TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
BY MICHAEL MULGREW
PRESIDENT

BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

REGARDING THE NEW YORK CITY FY23 EXECUTIVE BUDGET
AND CAPITAL COMMITMENT PLAN

MAY 25, 2022

My name is Michael Mulgrew and I'm the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, I would like to thank Chair Justin Brannan and all the members of the City Council's Committee on Finance for holding today's public hearing on the New York City executive budget for fiscal year 2023 and the executive capital commitment plan. I would also like to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph for their leadership during this year's budget process.

FY23 Executive Budget and Capital Plan Squander a Golden Opportunity

We fought for New York City public schools to receive $7.6 billion in federal stimulus funding during the pandemic and we finally received a commitment from Albany to fully fund the foundation aid formula and bring an additional $1.3 billion in school aid to New York City over the course of three years. With such an infusion of funding available to our city's schools, I ask, why are we considering an executive budget that looks to make $375 million in cuts to school budgets?

I will acknowledge that student enrollment in New York City public schools is down, and as a result the citywide average class size is also down, but these decreases should not be an excuse to make cuts to school budgets. I argue that instead this should be a golden opportunity to

establish new class-size limits that will restore trust in the public school system and bring families and their children back to our schools. The fact of the matter is that our current average class sizes are closer to the class-size goals we've been calling for and established over a decade ago in the state's Contracts for Excellence program.

New York City Average Class Sizes			
Grade Level	Pre-Pandemic (2019-2020 SY)	2021-2022 School Year	Contracts for Excellence Goal
K-3	23.8	21.2	20
4-8	26.5	23.8	23
High School	26.4	24.7	25

Instead, we should make these lower class sizes the new norm and seek to replicate them in the 16% of schools across the city where space is still an issue. We should not allow the DOE to return to pre-pandemic class-size levels, especially without any public debate on the matter.

I would like to point out that the figures I am presenting are averages, meaning there are New York City public school students who are in classrooms that have many more students than the average. An analysis of class-size data from May 2022 conducted by Class Size Matters shows us that there are presently 187,000 students in New York City who are in classrooms with more than 30 students.

Finding space to reduce class size in every school is an issue that can be resolved by the executive capital budget, but an analysis of the published plan has me equally troubled. Last year's plan indicated that the School Construction Authority planned to create 57,445 new seats through its new capacity program, but the executive capital plan this year includes the construction of 45,883 new seats, a reduction of 11,562. In financial terms, the city's new capacity program has shrunk from $7.8 billion to $6.3 billion.

Again, it appears to me that instead of designing a public school system with new lower class-size limits, as parents and educators have urged for decades, the administration is focused on making cuts to adjust for the decline in enrollment. If we follow the administration's plan, we will end up with a system that has fewer students yet has the same high class sizes as before the pandemic.

I am extremely disappointed in the proposed cuts under both the executive budget and the capital plan. Reducing class sizes is an equity issue. Class sizes in New York City have traditionally been 15% to 30% higher than those in the rest of the state. Why is it the norm for students in

private schools and suburban school districts to have small class sizes, but not for New York City public school students?

I propose that we work on maintaining the existing lower class-size averages, focus on reducing class sizes in schools and classrooms that remain overcrowded, and expand the physical footprint of the New York City public school system by creating new seats as we attract families back to our public schools and work toward rebuilding enrollment.

Chancellor Banks has spoken about the need to rebuild trust to increase enrollment. Lowering class size is the way to do it. Every parent, every neighborhood, every demographic understands smaller class sizes are a game-changer for their children.

Fund UFT Programs

We are proud to say that UFT programs are among the best vehicles that city government can use to ensure that the allocated funding for education makes it straight to the classroom and has a direct impact on students and educators. This year we submitted discretionary-funding applications for six programs we ask the City Council to support.

1. United Community Schools (UCS), Inc. – Our teacher-inspired nonprofit has developed a community-school model proven to transform public schools and the communities they serve. The model is anchored by a community school director placed in each school who is responsible for assessing the needs of students and families in the school community, then leveraging outside relationships to bring in the resources to meet those needs. We find that every $1 invested in a community school director yields $6 in resources for the school. During the 2020-21 school year, our 28 UCS schools in New York City collectively fed more than 6,000 families, coordinated more than 10,500 health-clinic visits and supported more than 20,000 students and families. This year we are requesting that the Council provide UCS a $5 million grant so we can continue to intensify academic programming, make more tutors available, expand access to school-based health centers, connect more students to mental-health and behavioral-health resources, and provide more social-emotional learning and culturally responsive-sustaining education professional development for teachers.

2. UFT Teacher Center – For more than 40 years, the UFT Teacher Center has been a guiding light for New York City educators, particularly during the pandemic. Whether it was providing technological support or professional development on remote instruction, UFT Teacher Center stepped up and filled the gaps. During the 2021-22 school year, the UFT

Teacher Center expanded its reach to include 118 sites across the five boroughs, and during the 2020-21 school year, the program supported 281,000 educators, principals and parents over the course of 126,000 hours of professional development. This year we are asking for a $10 million grant from the City Council to sustain current programming and expand. The UFT Teacher Center wants to add 10-15 new sites and develop new ways for teachers to help students catch up after the challenges of the pandemic. Those funds would also allow the program to expand its partnership with Google and increase its work with Apple, support paraprofessionals in addressing the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners, and increase culturally responsive-sustaining education course offerings.

3. Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC) – Our PLC program is one of our most effective tools for bringing equity to New York City public schools and helping teachers, students and parents cope with — and heal from — trauma. The UFT and the DOE created the PLC program in 2012 to help educators improve school culture by moving away from punitive disciplinary systems that relied heavily on suspensions. Over the past decade, reliance on suspensions in 40 PLC schools declined by 46%, while staff and student surveys indicated an increase of more than 50% in a positive school climate. During the pandemic, PLC expanded its offerings for schools to create healing-centered classrooms. We need to bring its expert services to as many schools as possible. We are requesting that the Council give PLC a $3 million grant to sustain our existing programming in schools.

4. Dial-A-Teacher – Dial-A-Teacher began in January 1980 as a pilot program in 17 schools in eight districts. Over the years, our homework helpline has expanded to help students citywide from all grades, across various disciplines and in many languages. Dial-A-Teacher is now operating Monday through Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m., in nine languages including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. Last year, the program received more than 40,000 calls. If Dial-A-Teacher's operating technology were upgraded, it could help even more students in the virtual-education arena, where so many of our students are now learning. We are requesting $265,000 to support this program. The funds would be used to: 1) further develop an online presence by creating an electronic application suited for the technology students are using today; 2) procure digital curricula for multiple subject areas — curricula the DOE has identified as aligning with the new standards; 3) perform technology maintenance and upgrades for the program; and 4) promote the program in the communities we serve.

5. BRAVE Hotline – The UFT entered into an agreement with the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHA), now known as VIBRANT, on Oct. 3, 2011, to launch an anti-

bullying campaign in New York City public schools. Since then, the UFT and MHA have been at the forefront of bringing awareness to the problem of bullying and creating resources that include a BRAVE (Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education) hotline that students, their families and educators can call, as well as ways to chat or text for help, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With your continued support, we can make a lasting impact on the lives and health of students across New York City. We ask you to support this program with $300,000 in this fiscal year, so we can continue to provide the services that are a lifeline for our students and a place our educators can turn for resources.

6. Member Assistance Program (MAP) – In 2009, the UFT started MAP to fill a void for its members and their families. The union crafted and funded the program to address a full range of mental-health and well-being issues confronting its more than 190,000 members and their families. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, members' outreach to MAP increased many times over. The program went from serving 4,500 members in 2018 to 32,000 members in 2021. Many of our members told us that the support provided by MAP enabled them to remain in the field of education by helping them to cope with and adapt to the stresses caused by the pandemic. During this time, MAP provided support groups, a Let's Talk About It series, a telephone careline and mental health referrals that allowed members to stay connected, express their grief and recognize their fears and stressors. It offered them healthier coping tools to navigate the COVID upheaval and recover. Until now, the UFT has fully funded its MAP program. With your support, we can make a lasting impact on the lives and health of educators throughout New York City. We are asking that the Council consider allocating a $1,780,000 grant to help us maintain and expand this valuable program.

Support Citywide Programs

I would also like to take the time to advocate for two citywide programs that are vital for our students and educators. We need to baseline Teacher's Choice, and I also ask the Council to support Broadway Bridges.

1. Teacher's Choice – The Teacher's Choice program is crucial to our educators. It's a key initiative to ensure teachers and other school staff are reimbursed for the school supplies and materials they purchase for their classrooms and for many of their students in need. After the program was baselined for three years in the FY20 adopted budget, funding for Teacher's Choice was completely cut from the FY21 adopted budget, but then $20 million for the program was restored in the FY22 budget. We appreciate the administration

included $20 million in funding for Teacher's Choice in the FY23 budget, and we ask that you maintain it and once again baseline the program in the budget.

2. Broadway Bridges – Broadway Bridges aims to ensure that every student in a New York City public high school can see a Broadway show before graduation. Through Broadway Bridges, the Broadway League subsidizes $20 tickets to weekday matinee and evening performances by paying half of the ticket price as well as the $3.00-$3.50 in fees associated with each ticket purchase. This subsidy enables the Broadway League to offer $10 tickets to schools. The initiative improves the arts experience of students who have not had the opportunity to attend live theater, and it enhances the experiences of students who are already engaged with the performing arts through their schools. We ask that you support this important initiative in the FY23 budget.

Carbon Free and Healthy Schools

As a member of the Carbon Free and Healthy School campaign, we believe it is time to invest in the infrastructure of public schools. Most New York City public school buildings need basic repairs and upgrades to address issues from antiquated heating and air-conditioning systems, to deteriorating rooftops, to outdated electrical grids.

By investing in school infrastructure, the city can create tens of thousands of good union jobs while making schools healthier and safer, taking on climate change and saving $250 million per year in energy costs. We want to give priority to historically under-resourced communities of color, where students face the most acute educational and environmental challenges.

The idea is to create 62,000 union jobs to conduct deep retrofits and install solar power and battery storage to meet the energy needs of all New York City public schools. With energy-efficiency retrofits and renewable power, the city can eliminate more than 75,000 tons of carbon emissions every year – the equivalent of planting 400,000 trees or taking 154,000 cars off the road.

Cafeteria Redesign

The UFT is also a member of the Lunch for Learning coalition, which successfully secured universal free school lunch for New York City public school students in 2017. We support the coalition's request that the DOE transform every high school and middle school by fully scaling the Office of Food and Nutrition Services' student-friendly cafeteria redesign model (Cafeteria Enhancement Experience).

The welcoming environment and the food-court-style serving line provide more daily menu options and faster service, and the presentation dramatically increases the appeal of the food. High schools with redesigned cafeterias experienced a 35% increase in student participation in school meals.

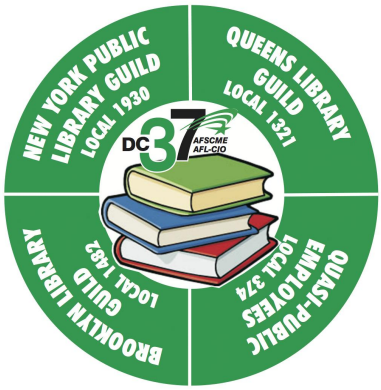
This model is highly cost-effective and time-efficient. Each cafeteria redesign costs only $500,000 and can be completed in one weekend. Approximately 80 of the Department of Education's 575 middle and high school cafeterias either have the redesign model or currently have funds dedicated for the work. An investment of $250 million in capital funds over five years is needed to transform all middle and high school cafeterias.

Closing Thoughts

We have a real opportunity to bring transformational change to New York City public schools. With access to federal stimulus funding and new state funding, we can permanently reduce class sizes for all our students, which will not only improve educational outcomes but will make schools healthier learning environments. The city's executive budget lacks imagination, creativity and innovation. After more than two years of a pandemic, our students deserve better. UFT members are always ready to be of service and provide the best they can to all students.

I want to thank you again for today's hearing. We look forward to our continued engagement throughout this budget process.

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Executive Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2022
Committee on Finance New York City Council
Joint Testimony of
Brooklyn Public Library
Brooklyn Public Library Guild, Local 1482
New York Public Library
New York Public Library Guild, Local 1930
New York Public Library Quasi-Public Employees, Local 374
Queens Public Library
Queens Public Library Guild, Local 1321
May 25, 2022

Chairman Justin Brannan and fellow committee members, thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify on behalf of all the patrons and employees of Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library. We are united in our request for the City Council to help our public libraries.

On July 1, 2021, the City Council and Mayor acknowledged all the amazing work library workers performed for our city, your constituents during the first year of this tragic pandemic and gave the three New York City public library systems budgets that allowed us to continue our excellent work.

In the beginning of this current fiscal year, our city was still struggling, yet we had hope because we had a vaccine. Library branches started opening up, offering more services and our customers, with joy and a bit of trepidation, started coming back. In December and January, the COVID surge spread throughout the City and the Library systems, for the safety of their staff and customers, wisely curtailed our opening plans. As cases diminished, we continued expanding our physical operations. Our customers are thrilled to have their in-person programs, newspapers, books, computers, printers, wifi, clean buildings and grounds, adult learner classes, and community.

Even though our physical buildings are opening, we still had to maintain our virtual infrastructure and presence that we built the previous year. The pandemic forced our libraries to adapt to offer robust online programs, services and IT infrastructure that have now become part of regular operations.

Honestly, we are struggling, struggling to keep our libraries open. During the pandemic we lost hundreds of members to attrition. Before, opening a branch with two staff members was rarely heard of and now it happens often. This is a disservice to our patrons and puts everyone in a dangerous situation.

Prior to the pandemic our members valiantly provided all the services our libraries offered to each and everyone who walks through our doors, even though we never had enough staff. Now, we have the extra online work with a proposed Executive Budget that cuts our operating funds. That is unsustainable and sacrifices to our work will be made. Therefore, our members need you. We need you to fight for a budget that sustains all the excellent in-person and virtual work library workers do each and every day. The New York City Council can be the champions for library patrons and staff if you fight for a budget that can sustain the in-person and virtual work we do every day.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
FY 2023 NEW YORK CITY EXECUTIVE BUDGET
SUBMITTED TO
THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
MAY 25, 2022
10:00 AM

Finance Committee Chairman Justin Brannan, and distinguished members of the City Council, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 | AFSCME. I am here today to provide testimony on the Mayor's proposed budget on behalf of the approximately 24,000 members we represent under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I.

The thousands of workers Local 372 represents perform essential support services to help the 1.2 million public school children of New York City to be learning-ready. Our School Crossing Guards, who remain essential workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure the children cross the streets safely in their morning and afternoon commutes. Our School Lunch Workers unload, prepare, and serve food each day, including during the summer, and continue to feed both students and members of the community on an essential basis during this time of crisis. Our School Aids are with students all throughout the day: they greet the children in the morning, engage in numerous activities to support their educational development, and help the children get to their buses at the end of the day. Our Community Titles, Parent Coordinators, School Neighborhood Workers, and Paraprofessionals work with parents to navigate the Department of Education, and work with the Department of Homeless Services to make sure the children get to school and have a place to sleep at night. Our Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists ("SAPIS") work with students in mental health, needed now more than ever, and the prevention of substance abuse, gun violence, and bullying, as well as gang prevention and mediation.

Many members of Local 372 are also members of the communities in which they work; they are neighbors to students, their families, and some are parents to school children themselves. Our members understand and can relate first hand to the struggles students and families face at home that can impact relationships between students, teachers, principals, parents and others.

I first want to commend the Mayor, the Chair, the members of the Finance Committee, and the City Council for recognizing the importance of investing in New York City's public schools and employees. The future that an education provides for a child is one of the most important obligations we must fulfill. I also want to commend the City for its leadership in prioritizing the health and safety of over one million students and the tens of thousands of teachers/support staff throughout our schools since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago.

Essential Workers

It is important for all of us here today to applaud essential workers, including those represented by Local 372, who risk their own health and safety to perform vital services in these times of crisis. When the school system was largely closed at the height of the pandemic, many of the 9,000 School Lunch Workers and 2,600 School Crossing Guards remained on the job throughout the city. These workers were and still are placed in harm's way – at risk of exposure to the ongoing pandemic – because their responsibilities play an essential role in keeping the wheels of society turning whether schools are open or not.

That is why these workers need more than just applause – these workers need access to assistance, benefits, and protections that help them continue working during this state of emergency. The City should provide hazard pay (such as contemplated by Int. 1918-2020) to appropriately compensate these essential workers for the sacrifices they must make and to make ends meet.

School Crossing Guards

Local 372 represents approximately 2,600 Level-I and 80 Level-II School Crossing Guards ("SCGs"), 90% of which are women. SCGs often make the hourly minimum wage, earning approximately $20,000 per year. These workers are often the first line of defense to improve the safety for students who walk, bicycle, or take transit to school, and have maintained this key safety role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, under current staffing levels, there still remains thousand of school children crossing main intersections without any supervision from NYPD school crossing guards, parental, or adult guidance. In order to place a SCG at every school post throughout the five boroughs, the City must hire an additional 100 full-time crossing guard supervisors, 200 part-time crossing guards, and implement a mobile replacement squad.

Additionally, SCGs do not get paid for snow days and certain holidays (days where the schools shut down but the City remains open), leaving their pay checks dependent on the whims of the weather. On top of the immediate, tangible concern over lost wages, this also represents an issue of equity for our members. Despite working under the New York Police Department, SCGs are

functionally analogous to the school support staff titles working under the Department of Education ("DOE") which are currently compensated for this lost time. Just as DOE school support staff are, so too should School Crossing Guards be equally compensated. Local 372 respectfully requests that, in addition to aforementioned hazard pay during the ongoing state of emergency, pay practics be permanently reformed such that SCGs share the same privileges and pay rights as Department of Education support staff titles.

Finally, SCGs are inherently at risk, not only from cars veering too close or from risk of exposure to COVID-19, but from physical attacks from people on the street. A number of SCGs have been the victims of on-duty assaults, which is a violent felony under current law. Local 372 requests City funding to support the promotion of a city-wide public awareness campaign to stop the violence against SCGs.

School Lunch Employees

On a normal school day, children need food in order to concentrate and learn in the classroom. And during these times of pandemic, many school children and members of the community continue to rely on schools for access to meals. Local 372 School Lunch Workers work hard each day – both in good times and as essential workers – to serve breakfasts and lunch, all which must fit into federal nutritional standards and guidelines. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these workers have served tens of millions of meals to students, their families, and members of the community in need.

This is demanding work; while current practices meet the Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood staffing standards, these current guidelines spread school lunch employees too thin between the "Breakfast in the Classroom" program and preparing for lunch. Local 372 is extremely supportive of the breakfast program, as well as universal lunch – every child deserves to come to class with a full stomach.

With the inadequate staffing level mandates by the Office of SchoolFood putting additional strain on workers, school lunch workers have to come to work earlier and stay later without extra compensation to simply make sure food is ready to feed all 1.2 million children when that bell rings. Furthermore, both the New York State Legislature and the City Council continues to introduce legislation that would broaden the scope of services by our school lunch workers by requiring them to do more additional tasks and potentially make them face not only disciplinary action but assume personal legal liability. School lunch workers are already struggling to fulfill

their current requirements and adding more to their plate will make it nearly impossible for school lunch workers to accomplish them effectively.

This strain could be alleviated by hiring more school lunch staff. Local 372 respectfully requests an additional 1,000 school lunch employees so we can reduce the strain on the current workforce while still continuing to fulfill the breakfast and lunch initiatives set by the previous Mayoral administration, including implementing more cooking from scratch, and continuing to fill our student's stomachs.

Another struggle faced by our school lunch employees, which also has a direct impact on sanitation and hygiene in the school cafeterias and kitchens is the inadequate air conditioning or ventilation. Updating the non-existent and inadequate cooling and air exchange systems in public schools kitchens has been a persistent struggle faced by School Lunch Workers for decades. The vast majority of schools built from the 1930s through the 1990s lack the proper design and operation for acceptable indoor air circulation. Due to the age and condition of these buildings, many lack the necessary electrical capabilities to simply install cool units in kitchen spaces. Many of these kitchens Local 372 workers are in every day have little to no cooling or ventilation and can reach over 130 degrees! Proper air conditioning would filter out heat, fumes, and airborne pestilence.

City Comptroller Brand S. Lander issued a report in March 2017 when he was a City Council Member, titled "Too Hot to Learn," detailing the significant lack of air conditioning. Former Mayor Bill de Blasio and other City officials rallied their support to install air conditioning in teaching spaces. That same energy and leadership are required to support the health and safety of thousands of School Lunch Workers. We thank former Council Members Treyger, Kallos, and current member Yeger for recognizing this fact and introducing Resolution 1145-2019, calling on the Department to install air conditioning or cooling systems in New York City public school kitchens. Local 372 calls on the DOE and the SCA to comprehensively evaluate the school system's outstanding kitchen ventilation needs throughout all five boroughs, and we request more funding be allocated towards a remediation plan pursuant to that evaluation. Additionally, Local 372 supports funding for School Transformation and Redesign of Cafeterias ("STARCafé"), which focuses on cafeteria redesign in order to help increase school lunch consumption, healthy eating habits, and other issues.

SAPIS

Since 1971, SAPIS have provided essential social-emotional strategies and services to help youth remain learning-ready. The SAPIS program is an established, credentialled service that is

sponsored by the NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports ("OASAS") to provide Evidence-Based Program ("EBP") presentations, group and individual counseling, and positive alternatives to NYC public school students, servicing K-12 throughout all of New York City's 32 school districts, including special education. This includes classroom mandatory presentations and counseling for mental health services and crisis mitigation in the individual and group settings; and more.

Our students are facing a mental health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion of children's mental health-related visits to Emergency Departments has skyrocketed since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the virtualization of many aspects of students' lives. SAPIS workers are already trained and ready to respond to this crisis. SAPIS have always been proactive in providing students and their families with the tools to navigate the myriad of societal, personal, and peer pressures that can derail healthy academic, social, and individual development. SAPIS are also responsible for monitoring behavior, as well as offering resources and services to support students when they find themselves struggling to improve. Our programming is already tailored to address the long-term consequences of the pandemic and shutdown which are derailing healthy development.

Local 372 has long testified to this panel about the devastating effects of cuts to the SAPIS program and the loss of over 200 SAPIS counselors since 2006. Now more than ever, there are simply not enough SAPIS today to address the needs of all of our at-risk children and their families. To that end, the NYC Department of Education is not prioritizing our SAPIS assets or strengths to meet the increased demand for more Social-Emotional Learning curricula, turning instead to less effective and more costly alternatives. Last year, the prior Mayoral adminsitration announced a "2021 Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan" to address the mental health crisis that instead proposes the hiring of school social workers and community-based organizations, and subsequently double down on hiring an additional 500 social workers and community-based organizations, invesitng in less-efffective alternatives to duplicate the work SAPIS already provide.

This is not acceptable in the current environment, and that is why New York City cannot afford to neglect this important work as the number of SAPIS positions continues to remain well below peak numbers. Even in the midst of a pandemic, it remains our shared responsibility to ensure our children meet and exceed their potential. Local 372's goal is to renew our partnership with the City and the State in making a smart investment in the quality of life for both New York students, their families, and communities at-large. That is why Local 372 requests that the New York City Council maintains its dollar-for-dollar match of the State Legislature's SAPIS funding.

Community Titles – Parent Coordinator Job Security

Local 372's 1,600 Community Titles play a key role in not only keeping parents informed, but serve as a liaison between school administration and parents. They ensure that parents know how to navigate the school system and help develop leadership and family engagement with schools. Parent Coordinators ("PCs") assist parents with language barriers, handle HRA paperwork, work with city agencies to identify and provide services directly to parents, and handle numerous ancillary duties.

In addition to requesting an increase in the number of PCs and community associates to allow us to serve more students, balance the ratio between our workers and the hundred of children they each currently serve, we also respectfully request that the Council provide and implement job security and protections for PCs. Since 2003, these titled workers have no job protection and seniority rights. They are subject to the practice of being fired at will. Some PCs are performing out-of-title work rather than risk the possibility of receiving a disciplinary write-up or termination notice for questioning the appropriateness of their assignments.

Local 372 asks that the City provide job securities to PCs, including seniority recall of a laid-off employee to an active status, identical to that of other Community Titles as well as School Business Managers that are non-instructional school-based positions. PCs take their numerous responsibilities seriously; it is only fair that, as a matter of principle, their employment is protected and that they are not treated as at-will employees by principals, supervisors, and management.

Public Employee Homeless Crisis

We all know that many of our city's communities are struggling. Just as many of our students' parents are struggling to pay for housing, food, and life's daily needs, so too are our members. As the cost of living continues to rapidly increase, wages are not rising at a comparable rate. And for many New Yorkers living paycheck to paycheck, including School Crossing Guards, any one unanticipated day off from work can be the difference between making ends meet and financial ruin. Homelessness and "working homelessness" (where a regular paycheck is not enough to cover the cost of living), both in the general population and of those on the city payroll, has been a citywide crisis, a crisis that affects many of our members who are forced to live day-to-day, bouncing from shelter to shelter or couch to couch; all while coming to work every morning to serve our 1.2 million school children. No one who is employed, or who serves the community as our members do, should have to sleep in a shelter because they cannot afford rent.

To address the homeless crisis amongst our working members, Local 372 respectfully requests the City Council and the Mayor to raise our members' wages (in addition to hazard pay for essential workers), so they can afford to stay in their homes and put food on the table, ensure all our members have adequate job and income protections, and hasten to find a solution to the lack of affordable housing in the city. Anyone working to provide a service to the city should have the right to make a living wage and afford to live in those city communities which they serve.

Job Security

Finally, regardless of whether our members work in a public school or a charter school, it is important that they be protected from shifts in funding. It has come to our attention that the Renaissance Charter School ("TRCS") is desperate for financial relief because the regular charter school funding process does not factor in the expenses of union workers stationed at the school. TRCS is a "model charter school" because the school has been able to produce high success rates even though they have sustained city and state cuts. To that end, TRCS adheres to our complete Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA), including a suite of benefits and pension payments.

Over the past few years, the City and the State have recognized the funding gap TRCS faces and have provided financial assistance. However, over the past three years, financial aid has tapered off and without any additional support, TRCS will have to make draconian spending cuts. Therefore, Local 372 supports any efforts on behalf of the City to ensure that TRCS remains solvent and that our members receive their collectively bargained benefits in a timely manner.

Conclusion

School support staff are critical to a functioning school system. They create the space every day where teachers can teach and students can learn. Local 372 workers who provide these services are essential to the public school system (as well as to the City as a whole during this state of emergency) and, as I have testified, are in need. Our workers come in every day, many work extra hours without pay or outside of their title, all to ensure that New York City's students are given the opportunity to succeed that every child deserves.

In closing, Local 372 extends it gratitude the City Council for your support for our titles. We recognize that there are not enough resources to address every worthy issue and service throughout the city, and that tough decisions must be made over how to allocate limited funds. However, the City's children are our lives' work, and in order for this important work to succeed, we need a healthy working space and hazard pay for essential workers, more support to increase staffing, a

living wage for our members, and to shelter those who provide critical services to the city yet cannot afford to shelter themselves.

On behalf of the 24,000 members of Local 372, NYC Board of Education, District Council 37 | AFSCME, I thank you for this opportunity to testify.

NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

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Lynn B. Kelly

New York Restoration Project
Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Finance
5/25/2022

Good morning and thank you to Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan for convening this hearing to discuss the FY23 Executive Budget.

My name is Lynn Kelly and I am the Executive Director of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). NYRP is the only land conservancy operating in all five boroughs of New York City, specifically in under-resourced neighborhoods. For over 25 years, NYRP has planted trees, renovated gardens, restored parks, and transformed open space for communities throughout New York City.

NYRP brings private resources to spaces that are underserved by municipal support; these communities have been the victim of decades of disinvestment. Parks serving low-income communities of color are generally smaller, serve more people per acre, and do not receive private funding. Decreased private donations compounded with budget reductions from last year had a devastating effect on parks in low-income neighborhoods even as park visitation increased to unprecedented levels as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As one of the 400+ organizations in the Play Fair Coalition, NYRP implores the Committee on Finance to help fight to secure raising parks funding from the 0.6% currently proposed in the executive budget to 1% of the total operating budget.

1% for parks is necessary for adequate staffing, maintenance, and parks planning to ensure our public parks are equitable, safe, clean and accessible for all New Yorkers. The current budget as proposed translates to a net reduction in agency staff. By the end of the month, the Parks Department will lose roughly 1,800 members of the cleanup corps that helped beautify our parks during this unprecedented pandemic, by keeping them clean and safe. Parks' workers have been frontline workers during this pandemic and deserve the resources needed to support their work.

NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

This stark reality of disinvestment in low income communities was highlighted in a recent report on the *Economic Benefits of Parks in New York City* published by the Trust for Public Land (TPL). According to the report, many neighborhoods in Central Brooklyn, the East Bronx, and Queens suffered the most during the height of the pandemic, with many dependent on a single park facility. New Yorkers of color are significantly less likely to have access to parks and open spaces. This disparity must be rectified and if these investments are not made after this unprecedented pandemic, then when?

Parks that serve low-income communities would drastically benefit from the budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation to increase to 1% of the total city operating budget. NYC must commit to a higher standard of maintenance across the five boroughs.

It is time for us to end environmental injustice and reinvest in our green spaces. Urban green space is not a luxury, but a necessity; countless studies have shown that parks and gardens yield outsized financial returns in terms of improved public health, climate change resilience, reduced crime, and economic development.

We urge our partners in City government to prioritize 1% for Parks in this year's budget.

Testimony of:

Cristina R. Fernandez, MD, MPH, FAAP (she/ella)
Co-Chair, NYS AAP - Chapter 3 Nutrition and Obesity Committee
Division of Child & Adolescent Health, Department of Pediatrics
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

AND

Jessica Rieder, MD, MS, FAAP
Co-Chair, NYS AAP - Chapter 3 Nutrition and Obesity Committee
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics
Children's Hospital at Montefiore

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committee. Our names are Drs. Cristina R. Fernandez and Jessica Rieder, Co-Chairs of the NYS American Academy of Pediatrics - Chapter 3 Nutrition and Obesity Committee.

As pediatricians serving New York City's children and adolescents, we see firsthand how critical DOE initiatives—such as universal free school lunch, breakfast in the classroom, and cafeteria redesign—are to combatting hunger and supporting students' health and wellbeing. The scientific literature points out a strong association between adequate nutrition and fueling children's brains for the school day. For example, a study out of Syracuse University linked universal free meals to academic performance, with increases in test scores equivalent to as much as 10 weeks of learning in state test scores in math and ELA. This makes it clear that a well-fed student body is fundamental to education equity. School meals play a unique role. Furthermore, inadequate nutrition has been tied to increased rates of mental illness, including mood, anxiety, behavioral and substance abuse issues. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of school meals for children and their families.

The model of the Office of Food and Nutrition Services' (OFNS) Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) has been a shining success, transforming the school food experience through deli-style serving lines and more socially inviting seating. As pediatricians we are calling for

additional $250 million in capital funds to transform the school lunch experience for middle and high school students. This would bring CEE to scale in middle schools and high schools.

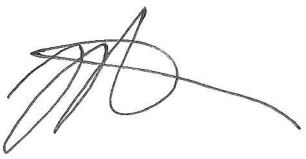
Presentation of school food and the environment in which it is served has a direct impact on school food participation rates. An analysis of CEE schools by Community Food Advocates found, after two years, there was a 35% increase in lunch participation in the first 47 high schools. Data from OFNS shows more fruits and vegetables are served in CEE cafeterias—as much as 11 times more grapes and 30 times more lettuce—compared to cafeterias without the redesign. Additionally, food court style serving lines have reduced the time students stand on line to obtain their lunch. And these are just the numbers. We hear numerous accounts from students, kitchen staff, administrators, and parents that the cafeteria redesign has influenced the school community's attitudes towards school food.

School meals are essential to students' wellbeing and learning and are foundational to advancing equity in schools. Free school meals for all NYC students is a momentous step in the right direction, yet many children and teens still do not participate. We as pediatricians know that peer influence is a major factor in adolescent development and decisions, and the redesigned cafeterias successfully counteract the stigma of school food. An additional $250 million should be invested in the Capital Plan towards a master plan phase-in of an additional 500 cafeteria redesigns that would serve all middle and high school students. This will help ensure students in higher grades, where school meal participation rates are lowest, choose the healthy school meals that will fuel their bodies and minds.

We hope the Council will continue to be champions for this important initiative. Thank you.

Sincerely,





Cristina R. Fernández, MD MPH
Co-Chair, Nutrition and Obesity Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics
New York Chapter 3

Jessica Rieder, MD, MS, FAAP
Co-Chair, Nutrition and Obesity Committee
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TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2023

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair

Submitted by:
Faith Behum, UJA-Federation of New York

May 25th, 2022

Thank you, Chairperson Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA has more than 50 thousand engaged donors in the New York area, supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services, and allocates over $150 million each year to strengthen Jewish life, combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being and respond to crises here and across the globe.

NONPROFIT HUMAN SERVICES PROVIDERS

Nonprofit Contracting

New York City provides a wide range of human services to low-income and vulnerable individuals and families to address a myriad of needs including, but not limited to, early childhood education, afterschool and summer programs, senior services, fighting food insecurity, and behavioral and mental health care services. These services are provided by nonprofits and managed through contractual relationships that dictate who is eligible for the services, and how the services will be administered. However, the ability of nonprofit organizations to provide the services required by their contracts is challenged by a host of issues that can jeopardize service delivery, including late registration and inadequate and delayed reimbursement for services rendered.

According to *A Better Contract for New York*, more than 75% of contracts were registered after the start date in FY22. Additionally, a survey by the Human Services Council of its membership indicated that 70% of organizations reported delayed payment from the City in the last year. Nearly 46% of respondents were forced to take out loans or draw on a line of credit due to

withheld or delayed payments—sometimes at significant cost. The average annual cost of interest for those loans is reported as $223,000. Late registration forces nonprofits to begin service delivery without startup costs or payments covered. For example, one of UJA's nonprofit partners that oversees behavioral health services has a FY21 contract that has not completed the registration process. Therefore, this provider cannot bill for services completed over a year ago, leading to delayed payments for services rendered. UJA participated in Mayor Adams and Comptroller Lander's Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid on Time, which produced *A Better Contract for New York*. **UJA encourages the City to implement these reforms promptly, which will directly support human services organizations and the communities they serve.**

Increase Wages for Human Services Workers

UJA is also a member of the #JustPay campaign, which is dedicated to increasing wages for human services workers. Despite the essential services that they provide their communities, human services workers are some of the lowest paid workers in New York's economy. UJA is urging the City to **include $86 million to support a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.**

City contracts have not included a COLA for two years. Ideally, human services workers could benefit from a multi-year COLA agreement. In the absence of this, the City should include a 5.4% COLA based on the Consumer Price Index.

OLDER ADULTS

Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative

UJA urges the Council to increase its investment in the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative to $5 million in FY23. In the wake of COVID-19, New York City's estimated 30,000 Holocaust survivors are among the most vulnerable to its impact.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, social workers funded through the Survivor Initiative have continued to provide the specialized care that survivors require due to the trauma they experienced during the Holocaust. There are many unique struggles survivors face today: the isolation, the return of memories of hiding, rationing food, being away from family, as well as sickness and death. They are also among the most vulnerable and susceptible to COVID-19. Because of this funding, survivors are not alone.

An investment of $5 million will support case management services that provide access to:

- **Mental Health Services** including home visits to help survivors work through the traumas that now manifest in sleep disturbance, anxiety, depression, and the inability to trust
- **Trauma Informed Care** provided by professionals who recognize and avoid possible triggers, thereby reducing the potential for re-traumatization
- **Crisis Prevention** to help stave off eviction and hunger
- **Legal Services and Entitlement Counseling**
- **Emergency Financial Assistance** for food, housing, prescriptions, medical, and dental care
- **Socialization Programs** to reduce isolation

- **Training & Support** for Caregivers and home health aides working with survivors
- **End of Life Care** including hospice and ethical wills

New York City must continue its commitment to Holocaust survivors. It is crucial to provide specialized care and support programs for survivors to enhance their quality of life and allow them to live out their remaining years with dignity. **UJA requests an investment of $5 million to support Holocaust survivors living in poverty.**

Home Delivered Meals Program (HDM)

The Home Delivered Meals Program has played a critical role throughout New York City's COVID-19 response efforts. While New York City launched GetFood to help address this issue, demand for the HDM program has also increased. Currently, an estimated 18,000 homebound older adults receive home delivered meals across New York City; however, enrollment in the HDM program at the peak of the pandemic was 21,000. Even then, more seniors qualified and should have been enrolled in HDM instead of being directed to GetFood NYC.

Beyond simple meal provision, the HDM Program provides important supports for homebound older adults. Recipients of home delivered meals are chronically disabled due to heart disease, mobility challenges, diabetes, arthritis, or severe vision impairment and are reliant on these supports, that now, in a pandemic, serve as a critical lifeline for these older New Yorkers. Regular meal deliveries provide health and psychological benefits beyond nutrition and can act as an access point for other critical support services, which help older adults continue to live healthily and safely in their homes.

The New York City per meal reimbursement rate was increased in the preliminary budget; however, the national per meal rate for urban areas is $11.78. We urge the Council and Administration to follow through on the announcement made in late 2021 that per meal reimbursement rates will continue to increase to $11.78 so that providers can support clients, particularly as the cost of food and gas continue to rise at alarming rates.

UJA requests the following investments to support the Home Delivered Meals Program:

- **$9.7 million to support continued growth in demand for the home-delivered meals program.**
- **$30 million to support Recovery Meal clients transitioning to traditional home-delivered meals.**
- **$3 million to support weekend and holiday home-delivered meals not provided by current contracts.**
- **DFTA should also assess and fund the capital and infrastructure needs for HDM providers, including van purchases and kitchen investments such as refrigerators and other items.**

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (N/NORCs)

Classic and Neighborhood NORCS are multi-age housing developments or neighborhoods, respectively, that were not originally developed for older adults, but are now home to a

significant number of older people. Throughout the COVID-19 health crisis, NORCs have provided vital response services to thousands of older New Yorkers, making continued investment in this program critical. NORC staff provide wellness checks to address mental health and social isolation; assist seniors in accessing food and other supplies, coordinate services in residential buildings not developed specifically for seniors, and help older adults navigate New York City's complicated vaccine process. These activities were crucial prior to Covid-19 and have become even more important since.

Without the support of the City Council, many NORC programs would not be able to continue to provide critical services to so many older adults in New York City. **In order to sustain and strengthen the NORC program, the FY23 budget must include $6.5 million for the NORC City Council Initiative, including funding to support health and nursing services.** The Council must include these funds to ensure that NORC and Neighborhood NORC programs can continue to provide services to residents.

Investing in Older Adult Initiatives

In addition to fully funding all Initiatives that support older New Yorkers, UJA requests the Council to consider restoring or increasing investment in the following Council Initiatives:

- **Increase funding for Support Our Seniors**
  UJA supports an increased investment of $2.6 million for the Support Our Seniors Initiative. This would provide $50,000 per district on average to better support older New Yorkers, particularly given the needs, such as transportation, social isolation, technology, and others, experienced during COVID-19. **This would bring the full Initiative investment to $9.74 million.**

- **Restore $4,376,000 for Senior Center Programs and Enhancements,** which provides support for senior centers, meals, homecare, transportation, and other senior services programs.

MENTAL HEALTH

Increase the DFTA Geriatric Mental Health Program by $8.7 Million

The Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) hosts the Department for the Aging (DFTA) Geriatric Mental Health program (DGMH). The DGMH program differs from the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative, a City Council funded initiative that provides funding directly to senior centers, NORCs, supportive housing providers, and other human services providers to provide a wide range of mental health services to seniors in various environments. The DGMH program focuses specifically on placing mental health clinicians in senior centers across New York City. Providing access to mental health services in nonclinical settings such as senior centers allow for clients to easily receive the help they need without stigma. This program has served more than 3,300 older adults in just the past 18 months, providing over 17,000 clinical sessions. Some recent preliminary data shows clinical improvement rates of 62% for depression and 57% for anxiety after just three months of treatment.

In FY22, the City expanded funding for the DGMH program from 48 sites to 88 sites in total, targeting areas of the City that had been disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic.

Three nonprofits in UJA's network received additional funding that was used to hire staff in their senior centers to ultimately connect more seniors to mental health services. Unfortunately, this funding has been delayed until FY23 due to Mayor Adams' Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) and included a $1.365 million cut to the FY 22 funding for the DGMH program. While senior centers hired additional staff, the FY22 funding cut in the Preliminary Budget made it impossible for these providers to compensate the new hires delaying expansion of the program. **In addition to immediately implementing this expansion in FY23, UJA urges the Administration to invest an additional $8.7 million to expand this program to all 108 sites that DFTA has identified as qualified to host clinicians based upon state requirements, and to expand the number of clinician hours at existing sites.**

Maintaining Investments in Mental Health Initiatives

UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through a number of mental health initiatives including Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, and Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health. UJA submits the following recommendations that will allow UJA's nonprofit partners to continue to serve these populations through FY 23:

1) **Maintain funding at $3.2 million for the Autism Awareness Initiative**

The Autism Awareness Initiative (AAI) funding allows eight of UJA's nonprofit partners to provide wraparound services to autistic children and youth in afterschool, weekend and summer programs. It also supports trainings for parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism. Most importantly, these supports and trainings are largely offered to individuals with autism and their families who are not eligible for services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities. In many cases, this is one of the few supports these individuals and their families can access in the community.

Providers continue to use both virtual platforms and in-person services to meet the needs of their communities. In UJA's network of nonprofits, trainings and support groups for parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism meet virtually which many providers believe has increased the number of individuals participating in these groups. The stress of the pandemic has increased the need for parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism to reach out for support for themselves. According to one provider in UJA's network, "Parents are balancing managing their own lives in a pandemic, from working remotely, economic challenges, social isolation, and navigating feelings of stress, anxiety and depression, while ensuring their child with disabilities is healthy and supported and receiving all of the care and services they need." Support groups for parents, guardians and caregivers of children with autism are very popular allowing for these individuals to virtually meet with others who are experiencing similar situations as well as learn new skills on how to support the individuals they are caring for.

During the past two years, when many out of school time activities were cancelled, UJA's nonprofit partners continued to provide virtual or in-person programming to children and youth. The wraparound afterschool and summer programs funded by the AAI, focused on assisting participants to develop intellectually and socially. More importantly, they provided a familiar social outlet for children during an isolating time. The afterschool programs funded

by the AAI are a combination of virtual and in-person offerings while summer programs were in-person. Providers worked with the communities they served to understand if individuals were more comfortable with in-person, virtual or a combination of both types of programming and families appreciated the flexibility.

Last year, programs funded through the AAI provided an outlet for individuals with autism while also supporting parents and caregivers of these individuals. In the upcoming year, individuals with autism and their families will need these programs as they navigate pandemic recovery. UJA urges the City Council to maintain funding for the Autism Awareness Initiative at $3.2 million in FY23.

2) **Maintain funding for the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative (GMHI) at $3,405,540 in FY 23.**

The GMHI supports organizations to provide individual and group counseling to older adults in non-clinical settings such as senior centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and food pantries, while also supporting in-home services for homebound elderly. The GMHI also provides financial support for in-home services such as psychiatric evaluations and counseling, services that are often not covered by insurance companies or reimbursed poorly. By offering these services in a non-clinical setting, providers are able to adapt services to the needs of the communities without stigma. Older adults have also benefitted from case management services funded by the GMHI, helping them to get connected to additional social supports like SNAP.

As the pandemic continues, programs have switched between providing in-person and/or virtual services. One of UJA's nonprofit partners continues to speak to their older adult clients over the phone instead of performing home visits. This agency provides in-home counseling and screens at least 200 homebound seniors annually for depression and substance abuse. As the situation with the pandemic improves, they hope to transition to in-person home visits again while also maintaining the flexibility of virtual options should they need to pivot for pandemic-related issues.

Regardless of how hard providers have worked to continue to serve older adults virtually during the pandemic, isolation and loneliness has increased amongst this population. Providers recognize the continued and increased need for these services in their communities and the important role they will play in helping older adults recover from the pandemic. Maintaining funding for this program in FY23 would allow our nonprofit partners to continue to connect more homebound elder adults with the mental health services they require to live fulfilling lives in the community.

3) **Maintain funding for the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative at $3.4 million in FY 23.**

The Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health Initiative is a citywide initiative that assesses risk for mental health concerns and connects court-involved youth with nonprofits. The initiative also provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth. These services are essential for preventing entry and re-entry into the juvenile justice

system. At-risk youth often lack access to mental health services, family counseling, or other supports that will keep them from juvenile detention. This initiative addresses lack of access to these important interventions through best practices in support services and referrals.

JCCA, one of UJA's nonprofit partners, receives funding through the Court-Involved Youth and Mental Health Initiative. The JCCA's "Second Chances" program is for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 who have mental and/or behavioral health needs and do not have health insurance, are court-involved or have behavioral indicators for court involvement. The program provides free mental health/counseling services, educational support and substance abuse referrals, family support services, and advocacy. During the pandemic, JCCA launched virtual workshops and programming on career exploration and skill development.

In FY22, JCCA offered an eight-week program titled, "Make it Work" which prepares a cohort of 12 to 15 at-risk youth opportunities for career exploration and critical work-readiness skills through projects such as resume-writing, interview prep, job etiquette, and work assignments. FY22 funding was used to staff the program as well as pay for expenses related to overseeing the program. Funds were also used to pay stipends to youth involved in the job training program. The stipends were especially beneficial to the many youths involved in the "Make it Work" program who lived in homes dealing with unemployment. A maintained investment in the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative in FY 23 would support agencies like JCCA to expand services and supports to youth who are court involved and struggling to thrive during the pandemic and beyond.

4) Maintain funding for Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health at $2,255,493 in FY 23

This initiative supports a range of programs and services that address the needs of individuals with substance use disorder, developmental disabilities, and/or serious mental illnesses and their families and caregivers. One of UJA's nonprofit partners oversees two programs with the funding they receive through this initiative. One program provides housing and services to ten people with serious mental illness who are transitioning from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization into a less restrictive setting. The second program is at a clinic where adults with mental illness and older adults receive mental health treatments in a group setting. The clinic provides services to approximately 900 individuals annually. Both individuals with serious mental illness and/or developmental disabilities have higher mortality rates when exposed to COVID. With Council funds for this initiative over the past year, this provider has been able to pay their staff, support all residents, and help two residents per year move into a lower level of residential care. A continued investment in this initiative in FY 23 will help prevent higher rates of homelessness and ensure those with serious mental illness survive through the pandemic without additional hospitalization.

5) Maintain funding for Opioid Prevention and Treatment at $3,500,000 in FY 23

Opioid Prevention and Treatment supports neighborhood-based prevention and treatment efforts related to opioid abuse. JCCA, one of UJA's nonprofit partners receives funding through the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative. JCCA uses this funding for the

Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment program to target Jewish Orthodox and Bukharian youth between the ages of 14 and 19 in Queens who are at-risk for or engaging in opioid abuse. All participants in the program complete substance use screenings; those who are determined to be exhibiting at-risk behaviors or dealing with substance use issues participate in a 10-week program focused on prevention and recovery tools and resources.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, youth living in the community that the Kesher program serves have experienced high rates of depression, leading some youth to turn to marijuana, opioids, and psychedelic drugs to self-medicate. The Kesher program provides a therapeutic outlet for youth who have been socially isolated from friends and family. The Kesher program has increased the number of cohorts of individuals who meet in person, limiting the number of participants while remaining socially distance and maintaining participation rates. Information on empowerment and well-being is sent virtually to youth as well and those engaging has increased as youth involve their friends. Community leaders such as Rabbis and principals continue to refer youth to the Kesher program, recognizing many are at risk for engaging in drug use during this challenging time. FY22 funding was used to pay staff and for youth incentives and outdoor recreational activities for participants.

Programs like the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment continue to be needed throughout New York City. Overdose deaths increased 55% from 2015 to 2019. The CDC reported 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States over a 12-month period ending in April 2021, with more than 2,300 fatal overdoses taking place in New York City. This data indicates a 28.5% increase in overdose deaths compared to FY20. UJA is requesting that the City Council maintain funding for this Initiative in FY 23 at $3,500,000 to support providers responding to the opioid epidemic in their communities.

YOUTH & CHILDREN

Strengthening Summer Programs

UJA's network of nonprofit partners oversee a number of DYCD funded programs, including but not limited to Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP), COMPASS and SONYC afterschool and summer programs, the Summer Rising program, as well as Beacons and Cornerstones. UJA appreciates the additional investments made in the Executive Budget to expand the SYEP and Summer Rising program. The nonprofit partners in the UJA network are committed to offering children and youth high quality programming over the summer. However, in regard to the Summer Rising program specifically, a number of issues must be addressed in order to ensure providers have the correct supports in place to serve every participant appropriately:

1) **Payment** At of the writing of this testimony, none of the nonprofits in the UJA network had been compensated for their work overseeing Summer Rising programs in 2021. Moving forward, the City must issue immediate payment of all outstanding contracts for work completed in summer 2021 and commit to prompt payment of contracts during summer 2022.
2) **Participants with Disabilities** In 2021, CBOs struggled to get access to the supports individuals with disabilities needed to thrive in Summer Rising programs. Specifically, paraprofessionals were often not available to work with individuals with

disabilities during the CBO portion of the day. CBOs also did not have access to individuals' IEPs and received little information regarding the needs of individuals with disabilities. CBO providers require access to participants' IEPs before the start of the Summer Rising program in order to have enough time to plan accordingly. Paraprofessionals must be available to work with participants during the DOE and CBO portions of the day. Preferably, the same paraprofessional should be working with participants for the entire day. A protocol must be developed for CBOs to follow if a paraprofessional is not available to work during the CBO portion of the day. Paraprofessional staff must not be counted towards staffing ratio.

3) **Licenses** Summer Rising programs will run under DOE authorization in 2022. Providers were told by DYCD that location of rooms that are listed on their School-age Child Care (SACC) licenses will not be able to be used for program space. Providers are concerned that there will not be enough space in buildings due to these room restrictions and that they will be forced to operate in spaces that logistically are difficult to manage programs in. The DOE must work with CBOs locating spaces that are large enough to accommodate Summer Rising programs.
4) **Medical forms** Participants' health conditions and known allergies were not communicated reliably to CBOs in 2021. Before the start of the Summer Rising program, updated medical forms must be shared with CBOs for all participants.
5) **Enrollment** Enrollment for Summer Rising began on April 25th. CBOs reported many of the families they usually serve in their afterschool programs were unable to get spots in their Summer Rising programs, forcing the families to apply to programs located far from their immediate neighborhoods. The DOE should develop a protocol for CBOs to follow if a participant decides not to attend a Summer Rising program they are enrolled in that allows CBOs to enroll other interested participants who live closer to program's site.
6) **Rates** DYCD has told providers elementary school seats will be funded at $1,414 per participant and middle school seats will be funded at $1,320 per participant. While the middle school rate was increased by 50% from last year, the elementary school rate remained constant. Providers in UJA's network of nonprofits stated that overseeing a program for elementary age participants at the $1,414 per participant rate would limit trips to once a week and where they could take participants on day trips. It would also require them to "get some donations" for materials. CBOs are dedicated to providing interactive and enriching summer programs for youth and children. They need to be compensated adequately in order to do so. UJA with the Campaign for Children recommends COMPASS, SONYC, Cornerstone and Beacon summer program rates (regardless of program structure) to be increased by 30% (to $1,848) for elementary programs and 10% (to $1,450) for middle school programs in order to better support providers financially and increase salaries for staff to at least $21 an hour. Increasing rates beyond the DYCD proposed rates will assist with attracting individuals to these positions as well as provide the funding to develop innovative programming.
7) **DOE responsiveness** CBOs struggled to get answers from DOE to operational questions during Summer Rising 2021. The DOE should designate individuals CBOs can reach out to this summer if they are experiencing issues or have questions regarding the implementation of Summer Rising.

8) **Transportation** Many of the proposed Summer Rising locations are not within walking distance from where participants live. Transportation has not been guaranteed for all Summer Rising participants. The DOE and DYCD must develop a detailed plan on how Summer Rising participants (including participants with disabilities) will be transported to and from program locations as well as who is responsible for participants during transportation.

UJA urges the Administration to address each of these issues that will strengthen the Summer Rising program and improve the overall experience for providers and participants.

Comprehensive Background Checks

Staffing is one of the main components that children and youth programs require to be successful. Specifically, CBOs need to not only recruit staff to work in their programs, but they also need to successfully hire these individuals. Part of the hiring process for CBOs operating under SACC licenses requires staff to undergo comprehensive background checks.

Since September 2019, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has required new comprehensive background checks for staff and volunteers in youth and early childhood education programs. The background checks are required by rules in the Federal Childcare and Community Development Block Grant that was reauthorized and revised in 2014. As the local regulator, the background check process is managed in New York City by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

Throughout the pandemic, DOHMH has continued to struggle to complete the background checks in a timely manner causing delays in the hiring process for staff members in afterschool, summer and early childhood education programs. When providers send inquiries about the status of pending background checks to the DOHMH mailbox designated for receiving completed background check paperwork they often receive delayed responses with little information. Programs have reported having to wait between *two and twelve months* to get staff fully cleared. In some instances, providers reported receiving notifications of successfully completed background checks up to six months after they were completed by the DOHMH. OCFS allows prospective staff to work in programs if they are supervised by fully cleared staff. However, this only works when there are enough cleared staff to oversee the prospective staff awaiting their clearances. When fully cleared staff test positive for COVID and need to quarantine, many programs are left scrambling to meet staffing quotas.

Maintaining the number of children and youth served in early childhood, afterschool or summer programs is difficult without a reliable comprehensive background check process; increasing the number of children and youth served would be impossible if the process is not expedited. **UJA urges DYCD to assist DOHMH in expediting the comprehensive background check process, ultimately making DOHMH commit to a two-week maximum timeframe to complete checks. DOHMH must also notify providers within 48 hours when background checks have been completed.** DOHMH is currently working on an online platform that will be used to upload comprehensive background check documents. If executed properly, this platform has the potential of expediting the background check process. **UJA is recommending this online platform be launched and that all pending background checks be completed by September 2022. UJA also urges DOHMH to test this platform with CBOs in order to**

address any system issues before it is launched. Providers support rigorous background checks for all staff and need their partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so providers can operate programs in this constantly changing environment.

Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS)

Prospective staff who are hired to work in programs located in the DOE buildings and all staff working in Summer Rising programs are required to be cleared through the DOE's Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS). Last year, CBOs struggled to get fingerprinting appointments for their staff in the PETS system which delayed their start dates in the Summer Rising program. **To combat this, the DOE must create a strategy for prioritizing Summer Rising CBO staff that need to go through the PETS system.** When staff are undergoing the PETS background check process and a previous criminal offense is uncovered, they are required to undergo a more thorough investigation through the DOE's Office of Personnel Investigation (OPI). While they are being reviewed by OPI, employees cannot work with children or be compensated with money from DOE contracts.

Previously, OPI investigations took about two weeks to complete. In many instances, the investigations clear prospective employees to work with children. Currently, providers report that OPI investigations are taking up to three months to complete. This places strain on providers to find ways to retain prospective staff and in many cases, they are unsuccessful, losing staff to places where they can get hired and paid more quickly. Unfortunately, there is not a large pool of candidates to work in summer or after school programs to draw from when prospective employees leave for other opportunities. Furthermore, providers cannot wait three months (more than the entirety of a summer program for example) for an investigation to be completed on a prospective employee. Providers also mention having no one to follow-up with at the DOE when they have questions about the OPI process. **Providers need the OPI to complete investigations within two weeks and require a reliable contact at the DOE when they have questions about the OPI process.**

Increase Supports for Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care

UJA is grateful for the investments made in the FY 23 Preliminary and Executive budgets for Fair Futures. Fair Futures provides supports to older youth transitioning out of the foster care system to ensure academic and/or vocational success as they age into adulthood. The COVID-19 crisis has left youth in foster care feeling isolated, confused and scared. While so many other New Yorkers can lean on their families to get them through this challenging time, these youth require additional supports to assist them during and after the pandemic. Additional supports can include providing foster youth with access to a long-term coach from the start of high school through age 26, as well as providing social-emotional supports for foster youth in middle school. This is a proven strategy for increasing graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment, preventing system involvement, and helping youth get on a pathway to becoming self-sufficient, successful adults. **UJA supports a total of $35 million in the enacted budget for Fair Futures to implement long-term, comprehensive supports for all foster youth from middle school through age 26.**

EDUCATION

UPK and 3-K

UPK and 3-K programs in CBOs had to overcome a number of challenges during the pandemic including remote learning, understanding and implementing constantly changing safety protocols once children came back to the classroom, fluctuating enrollment, and ensuring enough staff were present to work with children when staff became ill or left for other employment opportunities. Despite these challenges, CBOs continued to provide opportunities for young children to learn about math, science, language arts and social studies in a safe environment. As New York continues on the path to pandemic recovery, UJA urges the City to implement the following recommendations in order to invest in CBOs who are educating the majority of young children enrolled in the 3-K and UPK programs:

1) **Compensate CBOs based on the true cost of overseeing programs**
   Enrollment fluctuates in early childhood education programs. However, costs for overseeing programs remain the same. Reimbursing providers based on enrollment causes many to deal with a deficit they cannot absorb. In the Spring 2022, the DOE announced that all Birth to Five contracts would be held harmless and providers would not be compensated based on enrollment. In FY 2023, UJA urges the City to continue to reimburse UPK and 3-K programs based on the true cost of overseeing their programs and not how many children are enrolled.
2) **Create comprehensive pay parity for all 3-K and UPK staff in CBOs**
   The 2019 salary parity agreement resulted in certified CBO teachers in pre-kindergarten programs receiving the same compensation as entry level DOE pre-kindergarten teachers. This investment alleviated some of the recruitment and retention issues CBOs experienced in their UPK programs. However, some outstanding issues need to be addressed to achieve comprehensive pay parity. Since the salary increases negotiated in 2019 match the compensation entry level DOE teachers are making, teachers who have worked in CBO UPK programs for multiple years are making the same amount as a teacher who is working in their first year at a CBO. Directors and educational directors in CBO UPK programs were not included in the 2019 salary parity agreement. As a result, many are being compensated less than the teachers they supervise, resulting in directors and educational directors leaving CBOs for higher paying jobs. Additionally, non-teaching staff in CBOs, including assistants, janitors, cooks and other staff, are being compensated less than their counterparts in DOE schools.

   To combat this, UJA urges the City to create comprehensive pay parity for staff in CBOs which would result in equivalent salaries and benefits for equal levels of education and experience between early childhood educators inside and outside DOE programs. This should also take into account the differences in school days and longer hours worked for CBO educators. Longevity increases for teachers in community based early childhood education programs must also be included. When pay parity agreements are achieved, contracts must be promptly amended to include additional funds in order for CBOs to have the financial means to compensate their workforce according to those agreements. Lastly, the City should also raise the minimum wage of non-teaching staff to $21 per hour mirroring the ask of the #JustPay campaign. Increasing the wages of non-teaching

staff would help with retaining these employees who are vital to the day to day operations of 3-K and UPK programs.

3) **Allow community-based organizations to directly enroll families**
   Currently, families enroll their children in 3-K and UPK programs located in CBOs through the DOE. The DOE enrolling families in CBO 3-K and UPK programs creates another unnecessary step in the enrollment process that families would not have to deal with if they could enroll through the CBOs. It also results in CBOs obtaining their list of enrollees from the DOE meaning the DOE ultimately has control over who is or is not attending CBO programs. CBOs interact directly with the families who are interested in attending their 3-K and UPK programs and should be able to enroll them in their programs.
4) **Commit to Working with Community Based Organizations in Planning Reforms to Early Childhood Education**
   Often, CBOs are not involved in the development of early childhood policies and procedures that directly impact them. The DOE must allow CBOs to provide feedback on policies and procedures that will shape how they educate young children in their communities.

Preschool Special Education Programs

UJA is grateful that the City Council included in their FY 23 Preliminary Budget response $30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month Department of Education (DOE) counterparts. Unfortunately, the Executive Budget did not include this investment.

In 2019, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood education teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs. Excluded in this agreement were teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs. These teachers work 12-month jobs serving young children with disabilities with intensive needs. The City has not committed to salary parity for these educators, despite a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes.

CBOs have indicated that, in order for them to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs where they can earn higher compensation. The City has a plan to open 800 much-needed preschool special education class seats starting in July by offering a "contract enhancement" to the CBOs that run these classes. The City has not yet committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it will be impossible for the City to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide**. UJA urges the Administration to ensure that the FY 23 Enacted budget includes $30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts.**

Supporting non-public schools

While continuing to grapple with unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, non-public schools have been able to provide safe instruction. However, non-public schools have spent millions of dollars complying with health protocols to maintain teaching and learning, whether remote or in-person. Costs, so far, have ranged between tens of thousands of dollars to upwards of millions of

dollars (depending on school size) for expenses included but not limited to the hiring of additional staff, technology upgrades, ongoing school sanitizing, physical protective barriers and signage, personal protective equipment, air filtration system upgrades and the ongoing testing of students and faculty for COVID infections as well as data collection and reporting. It is critical that non-public schools be reimbursed for these expenses and provided additional current-year funding to cover ongoing COVID-related costs. As the City continues to make great strides in containing the spread of COVID19, the Administration must ensure that the health and safety of the non-public school community is not left behind and that all schools are reimbursed for the cost of COVID-related expenses. **UJA urges the City to provide COVID relief to non-public schools in parity to the public school community, including broadband access, mental health support and other subsidized supports**.

UJA also requests that the City consider expanding the eligibility criteria for non-public schools qualifying for the non-public school security guard reimbursement program. Instead of the current eligibility criteria of a qualifying non-public school with more than 300 registered students, UJA requests that the criteria be expanded to enable security to be provided for additional vulnerable institutions and that the eligibility mirror the Federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program. This would allow all nonprofits to be eligible via competitive award.

Increase Supports for Students in Foster Care

Students in foster care are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be chronically absent, or leave high school without a diploma. They were also impacted particularly hard by the transition to virtual learning during the pandemic. Last year only 43% of students in foster care graduated from high school in four years – by far the lowest rate of any student group in the city, and almost 40 percentage points below the city average of 81%. Despite this, there is not a single person at the DOE focused full time on meeting the needs of students in foster care. The result is that barriers to education for this population often remain unaddressed and opportunities for interagency coordination and policy change are not developed.

In the fall of 2021, the DOE announced that it would hire a small team of staff to focus on students in foster care. However, none of the positions have been filled. The DOE has started posting the positions, but *all the promised positions* – 7 focused on students in foster care and 4 serving students in temporary housing and students in foster care – must be filled as soon as possible. So far, the DOE has posted only 1 of the promised 7 positions focused on students in foster care and 3 of the 4 positions serving students in foster care and the much larger population of students in temporary housing. **UJA urges the DOE to move quickly to hire and fully staff its first-ever team focused on students in foster care.**

In addition, the DOE must ensure that every student in foster care can be transported to school. Federal and state law require the City to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools. However, the DOE has not guaranteed bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to these students. As a result, students who cannot travel to school on their own have been forced to transfer schools, or even transfer foster homes. During the 2019-20 school year, one in five NYC students had to change schools upon their initial placement in foster care. **UJA requests the**

enacted budget include $5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability.

Increase Investment in Adult Literacy Programs

There are more than 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English proficiency or who lack a high school diploma. Many of these New Yorkers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing the essential work that has been sustaining our communities – as grocery workers, delivery workers, home care workers, and parents. Others are service workers and domestic workers who lost their jobs and incomes and have faced a harsh reality with little or no safety net. While adult literacy education is only one part of the solution, it is essential to a fair, just, and sustainable recovery.

The majority of adults in NYC with limited literacy skills are women and people of color. Over 75% are immigrants, including many who are undocumented. Others are BIPOC who were born in the US and underserved by the public school system. Adult literacy education can provide the foundation for greater security and autonomy, as well as the tools to access, navigate, analyze – and ultimately transform – social, political, and economic systems and conditions.

When it comes to city and state funding for adult literacy education, there are a number of challenges. The first is that combined city and state funding is so limited that fewer than 4% of the 2.2 million adults who could benefit from adult basic education, high school equivalency, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are able to access seats in any given year. The second is that the level of investment per student is so low that programs are unable to provide the full range supports, services, and resources that students need and deserve. The last is that the funding places such an emphasis on increasing test scores, accruing credentials, and achieving workforce outcomes that it fails to recognize and honor the full breadth of students' goals and the myriad ways that programs work to build the collective power of individuals, families, and communities.

Last year, the Administration baselined $8 million in year-to-year funding for adult literacy education (creating a total of $13.5 million in baselined funds) and the NYC Council allocated an additional $2.5 million of Council Discretionary funding in a first-of-its-kind pilot project that provided 20 programs with between $70,000 and $150,000 of additional funds to invest in full-time teachers, counselors, expanded student support services, professional development and planning time for staff, and upgrades to technology to support digital literacy development. The pilot also recognized and encouraged a broader range of outcomes, including support for health literacy, financial literacy, immigrant rights, workers' rights, housing advocacy, culturally responsive education, and student leadership development.

Adult literacy education is the key to economic security and social mobility. Median wages for adults with a high school diploma or its equivalent are 24% greater than for those without a diploma. Furthermore, higher levels of literacy are associated with greater health knowledge, more efficient use of healthcare services, and the ability to manage chronic health conditions and communicate with healthcare providers. Increased literacy not only benefits individuals, it also drives broader economic growth. A national study from Gallup found that "getting all U.S. adults

to at least a Level 3 literacy proficiency would generate an additional $2.2 trillion in annual income for the country," and that large cities like New York would see a 10% increase in gross domestic product.

UJA urges the Administration to **maintain the $8 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional $13.5 million** (for a total of $27 million) to double the level of investment per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP. Additionally, UJA urges the City Council to **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to $5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources. Lastly, UJA urges the City Council to **renew the $4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

FOOD SUPPORTS

Addressing Food Insecurity

Food access continues to be a concern among New Yorkers. While food insecurity in the city has subsided somewhat from the peak seen early in the pandemic, it continues to be much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. Food insecurity rates have increased by over 36% for all New Yorkers and 46% for children since the start of the pandemic. Furthermore, citywide in New York, in a Hunger Free America survey, 84 percent of responding food pantries and soup kitchens reported that they served more people in 2021 than 2020.

Although UJA's nonprofit partners quickly shifted their operations to better support New York's emergency food efforts by expanding their food pantry operations; helping clients gain access to SNAP and other benefits and raising private dollars to deliver meals to homebound older adults, there is still tremendous unmet need.

UJA-Federation submits the following recommendations to ensure that the local food system and supply chain remains intact, that all families are able to access the food and support they need, and that front line community-based organizations (CBOs) can continue to respond effectively to this crisis:

1) **Increase funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)**
    a. In 2021, to account for increased need for emergency food, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy invested $63.5 million in the Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution Program (P-FRED) program, distributing over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries throughout the city. Additionally, the Administration recently announced the expansion of the EFAP program to include fresh foods and a recent request for proposal for EFAP was issued on January 31, 2022. However, the Executive budget includes only an additional $30 million for emergency food. This additional funding will not fully fill the gap created by the termination of the P-FRED program and the expanded scope of the EFAP RFP. While UJA is extremely supportive of getting more fresh food into the food system, UJA urges the Administration to invest an additional $33.5 million in the FY23 budget for EFAP to take into account the additional cost of fresh food.

2) **Allow additional flexibilities in terms of program operation of EFAP**
    a. In addition to increasing funding for EFAP, UJA urges the Administration and the Council to allow EFAP providers to use EFAP funding for administrative, rental and operational costs that have increased or emerged since the start of the pandemic. In addition, UJA encourages the Administration and the Council to explore ways in which the program can be adjusted to allow more opportunity for individual pantries to make purchasing decisions as is the case with the New York State Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program and New York City's Pandemic-Food Reserve Emergency Distribution Program.
3) **Allocate an additional $10 million in funds within the Human Resource Administration to engage community-based organizations in benefits program enrollment and outreach as well as to streamline benefits applications.**
    a. At the height of the pandemic, when rates of food insecurity had nearly doubled in NYC, only 50 percent of New Yorkers who were facing severe food hardship were enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). To meet this need, UJA urges HRA to allocate additional funds within the budget towards promoting and enrolling New Yorkers in social safety net programs, re-opening field offices closed during the pandemic, adding additional One Stop Shop locations, adding additional staff to the hotline to enroll people in programs and investing additional funding into promoting the Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff Program at DOHMH.
    b. **Additionally, UJA urges HRA to fund pilot projects to enable the state government to work collaboratively with New York City to make it easier for eligible New Yorkers to apply for multiple food benefits online, as a first step toward doing so for all anti-poverty benefits.** Currently, New Yorkers eligible for multiple benefits must fill out individual applications for each benefit for which they are eligible to apply. According to the MyCity plan laid out by the Mayor, the goal of the Administration is to create one online portal with a universal application and verification process so that New Yorkers can qualify for multiple benefits simultaneously. In addition, the Mayor proposes combining all City agencies' data onto one universal platform so that any agency can assist any New Yorker with any benefit. UJA urges the Council and the Administration to work together to ensure this portal is developed and rolled out. As a first step in this process, UJA encourages the City and the State to work together to create a joint application for the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) and the WIC program (run by NYS DOH).
4) **Expand access to Kosher and Halal meals in public and private schools.** UJA appreciated the City's commitment to ensuring that children had access to meals even when they were not physically attending school through the Grab&Go model, including access to Kosher and Halal meals. However, UJA agencies reported experiencing issues with the Grab&Go program Kosher meals, including with the meal quality. UJA agencies reported having to throw out food received through the Grab&Go program due to spoilage, poor quality or dietary standards not being met resulting in a significant waste of food and city funding.

Now that children are attending school in person, it is important that Kosher and Halal meals continue to be available to those students who require them. Mayor Adams has been a leading advocate for the expansion of Halal and Kosher meals. In his time as Brooklyn Borough President, he advocated for the creation of a Kosher and Halal meals pilot program at 12 schools across the city, both public and private. With nearly 1,800 schools across the DOE and 1.1 million children who rely on school meals, **UJA urges the DOE to take into account the lessons learned through the Grab&Go program, resolve the issues with food quality and adequacy, and work with the Administration to ensure that access to Kosher and Halal meals is expanded to serve the public and private school children who need them.**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

Maintaining Investment in the DoVE Initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for domestic violence services. In an April 2020 needs assessment survey, UJA's network of nonprofit partners were asked what issues were currently impacting the populations they serve. More than 10% stated that domestic violence is impacting the clients they serve, with one agency stating survivors of domestic violence are one of the populations most negatively impacted by the repercussions of Covid-19.

The DoVE Initiative supports a range of services for individuals impacted by domestic violence that include case management, crisis intervention, referrals, counseling, empowerment workshops, and legal advocacy. The DoVE initiative has always provided vital supports to individuals living in violent situations. During the pandemic it has literally been a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and community. The DoVE Initiative directs funds to many of UJA's nonprofit partners who are rooted in their communities and have been able to pivot to provide necessary and lifesaving supports to survivors of domestic violence during the pandemic. **UJA strongly urges the City Council to maintain funding for the DoVE Initiative at $11.5 million in FY 23.**

Conclusion

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist New York City's most vulnerable and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions, please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org.

United Community Services, Inc.
Inclusion Settings and Therapeutic Services

Testimony of UNITED COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC. for
New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the proposed budget. My name is Shusheila S. Tanwani, and I am the Program Director for United Community Services, Inc. For **27 years**, UCS has provided **preschool special education instruction in an inclusion setting and therapeutic services** within the **Bushwick** community in Brooklyn, NY.

We thank the City Council for including in your preliminary budget response the need for **$30 million to address disparities in salaries between preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) and their counterparts at Department of Education (DOE) sites**. Two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs, but excluded teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs, who work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs. The City has not yet committed to salary parity for these educators, even as a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes has left preschoolers with disabilities without the support they need and have a legal right to receive. According to the DOE's own projections, the City is short by more than 900 seats in preschool special education classes. CBOs have indicated that, in order for them to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs where they can earn higher compensation. The City has a plan to open 800 much-needed preschool special education class seats starting next year by offering a "contract enhancement" to the CBOs that run these classes, but the City has not yet committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it's hard to see how the City will be able to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide.

Given this large disparity in wages, UCS has been unable to retain qualified though dedicated professionals, in this economic climate. UCS will soon be closing its doors after struggling to recruit and retain staff, resulting in even more loss of services in a community that is very much in need.

Although, UCS may not be in the position to see this to fruition, we strongly urge the Council to ensure that the FY 23 budget includes $30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that preschoolers with disabilities get the support they need.

Shusheila S. Tanwani
Shusheila S. Tanwani, MA, SDA, SAS
Program/Clinical Director

1326 President Street, Brooklyn, New York 11213 Phone: 1•718•756•8065 Fax: 1•718•756•4720

Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022 | 10:00 AM

Good afternoon, and thank you Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee. My name is Chan Henry and I have worked in the human services sector for 4 years. I currently work as a Housing Specialist at Urban Pathways, a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Urban Pathways and human services workers.

I recently authored an op-ed featured in the Daily News on May 7th highlighting the need for increased pay for our workforce in order to combat homelessness. If staff cannot afford to work in the programs that serve New Yorkers in need, opening new programs alone will prove ineffective. **Making just 70 percent of what our government counterparts make, it is little wonder that city-contracted human service providers are facing very high turnover rates and finding it hard to recruit and retain staff.**

The impact is burnout among the staff that do stay, who take on extra work. The pandemic has also made the challenges our clients already faced more difficult to address, adding to the burden on workers like myself working to ensure my clients obtain stable housing and other essential services. Yet, I do not make enough to sustain myself. **As the main funder of services, and thereby the main driver of human services wages, we need the government to do more. My organization cannot fundraise itself to fair wages.**

The inclusion of a 5.4% cost-of-living adjustment for human services workers in the City's FY23 Budget is critical to the health of the sector. The state provided a 5.4% human services COLA. As an employee working on a City DHS contract, I am concerned that I will not get a COLA equal to my colleagues working on state contracts.

I love my job, and I'm sure all those who work in social services have a passion for this work as well. I know that the work I do makes a difference, and I am fortunate to see that difference every day in my clients. To see people grow and obtain the life that they want is a rewarding thing to witness and that is what drives me to keep doing the work that I do.

Urban Pathways is a supporter of the #JustPay Campaign: a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government's exploitation of human services

workers by demanding that sector employees under contract with New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

The human services sector has supported the City since the start of the pandemic, and now we need the City to support us. In addition to the 5.4% COLA for this fiscal year, we are asking the City to adopt these core reforms.

- Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.
- Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

Thank you again for providing me with this opportunity to testify, and for your partnership on all the issues impacting our sector.

Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022 | 10:00 AM

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee. My name is Nicholas O'Toole and I work as the Advocacy Associate at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget hearing on behalf of my organization.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider. We assist single adults through a unique combination of street outreach, drop-in services, Safe Havens, extended-stay residences, and Permanent Supportive Housing. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of our clients, including our Total Wellness Program and UPwards Employment Program. Urban Pathways serves over 3,900 New Yorkers in need annually.

As an organization that has found both the Drop-in Center and Safe Haven models of service for single adults experiencing street homelessness to be especially effective, we are happy to see the City Council's and Mayor Adams' investments in these services in both the City Council's Budget Response and the Mayor's Executive Budget. These programs have a low barrier of entry that makes them more effective than traditional shelters, and opening more of these programs can be effective tools for bringing New Yorkers indoors to safety.

However, **funding for the expansion of these services must be coupled with workforce investments.** Without this, staffing these programs will be impossible, making the prospect of opening new programs untenable. Urban Pathways recently opened a new Safe Haven, and we are having extreme difficulty filling the necessary positions. We are currently unable to fill 20 out of the total 37 positions outlined in our contract with DHS, after working to hire staff for nearly seven months. **We cannot take on another contract that pays our employees poverty-level wages. Essential functions including security, maintenance, and kitchen staff, start at a dismal $15/hour in these contracts.** While in the process of negotiating a contract with DHS for a new Drop-in Center, we were told that a Case Manager position is capped at $45,000 annually. This low pay is completely inadequate and does not match the extremely difficult work performed by a Case Manager with a Batchelor's Degree.

This is a sector-wide issue impacting human services providers that hold contracts with City agencies. **As a first step to combatting this issue, the FY23 Budget must include a 5.4% cost-**

of-living adjustment (COLA) for human services workers. This would match the State's investment, which is especially important for organizations like Urban Pathways who hold both City and State services contracts. **A 5.4% COLA from the State without an investment from the City will create a disparity between our employees doing the same work on different contracts.**

The issue of wages leads to high staff turnover, with an ultimately damaging effect on clients, whose recovery and ability to move forward with finding housing relies heavily on their relationships with staff. We know that when staff are struggling with their own finances, housing, and the ability to care for their families, they cannot be as focused in their service to clients and they quickly experience burnout. **Organization-wide, we have a 26% staff vacancy rate, leaving our organization in a constant staffing crisis.** The most difficult positions to hire for, which are Operations Supervisors, Practical Nurses, Security, Maintenance, and Case Managers, are critical to the functioning of our programs. While staff turnover has long been an issue, the current highly competitive job market has made it even more difficult to both hire and retain staff.

Urban Pathways is a proud supporter of the #JustPay Campaign: a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government's exploitation of human services workers by demanding that sector employees under contract with New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

The human services sector has supported the City since the start of the pandemic, and now we need the City to support us. In addition to the 5.4% COLA for this fiscal year, we are asking the City to adopt these core reforms.

- Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.
- Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

In addition to human services workforce investments and the expansion of Drop-In Centers and Safe Havens, **the FY23 Budget must also include investments in access to affordable and supportive housing, so that we can ensure those coming into these short-term solutions have ready access to permanent housing.** We do not want to see individuals getting stuck in programs that are designed for short-term use for the long-term.

The City must ensure there is enough Supportive Housing to meet the demand, as well as ensure that they are properly funded to successfully provide the services needed. To achieve this the FY23 budget should:

- **Increase the City's annual commitment to the creation of Supportive Housing by 1,000 units**, for a yearly total of 2,000 units at a cost of $**19 million**;
- Add **$7.1 million to increase rates for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH)**, of which Urban Pathways is a provider, to prevent the cycle of incarceration and homelessness. This includes giving providers Fair Market Rent (FMR) with an annual cost escalator to appropriately cover the cost of rents, along with increasing service funding to $20,699 for the scattered site model and $25,596 for congregate programs to address the complex needs associated with experiencing incarceration and homelessness.

The City must also dramatically improve the functioning of the CityFHEPS voucher, in order to ensure access to quality, affordable housing for those who either do not qualify for or do not want to live in Supportive Housing. Additional budget recommendations are to:

- **Increase staffing at DSS to improve the processing of the CityFHEPS program**. Throughout the current process, applications, housing packets, and move-in paperwork are reviewed by multiple DSS staff who may have different interpretations of whether applications and packets are complete. This creates a lot of confusion and frustration, as well as significantly increase the time that individuals are residing in shelter. The City should invest in increased staffing at DSS so that each voucher applicant and holder is assigned a single worker on their case to create greater ease of use and accountability in the use of CityFHEPS vouchers.

- **Invest in combatting illegal source of income (SOI) discrimination, by adding $1 million to the NYC Commission on Human Rights Source of Income Unit.** SOI discrimination prevents housing voucher programs (including CityFHEPS, FHEPS, and Section 8) from being as effective as possible at housing those in need in the private market, with large numbers of landlords and real estate brokers refusing to accept them. This leads to longer stays in shelter and people living in unstable situations in community. The City Commission on Human Rights has been successful in cases addressing SOI discrimination but remains drastically underfunded and under resourced to meet the need. At the moment, the unit has no attorneys working on it. Increased funding would improve the ability to address discrimination quickly and effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for the City Council's support of human services. We urge you to consider these recommendations as you finalize the FY23 Budget.

For more information, please contact Urban Pathways' Director of Policy, Nicole McVinua at nmcvinua@urbanpathways.org or 212-736-7385.

Hearing on the New York City Department of Corrections Budget

Written Testimony of Sebastian Solomon
Associate Director for Policy, Greater Justice New York
Vera Institute of Justice

May 25, 2022

My name is Sebastian Solomon, and I am the associate director for policy of the Vera Institute of Justice's Greater Justice New York Program, which works to build a leaner, fairer justice system in which public safety in New York is synonymous with equity and community health, and incarceration is a last resort.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Since releasing his Proposed Budget in February, Mayors Adams has added $58.7 million in funding for the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) in his Executive Budget, an increase of 2.2 percent, for an overall budget of $2.74 billion. This funding would pay in part for a new class of corrections officers. The City Council should not approve this increase, as pouring more money into DOC does not help the City become safer and only rewards DOC for its abysmal record on safety and fiscal responsibility. New York City's jails are lethal. In 2021, 16 people died in our city's jails—the most in a single year since 2016, when the citywide jail population was 49 percent higher.[i] So far this year, five people have died, and it is only May.[ii]

The issue at DOC is not a lack of funding or of staff, who outnumber people in detention by just under 2,000.[iii] New York City already operates the most expensive jail system in the country, at $556,00 thousand per person incarcerated, $1 billion more than Los Angeles County, the nation's largest and second-most expensive local jail system.[iv]

According to the Nunez monitor's March report, "the use of force and violence in the jails are inextricably linked to the Department's mismanagement of staffing and its significant security failures."[v] Central to that mismanagement is chronic absenteeism where 30 percent of officers are out sick on any given day—a number significantly more than any other uniformed municipal workforce—and overtime costs that reached $153 million in FY21, the equivalent of 3,629 supportive housing beds.[vi] Increasing DOC's budget, or even holding it steady, sends the tacit message that this wasteful spending and dysfunction is acceptable. It is not.

Rikers Island is set to close by 2027 and will be replaced by a jail system with a maximum capacity of 3,300 people.[vii] As a result, our jails will need fewer corrections officers. More broadly, DOC will need to reinvent itself rather than simply export the current dysfunction on Rikers Island to new locations. City leaders must start preparing for that transition now. The first step is to pass a budget that holds DOC accountable for maintaining appropriately staffed, well-managed, and humane facilities.

We note as well that Mayor Adam's has accompanied his proposed increase to DOC with decreases in budgets that fund prevention and community safety and health. Compared to the FY22 modified budget, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's budget will plummet by 33.2 percent, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's budget will shrink by 18.9 percent, and the Department of Homeless Services' budget will drop by 17.1 percent.[viii] Notably, the FY22 modified budget has already shifted substantially under the new administration, which means these figures may underestimate the full extent of the budget cuts.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you all today. Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Vera Institute of Justice may provide further support to you all.

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[i] Taiyler Simone Mitchell, "15 Rikers Island Inmates — All Men of Color — Died in 2021, the Largest Number of Deaths Since 2016," *Insider*, January 5, 2022, https://www.insider.com/15-rikers-island-inmates-died-2021-most-deaths-since-2016-2022-1; and Stringer, *NYC Department of Correction: FYs 2011-21 Operating Expenditures*, 2021.

[ii] Robert Pozarycki, "Another Rikers Island inmate dies less than a day after NYC and feds agree to reform plan," AMNY, May 18, 2022, https://www.amny.com/new-york/another-rikers-island-inmate-death-nyc-federal-action-plan.

[iii] Lauren Gill and Reuven Blau, "Hundreds of New City Jail Officers for Rikers Put Detainee Advocates on Guard," The City, July 11, 2021, https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/7/11/22572991/rikers-island-getting-more-jail-guards-correction-officers.

[iv] Vera Institute of Justice, *A Look Inside the New York City Correction Budget* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2021), https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/a-look-inside-the-new-york-city-correction-budget.pdf.

[v] Nunez Monitoring Team, *Special Report of the Nunez Independent Monitor*, 39, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/pdf/11th_Monitor_Report.pdf.

[vi] Ibid.; and Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Advancing Supportive Housing Solutions to Reduce Homelessness for People Impacted by the Criminal Legal System, A Report for New York City Leaders*, 23, https://www.csh.org/resources/reduce-homelessness-for-people-impacted-by-the-criminal-legal-system/.

[vii] Caroline Spivack, "Rikers Island Closure and Borough-Based Jail Plan, Explained," *Curbed New York*, February 26, 2020, https://ny.curbed.com/2019/7/9/18307769/nyc-rikers-island-closure-borough-based-jails-plan-explained.

[viii] New York City Office of Management and Budget, Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget: Expense, Revenue, Contract Budget (New York: New York City Office of Management and Budget, 2022), 303E, 295E, 97E https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/erc4-22.pdf.

New York City Council
Finance Committee Hearing
Wednesday, May 25, 2022 10:00 AM

Virtual Testimony:

Thank you City Council Chair Justin Brannan and members of the New York City Council Finance Committee for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Merble Reagon. I am Executive Director of the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement. I support the "Just Pay" Campaign.

Today I take this time to urge the committee to factor into its budgetary determinations the factual realities for many of the tens of thousands of human services workers who are providing mandated essential services and earning far less than their government and private sector counterparts.

If we don't right this wrong now – then when? This is the right time for NYC to finally address this issue of fairness and wage parity.

In my written testimony, you will find a link to the NYC Self-Sufficiency Calculator.

Put in your zip code and the ages of the adults and children in your household; in less than 2 seconds, you will see the numbers that make up your working family's breakeven/barebones budget and the salary you need cover all your basic expenses.

Then, do the same for one of your constituent families headed by a contracted human services worker. Consider the results…

Then, ask yourself, is this not the time to finally – "build it back better" for contracted human services workers who continue to provide the essential services and deserve to be paid fairly for their work.

We ask you to:

- Set an annual cost-of-living adjustment on all Human Services contracts
- Set a living wage floor of at least $21 an hour
- Create and fund a wage and benefit schedule that is comparable to the salaries made by NYC workers doing the same work

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your support on all issues impacting our sector!

Best regards,
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Full Written Testimony:

Thank you to City Council Chair Justin Brannan and the members of the New York City Council Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

My name is Merble Reagon. I am Executive Director of the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement. Founded in 1970 as a project of the National Council of Negro Women, we worked for 52 years to help achieve economic justice and career opportunities for New York City working families. We prepared, trained, educated, and supported more than 30,000 women as they achieved better paying jobs and opportunities to move up various career ladders, including business ownership. We have been the lead sponsors for six NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard reports since 2000. The Standard offers a realistic look at the incomes families need to make ends meet, based on where they live in NYC and the ages of their children. It calculates self-sufficiency



"breakeven" working family budgets, including the costs of housing, childcare, health care, groceries, transportation, and other miscellaneous expenses – at a minimally adequate level.

We are here today to support the Just Pay campaign on behalf of the 110,000 human services workers working at organizations that contract with New York City. They are predominantly people of color and women. Their wages are a fraction of the earnings made by New York City and New York State employees who have the same qualifications and do the same work.

We are asking that New York City:

- Establish, fund and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts;
- Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City-funded human services workers; and,
- Create, fund and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City employees doing the same work.

The Women's Center recently released the sixth **NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard**, a report called ***Overlooked & Undercounted 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City***, in partnership with the Center for Women's Welfare at the University of Washington, The United Way of New York City, The Fund for the City of New York, The New York Women's Foundation, City Harvest, Food Bank For New York City, and Hunger Free New York City (a division of Hunger Free America).

The findings unveil how precarious the lives of low-wage workers were before the pandemic, and it indicates just how vulnerable they will continue to be due to the COVID-19-triggered economic crisis and its aftermath.

Key findings of the report include the following:

- Since 2000, the costs of basic needs, on average, across NYC boroughs have increased 113%, while median earnings have increased by only 58%

- More than one out of three (36%) NYC working-age households lacks sufficient income to meet the minimum cost of living in New York City

- Before the Covid-19 pandemic, more than one in three – 2,378,730 New Yorkers – lacked enough income to cover the cost of food, shelter, health care and childcare and other bare necessities.

- For NYC families struggling to make ends meet, income inadequacy has been and continues to be an everyday ongoing struggle. And, it is largely low wages, not lack of work hours, that results in inadequate income.

- The majority of NYC households below the Standard had at least one employed adult.

- The 20 most common occupations below the Standard prior to the pandemic were essential worker positions largely held by women and/or BIPOC people, including home health aides, cashiers, child care workers, nursing assistants and cab drivers.

These and other critical findings of the report highlight the importance of ensuring that "New York City's evolving workforce development plans in the wake of the pandemic" be laser-focused on addressing both the historic wage inequality for women and people of color and the economic realities of what NYC's working families actually need to make ends meet. In addition, the report documents income inadequacy by a range of household characteristics, including, gender, race and ethnicity, educational attainment, citizenship and presence of children.

Also, the evidence in the report supports initiatives already underway to address wage inequities, such as the "JustPay" campaign to support fair wages for human services workers under contract with NYC and NYS; and, the NYC Salary Transparency Law, which we commend the NYC City Council for passing.

It is long past time to employ a policy approach that will best help NYC's low-wage working families move beyond the pandemic and toward financial security. Their economic well-being is most assured when we generate policies based on the financial realities of a family's life, rather

than the one-size-fits-all approach of the Federal Poverty Measure, which proposes the same income adequacy dollar amounts for families in each of the 48 contiguous states.

In order to facilitate an economic recovery for New York City, it is imperative to measure income inadequacy by a measure such as the **Self-Sufficiency Standard**, a realistic, geographically-specific, and family composition-specific measure that offers a clear picture of the exact incomes NYC working families need to make ends meet.

Here is an example: In the Bronx, a working mother with a four-year-old son needs to earn $32 (more than twice the current minimum wage) an hour and make an income of about $68,000 to meet all expenses according to the Standard. According to the Official Poverty Measure, however, that same 2-person family only needs to earn $10.40 an hour and make an income of about $17,000. That is an astounding difference of $51,000. The Standard calculates how much income more than 700 family types in different boroughs need to meet all their expenses.

This lack of sufficient income to meet basic needs is grossly undercounted largely because measures like the official poverty measure do not accurately document what it takes to afford just the basics, nor do they accurately pinpoint who lacks sufficient income. **Not only do governmental poverty statistics underestimate the number of households struggling to make ends meet, the underestimation creates broadly held misunderstandings about who is unable to afford basic needs, what skills and education they hold, and therefore what unmet needs they have.** These misapprehensions harm the ability of our society to respond to the changing realities facing families with insufficient income, especially during and as a result of the pandemic.

Why not start planning NYC's way out of the pandemic by acknowledging what we know it really costs for our NYC working families to pay for every basic necessity instead of an outdated "one-size-fits all" poverty measure?

We encourage you to consider using the NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard as a reality-based tool to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed strategies to assist working NYC families as we move forward from the pandemic to combat wage insecurity and create a workforce development strategy that supports living wages and, if necessary, work supports for all NYC workers.

We also recommend that all pandemic recovery policies be developed using an intersectional racial, gender, and citizenship lens to assist with an equitable recovery because women of color

and non-citizens are the demographic groups most heavily impacted by insufficient wages and lack of access to work supports and benefits that supplement low wages.

We invite you to review the full NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard report:
Overlooked & Undercounted 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City

Also, please feel welcome to explore the NYC Self-Sufficiency Project findings and tools.

Try out the NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard for your family and a constituent family!

We invite you to take 5 minutes to test the accuracy of the NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard for both yourself and a typical constituent family using the NYC Self-Sufficiency Budget Worksheet:

1. Enter your zip code or borough (the Bronx; North Manhattan; South Manhattan; Staten Island; Northwest Brooklyn; Brooklyn excluding NW Brooklyn)
2. Enter the ages of the people in your family
3. In seconds, you will see your self-sufficiency family budget and the annual/monthly/hourly wage needed to support that budget

Also, you can use the NYC Demographic Dashboard to see the percentage of households without adequate income in your community districts.

Please support the "JustPay" campaign to end poverty wages for government-contracted human services workers!

We offer the 2021 NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard report and tools to inform "New York City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic" and stand ready to assist all efforts to that effect.

Please contact Jennifer Panicali, Program Manager at the Fund for the City of New York at jpanicali@fcny.org or at 212-590-9455 for further information, copies of the report and any questions you may have.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and for your support on all the issues impacting our sector.

Best regards,
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Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke
Associate for NYC Programs
New York League of Conservation Voters

City Council Committee on Finance
Hearing on The FY23 Executive Budget
May 25th, 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Brannan for the opportunity to testify today.

Year in and year out, NYLCV has fought for a NYC budget that prioritizes green spaces, public health, and climate resiliency. This year is no different. With so many new leaders in government, it is imperative that we set a strong precedent of environmental accountability and climate action in the FY 23 budget.

We are thankful that the Mayor committed significant dollars to environmental initiatives in the Executive budget, including $900 million for the NYC Streets Plan and $600 million for the Parks Department. However, the budget could go even further to fully fund parks, sanitation, and building initiatives to help us fight climate change, invest in resiliency, and reduce emissions.

Our priorities by agency are as follows:

For the Parks Department, we have been adamant that no less than 1% of the NYC budget is sufficient for keeping our parks safe, clean and accessible. Parks are our most valuable environmental assets. They absorb stormwater runoff, keep our neighborhoods cool, and clean our air. Providing 1% of the budget will ensure parks have the money they need to maintain our green spaces so that they can effectively provide these crucial environmental benefits. In 2021, Mayor Adams and many Council Members committed to 1% for parks because they knew how crucial this funding was for the health of our communities and the green future of our City. We hope that our

elected leaders will make good on their promises and help us work towards 1% for parks in the FY23 budget.

When it comes to the Sanitation budget, we must be investing dollars into recycling programs that divert waste from landfills and reduce emissions. We are thankful that the executive budget includes money to start to build the curbside composting pilot back and to establish composting programs in our schools. However we need full funding of the curbside composting pilot so that we can get back on track working towards our 0x30 goal. The constant back and forth with this pilot is sending the wrong message to NYC residents. Multiple different recycling streams are complicated to manage and educate the public about, but consistency and gradual expansion will be key to ensure high participation and diversion rates.

Transportation is the leading sector for emissions in the state, so investing in infrastructure to encourage the use of low emission forms of transportation is also a priority for NYLCV. Full funding of the NYC Streets Plan will build out the infrastructure NYC needs to protect pedestrians, cyclists and micro mobility users while simultaneously prioritizing public transportation. We are so glad to see the Mayor and Council prioritizing this through budget negotiations and look forward to this plan's implementation in the coming years.

Finally, the nation-leading building emissions law, Local Law 97 of 2019, is set to go into effect at the end of next year. There must be resources available for building owners to comply with the new regulations, and we strongly believe that currently the Department of Buildings, specifically the Office of Building Energy and Emissions Performance (OBEEP), is underfunded and understaffed to handle the fun scope of work needed to implement this law effectively. We ask the Mayor and the Council to keep this disparity and looming deadline in mind during budget negotiations.

Budgets express priorities and we have to make our priorities clear; climate change is here and we must be doing everything in our power to fight it and protect New Yorkers. And while the Mayor and Council have proven that they will invest in efforts to do so, there is still more work to be done. We look forward to working with elected leaders as they continue to finalize the FY23 budget and choose to invest in the environment to ensure a green future for our City.

Committee on Finance - Executive Budget Hearing 5/25/22
Testimony by Janice Monger, Staten Island Museum

I'm **Janice Monger, President and CEO of the Staten Island Museum**, today also testifying in my role as Staten Island Vice Chair for the **Cultural Institutions Group** a collective of 34 organizations. On behalf of the Staten Island Museum, Historic Richmond Town, Snug Harbor, the Staten Island Children's Museum and the Staten Island Zoo – among the many cultural organizations in our borough and hundreds across the city – we ask for the city council's support of **Culture VIBE** for a visionary investment of an additional 100 Million Dollars in the New York City budget to enable cultural organizations to lead in NYC's recovery and for the wellbeing of New Yorkers.

Staten Island cultural organizations like many across the city adapted during the pandemic and have been resilient in serving our communities with online public and school programs, offering take-home art kits, and with outdoor exhibitions and programs in our green spaces. We have provided cultural and educational activities with protocols in place to keep people safe when we reopened our indoor physical spaces. Staten Island cultural organizations also stepped up to serve as testing sites and are distributing COVID tests. We remain vigilant in serving our communities and delivering on our missions. Culture is the heartbeat and soul of New York City and we need this strong investment for FY23 to ensure that we can more fully serve and contribute culture experiences that promote public safety and positive outcomes for youth.

The Staten Island Museum is opening an exhibition in early June 2022 called *Yes, And* that is a group exhibition of 36 artists connected to Staten Island. Participating artists will each be provided a stipend that in total amounts to $30,000 going directly to artists to help aid in their recovery. This is a key example of how supporting cultural organizations creates a ripple effect that extends to individual artists and broader economic impacts.

Also notable is that Staten Island Museum's school programs serve a majority of Title 1 schools. Cultural organizations are vital at this time to aid in education gaps and mental health needs when youth have been greatly impacted by the pandemic.

City council's support of Culture VIBE will send a meaningful message that culture in New York City is valued as a driver of the city's recovery, to support New Yorkers mental and educational health coming out of this pandemic, and to work towards a more equitable city. The Staten Island Museum and my cultural colleagues are grateful for the work that you do and look forward to fulfilling bringing arts and culture to every New Yorker at a whole new level with increased city support through **Culture VIBE**.

Testimony of The Guild for Exceptional Children
for
The New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the proposed budget. My name is Jolene Gunther-Doherty, and I am the Director of the The Guild for Exceptional Children's Preschool 4410 program. For over 60 years, the Guild has provided services for preschool students with disabilities.

We thank the City Council for including in your preliminary budget response the need for **$30 million to address disparities in salaries between preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) and their counterparts at Department of Education (DOE) sites**. Two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs, but ***excluded*** teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs, who work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs. The City has not yet committed to salary parity for these educators, even as a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes has left preschoolers with disabilities without the support they need and have a legal right to receive. Our school over the past year had to close 4 classrooms due to staff shortages. Crying families keep calling looking for seats. According to the DOE's own projections, the City is short by more than 900 seats in preschool special education classes. CBOs have indicated that, in order to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs where they can earn higher compensation. The City has a plan to open 800 much-needed preschool special education class seats starting next year by offering a "contract enhancement" to the CBOs that run these classes, but the City has not yet committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it's hard to see how the City will be able to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide. **Please ensure that the FY 23 budget includes $30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that preschoolers with disabilities get the support they need**.

Thank you.

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Testimony by the Arab-American Family Support Center
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Council Member Justin Brannan, Chair

May 25th, 2022

I would like to begin by thanking the Chair Brannan, members of the Committee on Finance, and the New York City Council for holding this hearing and inviting community-based organizations to testify. My name is Salma Mohamed, and I am the Partnership & Capacity Building Specialist at the **Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC).** I am honored to testify today alongside the Asian American Federation and the Coalition for Asian American Families and Children on behalf of marginalized immigrant and refugee families throughout New York City.

At the **Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC)**, we have dedicated ourselves to creating an inclusive safe haven for immigrants and refugees since **1994**. We promote well-being, prevent violence, and prepare families to learn, work, and succeed. Our organization serves all who are in need, but with over **27** years of experience, we have gained cultural and linguistic competency serving New York's growing AMENAMSA (Arab, Middle Eastern, North African, Muslim, and South Asian) communities. As a culturally and linguistically competent, trauma-informed organization, AAFSC has expanded to offer services at **13** service locations across each of the five boroughs. Our staff speak **36** languages – including Arabic, Bangla, Hindi, Spanish, and Urdu – enabling us to serve populations that mainstream providers struggle to reach.

As immigrants and refugees across NYC grapple with the long-term ramifications of the COVID-19 public health crisis, ranging from heightened discrimination and hate crimes to acute financial insecurity, they are turning to trusted, community-based resources like **AAFSC** for support. Over the past year, the **AAFSC Research Institute** has challenged the mainstream tendency to paint AAPI and AMEMSA communities in broad strokes through community-based data collection and disaggregation, working diligently to understand their nuanced needs. Over the course of our needs assessments, we identified that demand for support in the immigrant and refugee communities we serve has reached an all-time high. There has been a **625%** increase in the proportion of households reporting a need for mental health support over the past **2 years.** Similarly, food insecurity in our communities has reached an unprecedented level, with **44%** of our Needs Assessment respondents reporting inadequate access to food. Alarmingly, **66%** also reported at least one unmet health-related need.

In response, **AAFSC** has worked to scale our initiatives, offering uninterrupted service delivery throughout COVID-19 and serving **10,000** New Yorkers in **2021** alone. **AAFSC** has distributed over **$800,000** in Emergency Relief Funds during the pandemic, offering an essential lifeline to thousands of beneficiaries facing acute food and housing insecurity. Further, positioned as a unique and linguistically accessible resource within each of the five Family Justice Centers, **AAFSC** served **2,029** survivors of domestic violence across all **5** boroughs in **2021**. Also over the last year, **AAFSC** ramped up our efforts in the Adult Education and Literacy Program, carrying out a **119%** increase in enrollment over the pandemic and serving **711** immigrant and refugee learners.

Through these and our full range of other wraparound programs, the **Arab-American Family Support Center** continues to rise to the challenge, serving as an essential safety net even as we have faced budget cuts. However, as the external landscape introduces further challenges such as the recommencement of evictions and the alarming prevalence of hate crimes, current allocations will fall short of ensuring we can meet the needs of NYC's most marginalized. It is critical that the City Council honors existing budget contracts and invests in supporting community-based organizations throughout New York City. As the demand for linguistically accessible and culturally responsive programs like ours grows, our services are consistently at capacity, with limited options for external referral destinations that share these unique, but deeply in-demand competencies. We are committed to

remaining a resource for AAPI, AMENAMSA, and immigrant/refugee communities, but we cannot do it without the city's ongoing support.

AAFSC joins the Asian American Federation in respectfully requesting that the Committee expand funding for Citywide Initiatives that ensure more AAPI/immigrant-led and serving groups like the **Arab-American Family Support Center** are adequately funded to support those with the most pressing needs. In particular:

- We request that the AAPI Community Support Initiative be funded at **$6m**. This fiscal year, **AAFSC's** allocation through this emerging initiative has been essential as we responded to the rise in hate crimes against AAPI communities and worked diligently to mitigate the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these households.

- We request that City Council expands Access Health NYC to **$4m** to address the rising need and allow community-based organizations to educate and assist hard-to-reach New Yorkers on healthcare access and coverage.

- We request for and an investment to the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to **$7m**, the first New York City Council fund of its kind that aims to build the capacity of NYC nonprofits in recognition of the fact that organizations led by people of the community are best equipped to meet the needs of the community.

- We request that the FY23 City budget includes a **5.4%** COLA – an **$86m** investment - for nonprofit human services workers to address the wage and workforce crisis in the sector; a sector that millions of New Yorkers rely on each year for lifesaving services.

- We request continued and increased investment in the Adult Literacy Pilot Initiative. For the first time last year, **AAFSC's** allocation from this initiative has enabled us to make critical investments to our long-underfunded Adult Education & Literacy Program to ensure that the immigrant and refugee learners we serve have access to the resources they need to thrive.

- We request a new **$30m** investment in BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving mental health providers and services to address anti-Asian hate and violence by funding those who are already working in our communities. In **2021**, **AAFSC** offered direct mental health counseling to **114** youth and adults over **1,247** sessions. However, as our agency is one of the only providers offering free mental health counseling in AAPI languages like Bangla, Arabic, and Urdu, we receive hundreds of external referrals and often have an extensive waitlist.

- Finally, we request that City funding solicitations and decisions prioritize and more equitably allocate immigrant serving community-based organizations that center cultural-competency and language accessibility. Relevant initiatives include DOVE, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, the Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative, the Young Women's Leadership Development Initiative, and Access Health, etc.

Amid the landscape of heightening discrimination, hate crimes, and social isolation, AAPI and AMENAMSA communities are seeking out trusted community-based resources now more than ever. We hope we can count on City Council's continued support to ensure that we can remain an accessible resource to the immigrant and refugee communities who have come to rely on **AAFSC** after **27** years of service.

Thank you for your attention. As always, the **Arab-American Family Support Center** stands ready to work with you in ensuring the most vulnerable among us can thrive.

Testimony of
Kevin Jones
AARP New York

New York City Council
Committee on Finance

NYC Budget

5/25/22

Remote Hearing
New York, New York

Contact: Kevin Jones (646) 668-7550 | kjones@aarp.org

My name is Kevin Jones and I am the Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP New York. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to testify and advocate for better services for New Yorkers 50-plus, including for our 750,000 New York City members.

Older New Yorkers built this city and made it great. Now it's up to city leaders to make sure they can comfortably and safely age in the homes and communities they love.

We have five top priorities that address the greatest gaps in services and supports for older adults.

First: New York City residents age 50-plus account for nearly a third of the city's population, yet the Department for the Aging receives about half a percent of the city budget. And now, the mayor is proposing to cut even that small amount.

The Department for the Aging is responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of older adults – particularly the most vulnerable. Our first priority is to ensure DFTA's budget does not get cut – our older residents can't afford it.

Older adults also can't afford rising housing costs.

We've seen it in data time and again – including in surveys we've conducted: a lack of affordable housing is the biggest concern for more than half of city voters age 50-plus.

To help older adults age in their own communities, our second priority is to see the city increase the reimbursement rate for Senior Affordable Rental Apartments and allocate capital funding to develop 1,000 units of affordable senior housing per year.

Our third priority is to ensure older adults receive the services they need to live in their homes safely.

The Department for the Aging's Community Care Initiative is a great program that makes it possible for people to stay in their homes, but currently, it can't meet the demand for needed services.

The city should expand the program, including growing the home care program. People in our communities need more hours of home care service, but there aren't enough workers available right now.

The Mayor and City Council need to work to change that.

The City Council called for investing $7 million to clear the homecare and case management waitlists. We are calling on the Mayor to match that investment. After all: New Yorkers 50-plus deserve better.

We also call for increased funding for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, which provide a host of supports to help people safely age in place.

Perhaps more troubling than the housing struggles is the food insecurity experienced by many of our neighbors. Our forth priority is to address hunger among older people.

The increase in hunger during the pandemic is now being exacerbated by huge increases in food costs. The City Council has proposed increased funding for the GetFood Recovery Meals program. This is an important step, and we urge the Mayor to back the increase.

We are also calling for significant funding to meet the demand for home delivered meals – including weekend and holiday meals currently not provided. Older adults need to eat every day, including weekends and holidays.

New Yorkers 50-plus deserve better – they deserve food on their tables.

Finally, I'd like to address an issue that's in the news almost daily: mental health, which represents out fifth priority area.

The pandemic took a huge toll on our collective mental health and older adults were not spared.

Older New Yorkers experienced the greatest anxiety related to COVID and spent months, if not longer, completely isolated from loved ones, friends, and their social network. The toll on their mental health has been enormous and we need to address it.

The City Council has proposed increasing the budget for mental health services and I congratulate and thank them for it—older adults need it.

I hope the next city budget includes more financial support for the Department for the Aging's Geriatric Mental Health program and expanded geriatric mental health services to every NYC Health + Hospitals facility.

That's what New Yorkers 50-plus deserve.

These are AARP's top priorities: Affordable housing, food security, community-based care, geriatric mental health, and a DFTA budget that reflects the needs of the population.
And the needs are more acute in communities of color. Black, Latinx, and Asian American neighbors are experiencing greater economic hardships and heightened housing and food insecurity. And, of course, they experience this while also dealing with increased racism and hate crimes.

We do have other priorities. In coordination with LiveOn NY, United Neighborhood Houses, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Citymeals on Wheels, the UJA Federation of New York, and The New York Academy of Medicine we have released an FY23 Equity for Aging platform that highlights many other gaps in services and requests for support. These are also important priorities and we hope the Council carefully considers them all.

Thank you

Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn since 1971

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: FY 23 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York. For 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. We focus on students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students who are homeless or in foster care, students with mental health needs, and students with involvement in the juvenile or criminal legal systems.

Given the needs we see as we help thousands of families navigate the school system and the historic levels of federal and state education funding, the City should be increasing—and certainly not decreasing—supports to students, including in the following areas. We are pleased that the City Council included a number of these priorities in your response to the preliminary budget.

1. In 2020, nearly one in four English Language Learners dropped out of high school, and few schools provide the support recently arrived, older immigrant ELLs need. The City should invest **$2.1 million for programs to support older ELLs at existing transfer schools** and **$12 million to hire 120 school-based ELL Instructional Specialists**.

2. Two years ago, the City increased salaries for pre-K *general education* teachers at community-based organizations (CBOs), but excluded preschool *special education* teachers. The City should invest **$30 million to increase salaries for teachers and staff at preschool special education programs** to address the shortage of these programs.

3. The DOE announced it would launch the first team focused on students in foster care, but only 4 of the 11 promised positions are posted – and none has been filled. The City should **fully staff this team** and also invest **$5 million to guarantee bus service to students in foster care** so they can stay in their original school, as per their legal right.

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4. Sixty percent of students living in shelter are chronically absent from school. The City should invest **$12 million to hire an additional 100 DOE shelter-based community coordinators** to help ensure students can get to school every day and get needed support.

5. Too often, students who are struggling are met with exclusionary school discipline and policing practices. The City should invest **$118 million for citywide expansion and implementation of school-wide restorative justice practices**.

I also want to highlight two critical programs for which the Council was instrumental in securing funding last year. Both programs were funded for only one year, and, unless extended in the adopted budget, will expire in June just as they are getting off the ground.

1. **$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum**, the first-ever collaboration between DOE, H+H, and DOHMH to help students with significant mental health challenges at 50 high-needs schools through partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics, NYC Well hotline expansion to advise school staff, mobile response teams, direct mental health services, and training.

2. **$4 million for immigrant family communication** to help ensure immigrant families get needed information through strategies such as using local ethnic media, sending paper notices to families' homes, and collaborating with immigrant-facing CBOs to create and launch information campaigns.

Each of these priorities is described below. We urge the Council to ensure these programs are funded in the adopted budget. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Strengthen support for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Replicate successful models for English Language Learners by establishing programs at existing NYC DOE transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx to increase those schools' capacity to serve recently arrived, immigrant ELLs ages 16-21 ($2.1M)

English Language Learners (ELLs) who arrived in the U.S. as teenagers have some of the greatest needs of any of the City's student populations. In addition to having to learn a new language and meet graduation requirements before they turn 21, many of these students also have gaps in their education and require specialized academic support to access the curriculum; are juggling jobs and family obligations in addition to their schoolwork; and have complex social-emotional needs in part due to traumatic migration experiences.

- In 2020, nearly one in four ELLs dropped out of high school—the highest dropout rate of any student group.
- In 2020, only 46% of ELLs graduated from high school in four years.
- New York City is home to nearly 4,000 high school-age immigrant youth who do not have a high school diploma but are not enrolled in school.

Unfortunately, there are few DOE schools able to provide the support recently arrived, older immigrant ELLs need to be successful. We receive case referrals every year of immigrant students who are turned away at Family Welcome Centers and told to enroll in High School Equivalency (HSE) programs instead of four-year high schools or transfer schools. We also receive referrals of school-age immigrant youth who did not enroll in school at all because of the lack of available programs that can support their unique needs.

The DOE's "ELL transfer schools" provide a supportive learning environment for older immigrant students, including intensive English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, bilingual social workers, and partnerships with community-based organizations to help address immigration, housing, and other needs. However, there are only five such schools, four of which are located in Manhattan, making it difficult for students in other boroughs to attend.

The City has more than 40 non-ELL transfer schools, which are located across the five boroughs and serve over-age and under-credited youth, but they do not offer the intensive ENL classes and robust social-emotional supports that recently arrived immigrant students typically need.

To curb the ELL dropout crisis and put immigrant youth on the path to success, the City needs to provide high-quality school options for newly arrived, immigrant ELLs, ages 16–21, in their home neighborhoods, learning from what has been effective in the ELL transfer schools.

The City should allocate $2.1M in FY 23, increasing to $3.1M in FY 24, to launch programs to support ELLs, ages 16–21, at existing transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. This funding would enable four schools in FY 23—increasing to six schools in FY 24—to hire ENL teachers and bilingual social workers, offer culturally responsive wrap-around supports and services, and provide professional development so that all educators are prepared to support newcomer immigrant youth.

Establish the Position of English Language Learner (ELL) Instructional Specialist at NYC DOE schools with a high number of underperforming ELLs to ensure they receive appropriate academic instruction and support ($12M)

The nearly 139,000 ELLs in New York City public schools make up a significant portion of the total student population and require targeted language and academic instruction to meet their unique needs. Unfortunately, the City's ELLs continue to perform well below standards in reading and math, with only 9% of ELLs proficient in reading and 19% of ELLs proficient in math in 2019. Too often in our work, we encounter long-term ELLs who reach high school without having reached a sixth-grade reading level. Still, data show that ELLs have the potential to outperform their peers when offered appropriate academic support. This support must start from the time they enroll in school and continue through graduation.

We therefore urge the City to invest $12M to pilot a program for 120 schools with underperforming ELLs to hire an ELL Instructional Specialist. The ELL Instructional Specialist, a pedagogue who reports to the school principal, would be responsible for ensuring that all ELLs (including long-term ELLs and ELLs with disabilities) at their school are receiving grade-level instruction in core subjects, developing age-appropriate literacy, receiving additional academic support where needed, and on track to pass to the next grade. With this funding, the ELL Instructional Specialists would also receive professional development and tools from the Division of Multilingual Learners.

Establish a central system for DOE Immigrant Family Communications that takes into account families' varying levels of literacy and access to digital media ($6M)

Over 40% of New York City public school families speak a language other than English at home, and some have low or no literacy in their language. Additionally, many families have limited access to digital media such as email and the web and instead rely on phone calls, physical letters on paper, and in-person communication to understand what is happening with their child's education. With most of NYC DOE's family-facing communication currently happening via the DOE website or email, many immigrant families are left in the dark and without access to information. Without accessible information, parents cannot participate in their children's education.

In collaboration with the New York Immigration Coalition's Education Collaborative, we submitted to the City in 2020 a set of recommendations for improving immigrant family communications. These recommendations include multi-pronged approaches for communicating with families such as collaborating with immigrant-facing community-based organizations, using local ethnic media such as TV and radio, making personal phone calls to vulnerable families, and sending paper notices to families' homes. Although we were pleased to learn that NYC DOE began implementing some of our recommendations, we know that these efforts require funding.

We were encouraged that the City invested $4M this school year for immigrant family communications and outreach. However, this funding will expire in June 2022 and will be limited in reach. Unfortunately, the FY 23 preliminary budget does not include funding to extend this initiative. **We urge the City to invest $6M in FY 23 and baseline this funding to establish a permanent, central system of immigrant family communications and to continue funding this effort every year going forward.**

Provide salary parity to teachers and staff at community-based preschool special education programs to help address the shortage of classes ($30M)

We have been deeply concerned about the number of preschoolers who have had to wait for the DOE to provide them with the preschool special education classes to which they are entitled—even as the City has expanded 3-K and Pre-K for All. A "regional need" memo posted by the DOE in November 2021 shows that even at a time when preschool special education referrals are low and overall pre-K enrollment is down, New York City will need more than 900 additional preschool special class seats this spring in order to fulfill its legal obligation to provide a preschool special class seat for every child whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) requires one.

We strongly support the contract enhancement the City is launching in FY 23 to bring preschool special education classes run by community-based organizations (CBOs) into the 3-K and Pre-K for All system; the City plans to address the shortage of preschool special education classes by having CBOs apply to open 800 new seats through the contract enhancement. However, CBOs have indicated that, in order for them to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs.

Preschool special education programs are facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining teachers, who work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs in the City and can earn higher compensation working 10-month jobs in district schools. Two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs, but excluded teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs. While the City has said that it "hopes" to use the preschool special education contract enhancement to "create a pathway to higher salaries," the City has not yet committed to higher salaries for teachers and staff—and additional funding needs to be allocated to provide them with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts. If CBOs cannot recruit and retain teachers for their current classes, they will be unable to launch the new classes that the City anticipates opening to address the shortage that has left children going without the classes they need.

The FY 23 budget should add and baseline $30 million for the City to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that the City can open classes to provide a preschool special education class for every child who needs one.

Guarantee bus service for students in foster care to increase school stability ($5M)

More than 7,000 children are in foster care in New York City. Students in foster care are disproportionately Black and come from NYC's poorest communities. When students are removed from their homes and families and placed into foster care, school is often the only source of stability in their lives.

Recognizing the importance of school stability, federal and state law require school districts to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their school of origin, unless it is in their best interest to transfer to a new school. However, the DOE currently does not guarantee bus service or comparable transportation to students in foster care. The DOE only provides bus service to students in foster care who require special education transportation and those who can easily be added to existing routes.

As a result, students who cannot travel on their own may be forced to transfer schools. Having to transfer schools mid-year means that students must adjust to unfamiliar peers, teachers, routines, and curriculum, while experiencing the trauma of being separated from their parents, and often from their siblings and communities as well. Research shows that students who change schools frequently have lower test scores, earn fewer credits, are more likely to be retained, and are less likely to complete high school than students whose school placements are stable.

Even students in foster care who are ultimately deemed eligible for bus service are often left waiting for a month or more to get a determination. In the meantime, to protect the right that students in care have to remain in their schools, agency staff may be forced to spend hours each day escorting children to school instead of working to safely reunify families. Similarly, foster parents, who often have competing childcare or work responsibilities, are left getting the child to school on their own, which can result in children needing to switch foster homes or make it difficult to place children in homes in the first place.

No student in foster care should be forced to change schools or homes due to lack of transportation. The DOE already guarantees yellow bus service to the thousands of kindergarten through sixth grade students living in shelter. The DOE should extend this guarantee to include the relatively small number of students in foster care as well. **The FY 23 budget should include and baseline $5 million to guarantee bus service or a comparable mode of door-to-door transportation to students in foster care who need it to stay in their original schools**.

Add 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators to help students who are homeless get to school every day and receive needed educational support ($12M)

During the last school year, more than 101,000 city students experienced homelessness. Around 28,000 of these students spent time in shelters. Students living in shelter—94% of whom are Black or Latinx—face significant barriers to educational success. For example:

- During the two years leading up to the pandemic, 60% of students living in shelter were chronically absent—missing at least one out of every ten school days, and students living in shelter continue to have the lowest attendance rate of any student group.
- In 2020, only 52% of students in shelter graduated high school in four years, 27 percentage points lower than the citywide average graduation rate.

Currently, there are not enough staff working ***in shelters*** who have the skills and knowledge necessary to help families navigate the school system, address barriers to attendance, and resolve educational problems: just 117 shelter-based DOE Family Assistants are tasked with supporting the roughly 28,000 students who spend time in shelter each year. The number of Family Assistants has not grown over the past decade even though thousands more students spend time in the shelter system. As there are more than twice as many shelters as there are Family Assistants, these staff must divide their time among multiple shelter sites and are stretched very thin. The Family Assistant position is also very low paid ($28,000 for 10 months), making it difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff. Additionally, since Family Assistants do not work over the summer, there is limited support to help families get school placements and busing arranged for the start of the school year.

While there are 200 staff members working ***in schools*** with high numbers of students who are homeless focused on providing them with counseling and advocacy, three out of four students in shelter attend a school that does not have such a staff member. Furthermore, since students have the right to stay in their original schools when placed in shelter, students residing at any given shelter often attend many different schools.

The DOE should hire at least 150 Students in Temporary Housing Community Coordinators to work in shelters and focus on ensuring that students living in shelter attend school every day and receive the academic and social-emotional support they need for school success. Using a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach, these Community Coordinators should help students and families address barriers to education and navigate the school system, including enrollment, attendance, transportation, school applications, special education services, school suspensions, after-school and summer programs, and early childhood education.

The DOE recently received $9 million in federal American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funding specifically to support students who are homeless. While we are pleased that the DOE has committed to hiring 50 Community Coordinators using this initial round of funds, more coordinators are needed. The DOE is poised to receive an additional $24 million in ARP-HCY funding in the coming months, but has not yet decided how to spend this funding.

The City should invest $12M to hire an additional 100 DOE Community Coordinators, for a total of 150, to work in shelters to focus on meeting the educational needs of students who are homeless.

Fund a comprehensive integrated system of behavioral and mental health supports for students

The past two years have presented unprecedented challenges that have uniquely impacted the mental health and wellbeing of our students. As highlighted in a recent U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, the pandemic has exacerbated youth mental health needs that existed before the pandemic and spurred a national youth mental health crisis. We have seen dramatically increased rates of psychological distress among children and youth. Many young people in our City experienced unimaginable trauma and loss and are struggling with the return to in-person learning this year. For students to thrive in school, they must feel safe and supported by their school communities, and our schools must be places that are healing-centered, where students and families experience physical, psychological, and emotional safety. Students are 21 times more likely to seek support for mental health issues at school than at a community-based clinic, if at all.

However, too often when students are struggling, they are met with exclusionary school discipline and policing practices that only further traumatize them and perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline, disproportionately harming Black and Brown students and students with disabilities. Each year, in New York City schools, tens of thousands of students are suspended, losing days, weeks, or months of instruction and thousands of students with unmet emotional needs are removed from class—including some handcuffed as young as 5 years old—by NYPD officers and taken away from school by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) when medically unnecessary.

Sadly, this year is proving to be no different. Compared to two school years ago at this time in mid-March, we have received a similar number of calls from families requesting assistance with school suspension matters. In December, we heard from a parent whose daughter had already been suspended from school 6 times for a total of twenty-five school days. Three months into the school year, her child had missed out on more than one third of the days of instruction. In February, a parent contacted us about her 6-year-old son with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) diagnosed with ADHD and Autism. The parent was called down to her son's school to pick him up early because he was having a really bad day. The school counselor advised her that if this happens again and she is unavailable to pick up her son, they will call EMS and police to de-escalate him. The parent told AFC: "I was extremely concerned with this comment because my son is a 6-year-old African-American male and I do not want him to have this type of dramatic and traumatizing experience." Subsequently, we were contacted about a 7-year-old girl with Autism whose school did call the police when they did not know how to de-escalate the child's behavior. The child was transported to the hospital by EMS without her parent and without even notifying the parent. We can and must do better for our young people.

Schools need key resources to transform school environments, address our students' mental health and behavioral needs, and help improve academic outcomes. Even with the hiring of 500 new school social workers, NYPD school safety agents outnumber DOE social workers by more than 1,000. In addition, while the City funded some mental health initiatives in schools over the last year, many of these programs do not address the immediate needs of school communities and are piecemeal. What New York City needs is a comprehensive system to ensure that students are receiving direct mental health services, schools are receiving support to effectively manage student behavior and mental health, and the DOE is coordinating within key parts of the agency and across other key agencies to provide this support. It is more urgent than ever that our City invest in practices that support young people and divest from practices that criminalize them. We urge the City to work towards creating a

comprehensive, integrated system of mental health and behavioral health supports for students by making the following investments:

Baseline funding for the Mental Health Continuum, a model for integrating a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools partnered with hospital-based clinics ($5M)

Last year, thanks to the City Council's efforts, the City allocated $5 million for a promising model called the Mental Health Continuum, an integrated system of targeted and intensive supports for students with significant mental health needs. This model includes school partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics; NYC Well hotline expansion to advise school staff about students in crisis; mental health professionals who respond to students in crisis; increased clinic staffing; direct mental health services; School Based Mental Health Clinicians; whole-school training in Collaborative Problem Solving, an evidence-based, skill-building approach; and support for family and student engagement. Through a partnership between the Department of Education, Health + Hospitals, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, this model aims to meet the needs of students with significant mental health challenges in the schools and neighborhoods with the highest rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism. The City allocated only one-year funding for the Mental Health Continuum, so, unless extended, the funding will expire in June 2022. Unfortunately, the FY 23 preliminary budget does not include funding to extend this initiative. **To continue the model to be launched this school year in 50 high-needs schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn, the City must baseline $5 million for the Mental Health Continuum, with the following funding allocations:**

- FY 23 — DOE: $889,459; H+H: $3,638,068; DOHMH: $472,473 (Total: $5M).
- FY 24 (and beyond) — DOE: $787,272; H+H: $3,740,255; DOHMH: $472,473 (Total: $5M).

Expand the number of school-based mental health clinics

Given the current crisis in youth mental health, our students need timely, effective direct mental health services in school. School-Based Mental Health Clinics and school partnerships with community-based mental health clinics have proven to eliminate barriers that prevent young people and families from seeking mental health care by providing services on-site in schools. In addition to providing ongoing therapeutic services to students, school-based mental health clinicians and community providers work directly with school staff to coach them in strategies to support students in the classroom, prevent behavioral challenges, and better respond when behavioral issues arise. **Currently, there are only 280 schools with a School-Based Mental Health Clinic. We call on the City to increase the number of clinics in FY 23 so that as many students and schools as possible have access to this vital support.**

Fund the city-wide expansion and implementation of school-wide Restorative Justice Practices

To fulfill their commitment to students, the City must invest in the expansion and full implementation of school-wide restorative justice practices in all schools through a school-based restorative justice model. This evidence-based model includes hiring a restorative justice coordinator in each school; training all staff and interested members of school communities on restorative practices; providing young people with training and stipends to lead restorative practices in schools; and partnering with community-based organizations to support programs in schools. By building and healing relationships,

addressing the root causes of behavior, holding students accountable, and teaching positive behaviors, restorative practices have been proven to work in schools across New York City and around the country: their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships. **The City should invest $118 million to bring this model to 500 schools in FY 2023 with the ultimate goal of investing $225 million for full implementation city-wide by FY 2028.**

Fund the expansion of inclusive school programs for students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities

Black students and economically disadvantaged students with emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities are disproportionately referred to District 75 schools that segregate students with disabilities instead of providing them with targeted supports in schools with peers who do not have disabilities. **The City should fund the expansion of the cost-effective evidence-based, whole-school inclusion model successfully piloted in P.S. 88, first in other schools in District 9 and then in other districts, to support students with emotional disabilities.** In the model, four students with emotional disabilities are placed in small Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes with two trained teachers, one of whom is a special educator, alongside students without IEPs. They receive frequent therapy from a trained clinical social worker using cognitive behavioral intervention strategies who also collaborates with teachers and parents to infuse trauma-informed practices across all settings. A university partner with knowledge of trauma-informed care and therapeutic practices, as well as evidence-based practices used in an inclusive program for students with autism, is necessary to collaborate with the DOE to expand the model by providing clinical training and onsite support to school staff.

Reject harmful cuts, including the DOE hiring freeze that is already negatively impacting students with the greatest needs

We are extremely concerned about the DOE's hiring freeze, which has already put important initiatives on hold and decreased support for students and families, especially those from historically marginalized communities. To give just a couple of examples:

- In fall 2021, after years of advocacy, the DOE finally committed to hiring the first-ever team to focus on the educational needs of students in foster care—a group of students whose needs have long been overlooked and who have the lowest graduation rate of any student group (43%). The team was set to have 7 staff members focused on students in foster care and 4 staff members who would help support students in foster care and students who are homeless. However, only 1 of the 7 promised positions focused on students in foster care and 3 of the 4 staff members serving students in foster care and students in temporary housing have been posted and none of the positions has been filled, meaning that there is still *no* staff at the DOE dedicated to meeting the needs of students in care, and that schools, foster care agencies, and parents still have nowhere to turn when they have questions or need guidance specific to this population.
- The DOE committed to having 18 regional staff members dedicated to ensuring that the 100,000 NYC students who experience homelessness each year can access the supports and services they need to be successful in school. From helping with enrollment and busing, to navigating the special education system, to securing needed after-school services, the regional managers are the go-to contact for families experiencing homelessness, as well as shelters and schools. And yet, 4 of the 18 positions are currently open and have not been posted. Meanwhile, more than half of students living in shelter are chronically absent.

The hiring freeze is even impacting programs that are being underwritten with federal COVID-19 relief funding—such as initiatives to strengthen preschool special education—even though keeping these positions vacant will not save the City any money.

More broadly, when across-the-board hiring freezes and layoffs have been imposed in the past, we've seen the impact on the students we serve—it's taken longer for immigrant students to get a school placement, for students with disabilities to get a bus route, and for parents to get help addressing the roadblocks they encounter with their children's schools.

At a time when the DOE has received an influx of federal and state funding, such cuts are particularly hard to defend. The City should not balance the budget on the backs of the students with the greatest needs.

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New York City Council
Committee on Finance
NYC Council FY23 Executive Budget
Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Written Testimony
Mohamed Q. Amin, Founder and Executive Director, Caribbean Equality Project

Good Morning Chairman Brannan, Council Members, and the esteemed Committee on Finance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Mohamed Q. Amin, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of the Caribbean Equality Project. Founded in 2015 in response to anti-LGBTQ hate crime violence in Richmond Hill, Queens, Caribbean Equality Project (CEP) is an NYC-based community organization that empowers, advocates for, and represents Black and Brown, LGBTQ+ Caribbean immigrants in New York City. Through public education, community organizing, civic engagement, storytelling, and cultural and social programming, the organization focuses on advocacy for LGBTQ+ and immigrant rights, gender equity, racial justice, immigration, mental health services, and ending hate violence in the Caribbean diaspora.

We are a proud member of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, which lead the 18% and Growing Campaign, a collective that unites nearly 70 AAPI-led and -serving organizations across all five boroughs of New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members.

There are currently over 1.5 million residents of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent in New York City, comprising over 18% of the City's total population. AAPI New Yorkers are the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group and voting population in New York City, State, and the nation. In 2021, there were over 9,000 reported incidents of anti-Asian violence nationwide and a 361% increase in Anti-Asian related hate crimes in NYC (the highest rate of all US cities). In April and May of 2022, there was a significant increase in anti-Shki Hate crimes against elders, women, and working-class construction workers in my Richmond Hill, Queens community.

In NYC, South Asian and Indo-Caribbean New Yorkers had the highest rates of COVID-19 infection and hospitalization in 2020 due to limited access to culturally-congruent testing and vaccination sites, including neighborhoods of Ozone Park, South Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill in Queens.

Even before the pandemic, being underfunded has led our community-based organizations to experience growing capacity uncertainties, rising costs, and inadequate resources to support our documented and undocumented communities in sustaining vital and life-saving services, such as culturally-competent mental health care, Immigration support for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, language accessibility, and domestic violence resources.

In FY 2021 and FY 2022, the Caribbean Equality Project was a grantee of the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF). During the pandemic, this funding became essential to help the organization build capacity to respond to the community's emerging needs. From training our Community Action Team volunteers to address food insecurity by distributing culturally-responsive groceries, fresh produce, PPE, and safe sex products to expanding the organization's leadership capacity to advocate for culturally inclusive and linguistically COVID-19 testing services, the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund was critical in addressing and relieving these ongoing challenges.

AAPI Immigrant New Yorkers and LGBTQ+ people have always been essential workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted immigrant communities, and it will take years to recover from its economic crisis. Our diverse and intersectional communities can no longer be neglected, underfunded, and under-resourced.

We call on the New York City Council to invest in and protect our marginalized communities by increasing funding to the following:

- **Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $7 million**, the first New York City Council fund of its kind that aims to build the capacity of New York City nonprofits in recognition of the fact that organizations led by people of the community are best equipped to meet the needs of the community.

- CCNSF also intends to promote learning among CBO leaders in leadership development, financial management, management information systems improvements, and outcomes system development.

- **AAPI Community Support Initiative to $6 Million** to ensure that Asian American community-based organizations will no longer remain critically under-funded and can sustain their vital services to AAPI communities across New York City as they recover and heal from the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and the rise in anti-Asian violence.

- **LGBTQ+ Immigrant Empowerment Initiative to $600,000** to address the gap in services to LGBTQ+ immigrants in NYC. Immigration support services have been a central component of CEP's advocacy work for over seven years, as LGBTQ+ Caribbean immigrants need specialized assistance navigating the U.S. immigration system. Since 2015, through the organization's Immigration Justice program, CEP has successfully supported 55 Caribbean LGBTQ+ asylum seekers' cases. Funds will allow CEP to meet the rising caseload, fueled in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, and strengthen our legal and social support work.

- **Expand Access Health NYC to $4 million** to sustain this city-wide initiative that funds community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide education, outreach, & assistance to all New Yorkers about how to access health care and coverage.

I want to thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. Our recommendations will help the NYC Council invest more significantly to uplift and protect Asian Americans and LGBTQ immigrant New Yorkers. We look forward to working with you to create a more equitable New York City.

Ali Forney Center Testimony on the FY23 Executive Budget

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee, for this opportunity to testify on the FY23 Executive Budget. My name is Alex Roque, he/him pronouns, President & Executive Director of the Ali Forney Center (AFC). I am sharing testimony on behalf of AFC.

The Ali Forney Center was founded in 2002 in memory of Ali Forney, a homeless gender-nonconforming youth who was forced to live on the streets, where they were tragically murdered. AFC is the nation's first around-the-clock drop-in center for homeless LGBTQ youth, and the largest provider of housing and wraparound services for homeless LGBTQ youth in New York City. Committed to saving the lives of LGBTQ young people, our mission is to provide them with housing and a continuum of support services to help them thrive, prepare them for independent living, and enable them to become successful, productive adults. Our facilities encompass 16 emergency and transitional housing sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, and a multi-purpose intake Drop-In Center located in Harlem.

Studies have found that LGBTQ youth comprise up to 40% of the homeless youth population in New York City. AFC provides services to 2,000 homeless LGBTQ youth in NYC each year, and nine out of 10 of those we serve are youth of color. With just 750 beds available for approximately 4,000 homeless young people in New York City, 40% of whom identify as LGBTQ, homeless youth are gravely underserved. Few sites are LGBTQ-competent, and even fewer offer more than a bed.

Tragically, homeless LGBTQ youth are especially vulnerable. Homeless LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience higher levels of sexual and physical assault, domestic violence, stalking, and trauma than their counterparts in the homeless youth population. LGBTQ youth are more likely to be bullied, assaulted, or crime victims. More than 80% use or have used sex work to survive. As a result, these young people struggle with a vast array of psychological and mental health issues, including low self-esteem, depression, suicidal ideation, and past attempts at suicide. According to a study by the Trevor Project, LGBTQ youth are eight times more likely to experience mental health issues, and last year alone, nearly 50% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide.

AFC's Drop-In Center is working to meet this critical need, offering homeless LGBTQ youth a safe, warm environment, support, free meals, showers, clothing, and hygiene supplies – any time, day or night. The Drop-In Center also provides an entry point to emergency and transitional housing. In addition to our two-tier housing program, emergency housing, and transitional housing, we provide comprehensive services, including individual and group counseling, case management, mental health services, medical referrals, legal assistance, mentoring opportunities, educational opportunities, transportation, and connections to permanent housing.

As the city continues to recover from the pandemic, the connection between homelessness and mental health is important to address, especially as housing is becoming more unaffordable. Unfortunately, the affordable housing crisis has exacerbated conditions for people with mental health needs who experience homelessness. Furthermore, the rise in hate crimes across the city this year has brought on increased anxiety and stress for all New Yorkers, and these traumatic events can worsen existing mental health challenges.

To address the dire situation among our city's homeless LGBTQ youth, we must ensure that the FY23 city budget prioritizes the resources that support this population. We urge our partners in City government to preserve and expand the resources for LGBTQ+ youth, including the Trans Equity Initiative, Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade, LGBT Community Services Initiative, and Food Pantries Initiative.

Testimony of the American Heart Association

Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

May 25, 2022

Greg Mihailovich, Community Advocacy Director
American Heart Association, New York City

Thank you, Chair Brannan, and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. On behalf of the volunteers of the American Heart Association, we are grateful for the opportunity to present testimony related to key educational initiatives that our organization believes will motivate healthy behaviors in young New Yorkers.

As the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, of which approximately 80% of diagnoses are preventable[i], the American Heart Association prioritizes many policies that promote better cardiovascular health and health equity. Unfortunately, heart diseases and stroke continue to be our city's leading causes of death and disability. With your continued help, however, we hope to change these statistics.

I. CPR in Schools

Cardiac arrest – an electrical malfunction in the heart that causes an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) and disrupts the flow of blood to the brain, lungs, and other organs – is a leading cause of death. Each year, more than 350,000 EMS-assessed out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the United States, with 70% happing in homes. When a person has a cardiac arrest, survival depends on immediately receiving CPR from someone nearby. About 90 percent of people who suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrests die. CPR, especially if performed immediately, can double, or triple a person's chance of survival.

People at greater need are less likely to get bystander CPR. People from primarily poor, Hispanic, or African American neighborhoods are more likely to need life-saving bystander CPR for an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and are less likely to receive it.[ii iii iv]

In 2003, the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation recommended that CPR training be incorporated into the standard school curriculum.[v] The long-term thinking of that recommendation is that children trained in CPR contribute significantly to the number of adults trained in CPR in the community. Increasing the number of people trained to perform CPR increases the likelihood that a victim of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest promptly receives CPR. Studies show that any previous training in CPR was a strong predictor of whether bystanders acted to provide CPR to the victim.[vi]

Since 2015, New York State requires that all students in senior high schools be provided instruction in hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) as part of either their physical education or health education curriculum.[vii]

This graduation requirement was waived for graduates in the 2019-20 school year due to COVID-19 concerns.[viii] Even prior to the pandemic, it was clear that some schools did not have the equipment or resources to provide proper training – stories about students watching a video and being marked as having received the training without even attempting a chest compression. If we want our students to be able to act when someone nearby suffers a cardiac arrest, we need to provide their schools with the materials and equipment needed for effective CPR training.

We ask the NYC Council to dedicate $1 million in the next budget to ensuring NYC high school students receive proper CPR and AED training as part of their CPR in Schools graduation requirement.

II. Food and Vegetable Prescription Programs

Food and Vegetable Prescription (FVP) programs are when a health care provider or a health insurance plan provides a "prescription" for produce. NYC launched one of the first FVP programs in the United States called 'Pharmacy to Farm', where a patient that filled out a prescription for hypertension medication at a participating pharmacy also received $30 in Health Bucks that could be redeemed at nearby farmers markets to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables.[ix]

FVP programs have been proven to reduce HbA1c (blood sugar), enough so to bring people from pre-diabetes into a normal/safe zone. They have also been shown to help manage HbA1c in people with restricted diets, and there are promising indicators that this is just as good or even better than some of the most common drugs at treating blood pressure. There are also promising results on weight management.[x] Additionally, programs have shown success in improving attitudes towards fruit and vegetables.[xi]

Last fiscal year, NYC matched $5.5 million in federal funding for a total investment of $11 million dollars in the Health Bucks and Get the Good Stuff programs.[xii] However, the federal funding supporting Pharmacy to Farm expired, and NYC decided to wind the program down instead of investing city funds to keep it operating. We need NYC to make the same level of investment in Pharmacy to Farm.

We ask that NYC invest local funds to support and expand the Pharmacy to Farm fruit and vegetable prescription program.

III. Hypertension Programs

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a key risk factor for heart disease and stroke and often there are no obvious symptoms to indicate something is wrong. As of 2019, 2.5 million adults, or 31% of New Yorkers,[xiii] report having high blood pressure.[xiv] Only 47% of those diagnosed with high blood pressure are under control.[xv] The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has undertaken a significant effort to promote awareness, clinical guidelines and treatment adherence called *Take the Pressure Off, NYC*. The program's goal was to reduce the number of New Yorkers with raised blood pressure by 150,000 by 2022 and NYC placed 300 blood pressure kiosks around the city for public use. The world has changed a lot since then.

Those with heart disease, including high blood pressure and congenital heart defects, may face an increased risk for complications if they become infected with the COVID-19 virus. People with diabetes, compromised immune systems, chronic lung diseases and other underlying conditions also may be at risk of more severe illness, according to the CDC.[xvi] High blood pressure also

accelerates memory loss and other cognitive declines for middle-aged or older adults, even when it only goes up slightly and for a short time, new research shows. Conversely, controlling high blood pressure slows the speed of cognitive decline.[xvii]

The pandemic and our increased reliance on remote medical care underscores the importance of access to self-monitoring devices. Just like having a thermometer will help someone tell if they have a fever or are just feeling flushed, access to blood pressure cuffs helps someone determine whether need to seek in-person care if they are feeling unwell. This is especially important if that person struggles with accessing telehealth services.

Self-measured blood pressure (BP) monitoring, the measurement of BP by an individual outside of the office at home, is a validated approach for out-of-office BP measurement. Several national and international hypertension guidelines endorse self-measured BP monitoring, which has high potential for improving the diagnosis and management of hypertension in the United States. However, to adequately address barriers to the implementation of self-measured BP monitoring, financial investment is needed.[xviii]

NYC should increase funding to its hypertension program to support increased education and outreach, as well as support self-measuring of blood pressure at home by investing in blood pressure cuffs to provide to community partners (FQHCs, Health Systems, other clinics, CBOs) for distribution to those who do not have access to them.

We ask the NYC Council to invest an additional $1 million in NYC's hypertension program to save the lives of the New Yorkers most at risk.

IV. Smoking Prevention and Cessation Programs

Cigarette smoking continues to be one of the leading causes of preventable disease and death in the U.S., claiming over 480,000 adults over the age of 35 per year.[xix] Smoking not only takes the lives of those who use tobacco, but also those who are exposed to secondhand smoke. Cigarette smoking accounts for 1 in 4 cardiovascular disease related deaths every year, and prolonged exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of stroke by 20-30%.

Smokers are also likely more vulnerable to severe and potentially life-threatening cases of COVID-19 according to the World Health Organization.[xx] More research is needed on the impact of smoking on a patient who contracts COVID-19, but it is reasonable to suspect that it may increase one's risk of getting a severe case of the disease.

In New York City, 13.4% of residents (886,000 adults) smoke[xxi] and more than 200,000 children are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.[xxii] According to the NYC DOHMH, smoking kills about 12,000 New Yorkers in our city every year.[xxiii]

More than two thirds of New York City smokers try to quit every year. The rates of quit attempts were highest for African Americans and Hispanics.[xxiv] With the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) having implemented its Smoke-Free Public Housing Rule,[xxv] we need to make sure NYCHA residents who are struggling with a nicotine addiction are getting the support they need.

Receiving assistance with quitting from a health care provider doubles the chances that a smoker will quit. Investing in smoking prevention and cessation programs results in reduced

health expenditures and better long-term health outcomes. Let's make sure all New Yorkers are getting the help they need to stop smoking.

We ask the NYC Council to invest an additional $1 million in NYC's smoking prevention and cessation programs to help New Yorkers live longer and healthier lives.

Thank you for everything you have done and will do to protect the lives of the people of New York City. The American Heart Association is a reliable and trusted source of information based in credible science, and we will continue to be your partner in ensuring the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

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Written Testimony of Katelyn Giguere, Arab American Association of NY

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

My name is Katelyn Giguere, and I am the Youth Program Manager for the Arab American Association of NY. I am here to testify in front of the City Council for a number of essential programs serving immigrant and low income New Yorkers in the upcoming budget cycle.

As a community-based organization serving the Arab American community in Bay Ridge, AAANY sees the effects of hate violence on a daily basis. In the past two years, we have seen a terrifying increase in hate-based attacks against Arab and Muslim Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish communities, Black communities, queer and gender nonconforming New Yorkers, and a range of other religious and ethnic minorities. We know from our lived experience that hate violence is best addressed within our communities, through prevention, outreach, and community ties. We want to emphasize that hate violence has not been and will never be solved by police, who have a complicated and often fraught relationship with immigrant communities and communities of color. Our own community, for example, maintains a deep distrust of all city institutions as a direct result of the NYPD's history of surveilling mosques, community based organizations and other Islamic institutions. We need fewer police, not more – and we strongly urge the City Council to invest in community-based solutions and programs rather than continuing to bankroll a too-powerful institution with little interest in serving and protecting New York's most vulnerable communities.

For that reason, we call for increased investment in community-based funding for hate violence prevention. The PATH Forward program has already had an immense, positive impact on vulnerable communities across the City; and by increasing the City's investment in this program to $10 million in the upcoming fiscal year, you will ensure that dozens of community-based organizations serving thousands of New Yorkers are adequately resourced to define and create safety for themselves. The Hate Violence Prevention Initiative, too, has allowed organizations like our own to work directly with community members to provide resources, offer support, and develop community safety models that are responsive to the unique needs we face on the ground, but it is woefully underfunded in the face of this escalating issue. We urge you to be bold, to decrease the NYPD's bloated budget and instead invest directly in communities through the above-mentioned initiatives – and through education, mental health services, language access resources, and more. These types of investments are proven to have a meaningful impact on the safety and wellbeing of communities and have the power to transform our city for the better.

Finally, on behalf of all middle and high school students in New York City, and in collaboration with the **Youth Food Advocates**, **Community Food Advocates**, and **Lunch for Learning**

Coalition, I'm asking for your support in securing $250 million in the budget for the cafeteria enhancement in New York City for all middle and high schools across the five boroughs. As a Youth Program Manager for low income students, I know the importance of healthy school lunch options for students, in order to focus, keep up with their peers, and be fueled for academic success. The enhanced cafeteria model allows students who keep halal or kosher to access healthy school lunch options in alignment with their religious needs, and is proven to increase school lunch participation by 30%. Implementing the enhanced cafeteria model across the city will facilitate equitable and accessible access to nutritious and appealing school lunch options, and therefore we ask it to be a budget priority for the Council.

Thank you for your time.

Katelyn Giguere,

Youth Program Manager
The Arab American Association of New York

www.arisecoalition.org

Testimony of The ARISE Coalition for New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Budget - Education

May 25, 2022

Good afternoon. I am Maggie Moroff. I work as both the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children and as the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition. I am here today on behalf of the ARISE members to talk about the importance of ensuring that COVID-19 relief funding allocated last year to support students with disabilities is spent as intended; that all education initiatives funded in this year's budget include meaningful access for students with disabilities and provide appropriate supports to those students from day one; and that preschool special education teachers at community-based organizations see the pay parity they require in order to ensure that all students needing preschool special education placements have a place to attend school.

A New York City Comptroller's report released last month revealed that as of the start of March, the DOE had spent only 12% of the $251 million in federal COVID-19 relief funding allocated for FY 22 to provide extra support to students with disabilities and to create additional seats for preschool students with disabilities.

I wish I could say that the 12% came as a surprise to our members. While the DOE allocated funding to schools to offer after-school or Saturday Special Education Recovery Services (SERS) to students with disabilities, and launched the Sensory, Exploration, Education, and Discovery (SEED) program for students with sensory challenges, we have heard from many families whose children were unable to access those services or who were not offered services in the first place. We have been recommending the DOE provide make-up services for the instruction and services students with disabilities lost during remote learning, consistent with the DOE's legal obligation. Further, we have advocated for improved delivery of those services. We've called repeatedly for: clear information for families about the availability of recovery services – something our members have found to be inconsistent throughout city schools; expanded services for all students with disabilities regardless of age, grade, language needs and schools attended including preschools, charter school and state-approved non-public schools; targeted

instructional interventions at all SERS programs; and guaranteed busing for students with IEP mandates for transportation so they could remain after school at the SERS programs and access the SEED program. Unfortunately, without these changes, the SERS programs were not appropriate, available, or feasible for many students with disabilities this year. We want to be certain that the DOE uses the COVID-19 relief funds allocated for special education services for FY 22 and FY 23 to support students with disabilities, some of the students left furthest behind during the pandemic - and that unused special education relief funding is not reallocated for a different purpose. We ask for your help doing so.

We also want to make absolutely certain that all education initiatives funded in this year's budget, such as the $33 million to launch a new career pathways program included in the Executive Budget, are explicitly made available to all students, including those with disabilities who make up approximately 1/5 of the total student population but who have historically been left out of initiatives such as career and technical education. To make that a reality, students who require special education accommodations and modifications will need access to supports. Without an intentional effort to design the new program with the needs of students with disabilities in mind, those students will effectively be cut off from the benefits of the initiative. This is true of all new initiatives the city rolls out and funds in this year's budget. In addition, as the City examines Fair Student Funding weights, we want to ensure that there is adequate funding to meet the needs of all students with disabilities now and going forward.

Finally, we support paying preschool special education teachers working at community-based organizations on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts. Without that pay parity, far too many preschool-aged students with disabilities will remain without much needed specialized placements and the gaps between them and their more typical peers will continue to grow. We thank the City Council for including this important priority in your response to the preliminary budget and urge you to ensure that the needed funding is included in the final budget.

Thank you for your time today. I am available now and any time in the future to answer questions about ARISE and about our budget recommendations. I can be reached at mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org.

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New York City Council
Finance Committee Hearing Testimony
May 25, 2022
Lisa Gold, Executive Director
Asian American Arts Alliance

Thank you for your service to the City and for the opportunity to share my comments on the City's FY23 Budget.

You know that budgets are moral documents. Budgets reveal priorities and values, and as a society, they are the primary way that we care for one another, especially for the vulnerable. As the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance (A4), a 39-year-old nonprofit that seeks to ensure greater equity and opportunities for Asian American artists and arts organizations, I can state without hesitation that our community is extremely vulnerable and needs your support.

A 2021 study by the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum found that nearly 3 in 4 Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women reported experiencing racism and/or discrimination, showing a rise in hate incidents since the COVID-19 pandemic started.[1] Even with a relative decline in the severity of the pandemic, attacks against Asian Americans continue to increase at alarming rates.

Our community has suffered, and continue to suffer, the twin pandemics of COVID and anti-Asian racism. With theaters, museums, music and dance venues shuttered for months, our community has lost a significant amount of income. 55% of creative workers have no financial reserves. And BIPOC-led and -serving organizations like A4 have been under-resourced and overlooked for funding for so long that we did not have the necessary funds to support our community when they needed us most.

I understand that the economy, safety, and mental health are key priorities for the Council and the Mayor. And I know they all start with the arts. The cultural sector is the number one driver of tourism in the city and generates $120 BILLION in economic activity.[2] Studies show that neighborhoods with robust cultural assets had

improved outcomes on education, mental health, community strength, public safety, and aging, as well as decreased youth involvement with the carceral system.[3]

It is imperative that the City protect our cultural community and our Asian American New Yorkers by investing $6 Million for the AAPI Community Support Initiative and the $100 Million Culture VIBE (A **V**isionary **I**nvestment in **B**uilding the NYC **E**conomy) proposal.

One of the key requests in the AAPI Community Support Initiative is expanding language access through improved translation services, the creation of a Community Interpreter Bank, and by developing worker-owned translation cooperatives that provide employment and business opportunities for immigrant New Yorkers. Language access remains an entrenched barrier for 1.8 million New Yorkers with limited English proficiency. Despite our city having the greatest language diversity in the world, we have insufficient translation services. How is that even possible?

A4 was able to help translate the City Artist Corps information materials into 12 languages to ensure equitable grant access to New Yorkers who rarely, if ever, feel that cultural funding is for them. If we can do it, the City can do it.

Another recent study, the STAATUS (Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the U.S.) Index, showed that 58% of Americans can't name a famous Asian American.[4] The lack of representation and "othering" of AAPIs continues to fuel discrimination and violence against our community. When we are seen in films and tv, our music is on the radio and books are on the best seller lists, then we may begin to be accepted as "real Americans." But as AAPIs are continually cast in stereotypic roles, if at all, it is imperative that organizations like A4 and others are supported by the City. That is why the Culture VIBE plan is asking for a dedicated $15 Million for a Cultural Equity Fund to support BIPOC-led and -serving organizations. A small step to redress decades of neglect and discrimination.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to making New York City's culture the envy of the world and ensuring it is accessible to every New Yorker.

Sources:

1. National Asian Pacific American Women's ForumSafety Report, March 2022: https://www.napawf.org/assets/download/napawf-state-of-safety-report.pdf
2. NYC Comptroller Report: https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/
3. Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania, *Social Impact of the Arts Projec*t: https://repository.upenn.edu/siap/
4. LAAUNCH's (Leading Asian Americans to Unite for Change) STAATUS (Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the U.S.) Index: https://www.staatus-index.org/

Asian American Federation

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings

May 25th 2022

Written Testimony

I want to thank Chair Brannan and the Council Members of the Finance Committee for holding this hearing and giving the Asian American Federation (AAF) the opportunity to testify on the needs of our community. I'm Ravi Reddi, Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy at AAF, where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

We first want to thank Speaker Adams for advocating on our community's behalf during the State of the City address. As we'll discuss today, we want to emphasize that our community-based organizations need greater support to truly reflect our City's commitment to our communities.

Non-Profit Support

As we've discussed throughout this Budget season, the size of our community speaks to the urgency of supporting it through this year's Budget:

Since 2010, the Asian population in New York City has increased 34%, growing from over 1.1 million in 2010 to over 1.5 million in 2020, making up 17.3% of our city's total population. Overwhelmingly, Asian New Yorkers are immigrants, with two out of three in the city being foreign-born. Of those Asian immigrants, 47% arrived in 2010 or after. Additionally, language barriers remain high among Asian New Yorkers. Overall, 48% of Asians have limited English proficiency in New York City, compared to a citywide rate of 23%.

Within our communities, Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations continue to struggle to receive the funding they need to provide services the way our community members best receive them. From Fiscal Year 2002 to 2014, the Asian American community received a mere 1.4% of the total dollar value of New York City's social service contracts. Our analysis showed that over that 12-year period, the Asian American share of DOHMH funding was 0.2% of total contract dollars and 1.6% of the total number of contracts. This was over a 12-year period, representing a trend.

Although our community is in crisis, our member organizations have continuously demonstrated that they're the experts in providing the services most-needed. As City Council works on this year's budget, Council Members must keep in mind the persistent inequities in city contracting practices and the systemic barriers facing our CBOs seeking the dollars the Council is allocating for this year.

Contracting processes must prioritize the CBOs that have the expertise needed to make the most of every dollar in our communities by giving greater weight to organizations with a demonstrated track record of serving low-income, underserved immigrant communities with linguistic and cultural competency. Our CBOs are leading by example in the provision of direct services, from providing wrap-around services that include mental wellness checks, to allying with food suppliers that provide culturally-competent food. The funding support is the last piece of this puzzle.

Asian American Federation

Mental Health

Recent surveys we've done with our small business community and our senior serving organizations and their clients highlight the dramatic needs for mental health care in our community. A survey report we published late last year about Asian small business owners showed that over 60% of respondents said they were worried about anti-Asian bias and hate crimes for the safety of themselves, their staff, and their business establishment. More than 80% of respondents in a survey of seniors who use services from our Seniors Working Group coalition members reported that "mental health and social isolation" were either "important" or "very important."

Mental health service delivery in the city's most diverse community is notoriously difficult. More than 20 Asian ethnic groups are represented within our city, speaking dozens of languages. Aside from the logistics of mental health service delivery in a crisis, cultural stigma around mental health adds an additional layer of service delivery complexity. The shortage of linguistically and culturally competent mental health practitioners, which is particularly serious in areas of specialty, highlights the urgency to address these gaps and ensure that our community has equal access to mental health services that cater to their unique needs.

However, it's important to highlight one detail, it simply costs more to seek out, hire and retain bilingual and culturally-competent mental health staff and professionals. Many of our member organizations hire directly from within the communities they serve, and from immigration sponsorship to providing stable, competitive salaries, our members are consistently constrained by City and State funding and regulations.

As such, we would like to thank Speaker Adams and the Council for prioritizing $11 million for mental health services for the 33 communities hit hardest by COVID, and mental health clinicians for 108 senior centers. We urge the Council to continue supporting diversity efforts among mental health professionals so that our vulnerable communities have greater access to mental health care.

Here are some of our other recommendations:

- Provide increased, consistent investment in Asian mental health organizations to build bilingual and culturally-competent staff capacity and expertise to address the increased needs of clients with severe mental illnesses, as well as implement preventive measures where possible.
- Develop the capacity of Asian-serving community-based organizations to identify mental health needs and provide non-clinical interventions.
- Develop workforce initiatives that create a pipeline of Asian mental health professionals skilled in bilingual and culturally-competent mental healthcare.

Anti-Asian Hate:

The Stop AAPI Hate platform collected over 10,905 reports of anti-Asian incidents from March 2020 to December 2021 from all 50 states, as well as DC. In NYC, there were more than 2700 incidents collected by AAF, Stop AAPI Hate, NYPD, and CCHR, only a fraction of which were reported to the NYPD. These bias incidents are significantly underreported, as 70% of Asian New Yorkers are immigrants and systemic factors like high rates of poverty, limited English proficiency (LEP), and lack of immigration status deter reporting and reinforce continued systemic inequities.

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In response to continuing anti-Asian attacks in our City, the Asian American Federation is leading a coordinated effort aimed at interrupting violence and empowering from within our community. The City needs to continue to invest in community-based safety measures like those being implemented by organizations participating in our Hope Against Hate Campaign, to provide an immediate response to street violence and support the coordination and roll-out of initiatives like a safety ambassador program to escort vulnerable Asian immigrants in public spaces and training volunteers in de-escalation strategies so they can serve as a safe, deterring presence in our neighborhoods. From the creation of safety pamphlets and e-resources to continued robust community engagement on self-defense and upstander trainings with community members who trust them first, our CBOs are doing the work and our City needs to support them as they lead by example.

The City's approach to public safety must also consider how to help victims heal from traumatic events. We are asking the City to fund recovery services in Asian languages to help victims heal from their attacks, including providing access to a victim compensation fund and supporting a network of Asian community-based organizations that can provide mental health support, legal services, and other supportive services. Furthermore, we must support programs that increase access to mental health services for all communities since perpetrators, themselves, may have mental illness and need services so as not to further harm others and themselves.

We urge the City Council to consider the following recommendations to make sure Asian New Yorkers feel safe in their own City:

1. Increase funding to Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations to centralize the reporting of incidents in order to connect victims to services they need;
2. Increase funding for the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $6 million in order to sustain and expand direct services that are seeing increased demand as well as fund critical anti-violence programming in our Hope Against Hate Campaign. This includes safety ambassador programs that match seniors with volunteers providing physical protective accompaniment when they go outside, upstander and anti-violence trainings, as well as victim support services across the City;
3. Expand funding to include culturally competent, in-language, and senior-focused non-traditional mental health service models. This includes prioritizing CBOs that have a history of providing free or subsidized nontraditional, culturally competent services for funding opportunities;
4. Support recovery services in Asian languages to help victims heal from the trauma and increase access to mental health services for all communities to reduce harm.

Seniors

One of the most vulnerable communities we serve are our Asian seniors. Here at AAF, we convene the Seniors Working Group, the first and only Asian senior-focused advocacy coalition in New York. This group is made up of 12 Asian-led, Asian senior-serving member organizations of AAF who served nearly 250,000 Asian seniors in 2021, 87,000 of whom were low-income. Asian seniors comprise 13.9% of the city's senior population, and the number of Asian seniors in poverty increased by 63.4% between 2010 and 2019, the largest percent increase of any major racial group. Of our seniors in poverty, 29% live alone and 80% have limited English proficiency (LEP).

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In the face of dual pandemics of COVID-19 and anti-Asian violence, both of which uniquely target Asian seniors, our elders need support that fully addresses their needs, physically and emotionally. And as our partners in the Asian community can attest, these dual crises are fundamentally changing the behavior of clients as they seek out senior services; the City must adapt in support of our senior service providers.

Food insecurity is one of our coalition's top concerns for Asian seniors, alongside anti-Asian violence, senior centers, and mental health, all of which are connected. Culturally competent meal programs have become our seniors' lifeline, especially amid an era of increased anti-Asian violence that have left seniors understandably terrified to leave their homes. This makes it even more critical that our seniors are receiving as much support as they can every time they interact with one of their trusted CBOs. The meal programs our CBOs offer not only give them an opportunity to pick up food or eat together, but also to participate in social activities, receive assistance applying for services, and access health and mental health care.

Throughout the pandemic, our CBOs have reported more burnout among staff who are stretched to their limits with too much work and not enough institutional support. From May to November 2020 alone, AAF helped six senior-serving organizations to serve almost 3,000 seniors with nearly 20,000 food services and 8,500 assurance calls. It is clear that the need for these programs is still there, as thousands of Asian seniors still line up for culturally competent food pantries. CBOs are providing hot meals to seniors beyond the capacity of their finances.

We were grateful to see our elders prioritized in the State of the City speech and throughout Budget hearings, especially around mental health and food delivery. The urgency is clear.

In our Seniors Working Group, CBO staff members say meeting our most vulnerable where they are with culturally-competent, effective senior services requires systemic change. This includes the City supporting, reinforcing, and building capacity for programming by and for marginalized communities by prioritizing cultural competency and language access in contracting processes. It also means focusing more funding on smaller contracts so the organizations providing care to our most marginalized communities have access to funds they can spend down at their size.

Language Access:

And finally, we have language access: More than at any other time, many government policies are in such a state of flux that our communities will need sustained in-language engagement to stay abreast of changing policies, processes, and documents. As we consistently note, good policies mean nothing if the people they're meant to help don't know about them.

That's why there is a clear window of opportunity for City Council to finally fund a community legal interpreter bank so those needing legal services and social services can access qualified interpreters across communities of color, as well as worker co-ops which will focus on the recruitment, training, and dispatching of qualified interpreters and increasing job opportunities for multilingual communities. To these ends, we're asking City Council to fund a community legal interpreter bank with $2.25 million and commit $300,000 per worker co-op for three language translation co-ops covering Asian, African, and Latin American languages. The payoff from funding these initiatives will be seen in multiple ways, as



we've seen with similar models elsewhere, like Washington, DC's community legal interpreter bank, from providing employment opportunities in our immigrant communities, to relieving strains on existing CBO capacity to provide interpretation, to addressing the serious gap in quality language interpretation for the communities that need it the most.

The City must also make sure the FY 2023 Budget includes funding such that Local Law 30 is fully and consistently implemented across city agencies. In our work and the work of our member and partner organizations, we are consistently reminded that much of the language accessibility issues our community is grappling with relate to issues of capacity. Immigrants are often the last to know about key information, and the pandemic has demonstrated that there is still much work to be done in making sure our immigrants, many of whom are our frontline workers, benefit from the work of our city agencies.

We would like to thank Speaker Adam's acknowledgement on the need to expand language access in this budget.

CBOs have led by example in how to spend city dollars effectively and this moment presents an opportunity for this City Council to show that New York City can still lead by example in protecting its most vulnerable. We at the Asian American Federation thank you for allowing us to testify and look forward to working with all of you to make sure our immigrant communities get the support they deserve.

Council Speaker Adams and Committee CouncilMembers for Housing & Buildings, Finance, and Women & Gender Equity,

My name is Rumi Akong, the TransJustice Program Coordinator at the Audre Lorde Project. I'm here today to ask you to support stronger pathways to safe, long-term housing resources for ALL New Yorkers. Last Fall, I voted in-person - doubled-masked in district 31 in the world's borough: Queens. When I moved into central Brooklyn five years ago, it was to be closer to classes at the CUNY Graduate Center and part time gigs in food service. I rented apartments within district 41, 45, and now 37. I choose to live in Brooklyn because these neighborhoods are among the few neighborhoods where low-income lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-Spirit, transgender and gender nonconforming New Yorkers of color can just barely afford rent. Anytime I've experienced housing insecurity, I have been offered a couch, a room, an entire studio apartment by friends and lovers in community. Access to housing has not been too far out of reach for me. However, I've commuted from events with many community members whose journey home is more than 90 minutes away. At our events, too many trans* people have shared with me that they hadn't eaten for 60 hours before our food delivery arrived.

Our most marginalized New Yorkers - my community of transgender and gender nonconforming people of color alongside our 3,019 housing equity campaign supporters across the city are asking the City Council and Mayor's Office to collaborate in developing secure permanent housing.

Please help TransJustice and the Audre Lorde Project uplift resources to increase access to housing, food security, and competent and comprehensive medical care within ALL five boroughs. I wish for my home city to truly be a sanctuary city; for our institutions to be responsive, truly people-centered and prioritize those most disproportionately impacted.

New Yorkers of all gender expressions deserve access to safe and secure housing. ALL New Yorkers deserve housing. Housing for ALL! Thank you.

THE Authors Guild

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING

To: The Honorable City Councilmember Justin Brannan and the City Council on Finance

From: Cheryl L. Davis, General Counsel

Date: May 31, 2022

Dear Councilmember Brannan and City Council on Finance,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on behalf of the Authors Guild. With over 12,000 members, the Authors Guild is the nation's oldest and largest professional association of published writers of all genres including historians, biographers, academicians, journalists, and other writers of nonfiction and fiction. Since its founding in 1912, the Guild has worked to promote the rights and professional interests of authors in various areas, including copyright, freedom of expression, and fair contracts. While the Guild is a national organization, our headquarters are located in New York City, as are over 2,400 of our members. The financial health of NYC's cultural community and the City's support for its writers is therefore of vital concern to our organization and our members.

As you stated at the Committee's live hearing on May 25, "a budget is a reflection of the values one holds." We believe that the New York City budget should reflect the value that the arts bring to the City - specifically, the literary arts. The author community has suffered great harm not only as a result of COVID, but as a result of a general decline in authors' income since 2009. As our 2018 nationwide survey of author income showed, full-time authors' median incomes from writing-related activities fell 42% between 2009 and 2018 to a median of $20,300; half of that was from books and the other half came from writing-related activities including speaking fees, teaching, writing and journalism. Most writers' incomes have been further decimated by the pandemic. We conducted surveys of our members throughout the pandemic and conducted a two-year look back this past April, and the results were astounding. Almost 70% of the respondents had lost income due to the pandemic, and on average, respondents lost half of their pre-pandemic income – mainly from the loss of speaking engagements, journalism and teaching. The survey further showed that for roughly 55% of respondents their incomes have remained down relative to pre-Covid levels, suggesting the slow pace of recovery and its possible long-term impact on the writing profession.

In short, the writing community in New York City is hurting now and is desperately in need of support. As such, we urge you to include in the 2023 budget the $100 million dollar investment in the cultural sector proposed in FY23 Culture VIBE, a Visionary Investment in Building the Economy. This investment would represent only 0.24% of the City's total budget and would augment NYC's economic recovery and ensure equitable sector growth that includes all of the arts community, including the literary arts. We also support the proposal from the New York City Arts in Education Roundtable which includes recommendations to (i) boost the City's per student arts allocation; (ii) require schools to dedicate arts funding to the arts, and (iii) restore and baseline the $24 million for Arts Services cut when the pandemic hit New York City's economy. Since many authors also work in the educational system, they are also deeply affected by that sector's funding as well.

We also ask that a portion of the budget that the City dedicates to the arts be specifically earmarked for authors and the literary arts, and that much of that portion be committed to programs that are targeted to and offer support to authors. According to the report *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City* issued by the Office of the New York City Comptroller, in 2017, the publishing industry constituted approximately 19% of national employment in the cultural sector and over 10% of NYC's cultural sector. This contribution to the City's economy, and authors' central role in that economy, is worthy of specific recognition in the City's budget.

While there are a number of ways to recognize the importance of authors and the literary industry to NYC, we would like to suggest two specific options to the Committee:

1. The addition of a line item in the NYC budget specifically dedicated to support of writers and the literary arts. That kind of recognition would not only be of financial benefit to writers and other workers in the publishing industry, it would also ensure that the literary community has a consistent place in the City's funding and future budgets.
2. The addition of a literary arts liaison to the Mayor's Office. This post could provide a point of contact so that the City government can be kept abreast of the specific needs of authors and the literary community in order to better address them.

We thank the Committee for its consideration and urge it to value the contribution authors and the literary industry make to New York City and to our culture as a whole.

Respectfully Submitted,



Cheryl L. Davis
General Counsel

Bedford-Stuyvesant Family Health Center
1456-Fulton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11216

Buenas tardes Finance Committee, Chair Justin Brannan, and Council Members and Congratulations on your appointments. I also extend Hearty congratulations once again to Speaker Adams. Me llamo Suzanne Robinson Davis.

I am representing the Bedford-Stuyvesant Family Health Center and my role is Program Director of the Wellness Center Program. Bed-Stuy Family Health Center is a federally qualified health center located in Brooklyn with 2 sites in East New York & Bed-Stuy. We serve over 16,00 people annually.

The ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic on our City are unquestionable. Previously, where health disparities existed a gaping hole has been torn open, leaving increased health needs and increased misinformation in our communities. The need is great and recovery will take all of us.

In 2015, Bed-Stuy Family Health Center was one of the inaugural agencies funded for the Access Health NYC Initiative and 2017 recipient of the Viral Hepatitis awards. We were determined to ensure the confidence extended to us through City dollars was met with the highest level of commitment to educate, outreach, & assist all New Yorkers about how to access health care and health coverage. We were astute in attending all workshops and trainings (back then we had unrestricted face-to-face gatherings), we were intent on learning all there was to the Access Health and Viral Hepatitis Initiatives.

As an agency, we have invested in building an infrastructure that implements our activities, engages and support thousands of people with health information, builds partnerships and collaborations, and effectively monitors, the work of the program.

Each year, the Access Health NYC and the Viral Hepatitis Initiatives have produced strong results. The appeal is being tabled to refund the Initiatives to the requested 4 million dollars and 2 million dollars respectively. I call on the Committee to ensure that all the agencies can continue their work and to award new grants to additional agencies to make an even greater impact in our communities to benefit all New Yorkers.

In fiscal Year 2021, Bed-Stuy Family Health Center hosted 5 health fairs and collaborated with partners to facilitate 11 workshops. There were 46 unique outreach and tabling events. The program pivoted to include COVID-19 partners, with the goal of increasing education and testing in Black and Brown communities in Brooklyn. Food pantries and clothing drives featured more prominently in our work. One of the core program activities is providing preventive screenings, an important issue and an entry point in addressing health disparities – screenings included Hepatitis C (for which we also funded by the City), HIV, STI – syphilis, diabetes, and cancer screenings. A total of 1,707 people were supported with health care, health information, linkage to resources and health coverage and over 1,400 persons screened for Hepatitis 20 persons treated for Hepatitis C.

We know all too well that these 3,107 people are not just numbers or statistics used to justify our work. Each number represents a person, a New Yorker, a family, a story.

Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center is committed to the partnership with City Council and look forward to being refunded to continue the important work of serving all New Yorkers.

Gracias - Thank you.

May 24, 2022

Dear City Council Members,

Bright Horizons is a national child care provider that manages approximately 40 child care programs in New York City, including several that participate in the 3K and 4K For All Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program. We applaud the City's leadership and investment in quality child care and are excited about the upcoming expansion of services to more families.

Today we want to raise to your attention a serious concern related to the extreme delay in having **criminal background checks** completed for child care teachers in NYC. These delays impact almost every child care program in the City. We are very concerned about the impact the delays are already having on families and teachers and the potential critical risk of not completing the background checks in a timely manner.

DOHMH processes background checks for employees at child care programs in the City. Background checks play a critical role in assuring parents that their children will be safely cared for. Simply put a teacher can not supervise a classroom until they receive their clearance (or renewal) from DOHMH. The current length of time for clearances is undermining our ability to provide New York City's children with care and quality educational programming and is worsening a teacher staffing crisis.

We operate programs across the country and have not experienced delays anywhere close to what we are experiencing in NYC with DOHMH. Outside of DOHMH in NYC, typically comprehensive background checks are completed within 2 weeks and are almost always completed within 45-60 days. In NYC through DOHMH for Bright Horizons child care teachers and assistants the current average wait time for clearances is 243 days (8 months). This extreme delay compares to:

- The PreK for All programs in the City under the DOE that accomplishes their background check in 2 and 6 weeks.
- New York State OCFS that completes their turnaround for background checks similarly to NYC DOE with a mandate to not exceed 45 days.
- DOHMH own background check process for Education Directors and new child care centers of 2-6 weeks.

We briefly testified at the Council's previous DOHMH budget hearing about these extreme delays, and we are once again asking for your help to reduce the backlog as it is getting WORSE despite recent hew hires at DOHMH to address this issue. We believe part of the problem may stem from lack of dedicated resources for DOHMH specifically related to staffing required to complete the current manual background check process and funding for the future automation of the manual background check process.

We urge you to support:

- An immediate reallocation of funds to invest in additional temporary resources to address the current background check crisis with DOHMH.
- Consideration by the Council of having DOE or NYS OCFS (or some alternative agency) assist DOHMH with the extreme backlog of clearances.
- An investment in the upcoming budget for automating the DOHMH background check process.
- Action by the Council to prioritize first time background check completion over renewals for existing previously cleared staff and extend current clearances until the backlog subsides.
- Action by the Council to allow for portability of clearances so individuals can move between age groups, locations or organizations without undergoing a new background check.
- Action by the Council to establish accountability measures for DOHMH to complete background checks (Suggested target of two-weeks with outside mandate of 45-60 days).

Thank you for your time and consideration and please feel free to contact me at Michael.Day@BrightHorizons.com with any follow up questions or suggestions.

Respectfully,

Michael Day

New York City Council
Committee on Criminal Justice

Oversight Hearing re: Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention in City Jails
April 29, 2022

Written Testimony of The Bronx Defenders
By Tahanee Dunn, Daiana Griffith, Nikita Rahman, Tadd Vassell, Zakya Warkeno, and Elizabeth Williams

Chair Rivera, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this critical issue. The pandemic has put a spotlight on mental health. As public defenders, we have seen what happens when issues of mental health go unquestioned, unchecked, and unvoiced: all too often, suicide and self-harm become a means of escaping emotional pain and trauma, especially in our jails. We hope that, as a city, we are finally ready to acknowledge that mental health struggles can no longer be ignored, especially among our incarcerated community members. Our clients' experiences demonstrate firsthand that the crisis surrounding mental health care on Rikers Island has reached dire levels and must be addressed immediately and with meaningful solutions or more lives will be lost. The Bronx Defenders (BxD)[1] submits this testimony to share the relevant experiences of some of our clients on Rikers Island.

Suicide Prevention Services on Rikers Island Are Wholly Inadequate

Rafael Rosado

Our client, Mr. Rafael Rosado, whose permission we have to use his name and share his experiences, was emphatic about having us share his story. He said if it wasn't for the advocacy of his legal team while he was actively suicidal, he would not be here today. Mr. Rosado has

[1] The Bronx Defenders is a public defender non-profit that is radically transforming how low-income people in the Bronx are represented in the legal system, and, in doing so, is transforming the system itself. Our staff of over 350 includes interdisciplinary teams made up of criminal, civil, immigration, and family defense attorneys, as well as social workers, benefits specialists, legal advocates, parent advocates, investigators, and team administrators, who collaborate to provide holistic advocacy to address the causes and consequences of legal system involvement. Through this integrated team-based structure, we have pioneered a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized model of representation called *holistic defense* that achieves better outcomes for our clients. Each year, we defend more than 20,000 low-income Bronx residents in criminal, civil, child welfare, and immigration cases, and reach thousands more through our community intake, youth mentoring, and outreach programs. Through impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community organizing, we push for systemic reform at the local, state, and national level. We take what we learn from the clients and communities that we serve and launch innovative initiatives designed to bring about real and lasting change.

struggled with suicidal ideation while in Department of Corrections (DOC) custody after the loss of his son. He has been fighting to stay alive under DOC's inhumane lack of care for months. Despite his legal advocates' repeated requests to Correctional Health Services (CHS) and DOC to keep him under suicide watch due to his high risk, Mr. Rosado has been arbitrarily taken off suicide watch multiple times. During the time that he was under suicide watch, clinicians discovered that he had been without correct supervision for days on end. Tragically, the neglect of Mr. Rosado's mental health needs led him to attempt suicide by hanging himself on March 4, 2022. His suicide attempt was later labeled as "a manipulative gesture" on his medical records; this shows the DOC's callous attitude towards the lives of those they are obligated to protect. As a result of the incoherent, inconsistent, and poor care Mr. Rosado was receiving, he attempted to take his own life two additional times, with one of those attempts not being documented at all.

Mr. Rosado also reports that a DOC supervisor has been urging him to be taken off of suicide watch yet again. The supervisor's negotiation with our vulnerable client is appalling and should echo deep concern that a person of power, a decision-maker, is not taking mental health seriously. As described by Mr. Rosado, he was told that if he agrees to be moved to general population, the supervisor will make sure that he still gets clinical visits twice a day. Mr. Rosado shared that where he would be moved to would have a different supervisor who has worked with high-risk individuals. While it is extremely important that Mr. Rosado continues to be seen twice a day by a clinician, as he already is and has benefited from therapy, moving him to general population is a stressor and a risk factor for someone in such a vulnerable state.

Client 2

Another client, who agreed to share his story but not his identity, housed at RNDC, attempted suicide three times while being locked in his cell with no reprieve. This client's extensive history in Enhanced Supervision Housing and in isolation negatively impacted his mental health.[2] He reported being locked in his cell for 24 hours daily with no access to showers, recreation, or phone calls for two weeks from March 19, 2022 through April 7, 2022. During mealtimes, corrections officers pass food through slots in their cells. On April 4, 2022, during dinner, our client's face was near the opening awaiting his food, and another inmate walked by and slashed his nose. Suicide felt like a way to escape the hell he experienced at Rikers. In his first suicide attempt, he swallowed pills and corrections officers took him to the clinic. He pleaded with officers to not be returned to his cell but was returned regardless. The second time, he attempted to hang himself but couldn't secure his bed sheet to a stable place. The third time, he tried to cut his wrist. He was finally sent to a Mental Observation housing unit for clinical observation, and he felt safer in this housing unit. However, shortly after his attempt the clinicians cleared him to

[2] Empirical studies show that solitary confinement is linked to impaired concentration, confusion, depression, anxiety, and paranoia. Knowles, J. (2015). The Shameful Wall of Exclusion: How Solitary Confinement for Inmates with Mental Illness Violates the Americans with Disabilities Act. Wash. L. Rev., 90, 893.

return to the General Population housing area in 2 Lower North. Yet, the cycle of lock-ins continues today, as he remains in his cell the entire day unless he is brought to court.

A Lack of Stability, Care, and Trust

Stability and consistency in mental health care are a matter of life-or-death for those struggling with suicidal ideation. Yet mental health treatment is a constant source of uncertainty for our clients, which is only compounded by the stress of their criminal case and community separation. Clients under suicide watch have reported inconsistent assignment of Emergency Service Officers (ESO), who are responsible for monitoring them closely to prevent suicide. Our clients do not have necessary access to mental health professionals who are familiarized with their mental health backgrounds. Clinical counselors fail to share critical information about our clients' cases among other attending clinical staff. As a result, our clients are forced to retell their stories to different clinicians and relive their trauma, adding to their mental distress. Furthermore, this also causes a constant breakdown in care, often during critical moments when our clients are most vulnerable and susceptible to suicide and self-harm.

Our clients often have a deeply entrenched lack of trust in medical and non-medical staff. Some said they do not believe the medical staff have a genuine interest in their well-being and their health progress. There are countless incidents to point to as reasons for why our clients would be deeply distrustful. On November 27, 2019, Mr. Nicholas Feliciano attempted suicide and hung motionless for several minutes, while corrections officers watched from outside the cell he was in.[3] This is just one of the many instances when DOC staff showed complete apathy towards the suffering of our clients. From that same report from the Board of Corrections that highlighted Mr. Feliciano's death, it was recounted that Mr. Ryan Wilson died by suicide on November 22, 2020. Mr. Wilson was hanging for 14 minutes before DOC staff intervened.

It is no surprise that under these harrowing circumstances, the rate of self-harm in city jails has skyrocketed over the last few years. Data available from the second quarter of the year 2021 show that there were 539 acts of self-harm reported in city jails—this is a rate of 95 incidents per 1,000 detainees.[4] Despite these alarming numbers, DOC employees refuse to complete the necessary training to save lives. An investigation showed that only 27% of DOC employees had completed annual suicide prevention training in 2021.[5] DOC employees refuse to do the bare minimum to keep our clients safe.

CHS chooses not to advocate for MH clients who are suffering as a result of DOC staff misconduct. It becomes an ethical issue for CHS to concede to DOC when patients are not produced for their appointments for mental health and medical services. CHS has a duty to

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[3] https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/Reports/BOC-Reports/nicholas-feliciano-final-report-and-recommendations-with-chs-response-20211018.pdf

[4] https://www.wnyc.org/story/rise-suicides-rikers-island/

[5] https://nypost.com/2021/11/26/only-27-of-rikers-island-staff-completed-suicide-training/

protect clients from harm, and that harm is often directly related to DOC. The absence of challenging DOC speaks to a power deferential that impedes the receipt of care. It has been delineated by DOC that security and safety are always the priority. However, a proactive way to safety and security is making sure that people in custody get to their mental health and medical appointments with CHS. Without care, stress is elevated, and people are forced into a survival mode, spilling into violent behaviors. With care, people feel acknowledged, seen, and heard and the uncertainty of care dissipates.

A Starting Post for DOC Accountability for Patient Production

Int. 0030-2022 is meant to address the challenges of getting our incarcerated community members to their much-needed medical and mental health appointments during and after a facility being on lockdown. Bronx Defenders is certainly supportive of a piece of legislation that will uphold the needed care of our clients and other community members in custody. However, the bill does not acknowledge the lack of production due to staffing issues. Perhaps along with many stated reasons for non-production, "staffing" should be an explicit option that officers can mark in order to have this data recorded.

The federal monitoring body over the NYC Department of Correction has declared staffing issues the root cause of much of the crisis on Rikers Island.[6] Staffing issues gravely impact access to medical care for incarcerated persons on Rikers Island. The Department of Correction's Monthly Report on Medical Appointment Non-Production for January 2022 indicates that there was a 70% refusal rate for medical appointments without the individual providing a reason; this leaves room to wonder what the situational nuances were that led 3,722 people to refuse their medical attention without providing a reason. The numbers for refusal do not coincide with reality. Our clients' constant cries for help and pleas for advocacy speak to the probability that refusal designations are just another example of DOC's misconduct and apathetic behavior. It does not add up that there would be this many people who requested care, only to refuse it. Our clients have repeatedly attested to that there was no one who came to get them for their appointments. According to the CHS Access Report from December 2021, 36% of patients were not produced for their scheduled services.[7] During that same period, there were 241 referrals made to mental health services, and only 67% of individuals were seen within 72 hours.

There have been countless times that our clients have shared with us that they have had an appointment for medical or mental health and that no officer ever came to pick them up to produce them for their appointment. During the April 29th Hearing before this Committee, DOC's own Rabiah Gaynor, Executive Director of Health Services, shared with us all that since

[6] Office of the Monitor Nunez, et al. V. City of New York, et al. (2021, August 24). https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.nysd.383754/gov.uscourts.nysd.383754.378.0.pdf

[7] NYC Health + Hospitals Correctional Health Services. (2021, December). CHS access report: December 2021. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/Reports/Correctional-Health-Authority-Reports/CHS-Access-Report-CY21Q4.pdf

March 2022 – during which the jail population was approximately 5,459 people[8], there have been 12,745 missed medical and mental health appointments. Those numbers bring into perspective the amount of rescheduling and repeated efforts of incarcerated community members to get the care that they require. Without Int. 0030-2022, all of those missed opportunities for care would remain without reason for being missed. The lack of DOC accountability around production to appointments does not keep incarcerated New Yorkers safe. DOC's non-production of individuals to their appointments catalyzes the violence they attempt to control because it perpetuates unknowns, the unknown answers to their mental health and medical care, the unknowns of what is happening with their cases, and the unknowns of connecting with their loved ones. Non-production does not keep incarcerated New Yorkers sound and healthy and quite literally impedes them from being able to fight their cases while in custody. Int. 0030-2022 could be a road to resolving the issues of non-production.

Int. 0030-2022 says that individuals will be seen by medical staff after a lockdown based on medical necessity. What remains to be answered is how the medical necessity will be determined outside of emergency needs. One of our clients sat for two months with a swollen face due to an advanced oral infection without receiving treatment. If officers are the ones to escort people to the clinic, technically they will be the ones to see the patient first and make that determination

Part of Int. 0030-2022 requires officers to record when people refuse to go to court, visits, or programming. A client reported to us just on Monday that he had seen officers with recorders asking people whether they refuse court or medical appointments. He was skeptical that the recorders were even on. Our client pointed out that correctional officers can easily shut the cameras off. Many of our clients who were marked as refusing remain skeptical about whether this approach will be effective, when many times they are not even given the chance to refuse because officers simply do not show up to escort them to appointments.

Shifting Perceptions about and Care for Incarcerated Community Members

The oral and written advocacy in the name of care for our incarcerated New York City community members is not just for addressing what is happening now but also serves to affect their outcomes upon reentry. Jails and prisons are fear-based tools for incapacitation and punishment. In order to truly equip our incarcerated New York City community with the tools they need to succeed, we must establish and uphold standards of mental health care beyond confinement.

The City's new administration has made clear a mission that centers public safety. A solid means to achieve that is through a continuum of care that includes the tenets of mental health services. Some individuals who become court-involved enter the legal system have deeply rooted trauma, behavioral health challenges, and addiction. Even after, the *Brad H vs. City of New York* settlement and the Local Law 190 to support incarcerated clients with serious mental illness, there still stands the need for increased communication between mental health service staff

[8] https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/jail_population.pdf

inside of jail and outside of jail. A comprehensive continuum of care is the only way to truly meet individuals where they are and prepare them for success on the outside. Addressing self-harm and suicide ideation as well as other mental health needs while folks are inside in addition to affirming bridges of care upon release is how we should move forward. This makes Int.0030-2022 that much more salient as it has potential to change the trajectory of folks' ability to build with mental health service inside that carry over into community. If individuals are not produced for their appointments, continuum of care is disrupted.

BRONX OPERA
EST. 1967

BENJAMIN SPIERMAN, general director **MICHAEL SPIERMAN, artistic director**

5 minerva place, #2-j **(718) 365-4209**
bronx, new york 10468 **www.bronxopera.org** **BronxOpera@gmail.com**

First of all, good afternoon to chair Brennan, and council members. I'm Benjamin Spierman, General Director of Bronx Opera (founded in 1967) and a Board Member of the New York Opera Alliance (founded in 2013).

Bronx Opera has received city support via the Cultural Development Fund, and through Council initiatives, using that support to work with kids after school, with The Bronx's immigrant community, and with seniors, in addition to 55 years of presenting opera performances live and on video. Though my organization has needs, today I'm here to talk about our Alliance, and the impact our members make.

Pre-pandemic, the 45 organizations in the New York Opera Alliance provided over 2000 jobs to New Yorkers, providing these arts workers with over $30 million in salaries each year. This includes people on stage and backstage, instrumentalists, administrators, and more. Organizations in our Alliance usually bring in over $90 million in revenue each year, but obviously that economic power has been challenged since March 2020. Most of us survived thanks to a combination of creativity, grit, and the support of our faithful funders, very much including the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Mid and small-sized opera companies all over New York City are an underappreciated source of economic power, and we all know how to spend our money wisely. But wise spending does not preclude the need for greater support. In that spirit, the New York Opera Alliance asks that the City Council support the requests laid out in the 2023 NYC Culture VIBE ask, which would bring city support for Arts & Culture to ¼ of 1 percent of the City Budget, moving towards the long-ago "percent-for-art" goal. We also demand that the Council hold the Cultural Affairs budget harmless from Mayor Adams' 3% across the board cut.

As we recover from the pandemic, we are all seeing live audiences that are reduced from pre-pandemic levels. Your funding will help our community to remain the “bang-for-the-buck” industry that it’s always been, and will help opera producers keep working in the community, and keep the music echoing in places and spaces all over New York City outside of Lincoln Center, and allow us to continue raising our voices as we help provide entertainment to our audiences and dollars to the people who bring opera to life in New York City. Thank you for the chance to speak today.

FY23
NYC Culture VIBE

Fund Culture: A Visionary Investment in Building the NYC Economy

The cultural sector is requesting an additional **$100 million investment from NYC in FY23** to augment NYC's economic recovery and create an inclusive sector growth towards a future-focused and equitable economy. Investing in culture means investing in the long-term financial health of our city. **The $100m request will bring the annual investment in culture to .24% of City's total budget and will represent a commitment to our ultimate goal of reaching 1% for Culture.**

CULTURE FOR ALL

The FY23 $100M request includes:

- **$50M in CIG and CDF baseline funding** (split evenly between the Cultural Institutions Group and the Cultural Development Fund) to provide critical core support that will stabilize NYC's cultural community, allowing organizations to address their most-pressing logistical and mission-centric expenses. This will support their core work as community anchors and tourism magnets.
- **$45M in grants for 5 Strategic Initiatives** that advances a revitalized and equitable city:
  - $15M for a Cultural Equity Fund, to support BIPOC-led and -serving organizations;
  - $10M for tourism and marketing for culture across all 5 boroughs;
  - $10M for workforce development and support programs;
  - $5M for accessibility and inclusion of Deaf/ Disabled communities;
  - $5M for individual artists and renewal of the City Artist Corps program
- **$5M to increase staffing at DCLA** for the agency to provide efficient and timely support to the field

New York Opera Alliance

Members Organizations as of 2022

The American Opera Project

Amore Opera

Beth Morrison Projects

Bronx Opera

Capital Opera - Albany

Chelsea Opera

City Lyric Opera

Collectio Musicorum, Ltd

Conservatory of Music of Brooklyn College

Death of Classical

dell'Arte Opera Ensemble

Divaria Productions, Inc.

Douglas Moore Fund for American Opera

Encompass New Opera Theatre

Experiments in Opera

Harlem Opera Theater

Heartbeat Opera

HERE Arts Center

Hunter Opera Theater

Indie Opera Podcast

International Brazilian Opera Company

The Lighthouse Opera Company, Inc.

Manhattan School of Music Opera Theater

Martina Arroyo Foundation

MORE Opera

Music of the Americas

National Opera Center/Opera America

New Amsterdam Opera, Inc.

New Camerata Opera

New York Festival of Song (NYFOS)

No Dominion Theatre Co.

On Site Opera

Opera for Earth

Opera Lafayette

Opera on Tap

Opera Praktikos

Professional Women Singers Association

Prototype Festival

Regina Opera

Rhymes With Opera

Sas Performing Arts Co & Studios INC.

Sign & Sing

the little OPERA Theatre of NY

Untitled Theater Company No. 61

Utopia Opera, Ltd

Vertical Player Repertory

Vital Opera

Welltone New Music, Inc.

Brooklyn Defenders

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TESTIMONY OF:
Anya Mukarji-Connolly

BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

Presented before
The New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing

May 25, 2021

Introduction

My name is Anya Mukarji-Connolly. I am the Associate Director of Policy at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). I thank the City Council Committee on Finance, and in particular Chair Brannan, for this opportunity to testify about our work and the importance of funding for indigent defense providers in New York City.

BDS is a public defense office whose mission is to provide outstanding representation and advocacy free of cost to people facing loss of freedom, family separation and other serious legal harms by the government. For over 25 years, BDS has worked, in and out of court, to protect and uphold the rights of individuals and to change laws and systems that perpetuate injustice and inequality.

We represent approximately 25,000 people each year who are accused of a crime, facing loss of liberty, their home, their children, or deportation. Our staff consists of specialized attorneys, social workers, investigators, paralegals and administrative staff who are experts in their individual fields. BDS also provides a wide range of additional services for our clients, including civil legal advocacy, assistance with educational needs of our clients or their children, housing and benefits advocacy, as well as immigration advice and representation.

Public Safety and Community Investment

Public safety has been a focal point of the discourse surrounding the FY23 budget. As public defenders, we know that true investment in public safety must address the systemic issues giving rise to drug use, mental health crises, and community violence. We can not arrest and prosecute our way to solving these problems. These punitive responses can only exacerbate the very issues they intend to solve. Many of the people we serve may have avoided the court system had they had access to support services sooner. Instead, many of our clients become eligible for support services only because of their interaction with the NYPD, Administration for Children's Services (ACS), or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). With the support of the City

Council, we are able to provide our clients with robust support and assistance in navigating benefits applications and affordable housing processes, and accessing quality mental health care, substance use treatment, educational support, respite centers, or immigration assistance.

The City's dangerous reliance on incarceration as a strategy to promote public safety has deepened systemic inequities in our community and has enabled a culture of abuse and harm in the City's jails. Mismanagement of New York City Department of Correction (DOC) staff has been well documented. DOC has a higher staff to persons-in-custody ratio than any jail in the country. Yet, the Department still fails to transport people to court, legal visits, family visits or emergency healthcare appointments. Despite this exorbitant ratio, the Department described a need for additional uniformed staff and overtime pay to resolve the staffing crises in the jails.

In the fall of 2021, alongside the Legal Aid Society and Milbank LLP, we filed a class action lawsuit against the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) on behalf of incarcerated New Yorkers who are being denied access to medical care in the City jails. Even after being ordered by the Court to provide people immediate access to care in December 2021, DOC continued to fail to do so. In February and March 2022 alone, over 20,000 medical appointments were missed. This failure has caused undue suffering, resulting in long-lasting health impacts and even death. This May, a Bronx Supreme Court judge found DOC in contempt, giving the City 30 days to remedy its unlawful failure to provide access to medical services or pay $100 per instance access to medical care was denied in NYC jails from December 11, 2021 through January 2022. The City's inability and unwillingness to meet basic human needs for the people in its custody reaffirms the urgency to immediately remove people from the inhumane and dangerous conditions of the City jails.

As public defenders, we provide a different type of safety for the public. We provide protection from the overreach of law enforcement and from harsh and unfair laws that destroy lives, often because of one mistake or one moment in a person's life. We represent people who have been arrested, who have been suspended from school, who are facing deportation, or who are navigating other complex legal processes. We also provide a safety net for people we represent by providing assistance accessing housing, benefits, and other support services. To prevent system involvement, we provide know your rights trainings and brief legal advice in the Brooklyn community. BDS builds public safety by helping people stay in their homes, with their families, and in their community.

BDS is committed to providing a bridge to services for people who continue to be impacted by the criminal legal, family regulation[1], and immigration systems as we also work to shrink the scope of these systems and their impact on Black, Latine, and other New Yorkers of color. As we do so,

[1] Many, including scholar Professor Dorothy Roberts, have come to refer to the "child welfare" system as the family regulation system, given the historical and current harms perpetuated by the system. See e.g., Dorothy Roberts, "Abolishing Policing Also Means Abolishing Family Regulation", The Imprint (June 16, 2020), found at: https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare2/abolishing-policing-also-means-abolishing-family-regulation/44480.

we urge the City to consider why it takes an arrest or investigation for a New Yorker to access meaningful assistance and humane support. We implore the City Council to work with the Mayor to begin to move funding away from systems that surveille and criminalize New Yorkers and instead, invest in real public safety by expanding community-based programming, resources and crisis services. This must include ongoing support for existing community-based providers, who can provide increased interim services as the City begins to reduce reliance on the criminal legal system.

Our Work

BDS has provided legal services to Brooklyn residents for more than 25 years. BDS' diverse staff of approximately 450 includes over 280 attorneys, 50 social workers, and 120 support staff including investigators, paralegals, re-entry specialists, jail services advocates, community liaisons, policy specialists and administrative professionals. Our specialized approach allows us to provide targeted services for clients in each of our practices who have unique needs, such as veterans, people with mental illness or developmental disabilities, young people and victims of trafficking. We thank the City Council for your consistent support of indigent legal service providers.

I. Criminal Defense Practice

Our Criminal Defense Practice provides representation to approximately 20,000 people who are arrested in Brooklyn each year. BDS has over 140 criminal defense attorneys, each extremely dedicated and skilled in all aspects of criminal law. Our attorneys provide wrap-around services in collaboration with interdisciplinary teams including immigration attorney specialists, social workers, client advocates, paralegals, investigators, and administrative staff. In order to address the unique needs of our clients, BDS' criminal defense practice has a number of dedicated and specialized units which provide targeted services to adolescents, clients with mental illness, victims of trafficking, veterans and people with overlapping criminal, family court, and immigration issues.

II. Family Defense Practice

The Family Defense Practice at BDS has been representing parents and other caregivers in Family Court for 15 years. We are the primary provider of legal representation to parents facing the removal of their children in Brooklyn Family Court. Our Family Defense Practice provides a wide range of services for parents and caregivers, including assisting people who are facing an ACS investigation, providing legal representation to people who are brought to family court, and helping to clear the records of parents from the state's databases that impact employment.

In our work, we see that symptoms of poverty, mental illness, drug or alcohol use, and development or physical disabilities are often treated as grounds for court involvement – and the vast majority

of those targeted by ACS are families of color. Our team works to keep families safely together and to shrink the pathways through which marginalized families are funneled into the court system.

III. Immigration Practice

BDS' Immigration Practice works to minimize the negative immigration consequences of criminal charges for noncitizens, represent our clients in applications for immigration benefits, and defend our clients against ICE detention and deportation. Since 2009, we have counseled, advised, or represented more than 15,000 clients in immigration matters.

As one of three New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) providers, BDS has represented more than 1,500 people in detained deportation proceedings since the inception of the program in 2013. Our NYIFUP team represents people in detained and non-detained removal proceedings in bond, merits hearings, release advocacy with ICE, administrative and federal court appeals, and federal district court challenges to unlawful detention.

VI. Civil Justice Practice

BDS' Civil Justice Practice assists clients with criminal, family, and immigration cases in civil legal matters, including housing, education, employment, and access to benefits. In the past year, the Civil Justice Team represented or connected BDS clients with services in approximately 1,000 cases. The Civil Justice Practice seeks to reduce the civil collateral consequences of legal system involvement. Through legal advocacy in court and at various agencies, we assist people in remaining in their homes, maintaining their public benefits, staying in school, keeping their jobs, and protecting their consumer rights.

FY23 Budget Priorities

I. Fully Fund Family Defense for Article 10 Cases

Most of the people we represent are people of color living in poverty in highly policed neighborhoods and are raising their children in homeless shelters or public housing. These circumstances make them particularly vulnerable to government surveillance, including surveillance by ACS. Once in court, families often face prolonged separation and years of supervision, and the pandemic has resulted in extreme delays in family court proceedings and family reunification. While our clients usually have many needs that impact their ability to keep their families together, many families suffer more trauma from being separated than from staying together with supports in place.

We provide an essential service on behalf of the City, fulfilling New York State's legal mandate to provide representation to parents who cannot afford to hire an attorney. Our interdisciplinary model saves the City millions of dollars by reducing the time children spend in foster

placements, shrinking the foster system which disproportionately harms families of color, and providing needed support to families.

BDS receives $11,219,104 from MOCJ for our family defense contract. This level of funding is insufficient to sustain our representation model given our current intake targets. The City's family defense providers are currently funded at under 50% of what is needed to meet the state's statutory and constitutional mandates.

In 2021, the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services (ILS) agency released Caseload Standards[2] for parents' attorneys in New York State Family Court mandated representation cases, setting appropriate caseload standards for attorneys across the state. In analyzing the caseloads of the providers in these cases against the standards, New York City's family defense providers (Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, Center for Family Representation, and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem) need at least an additional $40 million to meet these minimum standards. We are asking the City Council to prioritize adding this amount to the MOCJ budget expressly for the purpose of enabling the providers to hire additional attorneys, social workers and other staff needed to support this essential work.

Our organizations were instrumental in creating a new model of interdisciplinary representation for parents which addressed many of the issues expressed at that time and has proven to improve outcomes for children and their families impacted by this system. However, there has never been sufficient financial investment to assure all low-income parents receive the robust interdisciplinary legal representation they need to keep their families together and to which they are legally entitled.

Nearly two decades later, the Chief Judge's Commission on Parental Legal Representation released a report on the status of parental representation across the State. The 2019 Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore describes the ongoing crisis in New York's parental legal representation and made six initial recommendations, including the need to reduce caseloads among family defense attorneys.

The inadequate investment in parent defense cannot continue. Article 10 cases are among the most traumatic for families and have long lasting effects on families and communities. The budget shortfall has been made more acute over the past two years as the backlog in the courts, which has been significantly worsened by the pandemic, has made it more likely that clients will face supplemental family court proceedings. Even with our best efforts to expedite our clients' cases, there are many factors that prolong the outcome of their court cases. Article 10 cases last two years on average. When it takes longer to resolve a case, there is a greater likelihood that

[2] New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services, *Caseload Standards for Parents' Attorneys in New York State Family Court Mandated Representation Cases* (June 4, 2021), Available at https://www.ils.ny.gov/files/Caseload%20Standards%20Parents%20Attorneys%20NYS%20Family%20Court.pdf

additional matters—termination of parental rights (TPR) petitions, custody petitions, and new allegations of neglect—will be filed against a client, creating an expanded need for critical casework outside of court by our social workers and other support staff to achieve positive outcomes in our cases.

Given what is at stake in these proceedings, including the temporary or permanent loss of custody of a child, it is critical that parents are represented by quality counsel with the expertise, time, and resources necessary to dedicate to these important cases. The City is mandated with the obligation to provide adequate services for this function by law and must meet this responsibility through increased funding for family defense contracts immediately. The City Council should demand that the Mayor's budget be amended to add these funds to the City budget in FY23.

II. Fully fund the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)

Now entering its 9th year, the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project remains the national model for universal representation for immigrants facing deportation. This groundbreaking City Council-funded initiative exemplifies the Council's commitment to immigrant New Yorkers. As the global pandemic continued in 2021, NYIFUP staff fought for the release of immigrant New Yorkers detained in dangerous conditions, advocated for over a thousand clients in the community, and utilized policy shifts made by the Biden Administration for the benefit of our clients.

In FY23, the NYIFUP providers – Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, and The Legal Aid Society - seek funding of $18 million total to ensure that all detained and previously detained New Yorkers can receive excellent representation through NYIFUP. This increase in funding would also expand our ability to challenge unlawful or unconstitutional government action in federal court.

As ICE policing and detention escalates under the Biden administration, NYIFUP providers are seeing an increase in our intake as compared with a few months ago and are prepared for additional increases as the pandemic recedes. As new remedies – such as prosecutorial discretion – continue to present opportunities, we must invest more time and resources in litigation, research, and advocacy. We call on the City Council to preserve this City's commitment to the groundbreaking NYIFUP initiative and fully fund NYIFUP.

FY23 Priority Discretionary Budget Requests

BDS relies on the support of the City Council – as well as individual donors and private foundations – to fund our wraparound services. Discretionary funding from the City Council allows us to provide targeted interventions and cutting-edge responses to meet community needs.

I. New York Immigrant Family Unity Project

As previously stated, NYIFUP is a vital program for immigrant New Yorkers who are facing Deportation. Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, and The Legal Aid Society seek funding of $18 million total to continue to ensure that all detained New Yorkers have counsel and that they continue to receive excellent representation once released.

II. Family Advocacy and Guardian Support: Right to Family Advocacy Initiative

The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is a two-year-old initiative that provides desperately needed due process, representation and advocacy services to individuals and families in high-stakes ACS investigations and in hearings with the New York State Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS). Currently, parents with family regulation involvement who cannot afford to hire counsel are not provided assigned attorneys until ACS files a case against them in family court. This means that families are not assigned attorneys until after an investigation, during which critical decisions are made regarding whether the family will be diverted to prevention programs, whether the case will be filed in court, and, most significantly, whether children will be separated from their parents and, if so, who will care for them.

BDS – with The Bronx Defenders, Center for Family Representation and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem – is requesting funding of $3,200,000 ($800,000 per organization) from the City Council. This funding will enable us to continue to advocate for parents during ACS investigations and represent parents looking to clear their child abuse and neglect records from the State Central Register for employment purposes.

III. Immigration Opportunity Initiative: Immigration Community Action Program

Our Immigration Community Action Program (ICAP), which receives Immigrant Opportunity Initiative (IOI) funding, represents people in non-detained removal proceedings and provides affirmative legal services such as assistance with applications for immigration benefits, including family-based applications for lawful permanent status, fear-based applications, U & T visas, Special Juvenile Immigrant Status (SIJS), DACA renewal and related applications. BDS' ICAP team prioritizes people that are current or former clients of BDS and their families, non-citizens with former system involvements, community residents referred from partner organizations, and individuals referred by constituent affairs offices.

Increased funding is needed for BDS to continue providing legal screening, advice, and direct representation to low-income immigrants in their pursuit of affirmative immigration benefits. We ask that the Council support our IOI ask of $200,000 to expand our ability to do so.

IV. Speaker's Initiative: Civil Justice Practice

We are seeking support for BDS' Civil Justice Practice (CJP) through initiatives such as Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers to advance our goal of serving clients who have

historically been unable to access traditional legal services or whose unique issues –caused or exacerbated by criminal, family, or deportation proceedings –require specialized knowledge to address. The modest funding we have received for this program has enabled us to successfully preserve housing and jobs, facilitate access to benefits, and address education and employment issues for thousands of Brooklyn families. Our expertise in representing people with multi-court system involvement has uniquely positioned us to address the countless barriers between vulnerable New Yorkers and the services they desperately need. The funding proposed would allow us to serve additional families most in need of comprehensive legal support.

BDS has requested Speaker's Initiative Funding for $200,000 to support Brooklyn Defender Services' Civil Justice Practice

V. Additional Discretionary Budget Applications

The Council's support enables BDS to provide a wide breadth of programming and comprehensive services to each client. We have established ourselves as a critical legal organization for residents throughout Brooklyn. In support of these targeted programs, we have submitted:

- An Alternatives to Incarceration request under application for $200,000 to support Brooklyn Defender Services' Pre-Entry to Re-Entry Initiative;
- A Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative request for $200,000 to support Brooklyn Defender Services' Specialized Domestic Violence Services;
- A Human Service Organization Pandemic Relief request for $251,000 to support Brooklyn Defender Services' Community Office work.

These funds allow us to meet the specific needs of community members – including those experiencing incarceration, returning to the community, experiencing domestic violence, or in need of legal advice.

Conclusion

BDS is proud to have served the Brooklyn community for over 25 years. Our staff has worked diligently to protect the rights of New Yorkers every day since, but the need for our services is more acute now than ever. BDS' requested funding will ensure that we can continue to provide quality legal services to people facing dire circumstances — incarceration, family separation, deportation, homelessness, school suspension, or job termination. We thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify today and for your continued support of the people, families, and communities we represent.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at amukarjiconnolly@bds.org.

Testimony in Support of Allocating 1% of the NYC Budget for Parks
To the City Council Committee on Finance
by Brooklyn Greenway Initiative Executive Director Terri Carta
May 27, 2022

Brooklyn Greenway Initiative (BGI) is a nonprofit organization that for two decades has been focused on the development, establishment, and long-term stewardship of the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway, a vital and nearly complete component of NYC's greenways network that connects parks and waterfronts, advances climate and sustainability goals, and provides safe mobility options for New Yorkers of all ages and abilities.

BGI proudly stands with our partners in the Play Fair Coalition and in City Council in our collective call for Mayor Adams to fulfill his commitment to allocate 1% of the city budget to Parks.

Much of the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway –which is also true of greenways throughout the five Boroughs– is managed and maintained by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks). Without sufficient funding for the agency, NYC Parks isn't able to fulfill its obligations to New Yorkers as outlined in the City Charter for baseline maintenance and keeping Parks facilities in a state of good repair. **This lack of funding disproportionately impacts lower income and communities of color along the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway and citywide, perpetuating decades of inequitable resource allocation and access to safe well-maintained parks and open spaces, including greenways.**

On the campaign trail, Mayor Adams publicly committed to fund the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation at 1% of the city budget, stating that "an equitable parks system starts with funding for the agency and accessibility for New Yorkers."

The FY2023 Executive Budget thus far fails to deliver on this promise, further hamstringing the agency at a time when park and greenway use, the effects of climate change, and impacts on New Yorkers from decades of inequitable investments are at an all time high.

As one of the 400+ organizations of the Play Fair Coalition, BGI implores Mayor Adams to make good on his campaign commitment and allocate 1% of the budget for NYC Parks. Raising parks funding from 0.6 to 1% of the budget is the bare minimum required for adequate staffing, maintenance, and parks planning to ensure that our park facilities are equitable, safe, clean, and accessible for all New Yorkers.

Working up to 1% over the course of the Mayor's term simply isn't good enough as we face another summer of increased demand and need for parks, beaches, greenways, and other open spaces. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relationship between parks equity, public health, and public safety – putting in stark relief what we have long understood: parks and open spaces are critical infrastructure and must be funded as such. New Yorkers of color are still significantly less likely to have access to parks, greenways, and open spaces –or park amenities like basketball courts and other recreational facilities, sufficient lighting for safety, or regular basic maintenance.

A recent analysis of the economic benefits of parks in NYC by Trust for Public Land calculated that parks "create billions of dollars of benefits and savings every year to residents, businesses, and visitors in all five boroughs" – including:

- $9.1 billion in recreational value
- $1.14 billion in health care savings
- up to $2.43 billion in avoided stormwater treatment costs
- $20.3 million through reduced fine particulate matter
- $6.2 million through reduced ground ozone
- Over $15.2 billion in increased property value
- $101 million in annual property tax revenues
- $17.9 billion in tourism spending
- $680 million annually spent on sports, recreation, and exercise equipment

It's high time the NYC Budget reflects this unparalleled "return on investment" for parks by funding NYC Parks with at least 1% of the city's budget.

New Yorkers need the city budget to reflect its values. We thank Mayor Adams and the Committee on Finance for listening to this call and taking action to finalize a budget that Plays Fair for Parks.

Testimony by Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
May 25, 2021, 10:00 AM
NYC's Committee on Finance: Public Hearing

For over 50 years, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (Brooklyn A) has adapted our services to meet current and emerging needs of our communities. Now that the state moratoriums on residential and commercial evictions and foreclosures have lifted, our main focus in Fiscal Year 2023 will be fighting displacement and building community resilience as we continue to face and recover from the public health and economic crisis generated by the ongoing pandemic.

We have hired more attorneys and advocates, added educational and outreach events, and adapted our services to meet the moment. Access to free, high-quality legal services and advocacy could very well be the difference between losing or keeping our clients homes and businesses. In FY23, Brooklyn A needs maximum discretionary funds to meet the incredible demand for our services now that the eviction and foreclosure moratoriums have lifted.

Based in Williamsburg and Bedford-Stuyvesant and serving clients citywide, our staff of almost 70 assisted thousands of New Yorkers last year. Over 95 percent of our $12.1 million annual budget goes towards providing free legal services and working with our partners to get essential resources to our client communities. Brooklyn A is uniquely positioned to represent their voice and interests in the legal system given our record of success. Our success is based on our collaborative model with new and long-time partners, such as community-based organizations, coalitions, government agencies, and elected officials, and on our good working relationship City and State government agencies.

Our three core programs – Preserving Affordable Housing, Community & Economic Development, and Consumer & Economic Advocacy – offer clients living and working in rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods relief and options to fight displacement and build community resilience.

<u>Preserving Affordable Housing – Application ID: 115066</u>

Many low-income New Yorkers have experienced lost or decreased income related to COVID-19 shutdowns and economic strain, making it hard or impossible to pay rent. The pandemic and the city's persistent affordable housing crisis have compounded to exacerbate the difficulties faced by low-to-moderate-income individuals and families throughout New York City. New York City renters are at a critical moment after the statewide moratorium on evictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic expired in January, thus opening a queue of potential evictions that had been on hold since March 2020. Our demand for eviction prevention services is astronomical in this moment.

Through the pandemic, BKA's commitment to keep tenants in their homes and respond to the increasing needs of the current moment has included providing legal advocacy to

prevent evictions and harassment in court; helping tenants access rental assistance through special COVID-19 rent-relief programs like Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds and one-shot deals, and contesting rejections for requests for government financial assistance; providing virtual workshops on tenant rights; and organizing tenant associations to build collective power.

Last year the program helped almost 2,000 individuals to maintain housing stability, and 30 tenant associations to fight for habitable living conditions. One individual helped was Dana, who has lived in Flatbush, Brooklyn since immigrating from Trinidad and Tobago. She came to Brooklyn A when her apartment building owner tried to evict her from the home where she had been living and caring for her Aunt Sheila. Brooklyn A helped Dana prove that there was an emotional and financial commitment and interdependence between her and her aunt, allowing Dana to succeed Sheila's tenancy and preserve her affordable family apartment and community.

BKA is requesting $525,000 in FY23 funds. With an investment in BKA's Preserving Affordable Housing Program, we will help thousands of renters access free, high-quality, low barrier legal assistance and secure rental assistance through special COVID-19 rent-relief programs and one-shot deals; host regular workshops and events to educate community members about their rights, explain legal and practical options, and ensure that members of the community know that help is available; help low-income tenants and their families secure repairs and essential services so they have safe and habitable living conditions; and contest illegally high rents, which slows the rise in future rents and thereby enhances affordability. We need maximum support to keep New Yorkers in their homes, to educate tenants on their rights and what to expect in the months to come, and to represent tenants in danger of losing their homes in legal proceedings.

<u>Foreclosure Prevention – Application ID: 124140</u>

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the housing foreclosure crisis disproportionately impacted low-income communities, BIPOC communities, and senior homeowners. The pandemic has compounded this issue, as a significant number of lower-income and BIPOC homeowners in NYC have lost income or had unexpected costs. During the pandemic, mortgage delinquencies of at least 90 days rose to the highest level in a decade. While some homeowners with federally backed mortgages have been granted forbearance, or a temporary lower or paused payment on mortgages, lower-income BIPOC homeowners have been historically excluded from access to some of the conventional mortgage systems. Financial hardship combined with structural racism has led to widespread defaults on mortgage payments and a potential mass wave of foreclosure proceedings for the most vulnerable homeowners now that COVID-19 homeowner protections are lifted. Additionally, there is a continuing prevalence of predatory lending, deed theft, and other illegal practices that target elderly homeowners and BIPOC homeowners, particularly in the neighborhoods served by BKA.

Last year we defended 237 individuals and families from foreclosure or discriminatory practices by predatory lenders, financial institutions, and home rescue scam artists. Over half of the homeowners we work with are seniors, and 92% are people of color. One individual helped was Tracey, who lives in her childhood home in Jamaica, Queens with her daughter and granddaughter. She was referred to Brooklyn A when the home went into foreclosure after disputes with the mortgage company on ownership and payment after Tracey faced a life-threatening accident that took her out of work at a hospital. Eventually we reached an agreement with affordable mortgage payments and established Tracey as the estate executive to keep the home in their family for generations to come.

BKA is requesting $130,000 in FY23 funds. An investment in BKA's Foreclosure Prevention Program would enable BKA to increase its level of legal representation and advocacy, which is desperately needed to prevent New Yorkers from losing their homes to foreclosure in the face of an ongoing catastrophic health and economic crisis. Our foreclosure prevention services aid in neighborhood stabilization, preserving homeownership, protecting seniors, and sustaining income for homeowners who rent apartments to low-income renters and thus increase the availability of affordable housing. To address the urgent needs at this moment, BKA is representing homeowners in legal proceedings to prevent foreclosure; educating homeowners on their rights and responsibilities concerning the end of the statewide foreclosure moratorium and relief available for financial hardship; and assisting homeowners to stop foreclosure, including using complex bankruptcy proceedings to stop the foreclosure process. The bankruptcy process immediately halts foreclosure proceedings and allows clients the opportunity to obtain loan modifications through the bankruptcy court's loss mitigation program or encourages banks to settle the cases. Bankruptcy proceedings will eventually significantly improve the financial status of families by wiping away credit card debt, resolving mortgage arrears, removing liens and most critically, keeping clients in their homes. This funding will mean increased protection of economic equity for homeowners, particularly those who are seniors and people of color.

Post-Incarceration Small Business Pilot – Application ID: 124139

Incarceration causes economic and social consequences that extend beyond the individual, family and community to impact the economic and social health of New York City and State. The lifelong consequences of incarceration affect individuals and families indefinitely, perpetuating economic inequality and increasing the likelihood of future carceral involvement. Those who experience incarceration on average have a 52% reduction in lifetime wages compared to those who do not experience incarceration. They are also twice as likely to lack high school credentials required for many jobs, and face stigmatization and lack of work experience that further reduces employment prospects. Data shows poverty increases incarceration twenty-fold. In 2019 alone 24,179 individuals were released by New York State corrections. The New York rate of recidivism is approximately 40% and is significantly impacted by lack of

financial opportunity and stability. For many people who have experienced incarceration, establishing an independent business may be the best viable alternative for financial stability. Formerly incarcerated persons are 50% more likely to become entrepreneurs than individuals who were not incarcerated. The only other population with comparably high entrepreneurship rates are immigrants, who have an 80% higher entrance rate into entrepreneurship than nonimmigrants.

BKA is requesting $175,000 in FY23 funds to support a pilot program to mitigate the economic consequences of incarceration by supporting entrepreneurs who have been impacted by incarceration and need legal support to realize their small business aspirations. The pilot is part of BKA's Community & Economic Development Program, and will provide a combination of business education, resources for planning for for-profit or nonprofit enterprises, and legal counseling and practical structure for establishing a for-profit or nonprofit business, including entity formation, licensing, trademark, copyright, negotiations, commercial leases, and other contracts. The program will serve people who were previously incarcerated, family members and others directly impacted by the carceral system, and those presently making the transition out of prison. Through this pilot, individuals that were incarcerated or who lost opportunities and resources due to the incarceration of a parent or relative will have increased chances of success and reduced odds of future incarceration while also generating positive social and economic outcomes for their families, communities, and New York's small business sector.

Join the Solution

In FY23, Brooklyn A needs maximum discretionary funds to meet the avalanche of need for our services at this moment, and in the coming years. Access to free, high-quality legal services and advocacy for New Yorkers could very well be the difference between losing or keeping their homes and businesses.

TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING FOR FY 2023

MAY 25TH, 2022

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. Our names are Allyson Martinez and Rachel Goodfriend and we are the Co-Founders of Brooklyn Level Up ("BKLVLUP"). BKLVLUP is a 501c3 nonprofit community development corporation with the vision of building community assets, equitable engagement practices and advocacy for BIPOC residents and small businesses within the East Flatbush, Flatbush, and Flatlands communities of Brooklyn, NY. We also advocate for holistic and thoughtful land use as well as truly affordable housing, commercial and communal spaces through our community land trust. BKLVLUP maximizes and/or creates access to opportunities, partnerships and information that spur communal wealth and economic sustainability. Our belief is that the space to build and grow as well as the resources needed to back those dreams has to be hyperlocal and devised in a way that "meets people where they are."

BKLVLUP and 19 partner organizations are part of a citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative that seeks to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces, in all five boroughs of NYC. CLTs are organizing in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods across NYC to stabilize housing, combat speculation, and ensure a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge the Committee and Council to support full funding of $3 million for the Citywide CLT Initiative, in the FY2023 budget. Please see attached BKLVLUP CLT Proposal and supporting material.

TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING FOR FY 2023

MAY 25TH, 2022

We further urge the City Council to ensure the final budget includes robust capital funding for the construction and preservation of affordable housing– including deeply and permanently- affordable housing; and to prevent budget cuts to HPD, DSS, and DHS that would threaten the housing security of thousands of New Yorkers.

We encourage the City Council to invest in CLTs because of what they are: vital engines for community sustainability, affordability, place-making, and community-centered changemaking. That support looks like assistance in land acquisition funding, capacity building support, and funding for technical and professional services. It also includes supporting (and voting in support of) CLT initiatives such as Abolishing the Tax Lien Sale, passing the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA), ensuring permanent affordability and community ownership of public lands, and why we are writing to you today, funding the Citywide CLT Initiative at $3 Million in FY 2023. We need the City's support to put funding where its values are supposed to be...with the residents of the various communities of New York City fighting to remain here in the face of mass displacement and a history of disinvestment, particularly in BIPOC neighborhoods.

Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT Initiative has catalyzed CLT organizing in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem, Richmond Hill, Brownsville, East New York and beyond. CLTs are community-controlled nonprofits that own land and ensure that it is used to provide permanently-affordable housing and other community needs. CLTs are flexible and can support permanently-affordable rental housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, microgrids and other infrastructure.

TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING FOR FY 2023

MAY 25TH, 2022

The CLT Initiative has made major strides--engaging thousands of renters, homeowners and small business owners in education and organizing; developing CLT steering committees and founding boards; incorporating new CLTs; and acquiring and preserving hundreds of permanently- and deeply-affordable housing units as well as community and retail spaces. Emerging CLTs have completed comprehensive property research and planning in their CLT catchment areas, and formalized developer and other strategic partnerships. As the newest CLT to join NYCCLI, BKLVLUP has formed a steering committee to educate and recruit concerned neighbors to join our cause in the communities of Flatbush, East Flatbush and Flatlands. Through our education campaign, we have presented CLT 101 training for Community Board 17's Housing Committee, will be participating in their housing fair, have rallied in support of our East New York CLT neighbors, have organized residents in the Cease and Desist state campaign to end aggressive real estate industry marketing in distressed communities, and have organized a door-to door outreach project in conjunction with local community boards and block associations to help neighbors get off of the NYC lien sale list.

Renewed FY23 discretionary funding and robust capital funding for acquisition and development will build on this tremendous progress, as more groups secure legal and technical assistance, launch CLT operations, sustain comprehensive organizing and community planning, and acquire and steward properties for long-term preservation. As a result of our Abolish the Tax Lien Sale work, we will build a comprehensive community trusts and estate planning toolkit to combat the loss of intergenerational and ultimately communal wealth that is occuring; we will continue to build our CLT membership and education campaigns, work to identify and acquire deeply-affordable housing units as well as community and retail spaces, build strategic

TESTIMONY TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING FOR FY 2023

MAY 25TH, 2022

partnerships, and advocate on behalf of and with the residents of East Flatbush, Flatbush and Flatlands, Brooklyn.

CLTs are a powerful tool to expand community control of land and stabilize housing in the wake of the pandemic. Strong CLTs, combined with policymaking that removes land and housing from the speculative market, will be key to a just recovery in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic.

We urge the City Council to redouble its commitment to CLTs at this critical time, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

In Service

Allyson and Rachel

Allyson Martinez & Rachel Goodfriend
Co-Founders
Brooklyn Level Up
bklvlup.org

press clippings

community land trust work

https://thebaffler.com/latest/lien-on-me-ramakrishna

https://council.nyc.gov/farah-louis/brooklyn-community-board-17-survey/

https://www.publichistoryproject.org/2021/09/20/decolonizing-archaeology-the-african-burial-ground-30-years-later/

https://commons.pratt.edu/gcpe/east-flatbush-community-preservation-empowerment-and-autonomy-plan/

https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:a194b8a1-794b-4048-a938-85b37552254c#pageNum=1

https://nyccli.org/abolish-the-nyc-tax-lien-sale/

https://bit.ly/3yFi2NT

https://wyckoffmuseum.org/calendar/your-silence-will-not-protect-you-audre-lorde-reading-discussion-group/

small business support

https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2021/12/17/citizensnyc-looks-out-for-little-guy-with-1-million-in-grants/

https://bkreader.com/2020/07/20/east-flatbush-restaurant-and-community-hub-celebrates-grand-reopening/

https://www.caribbeanlife.com/grand-re-opening-of-two-caribbean-restaurants-in-east-flatbush/

https://politicsny.com/2020/07/20/suede-black-owned-black-supported-restaurant-celebrates-outdoor-re-opening/

BROOKLYN LEVEL UP

community land trust

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PROPOSAL

Allyson Martinez
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917-703-7247

Rachel Goodfriend
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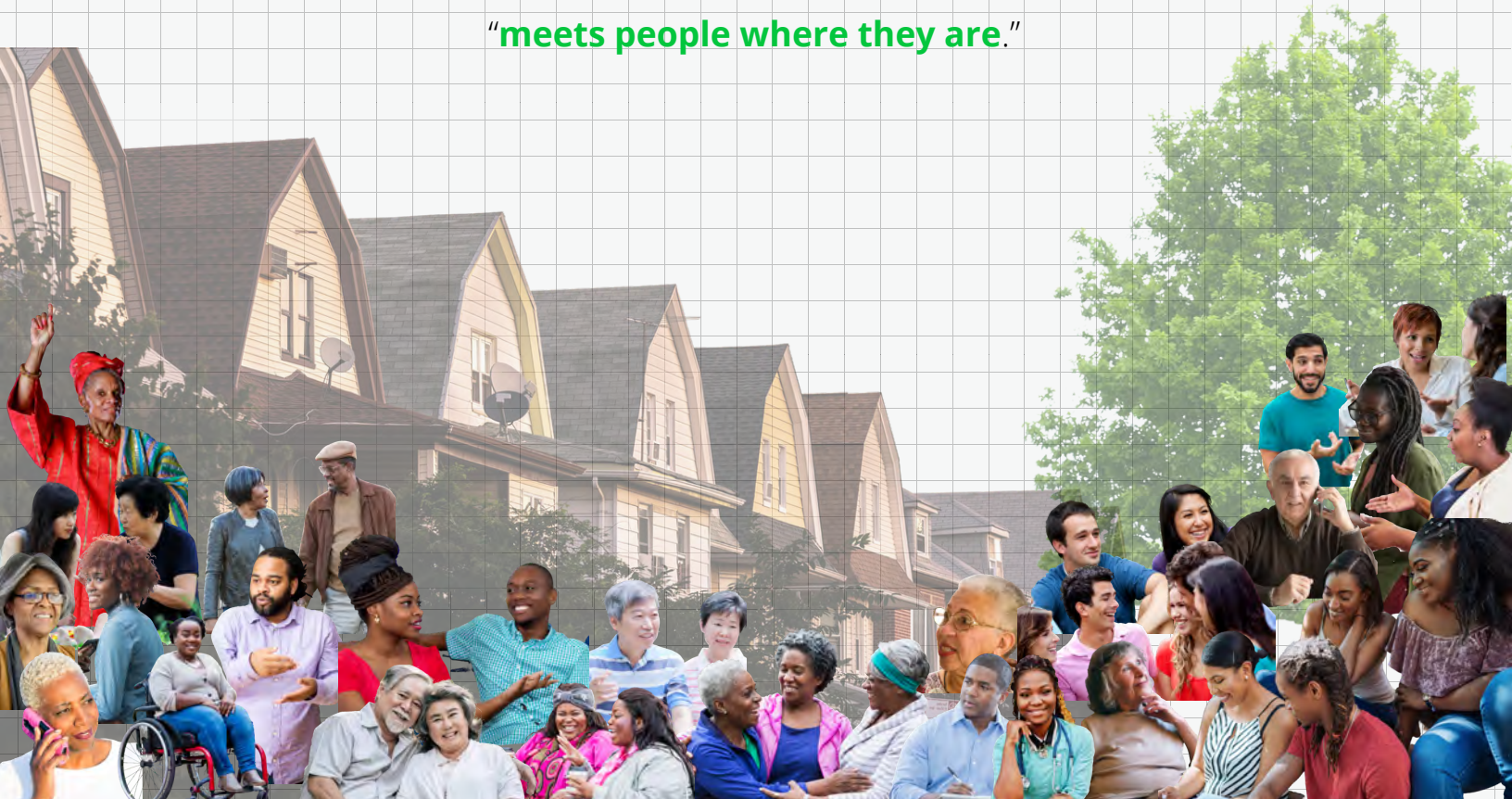


Community Development Corporation

maximize access. build community wealth.

About Us

Brooklyn Level Up ("**BKLVLUP**") is a 501(c)3 non-profit community development corporation with the vision of **building community assets** and **equitable engagement practices** for BIPOC **residents and small businesses** within the **East Flatbush**, **Flatbush**, and **Flatlands** communities of Brooklyn, NY. We also advocate for **holistic and thoughtful land use** as well as **truly affordable housing and commercial space** through our community land trust. BKLVLUP maximizes and/or creates access to opportunities and information that **spur communal wealth and economic sustainability**. Our belief is that the space to build and grow as well as the resources needed to back those dreams has to be **hyperlocal** and devised in a way that "**meets people where they are**."



Community Development Corporation

What We Do

SERVICES

BKLVLUP maximizes communal wealth by countering access inequities for BIPOC people. We cultivate leverage through:

- Education
- Communal Wealth-Building
- Community-Based Data Collection
- Consulting
- Providing Supportive Services and Access to Partner Service Pipelines
- Hyperlocal Community Engagement, Project Development & Marketing Services
- Community-Based Visioning Projects
- Regulation & Policy Visualization Toolkits
- Targeted Network Building

PROGRAMS

- Development and Management of the BKLVLUP Community Land Trust
- Small Business Entrepreneurship Collective Cohort Services
- MWBE Certification
- Community Digital Connector Program Services: Government Program/Grant/Loan Application Support & Agency Interaction
- COVID-19 Vaccine & Recovery Support
- Open Air Restaurant COVID19 Compliance and Guidance
- Engaged City Urban Planning Youth Fellowship

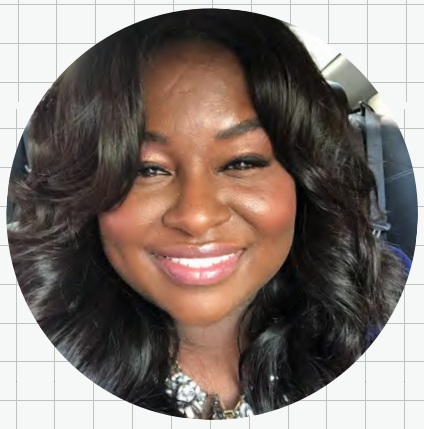
CLIENTS SERVED

- Homeowners
- Residential Tenants
- Commercial Tenants
- Youth
- Seniors
- Mission Driven Developers
- Community Gardens
- Local Restaurants
- Local Micro Businesses
- Community Board 17 & 18 Residents
- Local Block Associations
- Other CBOs/Non-Profits



Community Development Corporation

Our Team



Allyson Martinez

Co-Founder

CEO/Executive Director

Attorney



Rachel Goodfriend

Co-Founder

CFO

Development Consultant

We started BKLVLUP because of our experience as former CB17 Land Use Co-Chairs. We knew the breadth of the work we sought to do with and for our community and realized the limitations of what could be done within the community board itself. We endeavor to use creativity, art, technology and a deep commitment to the residents of East Flatbush, Flatbush and Flatlands to bring about momentous change and investment in the future of the place we call home.

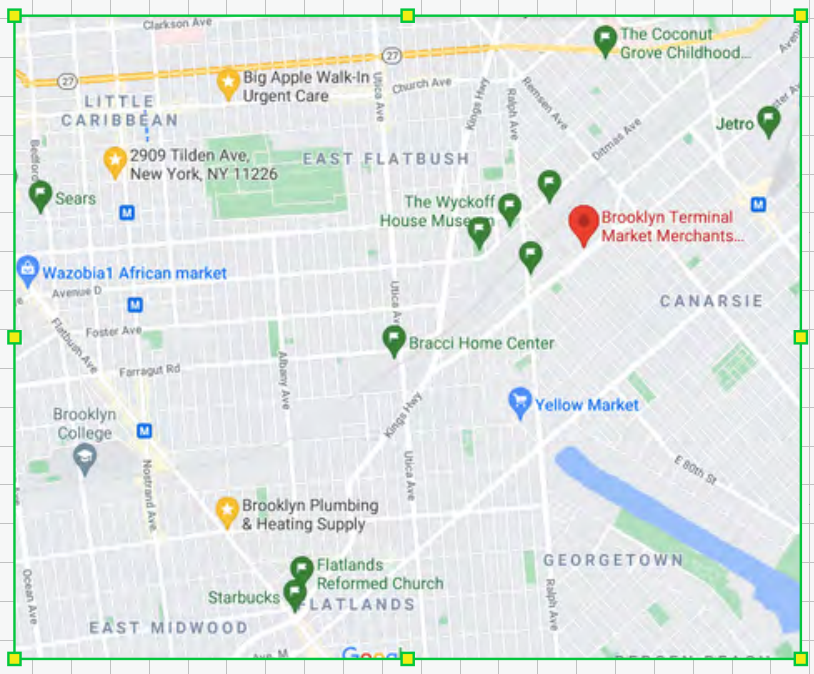


Our Objective

building BKLVLUP community land trust

- BKLVLUP has begun the steps to establish a community land trust serving the **East Flatbush, Flatbush and Flatlands communities** of Brooklyn, NY (partnership building and community engagement).
- BKLVLUP CLT will work to create/acquire/manage and preserve BOTH deeply affordable **residential**, **community** AND **commercial** space for our neighbors.
- Now is the time to re-engage NYC with **equitable planning** that centers community land ownership as a way to combat displacement of BIPOC residents, promote **community-controlled** housing and neighborhood development.
- We must **work collectively** to create spaces that people actually want in their communities.





Our Objective

community-based education & advocacy:

Education:

- Creating Programming to Meet Hyperlocal Information Needs:
  - Door-to-Door Tax Lien Sale Exemption Help
  - City & State Program Application Assistance
  - Trusts and Estates Planning Education
  - Environmental Justice
  - Entrepreneurship Collective Cohorts





Partnerships:

- **NHS Brooklyn**: A Strategic Community Partnership Providing the following Services:
  - CLT Staffing
  - First-Time Home Owner Prep
  - Foreclosure Prevention
  - Property Management





Organizing Campaigns:

- **Public Land for Public Good**
- Community Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning



Legislative Advocacy:

- **TOPA**: Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act
- **COPA**: Community Opportunity to Purchase Act
- **Abolish the NYC Tax Lien Sale**

How We Will Get There:
With Your Support of NYCCLI's CLT Initiative

community land trust

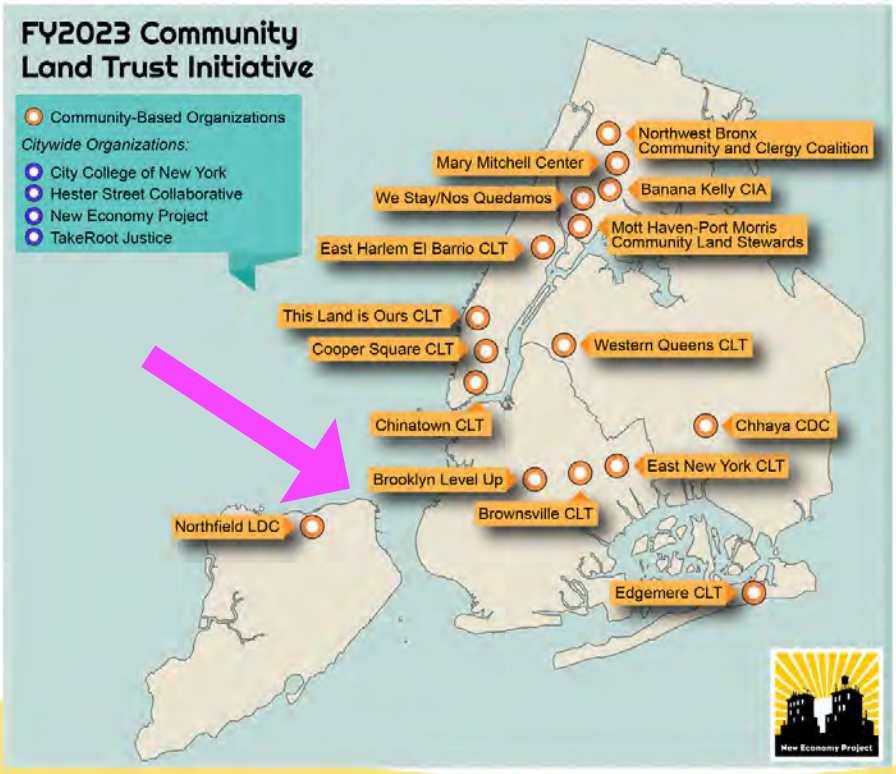
east flatbush • flatbush • flatlands

Community Land Trust Initiative

FY2023 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative** requests **$3 million** in FY2023 City Council discretionary funding to support 20 organizations working to develop CLTs and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. The initiative combats displacement and promotes community-led development in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic – by incubating CLTs and providing comprehensive outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support.

Launched in FY2020, the initiative has catalyzed the growth of CLTs across the five boroughs. Groups have engaged thousands of New Yorkers in community and tenant organizing and neighborhood planning; surveyed vacant and underutilized property in their communities; preserved hundreds of units of permanently-affordable, tenant-run housing – including more than 80 recent acquisitions; and advanced campaigns to shield land and housing from predatory development.



How We Will Get There:
With Your Support of NYCCLI's CLT Initiative

community land trust

east flatbush • flatbush • flatlands

In FY2023, the CLT initiative will engage two new groups and deepen CLT capacity to steward land and housing. We will engage 20 organizations to:

- Provide 100+ CLT education and organizing sessions – in multiple languages – for tenants, homeowners, small business owners, and other stakeholders.
- Develop training curricula to support community and tenant governance.
- Provide 50 legal and technical assistance engagements to emerging CLTs on incorporation, bylaws, developer partnerships, property feasibility research, and more.
- Provide capacity-building training for 50 CLT board and steering committee members.
- Complete feasibility studies and bring more properties into CLT stewardship.

Over the long-term, the CLT initiative will create and preserve thousands of units of deeply- and permanently-affordable housing; provide affordable commercial space for small and worker-owned businesses; support community solar and other resilient infrastructure; and build community wealth in historically-redlined Black and brown neighborhoods.



CLTs protect public subsidy by taking land and housing out of the market – ensuring that housing stays affordable, over generations. CLTs are flexible and support diverse community needs, from limited-equity co-ops and mutual housing to commercial and mixed-use development, cultural and green spaces, and more. Manhattan's Cooper Square CLT and East Harlem El Barrio CLT, for example, provide housing that is affordable to families earning 30-35% AMI, as well as storefronts for two dozen community-serving small businesses.

With evictions and speculation looming in the wake of COVID-19, NYC must invest in CLTs and democratic housing and land ownership models that combat displacement, stabilize neighborhoods, and promote community safety and self-determination. To learn more about CLTs in NYC, visit nyccli.org.

New Economy Project coordinates the citywide CLT initiative. For more information, please contact Will Spisak at will@neweconomynyc.org.

BROOKLYN LEVEL UP

community land trust

east flatbush • flatbush • flatlands

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Brooklyn Level Up

maximize access.
build community wealth.

CAMBA
Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022
Joanne M. Oplustil

Chairman Brannan and Members of the Committee, my name is Joanne M. Oplustil and I am the President and CEO at CAMBA. I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and affording us the opportunity to testify. CAMBA is one of New York City's largest and most trusted community-based organizations and is unique among peer agencies in scale, quality, and responsiveness. Founded in 1977 as a merchants' block association, the agency has grown in direct response to the needs of the Brooklyn community and beyond. Today, CAMBA provides services to 70,000 individuals and families annually through an integrated set of six program areas: Economic Development, Education and Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing, and Legal Services. Through our comprehensive continuum of care, CAMBA provides people with the tools and resources that they need to achieve their full potential.

These past two years, as the pandemic tore through every corner of New York, City-contracted human services workers were thrown onto the frontlines of a global health crisis—ensuring high-risk populations such as seniors and disabled New Yorkers had access to food and mental health support, providing childcare for the families of first responders, running drop-in centers and shelters for homeless New Yorkers, supporting our City's youth struggling to keep up with their education without resources to learn remotely, ensuring New Yorkers had access to the skills, training, and education needed to economically respond and recover from this pandemic, and more. Government is the predominant funder of human services. Stagnant and low wages paid by government make it difficult for us to fill the gaps from those contracts. This is because government contracts either directly set low salary levels or do so indirectly by establishing low rates for services along with required staffing levels on a contract.

The human services sector is facing a crisis due to years of chronic underfunding and extreme pay disparities. We ask you to take the lead in ensuring that government contracted workers are paid fair wages as an essential part of an equitable rebuilding of the City, after our our difficult COVID-19 days. A first and critical step on this is to include a 5.4% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget for contracted human services workers.

Former Mayor Bill de Blasio and Speaker Corey Johnson made a commitment of $40.5 million in the FY22 Budget to raise DHS-funded shelter security guards' wages to meet the prevailing wage rate for security guards. These security guards will see their wages increase from as low as $15 dollars per hour to approximately $18 an hour, in addition to receiving a supplemental benefit amount . This investment is expected to improve recruitment and retention of shelter security guards, and will impact nearly 4,000 security guards and their families across the City. The new wages took effect May 8, 2022.

While we are thrilled to be able to increase salaries of our staff, if the additional salary and fringe funding are not part of a registered contract/amendment, and the nonprofit is obligated to pay the

increase as of the effective date, rather than the date City agency funds the increase, it means that in most cases, the nonprofit needs to use funds borrowed from a line of credit. The nonprofit has to pay non reimbursable interest on these lines of credit. In many cases it can takes many months if not years to get an approved amendment to an existing contract. And the nonprofit has to keep borrowing from the line of credit to cover these additional costs.

It would be economically prudent to require nonprofits to pay the increases only after the contract/amendment is registered, thus avoiding the risk that a nonprofit will not have the borrowed funds to cover the increases. The increases would be retroactive to the law's effective date, and thus, staff would not lose out. Additionally, it would also be extremely helpful if the funding agencies were mandated to have the contract amendments executed within a much shorter window.

In short, funding for any type of new commitments and/or initiative needs to be available to the nonprofit in full prior to the effective date. Without the flow of funding the burden rests solely on the provider, which then strains the provider's ability to cover its payroll, retain staff and otherwise compete in this competitive job market. We all want to see our workforce wages increase without question, but it is crucial that we do so by providing the funding up front.

We want to thank the Committee – and especially Chairman Brannan –for joining our fight and leading the way in supporting fair wages for the human services sector by including the 5.4% Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the FY23 city preliminary budget response. Thank you for allowing us to testify.

May 25, 2022
New York City Council
Finance Committee Budget Hearing
Tory Kaso, Campaign Director
Carbon-Free and Healthy Schools

- Thank you to Chair Brannan and the members of the Finance Committee for allowing the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the FY 2023 Budget.
- My name is Tory Kaso, and I am the Campaign Director of Carbon-Free and Healthy Schools, an initiative driven by Climate Jobs NY, a growing coalition of labor unions representing 2.6 million workers committed to advancing a pro-climate, pro-worker agenda.
- I am speaking today because the city is at an inflection point – the pandemic exacerbated deep inequality, we're running out of time to act on climate change, and working families are getting hit hard by inflation and rising costs of living.
- Climate Jobs NY recently adopted *Climate for Change, a Complete Climate Jobs Roadmap for NYC*, a report released just last week by Cornell University's Labor Leading on Climate Program, that lays out a concrete plan that would address all of these issues.
- This plan works to solve the climate crisis and create jobs that benefit workers and their communities and presents a roadmap for New York City to fight the climate crisis, make the city safer, and address racial and economic inequity by investing in a pro-worker renewable energy transition.
- This report makes one thing very clear: that NYC is failing on climate. Its climate goals are not ambitious enough and climate work is not happening at scale.
- Committed solar and offshore wind would only generate enough renewable energy to meet 30% of its summer electricity needs; additionally, buildings account for 70% of all the city's emissions but the city is not thinking strategically about cutting down those emissions.
- The City should prioritize the transition to carbon-free and healthy schools, ensuring these buildings are safe for the students and staff who occupy them and for their surrounding communities; this transition can pave the way for carbon-free and healthy buildings citywide, laying a blueprint for more effective models of decarbonization of other public buildings, including but not limited to NYCHA and NYC Health + Hospitals.
- Many New York City School buildings are in need of basic repairs and upgrades, including antiquated heating and air conditioning systems, deteriorating rooftops, and outdated electrical grids.
- By investing to perform deep energy-efficiency retrofits, along with the installation of solar power and battery storage, in transforming all Public K-12 Schools to be

carbon-free and healthy by 2030, NYC would create over 62,000 good union jobs in the communities that need them most, while making schools healthier for over 1.2 million students, teachers, administrators, and staff, reducing emissions by the equivalent of taking 154,000 cars off the road, and saving millions annually in energy costs, money that can be reinvested into schools.

- The time to act is now: the City can take a major step forward towards meeting its climate goals by investing $1.6 Billion in Carbon Free and Healthy Schools in this year's budget, while leveraging currently available federal and state funds.
- By taking bold action, NYC has the opportunity to lead the nation, serving as a model on decarbonization, while guaranteeing policies and incentives that bring good jobs to traditionally disadvantaged communities in a just and equitable way.
- Thank you for your time and attention to this important initiative, and we look forward to working with the Council as we all aim to ensure a safe, just, and equitable future for New York City.

Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Submitted by Monsignor Kevin Sullivan
Executive Director
The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York

Good afternoon to Chair Brannan and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. I am Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York seeks to uphold the dignity of each person as made in the image of God by serving the basic needs of the poor, troubled, frail and oppressed of all religions. Catholic Charities agencies deliver, coordinate, and advocate for quality human services and programs touching almost every human need, and have a long and proud history of filling the void and providing for the neediest among us.

The FY23 Budget is an opportunity for the Council and the Administration to solidify the values that will characterize and enable the City's recovery. Permit me to highlight some of our priorities for the upcoming budget:

- **Affordable & Supportive Housing**: We thank the Administration for including additional capital funding for affordable and supportive housing, and the Council for calling for even greater investment. Catholic Charities supports an annual $4 billion capital commitment for affordable and supportive housing preservation and construction that will enable thousands to raise families and treat physical and mental health conditions in dignified and affordable settings. Having the infrastructure in place at various city agencies to process good projects quickly is also critically important.
- **Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)**: An annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for human services contracts, as outlined in the Just Pay campaign, as well as contingency funding in human services contracts to accommodate escalating costs, would demonstrate the City's commitment to the well-being of human services workers and the clients they serve.
- **Efficiency, Accountability and Flexibility in Contract Funding**: City contracts are sometimes funded in a way that does not target the most important needs. Because of the forced categorization of the expending of funds, resources cannot be allocated in the best way. Catholic Charities encourages efficiency, accountability and flexibility in contract funding so that human service providers may deliver optimal services that meet the needs of New York City's most vulnerable.

- **Rental Assistance Vouchers**: The City should establish a policy that New Yorkers making less than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) should not be made rent poor by having to pay more than 30% of their income on rent. While the City currently provides various types of rental assistance, the Council should provide a supplemental voucher program to implement this policy for those New Yorkers that fall through the cracks.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. Catholic Charities is proud to partner with the City and other nonprofits and looks forward to continuing these partnerships in helping to usher in a period of sustained and equitable recovery.

Testimony of the Center for Family Representation
Presented to
New York City Council Finance Committee
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022

This testimony is submitted by the Center for Family Representation (CFR). CFR is the New York City countywide assigned indigent defense provider for parents who are Respondents in abuse and neglect proceedings in Queens and Manhattan family courts. CFR was founded in 2002 to support indigent parents in raising their children safely and minimize the City's reliance on foster care. Pursuant to contracts with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), we provide legally mandated representation to parents summoned to family court by ACS, when ACS alleges they have put their children at risk. We represent parents in the Article 10 proceeding, with the goals of preventing or minimizing the time any child must spend in foster care and promoting family stability, as well as in supplemental proceedings like custody, guardianship, visitation and termination of parental rights cases. We also provide representation on interim appeals and at least 10 final appeals a year pursuant to our contract. CFR has maintained all its operations throughout the pandemic. Since becoming a high volume provider in 2007, CFR has served over 12,000 parents with more than 23,610 children. More than 55% of our clients' children avoid foster care altogether, and for those that do enter care, the average time they spend in care is half as long as the citywide average prior to 2007 when CFR became a high volume countywide provider. **We estimate we have saved taxpayers $50 million in foster care costs.**

With generous support from City Council, our **Home for Good** program enables CFR to provide holistic wrap-around legal and social work advocacy to those parents facing collateral challenges that are the direct result of family court involvement. Through **Home for Good**, we assist clients with housing and public benefits, securing immigration status, avoiding deportation, accessing culturally competent services, and provide criminal court legal and social work services. Since 2019, City Council's **Right to Family Advocacy and Guardianship** Speakers Initiative has also allowed CFR to represent parents during an ACS investigation, with the goal of preventing family separation and avoiding a court prosecution, and assist them in administrative proceedings to amend and seal indicated reports with the State Central Register, with the goal of increasing caregivers' employment opportunities.

Our service model provides interdisciplinary representation to clients: an attorney to represent them in court, a social worker to connect them to needed services like counseling or drug treatment, and a parent advocate—'credible messengers' who themselves reunified their children

from foster care— to mentor clients. Our clients are all indigent, 92% are People of Color, and a third are non-citizens. 20% identify as survivors of domestic or intimate partner violence. City Council **DoVE** funding allows CFR to provide enhanced, coordinated social work services to those clients who identify as survivors of domestic violence and who are often most in need additional supports. In 2019, CFR also expanded our model to serve families where a child or young adult is at risk of incarceration, launching our Youth Defense Practice, and representing youth in family court delinquency matters and criminal court Youth Part proceedings. As an agency dedicated to supporting families in their communities, this was a logical extension of our model.

CFR respectfully requests that the Council increase our funding in FY23 as follows:

- **We are asking the City to allocate to the family defense organizations an additional $40 million to fully fund the Article 10 work and so that our offices can meet the caseload standards instituted by the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services and guarantee the services and representation our clients need and deserve when facing family separation.**

- **We are asking that the City Council allocate $325,000 from Legal Services for the Working Poor and Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers to fund CFR's holistic, wrap-around *Home for Good* Practice;**

- **We are asking the City Council to allocate $100,000 in *DoVE* funding to support CFR's social work and legal advocacy for survivors of domestic violence as they navigate the family regulation system; and**

- **We are asking the City Council to increase funding to $800,000 to CFR for the *Right to Family Advocacy Initiative*, which provides representation to parents during ACS investigations, to avoid unnecessary family separation and case filings, and provides representation in SCR hearings, to allow parents to find employment. The total ask for this initiative is $3.2 million for the four family defense organizations in New York City, with $800,000 going to each.[1]**

The COVID-19 crisis threw ACS, the foster system, and the family court, collectively the Family Regulation system, into disarray. CFR followed the leadership of directly-impacted people and adopted the phrase "Family Regulation System" to describe what has traditionally been called the "child welfare system" or the "child protection system," to reflect the system's prioritization of and roots in surveillance, punishment, and control rather than genuine assistance to and

[1] Originally launched by former Speaker Corey Johnson and former City Council Member Steve Levin, the initiative provides funding to Center for Family Representation, Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services and Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem.

support of families living in poverty.[2] Since March 2020, the harrowing cascade of physical and mental health consequences, economic devastation, and social disruption have fallen disproportionately on the families we serve: low-income communities and Black and Brown people. These conditions have exacerbated the harm of family separation for parents and children, created conditions ripe for family regulation involvement, and slowed the progress on existing cases. It has also made the filing of termination of parental rights petitions -- an attempt to dissolve a family -- more likely because cases are pending longer and families are less able to fulfill the service plan requirements required to regain custody of their children. CFR, along with the other three family defense organizations (Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem) have met this challenge and have continued to provide effective representation to parents during this crisis in and out of court. As we outline in detail below, it is clear that our clients and their families will face more hardship for the foreseeable future, with serious emotional and legal consequences, as a result of the many interruptions in services, limitations on in-person contact, and restricted access to due process in family court that has continued for more than two years.

The primary goal of CFR's representation is to ameliorate the underlying issues that drive families into the Family Regulation system, and to reduce the harmful consequences of system involvement, including criminal charges, housing and income loss, education issues and immigration status. We currently serve about 2,700 respondent parents in Article 10 cases each year (with over 700 being new clients). Since our founding in 2002, our services have benefited over 12,000 families, most of whom are Black and Brown and live in the most marginalized low-income communities in New York City. Our model was the first of its kind in the country and has produced results. For our clients whose children do enter foster care, their stay is less than the city's average. With our model of representation in place, the foster care census has been reduced by almost 50% in New York City from over 17,000 children in 2007, when the city began contracting with institutional providers, to about 8,300 today. We also provide dozens of training sessions to more than 300 professionals around the city, state and country. This includes judges, court personnel, attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates.

I. The City Should Adequately Fund Mandated Institutional Representation for Parents in Article 10 cases.

The family defense organizations provide an essential service on behalf of the City, fulfilling its legal mandate to provide legal representation to parents who cannot afford to hire an attorney. The model also saves the City millions of dollars by reducing the time children spend in foster placements, shrinks the foster system which disproportionately harms families of color, and provides needed support to families.

[2] See, Dorothy Roberts, Abolishing Policing Also Means Abolishing Family Regulation, The Imprint (June 16, 2020), https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare-2/abolishing-policing-also-means-abolishing-family-regulation/44480.

A. Providing Interdisciplinary Representation reduces the time children spend in the foster system.

In New York, parents charged with abuse or neglect in family court are legally entitled to an attorney if they cannot afford one, both by statute and under the New York State Constitution.[3] In 2007, New York City dramatically changed its parent representation system by offering contracts to multidisciplinary organizations which employ lawyers, social workers, parent advocates, and investigators and have expertise in a wide range of legal matters including housing, public benefits, mental health, criminal justice, educational law, and immigration defense. Since 2007, our offices have represented the vast majority of parents in Article 10 proceedings and all related matters, including interim appeals, custody, visitation, family offense, paternity and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings.

CFR's interdisciplinary family defense model has served as a state and national model and has been recognized as the most effective model of representation for parents in family regulation cases.[4] The Commission on Parental Representation, established by Chief Judge DiFiore to examine the state of representation for indigent parents in New York State, issued an interim report in February 2019, following extensive hearings, recommending that New York City's model of parent representation in family regulation cases be adopted state-wide. The Commission concluded that:

> the best chance of successful implementation of its recommendations is through statewide expansion of institutional providers and attorneys specializing in child welfare law. The use of attorneys dedicated to, and proficient in, such representation would improve the quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of parental representation statewide.[5]

The benefit of New York City's contract with CFR and the other family defense organizations to fulfill the mandate of parent representation cannot be overstated: our work dramatically reduces the number of families separated by ACS as a result of an investigation, as well as the amount of time children spend in the foster system.[6] Our offices actively litigate emergency hearings under

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[3] New York has long recognized a parent's right to counsel in child protection proceedings. In a pioneering 1972 decision, Matter of Ella B., 30 N.Y.2d 352, the New York Court of Appeals recognized the equal protection and due process right to indigent parents to assigned counsel in child neglect and abuse cases. Three years later, sections 261, 262, and 1120 of the Family Court Act codified a broad parental right to counsel. Additionally, numerous provisions throughout Article 10 of the Family Court Act address implementation of the parental right to counsel in child welfare proceedings.

[4] *See* Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore 27-28 (February 2019); see also Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, *A New National Movement in Parent Representation*, 47 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 44, 45 (2013), available at https://cfrny.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-New-National-Movement-in-Parent-Representation-Clearinghouse-Review.pdf.

[5] Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore (February 2019) at 26.

[6] Center for New York City Affairs, The New School, *Watching the Numbers: A Six-Year Statistical Survey Monitoring New York City's Child Welfare System* (November 2016), available at

Family Court Act §§ 1027 and 1028, to ensure that children never enter the foster system unless absolutely necessary and, if they do, that the amount of time they spend in the foster system is as short as possible. After the start of the Article 10 case, our interdisciplinary teams fight at every stage to achieve family reunification as quickly as possible and maintain it, through advocacy at case conferences, active motion practice, investigation of the facts, and the litigation of fact finding, disposition, and visitation and permanency hearings. Adequately resourcing interdisciplinary family defense representation also ensures that the court is provided with all the information necessary to properly follow the law in maintaining family relationships. Zealous in-court representation with additional out-of-court advocacy and support of families is the only way to secure the rights of parents and children while ensuring the fairness and effectiveness of the family regulation system.

Our effectiveness in reducing the length of foster system involvement is well documented. The largest study of parental representation in family court ever conducted found that holistic, interdisciplinary institutional representation in New York City significantly reduces the time children spend in the foster system.[7] This study compared length of foster stays for the children of BxD, BDS, and CFR's clients with the children of parents who were assigned attorneys pursuant to Article 18-b of the County Law, Indigent Defense Legal Panel Plan. The study found that representation by multidisciplinary offices reduced children's time in the foster system by nearly 4 months during the 48 months following the filing of the petition, through earlier reunification outcomes translating to up to nearly $40 million in annual savings in foster system expenditures for New York City.[8] According to the study, these outcomes were achieved without any difference in safety to children between the two groups.[9]

B. Most Article 10 cases stem from poverty and its related stressors, and families benefit from the support services the family defense providers offer.

The vast majority of the parents we represent are facing allegations of neglect, not abuse. These cases are poverty-related and the allegations often include poor or unstable housing conditions, income and food instability, allegations that children are not attending school, domestic violence in the home, excessive corporal punishment or inadequate childcare. Many of our clients struggle with untreated underlying mental health and/or substance use disorders which are exacerbated by the stress of poverty, or are facing other challenges, such as cognitive disabilities. Many of our clients are or were in the foster system themselves.

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https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5849a22f725e254385d753eb/1481220657883/FINAL_Watching+the+Numbers_2016.pdf.

[7] *See* study at https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091930088X*; see also Providing Parents Multidisciplinary Legal Representation Significantly Reduces Children's Time in Foster Care*, by Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, June 4, 2019.

[8] *See Id.*

[9] *See Id.*

While the parents we represent may face challenges that impact their ability to keep their families together, research and our experience shows that the vast majority of these families suffer more trauma and deeper harm from being separated than from staying together with support systems in place. Family separation is traumatic for children and causes short and long-term harm,[10] and the state's highest court has recognized separation as a harm to children.[11] When children are separated from their parents for a long period of time, studies have shown that they remain on high alert, and their bodies endure prolonged and severe toxic stress as a result. If continuously exposed to toxic stress over time, damage done to the child's brain cannot be mitigated.[12] Quality representation for parents prevents needless harmful family separation, brings children home as soon as possible, and ensures that beneficial, family strengthening services are in place. As a result of our representation, many of our clients' families stay intact during the pendency of the legal case while the parent, child, and family receive needed services.

Fewer than 10 percent of our cases involve allegations of abuse. These cases involve more serious allegations, and these children often are removed from their families immediately. These are some of our most complex cases and often require extensive litigation and expert testimony as well as full investigations to uncover claims of innocence, underlying medical explanations of apparent injuries, or mitigating factors. Our offices are staffed with highly qualified, experienced and zealous attorneys that are ready to litigate more complicated claims and protect the due process rights of our clients.

C. Interdisciplinary Representation Reduces the Harm of Structural Racism Inherent in the Foster System

The foster system punishes, controls, surveils, and forcibly separates low-income Black and Brown families in numbers strikingly disproportionately to the percentage of the overall population of New York City. Just like our modern police systems are directly descended from slave patrols, the Family Regulation System comes from our country's history of separating Indigenous, Black, and low-income children from their families.

The Family Regulation System's origins are in the separation of enslaved Black children and parents to profit from their labor, and in the government-supported separation of Indigenous children from their parents meant to destroy the Indigenous communities whose land the government was seeking to colonize. The System continued with "Orphan Trains" of the late 1800s and early 1900s, when The Children's Aid Society, still in operation in New York City today, separated thousands of poor Italian and Irish immigrant children from their families, and

[10] Shanta Trivedi, The Harm of Child Removal, 43 New York University Review of Law & Social Change 523 (2019). Available at: https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all_fac/1085. Vivek Sankaran. "A Cure Worse Than the Disease? The Impact of Removal on Children and Their Families." Christopher Church and Monique Mitchell, co-authors. Marq. L. Rev. 102, no. 4 (2019): 1163-94.
[11] *See, e.g.*, *Matter of Jamie J.*, 30 N.Y.3d 275, 280 n.1 (2017); *Nicholson v. Scopetta*, 3 N.Y.3d 357 (N.Y. 2004).
[12] *See* Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Brain Development, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw&feature=youtu.be.

sent those children to the Midwest to work in indentured servitude. Family connections in impacted communities were considered inferior and therefore breaking those connections was considered to their, and more importantly, to society's benefit.

The Family Regulation System we fight today is rooted in this history, but its funding did not explode until public assistance programs were slashed in the 1980s and 1990s in response to Black families demanding equal access to social programs through the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. These cuts were coupled with billions of dollars in new funding for the foster system. In 1981, the federal foster system budget stood at less than $500 million. By 2003, it was at $4.5 billion. With this huge increase in funding, Family Policing agencies targeted the Black community, using the same racist and classist logic motivating the War on Drugs and the cuts to public assistance.

Research from all corners, from the Federal Children's Bureau to the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges to numbers reported by ACS itself, demonstrates that Indigenous, Black, and Brown families are disproportionately represented in reports, investigations, and prosecutions by the Family Regulation System and that Indigenous, Black, and Brown children are disproportionately represented in the foster system. This is not the work of a few bad apples. These outcomes, demonstrated reliably and consistently across a variety of social research, are a result of structural racism masquerading as social betterment.

When people from low income communities of color in NYC are investigated by ACS, caseworkers often use misinformation and the threat of family separation and police involvement to coerce families to relinquish their constitutional rights before a court is even involved. Hospitals target pregnant low-income Black and Brown parents to drug test them without consent, regardless of whether there are any actual child safety concerns, a legacy of the now-debunked racist "crack baby" myth. The Family Regulation System empowers the violence of greedy landlords, jilted lovers and vengeful family members by allowing anonymous reports to be filed, leaving families to pick up the pieces after the resulting intrusive investigations.

All of these processes create a dynamic that entangles low-income Black and Brown families into a system that, more often than not, tears them apart. The work we do to provide representation to parents in family court and as part of City Council's Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is an essential service for New York City's families that are targeted and harmed by these processes and history.

D. The family defense model provides consistent high-quality representation through the following key elements:

Interdisciplinary practice: Our interdisciplinary practices, which treat lawyers, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates as equal partners in our client-centered representation, is the key to our success. Parent Advocates are often parents with lived experience of child welfare

involvement, “credible messengers” that offer peer-to-peer support for parents experiencing the family regulation system. Social work and parent advocate support is vital to addressing the complex needs of our clients and ensuring that we support them both inside and outside of the courtroom. Social workers and parent advocates support clients through every step of their family court case, often meeting them on their first day in court and connecting them immediately with services, such as domestic violence shelter placement, family therapy, education consultants, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, or other vital resources needed to avoid family separation. Paralegals help attorneys file motions, in particular, motions seeking the return of children home or increased visits which are so crucial to family reunification, assist attorneys with obtaining, digesting and organizing discovery, draft subpoenas; help with appeals and assist with intake of new clients.

Social workers, parent advocates, attorneys and clients work closely as a team to develop a legal strategy and a service plan based on the client’s goals and the needs of their family. Unlike ACS caseworkers, defense parent advocates and social workers center parents in solutions for their families and work to support the family together, rather than through separation or the threat of separation. Social workers perform comprehensive and on-going family assessments that help identify the family’s needs to ensure that appropriate services and interventions are put into place. Social workers advocate for clients at ACS and foster-care agency conferences and collaborate with attorneys to ensure continuity between in-court advocacy, agency practice and the evolving circumstances of our clients’ lives.

One of the most important roles of our social work and parent advocate teams is to build trusting relationships with clients and ensure their voices are heard outside of court. Social workers and parent advocates attend ACS and foster agency conferences across the five boroughs to advocate for appropriate visitation and service plans that meet the needs of the individual family and move the case towards family reunification. Our out-of-court staff use their deep understanding of each individual client’s situation and their knowledge of New York’s social services landscape to connect parents with the material resources they need to care for their children, and help parents navigate the shelter and benefits systems. Social workers also help mediate and problem-solve issues that can arise between clients and ACS and foster agency workers, foster parents and/or service providers.

Our offices develop close relationships with community-based programs serving New York’s immigrant communities in order to connect clients to culturally competent service providers and access to services in their native language. For clients who do not qualify for medical insurance, our social workers identify programs that will accept clients on a no-fee basis.

Training of staff: Our extensive and in-depth training of new staff imparts the information and skill-building they need to provide high quality representation in a complex area of law from the very start. Our offices provide extensive training programs for new attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates covering every aspect of Article 10 proceedings, including both substantive law

and practical litigation skills for attorneys. Our offices also collaborate to present regular workshops and trainings to enhance staff's professional development and build on their substantive knowledge and skills.

Language access: Our offices recruit staff from different backgrounds who speak many languages because clients greatly benefit from working with staff who speak their primary language. Bilingual staff also develop contacts with community-based agencies and are familiar with a client's cultural or religious background, a factor which is often relevant in an Article 10 case. Attorneys who can communicate with clients in their primary language enhance the attorney-client relationship and vastly improve the quality of representation.[13]

Specialized expertise in substantive areas: Over time our offices have identified attorneys and social work staff who specialize in particular areas of law or practice, thereby developing skills and institutional knowledge and improving the quality of representation and making our practice more efficient, including expertise in appeals, custody, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), education, immigration and medically complex matters.

Technology/data that provides accountability: Our offices have online case management systems, developed and improved over many years, enabling our offices to produce data on client demographics and court procedures and outcomes for the City, ensuring accountability. These systems also allow staff members to access up-to-date information on cases, enhancing our ability to respond to frequent emergencies, and enable our attorneys and out-of-court advocates to share information about cases. Our relationship with the court has allowed us to access court data as well, which enhances our ability to advise clients and ensure our records are updated.

Leveraging pro bono and law school and social work resources: Our offices expand our limited resources through collaborations with the major New York City law firms which co-counsel with us on some of our most complex cases. Clinics from the New York City area law and social work schools also greatly enhance the efficiency of our practices with added resources to support the work of our attorneys and social workers.

II. The city must allocate an additional $40 million to our function and fully fund the essential work of the family defense providers.

Despite nearly 15 years of excellent interdisciplinary representation that has saved the City millions of dollars and the vast improvements our model has made to parent representation, the City has never adequately funded parent defense. Unlike the area of criminal defense which has seen a statewide effort to reduce caseloads for staff and make quality improvements, parent defense does not receive any funding from the state. Recent caseload standards implemented by

[13] See, e.g., Jayesh M. Rathod, The Transformative Potential of Attorney Bilingualism, 46 U. Michigan J. Law Reform 863-920 (2013).

New York's Office of Indigent Legal Services[14] (ILS) make clear what we have been arguing for years: our contracts have been deeply underfunded, putting at grave risk the benefits of our model of representation for both the City and our clients.

A. Recent caseload standards developed by the State's Office of Indigent Legal Services require that family defense budgets more than double in size.

The underfunding of our contracts is clear from the caseload standards that were recently announced by The Office of Indigent Legal Services (ILS). Following the recommendation of the Commission on Parental Legal Representation in June 2021, ILS developed Caseload Standards for Parents' Attorneys in New York State Family Court Mandated Representation Cases (ILS Caseload Standards). ILS is a state agency with a legislative mandate to analyze and set standards for indigent representation. The standards are based on a multi-prong statewide study that articulates the minimum attorney hours required to provide effective representation.

Based on our average intake over the last three years, our budgets cover less than half the staff required to meet the ILS standards. The ILS standards have confirmed what we have testified to in prior years: the current contract budget is insufficient to meet the needs of our practices. The City must meet its obligation to provide adequate funding to bring us into compliance with the new guidelines.

The additional amount needed to bring our offices into compliance is a combined $40 million for the providers. We are asking the City Council to ensure that this additional funding is added to the Article 10 budget overseen by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.

B. The budget shortfall is more acute because of the court backlog and the pandemic.

The budget shortfall has been made more acute over the past two years as the backlog created in the courts, which has been significantly worsened by the pandemic, has made it more likely that clients will face supplemental proceedings; when it takes longer to resolve a case, there is a greater likelihood that additional matters—TPR petitions, custody petitions, and new allegations of neglect—will be filed against a client, creating an expanded need for critical casework outside of court by our social workers and other support staff to achieve positive outcomes in our cases.

Historically, almost half of ACS petitions sought solely court-ordered family supervision. In this scenario, the children remain home and the family court supervises the family and ensures compliance with a service plan. Since the beginning of the pandemic, however, ACS has only filed petitions in cases in which they seek to remove children and separate families. Cases involving family separation are far more resource intensive and make up the bulk of our current

[14] New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services, *Caseload Standards for Parents' Attorneys in New York State Family Court Mandated Representation Cases* (June 4, 2021), Available at https://www.ils.ny.gov/files/Caseload%20Standards%20Parents%20Attorneys%20NYS%20Family%20Court.pdf

workload. While the absolute number of ACS filings has decreased since the pandemic, our offices represent the same number of separated families working to reunify. Even as family court has gradually expanded its virtual capacity, our ability to vindicate our clients' due process rights remains dramatically limited due to court restrictions. This is particularly true for those hearings in which we advocate for children to leave the foster system and reunite with their families. Family court has adjourned hundreds of cases for several months in the future despite our efforts to progress them. These limitations and delays only make it more likely that complicated supplemental proceedings like TPRs and custody petitions will be filed. The work required to reduce the backlog will be time consuming, complicated and staggering in scale. It is essential that we are fully staffed and prepared for that eventuality.

C. COVID-19 has caused an increase in our clients' needs and resulted in a growing backlog of court cases having a detrimental impact on workload and pending caseload. Our offices are experiencing unprecedented attrition of staff; insufficient funding and the impact of the changing work environment during the pandemic has kept workloads unmanageable and difficult to maintain. We need an influx of funding in FY23 to stem attrition and to begin to build capacity toward meeting the ILS caseload standards.

The work we do as family defenders is challenging to begin with—day in and day out we provide compassionate, effective, and zealous advocacy for our clients, many of whom are separated from their children, the most harrowing experience a parent could have. The various ways in which the pandemic has changed our work has made it much more difficult.

Before the pandemic, our initial contact with clients was in family court, face-to-face, when clients came to court after ACS told them that a case would be filed. We would meet with clients and walk them through the intake and arraignment process, advocating with ACS every step of the way. Our clients were able to quickly develop the trust needed to delve into their personal lives in part because they were able to read all the non-verbal cues that communicated that we were competent, passionate advocates with positive reputations in court. We were able to make eye contact with our clients and reassure them that they could trust us to fight as hard as we could to keep their families intact. In the pandemic, our initial attempts to contact clients often result in endless ringing and unanswered voicemails. When we can reach our clients, we are not much more than a disembodied voice on the other end of a call from an unrecognized phone number. It takes much longer to build trust and rapport, which makes it that much more difficult to get the information from clients that we need to effectively advocate for them.

In cases where families are separated, our clients are granted visitation with their children by family court, often—at the request of ACS—initially supervised by ACS, a foster agency, or a family member. For these separated families, the court and ACS often require significant supervised visitation before expanding to partially supervised visitation, then to unsupervised visits, overnight visits, extended visits, and ultimately reunification. This process can take

months, sometimes years and requires persistent motion practice by our offices. Throughout the pandemic, supervision of visits by ACS has been unreliable at best, and nonexistent at worst, resulting in extremely inconsistent visitation between parents and children and unnecessary delays of reunification. Initially, ACS required that all visitation be held virtually. While video visitation was a lesser but workable alternative for families with older children, younger children, for whom maintenance of the parental bond is so much more important, did not have the attention span to spend more than a few minutes on a video chat and therefore could not meaningfully spend time with their parents for many months. When new variants emerged with waves of infections ravaging our city, and when vaccines were mandated for city employees, visits were canceled, delayed, reduced, or made virtual for lack of staff to supervise, delaying reunification.

In almost all of our cases, ACS requires our clients to engage in services such as individual therapy, dyadic and family therapy, parenting instruction, and in some cases anger management courses and treatment for substance misuse, regardless of whether they have been found to have engaged in any wrongdoing. If family court makes a finding against our clients, they are often required to do similar services. For clients whose children have been separated from them, these services can be especially important, as compliance with services is often the material that paves the way to reunification, along with visitation. During the pandemic, unfortunately, many service providers drastically reduced their capacity, canceled services for significant periods of time, or closed altogether, leaving our clients unable to work towards reunification and/or unable to comply with court orders requiring engagement in services, both circumstances leading to delay in family reunification and resolution of cases.

As the family court limped towards creating protocols and processes for conducting virtual court proceedings, our respective staff met the challenge, litigating virtual hearings and trials from their homes. These trials are a pale comparison to in-person proceedings and greatly hamper our client's due process rights. Although our staff has adjusted and risen to the challenge, regular technological issues, including the inability of the court to admit parties and attorneys from the virtual waiting room, uncooperative computer microphones and cameras, background noise and feedback, and subpar bandwidth in our clients homes have made and continue to make ordinary trial procedures, like cross-examination, use of an interpreter for non-English speaking parties, objections and admission of evidence, incredibly difficult, inefficient, and time consuming. Again, the absence of non-verbal cues of the courtroom, such as where each party and attorney sits in relation to the judge and the presence of court officers and clerks, has made it difficult for our staff to help clients navigate the process. Where we would have leaned over and whispered assurances to our client during a difficult moment in a proceeding, we now text and message them, and hope they are able to access our communication while they also pay attention to what is happening in the proceeding. Many clients have complained that during virtual court, they don't know who everyone is, who is talking or what is happening, leaving them confused and hopeless after court appearances. Most difficult has been defending against TPR petitions, where

so much is at stake, but we only have the milquetoast facsimile of virtual court in which to vindicate our client's rights and keep their families together.

These extreme challenges in doing the basic work in the pandemic combined with the isolation of working from home, has led to very high rates of attrition across all our practices. When an attorney or social worker leaves a family defense practice, their cases must be transferred across remaining staff. Although a case can easily be transferred, the relationship between advocate and client cannot and both have to work very hard to once again build trust and cooperation, sometimes in the middle of a consequential moment of the case. Finding the time and bandwidth to dedicate energy to building a new foundation with a client whose case has been transferred can be very difficult to do as most attorneys are already representing far greater numbers of clients than recommended by ILS when they receive these transfer cases. Bandwidth and capacity of staff continues to spread thinner, resulting in more attrition, spinning this cycle faster and faster. New staff are hired, but many are recent graduates who don't immediately have the capacity to take on a full caseload or the demands of more than a few transfer cases.

There is no quantitative or qualitative metric that can capture the cascading impact this pandemic is having on New York City's families with ACS involvement. All of these changes have amplified the gravity of separation between parents and children in the foster system and, by default, increased the length of stay for children in the system and, as a result, the likelihood of a TPR petition being filed. Our continued ability to work around these obstacles and implement creative solutions is more critical than ever.

III. *Home for Good* wraparound services help keep families together.
We are asking that the City Council allocate $325,000 from Legal Services for the Working Poor and Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers to fund CFR's Home for Good *Program*

CFR launched our **Home for Good (HFG)** program, with City Council support, in recognition of the fact that many parents in family court face multiple legal challenges that arise out of or are related to their child welfare case-all of which undermine their ability to raise their children safely. **Home for Good** is an efficient, one-stop solution providing integrated services and legal advocacy to address collateral consequences or challenges in the following areas: 1) housing and public benefits; 2) a criminal prosecution; and 3) immigration status or the threat of deportation.

Until **Home for Good**, our clients had to access attorneys or professionals in other organizations, who typically lacked knowledge of the child welfare case and often unwittingly compromised the family's ability to avoid or shorten foster care. Building on the relationship our teams have with our clients, we can easily identify and efficiently rectify collateral issues and minimize the extent to which clients have to access critical services elsewhere. Notably, families in both the Bronx and Brooklyn now have access to such holistic assistance. We want to ensure that families in Queens and Manhattan receive the same opportunity for long-term safety and stability.

We have built a highly skilled *Civil Legal Services* team to represent parents in housing court and administrative proceedings to avoid eviction, secure repairs, or access benefits to obtain stable housing, ERAP and supportive housing, food security and Medicaid. Each year, over 30% of our clients are homeless or unstably housed. Our civil legal services attorney supervisor, senior housing attorney, and housing specialist assisted 282 clients with housing and/or public benefits representation or support. A third of our clients face criminal prosecution for the same events that led them into family court. Our goal for our criminal practice was to defend parents in criminal court and provide social work support to secure services that minimize incarceration. Our *Criminal Defense* team represented over 100 clients in FY 21 and is comprised of a dedicated paralegal, senior staff attorney, social worker, litigation supervisor, and part time investigator. 24% of our clients are non-citizens and our *Immigration* team helps these parents access culturally competent services, obtain legal status, and defend deportation actions. Our immigration attorney, immigration paralegal and our immigration social work specialist assisted 108 clients with immigration related matters in FY 21. Providing this collateral assistance is another critical tool in making sure that challenges in these areas do not undermine a client's success in the Article 10 context. Parents who are poor deserve the same representation that any parent of means would seek out: one law office to handle all of their legal issues including: Immigration matters, Criminal matters, and Civil Legal Services.

Since the pandemic, the demand for *Home for Good* services continues. With the end of the eviction moratorium, housing court has been hearing eviction cases at an alarming rate, while ignoring the shortage of free housing attorneys in the City. CFR's housing team is critical to ensuring our clients have attorneys who are able to advocate for them in housing court, with the added understanding of their family's circumstances and family court case.

During the pandemic, we pivoted seamlessly to providing all of our principal activities remotely and in person when necessary. We never stopped providing services for clients, many of whom were severely impacted by the pandemic, including losing part-time work and access to many services. This pivot required a commitment to providing necessary technology and personal protective equipment to staff and advocacy on behalf of our clients with courts to ensure they had access to due process and the necessary technology to participate in court proceedings that remained virtual. With the courts reopening, CFR staff has again quickly transitioned to in person work, assisting our clients with traveling to court and in-person services.

IV. We ask the City Council to allocate $100,000 in DoVE funding to support CFR's social work and legal advocacy for survivors of domestic violence as they navigate the family regulation system.

DoVE funding will allow CFR to offer enhanced, well-coordinated services to the 20% of our clients who are survivors or victims of domestic violence. We assign a family defense team to every client, which includes both an attorney and social work staff member. DoVE funding will

enable us to maintain the intensive social work support and coordinated legal representation survivors need. Social work staff will continue to do complete assessments to determine the needed services for a family and make appropriate referrals that address not only the issues of violence, but also the client's cultural background, to ensure survivors of domestic violence are able to remain safely with their children. CFR social work staff will also find appropriate referrals for our undocumented clients who need either free or sliding scale services, which are difficult to locate.

CFR staff collaborate with service provider staff to offer ongoing support to the client while they participate in services. Attorney and social work staff will coordinate their efforts, making sure that ACS and the family court have needed information on our client's progress in services in order to resolve the client's family court case as quickly and favorably as possible, hopefully with the client's children home and the family in a safe and stable environment. Whenever necessary, the family defense team will work with other CFR staff to address issues related to immigration, housing, public benefits, or criminal defense issues. Notably, a parent charged by ACS in family court in the Bronx or Brooklyn has access to such coordinated collateral assistance. CFR wants to ensure that families in Queens and Manhattan receive the same opportunity for holistic services that ensure long-term safety and stability. DOVE funding is critical to giving parents in Queens and Manhattan an efficient one-stop solution to a variety of essential needs.

V. We ask City Council to increase funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, to provide a total of $3.2 million to the four family defense Article 10 provider agencies, with $800,000 going to CFR. This Initiative provides representation to parents during ACS investigations, to avoid unnecessary family separation and case filings, and provides representation in SCR hearings, to allow parents to find employment.[15]

The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is a City-Council funded program that guarantees parents will have an attorney to advise them during an ACS investigation. We also utilize this funding to help people clear their records at the State Central Register so they are not arbitrarily limited from obtaining certain jobs. These funds, provided equally to our four offices, has enabled us to provide representation to low-income parents in deeply invasive, high-stakes ACS investigations, as well as in hearings with the Office for Children and Families (OCFS) to amend or seal an indicated case from the State Central Register. This undertaking, called the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, provides desperately needed due process legal representation and advocacy services to individuals and families involved in the family regulation system. Our Article 10 contracts with MOCJ do not fund us to provide this critical representation and, without these advocacy services, the low-income Black and Brown parents targeted by the family regulation system would not have access to counsel at these critical junctures.

[15] This Initiative funds CFR, Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services and Center for Family Representation.

The need for the services funded by this initiative continues and has become even more essential during the pandemic. Therefore, this year we are asking for $3.2 million dollars ($800,000 per organization) to provide these vital services in FY 2022.

A. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel during ACS investigations, resulting in unnecessary traumatic and harmful family separations and case filings.

Currently, parents with family regulation involvement who cannot afford to hire counsel are not provided assigned attorneys until ACS files an abuse or neglect case against them in family court. Before a case is filed in court, however, critical decisions are made that have grave consequences for how cases proceed, including whether the family will be diverted to prevention programs and services, whether the case will be filed in court, and, most significantly, whether children will be separated from their parents and, if so, who will care for them. Without access to counsel during this critically important investigative stage of an Article 10 case, parents are forced to meet with ACS, make critical decisions impacting the integrity of their family, discuss the allegations against them, and navigate the state's intervention in their family without any formal support. In contrast, ACS has access to legal representation throughout their investigation. The result is catastrophic for the families targeted by the Family Regulation System–families that are invariably low-income and predominantly Black and brown. Too many cases are filed unnecessarily and too many children are unnecessarily traumatically separated from their parents.

Because families are too often unnecessarily separated by the Family Regulation System, the Commission on Parental Legal Representation established in 2018 by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore recommended that parents be granted access to counsel during a child protective investigation.[16] In addition, the standards of practice for parents' attorneys adopted by the American Bar Association in 2006 recommend that attorneys actively represent parents during an investigation.[17] In recently-issued eligibility standards, ILS also recommended that counsel be assigned to parents during the investigation stage of a case. Representation at the investigation phase of a case is an effective and much needed bulwark against a multitude of avoidable harms to the low-income, mostly Black and Brown families most often targeted by the family regulation system.

B. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel in SCR hearings and are unjustifiably denied opportunities in employment and to care for children.

At the conclusion of an investigation, ACS will determine whether the report should be "indicated," which results in the name of the person being investigated being placed on the SCR.

[16] *Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore.*
[17] See American Bar Association, *Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases 10* (2006), available at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/aba-parent-rep-stds.pdf

This is true regardless of whether the case is ever brought to court and a parent is assigned an attorney and a judge determines whether the allegations are supported by evidence. Indeed the majority of indicated cases are never brought to court for review, yet the consequences for an indicated case are enormous, can last for decades, and fall disproportionately on families of color.

Despite Black and Hispanic children making up only 59.4% of the child population in New York, they represent 86.8% of all SCR reports.[18] For every SCR report made regarding a white child, 6.6 are made for Black children and 4.8 are made for Hispanic children.[19] New York parents who are listed on the SCR are routinely denied employment as daycare workers, nannies, teaching assistants, substance abuse counselors, home health aides, medical supply delivery people, drivers for the disabled, an array of positions in hospitals, and more, based on unproven allegations of child abuse and neglect.[20] Black and Brown New Yorkers are disproportionately impacted by the loss of opportunity in these professions: eighty-five percent of care workers, such as nannies and health aids, are women of color.[21] SCR records remain accessible to employers and others for years and restrict parents' ability to work and support their families.

The impact of an indicated case also goes beyond employment. Courts making custody determinations frequently consider indicated reports of child abuse or maltreatment and are significantly less likely to award custody to a parent with an indicated report. Moreover, an indicated report may pose risks for an individual assuming custody of children through kinship care—an alternative to the traditional foster system where care is provided by relatives. When parental care is not available, kinship care is widely recognized as the next best option. Yet kinship care arrangements are routinely rejected based on indicated reports, even if the report was outdated and the only other option is foster placement with strangers.

Although there is a process to challenge this outcome in a hearing through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), under current law, parents are not generally given access to counsel in these OCFS hearings that are necessary to amend or seal an indicated case from the SCR. At SCR hearings in New York City, ACS is always represented by counsel. The decisions often hinge on the interpretation of statutory and legal terms, such as "person legally responsible," "collateral estoppel," and "dismissed on the merits." Yet parents are never assigned an attorney to inform them of their right to challenge their listing on the SCR or to represent them. In January 2022, the laws governing SCR hearings were changed and an entirely new legal standard and process was put in place. The interpretation of many of the new provisions is being actively litigated in nearly every hearing now. It is critical that the City provide low-income parents with access to attorneys to represent them in these hearings. People

[18] City of New York, Oversight—Racial Disparities in the Child Welfare System 5
[19] Off. of Child. & Fam. Servs., *Disproportionate Minority Representation 2020*, https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/sppd/dmr/DMR-County-Comparison-2020.pdf.
[20] See Nikita Stewart, *The Child Abuse Charge Was Dismissed. But it Can Still Cost You a Job*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 25, 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/25/nyregion/ny-child-abuse-database.html.
[21] See N.Y.C. Dep't of Consumer Affs., *Lifting up Paid Care Work* (2018).

who challenge their inclusion in the SCR and have their names cleared can get jobs that serve society, particularly in health care, once they are cleared.

C. The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative avoids unnecessary removals and removes barriers to employment for hundreds of low-income NYC parents.

Through the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, low-income parents in New York City have access to attorneys through hotlines, emails, and walk-in hours when they are faced with an ACS investigation or have been denied employment due to having an indicated case on the SCR. Teams of attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates are available to advise parents about their rights, their choices and the consequences of decisions during an ACS investigation. As a result, parents are more meaningfully engaged in the process and ACS is better informed about a family's situation. We are able to assist parents in providing helpful information to ACS, identifying their strengths and resources, accessing services and material assistance and addressing the issues that brought their children to the attention of ACS in the first instance. Our advocates attend conferences at ACS, schools, and with medical providers alongside our clients. This support often results in resolving cases without ACS having to go to court.

Data from the four family defense organizations demonstrates that the Right to Family Initiative works. With the funding provided by the City Council in the period FY 21 and first six months of FY 22, the family defense organizations collectively represented nearly 1200 parents and caretakers during child welfare investigations and SCR hearings. CFR was 100% successful in having SCR reports amended or sealed when we were able to complete administrative hearings with client involvement, enabling parents to access employment and support their families. Through early advocacy and identification of appropriate services and resources, we avoided unnecessary and traumatic family separations and, often, kept family court cases from ever being filed against the families we assisted. Our representation during ACS investigations has also resulted in tremendous fiscal savings for the City by avoiding removals and reducing court filings, preserving valuable court resources and time for cases that actually require court intervention. By way of example of the extent of these savings, in FY 21, CFR diverted a family court filing in 80% of the cases where CFR represented parents during an ACS investigation. For the cases that were filed in court, early advocacy allowed families to remain together. In 76% of the cases that were ultimately filed, children stayed home or were placed with family rather than in the foster system. The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative saves families and money.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have and you can reach me at the contact information provided below. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to provide you with

information on the critical importance of maintaining our funding to ensure that parents faced with the loss of their children are provided high quality legal representation and social work and parent advocate services.

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Center for Court Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings
May 25, 2022

Good morning Chair Brannan and esteemed councilmembers of the Committee on Finance. Since its inception, the Center for Court Innovation (the Center) has supported the vision embraced by Council of a fair, effective, and humane justice system and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions. The Center's longstanding partnership with Council over the past twenty-five years has helped bring this vision to life through evidence-based and racially just programming that spans the entire justice continuum, which include:

- expanding diversion and alternatives to incarceration options across all parts of the justice system;
- prioritizing the rapid engagement and treatment of individuals suffering from mental health issues and substance use disorders;
- implementing gender and family justice programming around human trafficking, to address and prevent the intersection of gun violence and intimate partner violence, and offering supports for the whole family;
- and expanding access to comprehensive housing supports to prevent evictions and homelessness.

Our firsthand experience operating direct service programs and conducting original research uniquely positions us to offer insights that the Council can look to as it considers the development of initiatives that respond to needs of all New Yorkers. In each instance, our aim is to provide a meaningful and proportionate response, to treat all people under our care with dignity and respect, to prioritize public safety, and to produce much-needed cost savings for the City. And, as an anti-racist organization, to ensure the needs of marginalized New Yorkers are addressed.

The Center's Innovative Core Funding

This year, we ask the Council to continue and expand support for **the Center's Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to quickly respond to the immediate needs of New Yorkers by piloting novel and effective community-based pilots to test for scalable solutions. Through this work, the Center is making a deep investment in engaging individuals as far upstream as possible, to limit, and ideally prevent justice system involvement.

Examples of the programming supported by Council's core funding are reflected across the City in all five boroughs. In Brooklyn, credible messengers from the Center's Neighbors in Action program engage individuals in communities impacted by violence, or experiencing socioeconomic challenges, in wrap-around services. Support would also lift up Center's Midtown Community Court's Client Navigators in Manhattan, who build meaningful connections with individuals battling homelessness, mental illness, and/or substance use disorders to engage them in support services through two new pilot programs: Midtown Rapid Engagement Initiative and the Community First Program. At the Center's Staten Island Justice Center, the Youth Wellness Initiative provides robust mental health services to justice-involved youth and allows participants to co-design community engagement and service activities aimed at reducing mental health stigma.

In the Bronx, the Center's Bronx Child Trauma Supports uses this funding to provide therapy sessions to young people, ages 3-15, who have been victims of or witnesses to violent crime, thereby improving community health and reducing intergenerational trauma. And, the Center's Queens Community Justice Center's Youth Impact's peer leadership program engages youth diverted from the justice system in workshop and skill-building programming. We ask the Council to expand the Center's core funding so that we can continue innovating scalable solutions in response to issues we are seeing on the ground, and effectively serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Reducing Incarceration: Alternatives to Incarceration & Diversion Programming

The Center is committed to reducing unnecessary incarceration and identifying practical paths to safely shrink the jail system. We played a central role in crafting the plan to shutter the jail complex on Rikers Island by coordinating the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, otherwise known as the Lippman Commission. The Center has measurable experience in implementing data-driven programs that reduce incarceration without decreasing public safety.

Alternatives to incarceration can prevent unnecessary disruption to individual lives, while providing linkages to additional services to decrease criminogenic factors that would otherwise grow in confinement. These models are studied to be safe, effective, and cost efficient. They also prevent the long-term adverse impacts of incarceration on individuals, families, and communities.

Felony alternatives to incarceration programs for more serious charges pave the way for diversion at all levels of the justice system. We ask Council to maintain its support in Brooklyn, and expand funding to support Manhattan's operations which are currently supported by asset forfeiture funding that is set to expire halfway through FY23. The Center's **Felony Alternatives-to-Incarceration** courts in Manhattan and Brooklyn, operated out of **Manhattan Justice Opportunities** and **Brooklyn Justice Initiatives** alike, offer the opportunity to resolve a case without a jail or prison sentence for people who don't qualify for other specialized courts like drug diversion or mental health courts. They offer a reliable and systemic way for people to access alternative sentences, providing rapid assessment and tailored plans to address individual needs. They also provide access to culturally responsive community-based programs,

individualized cognitive-behavioral therapy, drug treatment, or mental health treatment. All assessments and treatment plans are individualized, as is the way the Court responds to developments and setbacks in individual cases.

With City Council's support, we can expand access to these alternatives in New York and safely provide communities with more options to adjudicate harm, maintain community safety, and produce better outcomes for the individual otherwise facing jail or prison time, and the community at large.

In addition to its felony programming, the Center's Manhattan Justice Opportunities provides additional social services as alternatives to jail and other sentences. The restorative justice initiative at Manhattan Justice Opportunities, which is completing a pilot phase, brings together the harmed party and the person responsible for the harm to discuss the issues underlying the conflict, and the pathways for moving forward. The goal is to help resolve these conflicts, heal relationships, and reduce the parties' likelihood of future court-involvement. Cases that are eligible for restorative justice programming include interpersonal conflicts between people with ongoing relationships and hate crimes. We urge Council to support restorative justice facilitators to provide programming as an alternative to incarceration for criminal cases that involve harm and have a need for healing. A hallmark of Manhattan Justice Opportunities' programming is how individualized it is. All assessments and treatment plans are individualized, as is the way the Court responds to developments/setbacks in individual cases.

The need for more meaningful, effective, and equitable interventions for traffic-related cases has never been more urgent. With support from Council, the Center's **Driver Accountability Program** (DAP) operates in all five boroughs. DAP offers participants a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and works to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court. DAP provides diversion even for the most serious cases, and is piloting a restorative justice program that brings together drivers and their victims for a process of accountability and healing in cases where traffic crashes have caused serious injury or death.

Preliminary research suggests that the program changes participant driving beliefs and habits and encourages safer driving. A recent evaluation found a majority of participants felt that their driving behaviors changed since their ticket or arrest as a direct result of the program. The Center urges Council to renew funding to sustain those operations, as well as expand the program to fully implement the second tier of the program that offers a more intensive restorative response for the most deeper end cases involving serious injury or death.

The Center's pre-arraignment diversion model, **Project Reset**, operates Citywide and helps further reduce the jail population by decreasing the likelihood of failure to appear bench warrants at arraignment for low level Desk Appearance Tickets (DATs). Project Reset diverts New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests away from the court system through community-based programming and access to opportunities, offering relief from the collateral consequences participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for a low-level crime, such as legal discrimination in housing, immigration, and employment matters, or even a bench warrant for failing to appear.

Pre-arraignment diversion is a component of the Points of Agreement. The Administration renewed Project Reset funding in FY22 for Staten Island, Queens, and Brooklyn, with City Council continuing to fund the program in the Bronx, and the New York District Attorney's office supporting Manhattan for FY22. The Administration will not cover funding for Bronx Reset in FY23. Therefore, we ask Council to provide support for this program in the Bronx in the absence of Administration funding so that its successes and impact continue.

Finally, the Center's Midtown Community Court (MCC) is piloting a program offering diversion options for young people with gun possession and related charges – the **Youth Diversion for Gun Possession Initiative –** in collaboration with the New York City Law Department and Manhattan District Attorney's Office. Understanding the drivers of gun violence is the first step in supporting evidence-based solutions. In groundbreaking research on the drivers of gun violence, the Center surveyed over 300 young people in neighborhoods with historically high rates of gun violence to determine their reasons for seeking out firearms. The findings demonstrated widespread feelings of diminished safety and pervasive experiences of violence and trauma that motivated the 'security' of carrying a gun.[1]

To appropriately respond to the complex drivers of gun violence, we seek Council support for MCC's Youth Diversion for Gun Possession Initiative. This pilot works with the Law Department to divert youth in family court cases to holistic diversion options if they are arrested for gun possession and related charges. It employs a team of case managers and a credible messenger who utilize their own experiences to connect with young people and help to change their behavior while simultaneously attaching them to meaningful services. The resulting trust, respect, and empowerment of participants are especially crucial to the success of this pilot.[1] Council support will allow MCC to continue this work as a longer-term initiative that serves a greater amount of youth.

Upstream, Precinct-, and Court-Based Supports for Individuals with Complex Mental Health Needs

Mental health and the justice system cannot be siloed; they are inextricably intertwined. Properly addressing the mental health needs of all New Yorkers—necessary now more than ever before with the stressors of COVID-19 weighing heavily on already under-resourced communities—will allow us to lessen harmful interactions with the justice system and law enforcement. And, on the flip side, ensure that contact with the system is humane, with an emphasis on providing culturally competent treatment and programming.

Ideally, we address the mental health needs of individuals before they ever intersect with the justice system. The Center offers trauma informed mental health programming in communities experiencing high rates of violence in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. We urge Council to continue and expand support for the Center's Queens Community Justice Center's UPLIFT Program and Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative.

To address high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Center's **UPLIFT Program** provides trauma and healing services to

justice involved male youth and young adults by offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops. Through case management, victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring, participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. In Staten Island, the Center's **Youth Wellness Initiative** provides robust mental health services that address trauma and promote healing for young people involved in the justice system or at-risk of justice system involvement. Additionally, the initiative is geared towards providing holistic support to families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative.

The Center's Brownsville Community Justice Center offers programming for young women. We urge Council to support two gender specific programs: **Brownsville Girls Collaborative** (BGC) and **Young Women's Collective Entrepreneurship Institute** (YWCEI). BGC is a leadership development program for young women, focused on holistic empowerment of the mind, body, and soul. The program creates a safe space to engage young women from the Brownsville community who are at high risk of violence and justice involvement. YWCEI is a 12-week intensive business incubator program designed to invest in female-identified entrepreneurs from Brownsville, ages 19-24. YWCEI intentionally addresses the link between complex trauma and economic disenfranchisement as well as provides opportunities for financial empowerment. The Brownsville Community Justice Center works to create safe spaces in which women can address their trauma histories and understand the roots of their behavior, reducing the likelihood of future violence or justice system contact and empowering participants to be become positive agents of change for themselves and the community.

For those who do intersect with the system, the Center seeks funding for Midtown Community Court's **Rapid Engagement Initiative** (the Initiative) which works in partnership with select NYPD precincts. The Initiative serves as a dedicated resource for the precinct-based rapid engagement of individuals who may have complex needs on the same day of an arrest. The Initiative offers individualized care to people arrested on cases that are DAT-eligible who want to connect to services by employing a highly skilled social worker from Midtown as the precinct's "on-call" social worker and Peer Navigator.

This timing is critical because often an arrest of someone may be the direct result of their dire need for mental health services and/or harm reduction services, along with other services. The intervention will use clinically informed best practices to help address any mental health, substance use, and other social service needs and connect individuals with local community-based organizations. We urge Council to fund this rapid support for justice-involved people, helping them to address needs while also resolving cases quickly and avoiding warrants.

Finally, the Center's **Brooklyn Mental Health Court** (BMHC) provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and represent a growing percentage of cases served. With Council's continued support, BMHC offers twice monthly programs specifically for youth, including arts programs, movie trips, and meditation classes, all designed to nurture close engagement with the youth population to help them comply with their court mandates and avoid future contact with the justice system. The court's new Youth Engagement Specialist, a bilingual member of our clinical team, ensures young people are not left behind due to language barriers. Renewed funding will enable BMHC to continue and strengthen youth-focused programs, maintain the critical Youth Engagement Specialist role, and

provide activities and healthy meals and snacks to participants, fostering close relationships that help youth to lead healthy non-justice involved lives.

Gender & Family Justice: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence, Uplifting Survivors of Human Trafficking, and Supporting Whole Families in Court & Upon Re-Entry from Prison

To prevent intimate partner violence (IPV), we seek continued Council support for models like the Center's **Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement (RISE) Project**, which operate at the intersection of IPV and gun violence. The Center's RISE Project draws from public health, healing-centered, and transformative justice frameworks to work within communities in New York City to change community norms that tolerate IPV and amplify community norms that support healthy relationships. RISE is a part of the City's Crisis Management System (CMS), offering supports to end IPV related gun violence, providing the tools to reduce intimate partner violence levels in community, and focusing on long-term sustained engagement in neighborhoods. RISE hosts community-oriented events and engages the community via social media, ensuring survivors and people who cause harm have access to conversations and restorative circles to take accountability for and change their harmful behavior.

We urge Council to continue funding support for human trafficking survivors that extends beyond meeting immediate needs and possible criminal mandates, and includes elevating the voices and ideas of survivors by building survivor capacity and equipping them with the tools to become leaders and advocates in the anti-trafficking field and their local communities. As the Center's Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC) referrals continue to go down, due to shared understandings of the harms traditional systems impose on survivors, the Center's Gender and Family Justice team, in collaboration with Rights4Girls, Courtney's House, and CATCH Court, are piloting **Bronx Project HEAL (Helping to Empower through Advocacy and Leadership)** out of the Center's Bronx Community Solutions (BCS).

By bridging the gap between community and institutions, Bronx Project HEAL will allow survivors to reimagine systems and engage in local advocacy on issues important to them. The Bronx Project HEAL pilot is rooted in an understanding of best practices, extensive consulting with local survivor leaders, and interviews with practitioners. Designed to center the needs and experiences of justice-involved trafficking survivors, Project HEAL is a six-to nine-month voluntary program that aims to enhance the capacity of survivors to become leaders and advocates in the community by creating a survivor leadership group. The group will offer community-based professional development experiences, leadership and advocacy opportunities, and mentorship and peer support. Among those who may be eligible for this voluntary program are current and former clients of Bronx Community Solutions, including those who have worked directly with the program's human trafficking specialist.

There is scant support for the New Yorkers who are released from prison each year, many of whom have lived for decades behind bars, and nearly no support for the families who welcome them home. Despite strong evidence that social support is positively correlated with stable housing and that stable housing greatly reduces the risk of re-arrest amongst formerly

incarcerated people, support is narrowly focused to material needs. The heads of households, primarily women of color, who welcome these loved ones home shoulder the emotional, psychological and spiritual challenges for all, after incarceration.

The Center's **Family Healing Project** uses restorative justice processes to offer supportive spaces for all who have been impacted by the criminal legal system. We urge Council to begin supporting The Family Healing Project as a discharge initiative which offers a restorative justice process and healing space for individuals returning to community from prison to rebuild relationships with those they care most about. By giving returning citizens the opportunity to build a strong network and strengthen connections with family members, the Family Healing Project aims to help these individuals navigate the challenges of reentry and conditions of parole while providing meaningful support to their families and loved ones to decrease rates of technical parole violations.

To round out support for families and infants, the Center seeks funding to build the capacity of the successful **Strong Starts Court Initiative (SSCI)** to meet the needs of a greater number of infants, toddlers, and their families throughout New York City. SSCI is a Family-Court-based project; it employs a two-generational approach to provide specialized supports for infants, toddlers and their families who have child protection cases, and it works to educate court-based professionals in an approach focused on early child development that will transform the traditional family court response to this extremely vulnerable population. SSCI offers an opportunity to address inter-generational system involvement in a way that builds trust with families, where 70% continue to reach out for services after their cases are concluded. With inquiries from other localities, and technical assistance provided to other Family Courts and child welfare systems across the state, Strong Starts is well positioned to expand capacity in NYC with the support of Council.

Housing as a Justice Issue: Preventing Eviction through Comprehensive Housing Support

Access to quality, sustainable, and safe housing is a crucial element to the conversation around social justice and equity. Our research shows that 18%-25% of our Felony Alternatives to Incarceration program participants are experiencing homelessness.[2] By proactively addressing factors like access to housing and housing resources, we hope to reduce the likelihood of individuals intersecting with the justice system. Three Center programs - the Red Hook Community Justice Center, the Harlem Community Justice Center, and Legal Hand – work directly with New York City residents who are facing housing instability, whether through the threat of eviction, the need for permanent housing, or living conditions that pose risks to their safety and well-being.

The Center's unique positioning–a community-based organization with programs across all five boroughs and individuals already engaging in this work–means that we can bridge those gaps to ensure that our most vulnerable residents do not fall through. We seek funding from Council to support the Center's proposed **New York City Housing Justice Corps** in launching a city-wide, community-based project dedicated to preventing evictions while promoting housing stability, affordability and tenant protections for vulnerable tenants and public housing

communities through a network of trained housing navigators and mobile, pop-up events in all five boroughs.

The Center conceives broadly of addressing the factors that lead to housing instability by providing tailored services through a predictable series of stages at which a client facing the potential loss of housing can be helped so as to avoid that potentially devastating outcome.[3] The Center introduced the Eviction Intervention Stage Model, which identifies junctures at which supportive, problem-solving interventions can ensure the necessary community supports and legal representation (Appendix A).[3] We believe that integrating these procedural protections and problem-solving interventions across the eviction process continuum, including but not limited to housing court, will support people with mental health conditions in retaining stable housing.

While New York City has made significant investments in attorneys for low-income residents, tenants are more likely to remain stably housed when they have assistance beyond legal representation in Housing Court. Support prior to legal filings have been noted to improve legal representation by having files, evidence, and written requests for evidence gathered and organized. We have found that a problem-solving approach in, and beyond, Housing Court helps both tenants and landlords connect to resources to address challenges like building repairs and back rent.

Conclusion

By partnering with the Center, Council can go beyond transforming the justice system to cultivating vibrant and prosperous communities that center safety and security for all residents. We thank the Council its continued partnership and are available to answer any questions you may have.

Notes

[1]Swaner, R. & White, E. & Martinez, A. & Camacho, A. & Spate, B. & Alexander, J. & Webb, L. & Evans, K. (2020). Guns, Safety, and the Edge of Adulthood in New York City. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation. Available at: https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications/gun-violence-NYC

Ibid. at citation 1

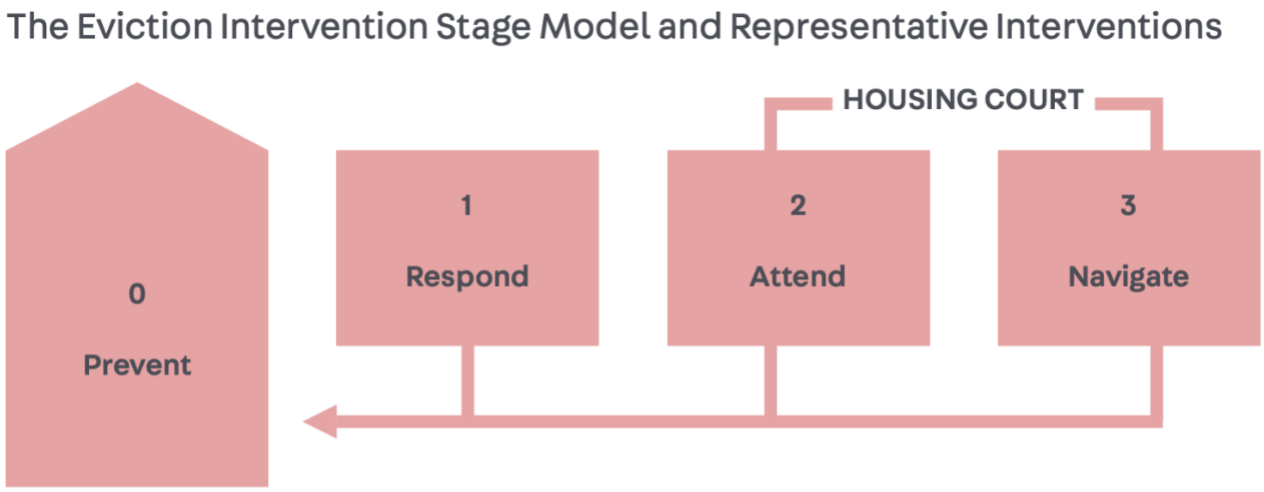
[2]Center for Court Innovation. (2020). [ATI data file]. Retrieved from the Justice Center Application case management system.

[3]Jaureguilorda, I. & Laurel, F. & Lopez, R. & Rotter, M. (2021). Eviction Prevention and Mental Health: A New Paradigm for Civil Justice Reform. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation. Available at: https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications/eviction-prevention-mental-health

Ibid. at citation 3

Appendix

A.



- **Stage 0: Prevent**, in which housing stability is maintained through housing affordability and access to support services as needed.
- **Stage 1: Respond**, in which the person receives the first notice of the housing problem, e.g., rent non-payment or nuisance complaint.
- **Stage 2: Attend**, in which the person has to navigate the Housing Court process.
- **Stage 3: Navigate**, in which the person has to navigate the tasks necessary to address the complaint in between Housing Court hearings.

Center for Court Innovation

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Courtney Bryan. Director

Center for Court Innovation
FY23 City Council Major Proposal Summaries

Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative

Center for Court Innovation General

- **Center for Court Innovation #128665 - $1,000,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** This is an application to support the continuation of our alternative-to-incarceration, youth-diversion, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs in New York City. The Council's support allows us to serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers with mental health services, family development, youth empowerment, workforce development, and housing, legal, immigration and employment resource services. Our goal continues to be improving safety, reducing incarceration, expanding access to community resources and enhancing public trust in government to make New York City stronger, fairer, and safer for all.

Midtown Community Court

- **Midtown Community Court: Midtown Rapid Engagement Initiative (MREI) #128380 - $403,060 (New)** Working in partnership with select NYPD precincts—namely Midtown South Precinct, the 10th Precinct, and the 20th Precinct—Midtown Community Court's rapid engagement pilot will offer individualized support to individuals who want to connect to services by stationing a Peer Navigator at each of the three precincts. The Peer Navigators will engage people as they are being released from the precinct after an arrest and support them through their case process, alongside a highly skilled case manager and social worker. The Midtown Rapid Engagement Initiative team will immediately engage individuals in need, assess their eligibility for pre-arraignment diversion programs (e.g., HOPE and Project Reset), and provide information about the court process. The team will use clinically informed best practices to help address any mental health, substance use, and other social service needs and connect individuals with local community-based organizations. This initiative will offer rapid support for justice-involved people, helping them to address needs while also resolving cases quickly and avoiding warrants.
    - **Also applied under Diversion Programs Initiative.**

Midtown Community Court

- **Midtown Community Court: Youth Diversion for Gun Possession #128360 - $276,482 (New)** The Center for Court Innovation's (Center) Midtown Community Court

(MCC) will operate a Youth Diversion for Gun Possession initiative in collaboration with the New York City Law Department and Manhattan District Attorney's Office for young people charged with gun possession and related charges. This initiative is the first holistic diversion option for young people arrested for gun possession and employs a team of case managers and a credible messenger who utilize their own experiences to connect with young people and help to change their behavior while simultaneously attaching them to meaningful services. This proposal aims to expand a pilot currently underway at MCC into a longer-term initiative that serves a greater amount of youth on expanded eligibility.

- **Also applied under Diversion Programs Initiative.**

Diversion Programs Initiative

Felony Alternatives to Incarceration

- **Center for Court Innovation: Felony Alternative to Incarceration Program #128572 – $1,976,516 (Renewal/Expansion)** The Brooklyn and Manhattan Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Courts, and Brooklyn Mental Health Court offer community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring for felony cases (that are otherwise ineligible for drug, mental health, and domestic violence courts), which can decrease the use of jail and prison sentences and potentially lead to reduced criminal dispositions. The court is staffed by a team of resource coordinators, social workers, and mental health counselors who conduct independent assessments, prepare recommendations for programming and supervision, provide referrals to community-based providers, offer ongoing case management, supervision and compliance monitoring, and pilot new services, such as restorative justice interventions. The program and court part seek to significantly increase the use of ATIs, support and supervision offered to individuals charged with felonies and provide a model for jurisdictions across the country interested in enhancing public safety and reducing incarceration.

Project Reset Bronx

- **Center for Court Innovation: Project Reset #128410 - $710,000 (Renewal)** Project Reset Bronx is a diversion program offering a new response to low-level arrests that is proportionate, effective, and restorative. The program offers people who are arrested for low-level, non-violent crimes and receive a Desk Appearance Ticket the opportunity to avoid court and the possibility of a criminal record by completing community-based programming. Participants engage in a one-time restorative circle discussion with community volunteers, during which they discuss their arrest, reflect on the impact of the incident, explore any underlying concerns or needs that may have contributed, and exchange stories that inspire a pathway forward. The circle process is designed to foster a sense of connection and renewed sense of responsibility to community, reducing the social and emotional isolation that contributes to contact with the legal system.

Driver Accountability Program

- **Center for Court Innovation: Driver Accountability Program #128651 – $985,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** The Center for Court Innovation's Driver Accountability Program

offers a meaningful alternative to the traditional legal responses of fines, fees, and short-term incarceration for vehicular offenses in criminal court. The program builds on Vision Zero's emphasis on enforcement and public education and uses principles of restorative justice to address the dangerous behaviors that are the primary cause of pedestrian fatalities. With support from City Council, the program currently operates at six sites in all five boroughs. A recent evaluation has highlighted the program's positive impact on participants' driving beliefs and behaviors. This application seeks funding to sustain those operations, as well as expand the program to fully implement its more intensive version, Circles for Safe Streets, which is a restorative justice program that brings together drivers and their victims for a process of accountability and healing in cases where traffic crashes have caused serious injury or death.

Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI's) Initiatives

Manhattan Justice Opportunities

- **Manhattan Justice Opportunities: Restorative Justice Program for Misdemeanant Clients #127632 - $211,000 (New)** Manhattan Justice Opportunities—a court-based site operated by the Center for Court Innovation that provides social services as alternatives to jail and other sentences—proposes hiring two restorative justice facilitators to provide restorative justice programming as an alternative to incarceration for criminal cases that involve harm and have a need for healing. The restorative justice initiative at Manhattan Justice Opportunities, which is completing a pilot phase, brings together the harmed party and the person responsible for the harm to discuss the issues underlying the conflict, and the pathways for moving forward. The goal is to help resolve these conflicts, heal relationships, and reduce the parties' likelihood of future court-involvement. Cases that are eligible for restorative justice programming include interpersonal conflicts between people with ongoing relationships and hate crimes.
    - **Also applied under Diversion Programs and Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiatives**

Children Under Five

Strong Starts Court Initiative

- **Center for Court Innovation: Strong Starts Court Initiative #126136 - $572,241 (New)** The Center for Court Innovation seeks funding to build the capacity of the successful Strong Starts Court Initiative to meet the needs of a greater number of infants, toddlers, and their families throughout New York City. The Strong Starts Court Initiative is a Family-Court-based project; it employs a two generational approach to provide specialized supports for infants, toddlers and their families who have child protection cases, and it works to educate court-based professionals in an approach focused on early child development that will transform the traditional family court response to this extremely vulnerable population.

- **Also applied under Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations, Speaker's, and Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative**

Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative

Access to Justice

- **New York City Housing Justice Corps #128541 - $1,346,497 (New)** The Center for Court Innovation proposes to launch a city-wide, community-based project dedicated to preventing evictions while promoting housing stability, affordability and tenant protections for vulnerable tenants and public housing communities through a network of trained housing navigators and mobile, pop-up events in all five boroughs.

Discharge Planning Initiative

Restorative Justice Practices

- **Center for Court Innovation: The Family Healing Project: Reentry after Prison #128502 - $210,000 (New)** The Family Healing Project is a process that supports families in the transition after incarceration. The Project acknowledges the strain that separation by incarceration puts on an individual's most cherished relationships—between spouses, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and other loved ones—and the Project recognizes that for a returning citizen to be successful after release, the whole family needs to be engaged and supported. Moving away from individualized reentry models, our program uses restorative justice process that offers space for participants to rebuild relationships with those they care most about. By giving returning citizens the opportunity to build a strong network and strengthen connections with family members, the Family Healing Project aims to help these individuals navigate the challenges of reentry and conditions of parole; provide meaningful support to the families and loved ones of these individuals; and, thereby, decrease rates of technical parole violations.

Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative

RISE (Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement) Project

- **Center for Court Innovation: RISE Project #128476 - $100,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** This is an application for continued support of the Center for Court Innovation's RISE Project. RISE is a part of New York City's Crisis Management System, working in partnership with Cure Violence sites to provide community-based intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence and with a focus on individuals who may have gun violence linkages. RISE works to reduce IPV by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior; changing community norms to reduce tolerance for IPV; and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for IPV, promote healthy relationships, and connect community members who are in need of

services to RISE. RISE incorporates components of Cure Violence and restorative justice models in its work.

- **Also applied under Criminal Justice-Diversion Programs and Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiatives**

Mental Health Court-Involved Youth Initiative

Brooklyn Mental Health Court

- **Brooklyn Mental Health Court: Court-Involved Youth Mental Health #126096 – $150,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of the Brooklyn Mental Health Court provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and who represent a growing percentage of the cases we serve. Since 2017, more than 126 youth in this age range have pled into the Court. Thanks to City Council support, we now offer monthly programming specifically for youth, including arts programs, movie trips, and meditation classes—all designed to nurture close engagement with our youth population to help them comply with their court mandates and avoid future contact with the justice system. Youth support groups are also offered on a weekly basis. City Council funding also supports our new Youth Engagement Specialist role, a bilingual member of our clinical team. Renewed funding will enable us to continue and strengthen our youth-focused programs, maintain our critical Youth Engagement Specialist role, and provide meaningful activities and healthy meals and snacks to our participants, fostering close relationships that help youth to lead healthy, law-abiding lives.

Queens Community Justice Center - Jamaica

- **Queens Community Justice Center: UPLIFT #128327 - $100,000 (New)** To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, QCJC piloted UPLIFT in FY22, a program that provides that provides trauma and healing services to justice involved male youth and young adults ages 18-25. By offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops, case management and victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. QCJC requests funding to continue and expand this critical work.

Staten Island Justice Center

- **Staten Island Justice Center: Justice-Involved Youth Wellness Initiative #129888 - $160,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** This is a renewal proposal for Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative, a program that provides robust mental health services that address trauma and promotes healing for young people on Staten Island involved in the justice system or at-risk of justice system involvement. Participants will be provided mental health assessments by a clinician who will create engagement plans based on the needs that are identified in the assessment. Youth will also participate in a 10-week long workshop series focused on addressing the impacts of trauma and promoting healing

facilitated by a mental health professional. In addition to group sessions, youth will be offered a menu of services such as individual short-term counseling, peer mentorship, restorative justice circles, and/or civic engagement opportunities as determined clinically appropriate to address underlying needs that spurred justice system involvement. Additionally, this proposal will be geared towards providing support to the families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative.

Support for Victims of Human Trafficking Initiative

Bronx Community Solutions

- **Center for Court Innovation: Bronx Project HEAL (formerly Human Trafficking Intervention Court) #128523 - $100,000 (Renewal/Redesign/Expansion)** This application is for Bronx Project HEAL (Helping to Empower through Advocacy and Leadership), an evolution of the Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court (HTIC) initiative. Based on the National Project HEAL curriculum, developed by the Center for Court Innovation, Bronx Project HEAL is a new leadership and peer support initiative for justice-involved human trafficking survivors that is informed by, co-created with, and often co-led by, survivors themselves. It is a 6- to 9-month voluntary program that aims to enhance the capacity of survivors to become leaders and advocates in the Bronx community by offering community-based professional development experiences, leadership and advocacy opportunities, and mentorship and peer support. Funding will support the implementation of the survivor leader empowerment program aimed at providing professional development services, including leadership and advocacy training, to survivor leaders to enhance their professional skills and encourage their participation in anti-trafficking policy and advocacy efforts.

Young Women's Leadership Development Initiative

Brownsville Community Justice Center

- **Brownsville Community Justice Center: Brownsville Girls Collaborative #132070 – $150,000 (Renewal)** The Brownsville Community Justice Center is requesting funding to support two gender specific programs under the Young Women's Speaker Initiative: Brownsville Girls Collaborative (BGC) and Young Women's Collective Entrepreneurship Institute (YWCEI). BGC is a leadership development program for young women, focused on holistic empowerment of the mind, body, and soul. The program creates a safe space to engage young women from the Brownsville community who are at high risk of violence and justice involvement. The Young Women's Collective Entrepreneurship Institute (YWCEI) is a 12-week intensive business incubator program designed to invest in female-identified entrepreneurs from Brownsville, ages 19-24. YWCEI intentionally addresses the link between complex trauma and economic disenfranchisement as well as provides opportunities for financial empowerment. In the year ahead, BGC and YWCEI will continue to create safe spaces in which women can address their trauma histories and understand the roots of their behavior, reducing the likelihood of future violence or

justice system contact and empowering participants to be become positive agents of change for themselves and the community.

DARCEL D. CLARK

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BRONX COUNTY

March 15, 2022

Speaker Adrienne Adams
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams:

On behalf of the Bronx County District Attorney's Office, I am writing in support of key Center for Court Innovation ("The Center") FY23 City Council applications. Funding will expand alternatives to incarceration for more cases, provide mental health support and early diversion, as well as aid programs that address the intersectionality of intimate partner violence and gun violence. Funding will also provide restorative re-entry support for individuals and their families, pre-court eviction prevention options, and innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities within the Bronx. These programs will enable the Bronx to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system wherever possible and allow us to build public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

To address the issue of street safety, I support the continuation and expansion of the **Driver Accountability Program.** The essence of this program is to provide a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and improve the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court. The Driver Accountability Program is accepting pressing cases which addresses cases involving deaths, victim mediation, and prison sentence mitigations.

The Center's pre-arraignment diversion model, **Project Reset,** re-directs New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests from the court system. This is done through community-based programming. Project Reset also provides access to opportunities by offering relief from the collateral consequence's participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for a low-level crime. Some examples include legal discrimination in housing, immigration, and employment matters, or even a bench warrant for failing to appear in court. The City has just released its request for proposals for citywide Project Reset for FY 2023, which includes the Bronx. In order to improve Project Reset outcomes, I ask that the Council provide supplemental funding to enhance outreach with Project Reset participants at the precinct level.

The Bronx County District Attorney's Office partners with the **Bronx Child Trauma Support** program to support the provisions of clinical assessment and treatment of child victims and

witnesses to crimes in the Bronx. I request the Council continue its support of these direct services conducted through evidenced-based and trauma-informed intervention models designed to prevent or reduce post-traumatic stress symptoms, suicidality, re-traumatization, and future victimization.

The Center's **Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court** (HTIC) referrals continue to decline. Therefore, I urge the Council to continue funding the Center's pilot program, **Bronx Project Healing and Empowerment through Advocacy and Leadership** (HEAL). Project HEAL is a survivor leadership and peer support initiative for human trafficking survivors. It is being developed to engage survivors voluntarily and non-voluntarily. Project HEAL also allows survivors to self-advocate for the change they want to see through programming that involves education, advocacy, and leadership skill building, allowing survivors to meaningfully reimagine systems.

I urge the Council to continue supporting the Center's **RISE Project** which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals who are actively volunteering in violence prevention programs. Such programs help to stop violence and change behavior by changing community norms to reduce tolerance for violence, and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

Finally, I request that the Council continue to fund the Center's **Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to respond to the immediate needs of the Bronx residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, mental health integrations to diversion, and other pilots to test for scalable solutions.

The Center has a long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in the Bronx. Their mission to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities aligns with my Office's vision. Together we can reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice. We can do this by reducing incarceration and convictions as well as by building substantial and meaningful community-based support. I strongly encourage the City Council to consider funding each of the Center's programs which will ultimately enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of the Bronx.

Sincerely,

Darcel D. Clark

Darcel D. Clark

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
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Eric Gonzalez
District Attorney

March 23, 2022

Speaker Adrienne Adams
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams and Member of City Council,

On behalf of the office of the Kings County District Attorney, I write in support of key Center for Court Innovation ("the Center") FY23 City Council Applications that will expand alternatives to incarceration for more cases, mental health support, early diversion, programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence, restorative re-entry supports for individuals and their families, pre-court eviction prevention options, and innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities. These programs will enable Brooklyn to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system wherever possible and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

The Center has submitted multiple proposals to assist my office in expanding diversion opportunities for misdemeanor and felony alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) across Brooklyn, while maintaining public safety and accountability. The **Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court**, launched in January 2020 with Council support, offers mental health screening, community-23based interventions, and judicial monitoring to felony cases. I urge the Council to continue and expand funding to this initiative to reduce unnecessary incarceration and strengthen diversion opportunities in Brooklyn.

To address the issue of street safety, I support the continuation and expansion of the **Driver Accountability Program** to provide a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving and work to change the risky driving behavior of people charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court. The Driver Accountability Program is also addressing more serious cases through a second tier of programming, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims through a restorative justice process.

Individuals demonstrating persistent and untreated mental illness causing a pattern of behavior require access to culturally competent mental health treatment. To address gaps in mental health related support for court-involved youth in Brooklyn, I urge the Council to continue support for the **Brooklyn Mental Health Court**, a specialized court providing support to youth ages 18 to 24 who have unique social and cognitive needs and represent a growing percentage of the cases the Center serves.

I urge Council to begin supporting **The Family Healing Project** which offers a restorative justice process and healing space for individuals returning to Brooklyn from prison to rebuild relationships with those they care most about. By giving returning citizens the opportunity to build a strong network and strengthen connections with family members, the Family Healing Project aims to help these individuals navigate the challenges of reentry and conditions of parole while providing meaningful support to their families and loved ones to decrease rates of technical parole violations.

I urge the Council to continue supporting the Center's **RISE Project** which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior; changing community norms to reduce tolerance for violence and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

Finally, the Council should continue and expand support for the Center's **Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to respond to the immediate needs of Brooklyn residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, mental health integrations to diversion, and other pilots to test for scalable solutions.

The Center's long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in Brooklyn to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities align with my office's vision. Together we reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice, aiming to reduce incarceration and conviction wherever possible and build substantial and meaningful community-based supports. I encourage investment in each of the Center's programs to enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of Brooklyn.

Sincerely,

Eric Gonzalez

Eric Gonzalez
Kings County District Attorney

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF NEW YORK
ONE HOGAN PLACE
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(212) 335-9000

ALVIN L. BRAGG, JR.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 16, 2022

Speaker Adrienne Adams
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Adams and Member of City Council,

On behalf of the Manhattan County District Attorney's Office, I write in support of key Center for Court Innovation ("the Center") FY23 City Council Applications that will expand and deepen alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) in Manhattan and sustain community-based prevention and re-entry programs that make our neighborhoods safer. The Center's proposal would expand mental health support, early diversion, and programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence; pilot restorative re-entry supports for individuals and their families; create pre-court eviction prevention options, and much more. These programs address the pressing needs facing our communities and will enable Manhattan to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful interactions with courts, jails, and prisons wherever possible – with the goal of building sustainable and community-driven pathways to public safety.

The Center has submitted multiple proposals to expand diversion opportunities in Manhattan for both misdemeanors and felonies. These programs work and must continue. The **Manhattan Justice Opportunities Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court**, launched in June 2019 with support from my Office's asset forfeiture dollars, provides mental health screening, community based interventions and judicial monitoring on serious felony cases. This innovative model allows my Office to safely expand its use of programming without compromising public safety. As the funds for this program expire in March 2023, I urge the Council to sustain and expand this holistic diversion option in Manhattan.

Through **Manhattan Justice Opportunities' Criminal Court initiative**, which launched in January 2020, my Office has referred over 4,000 misdemeanor and low-level felony cases to community-based programming – doubling our initial projection of 1,100 referrals per year. Manhattan Justice Opportunity has a suite of tailored sentencing options in-house,

including restorative justice programming, civic engagement projects, employment case management, behavioral healthcare, and more. This initiative is essential to our Criminal Court practice and connects justice-involved individuals to the community-based services they need most. It is of paramount importance to sustain this program beyond December 2022, when initial funding is due to expire.

Additionally, I support the continuation and expansion of the **Driver Accountability Program,** which provides a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving for people charged with driving-related offenses in Manhattan Criminal Court. The Driver Accountability Program can now accept more serious charges through a second tier of programming that handles cases involving death and utilizes victim mediation and prison sentence mitigations. This resource provides alternatives to fines, fees, and incarceration, when appropriate.

Many justice-impacted individuals present with persistent and untreated mental illness that requires rapid engagement, mental health treatment, and access to meaningful social services. I urge the Council to begin supporting pre-system engagement through the **Midtown Community Court Rapid Engagement Program**, a pilot that will offer individualized support at the point of arrest to individuals who want to connect to services by stationing a Peer Navigator at the precinct. This innovative model will create off-ramps that prevent people, including those with unaddressed mental health needs, from coming through our doors.

Additionally, I urge Council to support the **Midtown Community Court Youth Diversion for Gun Possession Initiative**, which operates in collaboration with Family Court to offer diversion options for young people charged with gun possession and related charges. This initiative is considered one of the first holistic diversion options for young people arrested for gun possession in Manhattan. Through this program, a team of case managers and a credible messenger utilize their own experiences to connect with young people and help to change their behavior, while simultaneously attaching them to meaningful services. We believe this is a valuable tool in the City's efforts to combat gun violence and are exploring ways to leverage this program in Supreme Court.

I urge the Council to continue supporting the Center's **RISE Project**, which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals who perpetrate abuse in voluntary programming that seeks to change community norms surrounding tolerance for violence, and trains credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

Finally, the Council should continue and expand support for the Center's **Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to respond to the immediate needs of Manhattan residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, mental health integrations to diversion, and other pilots to test for scalable solutions. This funding allows the Center to quickly respond to community needs and develop novel approaches to combat violence in Manhattan.

The Center's long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in Manhattan that promote equality, dignity, and respect aligns with my vision. Together, we reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice that seeks to reduce incarceration and conviction wherever possible, all while increasing public safety and public trust. I encourage investment in each of the Center's programs to enhance fairness, accountability, and safety for the people of Manhattan.

Sincerely,

Alvin Bragg
Manhattan District Attorney

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
RICHMOND COUNTY
MICHAEL E. MCMAHON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 17, 2022

Honorable Adrienne Adams
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: Support for Center for Court Innovation Fiscal Year 2023 Initiatives

Dear Speaker Adams and Members of the New York City Council:

As Staten Island's chief law enforcement officer, I write this letter to offer my support for the Center for Court Innovation ("CCI") and the critical FY'23 fiscal applications made by their organization to expand alternatives to incarceration opportunities and to provide mental health support, early diversion programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence, restorative re-entry options for individuals and their families, pre-court eviction prevention options, and innovative pilot programs that address pressing needs in communities across the city. Many of these important initiatives and programs will enable Staten Island to move towards our shared vision of reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

Individuals demonstrating persistent and untreated mental illness require access to culturally competent mental health treatment. To address gaps in mental health-related support for court-involved youth in Staten Island, I urge the Council to continue and expand support for the Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative. This initiative provides vital mental health services that address trauma and promote healing for young people on Staten Island involved in the justice system or at-risk of justice system involvement. Additionally, the initiative is geared towards providing holistic support to families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative.

I also urge the Council to continue supporting CCI's RISE Project, which provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence. RISE works to reduce intimate partner violence by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior, changing

community norms to reduce the tolerance for violence, and training credible messengers to identify risk factors for intimate partner violence.

Finally, the Council should continue and expand support for CCI's Innovative Core Funding. CCI uses this funding to respond to the immediate needs of Staten Island residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, providing victim services, mental health integrations to diversion, and other pilots to test for scalable solutions.

CCI's long and documented history of conducting original research and operating direct service programs in Staten Island to promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities align with my office's vision. My office has proudly partnered with CCI to bring a Community Justice Center to Staten Island purposed to reduce crime and incarceration, and strengthen community trust in justice, while also creating safer, more equitable neighborhoods through community-driven public safety initiatives, youth opportunity, and economic mobility efforts. Together, we reimagine a fairer and more holistic approach to justice, aiming to reduce incarceration and conviction and build substantial and meaningful community-based supports through innovative courts and alternatives to incarceration programming and services. I strongly encourage investment in each of the programs and areas outlined above to ensure that they can continue this successful work.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this letter as you make important financial determinations on behalf of the City of New York.

Sincerely,

Michael E. McMahon
District Attorney

MEM/aem

CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Ayuda Legal Para Refugiados Centroamericanos

240 Hooper Street Brooklyn New York 11211 (718) 486-6800 Fax (718) 486-5287

Testimony to City Council Finance Committee

May 25, 2022

Central American Legal Assistance (CALA) continues to represent hundreds of Latino asylum seekers, most from Central America, fighting to prevent their deportation and to unite families that have suffered persecution.

City Council funding has been absolutely critical to keeping our doors open. Last fiscal year, the Council provided CALA a total of $512,000 for these critical legal services ($380,000 dedicated to unaccompanied children and families; $84,000 under the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative; and $8,500 from our local City Council representative.) We ask that this be continued.

CALA kept its phones on all during COVID and as of March 2022, most staff were back in person. We had court hearings by Zoom, winning asylum protection for dozens of individuals and appealing when we lost. In addition, we helped several hundred New Yorkers keep their work authorization current; our clients constitute a large proportion of "essential workers" serving as home attendants, day care and school staff, medical assistants, construction and restaurant workers.

Federal immigration policy is – as always – in flux. The effects of the Trump Administration are still being felt as many of the new immigration court judges who were appointed during the past administration have a hostile view toward asylum seekers. Hopes for permanent legal status for the huge DACA student population and TPS (Temporary Protected Status) holders have evaporated as Congress is unable to act. They, too, turn to CALA for guidance and updates.

Unique in the nation, we are part of the ICARE Coalition (identified in the NYC budget as "UMI") which is made up of several non-profits all serving either unaccompanied children or families[1]. Some of us focus on removal defense and asylum, while others provide social services and Family Court representation. We each focus on what we do best and share best practices and updates. Working together as a Council-funded collation has increased our efficiency and effectiveness.

Our IOI funds help single adults, also asylum-seekers, lately a lot of new cases from Nicaragua and Venezuela. And the local Council grant helps fund our open door (telephone

[1] Members of the ICARE Coalition are: CALA, Safe Passage, KIND, The Door, Catholic Charities, Legal Aid, and Human Rights First.

during Covid) consultation services for any New York immigrant wishing to understand the complicated world of federal immigration law. We provide one-on-one "consultas" every day to over 100 people a week.

New York City is, more than ever, a city of immigrants and the better for it. We are grateful to be a part of this diverse and vibrant community and count on the City Council to help us continue to serve the City's newest residents, as well as those here for years but still hoping for a permanent solution to their immigration status.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Pilsbury

Anne Pilsbury, Director

Testimony of the Central Park Conservancy
Committee on Finance, May 25, 2022
Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning and thank you to Chairperson Brannan and other members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify. My name is Betsy Smith, and I am the President and CEO of the Central Park Conservancy.

A lot of people know The Conservancy as the non-profit organization that takes care of Central Park, which we do. But increasingly, we also devote staff and equipment to caring for other parks across the five boroughs, and since 2014 have helped to improve more than 40 parks in 34 Council Districts through our Institute for Urban Parks.

We do this work because we believe fervently at the Conservancy that everyone, regardless of what zip code they call home, deserves to have access to safe, clean, open spaces.

Unfortunately, that is not the case in too many neighborhoods of our city. And the core reason is that for generations, New York City has not adequately funded its parks and committed the resources required to grow and maintain them.

Investing 1 percent of the City's budget into parks would be a game-changer, and an acknowledgement that our parks are not a luxury, but essential infrastructure that are vital to the physical and mental well-being of all New Yorkers.

Never has this been clearer than during COVID, when parks have become critical respites for cooped up New Yorkers eager to gather safely with friends, share a meal, or just breathe some fresh air.

We need to acknowledge that new reality and take real steps to better maintain our parks.

We need to find ways to create new open space in underserved neighborhoods, like on 34th Avenue in Queens.

And we need to listen to the Play Fair Coalition and its 400-plus member groups and dedicate 1 percent of city's budget to parks.

More than 150 years ago, New York City leaders pioneered what was then a novel concept: a park dedicated to the ideal that people from all walks of life deserved to enjoy safe, free, beautiful open spaces.

The result was Central Park, which cost $14 million to build over some 20 years. It was a bold and unprecedented investment in the future of New York City.

I urge the Mayor and the City Council to take a page from those early visionaries and invest in parks, so that future generations of New Yorkers might someday look back and say – this is when history was made.

This is when New York City re-committed itself to parks by building a greener, healthier city.

Thank you.

Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Testimony at the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
May 25th, 2022

Good afternoon. Thank you so much to Chair Brannan and members of the Finance committee for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community based- organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 125,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities. To that end, we are grateful to testify about the issues that impact the individuals and families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council for their leadership on these issues.

Our most marginalized communities have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two and a half years, and community based organizations have been at the frontline providing crucial services. CPC partnered with the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) and NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health (CSAAH) to conduct a survey of 1,300 AAPI New Yorkers to assess our communities' experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our early findings showed that 51% of respondents needed help accessing food, 34% reported language barriers being a challenge, 56% were worried about paying rent or mortgage, 68% applied for federal or state benefits including unemployment, SNAP, Medicaid etc., and 80% reported fearing for their safety and changing their daily activities due to the increase in anti-Asian violence. This has created new and urgent needs for CPC to provide services such as emergency food assistance, eviction prevention counseling, public benefits and unemployment assistance, testing, treatment and vaccine navigation, and addressing anti-Asian violence.

Our city government needs to expand and support programs that are lifelines to our communities. Below are some of the following issues that CPC is championing for and we urge the City Council to advocate for fully funding these programs as well as meaningfully address these issues as we approach budget negotiations:

Immigration Legal Services

CPC strongly urges the Council to increase funding for immigration legal services. Throughout the pandemic, CPC continued to provide immigration legal services to our community. When pending immigration applications were suddenly paused and applicants were left in the dark, they turned to CPC for guidance. When USCIS reopened and implemented new COVID-19 safety measures, we helped our community members navigate the modified system. When the undocumented community was left out of federal pandemic aid, CPC, along with other community-based organizations, stepped in and helped provide critical funding to support food and housing insecurity. However, more is needed to adequately support our immigrant community.

At the start of the pandemic, CPC provided cash assistance grants to individuals and families who were unable to access federal pandemic relief. Many of the community members were immigrants and had an undocumented family member. As they shared their COVID-19 impact stories, they wept and expressed their fears for their children. Some lived in dire situations and relied solely on food pantries for their survival. Mothers expressed their concerns for their children who were losing weight because they did not have the financial resources to provide meals on the table. Some expressed frustration of their exclusion for federal pandemic relief because of their undocumented status. It was heartbreaking to hear their stories but it's a reminder that we need to do more to ensure all New York communities are being served.

I. Language Accessibility and Cultural Competence

Language barriers make it even harder for many New Yorkers to navigate government resources and support. Immigrants struggle to access the assistance they need and throughout the pandemic, CPC worked closely with them to ensure they were able to apply for those benefits, like unemployment assistance. However, during the pandemic, many community members feared applying for benefits because of their immigration status. Misinformation can spread like wildfire and within the immigrant community, it can have chilling and lasting effects. Misinformation about eligibility and restrictions prevented community members from reaching out and applying for the benefits they desperately needed. Fortunately, CPC was able to host educational workshops explaining the eligibility for different types of government benefits and we were able to reassure immigrants who were hesitant to apply. Furthermore, we were able to schedule

immigration consultations for immigrants who wanted to speak to an immigration attorney about their concerns. By providing educational workshops and immigration consultations, immigrants felt more reassured about their immigration situation. In order to continue assisting the growing number of immigrants in New York, **we need to increase funding to language accessible immigration services.**

Adult Literacy

CPC also provides essential new-immigrant workforce programs such as Adult Literacy. Like so many Adult Literacy Programs throughout the city, CPC relies on City funding to provide quality programming to our communities. We urge the city to continue funding Adult Literacy Programs and continue the Adult Literacy Pilot Program Initiative. At CPC, this funding opens the door to about 600 immigrant ESOL students seeking free English classes every year. It has also meant providing much needed wrap around services to our students. For example, throughout this pandemic, students have received up-to-date information on COVID-19 , testing sites, and vaccination centers. Students learn digital literacy skills to help their children with remote learning. They learn American Civics, how to register to vote, and what rank-choice voting is. Students learn about healthcare assistance and if needed, receive services for domestic violence. Classrooms provide information regarding rental and food assistance. And as Asian hate crimes ravage our communities, students learn how to recognize discrimination, racism, and learn how to report crimes to the authorities.

Investing in our communities works. However, at the current cost per student rate, Adult Literacy Programs citywide have struggled to maintain the costs of services and staffing needed. The Adult Literacy Pilot Project Initiative attempts to answer the question of what a fully funded Adult Literacy Program can provide our communities. CPC is one of the recipients of this Pilot Initiative. Even though only a fraction of the originally asked amount was received, this recently enacted addition means we have been able triple the outreach and wrap around services to our students. This means more hours are dedicated to our students seeking childcare, senior care, housing, food assistance, insurance, college access, and workforce counseling. Modernizing aging technological and digital infrastructure has allowed students to access our classrooms remotely and learn digital literacy skills needed to be competitive.

To address the gap in funding for community-based adult literacy services, CPC calls on the Mayor and the City Council to:

1. The city must **maintain the $8 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional $13.5 million (for a total of $27 million)** in order to double the level of investment per student in the

upcoming DYCD RFP. Astonishingly, Mayor Adams has actually proposed a significant cut to the $8 million that was baselined last year.

2. The City Council should **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to $5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources.
3. The City Council should **renew the $4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

I. Increasing AAPI Representation and Civic Involvement

Programs such as Adult Literacy and our ONA (Office for New Americans) programs provide a critical curriculum that engages new immigrants to be more civically involved. Expanding the right to vote is essential to an inclusive, representative democracy; as such, CPC is a proud member of the Our City, Our Vote coalition, as well as the APA VOICE coalition, which advocated for the city to restore municipal voting rights for over 800,000 Legal Permanent Residents and individuals with work authorization. In December of 2021, the City Council overwhelmingly passed Introduction 1867 to usher in the largest enfranchisement of New York City municipal voters in over a century. Now, these neighbors have a say on the issues that we all care about, like schools, safety, food and shelter access, public transportation, and more. On December 9th, 2022 the law goes into effect and eligible non-citizens will be able to register to vote in city elections starting in 2023.

With the passage of Intro 1867, New York City has an opportunity to encourage greater civic engagement and mobilize our communities to advocate for good public policies that invest in and enhance our city. To effectively implement this legislation, **CPC recommends a $25 million City Council Initiative to support community-based outreach to newly enfranchised voters, including voter education, registration, and get-out-the-vote activities**

Early Childhood Services & Youth Services

I. Pay Parity and Low Child Rates

CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and immigrant families. In addition to providing childcare for low-income families, CPC's Childhood Development Services (CDS) staff are instrumental in supporting the growth of children of color with disabilities. During COVID-19, when schools closed and services shifted to a remote setting, CPC's CDS staff continued to provide their services nonstop, and creatively integrated their programming onto an online format. They are recognized as essential and vital to the reopening of New York City, but this recognition

was only in words. CBO's are funded disproportionately to their counterparts in DOE. We are contracted to serve NYC children under the same capacity; to educate with the same curriculum, credentials, assessments and requirements. It is unethical that the DOE is not equitable in parity still. Support staff without longevity are paid a mere 30 cents above minimum wage due to the contract negotiated with the City. We are seeing an exodus of staff from the Child care system, due to the disparity, many have left for substitute positions within DOE, which pays a rate of $33 an hour.

In addition to CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers, CPC holds contracts with DOE to operate Family Child Care (FCC) Networks in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. The Networks assist low-income and immigrant families in applying for subsidized child care and help parents find high-quality in-network home-based programs for infants, toddlers, and 3-K children.

Pay rates for child care programs affiliated with Family Child Care Networks are dictated by DOE/ACS and do not promote equity within the industry. All home-based child care providers have been able to provide 3-K services after Mayor De Blasio expanded 3-K for All last year, which meant that all families living in NYC were eligible to apply for free 3-K services from 8AM-2:20PM September through June. However, if a parent needed extended hours and an extended school year for their child, they would have to apply for a subsidy through the City and be found eligible for the 8AM-6PM care, which includes the summer months. Child care providers are paid a rate of $37 per 3-K child a day, regardless if they attend from 8AM-2:20PM or 8AM-6PM.

Although they provide high quality instruction to 3-K children with subsidy cases for an extra 3 hours and 40 minutes compared to 3-K children without a subsidy case, they are not compensated extra for those hours. This discourages providers from accepting children with subsidy cases due to the providers' difficulty in making ends meet in an ever-increasing rent market alongside paying for daycare expenses, and would thus rather find families who can afford to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars a month. This in turn impacts the most vulnerable by increasing difficulty in securing child care to work and provide for their families.

The low pay rate to providers fuels their challenge in staying open. These are educators who also follow the DOE curriculum, participate in professional learning opportunities, and follow DOH health and safety regulations. One permanently closed program means one less program in a community, effectively robbing one of parents' and childrens' most vital resources. We will be investing in our children when we invest in our home-based programs and centers.

This summer running, **CPC calls for equitable investment towards Pay Parity for the staff within Center Based Organizations and further investment towards an increase in child rates for home-based child care providers.**

II. Child Regression and Decrease in Quality of Programming

CPC's Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and immigrant families. In addition to providing childcare for low-income families, CPC's Childhood Development Services (CDS) staff are instrumental in supporting the growth of children of color with disabilities. During COVID-19, when schools closed and services shifted to a remote setting, CPC's CDS staff continued to provide their services nonstop, and creatively integrated their programming onto an online format. However, the lack of support and funding from the city has made it even more challenging to implement creative programming that meets the learning and developmental needs of children during COVID-19, and this has resulted in concerning childhood developmental regression.

The following anecdotal example of childhood regression is about a child with disabilities who enrolled in one of CPC's Childhood Centers when she was two years old. When she enrolled in the program, she was unable to speak any words. Through CPC's support, she was able to speak coherent sentences at three years old. When COVID-19 hit and services shifted to remote, this child was unable to access their teletherapy sessions due to the language, digital, and financial barriers that her family encountered. Once CPC's Childhood Center reopened this fall, this child returned and was unable to speak in coherent sentences anymore. In six months, she had regressed two developmental years - back to speaking single word phrases.

Children with disabilities require paras (paraprofessionals who support students with disabilities with communication, instructional, and behavioral support), as well as services that are difficult to maintain through online systems due to the lack of equitable funding designated to support families who experience digital and linguistic barriers. Some parents with children who need extra support for their disabilities are also reporting that they are just now receiving their learning devices, even though they applied for them back when the pandemic first started in the US, in March 2020. Some students still have not received their learning devices. Along with the digital literacy gap disproportionately affecting working class immigrant parents, as well as the Broadband barrier affecting majority working class and Communities of Color, the lack of accountable follow through with providing digital learning devices is yet another systemic barrier that prevents working-class Children of Color from learning. These systemic inequities impact low-income children of color and children with disabilities, and immigrant-serving CBOs such as CPC end up taking on the mantle to support these children through interruptions to their cognitive development. **CPC calls for equitable investment in community-led Early Childhood services, the integration of intentional community outreach for families with digital and linguistic barriers, and provision of training on school reopening guidelines for community-based childhood centers to adequately support low-income immigrant families as NYC schools reopen.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has also been detrimental to children's mental health, which affects their academic performance and long term development. The disruption from in person learning and prolonged isolation has increased students' stress and anxiety. Fourth graders in CPC programs are asking questions such as, "what if it stays like this forever,

what if my parents die, what if we don't have any more money, why...why do I need to...nothing will change," and they breakdown in tears from sadness and frustration trying to get answers. The overwhelming sense of uncertainty, grief, and hopelessness weigh heavily on students' minds, leaving them unmotivated and unable to focus in the classroom. Additionally, students carry onto their families' pain and loss, and are unable to receive the proper mental health support to fully process and heal from their traumas. CPC staff are not professionally trained to provide the comprehensive mental health support students need, and may experience vicarious trauma from consoling students as well. Additionally, many staff are living through the same stress, anxiety, and dilemmas the children are feeling. Social Services workers need to be better trained and equipped on what signs to look for in mental illness specifically in young children, in addition to how to address it appropriately. **CPC calls on the City to ensure CBO's receive the same equitable support in mental health for the children they serve as the DOE.**

III. Community Based Support Capacity

Since the start of COVID-19, CPC Childhood Centers supported families remotely without an increase in staff capacity. CPC staff provide synchronized blended lessons to accommodate children learning remotely. However, in order to follow social distancing guidelines, staff separate the children at the site physically - which makes it hard to maintain engagement and interaction with young children. Without proper guidance and support from the city to increase CPC's capacity, CPC staff have to make difficult decisions as to whether to properly adhere to social distancing guidelines or sacrifice the critical social engagement period for healthy childhood development. With only a decrease in license capacity 5%-10% overall, there is no guarantee that children can safely social distance, leaving many families hesitant about bringing their children back to school.

During COVID-19, AAPI unemployment claims have increased by 6900% in comparison to last year. Lines for free meal distribution events wrap around the block, and CPC staff have supported thousands of families navigate through different relief programs provided by City, State, and Federal level governments. At CPC's Early Childhood sites, without an increase in funding from the City, any increase in meal distribution comes out of the individual site's program budget. The children would rely on the organization and agency's own resources to get fed, rather than from the City they live in. **Therefore, CPC demands increased investment funding for CBO-run Early Childcare Centers, which provide necessary childcare services for working-class immigrant families.**

IV. Lack of Transparency and Language Access

COVID-19 has exacerbated systemic injustices and has left many of our low-income and immigrant families without adequate resources to navigate unemployment and surface-level relief packages. CPC staff remain on the frontlines of the essential workforce, and have prepared and adapted to the ever-shifting policies throughout the past six months. However, critical information is still getting lost through the cracks, and CBOs such as CPC are left out of crucial communication around school reopening guidelines.

In early July 2020, DOE issued a survey for families to opt into blended or remote learning with very little details around the logistics behind the blended and remote formats. In mid-September 2020, the DOE sent out a bulletin mentioning that there is no funding allocated for blended and remote learning, leaving CBOs and families with no time to respond. Not only are updates around COVID-19 not reaching CBOs in a timely manner, but there is also no transparency regarding current allocated funds and what they are designated for. The DOE finally explained that they have no control over when they receive the information since they requested for blended learning through a state waiver. By the time CPC receives the information from DOE, it is already too late and as a result, CPC staff do not have proper guidelines and cannot respond efficiently to the families we serve, increasing the risks of COVID-19 exposure in our programs. As schools recover from COVID-19, working class immigrant families need holistic support with transitioning their kids back to in-person learning, including culturally competent and language accessible mental health services, investment in youth employment, funding towards Community Schools, and more. However, these programs will not reach working class immigrants without proper communication from DOE to CBO providers that serve marginalized communities. **Therefore, the City needs to pay CBO providers equitably with DOE teachers, and treat them with equal respect. The City also must hold DOE accountable to providing language-accessible communications in a timeline that allows for CBOs to respond and prepare for the quality programming that NYC children deserve.**

Additionally, wait times for families who receive HRA Childcare Vouchers are extremely long. Families have not received answers since September of 2020, and they remain in limbo as their applications remain unprocessed by HRA. In the cases of ACS, families who have resubmitted applications multiple times still are receiving little to no answers in regard to their childcare options. The responses currently provided by ACS only cover remote services, which does not begin to provide the support that working-class families need.

ACS voucher applications are not the only applications with long wait times. Currently, early child care subsidy applications can take around an average of 2-3 months to be found eligible. Without the free or low-cost extended child care, families have found it extremely difficult to search for work or continue going to work and are forced to stay home with their children because they cannot afford to pay a provider out of pocket. Not only is this hindering the City's reopening, but it is impacting children during their most important stage of developmental growth, forcing parents to make difficult economic decisions, and increasing the number of families unable to afford rent and most basic necessities.

Even families that are able to apply for CPC's programs face difficulties with receiving adequate information to make the best choices for their needs. CPC's Learning Bridges/Learning Labs programs exemplify this problem. Currently, CPC Learning Bridges/Labs provide interpretation of schoolwork services for immigrant and LEP (Limited English Proficiency) families. Families apply for the program online and then choose one Learning Bridges Center to send their child to. The website shows multiple Learning Bridges Center locations across multiple boroughs, but does not provide any information regarding

which languages are provided at each Learning Bridges/Labs Center. Parents are therefore ill-equipped to make informed decisions for their child, and there is no assurance of whether or not Learning Bridges/Labs students are able to receive the services in the languages they need. This information needs to be disseminated with full transparency and Learning Bridges/Labs need to be held accountable to providing the adequate services for the populations they serve.

V. Youth Mental Health Access

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than double the rate of white children. More than half of those parent deaths were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will "require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities." Beyond grief, the learning loss and isolation has had an extreme impact on our young people. In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health; and the Surgeon General followed suit by declaring a Youth Mental Health Crisis.

VI. The Need for Funded Mandates

Despite having returned to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, young people across New York City are still reeling from the mental health impact of the social isolation and grief from the COVID19

pandemic. Settlement houses have reported high levels of depression among middle school students and need resources to meet their needs–this means the budget to hire social workers to do crisis work, family outreach work, one on one counseling, and more.

Summer Rising 2.0 - and subsequent programming in Fall 2022 and beyond - must include funding, staffing, and other resources so CBOs can focus on the well-being of their participants, curriculum, and other markers of program quality instead of basic elements of programming in addition to the higher cost-per-participant rates and other investments into Summer 2022.

VII. Invest $28.5 million in School-Based Mental Health Clinics

The City currently has 280 school-based mental health clinics, which feature community-based providers who operate satellite sites of their licensed Article 28 or 31 clinics in schools. Providers can offer group and individual therapy, clinical treatment, diagnosis, crisis mental health services, support for teachers, family support, and more. These clinics work to improve overall school wellness. They integrate with broader community-based services to support whole families, and seek to reduce punitive measures for children experiencing mental health challenges.

The City should make a robust, $28.5 million investment in expanding school-based mental health clinics in the FY 2023 budget. This funding would support the creation of 100 new sites over the next two years (due to the time it takes for city procurement, state licensure, and securing space and staff) costing $150,000 per program. It would also provide increases of $75,000 per program to the existing 280 providers. Notably, staff retention at existing school-based clinics is a challenge due in large part to a lack of pay parity between community-based providers and DOE-employed professionals, including school social workers.

While clinics receive funding by billing health insurance, this is insufficient because insurance does not cover school wellness activities like mental health education and training; Medicaid does not cover services to children without a diagnosis; and commercial insurance often does not cover the service at all, or pays a rate that is so low that it covers only half of the cost of service. Further, because school-based clinics can bill insurance, which the DOE largely cannot, an investment in clinics will result in an infusion of state & federal dollars into schools, and ultimately cost the City less than hiring a DOE school social worker.

VIII. Focus Investments on Education, Employment for Youth, and Economic Mobility

Emerging evidence shows that the pandemic has widened pre-existing academic disparities; and raised new barriers for many students. This has a heightened impact on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who are caregivers, both for entry into higher education and for continuing and completing their studies. Moreover, the number of young people 18-25 who are out of school and out of work likely doubled in the year after COVID-19 lockdowns began. We must:

- Build on recent investments to continue to expand access to social and emotional support for New York City students.
- Fully fund Restorative Justice practices within New York's public schools so that we can begin to create a cultural shift that encourages community, safety, and healing when harm occurs.
- Eliminate policing infrastructure, practice, and culture from New York City public schools and replace it with youth, parent, and educator-led solutions that center liberation and restorative justice.
- Increase City investments in year-round and summer youth employment. Support state-law changes to permit New York State's Earned Income Tax Credit to include eligibility for young adults without children.

IX. Expanding Child Care Subsidy Eligibility

Currently, low-income families may apply for child care subsidies so long as they are found eligible to do so. One of the requirements is that the child whom they need child care for is a U.S Citizen or have legal documentation. The hardest conversation a CPC FCCN staff member had was when they spoke to a mother who recently immigrated to this country, desperately needed to start working as a single mother to build a life with her infant, but was ultimately found not eligible to apply for subsidy due to their infant not being born in the U.S

and not having proper documentation. The mother pleaded and pleaded for the opportunity to apply for the financial child-care assistance since she did not know anybody she could rely on to take care of her infant.

Families with situations similar to this mother are being left behind by the City. It is disproportionately impacting immigrant children as they are not being given the same opportunities as other infants and toddlers and thus continuing the perpetual cycle of inequity. **The City needs to increase funding to expand child care subsidy eligibility to include ALL children, regardless of their citizenship or documentation.**

This is why we are demanding that the City Council and the Mayor ensure that a $10 million investment in New York City's FY23 budget to ensure undocumented children have access to the same early childhood care and education programs as other children through the new Care for All Families campaign.

X. The Need for Community Schools

Students learn better when their various physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults. If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships that have been exacerbated by this pandemic, it will only be that much harder to focus on academics. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community based organizations in holistic and innovative ways, and represent a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in youth, families, and communities.

The City's Community Schools funding should be baselined, and in order to do so, the City must utilize a sustainable funding source to fill in the gaps left by temporary American Rescue Plan dollars:

- **A total investment of $60.3M will be needed to baseline funding after American Rescue Plan funding drops off in FY25.**
- The funding gap left by federal aid in FY25 includes the following:
  - Community Schools Expansion: $51.2M
  - Restoration of Community Schools Contracts: $6M
  - Community Schools Sustainability: $3.1M
- Additionally, in FY24, Community Schools will face a $25.6M deficit that will need to be filled, as the community school expansion is only half-funded for that year.
- The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These are barriers to consistently delivering services.
- Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of expansion to preserve fidelity to the community school model.

Senior Services

Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in New York State, and seniors are the fastest growing subset. Over 1 in 3 Asian American seniors lives under the poverty line, and over 2 in 3 are Limited English Proficient (LEP). These community members rely on community services like CPC for everything from adequate nutrition to mental health provisions. This makes the issue of aging in place of particular concern to CPC.

Throughout the pandemic, CPC senior services and CPC Senior Centers continued to operate and provide essential services to community members. Keeping health and safety as a priority, we conducted all classes in our senior programs in a remote setting. We utilized phone, Zoom video conferencing, and Wechat to communicate with our senior members.

To that end, we are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council for their leadership on these issues.

I. CPC Brooklyn Senior Services

CPC Brooklyn Senior Services was established in 2001 and operates out of CPC Brooklyn Community Center. Since the founding, more than 1,000 older adults aged 60 and above have participated in our activities and classes. There are currently 233 older adults enrolled at CPC Brooklyn Senior Services through our DFTA program in FY22. There are also about 180 older adults on a waiting list for enrollment. Through the pandemic, CPC Brooklyn Senior Services provided a blend of recreational and educational activities to support seniors; seniors that utilized our services experienced immeasurable improvements in their physical, social, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. Many of the members enjoy the curriculum and continue to be dedicated in attending the virtual yoga class, singing class, ESL class, I-pad class, I-phone class, computer class, Tai-Chi class, art painting class, Chinese brush calligraphy class, monthly birthday celebration event, holiday event, and health educational workshops. In addition to hosting classes and events for members, CPC staff also assisted members in a hybrid model with entitlement/ benefits application assistance, information referrals, and advocacy work.

Despite the pandemic's interruption with in-person services, CPC Brooklyn Senior Services maintained constant communication with senior members through different means of communication. We ensured our members had access to activities and events to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Our senior services team routinely engaged community members in workshops and developed new and exciting activities and classes to benefit our seniors.

1. Virtual Classes
    a. On average, about 50-60 seniors attend our virtual and in-person services. 99% of our seniors participate in at least one virtual class a week. 30% of

active members or 60 active members learned how to use Zoom on a computer and/or on their phone and participate in virtual workshops. We hosted 20 virtual workshops related to health, nutrition, and education topics since July 2021.

2. Virtual and In-person Holiday Events and Birthday Celebrations
    a. We hosted seven major virtual and in-person holiday events during the year for over 150 members. In addition, our program provided monthly virtual birthday celebrations since May 2020.

3. Outdoor Activities
    a. We hosted four outdoor activities in partnership with other community organizations and elected officials.
        i. Two GrowNYC Sunset Park green market tours (55 members participated).
        ii. Senior Picnic Day hosted by community elected officials.
        iii. CaringKind Walk and Donation, where we raised $2,537 to support families with Alzheimer in September 2021.

4. Fresh Produce and Meal Distribution
    a. During the pandemic, seniors were greatly affected. As a vulnerable population, food scarcity was a huge concern. Many were afraid to leave their homes because of COVID-19 and the rise in anti Asian violence. In response, CPC partnered with various groups to provide fresh produce, hot meals, and pantry items to community members in need. We collaborated with GrowNYC to distribute fresh produce bags to older adults weekly. There are 70 members who receive half-priced or subsidized bags every week. We partner with Heart of Dinner (HoD) to provide and deliver hot meals to seniors.

5. Case Assistance
    a. Along with providing group activities and events, the senior service team also assists seniors with their individual needs and cases (senior benefits, letters translation, benefit apply and application assistance and follow up, referrals, etc). We have on average 32 older adults who receive assistance per month. We make about 200 wellness calls a week to check-in with our members and ask about their well-being.

CPC urges the Council to increase funding for senior programs because this is an extremely vulnerable population and without the support of senior centers, they are often left in the dark. We must protect our most vulnerable and ensure that they are properly supported as the City rebuilds from the pandemic.

Testimony from a member of CPC Brooklyn Senior Services:

Mr. Wang, a 64 year-old senior, first immigrated to the United States in 1999. As a new immigrant lost in a foreign country, he was homeless and had difficulty overcoming language barriers. This prevented him from seeking eligible benefit resources. Extremely unhappy with his situation, Mr. Wang came to CPC Brooklyn Community Services with hopes of finding options for a better life.

Worker met him at CPC Brooklyn office on November 2018 He was one of our senior members. He lived in man shelter since 2018, which is only a temporary residence for him. He could not stay there during the day, which made him upset. CPC staff notified him he can apply a senior house or NYCHA house, which is an ideal place for him due to his limited income.

After understanding the status and needs of Mr. Wang, CPC staff assisted Mr. Wong to complete several housing applications. He was eligible on the waiting lists of 3 senior housing. Meanwhile the social worker from the man shelter assisted him applied the CityFHEPS Rent Supplement for him. Due to the language barrier, CPC staff kept in touch with Mr. Wong to encourage him to speak up his feeling and concerns about the housing status. CPC staff assisted him by translating and preparing documentations for the interview. Almost every week Mr. Wong met with CPC staff at the CPC Brooklyn office. He trusted the services that CPC provided. CPC staff followed up his case very closely. Step by Step through, CPC staff assistance led to Mr. Wong finally receiving the approval letter for CityFHEPS Rent Supplement in September, 2019. In January 2020, Mr. Wong moved into a staple place that provided by CityFHEPS.

Recently, Mr. Wong also received mail from NYCHA about the housing interview. That will a hope for Mr. Wong to have a long term place to live. Mr. Wong was very thankful to share it with CPC. CPC staff will continue to assist Mr. Wong with housing interview, and hoping him to move into a NYCHA housing sooner.

The current life of Mr. Wang is very fulfilling. In addition to participating in ESL and Ipad classes, he also participates in sports. As he said, "CPC is like his family; the same care and warmth he received made his life change for the better. He does not feel lonely anymore.

II. CPC Nan Shan Senior Center

At Nan Shan Senior Center, we distributed food to seniors every Thursday. COVID-19 has severely impacted our seniors. Food insecurity has been a growing issue for seniors and the pandemic aggravated this issue. Since March 2020, CPC has distributed over 108,000 pounds of food to community members across the five boroughs. At Nan Shan, there is always a long line of older adults waiting for meals. For some seniors, the meals provided by senior centers are often their only reliable source of nourishment. Congregate meals are developed to be 70% of daily nutritional value for this purpose. **In order to address the growing food insecurity in our communities, CPC urges the Council to increase funding for food access to vulnerable**

populations. Centers like CPC are great locations to distribute meals and produce because we are known in the community and community members come to us with their needs and concerns.

Secondly, as a vulnerable community, seniors struggle to find the support they need. Many seniors are concerned about the spread of COVID-19 and are afraid to leave their homes. This isolation causes several emotional mental health concerns. Therefore, it is vital for organizations like CPC to conduct wellness checks and provide online opportunities for seniors to engage with one another and not feel as isolated. While mental health is often seen as a taboo in the Asian communities, it is nonetheless important to have these resources readily available for seniors to access. **We urge the Council to provide a mental health counselor at every DFTA operated senior center so that seniors who have these concerns can get them addressed.**

Furthermore, there has also been an uptick in elder abuse cases during the pandemic. Unfortunately, many of these cases go unreported. There are many forms of abuse and many seniors are not even aware of the abuse. In addition with mental health traumas, this abuse makes it increasingly difficult to speak out. **We urge the Council to fund elder abuse prevention and fund new initiatives around elder abuse prevention in order to educate the community on elder abuse, how to prevent it, and how to stop it from happening.**

Addressing Anti-Asian hate crimes and Decarceration Solutions

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, AAPI hate crimes have surged more than 339% nationwide last year, with NYC surpassing its 2020 hate crimes rate[1]. CPC's community members have increasingly mentioned their fears of going outside, and the need for community safety. While some of our community members may call for more policing, many of our community members also know that increased policing does not equal safer cities[2], or decreased crime rates. If anything, severe mental health symptoms and poverty are unjustly criminalized[3], especially in Black communities and other communities of color. New York City must address persistent disparities in access to health and mental health services among our most vulnerable communities. CPC urges the City Council to invest in preventative safety measures and address root causes such as housing and education for our communities instead of increased policing and incarceration. Investing in our communities is healthcare justice, and will also open up

[1]https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-339-percent-nationwide-last-year-repo-rcna14282
[2]https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2021/04/20/988769793/when-you-add-more-police-to-a-city-what-happens
[3]https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-medicine-and-ethics/article/abs/opioid-crisis-in-black-communities/8827EC7AF6155CE486CA6BDF08B3CDC0

the conversation for increased mental health access and decreased stigma in our AAPI communities.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are best situated to offer longer term solutions and more direct community engagement to address and prevent hate violence. The City must expand funding for CBOs working in the community like the NYC Against Hate coalition, which includes a diverse group of organizations representing communities across the city to coordinate responses to incidents of hate violence and equip New Yorkers with tools to address harassment in public spaces. Specifically, the city must **increase funding for the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $6 million** to directly support AAPI-led and -serving organizations who offer critical programming to our AAPI communities, including direct services, mental health support, youth programs, racial literacy, and other culturally competent services which works to more comprehensively address the causes and effects of hate violence. **Non-policing approaches to hate violence through the Office of the Prevention of Hate Crimes Partners Against The Hate (P.A.T.H.) initiative must also be fully funded at $10 million with a renewal to the same grantee cohort.**

As our communities face increased hate violence and harassment, it is more critical than ever to ensure that we are providing community members all over the city with the resources and support necessary to be safe and find healing. The city, alongside community partners, must expand the approach to preventing and addressing hate through non-carceral methods and match those new ideas with the political will to support them.

Project Reach

Forty-five years ago (1971), Chinese American Planning Council (CPC) and Asian American community activists started Project Reach to provide services to immigrant youth, a direct response to the rise in Chinese youth gangs. Thirty-two years ago (1985) in an action unprecedented among race-segregated youth programs, Project Reach opened its door to all young people and put in place an innovative and dynamic youth organizing training space where understanding and confronting institutional discrimination and systemic oppression would form the foundation of its core youth organizing training curriculum.

Young people, as a class, have no power in this society. New York's most disenfranchised youth communities have few, if any, programs/training spaces that address their crises and provide opportunities for them to develop their awareness and leadership skills as socially responsible rebels, activists and community organizers.

Project Reach's constituency is Black, Latina/o, API/South Asian, Native American, Arab/Middle Eastern, Multiracial and White, young women, young men and intersex youth, lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two Spirit, transgender and heterosexual, immigrant and undocumented youth, HIV+/young people living with AIDS, young people with learning and physical differences, teen mothers and fathers, gang-related, court-involved and incarcerated youth, and runaway/foster care/homeless youth, whose realities are compounded by the fact that they are also from low/no-income families, mostly raised by immigrant parents (Asian/South Asian, Arab, Caribbean, Latin/ Central American, Muslim, Russian-speaking, etc.).

Today, Project Reach is a youth and adult-run, multiracial, multi-gender, grassroots and city-wide, anti-discrimination, youth organizing center with a clear mission and commitment to challenging the destruction of, between and among New York City's disparate youth communities. Implicit in that mission is a vision, which recognizes that the empowerment of disenfranchised youth communities is critical and integral to their participation as future leaders in the larger movement for social justice. Project Reach's strategies include building a city-wide, cross-community youth movement where "organizing readiness" supports a sustainable community of youth organizers truly invested in fighting against injustice and for radical systemic change. As an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ageist, youth rights organization, Project Reach asserts the rights of young people to identify those barriers/problems/institutions that disempower them and to organize actions, campaigns, and projects that concretely confront and change those conditions and institutions. Working with schools, community groups, youth organizations, colleges/universities and professional organizations, Project Reach's youth and adult staff conduct workshops, trainings, retreats, and technical assistance around issues of discrimination, community-building, and social justice organizing. Our 7-10 week winter, spring and summer Anti-Discrimination Winternships and Training Institutes bring together 20-50 young people to train and work in community around issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, health, and immigration status. Our present and past work include our Social Justice "Boot Camp"; an anti-militaristic, interdisciplinary approach to organizing readiness - a multiracial, multi-gender, cross-community, city-wide and national, 1-week intensive, out-of-the-city training; Womyn's Space Gender=Violence Program/ Young Men's Anti-Sexism Project's Give Back The Night campaign, identifying and organizing against sexist norms/practices/institutions; Positive Youth, an employment and organizing project for 12 young people living with AIDS; and TRANS Satellite Safe Spaces, establishing "safe" spaces for transgender, gender nonconforming and intersex youth in non-LGBT identified partner organizations in all 5 boroughs. Last year, Project Reach provided

crisis intervention, workshops, training and technical assistance to over 5,500 individuals, including 3,127 young people and 2,380 adults who work with them.

Project Reach's two significant city-wide and interconnected initiatives are implemented in all five boroughs. The TRANS Satellite Safe Spaces initiative provides cultural competency training in our partner organizations/schools at every level (Board members, executive directors, principals to line staff, parents and young people), raise the awareness about the needs of transgender, gender nonconforming and intersex youth and institutionalize policy, facility and programmatic changes, resulting in a safer space for these young people particularly those who are immigrant, undocumented and in-the-closet. The "Give Back The Night" Campaign will provides young people the opportunity to learn about the women-led "Take Back The Night" movement and create a campaign of their own that interrupts sexual harassment, sexism, misogyny and other forms of violence against women. Where historically women have taken the lead, these campaigns seek to place the burden on boys and young men to identity sexism, misogyny and homophobia and develop concrete ways to challenge and end all forms of violence against women and, ultimately, all people.

We respectfully request Project Reach to be funded at $125,000 through the Speaker's Fund, and through the Trans Equity Initiative at $75,000.

Just Pay

New York City's 40,000 contracted human services workers have been essential workers throughout this crisis, providing critical services on the frontline as well as remotely. Our sector has been historically undervalued despite the grueling and exhaustive work that our workers have had to endure to ensure that our communities are protected and uplifted. They have been doing this lifesaving work since before the pandemic and this health crisis has merely magnified the importance of these services.

We are proud members of the #JustPay campaign, which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers by demanding sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor. Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

1. **Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.**
2. **Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.**
3. **Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.**

The COLA is the biggest action that can be taken right now, during this budget season. We ask that the Council include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a 5.4% COLA based on the consumer price index which mirrors the State COLA included in the Governor's budget. This would be about an $108 million investment in an essential community workforce.

We urge the City Council and the Mayor to ensure that these priorities are met in the FY23 budget because a just and dignified recovery for our most marginalized communities is reflected through these demands. CPC appreciates the opportunity to testify on these issues that so greatly impact the communities we serve, and look forward to working with you on them.

Testimony Provided to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing

Testimony provided by Alice Bufkin, Rebecca Charles, and Caitlyn Passaretti
May 27, 2022

Since 1944, CCC has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for New York City's children.

We would like to thank Chair Brannan and all the members of the Finance Committee for this opportunity to provide testimony on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to the wellbeing of New Yorkers. To ensure recovery, we must make strong and robust investments in supportive structures for all families in the city.

Supporting Children's Behavioral Health Needs

In New York City and across the country, the pandemic has led to declines[i] in critical mental health screenings and access to services, even as rates of anxiety, depression, substance use, and suicidal ideation have risen.[ii] Children are experiencing serious emotional distress, yet have been unable to access adequate primary and preventive services, resulting in stark increases of psychiatric symptomatology and hospitalizations.[iii] This has created a perfect storm that is impacting all children, and disproportionately impacting low-income communities and families of color.

In February 2021, youth advocates and Citizens' Committee for Children launched a survey that collected responses from more than 1,300 young people (ages 14 to 24) across New York City, with a representative share from all five boroughs.[iv] More than a third (35%) of youth report wanting or needing mental health services from a professional, particularly youth in the Bronx and Manhattan. Among youth who want/need mental health services, only 42% reported receiving these services. Youth identified mental health as one of the greatest challenges and needs in their communities.

Though families in New York have faced significant challenges accessing much-needed behavioral health services, the City has an opportunity to identify and enhance services and interventions that work. With the commitment of our city and state leaders, it is possible to reverse course and transform the children's behavioral health system into one that supports and lifts up families in the face of crisis. Please see recommendations below for how New York can support the behavioral health needs of young people and their families.

1. Support the behavioral health needs of students

Schools play an essential role in meeting the behavioral health needs of children, yet New York City's approach to addressing the social-emotional needs of students in schools has often been fragmented and insufficient. Far too many students experiencing an emotional crisis are still sent to emergency rooms, subjected to police intervention, or punished with disciplinary practices such as suspension. In the 2018-2019 school year, the NYPD reported that 3,544 students experiencing emotional distress were removed from school by police and sent to a hospital for psychological evaluation. Nearly half of these students were Black, despite Black students accounting for only a quarter of the NYC public school population.

Schools need the resources and training necessary to support the mental health of all students, rather than relying on punitive and traumatizing responses to student behavior. We urge you to take the following actions in the budget to support the metnal and emotional wellbeing of students.

- **Fund and baseline $5 million for the Mental Health Continuum, an evidence-based model for integrating a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools partnered with hospital-based clinics.**

Last year, the City allocated $5 million for a promising model called the Mental Health Continuum, which aims to integrate a range of direct services and develop stronger partnerships with hospital-based mental health clinics to provide more effective and efficient supports for students with significant mental health needs. This model's goal is to meet the needs of students with significant mental health challenges in the schools and neighborhoods with the highest rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism.

The Mental Health Continuum represents the first time ever cross-agency collaboration (DOE, Health + Hospitals, and DOHMH) to help students with significant mental health challenges access direct mental health services in school and connect students to other services throughout the city. However, the City allocated only one year of funding for the Mental Health Continuum. Unless extended, the funding will expire in June 2022. To fully implement the model initiated in FY22 in 50 high-needs schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn, the $5 million must be included and baselined in the FY23 Adopted Budget.

- **Provide $28.5 million to add school-based mental health clinics to 100 new sites and expand the capacity of existing clinics.**

School-based mental health clinics provide on-site clinical services to students. These clinics provide essential clinical supports to students, including diagnosis, individual and family counseling, and more.

SBMHCs bill Medicaid and insurance directly for services provided to students. However, City funding is essential for enabling clinics to offer a more comprehensive and inclusive array of services, including services for uninsured children, services for children without a diagnosis, and trainings and support for school staff and the school population more broadly. Unfortunately, many school clinics lack the City funding necessary to provide the types of wraparound supports that are so essential for ensuring a school-based mental health clinic is part of a continuum of whole-school supports for students. It is critical for the City to provide additional funding to support existing SBMHCs so they can be more comprehensive, inclusive, and effective.

Moreover, far too few schools have access to School-Based Mental Health Clinics. There are approximately 280 schools with a School-Based Mental Health Clinic, out of 1,866 schools (15% of schools). In addition to supporting the operation of existing clinics, the City should significantly increase the overall number of school-based clinics so more students can benefit from their services.

- **Expand and fully complete implementation of restorative justice practices.**

We applaud the City Council for recommending $59 million in their Preliminary Budget response to expand restorative practices to more schools; however, we feel additional funding is needed to reach all students. To fulfill their commitment to students, the City must invest $118 million to bring restorative practices to 500 schools in FY 2023, with the ultimate goal of investing $225 million for full implementation city-wide by FY 2028. Restorative practices address the root causes of behavior, hold students accountable while keeping them in school learning, build and heal relationships, and teach positive behaviors. They also correlate with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships.

- **Support the recommendations of the Campaign for Effective Behavioral Supports in Schools (CEBSS)**

CCC is a member of the Campaign for Effective Behavioral Supports in Schools (CEBSS), a coalition of advocacy, social service, and community-based organizations, formed in 2012 to combat the increasing practice of school staff unnecessarily sending students to hospital emergency rooms via Emergency Medical Services when staff were unable to address students' social-emotional needs. We urge City leaders to support CEBSS Vision for Behavioral and Mental Health Supports in Schools, which can be found at here and includes recommendations to:

- Follow recommendations made by the Healing-Centered Schools Task Force, which recognize that social-emotional well-being is a necessary ingredient for learning;
- Fully implement and scale up the Mental Health Continuum, a model for integrating a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools partnered with hospital-based clinics;
- Ensure behavioral health services for students are effectively communicated to all families;

- Expand access to school-based mental health clinics and partnerships with community-based providers;
- Ensure social workers in schools have the support and resources to effectively serve students;
- Expand and implement school-wide restorative justice practices in all schools; and
- Revamp and enhance supports for students and reevaluate supports for students with behavioral disabilities in NYC District 75 special education schools and District 79 schools

2. Support city council mental health initiatives

City dollars allow for a unique level of flexibility and wraparound support that state funds, Medicaid, and commercial insurance cannot offer. City Council initiatives, for instance, have for years used non-traditional, community-based settings to help identify children and families in need and offer developmentally appropriate services and support. These trusted community services have been able to adapt to the specific needs of communities and support programs that are challenging to fund through state and federal sources. **As the City Council considers the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, we urge you to maintain funding for essential City Council Mental Health Initiatives, including:**

- **The Mental Health Services for Children under Five** Initiative (CU5) allows organizations to work with children to develop psychosocial and educational skills, as well as cope with trauma resulting from witnessing or experiencing domestic violence, sexual abuse, or physical or mental abuse.
- **Opioid Prevention and Treatment** Supports neighborhood-based prevention & treatment efforts around opioid abuse, including overdose reversal drugs.
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations** supports community-based behavioral health programs, including medication for individuals in transitional housing and mental health services for families with child welfare involvement.
- **Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health** helps individuals with behavioral health needs and developmental disabilities, supporting harm reduction, clubhouses and more.
- **The Court-Involved Youth Initiative** helps identify youth involved in the justice system who require mental health services and provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth.
- **LGBTQ Youth Mental Health** supports comprehensive mental health services for vulnerable LGBTQ youth, focusing particularly on youth of color, youth in immigrant families, homeless youth, and youth who are court-involved.
- **Autism Awareness** supports wraparound services for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in after-school and summer programs and during school closings.

Supporting Children's Healthy Development

1. Invest in programs and interventions that protect children from lead poisoning

CCC is a member of The NYC Lead Poisoning Prevention Roundtable, a coalition of advocates who first came together to create and pass Local Law 1 of 2004 as the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning. Now, the Roundtable focuses on closing loopholes in Local Law 1 and ensuring lead laws are adequately implemented and enforced.

In 2004, New York City enacted Local Law 1 (LL1), the most ambitious lead poisoning prevention law in the country, with the stated goal of ending childhood lead poisoning by 2010. LL1 has had an enormous positive impact: according to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) the number of children under age 6 with elevated blood lead levels (EBLL) declined from some 37,344 during 2005 to just 3,050 in 2019. Nevertheless, our city's children continue to needlessly suffer permanent neurological damage from exposure to lead-based paint and lead dust in their homes. Moreover, childhood lead poisoning disproportionately impacts children of color and low-income in New York City. As of 2019, 82% of children under age six with EBLLs were Black, Latino/a/x, or Asian. 67% of the children were also in high-poverty neighborhoods. Preventing lead poisoning is a matter of environmental and racial justice.

Accordingly, the CCC and our partners in the Roundtable make the following budget recommendations to help combat lead poisoning in children:

- **Fund legislation that enhances proactive inspections and tenant notifications (LL39)**

Local Law 39 was passed in 2018 and requires DHMH to: (1) inspect and test any residence or other location where the lead-poisoned child spends 10 or more hours a week, (2) inspect all other units in the primary residence where a child under the age of 1 resides, (3) improve the education and notification given to the child's parents, including providing information about special education services for the child and posting notices in buildings and other facilities where lead paint hazards are found that alert other residents to the availability of free inspections by HPD, (4) conduct investigations for the sources of exposure in instances of EBLL in pregnant women, and provide additional information to new or expectant parents about blood lead testing, safe work practices, and lead inspections. The City must allocate appropriate funding to DHMH to carry out this work.

- **Fund legislation that enhances tenant notifications of lead hazards (LL40).**

Local Law 40 was passed in 2018. This legislation requires that where DHMH inspects and finds lead hazards in a common area, it must post notices alerting tenants in that building, which include an explanation of the hazards of lead, precautions for lead dust, and a phone number for getting free blood lead screenings. The City must allocate appropriate funding to DHMH to create and post notices.

- **Fund lead poisoning prevention programs to reach the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s lowered blood lead reference level from 5 to 3.5 ug/dL.**

The CDC recently announced a lowered blood lead reference level, which is the minimum level of blood lead that is considered "high" in children and triggers action. The DHMH is now tasked with finding and treating children with a lower level of lead in their blood, meaning more children will require intervention. The city must fund the DHMH for the expected increase in cases of childhood lead poisoning.

2. **Protect funding for Article 6 public health services**

In State Fiscal Year 2020, the state reduced its reimbursement for NYC's Article 6 General Public Health Works Program from 36% to 20%. CCC has joined many of our partners – including those within the City – to adamantly oppose these discriminatory cuts, which have cut tens of thousands of dollars from NYC's public health budget. These cuts are particularly unconscionable as we try to recover from a public health crisis that has disproportionately impacted New York City.

The Article 6 General Public Health Works program supports a broad range of services that are heavily accessed and relied on in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic - including communities of color, Indigenous New Yorkers, and immigrant households, as well as people with disabilities and those experiencing chronic illness impacting their physical and mental well-being. Cuts to Article 6 impact programs providing immunizations; tuberculosis outreach, education, and testing; and sexual reproductive health. They also impact community-based preventive services addressing maternal and child and maternal health; mental health; substance use; and chronic diseases. These cuts put the health and well-being of children and families at risk, at a time when our city and state can least afford to slash public health.

Though the FY23 State Enacted Budget includes enhancements to the Article 6 program statewide, it does not address the State's reimbursement to NYC to 36%. **We therefore urge the City Council and the Administration to backfill these funding cuts for both DOHMH and CBOs, as it did in CFY 2020 and CFY 2021.**

Address Family Homelessness

While COVID-19 has impacted all New Yorkers, it has particularly heightened challenges for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. **CCC, in partnership with the Family Homelessness Coalition, calls on the City Council and Mayor Adams to develop a plan to end family homelessness and housing insecurity in New York City by dramatically expanding access to prevention programs, investing in shelter services and expanding access to affordable housing.**

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated housing insecurities across the city, especially for families of color. During the first year of the pandemic, households with children were more likely to struggle to make ends meet, with 58% in the New York metro area having experienced a loss of employment income. From April to October 2020, more than 40% of renter households with children in the New York metro area reported 'slight' or 'no' confidence meeting their monthly rental payments.[v] Furthermore, 40% of households with

children making less than $25,000 a year reported income loss from April to July of 2021, pointing to the challenges that low-income families faced with economic recovery.[vi] 114,000 eviction filings have been submitted in New York City.[vii] We are on the brink of a grave eviction and homelessness crisis and we must act now.

1. Improve upon the city's homelessness prevention programs

The city must take critical steps to ensure that prevention programs are improved upon to truly serve as tools of prevention, rather than intervention. CCC and partners support the following:

- Investing an additional $30 million to fully fund the CityFHEPS program expansion, while also removing the eviction and homelessness eligibility requirements and reducing supplement processing times for CityFHEPS, thereby averting eviction and homelessness before they occur;
- Increasing staffing at community-based organizations that provide prevention services to families at risk of housing instability;
- Sufficiently investing in aftercare programs that help ensure families do not return to shelters due to administrative issues or a lack financial, health, and educational supports;
- Ensuring that contracts related to prevention and after care are fully funded, paid on time, and support living wages to the workforce so essential to effective prevention and recidivism.

2. Prioritize affordable housing

The Executive Budget proposes a housing capital plan that would invest an additional $5 billion over ten years, an increase of $500 million more per year above the current capital plan. This level of investment does not come close to what is needed to address the city's homelessness crisis and dearth of affordable housing. With an eviction crisis on the horizon, affordable housing must be prioritized by city leaders. To improve access to affordable housing and increase its supply, CCC recommends the following:

- Invest $4 billion per year in housing capital, as promised by Mayor Adams during his campaign;
- Optimize staff capacity of HRA to ensure proper and timely administering of housing resources that will decrease shelter entry and length of shelter stays. City leaders must also prioritize undocumented and mixed-status families, who face significant barriers in accessing federal supports, and ensure that they are receiving housing resources at the city level;
- Oppose staffing budget cuts to HPD, which will lead to a significant delay in services, including the production of affordable housing and the placement of homeless individuals in set-aside units;
- Improve access to supportive housing by removing requirements that individuals be homeless or in shelter for a certain amount of time before they qualify for supportive

housing. These chronicity eligibility requirements prolong homelessness and shelter stays;
- Ensure that survivors of domestic violence are an eligible population for supportive housing;
- Enforce the mandate to set aside at least 15% of HPD-funded housing projects for people experiencing homelessness;
- Expand access to supportive housing for families with children who have been or will be evicted;
- Ensure that city-subsidized units increase income eligibility thresholds to accurately reflect the needs of the city's population;
- As City Council members, refrain from exercising veto powers and blocking affordable housing development.

Support equitable education opportunities for children of all ages

1. Achieve an equitable early care and education system

Over the past eight years, the city and state have made major strides in enhancing access to early care and education, but there is much work to be done by the new administration to ensure true universality of care from birth to five years old. Furthermore, city leaders must ensure that providers are paid a living wage and provided with the resources necessary to give high-quality care. **CCC, in partnership with the Campaign for Children, urges city leaders to take the following actions:**

- Address gaps in service by ensuring extended day and extended year programs for all families and by increasing system capacity by aging down the system to serve infants and toddlers;
- Achieve comprehensive parity and address inequities in benefits and longevity between early childhood CBO staff and their 12-month DOE counterparts, specifically those left out of the initial city agreement to raise salaries: preschool special educators, center directors, and support staff. Invest $21 million to increase the pay of program directors and $30 million to increase the pay of preschool special educators.
- Ensure that vouchers reflect the true cost of care and are flexible enough to expand capacity in both family and center based care.
- Improve enrollment processes by allowing CBOs to directly enroll families, reducing paperwork for families, increasing income eligibility for subsidies, and decoupling provider funding from enrollment numbers.

As we emerge from the pandemic, it must be stressed that New York City's recovery depends on a strong, stable system of high-quality early childhood education which takes into account the needs of providers, children, and parents.

2. Address the needs of students in foster care and temporary housing

The pandemic highlighted the vast academic and socioemotional disparities between students with stable housing and students in temporary housing. To that end, **students experiencing homelessness must be prioritized in this year's budget and CCC recommends the following:**

- Allocate $5 million to the DOE for yellow bus servicing to ensure that students in temporary housing have a way to school;
- Hire 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators to meet the needs of students living in shelters.

3. **Ensure educational supports for bilingual and immigrant students**

Even before COVID-19, the NYC public school system was ill-equipped to serve English language learners and immigrant families, and too many families were unable to access high-quality schooling and programs for their children. The pandemic only compounded these barriers. Immigrant-serving CBOs across the city were overwhelmed throughout the pandemic as they struggled to find enrollment and communications support for newcomer families, and far too many eligible students were unable to even enter the education system. Drops in enrollment reflect these serious issues but have led to Mayor Adams calling for cuts and hiring freezes to the DOE. The city must reject these proposals, so students do not have to pay the price for the pandemic.

New York City must finally address the barriers immigrants face and invest in the infrastructure needed to ensure high schools are fully accessible to immigrant families. **CCC joins the New York Immigration Coalition in calling on city leaders to invest $2.1M in this year's budget and commitment to supporting a 3-year, $8.3 million transfer school pilot to increase newly arrived, high-school-aged immigrants' access to programs that meet their needs.**

This pilot would infuse current transfer schools with best practices from ELL transfers schools and ensure that each transfer school has English as a New Language (ENL) teachers and social workers equipped to work with immigrant families. The pilot would also include culturally competent supports for students and professional development for all staff to meet the needs of newly arrived immigrant students.

New York City must address the devastating ELL dropout rate and the fact that thousands of newcomer immigrant youth don't have access to the public school system. For immigrant youth, a "return to normal" is unacceptable.

Prioritize primary prevention to keep children safe and families together

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated families and has exacerbated previously existing inequities. Prior to the pandemic, countless New York City families struggled to put food on

the table, pay rent, and access the child care or the behavioral health care they desperately needed. Too often, poverty has resulted in families being thrust into the child welfare system, with a disproportionate impact on children and families of color. Today, the pandemic has only heightened these needs and exacerbated the risk of child welfare involvement.

CCC and the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) conducted a qualitative study to better understand how child welfare prevention programs have responded to the needs of families and children during the pandemic and economic collapse. The results showed that the pandemic heightened needs that existed well before the pandemic. Specifically, findings indicated that top family needs included child care, cash assistance, mental health counseling, and housing, among other needs. These findings reinforce the need for significant investment in preventive services and support for families across communities.

- **Baseline $35 million in Fair Futures funding to expand services for young people up to the age of 26 and make services available for both foster youth and justice-involved youth.**

While CCC applauds the proposed investment of $13.4 million in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget for Fair Futures, we know that this program needs more sustained funding to make the greatest impact. We therefore urge city leaders to baseline Fair Futures funding at $35 million. This program works to support youth in the foster care system through age 26, increasing the amount of holistic care and wrap-around services accessible to the young person. We would encourage exploration of how lessons learned from Fair Futures might inform preventive interventions as well to minimize the number of children entering foster care to begin with.

- **Invest in programs that will create more pathways for primary prevention and allow families to receive strong support without a child welfare case**

Poverty is a significant driver of child welfare involvement. In New York City, Black and Latinx families have highest poverty rates in the city,[viii] make up nearly 80% of child welfare investigations[ix] and 89% of the foster care population[x] despite being 57% of New York's child population. In 2019, the Administration for Children Services investigated 54,985 cases of child abuse and neglect and served 45,273 children and families through community-based preventive services programs.[xi] If families were met with financial assistance and other supportive services when needed, then there would be fewer child welfare investigations and more families able to remain together.

We therefore call upon the City Council to invest in programs that will create more pathways for primary prevention and allow families to receive strong support without a child welfare case. One critical step would be to leverage child care as a primary preventive resource and take steps to clear the backlog of family eligibility determinations at HRA for

vouchers so that caregivers can reconnect to or maintain employment, knowing their children have access to care.

Youth Justice and Youth Opportunities

CCC is a co-lead in the Raise the Age statewide coalition that passed the monumental legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility for youth in New York in April 2017. As a result of Raise the Age, we have seen long awaited progress for communities and youth who are over-policed and over-represented in the juvenile justice system. Today, because of Raise the Age legislation, youth are served closer to home and have an array of services that are more developmentally and age appropriate than prisons.

Importantly, during the first 18 months of Raise the Age implementation, shootings in NYC were the lowest they had been in decades, even as arrests and incarceration of 16- and 17-year-olds declined.

Today great attention is being rightly paid to rising gun violence. We and our RTA partners urge elected leaders to reject efforts that erroneously tie rising crime to criminal justice reform, but instead acknowledge the prolonged disinvestment in communities, deeply rooted and income inequality, and a lack of services and programming and now severe social and economic needs exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Crime is rising across the nation due to the pandemic as the pandemic and economic fallout has had harmful impact on health, income, housing, social isolation and more across communities, with disproportionate impact occurring in communities of color.

We are deeply concerned about Mayor Adams' interest in rolling back Raise the Age reforms – the mayor's approach must be resisted as it will not result in safer communities; it will result in more children and youth facing the trauma of incarceration. We need creative, non-carceral solutions to gun violence and **urge the Mayor and the City Council to utilize the city budget to invest heavily in community programming, parks, housing, youth sports, employment, and behavioral health.**

1. Treat gun violence as a public health crisis by investing in transformative community programs

- Expand investment in Cure Violence and other community-rooted programs that employ a public health approach to community safety
- Fund high-quality youth engagement programs and services, including those employing "credible messengers," to young people in spaces that are important to them
- Fund comprehensive civil legal services for young people facing barriers to employment, housing, accessing public benefits, or any other legal need
- Invest more deeply in conflict mediation resources at schools and in neighborhoods

2. Focus investments in education, year-round employment, and development for youth

- Reallocate the $450 million from school policing into opportunities for young people in schools and communities from school policing into opportunities for young people in schools and communities. .
- Support the City Council's proposal to invest an additional $43.2 million to expand year-round core youth employment programs such as Work Learn Grow and Advance & Learn
- Advance rate equity by increasing the cost-per-participant rates of COMPASS contracts to $1,848 and SONYC contracts to $1,410
- Support the Mayor's proposal to expand Summer Youth Employment Program and Summer Rising, and ensure sufficient transportation for students, equitably resourced contracts and compensation for providers, and special attention to inclusion of services for students with special needs
- Ensure that year-round and summer employment, as well as after-school programming, is available and accessible to justice involved youth, disconnected youth, and youth with disabilities

We cannot criminalize a path to safety; we must instead invest in youth opportunity, behavioral health, and economic mobility. This is a pivotal moment to shift how we approach general welfare, and we must commit to resourcing systemically neglected communities and building support networks. It is critical that the Council restore initiatives that uplift youth opportunity so we can truly invest in our communities.

Ensure Families are Economically Secure

1. Ensure fair pay for all human service workers employed or contracted by the city

The human services workforce in New York City has some of the lowest paid workers in the city's economy. Human service employees provide the backbone for essential services for children and families. Without their hard work, millions of New Yorkers would be living in crisis. CCC supports the #JustPay Campaign, which is a campaign headed by the Human Services Council, calling for a living wage, a comprehensive wage and benefits schedule, and an annual cost of living adjustments for social service providers. **We urge the city to enact a budget that adheres to the asks of the #JustPay Campaign.**[xii]

2. Support expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit

The Mayor's Preliminary Budget proposes the first increase to the city's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) in 20 years. Under this proposal, the amount given to targeted recipients would increase from 5% of the federal benefit to 30% of the federal benefit. For a married couple with two children earning $25,000, this would mean an additional $1,500 (or a 70% increase from the current rate). **CCC strongly supports the proposed enhancement of the EITC.** We also believe it is essential that an increase in the EITC is not accompanied by any reductions in funding for existing benefits or social services for children and families.

3. Address widespread food insecurity

New York leaders must also address the widespread hunger crisis that was exacerbated by the pandemic. Though we are appreciative of many of the investments in hunger prevention that were made during the peak of the pandemic, many of these resources have lapsed, even though the need remains—and has always been—high. As a member of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, CCC recommends the following investments in the budget to help combat food insecurity:

CCC is a member of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, a multi-sector alliance of 40+ food system stakeholders from across New York City, including frontline CBOs directly impacted by food insecurity. The Alliance's mission is to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that promote access to healthy and affordable food to both respond to today's crisis as well as address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system. We urge you to support the priorities of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, including but not limited to:

- **Increase HRA's budget baseline by $10 Million to engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications.** For the last several years, and especially during the pandemic, HRA's clients reported many issues to City Council and HRA with the closures of service centers, long phone wait times, problems returning missed calls from HRA, timely and accurate processing of applications, and the overall client experience. Despite these issues, the Preliminary Budget Plan does not include any additional funding for outreach or streamlining of social service program administration for the HRA. Additional administrative funding should also support the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications. We urge the City Council to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

- **Increase funding with an additional $63.5 Million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Baseline budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program and continued need.** In response to food insecurity rates that increased by over 36 percent for all New Yorkers and 46 percent for children, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy administered a new $63.5 million program called the Pandemic Food Reserve and Emergency Distribution (P-FRED). Since 2020, P-FRED has provided over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries throughout the City. The Mayor's preliminary budget excludes funding for the continuation of P-FRED past June 2022 yet no formal announcement has been made indicating if the program will continue. However, Mayor Adam's announced his intentions to strengthen EFAP by establishing a produce procurement operation into the program for the first time in its 40 years of existence. We urge the City to increase funding for EFAP beyond its current baseline level of $23.8 million to a total of $87.3M

to account for the loss of P-FRED and adequately invest in this expanded effort to include fresh produce.

- **Allocate $5 million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program Housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) that supports community-led projects to grow food justice.** In *Food Forward NYC*, the MOFP calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We would like to see this initiative launched and modeled on USDA's Community Food Project and Philadelphia's Food Justice Initiative, and designed to support many different types of community-driven solutions to create a more just food system that empowers communities to grow, sell, and eat healthy food.

- **Allocate an additional $50 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan towards a planned phase-in of 500 more cafeteria redesigns** to fully scale the highly successful Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) to all high schools and middle schools to support school food participation, student well being and reduced lunch lines.

Conclusion

This is a pivotal time where recovery is only possible if we invest in communities and opportunities to strengthen New Yorkers' health, housing, education, safety, and economic security. We urge you to take advantage of this moment and to prioritize these requests to support New York children and families.

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[vi] CCC's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey. Retrieved from: https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html
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[viii] Indicator Data: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. Keeping Track Online Database: Poverty, 2019. https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/map/99/poverty#101/11/3/154/62/a/a Accessed on 26 October 2020

[ix] Indicator Data: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. Keeping Track Online Database: Children in Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations, 2018 https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/map/1/children-in-child-abuse-and-neglect-investigations#1383/12/3/1634/40/a/a Accessed on 22 October 2020

[x] In 2019, there was a record low of 7,804 children in foster care, a decrease of 647 from 2018. Indicator Data: Citizens' Committee for Children of New York. Keeping Track Online Database: Foster Care Population, 2019 https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/map/1399/foster-care-population#1399/a/3/1661/62/a/a Accessed on 22 October 2020.

[xi] "NYC's Preventive Services Landscape: Meeting Children and Family Needs During COVID-19" Retrieved from: https://cccnewyork.org/nycs-preventive-services-landscape-meeting-children-and-family-needs-during-covid-19/. Accessed on March 12, 2021.

[xii] See: https://www.justpayny.org/

Citizens' Committee for Children of NEW YORK

CCC Budget Priorities: NYC FY 2023

Healthy

Support children's behavioral health needs:

Baseline $5 million in funding for the Mental Health Continuum, a model for integrating a range of direct services to students with significant mental health needs in high-needs schools partnered with hospital-based clinics.

Provide $28.5 million to bolster existing school-based mental health clinics and to bring school-based mental health clinics into 100 new schools.

Maintain funding for Council-funded Mental Health Initiatives, including Children Under Five, Court-Involved Youth, Mental Health Services for Vulnerable populations, Developmental, Psychological, and Behavioral Health, Autism Awareness, and LGBTQ Youth Mental Health.

Invest $118 million to bring Restorative Justice to 500 schools in FY 2023.

Ensure our public health systems support children and families

Enhance and **baseline** funding for Access Health at $4 million.

Ensure programs funded through the Article 6 General Public Health Works Program do not experience a loss in funding due to state reductions.

Provide funding for recent legislation designed to address childhood lead poisoning, including legislation that enhances proactive inspections and tenant notifications (LL39) and legislation that enhances tenant notifications of lead hazards (LL40).

Housed

Improve Access to City FHEPS Subsidy

Fully **fund** the CityFHEPS voucher rate increase, specifically by increasing budget funding for the program by at least $35 million

Increase upstream access to CityFHEPS by eliminating program requirements that necessitate an eviction filing, shelter history, or income to qualify.

Increase access to affordable and stable housing

Increase access to supportive housing for families with children facing eviction by including domestic violence survivors as an eligible population for supportive housing, and by amending eligibility requirements so they do not require a lengthy DHS stay or a diagnosed disability.

Enforce the mandate to set aside at least 15% of HPD-funded housing projects for people experiencing homelessness, and open Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) homeless set-aside units to all shelter residents, not just those residents in the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

Address budget cuts and understaffing in DHS, HRA, and HPD:

Increase Human Resources Administration's (HRA) headcount to meet the demand of increased check processing requests (for both the Emergency Housing Voucher's CityFHEPS and FHEPS) and one-shot deal requests.

Restore funding for HPD and increase staffing to address significant delays in affordable housing production, placement of tenants in units' set-aside for those at risk or homeless, and inspections and other critical functions.

Address the needs of runaway homeless youth

Support the City Council's proposal to add $6 million to fund 120 additional runaway homeless youth shelter beds to fill the need.

Educated

Oppose proposed cuts to the Department of Education (DOE), specifically the $375 million cut due to enrollment changes and a staffing cut of 3,600 positions

Achieve an equitable early care and education system

Fund extended day and full year 3-K and Pre-K programs and invent in increased system capacity to serve infants and toddlers full day and year-round.

Support comprehensive parity between early childhood community-based organizations (CBO) staff and their DOE counterparts by addressing the needs of preschool special educators, center directors and assistant directors, and support staff who were left out of the initial parity agreement, and by ensuring the next phase of parity negotiations addresses teacher and staff longevity and benefits.

Invest in the child care workforce by increasing and facilitating access to the state's upcoming market rate adjustments for center and family day care providers, as well as by increasing the value of vouchers.

Address the backlog of childcare vouchers distributed by Administration of Children's Services (ACS) and HRA.

Support the City Council's proposal to strengthen the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) by outlining 3-K and Pre-K enrollment by type of setting and program, cost per pupil, and identify extended day and extended year seats.

Address the needs of foster care students and homeless students

Allocate $5 million to the DOE for yellow bus servicing to ensure that students in temporary housing have a way to get to school.

Leverage federal relief money to hire 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators to support students experiencing homelessness.

Fulfill the City's commitment to hire a DOE team dedicated to students in foster care

Invest $5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to students in foster care.

Ensure educational supports for bilingual and immigrant students

Invest $2.1 million in this year's budget and commit to supporting a 3-year, $8.3 million transfer school pilot to increase newly arrived, high-school-aged immigrants' access to programs that meet their needs.

Safe

Expand year round opportunities for youth development and employment

Support the City Council's proposal to invest an additional $43.2 million to expand year-round core youth employment programs such as Work Learn Grow and Advance & Learn.

Advance rate equity by increasing the cost-per-participant rates of COMPASS contracts to $1,848 and SONYC contracts to $1,410.

Support the Mayor's proposal to expand Summer Youth Employment Program and Summer Rising, and ensure sufficient transportation for students, equitably resourced contracts and compensation for providers, and special attention to inclusion of services for students with special needs.

Ensure that year-round and summer employment, as well as after-school programming, is available and accessible to justice involved youth, disconnected youth, and youth with disabilities.

Invest in mentorship for youth in foster care and justice-involved youth

Baseline $35 million in Fair Future funding to expand services for young people up to the age of 26 and make services available for both foster youth and justice-involved youth.

Promote community safety by investing in youth-led community-rooted initiatives

Reallocate $450 million from school policing into opportunities for young people in schools and communities.

Expand investment in Cure Violence and other community rooted programs that employ a public health approach to community safety.

Fund high-quality youth engagement programs and services, including those employing "credible messengers," to young people in spaces that are important to them.

Fund comprehensive civil legal services for young people facing barriers to employment, housing, accessing public benefits, or any other legal need.

Invest more deeply in conflict mediation resources at schools and in neighborhoods.

Economically Secure

Invest in the nonprofit human services workforce and advance tax policy to lift incomes

Support the #JustPay Campaign to address and combat inequitable pay among human services workers, by establishing a cost of living adjustment, setting a living wage floor, and creating a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human service workers.

Support the Mayor's proposal to invest $250 million to deepen the local Earned Income Tax Credit, which establishes the deepest enhancement for the lowest earners.

Combat food insecurity

Increase funding by an additional $63.5 Million for the Emergency Food Assistance Program's (EFAP) baselined budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food to the program and continued need.

Increase HRA's budget by $10 Million and baseline this enhancement to engage CBOs in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications.

Allocate $5 Million to establish a new Food Justice Grant program to support community-led projects to advance food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities.

Include $3.5 million for additional school food managers in The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS).

Allocate an additional $50 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan to support a planned phase-in of 500 more cafeteria redesigns and fully scale the highly successful Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) to all high schools and middle schools, thereby supporting school food participation, student well-being and reduced lunch lines.

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for your commitment to New York City children and youth. As one of seventeen partners in the Council's own Early Literacy Initiative, **City's First Readers**, *New Alternatives for Children* is very grateful for your participation on the Financial Committee.

With the FY23 Executive Budget being reviewed, *New Alternatives for Children* would like to remind you of the critical importance of ensuring the well-being and school readiness of our youngest and most vulnerable children.

- There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC. **44.5% of them live in low income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - $25,750 for a family of four), and 76**% of children under the age of five are children of color**.

- The number of homeless New Yorkers has risen to the highest point since the Great Depression, and the largest demographic within the homeless population is children; approximately 45% of the children in the Department of Homeless Services' facilities were 5 or younger even prior to COVID.

City's First Readers partners work in every Council District to thwart this opportunity gap from becoming an achievement gap.

With the help of City's First Readers, NAC has launched an early literacy workshop that meets every other week on Monday evenings. While still remote, this workshop is meant to guide and empower our parents and caregivers of 0-5 children. We highlight and celebrate the teaching that they already do as well as give them the tools to build more literary activities into their everyday routines. Our parents and caregivers eagerly participate by sharing their own experiences, which allows the workshop to be a space for growth and support. Participants receive book bundles that have allowed the families to start their own home libraries. One parent commented that "I had much more strict ideas about reading. But, I've learned that reading can mean anything like describing the environment to my children or allowing them to play with books." City's First Readers has been instrumental in the creation and promotion of NAC's first ever early literacy workshop series. With additional funding, NAC will be able to expand the program by including workshops in other languages, sponsored trips to partner sites, and additional literacy materials for our families.

COVID has isolated our city's youngest children and kept them from experiencing the social interactions and stimulation that are the building blocks of acquiring literacy. If we are to remove the obstacles created by the pandemic and use this imposed opportunity to rebuild a more equitable city, early literacy and related early childhood services must be viewed as the key to this goal.

Any public budget is a statement of social priorities. Please ensure that the FY23 New York City Executive Budget includes enhanced funding for City's First Readers. Every New York City child deserves the opportunity to learn.

Sincerely,
Isabelle Mendez
Education Department Liaison
New Alternatives for Children

Testimony of City Harvest
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing

May 25th, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Justin Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance, for holding today's hearing on the Mayor's FY23 Executive Budget. My name is Keith Carr, and I am the Senior Manager of Policy and Government Relations at City Harvest, New York's largest and longest operating food rescue organization.

Since the start of the Pandemic, City Harvest has distributed over 250 million pounds of food, mostly fresh produce, to a network of over 400 food pantries and food distribution sites. Our citywide network of food distribution programs serves well over 2.4 million New Yorkers who lack the income to afford the cost of food, housing, transportation, child care and medical expenses in our City. Over 80 percent of these New Yorkers are BIPOC families.[1] Food insecurity is a clear racial equity issue

As a food bank that has tirelessly fought to keep food on the plate for millions of New Yorkers for nearly four decades, we know far too well that charitable food programs cannot end hunger without the foundations of effective public policy. Census Pulse Survey data demonstrated that food insufficiency dipped when new relief programs were distributed to families, and food pantry visits increased when economic relief programs expired[2]. As New York continues to rebuild, it is important that we do not make the mistake of disinvesting in efforts that protected so many families from falling deeper into poverty.

[1] https://www.cityharvest.org/self-sufficiency-study-2021/
[2] https://frac.org/blog/the-child-tax-credit-address-root-causes-of-hunger

In reviewing the Mayor's Executive Budget, we respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the final FY23 New York City Budget, all of which we believe are centered in equity. These investments in human and social service programs and organizations serving low-income communities of color will help advance equity, addressing some of the long existing systemic inequalities exacerbated by COVID.

1. **Increase funding with an additional $63.5 Million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Baseline budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program and continued need.**
2. **We applaud the Mayor's commitment to increase NYC's Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Care Tax Credits for businesses that provide child care, the Summer Youth Employment program and Fair Fares,** and are eager to share these resources with our network of food pantries and food businesses when they are finalize
3. Invest in community-led solutions to food insecurity by **developing a new $1 million Food Justice Fund that provides $200,000 grants to programs in neighborhoods hit the hardest by COVID-19.**
4. Strengthen the Office of Food and Nutrition Serve's (OFNS) school meals programs by **expanding halal and kosher meals** in the Department of Education budget.
5. **Protect the Human Resource Administration (HRA), Housing Preservation Department (HPD) and Small Business Services (SBS) from the Program to Eliminate the Gap** and ensure these critical agencies are adequately funded to support the economic resiliency of rent burdened families and recovering food businesses. Reassessing funding equity between highly resourced agencies such as the NYPD presents an opportunity to protect under-resourced agencies that promote economic stability for families.

Increase Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) funding with an additional $63.5 Million

In a recent survey of 16,000 City Harvest pantry participants, nearly 9 in 10 respondents reported that they expect to participate in food pantry services more often this year due to rising food costs. Sufficient funding for programs like the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) is critical for supporting millions of pantry participants that are struggling to afford groceries and other essential living expenses amidst supply chain issues and increasing global uncertainty.

In response to food insecurity rates that increased by over 36 percent for all New Yorkers and 46 percent for children, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy administered a new $63.5 million program called the Pandemic Food Reserve and Emergency Distribution (P-FRED). Since 2020, P-FRED has provided over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries in target areas throughout the City.

We thank the Mayor for the inclusion of $53.7M in total for EFAP in the Executive Budget, but due to the discontinuation of P-FRED it still would not fully meet the need across our City. While hunger rates in the City are thankfully lower now than they were at the peak of COVID, they are still much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. The Mayor's preliminary budget excludes funding for the continuation of P-FRED past June 2022 yet no formal announcement has been made indicating if the program will continue. However, Mayor Adam's announced his intentions to strengthen EFAP by establishing a produce procurement operation into the program for the first time in its 40 years of existence. We urge the City to increase funding for EFAP beyond its current baseline level of $23.8 million to a total of $87.3M to account for the loss of P-FRED and adequately invest in this expanded effort to include fresh produce.

With the addition of produce procurement into EFAP for the first time and the release of a new RFP in January 2022 calling for a vendor to support procurement, ordering & distribution for EFAP, we urge HRA to consider innovative joint proposals in response to the recently released RFP and proposer(s) that demonstrate a commitment to following values set by the Good Food Purchasing procurement framework. We also urge HRA to consider RFP responses that prioritize sourcing from BIPOC and/or historically disadvantaged producers, distributors, and other places along the food supply chain and adequately track value-based procurement.

Increase NYC's Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Care Tax Credits for businesses that provide child care, the Summer Youth Employment program and Fair Fares

We support the Administration's inclusion of $250 Million per year for an Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion and call for the State to support this initiative. As Mayor Adams mentioned in his recent testimony to the NY State Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee members, it has been 20 years since the City and State of New York increased the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Benefits low-income families receive. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, EITC programs are a proven strategy for lifting families low to moderate income families out of poverty. We support the Mayor's call to the State to authorize the City to increase EITC benefits and match the City's investment of $250 Million to expand EITC here in New York City.

We support the Administration's inclusion of $101.6M in baseline funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to cover the increase in job opportunities for NYC youth from 70,000 to 90,000. We strongly support the Administration's increase in baseline funding of $57.2M per year over the next four years to support the expansion of SYEP jobs for youth ages 14-24. Mayor Adams has expressed his commitment to bringing green jobs to SYEP and investing in the future of urban agriculture, yet current DYCD regulations create a barrier for smaller worksites that would provide meaningful experiences for young people. To ensure the successful implementation of this expansion especially with food systems and urban agriculture worksite partners, we urge the DYCD to shift the weekly site visit requirement to something less burdensome for worksite partners.

The proposed increases to Earned Income Tax Credits, child care tax credits for businesses that provide child care, expansions to the Summer Youth Employment Program, and Fair Fares are all clear efforts that will benefit over 2.4 million low- and moderate- income New Yorkers.

Develop a New Food Justice Fund Grants for Programs in Target Neighborhoods

In October 2021, the Mayor's office announced one time funding for the Community-Led Food Project grant program through the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City (Mayor's Fund), on behalf of the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. The one-time program offered $5,000 grants to organizations across 19 neighborhoods that were hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic; the application process was opened for less than four weeks and operated separately from the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP).

While the grant was well intended, the funding was inadequate and inaccessible for far too many communities. Furthermore, City Harvest's direct engagement with the MOFP to include a Food Justice Fund in the 2021 published 10-year-food policy plan, also referred to as Food Forward NYC, provide a clear connection to the City-s community informed plan to build food resiliency. Modelled after Philadelphia's Department of Public Health's Food Justice Initiative and the US Department of Agriculture's Community Food Project, there are proven government approaches for investing in community-led efforts that build food security. The City should ensure that this vital effort is adequately funded. Based on input for over 40 anti-hunger groups in the NYC Food Policy Alliance, as well as a review of the USDA Community Food Project Competitive Grants Program, $200,000 per grantee is needed to have an intentional impact.

Expanding Access to Halal and Kosher Meals

Halal and kosher food are not cultural preferences, they are a religious requirement. While the majority of City agencies include halal and kosher alternatives, this is not the case for the Department of Education Office of Food and Nutrition Services Access. In Mayor Adams' former capacity as the Brooklyn Borough President, he was a leading advocate for the expansion of halal and kosher meals at a dozen schools across the City. With nearly 1,800 schools across the DOE and 1.1 million children who rely on school meals, the City must do more to ensure that every child has access to the food they need to thrive. According to Community Food Advocates, access to halal and kosher school meals saves parents more than $900 per child per year[3]. The City should scale up its Halal and Kosher meal efforts so that every school provides religiously required alternative meals within the next 4 years.

Protect HRA, HPD and SBS from the Program to Eliminate the Gap

We are encouraged that Mayor's executive budget shows an increase of $1.2 billion from his preliminary budget and we are pleased to see that much of it will go towards expanding homeless services, affordable housing, education and mental health programs

We ask for an increase to HRA's budget baseline by $10 Million to engage community-based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications. For the last several years, and especially during the pandemic, HRA's clients reported many issues to City Council and HRA with the closures of service centers, long phone wait times, problems returning missed calls from HRA, timely and accurate processing of applications, and the overall client experience. Despite these issues, the Preliminary Budget Plan does not include any additional funding for outreach or streamlining of social service program administration for the HRA. Additional administrative funding should also support the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications. We urge the City Council to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

Charity cannot end hunger without effective public policy and government led initiatives. Many of the families that participate in pantry services are low to moderate income New Yorker who cannot afford the costs of food and housing. Many of these families also participate in critical benefit access programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is administered through the Human Resource Administration (HRA).

This year, HRA included a $3.5 million Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) reduction for SNAP Admin. The case was made that American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds are replacing these reductions. However, at a time when over 1.5 million New Yorkers accessing SNAP may see significant reductions in their benefits due to the expiration of federal relief programs like SNAP Emergency Allotments[3], and during a time with tens-of-thousand more New Yorkers may not access the program due to a lack of SNAP outreach, stigma, administrative issues or mis-information for certain communities (especially immigrant communities), the City should take advantage of ARP funding by providing long overdue increases to SNAP admin efforts. This is especially important for food charities, since SNAP provides more than 9 meals for every meal provided through food banks.[4]

[3] Thrifty Food Plan Re-evaluation Puts Nutrition in Reach for SNAP Participants | Food and Nutrition Service (usda.gov)

[4] https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Feeding%20America%20orange%20slice%20AHPC%202020.pdf

In addition to protecting HRA, City Harvest stands by the expertise of policy leaders in other areas that are foundational to food security. We stand with the People's Plan platform[5] to exempt the Housing and Preservation Department (HPD) from PEG and strengthen City programs that invest in cooperative owned living spaces and deeply affordable housing. With over half a million New Yorkers behind on rent[6], food charities need the full support of a high functioning HPD to mitigate the strain that the rental crisis is having on the food pantry network.

Lastly, City Harvest's stands with the restaurant and hospitality industry in our ask to exempt the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) from PEG reductions and to reinvest in successful efforts such as the NYC Small Business Resiliency Grant. The restaurant industry supported New Yorkers who were hit the hardest by the Pandemic by providing over hundreds of thousand meals through City Harvest, all during a time when the industry itself faced challenges. Since March 2020, over 50 new SBS initiatives and one-time programs were implemented to support small businesses. It is time to apply the lessons and best practices from our recovery by investing in programs that mitigated some of the greatest financial damage for our restaurant partners.

As the City looks to reduce expenses through PEG, it is paramount that there are no cuts to agencies and programs that provide economic stability to these families. Furthermore, it is critical that the Mayor ensures that there is budget equity across all City agencies by reassessing opportunities for savings from agencies that are not centered in poverty reduction, such as the NYPD.

Conclusion

We thank the Committee on Finance and the Council for holding this vital hearing on the Mayor's Executive Budget. City Harvest will remain vigilant in our work to provide food for families today and in our advocacy for legislation that builds resiliency beyond COVID-19 and we remain committed to working with you on budget efforts and policy solutions that help New Yorkers become more food secure.

Keith Carr, Senior Manager, Policy and Government Relations

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[5] https://peoplesplan.nyc/the-peoples-response-to-the-fy2023-executive-budget/
[6] https://anhd.org/sites/default/files/new_yorks_pandemic_rent_crisis_2021_final.pdf

TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS

Before the New York City Council Finance Committee
Honorable Justin Brannon, Chair
Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022

Submitted by:
Citymeals on Wheels

Prepared by:
Jeanette Estima
Director of Policy and Advocacy

Overview

My name is Jeanette Estima, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at Citymeals on Wheels. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Citymeals was established in New York City in 1981 as a unique public private model to fill a critical gap in the City's home delivered meal program, which provides only one meal per day, five days a week, excluding weekends and holidays. More recently, Citymeals has emerged as *the* emergency responder for homebound older adults, beginning with 9/11 and continuing throughout the pandemic.

While the executive budget includes $8.8 million for the transition of 3,000 Recovery Meals clients into DFTA's home-delivered meals program, this is a far cry from the $30 million requested by the sector and the council in its response to the preliminary budget; moreover, it does not include any

funding for weekend and holiday meals. The need for this program has increased over the past few years, and even as we begin to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, we expect that many older adults will continue to need meals delivered to them. While we understand that many Recovery Meals clients have turned down an assessment, we believe that many more than the 3,000 estimated by the City will ultimately return to the program and we must be prepared to take them in. Moreover, as the number of older adults grows and climate related emergencies keep increasing, we must ensure that our emergency response infrastructure is adequately funded. Therefore, Citymeals respectfully request the following investments:

- **$1 million** through the Senior Centers, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative to fund Citymeals' emergency meals program
- **$1.6 million**, which is the amount that the Department for the Aging (DFTA) receives through the federal Department of Agriculture's Cash in Lieu of Commodities program *for food provided by Citymeals*
- **$12.7 million** to support current needs for home-delivered meals:
    - $9.7 million for DFTA-contracted community-based meal providers; and,
    - $3 million earmarked for Citymeals' weekend and holiday meals
- **$30 million** to support the transition of thousands of older adults from Recovery Meals to DFTA's HDM program:
    - *This must include an allocation for Citymeals to provide weekend and holiday meals.* We estimate that for every 1,000 new clients, $1.1 million is needed to provide them with a meal on the 115 days that are not covered by DFTA contracts.

Moreover, older New Yorkers rely on a robust network of community-based services in order to age in place safely and with dignity. This is especially true in a post-Covid-19 world, where the virus may be endemic, but its

impact will continue to be felt for years to come. Therefore, we stand with our partners in the aging services sector in asking for the following:

- **Full funding of all council initiatives** supporting older adults
- **$8.7 million** to expand DFTA's Geriatric Mental Health program

Finally, to shore up the nonprofit providers that implement the City's critical human services programs, we stand with our sector partners in requesting that the City:

- **Provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)** across all human services contracts
- **Boost salaries of nonprofit employees** on human services contracts with a floor of no less than $21 per hour
- **Create and fund a comprehensive wage & benefit schedule** as exists for government employees

The Citymeals on Wheels Model

Citymeals on Wheels was founded forty years ago to fill a significant gap in city services, securing funding to provide weekend and holiday meals to those homebound older adults unable to shop and cook for themselves. While the Department for the Aging funds the one daily meal that homebound older adults receive Mondays through Fridays (excluding holidays), Citymeals funds the same network of providers to deliver weekend, holiday, and emergency meals. *Without Citymeals, the most vulnerable older adults would not receive a meal 115 days each year*. On a 3-day holiday weekend, the most isolated older adults could go 3 straight days without a meal; and, in times of emergencies, they could go even longer without food or contact with another person. To bridge this gap, Citymeals raises over $20 million to fund about 2 million weekend and holiday meals annually.

In addition to providing food on weekends and holidays, Citymeals has become the emergency responder for older adults, beginning with 9/11. In 2018, the opening of our Bronx warehouse solidified this role by giving us the capacity to keep at least 100,000 shelf stable meals on hand, with the ability to quickly package more meals to assist the older adults we normally serve and those in temporary need. With this level of inventory, we can pre-supply existing clients and senior center members with shelf stable food in the event of an emergency closure or a suspension of meal delivery service. We can turn on a dime to reach large numbers of older adults in senior housing facilities, NYCHA housing, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), as well as individuals living across the five boroughs. We have stepped up during citywide emergencies like Superstorm Sandy, the Covid-19 pandemic, and Hurricane Ida, as well as more localized emergencies such as a power or gas outage. Time and again, we have illustrated the value of our agile and resourceful model.

Nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than the Covid-19 pandemic, which rendered thousands of older adults effectively homebound when it very suddenly became unsafe for them to be in most public spaces. They were no longer able to access their usual food programs, such as having lunch at an older adult center, using their EBT cards at a local grocery store, or stocking up at a food pantry. We delivered our first emergency meals on March 5, 2020, at least a week before the city shut down, because we anticipated that something could happen which would leave older New Yorkers without enough food on hand. Between March 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, Citymeals delivered more than 4 million meals to 50,000 older adults throughout NYC, a 112% increase from the year prior. This is what we do, and what we hope to keep doing. Citymeals has the infrastructure and

stands ready for the next emergency, provided we can access the additional funding that makes our nimble model possible.

More than a Meal

Community-based meals on wheels providers ensure that older New Yorkers have nutritious meals that support their health and that they are checked-in on most days. The check-in can be almost as important as the meals. The pandemic exacerbated social isolation for this population who could not participate in many of the alternative ways we all stayed connected, like picnicking in parks or zoom parties. Unable to socialize or see family, or even risk a trip to the doctor, for two years has been devastating and added another layer of stress for these older adults who were already coping with health issues, income insecurity, and hunger.

Meals are brought to homebound older adults by volunteers and paid staff—some of whom have been on the same route for many years. They come to know the older adults on their route, they know their routines, and often they can tell if something isn't right. This is a strength of the Citymeals model: by funding the same community organizations who deliver meals during the week, we maintain a continuity of service that allows connections and trust to develop. These relationships are a critical component of our city's care infrastructure.

For the most isolated older adults, their meal deliverer is a lifeline. If a person does not come to the door, deliverers will call them and/or notify program directors, who in turn ensure that the person's case manager follows up with them. The sense of security that this check-in can bring to someone who otherwise feels alone and invisible cannot be overstated. That knock on the door and the ensuing chit chat provides a sense of connection

to the outside world, and the comfort of knowing that someone is looking out for them.

The Need

There are over 1.7 million New York City residents over the age of 60—that's one in five New Yorkers. Increased life expectancy is a testimony to the achievements of modern science, technology, and even the social safety net. Living longer and on a fixed income presents a wide-ranging set of needs from healthcare to mobility restrictions to food insecurity. For our clients this could look like not being able to see well enough to cook their own meals, being unable to safely walk to the store or carry groceries home, or not having someone who can come by regularly to help with these tasks. Being unable to shop for groceries or prepare your own meals does not warrant institutionalization; these needs can be effectively managed through a network of community services and supports. And remaining at home is not only the overwhelming preference of older adults, it's also better for their overall wellbeing, and of course, much more cost effective—for both the person and the City—than moving into a nursing home.

It is clear to us that the need for an expanded home delivered meals program is not waning, for two reasons. First, there were originally over 11,000 older adults in the City's Recovery Meals program, a temporary program created during the pandemic when thousands of people were suddenly unable to access food through their usual channels. This program is currently set to end on June 30, 2022, and *we believe that thousands of Recovery Meals recipients will need to transition to DFTA's home delivered meals (HDM) program next fiscal year*. Secondly, older adults are among the fastest growing populations in this country, and thankfully, we are all living longer than ever before. We can confidently predict, then, that more and

more people will be coming onto the HDM rolls in the years to come—indeed we have already been seeing a steady increase for years.

However, there is not nearly enough funding in the executive budget to support this transition from Recovery Meals, nor a broader plan for investments that would enable HDM to keep up with the rapidly growing number of New Yorkers in need of meals. Without additional funding for the thousands of new clients that will be coming into the HDM program, providers will not be able to meet the increased demand, and older adults with little or no other recourse will go hungry.

Therefore, Citymeals respectfully requests the full funding of programmatic and infrastructure investments required to expand the HDM program to meet a significant and persistent growth in demand. **We estimate that a programmatic investment of $12.7 million will be needed, as well as $30 million specifically for the Recovery Meals transition. Capital needs must still be assessed.**

Because DFTA is currently assessing the number of people who will need to transition to HDM, we worked with our coalition partners to develop an estimate. **The $12.7 million estimate includes: $9.7 million for HDM providers to meet current needs; and, to ensure that clients receive weekend and holiday meals, an additional $3 million earmarked for Citymeals.** Weekend and holiday meals are not provided through existing City contracts, and therefore Citymeals did not receive the same investment to address reimbursement rates in the Preliminary Budget. This is a critical point: Citymeals fundraises to fill the gap in the City's HDM program, and we cannot reasonably expect to raise an additional $3 million to cover this new

need. Therefore, without *both* investments, new HDM clients will only receive one meal a day, on weekdays only, and excluding holidays.

Moreover, the transition of clients from Recovery Meals to DFTA's HDM program is expected to bring a minimum of 3,000 new clients into the system and additional funding beyond the $8.8 million included in the executive budget is needed. **A total of $30 million will be needed to adequately support this transition. This funding must include an allocation for Citymeals to provide meals on weekends and holidays.** We estimate that for every 1,000 new clients, $1.1 million is needed to provide them with a meal on the 115 days that are not covered by DFTA contracts. Especially when we consider the already increasing need for these meals to supplement the City's program, this influx of new clients is simply too great for Citymeals to support without an investment from the City.

While the focus of HDM investments is usually on food costs, the infrastructure of such a program is significant and maintenance costs are high. During our site visits with HDM providers, we are often told about vans that have been sitting in parking lots because they need costly repairs, old refrigerators or stoves that should be replaced, cramped kitchens with no space for storage or additional equipment that would allow them to cook and store more food, etc. **DFTA must evaluate the infrastructure needs of these programs and ensure that there is sufficient capital funding to address them.** This is a critical aspect of ensuring that this program will be able to keep up with the increasing demand for home delivered meals.

Moreover, the pandemic has only highlighted the need for emergency, supplemental food for our recipients. This will not change just because the pandemic is abating. For example, the number of climate events that create

enough damage that people become unable to leave their homes to get food, whether due to power and gas outages or unsafe streets, has grown. *The homebound older adult population is not served by any other emergency feeding groups.* Therefore, it is critical that Citymeals can provide supplemental food that can be stored in a cabinet for minor emergencies or bigger emergencies that may last a couple of days. **We respectfully request $1 million through the Council's Senior Centers, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative to fund Citymeals' emergency meals program.**

Ctiymeals as a not-for-profit will continue to raise private dollars in order to meet the needs of homebound older adults in the years to come. However, we also need the support of our partners in city government to help us reach all of those in need consistently and without a disruption in service, especially as costs and demand continue to rise. The exponential growth of the older adult population means there are more people needing meals—and needing them for many years—than ever before. This growth is happening at a scale that private fundraising simply cannot match. DFTA reports the meals provided by Citymeals in its estimate to the USDA's Cash in Lieu of Commodities program and receives 74 cents per meal (about $1.6 million) for them each year. **We respectfully request that the administration instead pass this $1.6 million federal reimbursement directly through to Citymeals** so that we can continue to close the gaps in the City's HDM and emergency food programs as the need increases.

Sector-wide Needs

Citymeals joins our partners across the network of older adult service providers in advocating for a city where we can all safely remain in our communities and continue to contribute to its diverse social and economic

fabric as we age. To achieve this vision, we must build a robust infrastructure of community-based services such as older adult centers, mental health care, transportation, homecare, and caregiver support.

Due to the chronic underfunding of services for older adults, any cuts to these programs must be avoided. Each year, the Council adds millions in funding for discretionary initiatives, in addition to individual member items, and FY23 can be no different. Whether held virtually or in-person, these programs are crucial to preventing isolation and supporting the wellbeing of older adults. As such, **we urge the council to not cut the nearly $32 million in funding for these discretionary initiatives**, including Support Our Seniors, Immigrant Senior Centers, NORCs, LGBT Senior Services, SU-CASA, Healthy Aging Initiative, and Case Management. Additionally, **$8.7 million** is needed to expand DFTA's Geriatric Mental Health program, the need for which has become even more critical in the aftermath of the isolation which older adults continue to experience due to the pandemic.

Finally, it cannot be overstated that nonprofit human services providers are a lifeline for the City and its residents of all ages; the sector's tenacity, resourcefulness, and expertise was on full display during the pandemic. Yet the City continues to underfund the services it relies on nonprofit providers to deliver, harming not only the programs but also the workers whose low wages fail to reflect the essential nature of their work. Therefore, we stand with the Human Services Council's #JustPay campaign and request the following investments:

- **Provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)** across all human services contracts
- **Boost salaries of nonprofit employees** on human services contracts with a floor of no less than $21 per hour

- **Create and fund a comprehensive wage & benefit schedule** as exists for government employees

We thank the City Council and the Department for the Aging for your continued partnership in ensuring that homebound older New Yorkers have food to eat 365 days a year and are not forgotten during emergencies. This new administration has an important opportunity to take a step back and consider how we can best support New Yorkers aging in place. We look forward to working with you to build a bold new vision for the services and supports that will make New York City a place where older adults can thrive.

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New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing May 25, 2022
City Parks Foundation Testimony

Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of fairly funding the Department of Parks and Recreation. At City Parks Foundation, we encourage New Yorkers to use and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces.

As you know, our city parks are the most fundamentally democratic of public spaces, providing opportunities for recreation, enjoyment, community building and rejuvenation. The pandemic has made it clear that parks are essential to the physical and mental health of our city residents and we need to treat them as essential infrastructure. We call on the administration to dedicate 1% of the city's budget towards parks.

We are honored to partner with and serve 310,000 New Yorkers of all ages every year through SummerStage, the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre and traveling PuppetMobile, sports programs, environmental education programs, and Partnerships for Parks (PfP), our flagship community building program that we manage jointly with the Parks Department.

We acknowledge and are grateful for the Council's support; its visionary Parks Equity Initiative (PEI) has enabled us to significantly expand the support for park stewardship groups through Partnerships for Parks. With $778,500 in Speaker designated funds received through the Parks Equity Initiative in FY22, we're able to purchase volunteer supplies and employ 11 full time staff members providing coaching, small grants, workshops, fiscal sponsorship, and organizing support to 570 park groups and community partners. Without them, we would not be able to help energize the groups and individuals that help care for our parks, alongside the invaluable Parks Department.

Additionally, the member designated PEI awards help to fund free programming in 60 parks across the city - including seniors fitness, tennis, track and field, golf, SummerStage performances, It's My Park volunteer service projects, and environmentally focused Learning Gardens, Seeds to Trees, and Coastal Classroom programs - all helping to connect New Yorkers deeply to our city's parks and their neighbors, and building stronger social infrastructure. As the Council seeks to support microparks and green spaces in underserved communities and increase funding for senior recreation programming in parks, we would be thrilled to partner in making these goals a reality.

As the need for an equitable distribution of resources for park maintenance and operations increases, Partnerships for Parks aims to rectify historic inequities, diversify park engagement, advance health and wellness and strengthen collaboration across a growing network of park partners. This year, as we rebuild from the pandemic and prepare for the next phase of the Community Parks Initiative in reconstructing parks, we are seeking increased support of $1M in leadership funds through the Parks Equity Initiative in

order to hire staff members who can prioritize outreach in soon-to-be renovated parks and parks that are historically under-resourced.

The Parks Department is currently under-funded and struggling with insufficient staffing. The Mayor's proposed budget cuts would have a detrimental impact on the effort towards equity - making it challenging to serve all communities, exactly at the time we collectively recognize the climate, social and racial justice implications of ingraining equity into our vision for the city. We stand as a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition and call on the city to recognize parks as the essential infrastructure they are by adequately funding the Parks budget at 1% of the city's budget, continuing to support the Parks Equity Initiative and taking concrete steps towards true equity.

We have a pivotal opportunity as a city to address long standing challenges; let us rethink the planning for and maintenance of our city's parks and open spaces with the understanding that parks serve as a strengthening network for our city. As you know, everything we do here at City Parks Foundation depends on the support of the Parks Department. We ask the City and the Committee on Finance to continue investing in our public parks and green spaces, which are so essential for New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our mission and goals in this testimony.

Written NY City Council Finance Budget Testimony
Maggie Clarke, Ph.D. and Sharon Silbermann, M.A.
5/31/22

We are Maggie Clarke, Ph.D. and Sharon Silbermann, M.S. chairs respectively of the Long Range Planning and Textile committees of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board (MSWAB). Additionally Dr. Clarke is on the board of the National Recycling Coalition (NRC) and chair of two of its committees, and on the legislative committees of NRC, New York State Association of Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling (NYSAR3), and the MSWAB. We testified before your committee May 25, 2022 presenting our written testimony, here, on behalf of ourselves.

What are the problems to solve regarding the organics programs and where will the funding come from? Our testimony describes how to fix and fund NYC's organics and recycling programs.

1. The City is spending hundreds of millions of dollars per year to burn and bury organics and recyclables. This needs to stop.

Waste export is not a sustainable, long term waste management policy - refer to this MSWAB factsheet: "New York City Has Not Made a Long Term Commitment to Zero Waste". Roughly 60% of what we send to landfills and incinerators is recyclable or compostable. Those materials are exported due to insufficient funding for organics collection and participation enhancement programs (i.e. education and enforcement).

We could be spending this funding on a program that works - which will ultimately cost less in the long run, creating local infrastructure and green jobs here.

Now we are spending an estimated $470 Million /FY23 on export and are under several long term contracts to do so until the middle of the next decade. The contracts have been automatically renewing without regard to recovering funding to be spent on increasing collection efficiency and processing here in the City. No attempt has been made to reduce exports and use the money for organics and recycling programs[1] even though there are provisions in the contracts to do so. And these costs can be predicted to skyrocket due to inflation.

Instead, this year's funding has been slashed for collection of organics, which is 41% of our exports [2], when we should be investing in and redesigning the program with the goal of redirecting the largest part of our exported waste stream from incineration and landfilling to composting and anaerobic digestion..

Recovering organics exported for disposal and the funding we have been losing to Waste Management and Covanta, would allow us to invest in expanding and improving the existing organics program and the participation rate enhancement programs (education and enforcement) which would benefit the economics of both the organics and recycling collection programs. Increasing reuse and prevention programs would allow the City to reduce exports even more. The funding for curbside organics collection and effective participation enhancement programs could come back to the city in the form of

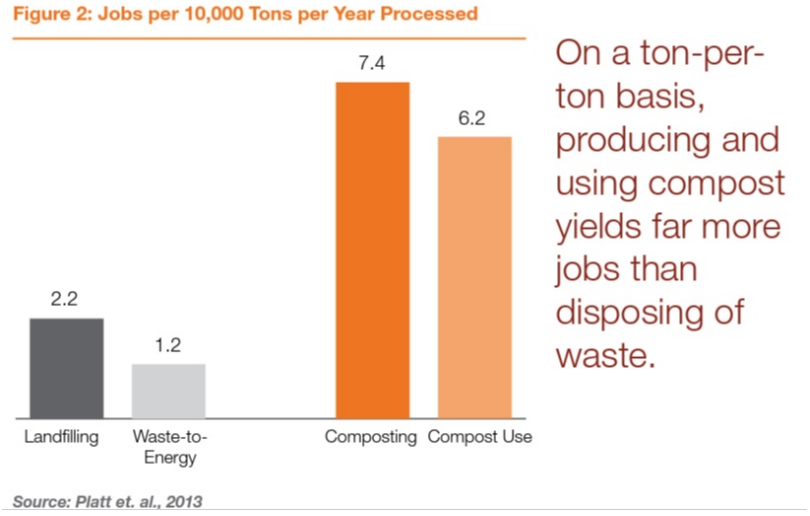
[1] MSWAB factsheet: Zero Waste Programs
[2] 2017 NYC Residential School, Schools and NYCHA, Waste Characterization Study

the gradual, annual reduction in DSNY's annual waste export costs. Since about 60% of the $470 million total export cost (or roughly $280 million/year) is being spent to export organics and recyclables, bringing this back to the City would allow for far more robust education and enforcement as well as funding the increased collection and processing costs of expanding organics curbside citywide.

Chronically underfunded and inadequate education and enforcement has also resulted in roughly half the recyclables being exported as trash at additional fiscal and environmental costs. Capture rate for recyclables ranged from 23% to 65% in 2019[3] or about half. This hasn't changed for decades. We must budget to develop and enforce these programs - not to continue to let our waste export costs increase uncontrollably. We need to invest and pay now or pay much more later.

The export costs do not include the significant environmental, social, opportunity or health costs and impacts from the air pollution in the communities surrounding the incinerators and landfills. Raising asthma rates in these areas, which are typically communities of color, are a significant environmental justice issue.

- *Costs of environmental harm: 657,000 tons of CO2e into the atmosphere each year cost society an estimated $28 million a year.* [4]
- *Lost revenue from not selling compost and or natural gas that could be generated from our organics about $12 - $22 million a year* [5]
- *Choosing to landfill and incinerate organics causes a loss of jobs as seen in the following graph cited in DSNY's 2015 report on organics* [6] *the graph originally from Institute for Local Self Reliance.*

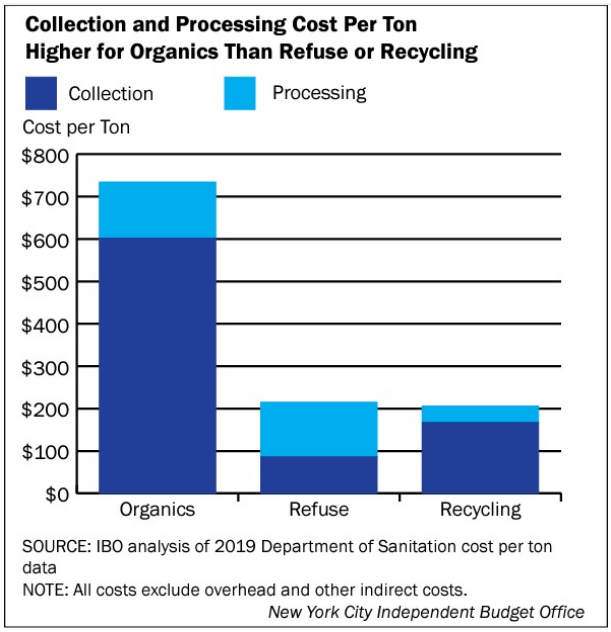


We should begin to reclaim these export expenditures starting *this year* and start ramping up organics collection and creating the local infrastructure, eventually and over time, to collect and process

[3] Monthly Recycling Diversion by District In April, 2019 the average capture rates were: Brooklyn: 46%, Bronx: 43%, Manhattan: 48%, Queens: 53%, Staten Island: 63%.
[4] Going Green: Can The Organics Collection Program Be Fiscally & Environmentally Sustainable? NYC IBO, October 2021
[5] Going Green: Can The Organics Collection Program Be Fiscally & Environmentally Sustainable? NYC IBO, October 2021
[6] 2015 NYC Organics Collection Report_web (1).pdf

organics here or close to the City.

2. The Mayor recommended slashing funding for organics management because it costs too much per ton to collect organics and this is because trucks come back almost empty. We can fix this. Fill the trucks by increasing participation and making the program universal, mandatory and convenient (i.e. curbside).



In the 1990s this same thing happened with recycling collection costs which were equally through the roof and for the same reason - inadequate public participation. Clearly, the City has remedied the very high recycling costs in the 1990s.

In order to have a well-functioning, successful, and economic organics system, we need to maximize all three of these steps.. Now the participation rate is low and the trucks come back nearly empty; it's not a workable system (also close to 100% of reusables, recyclables and organics must be targeted for collection to approach zero waste)

Participation rate must approach 100%	Collection Efficiency Must have full trucks	Sufficient composting sites for all organics generated
		

The IBO graph below shows how increasing the diversion rate to 35% for organics could bring the per ton cost to parity with recycling per ton cost (which is less than export disposal costs).

At Current Processing Costs, High Diversion Rates Required to Bring Organics Costs On Par with Refuse

Organics Diversion Rate	Organics/Refuse Cost Differential At Current Processing Costs					
35%	$8	$6	$3	$0	($4)
30%	$14	$12	$10	$7	$4
25%	$20	$19	$17	$14	$12
20%	$28	$27	$25	$23	$21
15%	$39	$38	$36	$35	$33
10%	$56	$55	$54	$52	$50
5%	$95	$93	$92	$91	$89
	15%	**20%**	**25%**	**30%**	**35%**
	Recycling Diversion Rate				

SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Sanitation collection and export data
NOTES: Positive amounts indicate how much more the total cost per ton for organics would be relative to refuse. Negative amounts indicate how much less the total cost per ton for organics would be relative to refuse.
New York City Independent Budget Office

But how do we increase participation?
The keys to solving the empty trucks problem is (1) to structure educational approaches and (2) collection program design that will work for all and (3) ensuring there is enough funding to implement these every year. To maximize collection efficiency, the capture rate must be significantly increased from the current 50% for recycling and 1% for organics.

3. The current organics collection program is uneconomic because of its design (voluntary, opt-in, difficult to access, expensive for DSNY to operate, hand-holding individual buildings). A redesign is necessary (mandatory, universal, curbside).

In order to maximize participation and fill the trucks, we need to maximize convenience. This means

that we need to establish pilot districts that require mandatory curbside throughout the district, not opt-in programs, which are not convenient. The next section describes how convenience is a key strategy to maximizing participation. Using the City's campaign to get everyone tested and vaccinated as an example, one of the first strategies used was to make the sites conveniently located. For recycling/organics which requires weekly participation, the convenience factor becomes even more important.

Pilot organics collection, by district, and other studies are needed to perfect programs

As of early 1988, the City operated a number of pilot programs as part of the development of its new recycling program. The first two programs included one that collected newspapers at curbside in five neighborhoods and another that picked up papers in large containers in 97 apartment buildings. Then the other recyclables were studied. DSNY piloted the recycling program in the different housing density districts starting 1988. Pilot testing collection of the different recyclable materials continued for four years until the citywide rollout of mandatory, universal, curbside collection. The piloting process took five years and the City rolled the program out citywide in 1993. One other pilot was done in Park Slope in 1996 by the Center for Biology of Natural Systems (consultant), and included organics.

We need to look back to the success of these early recycling pilots and the first curbside organic district in Staten Island around 2015 and the few that followed in Brooklyn. The results of these pilots and retrials to make the organics program more effective were not shared nor followed up on for an eventual Citywide curbside organics rollout. Every pilot study undertaken by DSNY must be shared with the Solid Waste Advisory Boards and City Council in a timely manner. We would like to be part of perfecting pilots and the protocols followed to optimize effectiveness and use of public funds. In order to optimize participation the pilots need to take place not only in single-family dwelling districts. High rise apartment buildings, mid and low- rise apartment buildings as well as brownstones, and duplexes need to have pilots. All demographics need to be included. If any of these housing densities or demographics are missed in the pilot program, the participation rate will suffer. The data need to be public, in real time.

In stark contrast, in recent years the City has spent more time in piloting organics collection than it did for recyclables, but in that time did few pilots, and have confused the issue by mixing opt-in curbside, which is inherently inconvenient and off-putting, with drop-off and other non-mandatory, inconvenient programs. The first curbside district in Staten Island many years ago and the few that followed in Brooklyn, were not tweaked for optimization nor followed up for an eventual Citywide curbside organics rollout. In order to optimize participation, the pilots need to take place not only in single-family dwelling districts. High rise apartment buildings, mid and low- rise apartment buildings as well as brownstones, and duplexes need to have pilots. All demographics need to be included. If any of these housing densities or demographics are missed in the pilot program, the participation rate will suffer. The data need to be public, in real time.

Community Districts Bronx 8, Brooklyn 1, 2, 6, 7, Manhattan 6 and 7	SUMMARY DATA ALL		New York City		Percent Pt. Difference Summary versus City
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total population	1,073,203	100.00%	8,804,190	100.00%	**0**
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	232,586	21.70%	2,490,350	28.30%	**-6.6**
White nonhispanic	**568,785**	**53.00%**	**2,719,856**	**30.90%**	**22.1**
Black/African American nonhispanic	81,813	7.60%	1,776,891	20.20%	**-12.6**
Asian nonhispanic	136,260	12.70%	1,373,502	15.60%	**-2.9**
Some other race nonhispanic	11,438	1.10%	143,632	1.60%	**-0.6**
Nonhispanic of two or more races	42,321	3.90%	299,959	3.40%	**0.5**
Total housing units	531,211	100.00%	3,618,635	100.00%	**0**
Occupied housing units	481,237	90.60%	3,370,448	93.10%	**-2.5**
Vacant housing units	49,974	9.40%	248,187	6.90%	**2.5**
Average household size	2.16			2.55	**-15.3**
Population per acre	79.9			45.8	**74.5**

Thus, a citywide mandatory curbside program would start with the 7 districts that are currently receiving curbside service (though incompletely since they are opt-in). The City needs to see these as the first group of pilot districts for mandatory, curbside treatment that will eventually expand citywide. Every year a new group of districts should be added until the entire City is covered. NYCHA housing needs to be included in the early pilot districts in order to better reflect the diversity of the population (see chart above) and ultra-dense housing districts need to be included early since special educational and collection approaches will be needed there.

4. **The current organics collection program is also uneconomic because the education and enforcement are significantly underfunded and the basics of a successful educational program following the principles of behavior science and motivation are not being followed. How should education and enforcement programs and pilots be designed to maximize participation and how much should be allocated, understanding what constitutes a successful set of approaches?**

Seven step strategy for maximizing public participation in government programs

a. There are several steps for individuals to transition from nonparticipation to participation. Ignoring any in the education/outreach process reduces participation

b. Design collection and education with the understanding that the population has 5 components, and each needs a separate educational approach

c. include all the demographics in pilot areas (e.g., NYCHA) because studies indicate different demographics get information on programs in different ways

d. Give attention to having pilots in districts with the range of housing densities in the City (single-family to ultra dense high rises),

e. Pilot test a multi-prong educational campaign program design (optimize and implement all approaches - print, media, social media, transit, peer ads, bribes, convenience, enforcement),

f. Apply campaign elements consistently, study, tweak, repeat, and optimize (one and done doesn't work - the advertising industry spends billions and repeats and changes and targets messaging to change behavior),

g. Provide sufficient funding with City Council direction and oversight to DSNY to ensure that pilots, education and enforcement are designed and optimized effectively and rolled out timely.

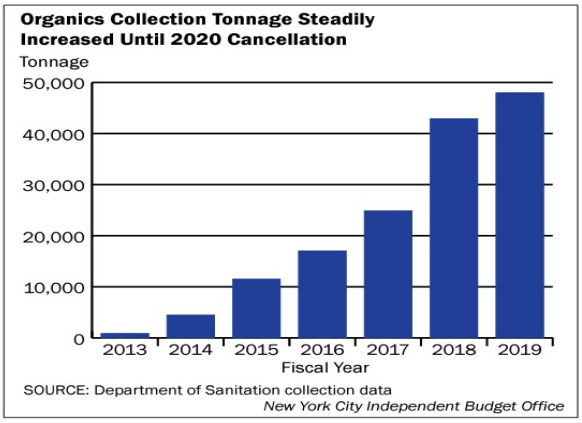
All of these steps are described in more detail, below.

The Keys to Increasing Public Participation: Behavior change / educational programs: Important themes:

A. Changing behavior involves a number of steps and educational programs need to address all of these, and programs and educational materials should be designed to succeed in getting everyone to continue to participate.

Awareness of the program	**Comprehension** of program purpose and elements	**Motivation** to participate	**Attitude** towards recycling	**Intention** to participate	**Convenience** and ease, of participating	**Continuing** to participate

If any of these steps is not optimized, the job of the educational program is not done and participation rate will suffer. The percentage of materials captured will suffer. The City's programs have focused on the first two with its brochures and occasional media or subway campaign, but not so much on motivating or changing attitudes of those who are questioning, disinterested or resistant. And those who had a bad experience recycling will cause them to not continue to participate. In the case of organics collection, the opt-in system makes it difficult for most to participate (and engenders negative feelings by those who cannot get into the opt-in system). We learned that when the City creates negative feelings towards its recycling program (as it did in 2002 when glass and plastic recycling stopped for 1-2 years), the diversion rate suffers long-term. By 2001, 8 years after recycling began, the diversion rate had reached 21%. Today, almost 30 years after recycling began, we are only around 18%. The SWABs and the City Council all warned the City in 2002 that canceling the recycling programs would cause permanent damage to participation rates. Causing negative feelings against your recycling program is at odds with motivating and changing attitudes, and is the opposite of what is needed. The previous Mayor made the same mistake in 2020 canceling the organics collection program as it was growing steadily, and it is likely, based on previous experience, that attitudes will sour and the participation rate will suffer long-term.



Now the City Council and new Mayor need to remediate the damage done from various stops and starts and generate positive feelings towards recycling. Universal curbside collection and maximized convenience as well as sufficient, well-designed education and outreach for the recycling/organics program are required for maximized participation and therefore, optimal cost/benefit for recycling/organics collection. The MSWAB offers its expertise to review draft educational materials and program design, and partner with DSNY on perfecting these as we did prior to 1993.

B. The universe of people is divided into 5 groups in terms of readiness to participate. To be effective, all educational programs and materials must be targeted to achieve high participation rates in all of these 5 groups. Each requires a different set of educational and programmatic approaches to reach them successfully. These groups are:

1. those who are eager to do the behavior change,
2. those who will do it if it's convenient and won't cost them time or money,
3. those who will do it if their peers (friends, family, neighbors) are doing it,
4. those who will only do it if they receive monetary incentives, and
5. those who will only do it if it will cost them (e.g., money, job, freedom) not to do it.

Readiness to participate

Eager Beavers	If Convenient	If Peer support	Need Bribes	Most Resistant

A one size fits all approach, such as a single brochure, will not work except to those inclined to participate (group 1). Those who are more resistant need to be reached with additional targeted outreach, marketing and incentives. If we are only reaching those most ready to participate, we should not be surprised that the capture rate is rarely above 50%.

If we are serious about zero waste, participation rate must also be near 100%. If we are not planning ways to achieve that, we will not reach zero waste. There are west coast cities that have achieved near and over 75% diversion rates. We should be learning from them. The Mayor recently said he wanted to learn from other cities (like Chicago / crime). More details on model cities are described below.

These are the five groups and what is needed to get them to participate:

Eager Beavers/Early Adopters: Tell them what to do, and how to do it, and if it's possible, they will participate. Not so much effort is needed to convince them.

Convenience: For recycling participation the most convenient collection design is curbside collection on a sufficiently frequent basis. The current curbside program collects only once a week, where in the past there were multiple pick ups per week of putrescibles mixed with other discards. Once a week pick up deterred many from participating. Other cities remove garbage pickups when they add organics pickups. Convenience also means that the program has to be easy to follow. It has been shown that dropoff programs are not nearly as effective as curbside since a fraction will not inconvenience themselves to use dropoff locations. In New York City, where many do not have cars, the convenience factor is more important. Voluntary or Opt-in programs will also not optimize participation because effort is required to register. Mandatory curbside, citywide for recyclables was automatic; organics should be treated the same way.

Peer support: To participate, people in this group need to be assured that members of their demographic group, neighborhood, family and friends are participating. Advertising needs to be targeted to these groups and neighborhoods. In the NYC Covid vaccine campaign, TV ads featured people of different ethnic and demographic groups, including various immigrants, pregnant mothers, young men, among others who changed their mind about getting the vaccine and explained why they now wanted to participate (get the vaccine). NYC's recycling program would greatly benefit from funding to create a similar, multifaceted campaign. Ad campaigns have infrequently been used by DSNY. One memorable TV recycling ad in the late 1990s included Mayor Giuliani and Yankees manager Joe Torre – opinion leaders for some. DSNY should have a budget for similar marketing campaigns to educate and motivate New Yorkers on why recycling is important.

Bribes (Incentives): As resistance to behavior change increases, mere knowledge, convenience, and peer acceptance of a program are insufficient to convince the last two groups. In the Covid vaccine campaigns, free metrocards and even $100 cash were offered to members of this group. It worked to get many vaccinated. Nothing has been offered to incentivize participation in recycling in New York City. In many thousands of cities and towns, the equitable system of billing (Pay as you Throw), incentivizes residents to participate by charging for waste management based on the weight of garbage discarded, while allowing recyclables to be picked up for free. As recently as a couple of years ago the City had planned to study "Save as you throw" and even had RRS subcontracted to SERA (the experts in Pay as you throw) lined up to work on it, and then the City suddenly pulled out. We never learned why. In 2000 USEPA Region II put on a day-long conference in the City, in part, to encourage NYC to use Pay as you throw, to no avail. In 1997 a $250,000 grant from NYSERDA was about to be awarded to independent researchers, to build and test in NYC, infrastructure to measure the weight of garbage using scales and barcode reading systems to be installed in chutes and studied in apartment buildings. NYSERDA knew that the technology was likely sound, but needed to know that there would be a market for such a PAYT infrastructure for apartment buildings, so they asked DSNY to attend a meeting. Unfortunately, DSNY would not, and the grant was never awarded. USEPA has data going back decades demonstrating how PAYT is the single most effective means of incentivizing program participation. The City should be researching how to accomplish Pay As You Throw in apartment buildings and phasing it in, at first in single-family neighborhoods and eventually to more densely packed housing districts.

Most Resistant/Hard to reach: When bribes don't work, then the only thing left to employ is providing sufficient disincentives for those continuing to not adopt the new behavior. In the vaccine campaign, we saw people losing their jobs. DSNY's enforcement program must have adequate funding and have oversight by the City Council to equitably and effectively enforce its mandatory recycling participation requirement. The City Council should increase the fines for continued noncompliance to increase the disincentive for not complying with mandates. These fines should be based on the number of residents (e.g. fines much higher for apartment building owners). With half the recyclables still in the trash (and some buildings not even providing recycling options), it should be very easy to find bags of garbage with recyclables. Fines is the only mechanism that the City has at its disposal to disincentivize non-participation. Apartment buildings should be fined as often as single-family homes and universities and other institutions. Enforcement records and fines (who/when/how much) should be available online through NYC Open Data and in studies so that all can see how effective the program is and how it needs to be improved. Adequate funding must be provided to allow for increased enforcement.

The Example of Covid-19 Vaccinations vs. NYC recycling education campaigns:
A study of the Department of Health's $140 million campaign to overcome Covid vaccine hesitancy/resistance [7] would be instructive since both are attempting to change behaviors in the entire population. DOH has been deploying outreach designed for each of the five "readiness to participate" groups and the TV ads are frequent and varied. It would be very useful to compare the individual elements of the DOH's advertising campaign to DSNY's campaign over a year's time including costs. In addition, it would be instructive to measure the cost of the DOH giving incentives to participate and the effectiveness of their disincentive program (e.g. threatening jobs etc).

NYC's motivation campaign to get people vaccinated should be very similar in structure and approach to the campaign to motivate an increase in participation in recycling. But because the two programs do not address all 5 kinds of people (less and more resistant to behavior change requests), both campaigns have not been equally successful at convincing those who are hardest to convince. Vaccinations have been made convenient, located in many places; curbside collection is the most convenient for recycling, but DSNY persists in the opt-in program and dropoffs which are only convenient for those in the most already motivated to recycle. The vaccination campaign uses a wide variety of people and their stories of learning/accepting behavior change in their TV ads to effect peer encouragement; the recycling education campaign hardly addresses this. The vaccination campaign bribes New Yorkers with transit cards, $100, etc; the recycling campaign does not pay New Yorkers to recycle. The vaccination campaign requires vaccination to travel, to work, to go to school, etc taking jobs etc from those who refuse vaccination; the recycling campaign has a badly enforced program with low penalties for not recycling. If the City were to design, fund, and implement the multi-prong, targeted approaches for curbside collection that the vaccination campaign has done, focusing on resistant individuals, to increase recycling participation, more would participate and costs would go down.

It would be instructive for the City Council to fund a study showing how much does the City's vaccination behavior change campaign cost NYC compared with the recycling education campaign and what each achieved in participation rate. How many ads have been on TV, radio, etc per month? How have the ads varied? How specific is the targeting? What is the advertising budget for each element and which media are used? How many staff are required? How much does it cost to set up and maintain vaccination locations, how much to bribe people to get vaccinated? What could

[7] City health department has spent nearly 140m on vaccine advertising

be done better? We need these kind of data to design effective programs.

C. To be effective, educational programs need to reach all demographic groups. Different demographics get their information from different sources. Some read (brochures, newspaper articles, websites). Some get their info from TV and radio. Others get info from their children learning it in school and bringing it home. Some hear from friends and neighbors. Some get info from subway ads and billboards. Some use Google. And as the advertising industry shows us (e.g Liberty Mutual, Geico), repetition and variety of the message using different approaches is what works, not one and done. DSNY must not only have adequate funding but should design and implement a multi-approach, consistently applied, targeted approaches to education. Since DSNY's approach usually focuses on print and having information on its website (not a convenient means of imparting information to the vast majority who are not seeking it out), the capture rate is only half effective, only reaching those who are most interested in recycling to start with. Funding should also be provided to conduct more research/survey studies to get to know more about NYC residents' preexisting attitudes regarding recycling and the impact of barriers to participation on them. Decades of chronic under-funding has caused great damage to the program's participation.

D. How much does the City need to spend to achieve an effective public education/ participation program, and what does it need to spend the money on?
In order to fill the trucks and make the curbside organics collection economic, we need to increase the participation rate significantly as was done for the recycling program in the 1990s.

Studies. First, DSNY needs funding to conduct more survey studies to get to know the City's population and its inclination to participate in recycling better. Academic surveys with significant sample size and studies have been conducted in the 1990s and 2000s in New York City (2 pages filled out in person) and there are published reports on them.[8] One of many facts learned in 2004-2005 is that 60% of the respondents didn't recycle every time because they either forgot or were confused.[9] This is the fault of inadequate education. The City's education program will continue to fail without adequate funding to strategically design a program that will succeed in addressing any and all barriers. DSNY's education program has failed to achieve more than a 50% capture rate. Since New York City's programs are only reaching those most ready to participate, we should not be surprised that the capture rate is rarely above 50%

Education Pilots. Once the needs are assessed having studied New Yorkers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, different educational approaches, alone and in combination, should be tested in different neighborhoods. Pilots would test various mixtures of educational literature, media, and outreach approaches. This requires funding. Without this testing we are just guessing what will be effective in motivating everyone to participate.

Historical insufficient funding has been a hallmark of New York City's recycling education and outreach since the beginning due to misunderstanding the role and importance of participation in

[8] Optimizing recycling in all of New York City's neighborhoods: Using GIS to develop the REAP index for improved recycling education, awareness, and participation
[9] Optimizing Recycling in All the Neighborhoods of New York City: The Roles of Demographics, Education, Barriers, and Program Changes

reducing costs and lack of political will to have a high participation goal. In the 1990s recycling was threatened with cancellation more than once on the basis of the per ton cost of collection being so high. In order to fill the trucks and make the economics work, everyone needs to participate all the time. In order to have that, there must be sufficient budget for targeted, ongoing outreach.

Can we compare New York City to other cities' effective curbside recycling and organics collection programs? How can we know how much funding is needed to address all the types of people and housing density districts? We can compare collection routes in New York City with other jurisdictions that have the same types and range of housing density districts. There are many that fit the bill. It is easy to envision a small district of ultra dense housing in both San Francisco and New York City. San Francisco has had a 3 bin program (trash, mixed recyclables and organics) for well over a decade, sending the latter to a vast composting site in the Valley and shipping compost to the vineyards up north. If the demographics are similar in those districts, the programs should be similar. We should be looking at those large jurisdictions that are successfully diverting a large majority of recyclables and organics from disposal. If there are collection truck routes in dense urban areas, smaller apartment districts, brownstone districts and single family homes, we can learn lessons from those. It's best to compare the efficiency and design of NYC programs with successful, zero waste cities that have the same range of housing density districts as NYC (ultra high rise, mid-, low- level apartments, brownstones, duplexes, single family), for example San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver.

Model Cities for Recycling education. If we are serious about reaching zero waste, we need to plan ways to target, in program and other initiatives, and capture and appropriately recover close to 100% of what we discard; participation rate must also be near 100%. There are model cities that have achieved near and over 75% diversion rates and are aggressively working towards zero waste. We should be learning from them. The Mayor recently said he wanted to learn from other cities (e.g., Chicago / crime).

We can study the stellar example of Austin, TX which succeeded in achieving 85-95% participation by increasing funding for educational programs to $1/household/month (which is roughly $5/person/year). This was done in combination with a Pay as you throw program, USEPA endorsed, as the best incentive program to motivate residents to dispose of less and reduce, reuse and recycle more. We should be striving to do likewise. Underfunding of recycling participation enhancement programs over many years has kept our diversion rate below 20% and roughly half the recyclables are exported as trash.

As of 2019 both San Francisco and Seattle spent over $3/person/year on education programs and staff and have achieved far greater diversion rates than NYC, closing in on zero waste. They have collected organics and recyclables for many years and divert most material from disposal. NYC, by comparison, spends 86 cents/person per year. (Interviews conducted by Manhattan Borough President's office in 2021) These two cities have 70- 80% diversion rates compared with ours (17-18%). You get what you pay for.

Pay As You Throw (Incentive) - a wise path for New York City

Unlike their counterparts in many thousands of other localities large and small, New York City residents do not pay directly for garbage collection. Everyone pays the same no matter how much they dispose of. The cost is buried in the tax structure. It's an inequitable system that does not reward conservation behaviors. New York City was recently planning to spend $1 million to study their branded "Save As You Throw", a billing system which would financially reward prevention, reuse, and

recycling behaviors. Since the 1990s USEPA has recommended this system as the single most effective method to incentivize public participation. The first step must be to fund the delayed study of Pay as You Throw, design and conduct pilots for different housing density neighborhoods, and then roll it out in the single-family areas, gradually moving to more densely populated neighborhoods.

E. Mandatory curbside is more effective and inexpensive than voluntary (opt-in) or dropoff collection programs.

A 1979 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency study found that 50 percent of mandatory programs had participation rates equal to or exceeding 50 percent. The National Solid Waste Management Association, in a study of 26 voluntary and 13 mandatory programs, found average voluntary participation to be 34 percent and average mandatory participation to be 55 percent.

Since incentives are not in place and no direct benefit accrues to New York recyclers for participating, mandatory compliance (i.e., threat of fines for noncompliance) can prove effective over voluntary participation. Better funding and oversight of the City's recycling enforcement program to make sure it is equitably and thoroughly applied across the City would have a positive impact, since likely half the black bags containing discards intended for export contain recyclables.

How to optimize diversion rate? Participation, which we don't have figures for in New York City), is related to Capture Rate (percent of targeted materials collected). The City has collected capture rate data by district per month for many years. Across the 59 community districts the capture rate ranges from less than 25% to 60% for the recycling program. It is far less in those districts where organics are collected. We only collect 1% of NYC's residential organic waste, due in part to the small size of the program and insufficient funding for education. This is a metric that must rise towards 100% as educational programs improve.

Diversion rate (percent of all discards diverted from disposal) should not be confused with capture rate. Diversion rate is the main metric for overall evaluation of a program's success and progress towards zero waste.

Collection Efficiency (truck routes need to be optimized to allow trucks to fill up during a shift; high participation is also a requirement to maximize collection efficiency).

Processing Capacity "In 2015, DSNY conducted a survey to assess regional composting and anaerobic digestion capacity. The survey results show that there are 106 facilities that can process organics within 400 miles of NYC, 26 percent of which are within 100 miles. They range in capacity from less than 1,000 Workers and windrows at the NYC Compost Project hosted by Big Initiatives urban compost site. Yard waste set out for pickup. to more than 300,000 tons per year." " the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment plant to process food waste in anaerobic digesters, boosting the production of renewable biogas on site. "The plant has the capacity to process up to 500 tons of food waste per day, eight percent of the city's total food waste generation from residents and businesses combined".[10]

5. How can the City get to zero waste? (legislation)

What else is needed to achieve zero waste? NYC is far from targeting 100% of the

[10] 2015 NYC Organics Collection Report_web (1).pdf

materials discarded by New Yorkers for collection and processing programs and will not come anywhere close to achieving New York State's Zero Waste by 2030 mandate without mandatory organics collection, improved education and enforcement, and waste prevention and reuse initiatives.

The council should update the city's recycling law so that Organics will be part of the city's recycling program, made mandatory and universal the same as it is for other recyclables. Participation and waste prevention/reuse should also be included.

The MSWAB has prepared a list of provisions that should be in a successful zero waste by 2030 bill [11] as well as legislative justifications.[12] A bill for consideration by the City Council is being prepared, to be finished soon.

The bill #244 introduced by Council Member Hanif does include many of the provisions and objectives we are proposing. We recommend an update to Local Law 19 of 1989 (which was updated in 2010) to set up mandates and schedules for reaching zero waste by or near 2030. Note that USEPA's research shows that half of carbon emissions that create climate change can be lessened by zero waste programs, since 42% of carbon emissions are produced by materials extraction, refining manufacturing, and transportation of consumer goods, packaging, and food. The other 8% is from use of appliances and electronics.. Our factsheet, Consumer Demand and Climate Change, details this important information.[13]

6. Reclaiming the last 32% that is exported

The remaining 32% of the discards include product categories that would benefit from prevention, repair, and reuse programs and initiatives, as well as legislation, that do not exist now. These categories include textiles, e-waste, construction and demolition materials.

Reuse. DSNY's waste characterization pie charts show about 32% as unrecyclable, possibly reusable waste stream categories and a lack of programs and infrastructure to handle them. But their waste characterization studies don't measure all the potential reusable or repairable goods. A portion of the 32% could be reused and repaired. Consumer items that can be repaired, refurbished or otherwise reused, are dealt with in the private sector to some extent, but there is much left at curbside as garbage for export and disposal. The City must be directed to study reuse capacity at curbside as part of its waste characterization studies. Not only is it important to measure the volume and type of reusable items plus subcategories, but also the condition (i.e. repairability, salvageability for parts). The Manhattan SWAB has asked repeatedly since 1989 that DSNY include all durables/consumer products categories in its waste characterization studies.

Unrecyclable packaging. Twenty-three percent is poorly designed packaging and other undiverted material that could be a target for bans. In the waste characterization studies it's important to know all the many subtypes of packaging so that those that are bad for the environment can be targeted.

City Council must fund a new waste characterization study and direct DSNY to expand the parameters to be able to design additional waste prevention and reuse initiatives to capture as much of our discards as possible.

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[11] Fact sheet 2021 Zero Waste by 2030 Bill

[12] Zero Waste by 2030 Legislative Justification and Background

[13] Consumer Demand and Climate Change, Manhattan SWAB Another portion is packaging that could be avoided.

Other Recyclables. The City has sometimes hired vendors to collect textiles at dropoff sites (e.g. Wearable Collections), and we hope this funding will be restored, but has never collected used textiles and clothing curbside; it's always been drop off or opt in. DSNY's waste characterization studies must make clear which other recyclable items should be targeted for curbside convenient collection. And its almost 30% "Other" category should be studied and understood so that we know specifically what is included there so that measures can be taken to reduce, reuse and recycle what is there..

Conclusion

It is clear that in order to optimize the economics of our recycling/organics programs, participation is key. It needs to move towards a mandated goal of 100%, utilizing best practices for well-designed and well funded education programs outlined above, prioritizing curbside as the best method of collection, as well as a mandated goal of 100% targeting of materials in order to approach zero waste. With participation less than 50% and targeting of materials now the 34% that is recyclables, the result is the roughly low 17% diversion rate. If the City were to also establish mandatory, universal, curbside organics collection (coincidentally, another 34% that is organics) could double the diversion rate from 17% to 34%. Revamping our education and enforcement programs to target all groups with sufficient funding and adding programs to reuse and recycle more materials would further increase diversion towards a zero waste goal. Improving the education and enforcement programs, even by 50%, would have a significant positive impact on the diversion rate and potentially on economics. It is not a foregone conclusion that recycling or organics programs in New York must be unaffordable.

Written Textile Budget Appeal to NY City Council Finance Committee

By Sharon Silbermann, M.A. 5/31/22

Thank you, Finance Committee Chairman Brannan and City Council Members.

My name is Sharon Silbermann, MS, Social Impact and Sustainability. I come today to appeal to City Council to create a budget for the development of a circular textile industry

We all wear clothing every day, usually multiple outfits, but most people give little thought of the huge environmental and labor impacts the fashion industry makes, in NYC and across the globe.

According to UN statistics, 1 in 8 people globally work in some capacity in the fashion industry. Fashion is responsible for 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Largely due to the exponential growth of fast fashion, consumption has exploded with these consumers disposing of this cheap clothing within a year of purchase. This category and the associated disposal behavior is expected to grow an additional 63% by 2030!

In NYC, as 6% of our municipal solid waste stream, we spend approximately $193 million on the collection, transportation, and landfilling or incineration of apparel and textiles that could be circularly recycled as a resource for new textiles and merchandise, thereby employing New Yorkers in the circular economy, greatly reducing our carbon footprint, eliminating the greenhouse gasses emitted from landfills, and re-growing our domestic textile and apparel manufacturing industry. The textiles and apparel that make up 6% of our municipal solid waste stream is resident waste ONLY – not commercial waste from our robust fashion industry!

I am currently the Textile Waste Committee Chairwoman for the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board, and I also own Shamann Productions, a small Textile and Apparel Waste Diversion, Resale, Repurposing, and Consultancy business. Additionally, I am the Secretary of the Education and Research Committee for The Fashion Policy Initiative, Co-host and Founder of The Re:GEN-eration Podcast. I've been a designer in the fashion industry for more than 30 years and grew up the daughter of a fashion buyer.

My career is now dedicated to helping the fashion industry make the difficult transition toward sustainability, circularity, and regeneration. I wrote a Master's thesis in 2020 based on the 400 million pounds of Apparel and Textiles that NYC residents ONLY throw "away" in the garbage annually. That is more textile waste than most European countries and it comes from just 8.5 million New Yorkers who live in a global fashion capital.

Apparel and textiles are not garbage. Technologies exist to create a circular textile-to-textile recycling and innovation industry right here in NYC from this waste stream. We must create a public private partnership to engage our Sanitation Department in developing convenient curbside and drop off textile collection and sorting programs alongside public education and

marketing outreach that maximizes participation that is reinforced with mandatory legislation and enforcement.

I urge the City Council to provide initial funding in the amount of $5 million dollars to design and develop a broad stakeholder panel of experts and launch an initial pilot textile recycling program.

Class Size Matters
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www.classsizematters.org

Testimony before the City Council Finance Committee concerning the Mayor's proposed budget cuts to education and the capital plan

May 25, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan, and members of the City Council. My name is Leonie Haimson, and I am the Executive Director of Class Size Matters, a non-profit organization that advocates for class size reduction in NYC public schools.

The budget cuts proposed to school budgets of $375 million over the next three years are projected to lead to a loss of over 3200 teaching positions and would likely cause a sharp increase in class size. I urge you to prevent these cuts from being imposed, or this will likely cause the largest increase in NYC class sizes since the Great Recession, and the quality of our schools to fall further behind from being able to provide children with a better opportunity to succeed.

Though the DOE euphemistically calls these proposals "right-sizing" school budgets, or "enrollment adjustments" instead they reflect "wrong-sizing" school budgets, keeping their budgets handcuffed to an outmoded system called Fair Student Funding system, devised fifteen years ago by Joel Klein, a man who did not believe in small classes and did everything he could to prevent them from happening. As a survey undertaken by the Fair Student Funding taskforce revealed, nearly 80% of the principals identified their large class sizes as a consequence of the formula.[1]

Our analysis reveals substantial decreases in average class size this year citywide, especially in the early grades, due to enrollment decline. And yet more than 187,000 students still in classes of thirty or more, and sharp disparities exist across school districts. I am including a pdf with charts with relevant data along with my testimony.

Yet instead of seizing on this decline in average class size and moving forward to make it more equitable across the city, the administration seems intent on undoing this progress, however inadvertent, and moving backwards.

While the DOE often claims there is not the space to lower class sizes to acceptable levels, at the same time, the SCA proposes to slash new capacity by $1.5 billion or 19 percent, compared to the five-year capital plan adopted last June. This would include cuts of more than 11,000 new school seats, with especially large reductions in both the Bronx and Queens of about 6,000 seats.

[1] https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2021/11/why-fair-student-funding-task-force.html

Though the School Construction Authority has now substantially lowered classroom capacity standards in their annual School Enrollment, Capacity, and Utilization report (known as the "Blue Book") to align them with the smaller classes in the city's original reduction plan approved by the state in 2007 – that is, 23 students per class in grades 4th-8th and 25 students per class in high schools, they have counter-acted that by at the same time eliminating the classroom efficiency ratio from the Blue Book formula.

What does that mean? It means that the formula assumes that every middle and high school classroom is scheduled in every period of the day, even though that is unrealistic and indeed impossible in most cases. For example, it is impossible to schedule a dance room as a regular classroom or use it as a dance room when the dance teacher is at lunch or at her break. It is very difficult to schedule even regular classrooms one hundred percent of the time in most medium size or small schools as well. By eliminating the efficiency ratio, our analysis finds that the SCA has artificially = created over 20,000 new classroom seats in high schools, and over 2500 new middle school seats. This is certainly quicker and cheaper than building new schools, but it reflects magical thinking.

Despite their implied claim that the 20% cut in new seats will fulfill the need to eliminate overcrowding and reduce class sizes to adequate levels, we have no confidence that this is true. Our doubts are exacerbated by the fact that the NYC Department of Education and the SCA have comply with Local Law 167, passed by the Council in 2018, which requires them to provide the data on which they base their estimates upon as well as their methodology. More details on how this law has been flouted is in the attached pdf.

They have not complied with Local Law 168 either, passed in 2018, that created a Task Force that would together analyze the suitability of all city- and privately-owned empty lots for siting schools, but as the SCA recently admitted they still have not analyzed over 22,065 privately-owned sites.

We urge you to oppose the huge cuts to the seats proposed in the Capital plan, unless the SCA can clearly prove they are not needed to eliminate overcrowding and to cap class sizes at lower levels.

We also ask that you prevent the proposed cuts to school budgets, and instead resubmit and pass Intro 2374-2021, which would phase-in smaller classes by amending the administrative code regarding classroom capacity. As you know, the original bill last session had the support of 41 out of 50 Council Members last session, including you Chair Brannan, but never came to a vote.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Proposed budget cuts to NYC schools & capital plan:
With likely impact on class size and school overcrowding

Leonie Haimson, Class Size Matters

Appendix to Council budget testimony

info@classsizematters.org

5.25.2022

In 2003, NY state's highest Court concluded in CFE that NYC class sizes too large to provide students with constitutional right to an adequate education

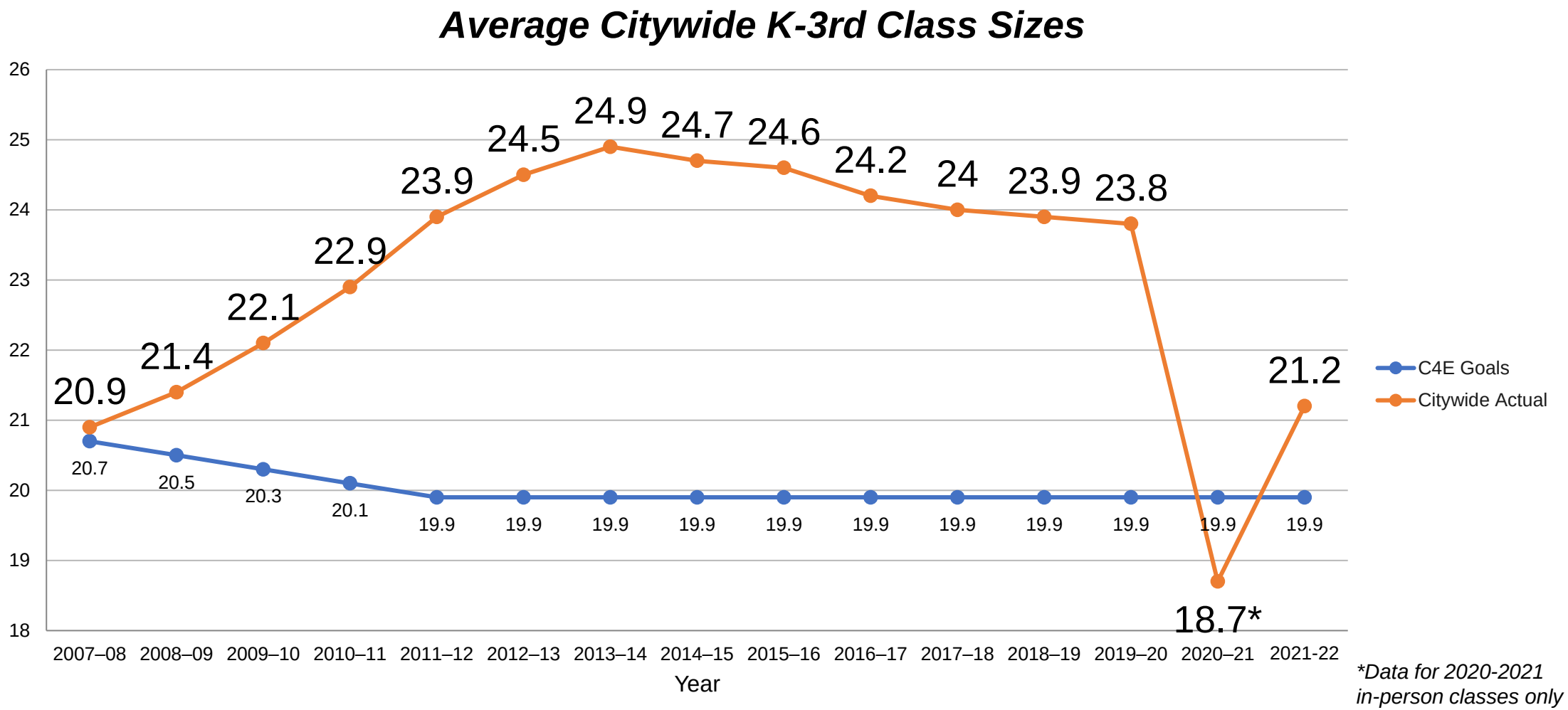
- *Court of Appeals* wrote: *"Plaintiffs presented measurable proof, credited by the trial court, that NYC schools have excessive class sizes, and that class size affects learning."*
- "Plaintiffs' evidence of the advantages of smaller class sizes supports...a meaningful correlation between the large classes in City schools and the outputs…of poor academic achievement and high dropout rates."
- ***"[T]ens of thousands of students are placed in overcrowded classrooms … The number of children in these straits is large enough to represent a systemic failure."***

(Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc., et al. v. State of New York, et al., 100 N.Y.2d 893, 911-12 (2003) ("CFE II")

Research shows *smaller classes* provide important benefits, esp. to students of color & economically disadvantaged kids

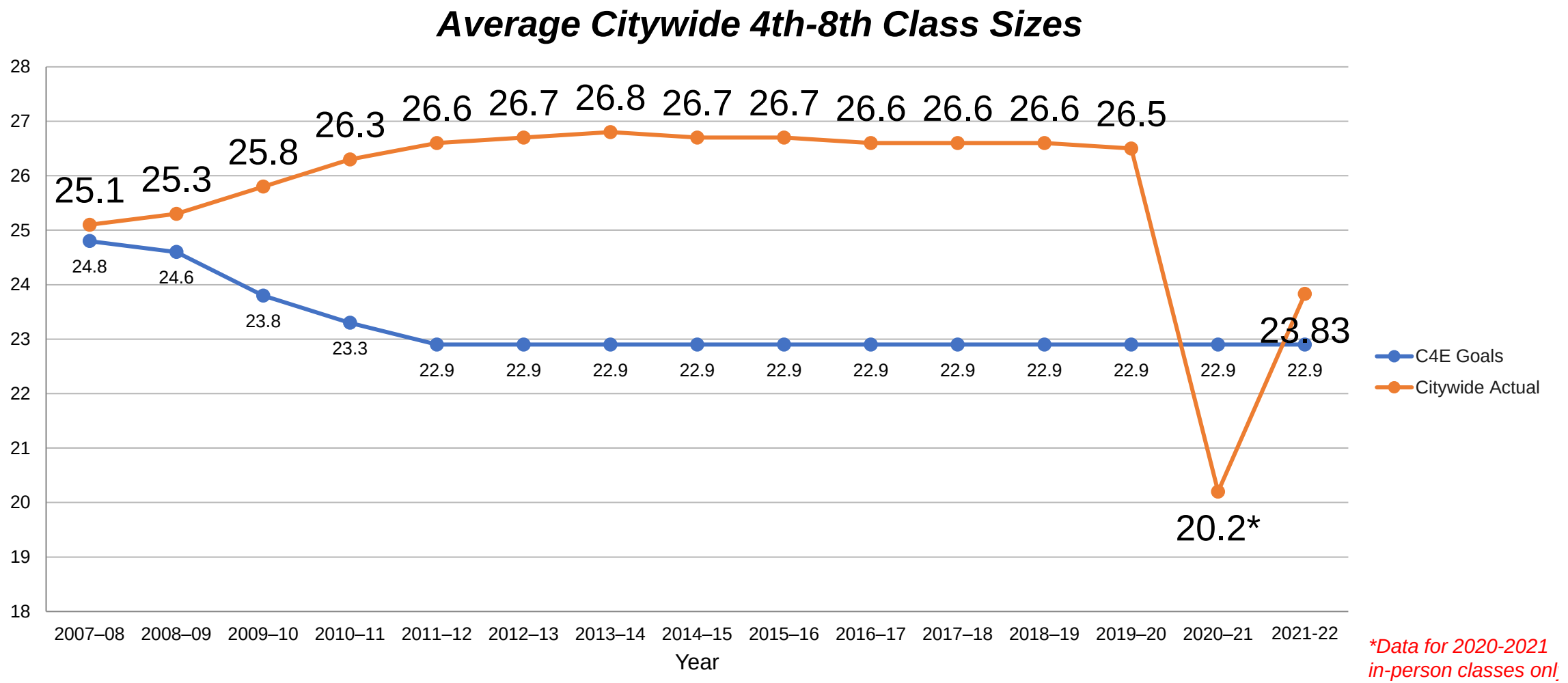
- Smaller classes lead to better grades and test scores, stronger engagement, fewer disciplinary referrals, and higher graduation rates, especially for students who need help the most.
- Class size reduction is one of few reforms proven to narrow the achievement/opportunity gap between income and racial groups.
- Economists estimate that smaller classes in grades K-3 would yield economic benefits worth twice the costs.
- Class size reduction in NYC would also likely make cost savings through fewer special education referrals & private school placements; & higher rates of teacher retention.

Class sizes have decreased significantly on average THIS YEAR in K-3 mostly due to enrollment decline



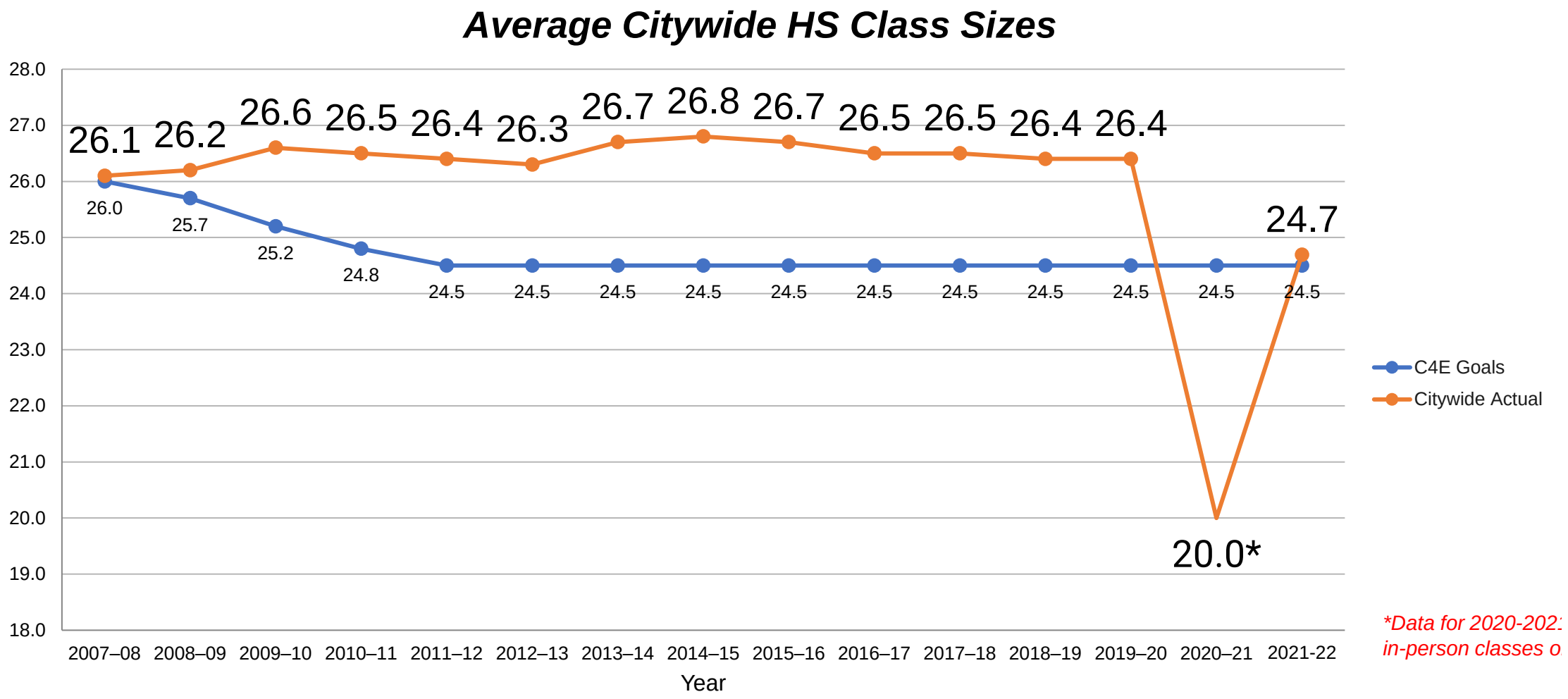
Data for 2020-2021 in-person classes only

Class sizes have also fallen in grades 4-8 on average



*Data for 2020-2021 in-person classes onl

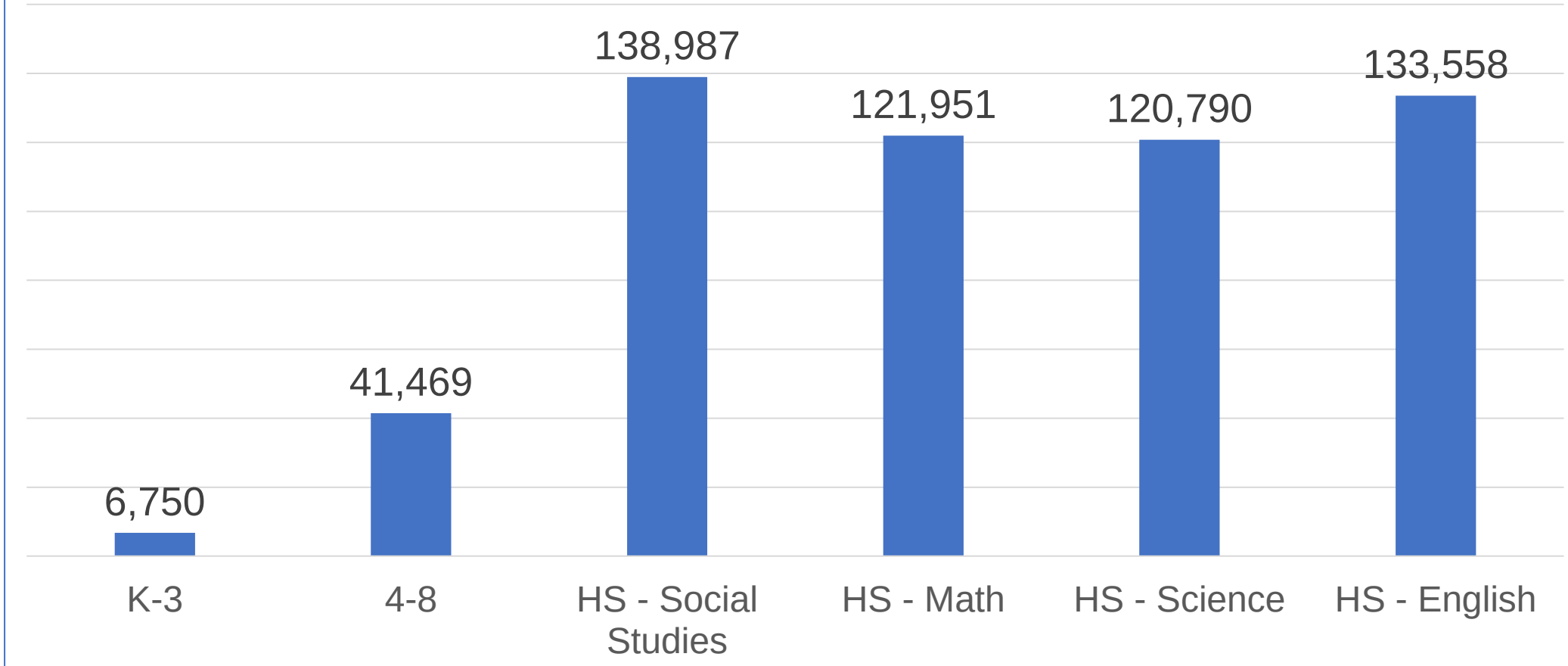
And in high schools…



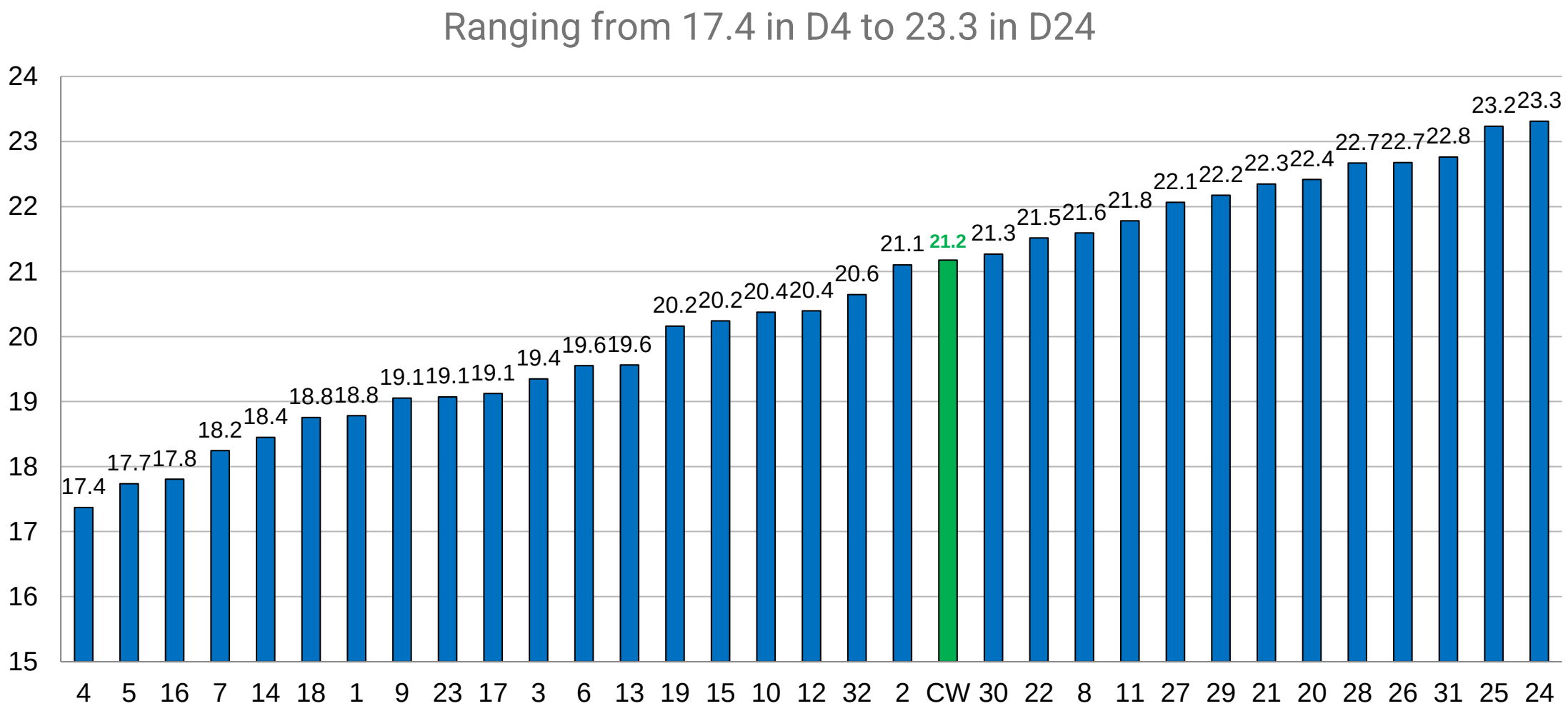
*Data for 2020-202
in-person classes o

STILL more than 187,000 NYC students are in classes of 30 or larger

(only HS social studies classes in this total, so not to double count)

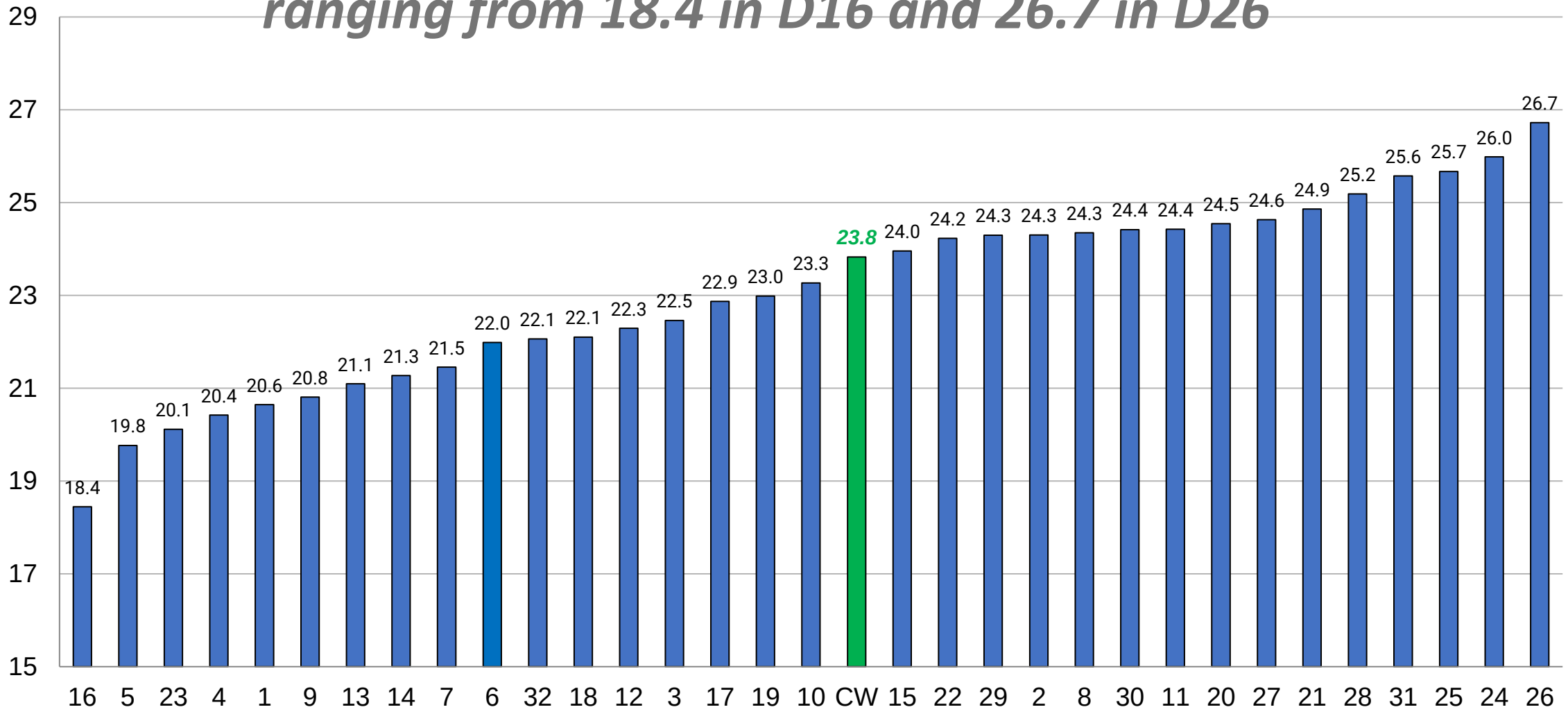


And class sizes are very unequal across districts in grades K-3

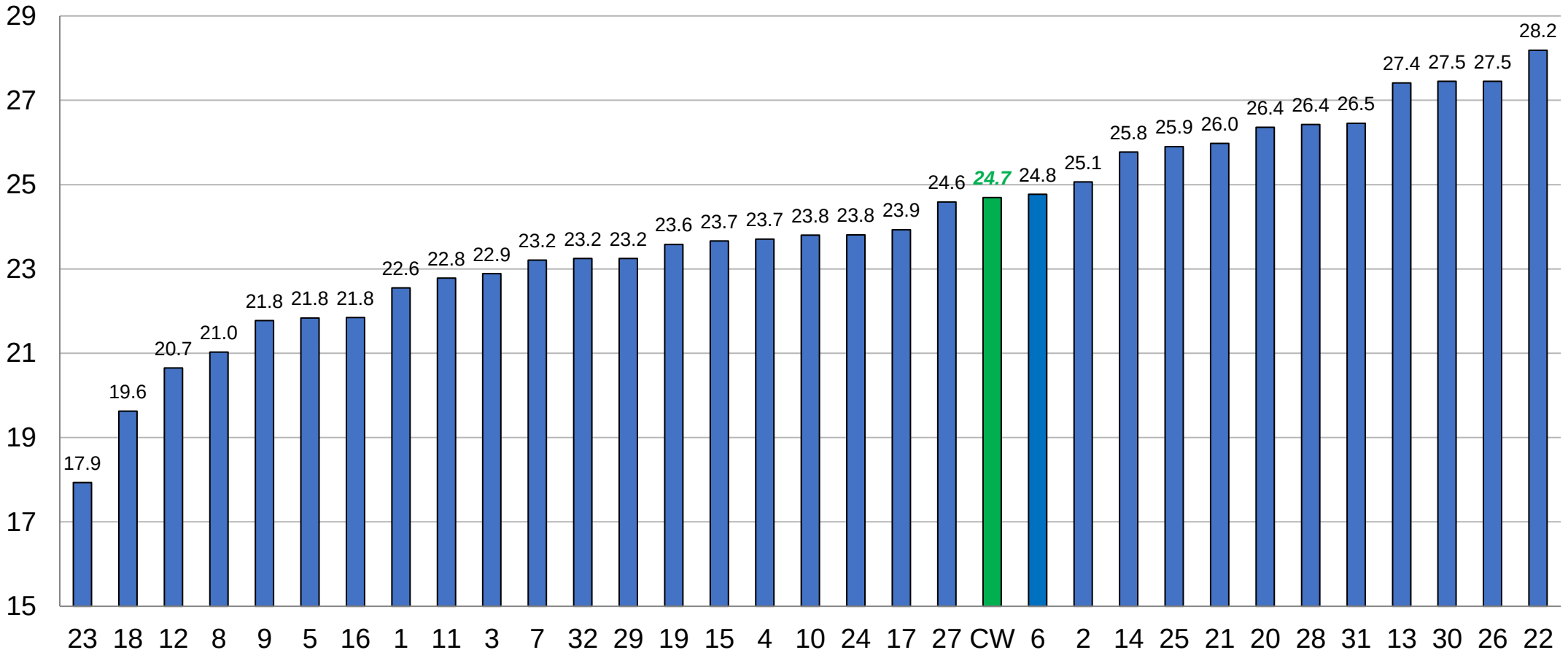


ALSO in grades 4-8

ranging from 18.4 in D16 and 26.7 in D26



ALSO in High School
Ranging from 17.9 in D23 to 28.2 in D22



So, the problem of large classes in NYC schools NOT solved

- We need class sizes capped so that whatever happens to enrollment next year or thereafter, they don't increase to even more unacceptable levels.

- Also, DOE currently plans to cut the budgets for schools by more than $350 million which would otherwise cause these class sizes to increase to previous levels, as "Fair Student Funding" ties budgets strictly to enrollment.

- ***All NYC students should have reasonably small class sizes no matter where they live or go to school.***

Golden opportunity to lower class size since NYC schools are due to receive more than $8 billion in additional state & federal aid over next three years

- NYC receiving $7 billion in additional aid for NYC schools via the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) and he America Cares Rescue Act (ACRA) to help NYC schools reopen safely and well with additional learning support.

- State sending $530 Million in additional Foundation Aid to NYC schools this year, increasing to $1.3 Billion annually over three years, to fulfill the crucial class size reduction goals of CFE.

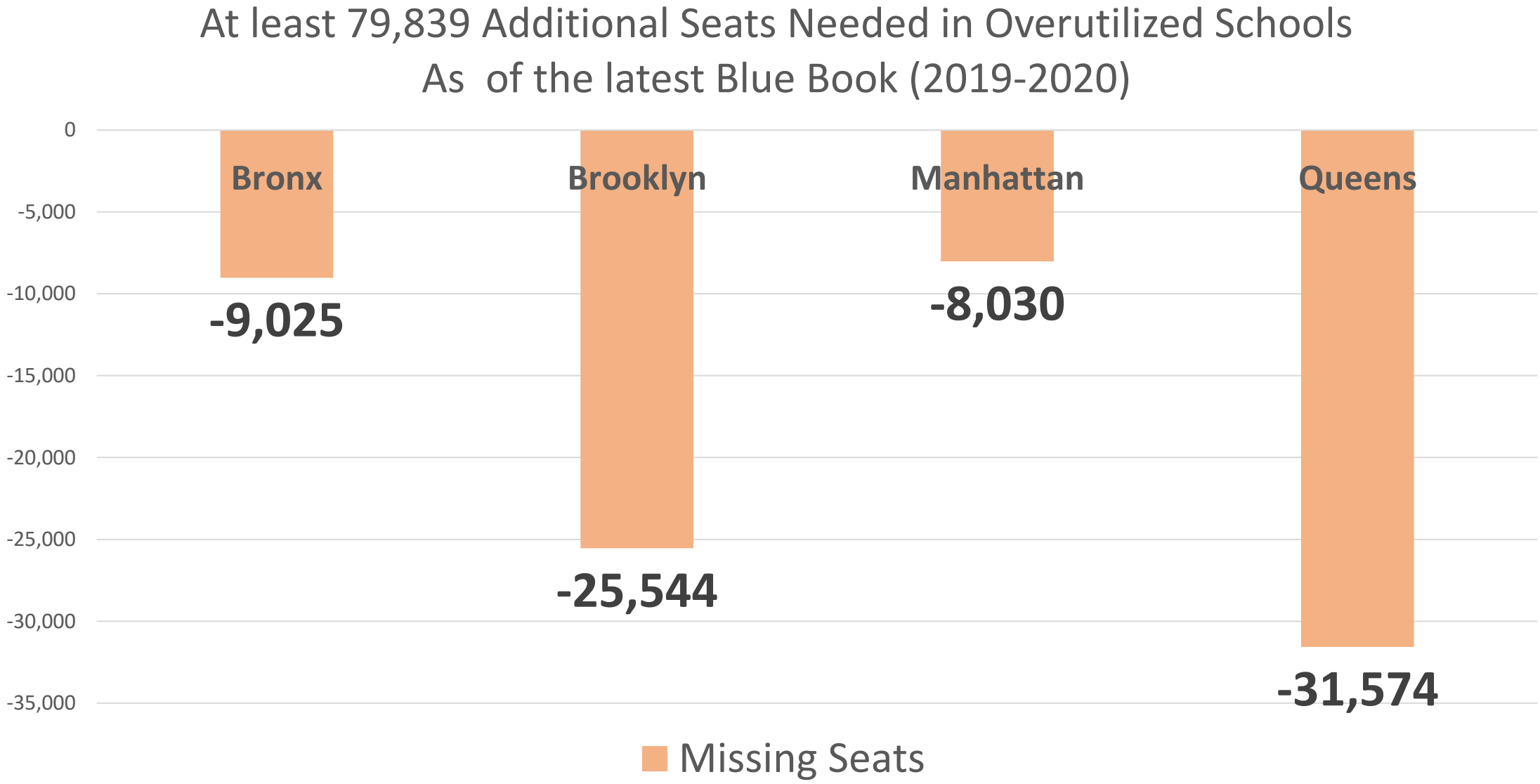
- But instead, Mayor Adams is proposing to CUT about $375M from school budgets over the next 3 years, causing a loss of over 3200 teaching positions and likely class sizes to increase more sharply than at any time since the Great Recession.

New proposed capital plan would also cut $1.5B in new capacity compared to plan adopted in June

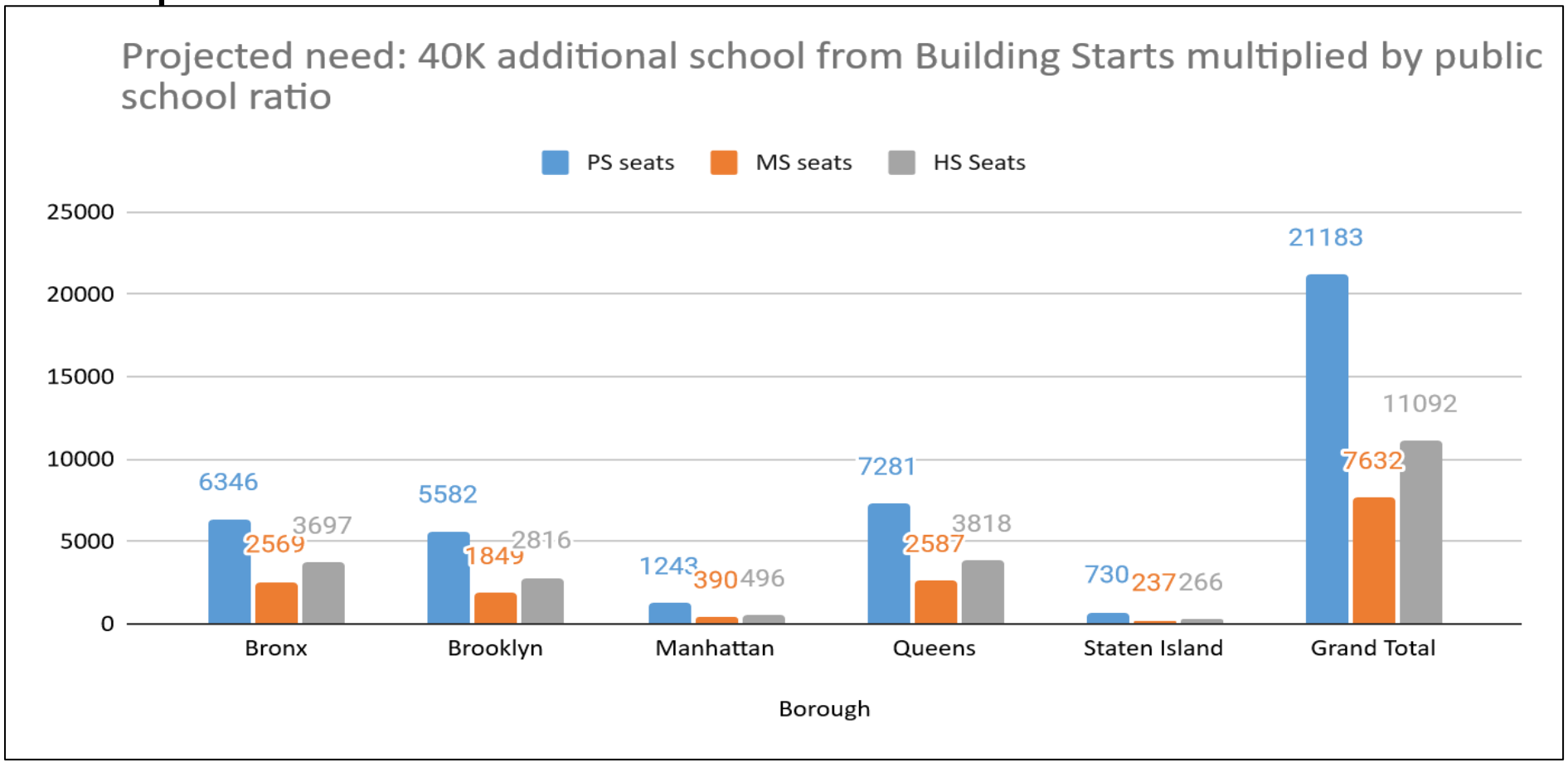
- Amount to be spent on new capacity would plunge from $7.8B to $6.3B in the adopted plan

- Number of new school seats cut 20% from 57,498 to 45, 883

- More than 6,000 seats to be cut from Queens and nearly that many from the Bronx.

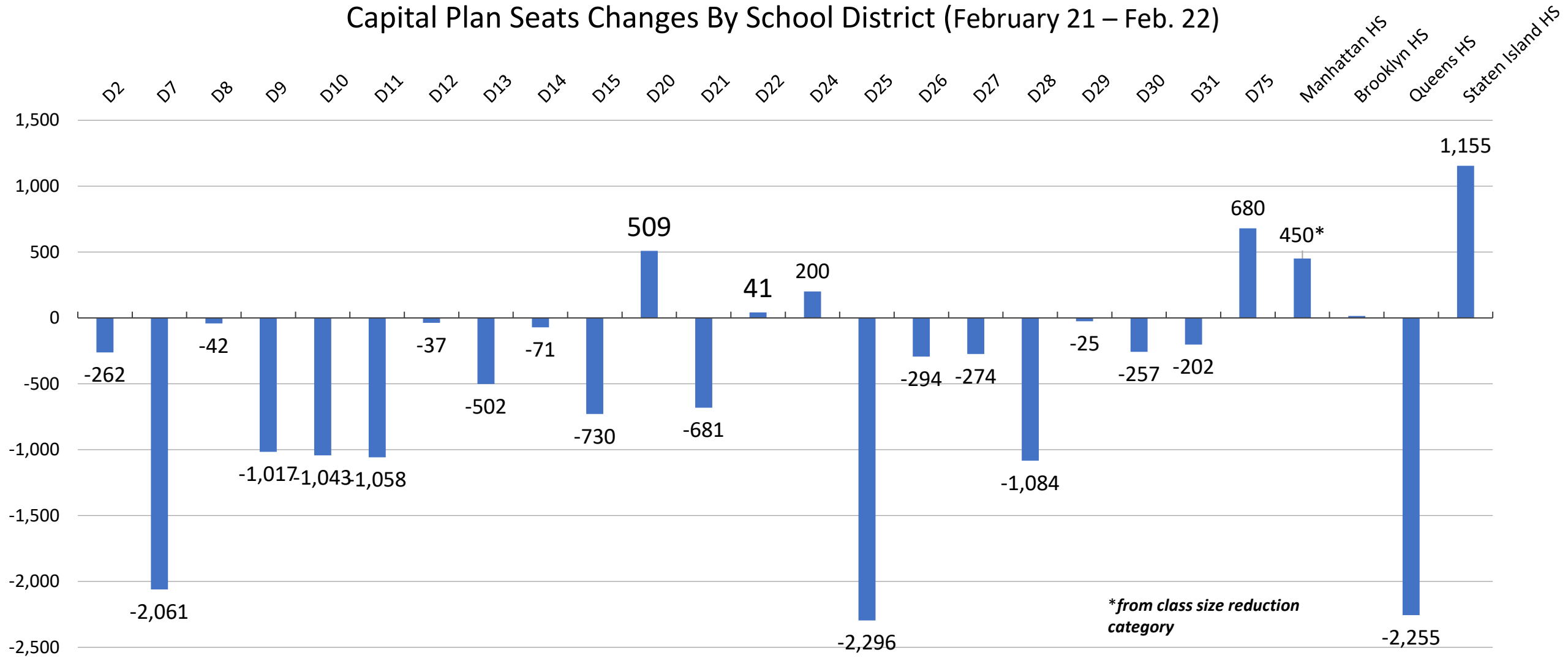

At least 79,839 Additional Seats Needed in Overutilized Schools
As of the latest Blue Book (2019-2020)
0
-5,000
-10,000
-15,000
-20,000
-25,000
-30,000
-35,000
Bronx
Brooklyn
Manhattan
Queens
-9,025
-25,544
-8,030
-31,574
Missing Seats

Another ~40K seats needed from new residential development 2020-2029



Data: Projected Housing Starts 2020-2029 as used in 2020-29 Enrollment Projections multiplied by Public School ratio. See http://www.nycsca.org/Community/Capital-Plan-Reports-Data#Housing-Projections-70

Proposed capital plan would cut funded school seats citywide by over 11,000 seats compared to the adopted plan.



What's perplexing about these cuts…

- In latest Blue Book (DOE annual school capacity/utilization report) max classroom capacity was lowered to 23 students per classroom in grades 4-8, and 25 students per classroom in HS to align with original NYC C4E goals.

- Previously these figures were at 28 for grades 4-8 and 30 for HS classes. (Max capacity per classroom was already 20 students per class in grades K-3.)

- One would think that would create need for MORE space, not less.

However, they made another change to the capacity formula

- In previous Blue Books, they included an “efficiency ratio” that set out how many periods a day they expected classrooms to be occupied.

- Typical classrooms were expected to be in use 7 of 8 periods a day. Specialty rooms – science labs, music classrooms, etc. –in use 5 of 8 periods a day

- In the latest BB they write, “*we are dropping the program efficiency ratios in capacity calculation for middle and high schools. The program efficiency ratios were used to partially account for lower classroom capacity but are no longer needed*.”

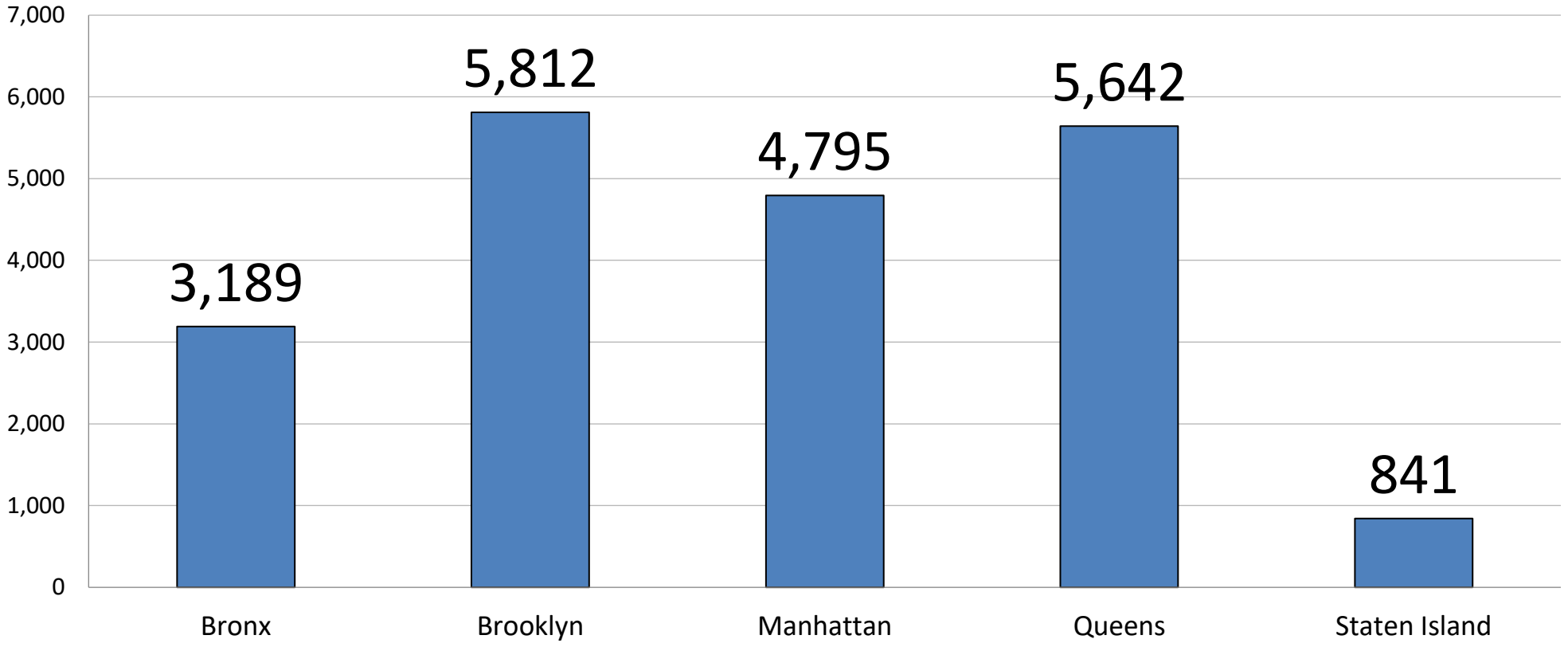
Scheduling all classrooms 100% of time impossible in most middle and high schools

- In most middle and high schools, impossible to schedule specialty rooms like art rooms, dance rooms or science labs when the art, dance or science teacher having prep period or lunch.

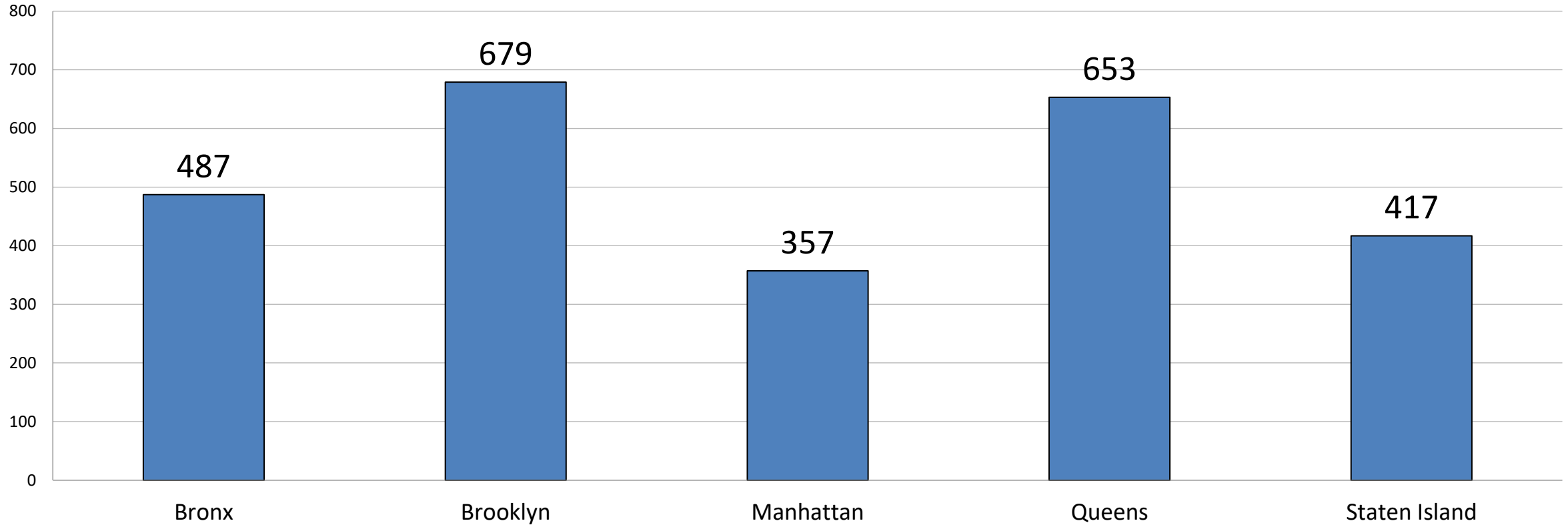
- A dance room or science lab cannot be used as regular classroom when the dance teacher is having their prep period or lunch.

- Even classrooms are difficult to schedule 100% of time, especially in smaller schools.

20,279 Seats Added to High Schools due to Revised Efficiency Ratio



2,593 Seats Added in Middle Schools due to revised efficiency ratio



SCA/DOE claims they're building sufficient seats but haven't abided by laws to improve school capital planning

Local Law 167 (2018) requires DOE to provide transparent methodology and data on which seats needs estimates made. Neither has happened.

- Enrollment projections posted are from 2/2018; housing starts from 6/2020; No current utilization or enrollment data.
- Identified seat needs 3/22 STILL do not differentiate elementary vs MS needs
- Rezonings/changes in school utilization info provided only to 2021
- Methodology isn't provided in enough detail & can't be replicated, instead vaguely describes using *"qualitative analysis" and "various strategies to address need"* without specifying.
- *Data source http://www.nycsca.org/community/capital-plan-reports-data as of 5.22.22*



DOE also in non-compliance with Local Law 168

Local Law 168 (2018) created a Task Force for School Siting to identify sites where new schools could be built, including all empty lots owned privately and by the city.

The Task Force met twice, released a 2-pg report with no input from City Council & parent members (including Shino)



Through FOIL we received a spreadsheet that ruled out hundreds of city-owned sites for unclear reasons, and never reported on suitability of 22,065 privately-owned sites.

All NYC students should be able to attend uncrowded schools with reasonable class sizes no matter where they live or go to school – especially given the disruption due to the pandemic.

- These capital plan cuts are incomprehensible, especially as enrollment may increase once again.
- Also, the Mayor proposes to slash school budgets by $215 million next year, rising to $375 million in cuts over the next three years, causing projected loss of about 3200 teachers.
- This would cause class sizes to sharply increase once more.

$374 million proposed budget cuts to schools in the Executive Budget projected to cause loss of more than 3,200 teachers

040 - Department of Education	City Personnel as of 6/30/23	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
February 2022 Plan PEG Initiatives						
ATR Savings Re-estimates cost of the ATR Transfer Subsidy allocation.	(125) P	(14,659)	(14,659)	(14,659)	(14,659)	(14,659)
Central Savings Re-estimates costs for central and administrative salary, per session, professional development, equipment, and supplies.		(110,015)	(57,000)	(57,000)	(57,000)	(57,000)
Enrollment Changes Systemwide savings from enrollment changes, including elimination of a current register relief allocation; stimulus is repurposed in a separate initiative to support schools with enrollment changes.	(3,227) P	-	(374,644)	(374,644)	(374,644)	(374,644)
Prior Year Revenue Recognizes recently received State revenue related to prior year costs.		(55,000)	-	-	-	-

C = Civilian, P = Pedagogical

DATA Source: Executive Budget Fiscal Year 2023
Program to Eliminate the Gap ((PEG), April 2022
https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/peg4-22.pdf

DOE plans to use some federal stimulus funds but only to temporarily fill the gap

- Next school year (2022-2023) $160M in federal funds to TEMPORARILY fill in some of the gap – with cut of $215M causing loss of 1,449 teaching positions

- The year after, cut would equal about $295M compared to this year, with a net loss of 2,338 teaching positions vs this year

- The following year the entire $375M would be cut, with the total loss of ~3,200 positions overall

- ***Source: NYC Independent Budget Office," "Fewer Students, Fewer Dollars: DOE Savings Plan Phases Out School Budget Cut Forgiveness Available During the Pandemic," March 2022 at: https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/fewer-students-fewer-dollars-doe-savings-plan-phases-out-school-budget-cut-forgiveness-available-during-the-pandemic-fopb-march-2022.pdf***

City Council should introduce & pass legislation to require class sizes be reduced

- Intro 2374 required smaller classes to be phased in by amending the administrative code to raise the capacity requirements per student in classrooms

- Bill had support of 41 of 50 Council Members last session but never came to a vote.

- Bill should be resubmitted and passed by the Council, in an amended form to allow a 5-yr phase in and slightly different class sizes by grade.

Given the pandemic and its aftereffects

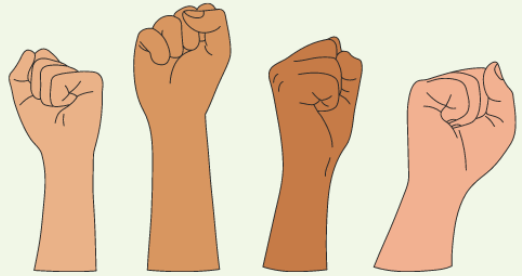
- Smaller classes are more critical than ever before to give the in-person emotional and academic support NYC kids need after more than a year and a half of remote or blended learning.

- *Students will need to make closer connections with their teachers and peers more than ever before – connections that only smaller classes can provide.*

Our kids face bigger challenges given Covid - they shouldn't have to face bigger class sizes, too.

Call the Mayor at 311 & your Council Member and tell them:

DON'T CUT SCHOOL BUDGETS!



New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, May 25th, 2022

Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you to Hon. Chair Brannan and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to offer testimony. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, is a non-profit organization with a 40-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

CHCF delivers wrap around, holistic services through and beyond our state and city contracted birth through school-age programs and services. We know that access to high quality, equitably resourced, and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning spaces is critical from birth, through school-age and post-secondary education; and that a child's development, academic growth, and long-term life outcomes are impacted by so many intersecting circumstances that go beyond what occurs in care and educational spaces. Our work not only is to deliver high-quality services through our direct programming, but to support youth, parents, and child care providers in navigating city systems to access additional resources.

Even before the pandemic, our organization, like so many of our CBO and non-profit partners across the city, was fully intrenched in fighting the gross inequities faced by families and children across city systems. Disparities in access to resources, support and services were perpetual – systems seemed to endlessly work unfavorably for the families in our communities. Then with the pandemic, all of those ongoing inequities were exacerbated and our efforts to rapidly address gaps in access were multiplied as children and families transitioned overnight to remote learning, city agencies closed physical offices, and isolation from systems of support ensued. We are still living in the trauma that we carried into the pandemic and that has grown out of it. We, like so many, are looking to city leaders to take thoughtful, responsive actions through the FY 23 budget to sustain programs that are necessary and proven to work for communities and families, and expand investments where necessary to grow the reach of services for our most vulnerable communities and families.

School-Age

We know that academic and wrap around supports for our students were significantly disrupted during remote learning and requires ongoing, robust funding and recovery beyond one school year. The city should be intentional in its use of federal relief dollars, focusing on supports for those student groups who faced the greatest gaps in access to undisrupted support – English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Students in Temporary Housing. Further, parents, students and community partners should be directly and equitably engaged in both the decision making and implementation oversight of those dollars.

We are happy to hear of the DOE's attention to English Language Learners and the expansion of bilingual programming. We echo the call for attention to hiring practices and considerations of how to attract candidates that reflect our students and communities. Of particular concern both before and through the pandemic are the difficulties faced by immigrant families and older immigrant students in enrolling in schools. We continue to see gaps in access for immigrant families in enrolling their children in 3K and PreK; further, a 2022 Migration Policy Institute analysis found that approximately 3,900 newcomer immigrant youth ages 14-21 are not enrolled in school here and do not already have a high school diploma. We join our partners in the NYIC in calling on the city to invest $4 million in the LIFE Project, to expand outreach, application, and enrollment support for immigrant families with 3- and 4-year-olds; and $2.1 million in a pilot program to expand transfer school access in the outer boroughs for newly arrived high-school-aged immigrant youth.[1]

We serve many families with Limited English Proficiency who face language barriers in navigating most educational system and access to supports. The DOE (and all city agencies, really) need to invest in translation and interpretation services that allow for rapid, simultaneous information and resource sharing in the top languages. Additionally, we continue to hear from families that there are gaps in access to linguistically responsive IEP support and in navigating IEP service delivery for their child. We call on the city to invest appropriate resources to ensure that families are given the necessary support in navigating the IEP process for their child, including language access. Children should not be interpreters for their parents in navigating complex documents around legally mandated learning services.

Additionally, as so many of us know, parents and educators continue to uplift the ongoing mental health crisis being felt by our students, families, and educators. In addition to the impacts of the pandemic, our communities continue to face housing insecurity, food insecurity, and the trauma of ongoing violence. As Council Member Sanchez stated in the hearing, there was a shooting outside a school that we serve right near her office. In the wake of the tragic school shooting in Uvalde, some of our parents spoke to a reporter to share their reactions to the Texas shooting and one parent also referenced the shooting near PS/MS 279 and the ongoing fear that her children are experiencing, which made it that much more difficult to discuss Uvalde with her children. The fears being carried by parents and students, even beyond those triggered by tragedies that capture national attention, never truly let up. While we are happy about the investments that the DOE named around new school social workers in targeted communities, and the 50 Community Coordinators helping students and families in shelters in bridging access to academic and wrap around supports and services, we implore the city to prioritize funding that would ensure a social worker or counselor in every school. The mental health crisis and the traumas being faced by so many of our children and their families necessitate our immediate action to meet recommended ratios for students to counselor/social workers in every school.[2]

With all of these student and family needs in mind, CHCF continues to underscore the significant value-add of connecting community-based partners with schools to comprehensively meet the unique needs

[1] NYIC First Step: Paving the Path for Immigrant Students. NYIC_FirstStep_EdPolicyEdCollab_03.08.22.pdf

[2] ACLU (2019) Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students. Retrieved on May 27, 2022 from Cops and No Counselors | American Civil Liberties Union (aclu.org)

of students and their families. Strong, integrated CBO partnerships in schools bring in additional support staff from the community who can offer culturally and linguistically responsive, holistic support and resource access to meet family needs. CBO partners help to facilitate holistic and effective address of intersectional issues that students and families are facing, and we are well-positioned to connect families with resources and services, both within our respective agency and with other CBOs and agencies in the community and city that might function outside of educational spaces.[3]

We fight each year for increased investments in programs that build CBO relationships and partnerships with schools and that have demonstrable positive impacts on the communities served. While we continue to advocate for increased federal and state funding on a number of these program areas, it does not remove the City's responsibilities to expand upon the scope and reach of federal and state dollars, designing, equitably funding and resourcing, and administering truly accessible programs that center children and families, while uplifting their CBO partners.

We continue to support calls for NYC to expand its city-funded out of school time programs so that we can create universal access to high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive after school and summer programming.[4] Summer Rising addresses such a tremendous need for our families, offering safe spaces for their children during the summer months that are not cost prohibitive, with academic supports to address the disruption of remote learning and enrichment activities to bring joy, peer and mentor relationship-building, and exploration back to our children. The DOE should baseline Summer Rising funding through FY 26 in line with DYCD, and our city should determine means of sustaining this programming beyond FY 26, funded at levels to meet the true community need, particularly in our most vulnerable communities. This year's seat limitations and application process created barriers for many of our parents in gaining access before the program filled up. A reduction in campuses tapped to offer programming in extension to existing contracted CBO work already present during the school year, shuffled families around to surrounding schools which took away access for our families in those schools, many of whom enroll in our program during the school year. It has been challenging to explain to parents why things were done as they were, and CBOs largely have had to field those frustrations in the absence of clear communication from the DOE around programming changes from the previous summer.

We additionally recognize the Community School model as a means of investing in CBO partnerships with schools. The research is clear that students learn better when their physical and socio-emotional

[3] CHCF Testimony on New York City Council Committee on Education Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing held on March 21st, 2022 CHCF Testimony_Committee on Education FY 23 Preliminary Budget Hearing.pdf

[4] CHCF Testimony on New York City Council Committee on Youth Services Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing held on March 14th, 2022 CHCF Testimony_Committee on Youth Services FY 23 Preliminary Budget Hearing (2).pdf

needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults.[5][6] If students are coming to their classes hungry; dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing; receiving inadequate mental or physical health care; or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships, it will only be that much harder to focus on school. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community-based organizations in holistic and innovative ways and is a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in communities.

As part of the Coalition for Community School Excellence (CCSE), we call on the city to continue growing the country's largest community schools initiative as a long-term resource delivery model, not just as a temporary intervention strategy. While the City is poised to expand the initiative to 406 schools using American Rescue Plan federal stimulus dollars, the DOE has yet to develop a permanent long term sustainable funding solution for our community schools. Federal stimulus dollars will sustain them for now, until 2023 and then dropping off completely in 2025, the future of these neighborhood lifelines remains unclear. Joining the CCSE, we support smart and sustainable investments from the city in the community schools initiative to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of these crucial services. *Consistent and sustainable funding are critical to building community trust and authentic school-community partnerships.* The following are the CCSE's recommendations for community school investments:

- ✓ The City's Community Schools funding should be baselined, and in order to do so, the city must utilize a sustainable funding source to fill the gaps left by temporary American Rescue Plan dollars, including:
  - → In FY 25, $25.6M to fully fund the Community Schools expansion, which is only half funded for FY 25
  - → A total investment of $60.3M to baseline funding after ARP dollars fully drop off in FY 26
- ✓ The Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and inconvenient bridge loan process. These remain barriers to consistently delivering services.
- ✓ 52 schools will experience a reduction (totaling $9.16M) in funding that came from a new funding formula from DOE/OCS. Last year, the council granted a one-year amendment to make those schools whole; we believe there should be an extension of that amendment to avoid a cliff in services for our communities that are still reeling from the past few years.
- ✓ Providers must be engaged in the strategic planning of growing the system in order to preserve fidelity to the community school model.

[5]Winthrop, R., Barton, A., & McGivney, E. (2018) Leapfrogging Inequality: Remaking Education to Help Young People Thrive. Brookings Institute. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from: https://www.brookings.edu/book/leapfrogging-inequality-2/

[6] Johnston, W.R., Engberg, J., Opper, I.M., Sontag-Padilla, L., & Xenakis, L. (2020) Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative | RAND. Retrieved on March 24, 2022 from: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html

The past two years, and the present efforts to address the traumas and academic impacts of the pandemic, have certainly underscored the tremendous value-add of school partnerships with CBOs. However, CBO partners have been facing long standing and exacerbated challenges from the city and state partner agencies who have relied upon our services over the years and in rapid response to the many challenges posed by the pandemic and school closures. Bureaucratic bottlenecking, issues with clear guidance and reimbursement, as well as longstanding city and state contracting practices that undermine the sustainability of CBO partners have stagnated our ability to deliver programs to capacity, holistically supporting our school communities in addressing the many challenges our students and families continue to face.

CBO contracts at both the state and city-levels have historically been underfunded, not meeting the true cost of care. This places undue financial burden on CBO partners to cover the remaining costs that go into delivering programs that truly respond to the unique and intersecting needs of students, families, and communities. With significant delays in contract pay out, along with unclear or no guidance on allowable shifts in programming reflective of remote and hybrid learning in schools through the pandemic, CBOs already functioning on razor thin margins or in the red were faced with difficult decisions about staffing lay-offs, service reduction, and in many cases closure, ultimately harming our communities by disrupting the flow of services and minimizing resource access.

The nonprofit sector and CBO city partners are not a support of last resort. Community-based partners are essential to delivering citywide comprehensive, holistic, culturally responsive programming and services. Even beyond the fact that the city agencies do not have the capacity to do the work on their own, they should not do the work on their own through tremendously siloed agencies. CBO partners are embedded in and understand their communities, and are well-equipped to do this work, delivering intersectional supports and services above and beyond the limited scope of contracts from any one agency and their purview. As such, CBO partners should be proactively brought into planning and decision-making spaces as stakeholders, to offer insight and expertise on program design and effective delivery.

Contracting with CBOs should not be seen as a cost-saving method, paying 85% of what it really costs to deliver these services. Underfunded contracts have always limited CBO ability to offer competitive salaries that reflect the true value of our program staff in parity with their city-employed counterparts. The high value of CBO staff is not lost on city agencies, as there are consistent reports from CBO partners of city agencies recruiting staff from CBO partners, given their ability to offer stronger salary and benefit packages compared to what our contracts allow us to offer. We cannot be seen merely as a training pool for city-agency candidates. These practices contradict the often-spoken messages of valuing CBO partnership by city leaders; they undercut our financial stability, as well as our ability to recruit and invest in our staff, and our ability to consistently deliver services reflective of our communities' holistic and shifting needs.

CHCF calls on the city to improve its practices of partnership and contracting to ensure that the non-profit human services sector and their staff, who are so critical in the delivery of comprehensive, culturally and linguistically responsive services, are not only sustained, but able to thrive. We join our

partners in the #JustPay Campaign in calling for the city to end the poverty-level wages that result from low contract reimbursement rates. Specifically, the city must:

- ✓ Establish, fund and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on human services contracts.
- ✓ Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- ✓ Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule government contracted human services workers comparable to salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

Early Care & Education

Listening in on the Council Committee on Education Preliminary Budget Hearing and Joint Hearing on the Executive Budget, it was disheartening to hear little to nothing said on early care and learning. We maintain many of our priorities and recommendations presented in our testimonies on the Preliminary Budget[7][8][9][10] but wish to re-assert several points here for this committee's consideration.

CHCF continues to support the early care and education sector through our state contracted work as part of the NYC Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Consortium. Through our work as a CCR&R, CHCF predominantly (but not exclusively) delivers supports to child care providers in residential settings (Group Family and Family Day Care), overwhelmingly providers whose primary language is Spanish, across all five boroughs of New York City. Our bi-lingual provider supports span technical assistance with licensing and compliance (navigating DOHMH & OCFS), intensive coaching around mental health, medication administration training, healthy development, and literacy for infants and toddlers; as well as sustainable business model development and training. During the pandemic, the scope of our support services expanded to include distribution of cleaning supplies and PPE, as well as relief dollars through stabilization grants and connection to the essential worker child care scholarships distributed by the state from federal relief dollars.

[7] CHCF Testimony on New York City Council Committee on Education Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing held on March 21st, 2022 CHCF Testimony_Committee on Education FY 23 Preliminary Budget Hearing.pdf

[8] CHCF Testimony on New York City Council Committee on General Welfare Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing held on March 9th, 2022 CHCF Testimony_Committee on General Welfare FY 23 Preliminary Budget Hearing.pdf

[9] CHCF Testimony on New York City Council Committee on Economic Development Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing held on March 16th, 2022 CHCF Testimony on Committee on Economic Development FY 23 Preliminary Budget.pdf

[10] CHCF Testimony on New York City Council Committee on Small Business Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing held on March 14th, 2022 CHCF Testimony_Committee on Small Business FY 23 Preliminary Budget Hearing.pdf

Through our CCR&R work, we also support families in accessing child care that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule and particular child needs; and to support navigation of often complex bureaucratic systems to afford child care. Parents/guardians can be connected to CHCF or any of the CCR&Rs through 311 if they are looking for care, birth through school age, and if they need support in determining potential eligibility for subsidy/vouchers and in navigating city agency systems.

It is critical that the City immediately address the systemic flaws that will impede our ability to actualize a child care system that truly centers the needs of our families and children, which are having real time catastrophic impacts on our existing child care workforce and families in need of consistent, quality, responsive care in order to fully return to work.

While it is important that the federal and state governments make investments in child care, there are significant limitations in the equitable reach of those dollars and the city must take responsibilities in designing, equitably funding and resourcing, and administering responsive systems that truly center our families and uplift its CBO partners and the workforce at the heart of this essential sector. Systems that uplift informed choice in modalities reflective of family and child need (center-based ***as well as*** family child care (FCC), and Legally Exempt); and ensure that every child – no matter which modality their family *chooses* to place them in for care and early learning, no matter any special needs, no matter their economic background, their location, or their immigration status – has access to equitably funded, resourced, and supported high-quality care.

Addressing family access

CHCF supports the Care for All Families campaign, calling on the City to invest at least $10M in FY 23 to expand child care access to undocumented children who do not have access to federally funded child care.

The city must additionally address the bureaucratic issues delaying enrollment that stagnated families' access to care, and dollars flowing to existing child care programs. This is occurring in ACS, HRA and DOE. Because child care programs have been underfunded for so long, these sources of funds have become a lifeblood for their program's survivability in many instances, and as such has further forced existing programs to close and eliminated child care capacity, especially in low-income communities. With subsidy eligibility set to expand to families up to 300% of FPL on August 1st, it is crucial that the city rapidly clear the present waitlist of families and ensure that the system is prepared to move subsidy dollars to the families and providers who desperately need them.

Addressing contracting and sector inequities

Child care providers and staff have been grossly undercompensated and given little to no access to benefits. Particularly, rates paid to providers do not reflect or come close to the true cost of care,

meaning that providers either offset that cost gap onto parents paying out of pocket or, more likely, carry that financial deficit on their own shoulders. As a result, we have lost numerous programs and providers and we are now at risk of creating and expanding child care deserts, which need not happen. Those who are drawn to this important work cannot afford to join or stay in the sector. We need to invest in the existing child care workforce, inclusive of all modalities, and establish compensation and benefits rates that demonstrate their value, which will ultimately draw more to this profession.

With the state-set market rates set to increase as of June 1st, and an increase of reimbursement to the 80th percentile, it is critical that the DOE adjust its rates to the new levels for all contracted providers to move closer to covering the true cost of care. Additionally, the city needs to streamline its process for providers to receive rate increases to eliminate any unnecessary barriers in access to the new rates for providers serving children with subsidies.

Inequities were established and perpetuated under the DOE-run Birth to Five system. The City system has created a tier of programs that are either affiliated or directly contracted with the Department of Education and are therefore offered supports and resources; and another tier of providers that the DOE was either not able to extend contracts to or that have chosen to stay independent of the DOE system. Ultimately, there are harms being imposed on both tiers of programs/providers and on parents in need of care that fits their family needs:

1. **Especially in licensed, home based child care programs, DOE contract limitations have restricted the children who can be enrolled in their programs.** In many cases these providers were given disproportionately 3K school day/year slots, which absolutely do not reflect family need and therefore keep these programs under enrolled and only in operation for part of the year, leading more well-established, quality programs to close their doors.
2. **The tiered system eliminates a free market** where providers who choose to remain independent are unable to accept and recruit subsidized children, which is particularly harmful in communities with high rates of poverty. Child care programs with established, high-quality programs and strong connections in communities are being forced to close, eliminating child care capacity in those neighborhoods.
3. **Parents are limited in their ability to identify and select the provider of choice,** restricting their options only to those under contract care that might not have the flexibility to meet their family needs (schedule, mixed-age children, language preferences, etc.); and options that are potentially skewed based on the outreach and enrollment support staff they are working with (i.e. parents might be pushed to a DOE-facility placement or a center over a home-based provider that can offer non-traditional hours of care, that they might have an established relationship with or that might be caring for their other children).
4. **This tiered system perpetuates inequity in resources and supports for programs that continue to serve children of color, immigrant children, and children in low-income families/ communities.** The DOE does not have the capacity to offer care and early learning to every child who needs it, and ultimately families will continue to choose providers that meet their needs, regardless of affiliation with the DOE. Denying equitable resources to programs across the city's

child care sector because they are unable or unwilling to affiliate, is denying equitable resources to children. This harms families who have the right to place their children in care the is culturally and linguistically responsive and reflective, as well as in programs that flexibly meet their family's scheduling needs. Funding, resources and quality supports must meet families and children where they are to ensure healthy development and school readiness.

Addressing city systems overall

Given the convoluted and intersecting systems and agencies that have a hand on NYC's child care sector (DOHMH, ACS, HRA, and DOE), it is important to uplift that there are concerning elements that each agency manages; as well as the harm in a perpetual lack of communication between agencies on matters and issues that intersect the varying purviews of each agency. Ultimately, existing system flaws *and* the lack of oversight spanning all of the agencies with a hand on this sector has been destabilizing the existing NYC child care sector, families in need of child care, and the well-being of our youngest New Yorkers for years – well before the pandemic exacerbated the many challenges faced by providers in sustaining and delivering these services, and by families in accessing them.

While there is a growing call to build towards a universal child care system, we need investments that will immediately stabilize our existing child care workforce and capacity as opposed to tax breaks that will take too long to have any impact and ultimately leave out a vital piece of the child care sector – home based child care. The city can do this by:

- ✓ Assessing effective use of funds going towards outreach and enrollment teams in the DOE (as well as ACS and HRA) around child care subsidy and voucher eligibility and enrollment; and to determine any additional allocations to fill gaps in personnel/supports that are resulting in delays of family access to case managers, delays in determining eligibility, and delays in enrolling families to care that meets their needs in a timely manner.

  In particular, the city should consider how funds are being used to market and connect families to existing resources – particularly to culturally and linguistically responsive supports in successfully navigating access to care. How funds are being used to effectively train agency staff to fully inform families about child care options and programs that might be available to them that respond to their unique family dynamics and make appropriate referrals to additional supports in other agencies as necessary. The city should also assess where bottlenecks are occurring in quickly processing family paperwork so that they can be enrolled in programs and providers can immediately receive compensation and determine the needed solutions/ investments to streamline the process.
- ✓ Fund presumptive eligibility, paying for 30-days (or to cover the length of time for determining eligibility) of care while eligibility is being determined – providers must be paid regardless of ultimate outcome of eligibility.
- ✓ The city must allocate dollars specifically focused on expanding child care access to vulnerable populations, namely families navigating temporary housing and/or domestic violence, as well as

undocumented immigrant or mixed-status families who face barriers in accessing care outside of the universal, school day/year offered to 3- and 4-year-olds. Since extended day/year slots are mostly reliant on federal CCDBG dollars, it leaves out many families who are ineligible for services tied to federal subsidies. NYC must invest the necessary dollars to particularly ensure access to those families being held out because of systemic barriers or limitations in access to federally funded services.

- ✓ The city must determine ways to move towards equity in compensation for this workforce, beginning with paying rates for existing universal programs reflective of the true cost of delivering those services. Contracting with licensed, quality programs in residential settings should be a willful act, not a choice of last resort because DOE buildings do not have the capacity to care for all 3- and 4-year-olds, let alone infants and toddlers. Group Family and Family Day Care programs are an integral part of their communities, often with strong ties to the families served in their program, and most able to flex to the needs of parents and the hours of care required for infants and toddlers, as well as school-aged children who need care beyond the school day/year.

  In willfully contracting these programs to deliver such important services for families and our littlest New Yorkers, this should not be seen as a means of saving money for the City. Contracted community-based partners should be equitably compensated to reflect the true cost of sustaining a thriving, high-quality program, including the provision of compensation and benefits packages in par with DOE employees of comparable expertise and credentials. This includes specific attention to parity in funding and compensation for community-based providers who are delivering services to students with disabilities so that we can expand access for families.[11] We join our partners at Advocates for Children in thanking the Council for including $30 million in your budget response to increase salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOS and want to ensure it is in the final budget.

  Historical and present practices of underfunding and undercompensating undermines the stability of our existing child care workforce as well as the continuity of caring relationships that are foundational in the growth of our littlest New Yorkers.

- ✓ For providers who choose to remain independent of direct contracting with the city/DOE, the city must establish equitable supports and resources. This is a matter of equity. Ultimately parents will continue to choose where they place their children for care and early learning, and will continue to choose programs in residential settings that meet their needs and those of their children, regardless of affiliation with the DOE. We must ensure that no matter where parents place their children, those programs are equitably resourced and supported to ensure high quality care.

[11] Address the Shortage of Preschool Special Education Classes (2022) Advocates for Children. Retrieved on May 27th, 2022 from FY23 Budget Priority: Address the Shortage of Preschool Special Education Classes (advocatesforchildren.org)

Additionally, as an FCC Network under the DOE, Networks experience similar threats to financial stability, while facing the constant cost of running their high-quality, fully staffed networks. This was a decision that was made by the DOE during contracting prior to the pandemic, but advocates anticipated the destabilizing effect it could have for many of these organizations, especially when enrollment was centralized, and seat awards limited which children they could enroll. If the city wants to sustain high-quality networks that can hopefully grow in reach, they need to take care of their partners with the mindset of growth and ability to thrive. As previously stated, CBOs partners cannot afford to be funded an amount less than the true cost of service and operations. The city has often left its CBO partners who extend the reach of their social services in a constant state of financial vulnerability, even before the pandemic. Since the pandemic, thousands of nonprofits have had to close their doors and this ultimately harms the communities and families that they serve, as these CBOs often serve as the cultural and linguistically responsive bridge in access to city initiatives and services. These same communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and will require a lot of collective support to recover from the traumas of this crisis.

An additional city program that CHCF has continued to proudly participate in is City's First Readers. City's First Readers (CFR) is a collaboration of 17 community-based partners fostering the literacy development of NYC children, ages 0-5. The initiative provides research-driven programming to more than 1 million children, parents/caregivers, early childcare providers, and educators annually to ensure children enter school ready to read and achieve educational success.

Decades of research show that early literacy skills are key to building positive futures for children and breaking cycles of poverty. There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC. 44.5% of them live in low-income households (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - $25,750 for a family of four), and 76% of children under the age of five are children of color. It is estimated that 325,000 additional children have been pushed into COVID related poverty. Families with children five and under who lack resources for their basic needs including food and shelter also face barriers in access to key educational resources, such as books and toys, that support children's foundational learning at a time when 90% of children's brain development takes place.

There are proven and effective strategies that directly impact the early learning opportunity gaps that children living in systemic poverty experience and that protect them from the effects of trauma. These are the strategies that City's First Readers has *always* used to support children and their families. The core program elements include:

1. Delivering free, high quality, and culturally relevant early literacy programming;
2. Providing tools for parents to create safe, stable, and nurturing relationships;
3. Facilitating coaching and professional development that increases the capacity of child care educators, librarians, medical providers, and other literacy support staff; and
4. Leading a city-wide public education campaign that raises awareness of the importance of early literacy.

City's First Readers has served approximately 6 million children and families since the initiative began in FY15 and continued to achieve remarkable engagement in the face of the ongoing COVID pandemic. In

FY21, CFR reached 800,000 families and many partners exceeded their FY20 engagement despite doing that work almost exclusively online. Furthermore, CFR distributed 380,000 books and books and early literacy kits to families across the city, this was a 41% increase over FY20.

In Conclusion

We call on the city to continue supporting, sustaining, and growing the programs that we know work, and to ensure equitable access for families navigating intersecting barriers such as houselessness, immigration, or Limited English Proficiency. With the anticipated long-term effects of the pandemic on mental well-being and educational growth for our most vulnerable young children and school-aged learners, it is essential that programs like out-of-school-time programming, community schools, residential-based child care and education programs, and City's First Readers—as well as the culturally and linguistically responsive CBOs who implement and support them—are funded to thrive and grow in reach.

If there are any questions about this or any of our previous testimonies on the FY 23 budget, please contact Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy for CHCF, at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 23 budget.

Testimony before City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearings
May 25, 2022

Good morning, Chair Justin L. Brannan, and members of the Committee on Finance. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Michael A. Hernandez, and I am offering testimony on behalf of Communities Driving Recovery (CDR).

CDR is a citywide coalition of community groups — Community-Based Organization (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs); many of whom were brought together by the NYC Test and Trace Corp (T2) initiative to battle the Covid-19 epidemic. Together with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and NYC Heath and Hospitals Corp we, the T2 CBOs, helped keep our city safe during each stage of the COVID-19 pandemic; from Stop the Spread to VAX4ALL. We placed ourselves at the frontlines to protect our city's most vulnerable populations and built an infrastructure that is uniquely suited to help with the recovery. Simply put, we are the city's best asset to COVID-19 recovery.

As trusted messengers, we are positioned to bridge the gaps to the critical services and programs needed to bring health equity to all New Yorkers. We know, all too well, the systemic inequities that prevent members of our communities from accessing good health; and we are here to help the city address these barriers that continue to impede health equity for all and stymie the road to COVID-19 recovery.

We simply ask that the Council included $50 million in its proposed budget for community public health support and call on the Adams administration to incorporate the proposal into the city's final budget.

Thank you.

Respectfully,
Michael A. Hernandez

Testimony before City Council Committee on Finance

Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearings

May 25, 2022

Good morning, Chair Justin L. Brannan, and members of the Committee on Finance. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Michael A. Hernandez, and I am offering testimony on behalf of Communities Driving Recovery (CDR). We are requesting continued funding for New York City Test and Trace partners to finish the task that we were asked to do; protect vulnerable populations from COVID-19.

We know City leadership prioritizes keeping all New York City resident safe; protecting those who are the most vulnerable; building health equity for all; and reducing health costs. Furthermore, we realize managing a city budget is not an easy task. You are asked to make smart choices that will maximize return on investment. Funding T2 CBOs is not only a smart decision, but also the best solution to ensure our city can effectively recover from COVID-19. We are best investment the city can make to maximum ROI — building health equity, reducing health cost, and saving lives.

CDR is a citywide coalition of community groups — Community-Based Organization (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs); many of whom were brought together by the NYC Test and Trace Corps (T2) initiative to battle the Covid-19 epidemic. Together with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and NYC Heath and Hospitals we, the T2 CBOs, helped keep our city safe during each stage of the COVID-19 pandemic; from Stop the Spread to VAX4ALL. We placed ourselves at the frontlines to protect our city's most vulnerable populations and built an infrastructure that is uniquely suited to help with the recovery. Simply put, we are the city's best asset to COVID-19 recovery.

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We simply ask that the Council included $50 million in its proposed budget for community public health support and call on the Adams administration to incorporate the proposal into the city's final budget.

Thank you.



Respectfully,
Michael A. Hernandez

COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR POLICE REFORM

Testimony of Communities United for Police Reform (CPR)

Submitted to the New York City Council Finance Committee
by Anthonine Pierre
(CPR Steering Committee members and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Movement Center)

For May 25th, 2022 Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2023

Communities United for Police Reform (CPR) respectfully submits these comments to the New York City Council.

I. About Communities United for Police Reform (CPR)

CPR is a multi-sector campaign working to end discriminatory and abusive policing practices in New York. CPR organizes coalitions of over 200 local, statewide and national organizations on various campaigns. Through community organizing, policy advocacy, public education, litigation, civic engagement and other strategies, CPR works to build a broad-based movement to end discriminatory and abusive policing, promote community safety and respect for the rights and dignity of all New Yorkers. Our members and partners include over 200 local and national organizations, many of whom are based in and led by those most directly impacted by abusive policing.

Through this campaign, we have helped to change the local conversation on public safety, increased the knowledge and practice of New Yorkers in observing and documenting police misconduct, and have won key policy victories including the repeal of the statewide police secrecy law (“50a”) by the NYS legislature, passage of the Community Safety Act (which established the first Inspector General of the NYPD and an enforceable ban on bias-based policing) and Right To Know Act in the New York City Council.

II. Comments regarding New York City Executive Budget for FY23

My name is Anthonine Pierre, I’m the Executive Director of Brooklyn Movement Center, and I am submitting this testimony today on behalf of Communities United for Police Reform (CPR). Thank you to the Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan for hosting this hearing today and to other Councilmembers who have tuned in for this important conversation.

CPR has run its #BudgetJustice campaign for the last three years and we have been successful in addressing our demands. We have brought light to the massive size, scope and power of the NYPD, and have changed the narrative on NYPD’s bloated budget and spending. While we

didn't win a $1 Billion cut from the NYPD, we created the conditions that made our demands irresistible and irrefutable and contributed to increasing numbers of New Yorkers who want to see the city take a drastically different approach to public safety.

New Yorkers' sense of safety is not limited to violence or crime victimization but encompasses a sense of security that is based on a notion of harm, which includes quality and accessible housing, health care, and education, and most of all, a sense of community and belonging. The pandemic brought these factors into sharp relief, and to feel safe, these needs must be addressed, while simultaneously addressing the fear of abusive, unlawful, or violent policing.

Unfortunately, Mayor Adams' primary strategy for curbing violence has been through a dramatic increase in policing and enforcement that is outdated and proven to be ineffective — a return to the Guiliani-era tactics that divided our city, led to the murders of Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Ramarley Graham, Shantel Davis, Eric Garner, Carlos Lopez Jr., Saheed Vassell, Antonio Williams, Kimani Gray and more by hyper aggressive plainclothes units, and put thousands of New Yorkers like Kalief Browder in Rikers Island. Mayor Adams' regressive plans to address the rise in violence will put Black, Latinx, and other communities of color at serious risk of increased police violence and unnecessary contact with the criminal legal system. To expand policing and criminalization as we go into the third year of this global health pandemic, will harm communities that the Mayor and others in the administration are allegedly trying to help.

For decades communities have been demanding a vision for public health and safety that reduces gun violence, and all violence, by promoting jobs, affordable places to live, wraparound services for people with mental illness and substance use disorders, high-quality education for all students and access to high-quality health care. These calls for public health solutions to community violence couldn't be more pressing as Black, Latinx, other New Yorkers of color continue to struggle more than their white counterparts with the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyone in NYC has been impacted in some way by COVID-19. However Black, Latinx and other communities of color – including low income people, homeless New Yorkers, immigrants, LGBT and gender non-conforming, elders, youth, women, informal sector workers, government workers, and other subsets of communities of color -- have been disproportionately devastated by the pandemic. The deep inequalities existed in our city before COVID-19 but have been starkly revealed and exacerbated during and after the pandemic.

As we enter the 3rd year of the pandemic, we have a moral obligation to divest from a police department that has shown itself to be deeply troubled, and invest in young people, education, homeless services, health and mental health services, programs for the aging, community-based organizations, and workforce development. Budgets are moral documents that outline a government's priorities – a city budget tells the story of how a government plans to care for its people.

We are calling on you to ensure that the FY23 budget makes significant cuts to NYPD's bloated budget of $5.6 Billion (that doesn't include the fringe, pension, debt service costs, capital budget, settlements and other litigation costs, and Council Discretionary Funding; which would **add up to over $11B in spending**)

The FY23 demands of the #NYCBudgetJustice campaign are for Mayor Adams, Speaker Adams and the New York City Council to make sure that the adopted FY23 budget will ensure a safe, healthy and prosperous New York for Black, Latinx, and other communities of color. This includes:

1. **Move money away from policing and invest in community safety solutions -**
   - Cut at least $1 billion from the NYPD FY23 expense budget.
   - Redirect all savings to non-police health and safety solutions.

2. **Cancel regressive policing tactics and block any increases to the NYPD FY23 Budget.**

   - Cancel Anti-Crime Plain Clothes Units rebranded as "Neighborhood Safety Teams"
   - Cancel NYPD Mental Health Co-Response Teams and NYPD Homeless Encampment Sweeps.
   - Cancel Abusive Units like SRG and VICE

3. **Require NYPD transparency in the budget** by including transparency-related terms and conditions in the adopted FY23 budget. The NYPD's lack of transparency serves as structural protection from any meaningful fiscal oversight. This allows the NYPD's budget to continue to balloon, and their impunity and power to grow unchecked. There are four terms and conditions that should be included when the FY23 budget is adopted:

   a. The NYPD should be required to make public a full accounting of the millions that the NYC Police Foundation spends on NYPD programs and initiatives each year. This should include a full description and accounting of NYPD programs, initiatives and projects and miscellaneous items that the Police Foundation funds. The NYPD should not be permitted to continue to use the NYC Police Foundation as a private slush fund and piggy bank for unregulated policing operations and programs in NYC and around the world.

   b. The NYPD should continue to be required to publicly report on all private sources of income that equals $5,000 or more in a fiscal year – with details of the specific purposes of those funds and a full description and accounting of budget lines those funds cover.

   c. The NYPD should be required to have more specific units of appropriation in all public facing budgets and fiscal reports.

d. The NYPD should be required to publish annual reports of all officers with pending and closed misconduct incidents, with details including when, whether and what disciplinary action was taken, if any.

The cuts to NYPD should include:

- Hiring freeze and headcount reduction: To reduce police violence, we need to reduce the massive staffing of the NYPD and redirect those monies to non-police community safety solutions that can prevent and reduce violence in our streets and in our homes. The NYPD is projected to hire roughly 2,300 officers in FY23 (to account for an annual attrition rate of about 2,300 officers). A hiring freeze could reduce the NYPD expense budget by approximately $269.1 million. This would result in an additional baseline savings of at least $259.5 million from the centrally-allocated costs of fringe and pensions. This would result in a total of at least $528.6 million that could be redirected to community-based safety solutions.
- Address Failure to Fire NYPD Officers and Cancel New NYPD Positions: The NYPD has a documented history of protecting and refusing to fire officers who kill, brutalize, sexually assault/harass, unconstitutionally stop, lie in official statements, refuse to identify themselves, retaliate against complaints, and otherwise engage in misconduct against members of the public. While the City Council can't mandate discipline by the NYPD, the Council can use their budgetary authority to ensure there are consequences for the NYPD's systemic refusal to fire officers who engage in misconduct against members of the public.
- Remove police from schools, community "engagement" and social services: Police should be removed from schools and all social service roles, and related monies should be redirected to agencies and community-based organizations that can deliver on community safety solutions, instead of more policing and criminalization. Removing NYPD and school safety agents from schools could result in a direct reinvestment of $444 million back into the Department of Education. The cost of NYPD youth coordination officers is at least $52.8 million dollars. This includes approximately $26.9 million in the NYPD FY22 expense budget, plus an estimated $25.9 million in centrally-allocated costs. This does not account for additional expenses that are not salary related. The NYPD co-response teams should be eliminated and invested in increasing non-police community-based mental health services and programs that can provide general mental services (including crisis prevention), crisis response and post-crisis wrap-around support.
- Eliminate Anti-Crime Units, SRG, VICE and Other Units: Mayor Adams claims his Neighborhood Safety Teams are different, but recent reporting on the teams by New York Focus has uncovered that a great number of the officers have documented complaints against them for excessive force and other abuses against New Yorkers. More than ninety-six percent of the precincts that have these teams are in primarily Black or Latinx communities and by the end of FY23 there are slated to be over 500 officers on the Neighborhood Safety Teams, costing $58.5 Million in salaries and another $56.4 million in central expenses, totaling $114.9 million dollars. There are approximately

445 SRG officers, with a budget of $68.1 Million in FY23. Cutting this unit would also result in an additional $65.6 million from centrally allocated expenses, resulting in $133.7 million that can be re-invested into community safety solutions. The VICE unit should be eliminated and the $12 million dollars should be used to support people in the sex trades before they are arrested, instead of being used to make arrests and mandate services post-arrest. The reallocated funds should go to the COIN Clinic housed in the Callen Lorde facilities increasing access to health and wellness services, competent legal representation, and educational opportunities; and to nonprofit organizations working with individuals involved in the sex trades.

- Cancel Other NYPD Budget Bloat: Over the last seven years the NYPD has spent $4.6 Billion dollars on overtime, far eclipsing the budgets of other crucial agencies. This year, Mayor Adams' FY23 executive budget proposes to increase NYPD overtime to a total of $454 million dollars which is millions more than the cost of the summer youth employment program and many other city programs combined.

We are pleading the city council to stop the pattern of investment in over-policing and criminalization of Black, Latinx and other communities of color, we need investments that will create safe and prosperous communities, investments that will significantly change the city's landscape and ensure that communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic are able to fully recover from its devastating impacts.

We need investments in the following areas:

- Hate Violence Prevention Programs
- Crisis Management System/Cure Violence Programs
- Restorative Justice Programs in Schools
- Invest in Mental Health and Overdose Prevention
- Mental Health Crisis Response & Investments in Core Mental Health Services
- Fund School Social Workers and Counselors
- Fund the Mental Health Continuum for students
- Further expand the Summer Youth Employment Programs
- Provide More and Deeper Affordable Housing Citywide
- Expand City FHEPS Eligibility to Households at Risk of Eviction
- Invest in NYCHA
- Workforce Development and Adult Literacy

For communities of color to have a chance at an equitable recovery from the devastation we have faced in by this pandemic for the last two years, we need an FY23 budget that puts major financial resources into our public health infrastructure, social safety net, and programs that will enable our communities to not only survive but thrive through and after the pandemic. The only way to do this requires the Council to be willing to reduce the NYPD's massive, non-transparent and unaccountable budget as part of an overall budget justice strategy.

Please feel free to reach out to us at CPR & our member groups would like to partner with Council members to fight for a budget our communities deserve. And please use the hashtag: #NYCBudgetJustice

Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

May 25, 2022

Presented by:
Cal Hedigan, Chief Executive Officer
Community Access, Inc.
chedigan@communityaccess.org

Community Access expands opportunities for people living with mental health concerns to recover from trauma and discrimination through affordable housing, training, advocacy, and healing-focused services. We are built upon the simple truth that people are experts in their own lives.

www.communityaccess.org

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of this committee, for convening this hearing on the FY 2023 Executive Budget. As the CEO of Community Access, I lead an organization that has long been at the forefront of efforts to transform our public mental health system into one where the voices of people living with mental health concerns are centered and play a vital role in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services.

Community Access is one of the leading providers of supportive housing in New York City, and we are the originators of an integrated housing model, which has become a best practice nationally: affordable and supportive housing where families reside alongside people living with mental health concerns. Our 350-person strong staff work daily to support thousands of New Yorkers living with mental health concerns through supportive housing, mobile treatment teams, job training, supported education, advocacy, crisis respite, and other healing-focused services. Community Access is also proud to be a founding member of the Correct Crisis Intervention Today in NYC Coalition (CCITNYC)[1], which is committed to transforming the City's mental health crisis response.

Mayor Adams' FY23 Executive Budget touts "an equitable, inclusive recovery for all New Yorkers," but it lacks equity for the workforce that shows up every day to make sure there is a safety net for our city's most vulnerable residents. Amid a housing crisis that has led to record numbers of people experiencing homelessness,[2] and a mental health crisis, this labor is essential, but the Executive Budget fails to make an investment that will support and sustain this workforce.

Without pay equity for the human services workers, NYC's nonprofits cannot provide the services that New Yorkers need. Our city's recovery, resilience, and its health depend on this workforce, which is predominantly made up of women and people of color, yet they are paid poverty wages. Our City-funded contracts are structured in such a way that nonprofits cannot raise wages and benefits without increased funding from the city. The current wage structure has led to vacancies and retention issues that make it increasingly difficult to do this work. At Community Access, our supportive housing staff vacancy rate is close to 30%. I cannot overstate the need to investing in this sector to enable providers like us to recruit and retain staff.

While the Council thankfully included a 4% (COLA) adjustment for human services contracts in the preliminary budget response, Mayor Adams did not include this funding in the FY23 Executive Budget, effectively ignoring this essential workforce. This is shameful. The city must match the State's 5.4% COLA. To do otherwise would send a terrible message to this essential workforce: your contributions to our city are not valued. In addition, if the City fails to fund the COLA, workers could be paid differently within the exact same role based on the funding source for their position, creating an unfair and inequitable pay disparity within organizations like Community Access. Funding the 5.4% COLA must be a budget priority.

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[1] https://www.ccitnyc.org/

[2] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2022/

Turning to how our city responds to people experiencing mental health crises, the FY23 Executive Budget includes $55 million to expand the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division (B-HEARD) initiative. B-HEARD was intended to significantly decrease the number of mental health crisis calls that receive a law enforcement response. It is failing in this regard.

After six months in operation, only 22% of calls were routed to the B-HEARD teams, and of those only 82% were responded to by the teams.[3] We urgently need a true non-police response. Lives are at stake. As a reminder, 19 New Yorkers experiencing a mental health crisis have died in police encounters since 2015 alone.

The pilot has been launched for almost a year now, but the public has not received any updated data since the 6-month mark, despite its expansion into nine precincts in Harlem, Washington Heights, Inwood, and the South Bronx. Meanwhile, the Executive Budget proposes to expand the program into Central Brooklyn, Eastern Queens, and additional areas of the South Bronx. The lack of transparency and accountability is unacceptable. Why is NY expanding the pilot to more precincts when it is clearly not meeting its objectives? What body is evaluating the pilot? What is being learned about the barriers to deploying health only teams? We cannot continue to expand a program based on its unimpressive numbers from six months ago, and without a clear indications of its current impact.

Additionally, the B-HEARD program was created and continues to operate without input and participation from impacted communities, especially peers (people with lived mental health experience). Community Access has worked diligently as a member organization of the CCIT-NYC Coalition to develop a proposal, presented before the New York City Council in 2020, in which we outline required elements of a peer driven, health-only crisis response framework.[4] The proposal was developed in consultation with affected communities through two focus groups, each attended by more than 100 peers, and an ongoing community survey.

The core components of the CCIT-NYC proposal are:

- The removal of police responders
- Calls routed to a call number other than 911
- Response teams made up of trained peers and emergency medical technicians (EMTs)
- Peer involvement in all aspects of planning, implementation, and oversight—nothing about us, without us
- Expanded development and funding of non-coercive mental health services ("safety net"), including respite centers, increased safe-haven capacity, and 24/ 7 urgent mental health care, to minimize crises in the first place and to serve those for whom crisis de-escalation is insufficient
- Training teams to use a trauma-informed framework
- Response times comparable to those of other emergency services

[3] https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/FINAL-DATA-BRIEF-B-HEARD-FIRST-SIXMONTHS-OF-OPERATIONS-12.15.21-1.pdf

[4] http://www.ccitnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CCITNYC-Pilot-11-2-20.pdf

- 24/7 operating hours
- Oversight by an advisory board of 51% or more peers from impacted communities

B-HEARD does not include any of these core components. We still can, and must, create a system that is better prepared to respond to mental health crises and to protect New Yorkers. In the FY 2023 budget, we ask the City to:

1. Enact into legislation the CCIT-NYC proposal to create a non-police, peer-driven mental health crisis response
2. Allocate $112 million annually to fund the CCIT-NYC proposal for a non-police, peer-driven mental health crisis response.
3. Enact legislation to amend the operation of the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health (MOCMH) by adding peers, mental health advocates, and providers to the oversight board; requiring the development of an annual strategic plan that enables New Yorkers with mental health concerns to connect to mental health services and appropriate housing; and requiring publication of quarterly reports showing progress made on achieving the strategic plan's objectives.

I am proud of the work Community Access and other allied organizations have done to push the conversation about mental health service delivery in a direction that is more person-centered and rights-based. With thoughtful policy choices and investments, we can create a more just city that meets people's needs, protects them from harm, recognizes human dignity, and supports them to make decisions about their own health and wellness.

We must invest in community-based services, supportive and affordable housing, and other person-centered programs that prevent mental health crises from happening in the first place. As a provider of Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) Team services in New York City, I have seen firsthand how transformative the right approach can be for people who have not been well served by more traditional models. We applaud the inclusion of $174.6 million in the Executive Budget for street outreach, drop-in centers, and new stabilization beds and safe-havens.

As our city continues to grapple with record numbers of people experiencing homelessness, we must change our approach to look at this not as a homelessness crisis but as the affordable housing crisis that it truly is. The City must move on from the idea of a right to shelter to the understanding of housing as a fundamental human right—and a vital determinant of individual health and mental health. Furthermore, we must establish policies and budget priorities that support that truth. While the City has invested heavily in new housing developments, we know more needs to be done to develop and preserve supportive and deeply affordable housing. We need accelerated investment in supportive and deeply affordable housing today to pave the way for a future where all New Yorkers will be stably housed. Nonprofit housing developers are mission-driven and committed to permanent affordability, and we are natural partners for the City in ending the affordable housing crisis.

The Executive Budget includes $2.1 billion for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), a 22% increase over February's Preliminary Budget for FY 2023, and a 38% increase over the planned commitment for the current fiscal year. This is an important step, but it falls short of the $4 billion per year the mayor promised on the campaign trail.[5] With rising interest rates, construction costs, and rents, a larger investment is needed to meet the demand for supportive housing.

I appreciate the Council and the Mayor's focus on developing a budget that creates an inclusive and equitable recovery for New Yorkers. We can make these priorities a reality if we invest in supportive housing, person-centered mental health services, and a crisis response system that protects New Yorkers. And crucially, the human services workforce must be adequately compensated for their work. We cannot achieve these other goals without them.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I look forward to working with the chair and members of this committee to advance community-based service options and ensure providers citywide have the resources they need to offer the supports our communities rely on. If you and your staff have any questions, or if Community Access can offer direct support to members in your district, please reach out to me at chedigan@communityaccess.org or 212- 780-1400, ext. 7709.

[5] https://thenyhc.org/2022/02/17/mayor-eric-adams-fails-to-deliver-on-promise-to-double-housing-investment/

Executive Budget Hearing Fiscal Year 2023 Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

May 25, 2022

Presented by:
Jordyn Rosenthal, MSW
Advocacy Coordinator – Community Access
Lead Organizer & Steering Committee Member – CCIT-NYC
jrosenthal@communityaccess.org

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance for convening this hearing. My name is Jordyn Rosenthal and I am the Advocacy Coordinator at Community Access, an organization that has long been at the forefront of efforts to transform our public mental health system into one where the voices of people living with mental health concerns are centered and play a vital role in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services. I am also a proud steering committee member of Correct Crisis Intervention Today - NYC (CCIT-NYC), which aims to transform how mental health crises are responded to in New York. I am here today to represent Community Access and CCIT-NYC.

Community Access was founded in 1974, in response to the closure of psychiatric facilities, to support individuals who were transitioning into community living. Today, we are one of the leading providers of supportive housing in New York City, and are the pioneers of an integrated housing model, which has become a best practice nationally: affordable housing where families live alongside people living with mental health concerns. Our 350-person staff work daily to support thousands of New Yorkers living with mental health concerns through supportive housing, mobile treatment teams, job training, supported education, advocacy, crisis respite and other healing-focused services. Community Access is also proud to be a founding member of CCIT-NYC.

Correct Crisis Intervention Today - New York City (CCIT-NYC) was formed in 2012 in response to the rising number of deaths and serious injuries associated with the New York Police Department (NYPD) responding to mental health crisis calls made to the City's 911 system. CCIT-NYC is a broad-based coalition of civil rights and human service organizations, people with lived experience with mental health crises, family members, and other advocates, all of whom work together with a mission to reform the City's response to mental health crises, in order to reduce the incidents of violence and trauma experienced by those who turn to emergency services for assistance.

It is critical to end the use of law enforcement officers to respond to people experiencing mental health crises. The City's B-HEARD program looked like a promising step towards a health-first crisis response, but in reality, it fails to protect New Yorkers in crisis from harm. CCIT-NYC and Community Access call for a total overhaul of the City's current mental health crisis response. The pilot, which commenced in June, 2021, was dubbed a "non-police" crisis response, but after six months in operation (the most recent statistics available), 78% of calls still were responded to by police.[2]

This data speaks for itself. This is not a program that meets the goal of a non-police response for people experiencing mental health crises in our city. We urgently need a true non-police response. Lives are at stake. As a reminder, at least 19 New Yorkers experiencing a mental health crisis died in police encounters since 2015 alone.

The B-HEARD program was created and continues to operate without input and participation from impacted communities, especially peers (people with lived mental health experience). CCIT-NYC and Community Access, on the other hand, have developed a proposal, which we presented to the New York City Council as early as 2020, in which we outline the design, implementation, execution, and budget considerations for a health-only crisis response system.[3] The proposal was developed in consultation with

[2] https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/FINAL-DATA-BRIEF-B-HEARD-FIRST-SIX-MONTHS-OF-OPERATIONS-12.15.21-1.pdf.

[3] https://www.ccitnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CCITNYC-Pilot-11-2-20.pdf.

affected communities through two focus groups, each attended by more than 100 peers, and an ongoing community survey.

The core components of the CCIT-NYC proposal are:

- The removal of police responders
- Calls routed to 988
- Response teams made up of trained peers and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who independent of the City's Emergency Medical Services
- Peer involvement in all aspects of planning, implementation, and oversight—nothing about us, without us
- Training teams to use a trauma-informed framework
- Response times comparable to those of other emergency services
- 24/7 operating hours
- Oversight by an advisory board of 51% or more peers from impacted communities

B-HEARD does not include any of these core components.

We still can, and must, create a system that is better prepared to respond to mental health crises, and to better support community-based services that help prevent those mental health crises from happening in the first place.

In the FY 2023 budget, we ask the City to:

1. Enact into legislation the CCIT-NYC proposal to create a non-police, peer-driven mental health crisis response
2. Allocate $112 million annually to fund the CCIT-NYC proposal for a non-police, peer-driven mental health crisis response, or at a minimum, allocate the $55 million currently allocated for B-HEARD to fund the CCIT-NYC proposal.
3. I am proud of the work CCIT-NYC, Community Access, and other allied organizations have done to push the conversation about mental health service delivery in a direction that is more person-centered and rights-based. With thoughtful policy choices and investments, we can create a more just city that meets people's needs, protects them from harm, recognizes human dignity, and supports them to make decisions about their own health and wellness.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I look forward to working with the chair and members of this committee to implement a truly non-police response to mental health crises in New York. If you and your staff have any questions, or if CCIT-NYC or Community Access can offer direct support to members in your district, please reach out to me at jrosenthal@communityaccess.org.



RTCNYC Coalition Testimony

Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Finance Committee

May 25, 2022

Dear Finance Committee -

Please accept our testimony on behalf of Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) - New Settlement, NY. We are members of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, which led and won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction. We are proud of NYC's groundbreaking Right to Counsel legislation and applaud the City Council, the Mayor, and the Office of Civil Justice for its dedication to making the Right to Counsel available to all New Yorkers during this pandemic. The law had tremendous impact in just the first few years since it passed: 84% percent of tenants who had RTC won their case and stayed in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to protect and advance tenants' rights. Right to Counsel has also helped develop a body of more just case law, lower tenants' rents, re-stabilize apartments, and has forced landlords to make repairs.

As we have seen, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Right to Counsel is more important than ever before. We know that evictions and housing instability have a disproportionate impact on people of color, especially women and children of color. Evictions and housing instability also have significant impacts not just on people's housing, but on people's education, employment, family relationships, physical and mental health, and so much more. NYC's Right to Counsel moves us closer towards achieving economic, gender, and racial justice.

We are here today to urge this committee to immediately and fully implement Local Law 53 and to work with the courts to ensure that no case move forward without an RTC attorney.

Immediately and Fully Implement Local Law 53:

The expansion of RTC to work with and fund community organizing groups to do the necessary education and outreach work of RTC, Local Law 53, is so incredibly critical. While we applauded the city for passing legislation in May of last year, with an effective date of November 2021, we are deeply disappointed that it has not yet been implemented.

To date and since the Coalition last testified at the General Welfare Committee Hearing on February 28, the Office of Civil Justice has failed to release the RFP or confirm funding for Local Law 53. Furthermore, we understand that OCJ and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit have engaged in efforts to inform the public of Right to Counsel. *We want to be extremely clear - this is not a substitute or solution for failure to fund Local Law 53.*

The intent of Local Law 53 is clear - to fund trusted tenant organizing groups working in low-income communities of color to lead outreach and education efforts through community meetings, workshops, Tenant Association meetings, and more. This is the vital work of tenant organizers, and ensuring that tenants are informed of Right to Counsel and supported prior to an eviction case being filed. Tenants know about their rights and exercising them is a preventative and proactive measure.

With hundreds of thousands of households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 200,000 eviction cases filed across New York, tenants need this law now more than ever. We were told the city allocated $3.6 million towards this bill, had drafted the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was going to release it in November of last year. To date, we haven't seen it. We know the mayoral and city council administrations take time to transition but **with the expiration of the eviction protections almost 4 months ago and hundreds of eviction cases moving forward without Right to Counsel, we can't wait.** <u>The city is now out of compliance with its own law and it needs to implement it now, in this current budget.</u>

Why is this law important?

- Right to Counsel has been proven to stop evictions in NYC, but many tenants who are eligible for Right to Counsel don't know about it or are too afraid to use it. When tenants don't know or use their rights, they are more easily harassed out of their apartments. This leads to the displacement of mostly poor Black and brown New Yorkers.
- A survey done by volunteers at Bronx Housing Court found that **53%** of tenants who had Right to Counsel did not know about this right before arriving in court.
- When tenants don't know they have a Right to Counsel, they might decide not to appear in court, decline representation, sign agreements with their landlord's lawyer prior, decide not to ask for repairs in fear of being evicted, or face a variety of other serious consequences.
- Local Law 53 requires the city to support organizers who would work to ensure that tenants know about their Right to Counsel and feel supported using it. More tenants will be prepared to defend their homes against eviction and fight for their right to a safe, affordable home.
- Tenant organizing is the most effective means of ensuring tenants know about their rights. Tenant organizing groups create an environment where tenants feel supported by a community that is working together to combat landlord abuse, ensuring that a landlord cannot target an individual tenant for standing up for their rights.
- We need to stop informal evictions! 54% of forced moves that take place in NYC are the result of informal evictions, such as a tenant leaving due being told to leave, landlord harassment, a lack of repairs, etc. When tenants know they have the right to a lawyer and are organized, they can fight back when landlords try to push them out.

To meet the needs of tenants across the city, this law must be implemented now. **We urge this Committee to work with HRA to release the RFP so that tenant organizing groups can do their work to educate and organize tenants across NYC during this incredibly scary time.**

We urge this Committee to call on Mayor Adams to fully fund and implement Local Law 53 and ensure the Office of Civil Justice is allocating $5 million towards Local Law 53.

We look forward to working with you on this. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

CASA Community Action for Safe Apartments
a project of new settlement
1512 Townsend Avenue / Bronx, New York 10452 / P: 347-941-3281

Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) - New Settlement Testimony

Finance Committee Hearing

May 25, 2022

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Yeraldi Perez. Please accept my testimony on behalf of Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) and we are part of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, which led and won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction.

Due to the tireless organizing work of CASA and the rest of the Right to Counsel Coalition we won the historic Right to Counsel legislation; providing attorneys for tenants facing eviction. Since then, the legislation has had a great impact, allowing for 84% percent of tenants who had RTC to win their case and stay in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups like CASA are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to organize and advance tenants' rights.

These results did not happen in a vacuum but were due to the organizing work happening across the city with the support of community-based organizations like CASA. This was especially true and critical during the pandemic. CASA organizes in the South West Bronx community, the borough continuously with the highest number of evictions even before the pandemic and one of the hardest hit by the pandemic on all front. It was CASA's priority to ensure tenants were informed and resourced to be able to stay in their homes.

During the pandemic CASA organizers phone banked hundreds of members to keep them educate them on the moratoriums, eviction protections and other resources. These protections were fought and won with the work of the Right to Counsel Coalition in conjunction with other allies. We created content to disperse amongst our members and the larger community. When permitted we did in-person outreach in the community to and connected folks in need to attorneys who could counsel them. This is the work that organizations like CASA do to ensure evictions didn't and won't happen because we understand the devasting and lasting impact they have on communities like the South West Bronx.

The pandemic is not over but courts have now continued to function business as usual. This means that now that protections like the eviction moratorium are no longer in effect cases will move forward and evictions will increase. The work that community-based organizations like CASA and the rest of the Right to Counsel Coalition will be crucial to ensure the stability of our community in the city. That's why we ask and urge you all to **immediately and fully implement Local Law 53 and to work with the courts to ensure that no case moves forward without an RTC attorney.**

Local Law 53: Will allow expansion of RTC to work with and fund community organizing groups to do the necessary education and outreach work of RTC, Local Law 53, is so incredibly critical. With 1.2 million households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 220,000 eviction cases pending across the city, New York tenants need this law now more than ever.

Why is this law important?

- Right to Counsel has been proven to stop evictions in NYC, but many tenants who are eligible for Right to Counsel don't know about it or are too afraid to use it. When tenants don't know or use their rights, they are more easily harassed out of their apartments. This leads to the displacement of mostly poor Black and brown New Yorkers.
- When tenants don't know they have a Right to Counsel, they might decide not to appear in court, decline representation, sign agreements with their landlord's lawyer prior, decide not to ask for repairs in fear of being evicted, or face a variety of other serious consequences.

- Local Law 53 requires the city to support organizers who would work to ensure that tenants know about their Right to Counsel and feel supported using it. More tenants will be prepared to defend their homes against eviction and fight for their right to a safe, affordable home.
- Tenant organizing is the most effective means of ensuring tenants know about their rights. Tenant organizing groups create an environment where tenants feel supported by a community that is working together to combat landlord abuse, ensuring that a landlord cannot target an individual tenant for standing up for their rights. AND this is the work that we already do but often with limited resources.
- We need to stop informal evictions! 54% of forced moves that take place in NYC are the result of informal evictions, such as a tenant leaving due being told to leave, landlord harassment, a lack of repairs, etc. When tenants know they have the right to a lawyer and are organized, they can fight back when landlords try to push them out.

It is not a surprise that the neighborhoods hit hardest by COVID-19 are also being targeted for eviction but that is precisely why our work is essential. Evictions are never just; we all deserve a roof over our heads but it is irresponsible to continue business as usual and deny tenants necessary resources to stay in their homes. To meet the needs of tenants across the city, this law must be implemented now. Thank you.

Testimony of Liz Accles, Executive Director
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committee. My name is Liz Accles, Executive Director of Community Food Advocates (CFA). On behalf of Community Food Advocates and the Lunch 4 Learning coalition, it is a pleasure to testify on the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget and Capital Plan, and to inform this distinguished body of our Lunch 4 Learning FY2023 budget priority, which is aimed at ensuring the successful implementation of the "Universal Free School Lunch for All" (Universal) program and to build on its foundation.

As you know Community Food Advocates (CFA) spearheads the Lunch 4 Learning campaign, a broad, diverse coalition-based group that, in partnership with the City Council, successfully advocated for Universal Free Meals in all New York City public schools. However, much more work is needed.

Even before the pandemic 1 in 5 children experienced food insecurity, and we know this number has only risen over the past two years. Among the nearly 1.1 million students in the NYC school system, 73 percent are economically disadvantaged. Our children rely on school food programs for their daily nutrition. As part of our mission, CFA strives to identify and promote strategies that improve access to nutritious food, including through school meal programs.

Building on universal, we continue to advocate for initiatives that will have the biggest impact on school meal participation. The Office of Food & Nutrition Services' cafeteria redesign—known at DOE as the Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE)—is an impactful and cost-effective approach to increasing participation. So far, the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) has redesigned 44 middle and high school

cafeterias, and we would like to see this transformation in school communities across the City.

The presentation of school lunch has a direct impact on school lunch participation rates. The OFNS cafeteria redesign transforms the serving line into a deli-style service that gives students more variety of options on a daily basis. The seating area, which includes diner-style booths, round tables, and high-top seating arrangements, transforms school cafeterias from an institutional configuration to a more welcoming environment for students. Additionally, the food court style serving lines have reduced the time students stand on line to obtain their lunch, allowing for more time to eat and socialize. Lastly, consumption of fruits and vegetables in the enhanced cafeterias are at least four times higher than schools without enhanced cafeterias. Cafeteria redesign should be a priority.

NYC DOE Should Implement a Master Plan for Cafeteria Redesign for All NYC High Schools & Middle Schools

No student can learn on an empty stomach. In fact, research directly links participation in school meals to improvements in academic outcomes and classroom behavior. Yet school meal participation declines abruptly during middle school and is even lower among high school students. This is in large part because pre-adolescents and adolescents are sensitive to the stigma associated with school meals and are socially motivated and seeking independence. The redesigned cafeterias accommodate older students' need for autonomy, speed-of-service, and a more welcoming dining experience.

It is critical that we ensure our school meal programs best meet the needs of our students, and the deli-style, "enhanced" cafeteria is an overwhelmingly successful model. The 44 middle school and high school cafeterias—serving 75,000 students—that have received the enhanced cafeteria over the past couple of years have been a huge success. Among the first set of high schools that were enhanced, there was a:

35% increase in lunch participation

If all high school received the enhancement, we project:

30,000 more high school students would participate every day

We propose that DOE adopt a Master Plan to roll out redesign of high school and middle school cafeterias. The onetime capital cost of redesigning a cafeteria is approximately $500,000. Considering the positive benefits, this is an extremely cost-effective initiative. We believe this master plan should be equitably distributed across

School Districts, phased-in by priority: high need/low participation rate; high need regardless of participation rate; and low participation rate/mixed income.

As you know, now more than ever, our public-school students face many challenges. As students return to schools to learn in-person, and eventually to cafeterias to eat, it is imperative that these inherently social spaces are responsive to the trauma brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cafeteria redesign is the response to ensure students feel safe and secure, by expediting the service line and reducing overcrowding, smaller tables that maximize space and minimize large groups, and reducing frequent surface contact. By increasing participation, it will also help to combat the prevalent food insecurity brought on by the pandemic. Additionally, while some students are now learning in-person again, cafeterias are not currently in use. This is an opportunity to revamp cafeterias for the time when students return to cafeteria spaces.

We were thrilled to see $25 million committed in the Fiscal Year 2020 Capital Budget towards expanding this critical initiative to another 50 cafeterias. We were also pleased to see major expansion of deli-style cafeterias in schools included as a priority in the Speaker's Agenda on Growing Food Equity in New York City. However, to see the full potential of cafeteria redesign initiative realized in an equitable way, an additional $250 million should be allocated to roll this out in another 500 cafeterias over the next five years.

Please see the attached one-pager and cafeteria redesign look book for additional information, including photos and analysis, of the enhanced cafeterias in NYC schools. We hope the Council will continue to be champions for this important initiative. Thank you.

Liz Accles, Executive Director

Community Food Advocates

Lunch 4 Learning Coalition

110 Wall Street

New York, NY 10005

Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council

*Tweed Courthouse *52 Chamber Street, New York 10007/Email: InfoCPACNYC@gmail.com*

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May 12, 2022

Chancellor David Banks
Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chancellor Banks,

CPAC's Request for Support on the Enhanced Cafeteria Redesign

As proud parents and guardians of New York City public school students, we are grateful for your long-time support of our efforts to ensure our kids receive the best possible education. Thanks to your partnership over the years, we have made significant gains in public education to the greater benefit of our communities and the City at large. Now, we are calling on you to invest $250 million in the Capital Plan towards an additional 500 cafeteria redesigns that would serve all middle and high school students. This modest, one-time investment would dramatically enhance students' school day experiences and ultimately translate to better educational outcomes.

Children cannot learn on an empty stomach. There is ample evidence showing the direct correlation between school meal participation and standardized test scores. In one Syracuse University study looking at universal free meal participation and academic performance, students' math and ELA test scores increased at a rate equivalent to an additional 10 weeks of learning. These dramatic findings underscore the significance of school meal participation to long-term student success.

That is why we are so excited by the latest data highlighting the success of the Office of Food and Nutrition Services' (OFNS) Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE). By updating school cafeterias with new features like deli-style serving lines and more socially inviting seating, 44 cafeterias have already transformed students' lunch experiences and subsequently seen increased participation in school meals.

The results speak to the direct impact that food presentation and ambience has on school food participation rates. According to an analysis of CEE schools by Community Food Advocates, high schools with CEE have seen a 35% increase in lunch participation. OFNS data also shows that more fruits and vegetables are served in CEE cafeterias compared to cafeterias without the redesign. The food court style serving lines also reduce waiting times for students, meaning they have more time during their lunch period to eat and socialize with friends. Anecdotally, many of us have heard first-hand from our children, their teachers, and other school staff how the cafeteria redesign has improved their school lunch experiences and ultimately helped them have more productive school days.

Free school meals are an essential tool to boosting student academic performance and advancing educational equity in schools, but the relatively low participation rate among students across NYC schools is a major barrier to realizing the program's potential. As parents, we know how difficult it is to keep hungry kids motivated and engaged with their schoolwork. We are tremendously grateful to entrust our children to New York City's dedicated public school teachers, and we want to ensure that they have every possible tool in their arsenal to set students up for success. That is why we urge you to make cafeteria redesign a priority and commit an additional $250 million towards a master plan phase-in of 500 cafeteria redesigns for all NYC middle and schools. This one-time investment will translate to exponential educational gains for NYC students and ultimately make our city a more equitable place.

With much appreciation,

The Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council

Approved by the membership at its May, 12, 2022 meeting

Cc: Camille Joseph Varlack, NYCDOE Special Advisor, Operations
Sheena Wright, Deputy Mayor, Strategic Initiatives
Kevin Moran, NYCDOE Chief School Operations Officer
Chris Tricarico, NYCDOE Senior Executive Director, Office of Food and Nutrition Services
Liz Accles, Executive Director, Community Food Advocates
Rachel Atcheson, Senior Assistant to the Mayor, Office of the Mayor of New York City
Kate MacKenzie, Director, Mayor's Office of Food Policy

NYS AAP–Chapter 3

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May 12, 2022

Chancellor David C. Banks
NYC Department of Education
Tweed Courthouse
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Banks:

As pediatricians serving New York City's children and adolescents, we see firsthand how critical DOE initiatives—such as universal free school lunch, breakfast in the classroom, and cafeteria redesign—are to combatting hunger and supporting students' health and wellbeing. The scientific literature points out a strong association between adequate nutrition and fueling children's brains for the school day. **For example, a study out of Syracuse University linked universal free meals to academic performance, with increases in test scores equivalent to as much as 10 weeks of learning in state test scores in math and ELA. This makes it clear that a well-fed student body is fundamental to education equity. School meals play a unique role.** Furthermore, inadequate nutrition has been tied to increased rates of mental illness, including mood, anxiety, behavioral and substance abuse issues. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of school meals for children and their families.

The model of the Office of Food and Nutrition Services' (OFNS) Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) has been a shining success, transforming the school food experience through deli-style serving lines and more socially inviting seating. As pediatricians, we are calling on you to commit an additional $250 million in capital funds to transform the school lunch experience for middle and high school students. This would bring CEE to scale in middle schools and high schools, a legacy that would have a lasting impact and highlight your commitment to equity.

Presentation of school food and the environment in which it is served has a direct impact on school food participation rates. An analysis of CEE schools by Community Food Advocates found, after two years, there was a 35% increase in lunch participation in the first 47 high schools. Data from OFNS shows more fruits and vegetables are served in CEE cafeterias—as much as 11 times more grapes and 30 times more lettuce—compared to cafeterias without the redesign. Additionally, food court style serving lines have reduced the time students stand on line to obtain their lunch. And these are just the numbers. We hear numerous accounts from students, kitchen staff, administrators, and parents that the cafeteria redesign has influenced the school community's attitudes towards school food.

School meals are essential to students' wellbeing and learning and are foundational to advancing equity in schools. Free school meals for all NYC students is a momentous step in the right direction, yet many children and teens still do not participate. We as pediatricians know that peer influence is a major factor in adolescent development and decisions, and the redesigned cafeterias successfully counteract the stigma of school food. **We urge you to invest an additional $250 million in the Capital Plan towards a master plan phase-in of an additional 500 cafeteria redesigns that would serve all middle and high school students.** This will help ensure students in higher grades, where school meal participation rates are lowest, choose the healthy school meals that will fuel their bodies and minds.

Sincerely,

Jesse Hackell, MD, FAAP
Chair, AAP Committee on Practice and Ambulatory Medicine
President, NYS AAP - Chapter 3
Co-Chair Pediatric Council, NYS AAP - Chapters 2 & 3

Cristina R. Fernández, MD, MPH, FAAP (she/ella)
Co-Chair, NYS AAP - Chapter 3 Nutrition and Obesity Committee
Division of Child & Adolescent Health, Department of Pediatrics
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

Jessica Rieder, MD, MS, FAAP
Co-Chair, NYS AAP - Chapter 3 Nutrition and Obesity Committee
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics
Children's Hospital at Montefiore

Cc: Camille Joseph Varlack, NYCDOE Special Advisor, Operations
Sheena Wright, Deputy Mayor, Strategic Initiatives
Kevin Moran, NYCDOE Chief School Operations Officer
Rachel Atcheson, Senior Assistant to the Mayor, Office of the Mayor of New York City
Kate MacKenzie, Director, Mayor's Office of Food Policy
Chris Tricarico, NYCDOE Senior Executive Director, Office of Food and Nutrition Services
Liz Accles, Executive Director, Community Food Advocates

CAFETERIA ENHANCEMENT EXPERIENCE

An initiative of the NYC DOE Office of Food and Nutrition Services

Images and information compiled by Community Food Advocates and the Lunch 4 Learning coalition

COMMUNITY FOOD ADVOCATES
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YOUTH VOICES

"I HAVE SEEN HOW THE STIGMATIZATION OF EATING SCHOOL LUNCH OR SITTING IN THE CAFETERIA HAS PREVENTED THE TYPE OF LIVELY SOCIALIZING A SCHOOL CAFETERIA SHOULD FOSTER."

-ELISHA VEREBES



"BY OFFERING RENEWED AND IMPROVED SCHOOL CAFETERIAS WHERE STUDENTS FEEL COMFORTABLE EATING THE SCHOOL FOOD, YOU CAN SUPPORT THE INTELLECTUAL GROWTH OF EACH AND EVERY STUDENT."

- ALEXANDER RIJO-MARTINEZ



"THE NEXT STEP IN THE BATTLE FOR SCHOOL FOOD JUSTICE IS TO BRING MORE MODERN AND UP TO DATE CAFETERIAS TO NYC STUDENTS."

-FAITH JONES



"WHEN MY FATHER WAS SICK AND MY MOTHER WOULD BE AT THE HOSPITAL WITH HIM, I HAD TO RELY ON SCHOOL FOOD. THIS OPENED MY EYES TO THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL FOOD BECAUSE IT WAS ACCESSIBLE TO ME AT THE TIME THAT I NEEDED IT THE MOST."

-LESLIE GOMEZ RIVERA

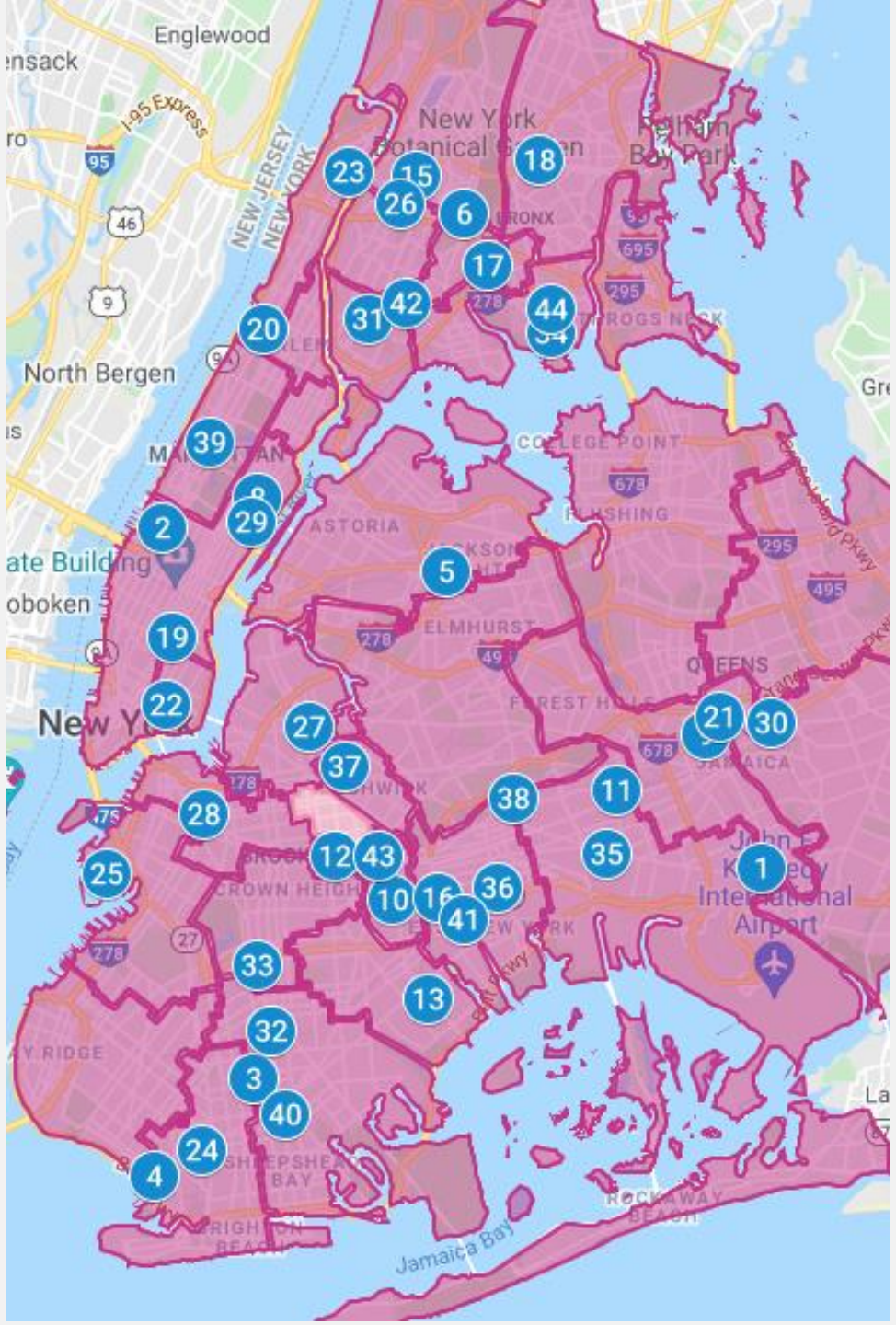


IMPACTS

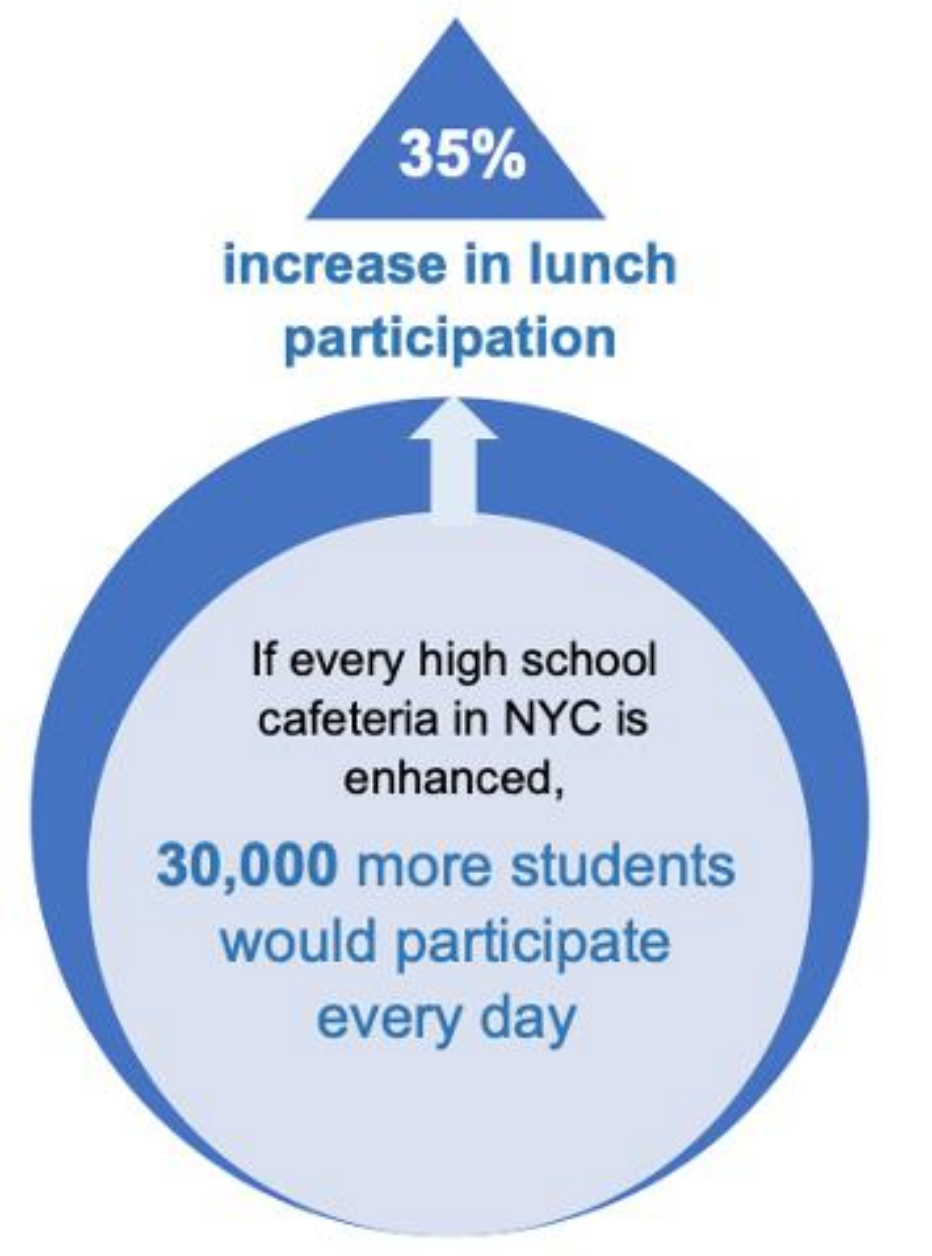
44 School Cafeterias Across NYC

(as of February 10, 2022)

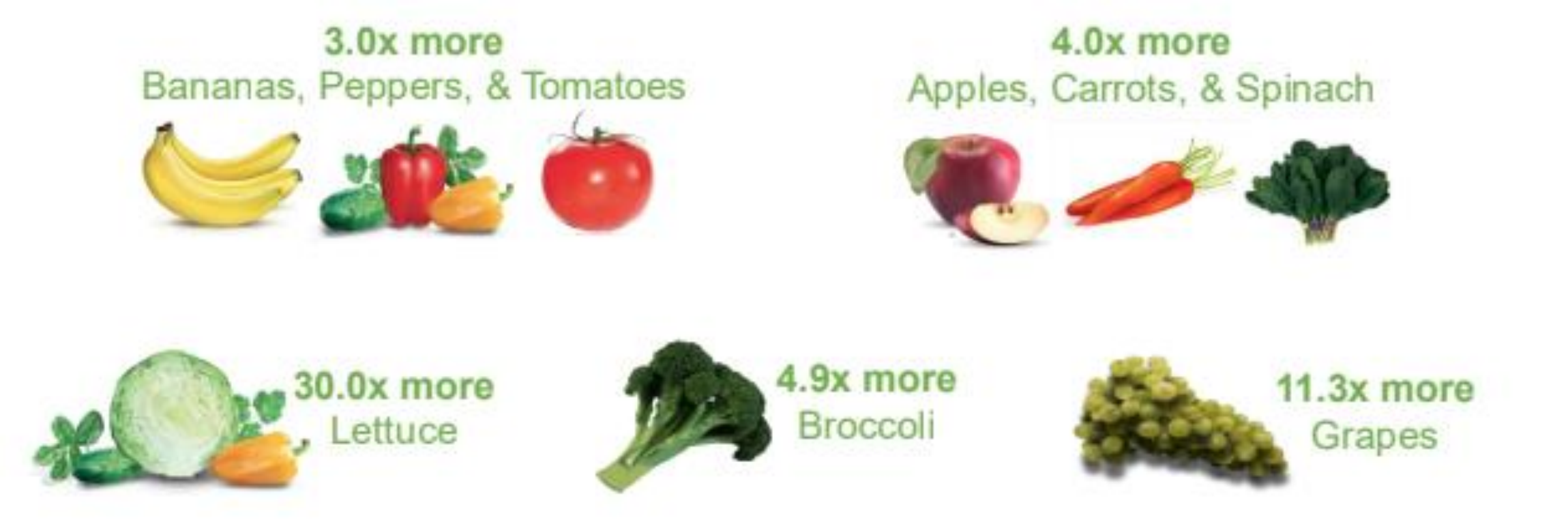


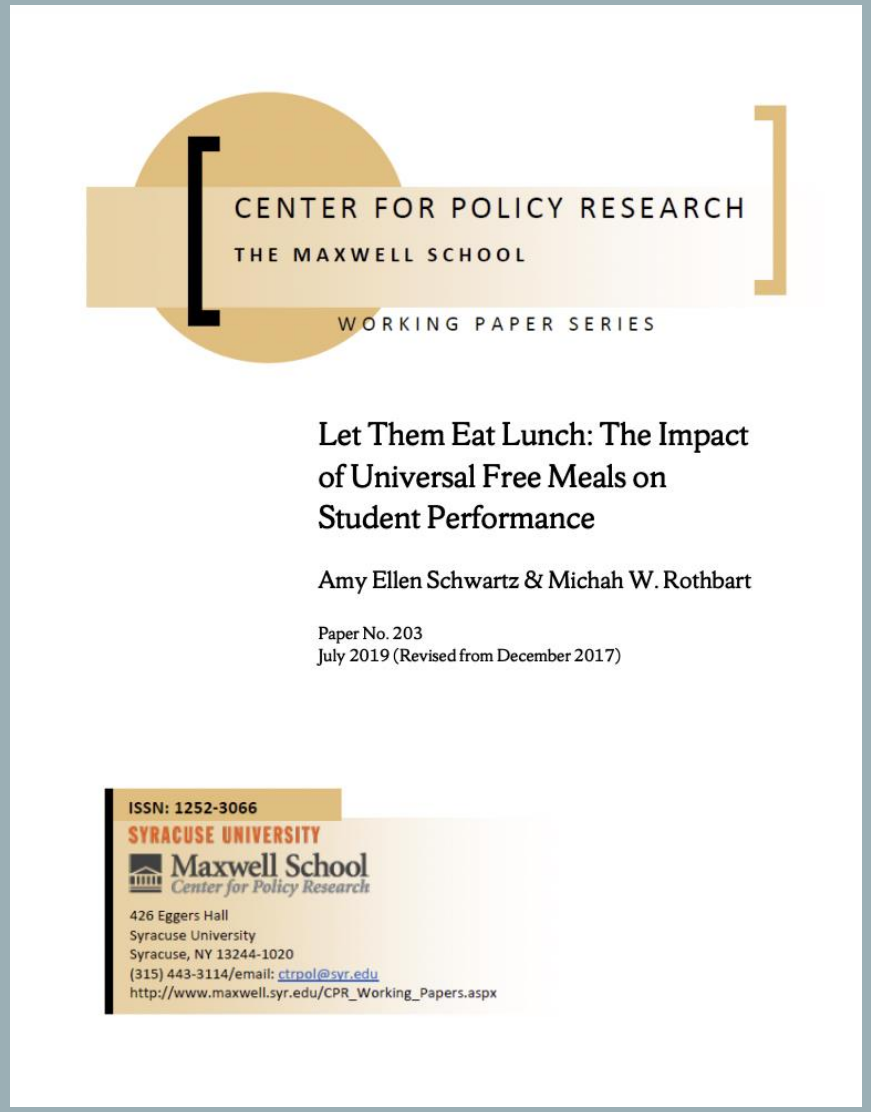


The first 15 high school enhanced cafeterias, serving 47 schools…



Compared with schools of the same type without redesign, enhanced cafeterias served:





ACCESS TO SCHOOL LUNCH IMPROVES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Syracuse University study linked universal free meals to academic performance, with increases in test scores equivalent to as much as

10 weeks of learning in math and ELA

Source:
https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/cpr/publications/working_papers2/wp203.pdf

Who We Are: Community Food Advocates (CFA) is a policy impact organization. We spearhead the Lunch 4 Learning (L4L) Coalition, which successfully secured Universal Free School Lunch (UFL) for all 1.1. million NYC public school students in 2017.

Our Vision: Build on the foundation of UFL for all with high impact policy change to create an innovative, enjoyable, accessible and equitable school lunch program.

The Importance Of School Meals

Unmatched Reach: The scale and reach of the school meals program is unmatched. NYC's Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS) serves an average of 900,000 daily meals. The program is second in size only to the U.S. military.

Equitable: UFL eliminates structural barriers and ensures all students have access to healthy and nutritious school meals. After UFL was adopted, we saw an average daily increase of 26,000 students who participate in the school lunch program. For many students, school is the only place they can get three hot meals a day.

Impactful: Participating in school meals has positive mental and physical health benefits and has been linked to improvements in attendance and academic success. Students who eat school lunch eat healthier meals than students who bring food from home, regardless of income, and perform better in Math and English Language Arts tests – equivalent to up to 10-weeks of learning.[1,2]

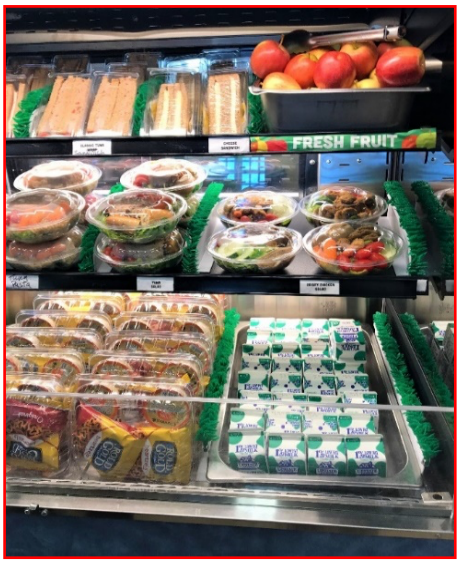
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition Policy Priority

Transform every high school and middle school cafeteria by fully scaling OFNS' student friendly cafeteria redesign model (Cafeteria Enhancement Experience). The welcoming environment and the food court style serving line provide more daily menu options and faster service, and the presentation dramatically increases the appeal of the food. High schools with redesigned cafeterias experienced a 35% increase in student participation in school meals. This model is highly cost-effective and time efficient. Each cafeteria redesign costs only $500,000 and can be completed in one weekend. Approximately 80 of the 575 DOE middle and high school cafeterias either have the redesign model or currently have funds dedicated for the work. An investment of $250 million in capital funds over 5 years is needed to transform all middle and high school cafeterias.

1. https://www.wilder.org/sites/default/files/imports/Cargill_lit_review_1-14.pdf
2. https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/cpr/publications/working_papers2/wp203.pdf

Universal Free School Meals & COVID-19

Thanks to UFL, every NYC public school student was eligible to receive **Pandemic EBT (P-EBT)** food funds to cover meals missed due to school closures since Spring 2020. This automatically placed food funds in the hands of all NYC families with school-aged children and infused **$1 billion federal dollars into the local economy** with more to come.





More Information:

awatts@foodadvocates.org

CommunityFoodAdvocatesNYC.org

Facebook.com/Lunch4Learning

Community Service Society

Powering a more equitable New York

President and
Chief Executive Officer
David R. Jones, Esq.

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Chief Operating Officer
Steven L. Krause

Community Service Society of New York
Testimony before the
New York City Council Finance Committee
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

Good afternoon. My name is Juan Pinzon, Director of Government Relations at the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). CSS respectfully submits this testimony on the Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget.

CSS has worked with and for New Yorkers since 1843 to promote economic opportunity and champion an equitable city and state. We power change through a strategic combination of research, services, and advocacy to make New York more livable for people facing economic insecurity. By expanding access to health care, affordable housing, employment, opportunities for individuals with conviction histories, debt assistance, and more, we make a tangible difference in the lives of millions

CSS urges the City Council to increase funding for the NYC Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) from $1,014,114 to $2,314,114 in the FY23 budget. CSS also urges the City Council to increase funding for the Next Door Project to $150,000 and continue supporting funding for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

The Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP)

Navigating our healthcare system has sadly become one of the hardest thing people experience in their lives. If they are lucky enough to have health insurance, they often get lost in the labyrinth of insurance terminology, tier networks, billing notices, and other puzzling issues; all while their premiums and out-of-pocket costs continue to increase, forcing many to put off preventive visits or filling their prescription drugs. A 2022 healthcare affordability survey confirms this troubling trend: half of New

Yorkers (53 percent) say they are not very confident they can pay for usual healthcare services and 4 in 10 (38 percent) are sacrificing health care because of costs (e.g., delayed care, avoided care, cut pills, or didn't fill a prescription).[1] For those less fortunate who are unable to access coverage because of their immigration status or affordability barriers, the ability to access care is even more daunting. In addition, our inequitable health delivery system fails to address cultural and linguistic barriers and thus exacerbate health disparities and poor health outcomes.

Fortunately, New York City residents have a resource available to make the system work for them when the odds are stacked against them. In 1998 the New York City Council launched MCCAP to help residents with their healthcare and health insurance needs through a network of 26 CBOs with $4 million in funding ($2 million in Council funds plus $2 million in federal Medicaid matching funds). The program was cut in the fiscal crisis after the Great Recession. In 2019, the Council restored funding and MCCAP has since grown to a network of 12 CBOs—less than half of its old levels of capacity.

Nonetheless, today MCCAP helps our most vulnerable populations across the city navigate our Byzantine healthcare system. CSS acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline while CBO advocates serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in 15 languages and at 15 different locations across all five boroughs. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people understand their insurance, resolve health insurance problems, get medical services, access affordable care for those who are uninsured, and address social determinants of health.

Since the program relaunched in February 2020, the CSS helpline and CBOs have provided much-needed advocacy assistance to clients who have struggled to secure coverage and medically necessary care (including COVID-19 tests and vaccines) during the COVID-19 pandemic, proving to be a cost-effective program along the way. Some examples of our success include:

- handling more than 7,000 cases;
- obtaining a favorable outcome for clients in 90% of the cases;
- serving clients (80%) who are people of color and/or speak a language other than English at home; and
- maintaining a helpline live-answer rate of over 90%.

In addition to helping people secure coverage and care, MCCAP CBOs have also been effective at addressing social determinants of health, such as food insecurity and unemployment, by helping clients apply for food stamps and unemployment insurance.

New York City residents need trusted and experienced MCCAP advocates on their side now more than ever to help them access the coverage and care they need.

[1] Source: https://smhttp-ssl-58547.nexcesscdn.net/nycss/Affordability_NY_D4.pdf

New York City deserves to have the MCCAP program restored to its old levels of $4 million in funding with a network of 26 CBOs.

We respectfully ask for the New York City Council help us get halfway restored by increasing MCCAP funding from $1,014,114 to $2,314,114 in the FY23 budget. With an additional $1.3 million, MCCAP will be able serve thousands of additional clients by increasing funding to the existing network of CBOs and procuring 14 additional CBOs that can provide in-person services in districts that are currently underserved.

The Next Door Project (NDP)

NDP works with and for low-income New Yorkers whose past contacts with the criminal punishment system have stymied their forward progression. Working on-site at partner agency offices across the city and at CSS's headquarters, NDP helps an average of 600 New Yorkers each year to obtain, understand and repair their rap sheets, address employment and licensing discrimination through advocacy and litigation, apply for Certificates of Good Conduct or Certificates of Relief from Disabilities, and more. NDP services help open doors to jobs, housing, and stability that had previously been closed.

NDP services do not begin to meet the needs of all New Yorkers with conviction histories. NDP currently receives $50,000 in funding, which is used to work with immigration legal defense groups to provide confidential rap sheet services. We respectfully ask for the New York City Council to provide an additional $100,000 in funding ($150,000 in total), to be used for expanding on-site services in areas not currently served in this way, including upper Manhattan and the South Bronx.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

RSVP recruits, trains, and places volunteers at community-based organizations throughout the five boroughs of New York City. RSVP has nearly 750 volunteers 55+ at hundreds of nonprofit agencies throughout New York City, down considerably from its pre-pandemic level of 2,300.

RSVP provides life-changing opportunities for volunteers ages 55 and over, helps meet the critical needs of communities by mobilizing tens of thousands of hours of volunteer service, and strengthens public and nonprofit agencies by matching skilled volunteers with vital programs and services.

We respectfully ask for the New York City Council to continue supporting funding for RSVP as we continue to retain and recruit older adults who provide vital services to New Yorkers still recovering from hardships created by the pandemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: 212-614-5353 or at jpinzon@cssny.org.

Community Voices Heard Testimony on the
Proposed FY 2023 Executive Budget Regarding Public Housing

The New York City Council must fight to ensure that the $1.5 billion it allocated for capital repairs in the New York City Housing Authority is m. Mayor Adams' proposed executive fiscal year 2023 budget for New York City has abandoned the city's responsibility for the lives of 400,000 public housing residents by investing in privatization. Rather than investing resources to make capital improvements to public housing developments most in need, the City has signaled its commitment to increased privatization, turning over public housing to profit-motivated developers. This comes during a housing crisis when the city needs public, affordable housing more than ever.

Community Voices Heard (CVH) is a member-led, multi-racial organization principally composed of women of color and low-income families in New York State. CVH tackles tough issues and builds power to secure racial, social and economic justice for all New Yorkers. Through grassroots organizing, leadership development, policy changes, and creating new models of direct democracy CVH is creating a truly equitable New York State. We are the largest Black-led organizing institution in New York State.

For years, CVH's members living in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing have raised alarms about the dire conditions and negligence of public housing by local, state, and federal elected officials. NYCHA is the largest source of affordable housing in New York City, providing housing to nearly 400,000 low-and moderate-income city residents in 302 public housing developments. Yet, most NYCHA residents continue to live in unacceptable and unsafe conditions while elected officials do nothing.

The Mayor's proposed FY2023 budget continues years of disinvestment, investing little beyond capital money already committed, and instead investing $1.2 Billion dollars toward more privatization through the PACT program. Instead of devoting these billions toward urgently needed repairs, Mayor Adams is subsidizing private takeover of public housing.

<u>Stop the Privatization of Public Housing</u>

The New York City Housing Authority has already committed to converting 62,000 units to private management through the PACT program. Reports from residents in development that

have or are currently being converted through PACT reveal insufficient engagement of residents, confusion, and a loss of resident rights.

CVH Member Maria Pacheco recently testified to the City Council that:

"[R]esidents [are] feeling confused and scared. I am hearing a lot of negative comments from residents in my building. Some people say that they are going to be pushed out, others think the rents are going to go up. They put materials on our door but that is it. Residents don't read this, and the materials are not easy to understand so tenants are still confused."

As the president of her resident's association, Maria said that, "NYCHA also puts all of the burden of sharing information on the tenant association. I have been asked to tell each resident about the plans for RAD and this is too much for me to do."
She urged the City Council to "[M]ake sure that you protect residents. Residents need all the information and support they can have. And they need to have decision making power about RAD/PACT."

Poor Living Conditions Impact NYCHA Residents' Health and Mental Health

The impact of poor housing conditions reverberate far beyond the walls of public housing. In a study released in 2020, CVH and the Regional Plan Association found that eighty-one percent of residents living in five public housing complexes across the Rockaway peninsula are in desperate need of immediate repairs to their apartments. Our analysis found:

- Eighty one percent of residents living in five public housing complexes across the Rockaway peninsula desperately need immediate repairs to their apartments.
- More than half of the 700-plus people surveyed need bathroom repairs and 45 percent need kitchen repairs.
- One third of those surveyed say their living conditions are directly affecting their mental health — intensifying problems like stress and depression.
- A quarter of respondents say issues like mold affect their physical health — triggering ailments like asthma, and chronic fatigue.[1]

These findings underscore the lived experience of CVH members: the physical and mental health consequences of poor housing conditions impact residents' employment, children's

[1] Regional Plan Association, "The Impacts of Living in NYCHA Needs for resident health in the Rockaways and beyond," July 2020, *available at* https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/rpa-org/pdfs/RPA_The_Effects_of_Living_at_NYCHA.pdf.

schooling, and increase healthcare needs. According to the Regional Plan Association, NYCHA residents hold more than 137,000 jobs, including over 30,000 in the Health Care sector alone. Residents spend more than $2 billion dollars a year, much of it supporting local businesses, and own hundreds of local businesses themselves. The abhorrent conditions affect dozens of neighborhoods and the economy of our entire city.[2]

Prioritizing Resident Input and Control will Increase Accountability

Residents have a right to management that is punctual, respectful, and responsive. Increasing resident input and control would increase accountability for quality and timely completion of repairs and prioritization of need.

CVH's joint report with the Regional Planning Association found that 39 percent of residents reported that management had closed out a ticket due to a resident not being home, when they were in fact home.[3] Furthermore, due to constrained windows of availability, residents often have to take off work or cancel other obligations in order to be home and give access for repairs. NYCHA must institute a process of independently verifying with the resident when a ticket is closed.

The Mayor and City Council Must Preserve Public Housing with Increase Funding for Capital Repairs

CVH calls upon the Mayor and City Council to increase funding for capital repairs in NYCHA by $2.5 billion in the FY2023 budget. Without investment in capital repairs, conditions at NYCHA will continue to deteriorate, impacting the health, safety, and welfare of hundreds of thousands New York City families, and we will lose public housing to profit-driven, private companies. The crisis in NYCHA is a crisis for New York City. Privatization is not the solution.

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Submitted: May 26, 2022

[2] Regional Plan Association, "NYCHA'S CRISIS A Matter For All New Yorkers," December 2018, *available at* https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/rpa-org/pdfs/RPA-NYCHAs_Crisis_2018_12_18.pdf.
[3] Regional Plan Association, "The Impacts of Living in NYCHA Needs for resident health in the Rockaways and beyond," July 2020, *available at* https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/rpa-org/pdfs/RPA_The_Effects_of_Living_at_NYCHA.pdf.

New York City Council
Testimony of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

2022 Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022

My name is Cassondra Warney, and I am a Senior Program Manager at the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). I am here to talk about how the City needs to continue to invest in supportive housing as a solution to de-incarcerate the thousands of New Yorkers on Rikers, end homelessness, and to help communities thrive. CSH's mission is to advance solutions that use housing as a platform to deliver services, improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, and build healthy communities. We have been working in NYC as a supportive housing intermediary for over 30 years. Supportive housing improves lives by providing an individual or family with a safe, affordable, permanent home and connection to services like behavioral health, employment, medical and more.

While CSH has advocated for supportive housing to be available to individuals coming out of incarceration who need it, we are urgently looking to improve access to supportive housing for those currently on Rikers Island who have significant behavioral health needs and are homeless. In our recent analysis, we found that several thousand people on Rikers Island – approximately 2,589 people in a given year – are experiencing homelessness and struggle with ongoing behavioral health needs. When released, these community members struggle to find adequate support, cycle through crisis systems (including shelter and emergency departments), and likely return to Rikers Island. This group needs an intervention of supportive housing – a combination of affordable housing with voluntary, individualized services. We know supportive housing is a solution to not only ending homelessness but also a solution that improves community safety, disrupts cycling through costly crisis systems, reduces jail recidivism and, improves health outcomes for many populations, especially those with behavioral health needs and criminal legal histories.



It is important to note that:

- We thank City Council for formally requesting the Adams' administration to add $28.4M to the existing funding dedicated to supportive housing for the justice-impacted. Preliminary review of the latest budget suggest this request has not been incorporated.

- Through the Borough-based Jail Plan Points of Agreement in 2019, City leadership agreed to expand Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH), which has not yet happened.

- The CSH Metro Team spoke with many City Council offices in the last few months, including Criminal Justice, Public Safety, Housing and Buildings, and thank those partners, especially to Criminal Justice Chair Carlina Rivera and her staff, for their time and support in the following recommendations.

Today I wanted to elevate two essential budgetary elements that need to be changed this year to support the de-incarceration of Rikers Island as part of the City's 2019 Points of Agreement to Close Rikers, which include: (1) expanding Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) and (2) increasing the annual commitment to Supportive Housing.

Expand rates for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH):
JISH is currently the only designated supportive housing program for people leaving Rikers Island, and there are only 120 apartments available. DOHMH has put forth an RFP to increase units to 500, however due to the contracts rates being too low, there have been minimal bids since 2019.

- Give providers current Fair Market Rent (FMR) with an annual escalator. Currently, they are receiving rates based on the FY2017 FMR that doesn't cover rent for the tenants in 2022.

- Increase service funding for scattered-site and for congregate service. People who have experienced incarceration, homelessness, and struggle with behavioral health needs have trauma and complex needs, and these essential service providers need adequate staffing to serve this group of people. *Currently, providers only receive $10,000 in services per person.*

- The "scattered" site model typically utilizes vouchers to rent units on the private market and case managers visits the tenants to connect them to any services they might need. For the "congregate" model, buildings include designated supportive housing units and typically have onsite case management.

Cost Breakdown for JISH

- Recommended JISH Operating Costs: $20,568 (with a 2% escalator each year to keep up with FMR)
- Recommended JISH Service Costs for Scattered Site: $20,699
- Recommended JISH Services Costs for Congregate Setting: $25,596

Average Cost: $43,716

Allocating $28.4M Million for JISH		
Average/Blended Cost	$43,716	640 Possible Units
Scattered Site Only	$41,267	678 Possible Units
Congregate Only	$46,164	606 Possible Units
300 Scattered Site Units 338 Congregate Units	$12,380,100 $15,319,900	

In summation, it is realistic that we can better support the current 120 JISH units at increased rates, in addition to bringing on new units for a total of 600 to 640 *properly funded JISH units*.

Increase the City's Annual Commitment to Supportive Housing:

- Increase NYC's commitment to supportive housing by 1,000 units, for a yearly total of 2,000.

- Enhance rental subsidy to align with current FMR and increase service funding for scattered-site to **$17,500** per person.

In addition to encouraging the Adams Administration to double the de Blasio Administration's commitment and create 2,000 supportive housing units total per year, we are also advocating for the Administration to revise the eligibility criteria for NY 15/15 for incarcerated individuals, which is backed by many City Council members and City leaders alike, to make time served count as time homeless so that those individuals are not forced to accrue 12 months of homelessness after incarceration in order to qualify for housing.

Cost Breakdown for Recommendations on NY 15/15

Operating Costs: $20, 568 (with a 2% escalator each year to keep up with FMR)
Services Costs: $17,500

Increasing Capacity and Adding 1,000 NY 15/15 Units	
Total Cost: $38,068 per unit	1,000 Units: $38,068,000

New York City moving these recommendations forward will be an innovative milestone and example for communities nationwide. They will reduce significant racial disparities in the criminal legal, and homeless systems and end the cycle of homelessness and institutionalization for those struggling with complex behavioral health needs who are incarcerated on Rikers Island.

CSH looks forward to working with the New York City Council and Adams Administration on seeing these budgetary needs reflected in 2023's Budget. Implementing these recommendations are cost-effective in the long run, and essential to helping these fellow New Yorkers while also making our City safer.

Please reach out with questions you or other City Council members may have. CSH greatly appreciates your time and attention on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Cassondra Warney
Senior Program Manager, Metro Team, CSH

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TESTIMONY

NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CHAIR, RITA JOSEPH

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearings

Presented on
Wednesday, May 25th, 2022

SINCE 1962
COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS & ADMINISTRATORS
Local 1:AFSA, AFL-CIO

The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
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Thank you, Speaker Adams, Education Chair Joseph, Finance Chair Brannan, and distinguished members of the City Council for conducting this hearing. I am Mark Cannizzaro, the president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). On behalf of some 17,000 in-service and retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Educational Administrators, Supervisors and Directors/Assistant Directors of City-funded Early Childhood Centers, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the 2023 Executive Budget.

As we reach the 2-year mark of the global pandemic, all of us at CSA have are cautiously optimistic. No one in New York City, and indeed the world, has been left untouched by this health crisis, least of all our children. The U.S. and the City of New York seemed to have turned a corner on the pandemic phase of Covid-19 and, barring the emergence of a particularly dangerous variant, we could well be on our way to something resembling a more typical school experience for our students.

And, importantly, the State and City have committed to fully funding Foundation Aid and Fair Student Funding (FSF). To this, I will add a note of caution and a note of thanks. We must all be aware that, while welcomed, class-size reduction legislation must come with a commensurate increase in the FSF Formula. On behalf of all the members of CSA, I would like to thank all of you in the City Council for your many years of tireless advocacy for fully funding FSF.

Still, daunting consequences of the pandemic era remain to be addressed. Both students and staff struggle with mental health challenges resulting from extreme isolation and stress. It is likely that for some of the same reasons, rates of serious student misconduct are on the rise, significantly exacerbated by changes in the discipline code under Mayor de Blasio's administration prior to the emergence of Covid-19. Finally, lost instructional time has resulted in learning deficits which must be addressed. The cumulative impact threatens the retention and recruitment of educators and the loyalty of families to the public school system.

SAFETY PRIORITIES

In order to teach and learn, teachers and students must feel valued, respected, and safe. The first and most important priority of our city's school leaders is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our students while maintaining a culture that is conducive to learning and respectful to all. During the pandemic, our school leaders and their staffs made heroic efforts to protect the health of their school communities, as they responded to ever-changing information and mandates.

It is important to point out that long before the pandemic, CSA was regularly communicating with the de Blasio administration and the DOE regarding our members' growing concerns about school safety, resources allocated to schools to provide safe learning environments, and the erosion of school leaders' discretion over decisions that affect the well-being of their communities. In a pre-pandemic survey, only 21% of school leaders reported satisfaction with the changes to the discipline code under the de Blasio administration, only 31% were satisfied with the direction of the DOE with respect to student/staff safety, and only 30% were satisfied with its direction with respect to school climate and culture.

Unfortunately, we are still hearing regularly from school leaders about safety concerns. In many schools, misconduct is on the rise, leading some students to believe there are few or no consequences for disruptive, openly defiant, threatening and even violent behavior.

CSA would like to call upon the City Council for its support as we continue to advocate with Mayor Adams' new administration for safety measures that will allow our children to learn, our teachers to teach, and our administrators to lead. Here are our safety priorities:

1. **Maintain an adequate number of school safety agents.** Our schools need an adequate number of safety agents, and they must be appropriately funded. Approximately 1,000 vacancies must be filled as soon as possible. We ask for the full support of the City Council in ensuring that all school safety agent openings are filled, and no hiring reduction occurs.

2. **Every NYC school must have at least one assistant principal and the budget to accommodate this.** Recognizing that safety issues and concerns are exacerbated in schools without an assistant principal, CSA recently secured a new contractual provision calling for an assistant principal in every building. It is absolutely necessary to have a licensed administrator to oversee the protocols and procedures to keep students safe in an emergency. In a few instances, superintendents have denied a principal's request for an assistant principal. In other instances, schools have been denied the budget assistance that is required for such a hire. This is unacceptable. The leadership of assistant principals is critical to ensuring a positive school culture. Assistant principals are particularly necessary given that our system is deeply committed to using restorative approaches to student missteps, which understandably takes time and requires training.

3. **Principals need more discretion over the discipline code and its application**. CSA supports the philosophical shift in intervention responses and champions de-escalation techniques. School leaders fully recognize the folly of the old zero tolerance policy and its disproportionate impact on students of color and students with disabilities. However, many of our members believe that our system is faltering because the manner in which the de Blasio administration chose to implement these promising practices has eroded their discretion and tied their hands. As we have throughout our union's history, we continue to advocate that there must be regular and ongoing collaboration with school leaders over decisions that directly affect the operation of schools. We are hopeful that this collaboration will increase under the leadership of the new mayor and chancellor, who have so far expressed considerable regard for school principals.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

We face a dire threat to public education as we lose school principals, and we therefore urge you to help us stanch this loss by supporting their professional and personal development. We face this looming exodus partly because principals have been on the frontlines managing ever-shifting regulations and directives, dealing with declining student mental health and staff shortages, swerving from in-person to online learning and back again, then getting excoriated in the press.

In the City of New York, I can proudly and confidently say that no entity has done more to recruit, train and retain school principals than CSA's Executive Leadership Institute (ELI). As always, I would like to acknowledge that the City Council has long provided essential support for ELI's professional development efforts and this year we request an increase to 1.5 million dollars.

Training in social and emotional learning (SEL) have been at the forefront of ELI's professional development activities during the traumatic years of the pandemic. ELI has had a fruitful partnership with Marc Brackett at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to create an evidence-based approach

to addressing the uncertainty and anxiety children and their families have been experiencing during the pandemic. Staff has been trained to deal with their own emotional concerns in order to be better able to deal with those of their students. The needs of children, families and staff have only increased, and, with your help, we will continue to expand these programs.

ELI's Advanced Leadership Program for Aspiring Principals (ALPAP) will also continue to be invaluable to the development of new leaders. ALPAP has a stellar track record in accomplishing these goals. It is a year-long principal preparatory experience in which the complex nature of decision-making and authentic leadership is explored. The principal retention rate for ALPAP graduates exceeds the citywide and national average

Also critical is ELI's two-year educational leadership program, which is cost-free for participants. The program is designed to support newly assigned Assistant Principals, Education Administrators, Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors. The School Leadership Institute (SLI) provides two years of professional development seminars and mentor resources to enhance a wide variety of skills. Each series is designed to build and expand fundamental school leadership skills The mentors are highly experienced former supervisors who help mentees integrate the content of the SLI training into their daily routines, which of course includes a growing reliance on online learning.

Increased funding from the City Council will enable ELI to expand the outreach of recruitment and retention programs such as SLI and ALPAP and collaborate with superintendents to offer customized workshops to meet the needs of their supervisory staff, and to expand workshops dealing with issues such as bullying, equity, social and emotional development, and mental health. We have faith in the Council's continuing support for ELI, and we thank you for your past recognition of the role that professional development plays in the work of our educators.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CSA's Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors have been on the front lines of the heroic work of re-opening their centers and providing many of our youngest learners with the attention and care they have needed while most of their parents have served the community as essential workers. We continue to ask you to support us in eliminating the shocking disparities in their pay and working conditions. Compared with their colleagues in the DOE, our Early Childhood Directors and Assistant Directors barely make a living wage. Over the years, CSA has tried to raise awareness of the inequities they face on a daily basis and to point out that the majority of them are professional women of color. These inequities must be addressed so that we can hold onto these educators and attract many more of them to ensure that our youngest learners are a priority. We are grateful to all of you on the City Council for making a request of Mayor de Blasio last year to address this issue. Unfortunately, it was not included in the budget.

After years exhausting all other options, CSA filed a lawsuit against the de Blasio administration on December 1, 2021, seeking to address that pay disparity, noting that "This pay scale inequity not only smacks of racial injustice and patent unfairness, it also threatens to compromise the stability and quality of early childhood education for all – a frequently trumpeted priority of the administration. As long as CBO Directors are paid on a lower scale and treated like second-class citizens, they – and the children in their care – are stigmatized and branded as less important."

While this union awaits the outcome of the lawsuit, we request your support once again for budget inclusion and advocacy.

SUPPORTING OTHER SCHOOL COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Allow me to take this opportunity to address two other school community concerns: hunger and the environment.

Our union fully supports the efforts of Community Food Advocates' (CFA) Lunch 4 Learning coalition in its request for a 5-year investment of capital funds to allow New York City's Office of Food and Nutrition Services to transform all middle and high school cafeterias into welcoming environments that increase student participation in school meals.

CSA also fully supports the Carbon Free & Healthy Schools campaign being led by NYC labor unions to move to renewable energy and correct decades of underinvestment in New York City school buildings. The global pandemic shed a particularly harsh light on the deficiencies of our ventilation and filtration systems. Full funding will address an outdated infrastructure that is putting students and the planet at risk.

Finally, significant federal dollars were distributed directly to schools to provide extra tutoring, social and emotional support, and professional development. But ironically, some of this money remains unused, mainly because many of our principals are having trouble finding staff to put in the extra time when they are already so overworked.

Tutoring and enrichment programs require convincing staff to work extra hours at a moment when educators are greatly overworked. People are tired, and it's difficult to find enough of them at this point who are willing to trade whatever little precious time they have for money. Our members will need your support to make sure that any unspent money will not be taken away but will be used, when possible, for the sake of our students. We have been able to count on you in the past and we know we will be able to count on you as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.

Once again, I thank the finance committee for the opportunity to address you and share our triumphs and concerns. I look forward to working with you on behalf of our children.

Mark Cannizzaro

FY23 NYC Sexual Assault Initiative



Testimony

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022

Crime Victims Treatment Center

Good afternoon and a sincere thank you to Councilmember and Committee chair Brannan, and other members of the Committee on Finance. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the increasingly important New York City Sexual Assault Initiative, which provides essential funding to five diverse sexual assault programs across NYC, and allows us to continue increasing services to populations of survivors that face significant barriers to service.

My name is Christopher E. Bromson and I am the Executive Director of the Crime Victims Treatment Center. CVTC has been helping survivors of interpersonal violence heal, completely free of charge, since 1977, and has been on the forefront of victims services since its inception. In 2018, we separated from the Mount Sinai Health System, incorporated our own 501(c)3, and have tripled our staff, budget and services since.

The New York City Sexual Assault Initiative was first funded in 2005 by the speaker; $250,000 was distributed equally among 4 direct service programs in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. The monies were given specifically to increase services to underserved populations that we on the program level know continue to experience immense barriers to service. For FY 23, we are asking for a total of $1.6 million to be distributed equally between our five programs. At CVTC, that 2005 funding meant the creation of NYC's first and still only program dedicated to serving male survivors of sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. Before Council funding, CVTC treated about a dozen men per year. Now, a decade and a half later, male-identified survivors make up over 20% of our overall client population. We offer both individual, trauma-focused psychotherapy, and 4 different trauma-focused groups, specifically tailored to male survivors, including those who are incarcerated. Council funding allowed us to create outreach materials designed to normalize feelings and begin to lessen the intense shame that so often surrounds male survivors. Those materials and other outreach efforts have been so successful that the demand for our services continues to increase. Transitioning to a hybrid model of therapy provision has both increased the accessibility of our services, and also the demand. Increased funding from the Council will allow us to continue to meet the needs of the survivors we serve, in the ways that are most convenient for them, whether that be in-person in our office, via Zoom, or over the phone or through the mail for incarcerated individuals.

Funding from this initiative has also allowed CVTC to expand its services to new hospital emergency departments in Brooklyn. Last year, we expanded our Volunteer Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence Advocate Program, and Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Program, to Brookdale Hospital, and are

currently implementing both of those programs at Kingsbrook and Interfaith Hospitals, along with two other hospital systems.

Funds are also used to support sexual violence prevention programs that focus specifically on NYC nightlife spaces and middle school aged youth. Outsmart NYC, a program managed by CVTC and the Alliance, along with a multitude of nightlife partners, engages nightlife staff in preventing sexual violence before it occurs. The robust curriculum was built in partnership with the nightlife community, and has been replicated across the state. CVTC's prevention team also works in partnership with a charter school in Crown Heights, facilitating programs on healthy sexuality, consent, and bystander intervention.

Support through this initiative does not only make a profound impact on the 1,400 people who come to our office each year for services; it makes a profound impact on their families, their friends, their neighborhoods and communities. The impact is multiplied by the hundreds of thousands of people who are supported by the 7,000 individuals we train each year. This is how change happens, and support through this initiative is how the City has a direct opportunity to be a part of it.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher E. Bromson
Executive Director
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Cultural Institutions Group Live Testimony
Committee on Finance
Wednesday, May 25th at 10:00am
Taryn Sacramone, Executive Director, Queens Theatre
Chair, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

Good morning Chair Brannan and members of the Committee. I am Taryn Sacramone, Executive Director of the Queens Theatre and Chair of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the CIGs – a diverse coalition of 34 cultural organizations who share a public-private partnership with the City of New York and are located in all five boroughs, including zoos, gardens, museums, and performing arts organizations.

Culture has the data-proven ability to strengthen communities, improve education outcomes, decrease youth involvement in the criminal justice system, and improve the mental health and well-being of the communities they serve.

The CIGs maintain a collective workforce of over 6,300 full-time employees and nearly 4,000 part-time employees. I am proud to say that in FY20 we welcomed 24 million guests through our doors.

I would like to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to testify today. We are very grateful for the Council's continued support for the culture and arts sector. Our partnership has allowed cultural organizations to provide much needed services to residents across New York City as we navigate the road to recovery from the pandemic.

In regard to the FY23 Executive Budget, we would like to continue our conversation about the City's most pressing needs. The city's cultural sector has proven time and again its capacity as the number one driver of tourism and economic impetus of past recoveries. The cultural sector has an annual direct contribution to the economy of the City of $7 billion, comprising $3.5B in wages and salaries to households employed by these organizations and $3.5B of the budgets of these nonprofits being utilized to purchase goods and services. According to the Office of the NYC Comptroller, the cultural sector contributes approximately $11B to the city's economy. However, cultural funding has seen a decline over the past 15 years. In FY08, it received 0.26% of the total budget, while in FY22 culture received less than 0.23% of the city budget. The importance of the cultural sector, the services it produces, and the revenue it generates towards the economy are extremely underrepresented in the City's budget. We are asking for the Council's consideration in remedying this issue and ensuring that the cultural community can continue to operate and grow.

We were very excited about the Council's conversation with the Department of Cultural Affairs on Friday and grateful for the Council's advocacy related to our request. We are also grateful to the Administration for the $5.2 million allocation (in accordance with the Mayor's Blueprint for Economic Recovery), the addition of six new staff positions at DCLA, and the reforms to the Cultural Development

Fund application process. As many of you are aware, the entire cultural sector is requesting an additional $100 million investment from the City in FY23. This investment, known as *NYC Culture VIBE – Visionary Investment in Building NYC'S Economy* – will bring the annual investment in culture to .24% of City's total budget and will represent a commitment to our ultimate goal of reaching 1% for Culture. That $100 million includes:

- **$50M in CIG and CDF baseline funding** (split evenly between the Cultural Institutions Group and the Cultural Development Fund) to provide critical core support that will stabilize NYC's cultural community and support their core work as community anchors and tourism magnets.
- **$45M in grants for 5 Strategic Initiatives** that advances a revitalized and equitable city:
    - $15M for a Cultural Equity Fund, to support BIPOC-led and -serving organizations;
    - $10M for tourism and marketing for culture across all 5 boroughs;
    - 10M for workforce development and support programs;
    - $5M for accessibility and inclusion of Deaf/Disabled communities
    - $5M for individual artists and renewal of the City Artist Corps program
- **$5M to increase staffing at DCLA**, for the agency to provide efficient and timely support to the field.

In addition, the renewal of Council Initiatives, totaling $32.7M in FY22, will support the Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC), Cultural After School Adventures (CASA) and others, to continue essential partnerships with NYC human services agencies.

The funding of this request will have a profound, transformational effect that will resonate throughout the city. It will bring economic resiliency and growth, kickstart a return of tourism, and lay the foundation for an equitable, educated, and safe city that is truly representative of the diversity of its residents. *NYC Culture VIBE* will benefit cultural organizations of all sizes, providing them with the resources to continue their work as community anchors and expand their services to the city's most vulnerable and underrepresented populations. We look forward to our continued partnership with the City and Council. On behalf of the Cultural Institution Group and the entire cultural community, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

University Student Senate
555 West 57th Street, 1420
New York, NY 10019
Tel: (646) 664-8844
Website: www.usscuny.org

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Oversight FY 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony of Salimatou Doumbouya
Student, New York City College of Technology, City University of New York (CUNY)
Chairperson, CUNY University Student Senate (USS)
MAY 25th, 2022

Good Morning Chairperson Brannan and Honorable Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Salimatou Doumbouya and I serve as the 37th Chairperson for the City University of New York University Student Senate, representing more than 500,000 CUNY students within New York State. I also have the distinct honor to serve as the only student on the City University of New York Board of Trustees, as well as President of the CUNY New York City College of Technology (City Tech) Student Government Association. As a first-generation international college student from Guinea in West Africa, I received my Associates Degree (AA) in Liberal Arts from the Brough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) and currently I am an upper senior at City Tech, studying architecture.

The Preliminary Executive Budget Proposal which includes a 3% overhead spending reduction for most city agencies, would result in around $14.6 million in critical funding dollars being cut from the city university's total budget. This would have a significant impact on CUNY's community colleges which receive the majority of their funding from the city and leave 128 full-time faculty positions unfilled. A 2019 report produced by the NYC Comptroller's Office found that CUNY graduates contributed $4.2 billion to the state's economy. At the same time, the Department of Labor has routinely recommended investing in Community Colleges as a viable and effective pathway to decrease both reincarceration and recidivism. Missing the chance to increase CUNY's funding in building off some of the state's recent historic investments, would undermine a proven social economic and workforce pipeline for our city and further jeopardize already at-risk New Yorkers.

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On behalf of the nearly 500,000 students at CUNY, I ask you to support a total proposed funding increase of $85.6 million in CUNY funding. This would include $62.6 million in operating funds for needed investments at the university such as expanding ASAP availability to all community college students and hiring new full-time faculty, in addition to $23 million for Speaker Adams' "CUNY Reconnect" Initiative proposal which would help bring back nearly 700,000 New Yorkers who have some CUNY credits, but have not received a degree. This a bold and groundbreaking initiative, that can be achieved given that we make the needed investments in programs and services that have proven successful at increasing both graduation and retention rates.

The $62.6 million operating increase would be distributed as follows:

$20 million (baseline increase) for ASAP for All: This would make the Accelerated Study in Associates Programs (ASAP) program available to all community college students. Studies by the university have found that the program has proven successful at boosting graduation rates for Black and Hispanic males, with the program's three-year graduation rate more than doubling that of non-ASAP associate degree students throughout the university's community colleges.

$14.6 million to Replace Lost Full-time Faculty: The proposed 3% overhead agency cuts would increase the university's over-reliance on underpaid, adjunct faculty, while making it more difficult to convert long-time adjuncts to full-time positions.

$10 million for Mental Health Counselors: CUNY currently has an average of 1 mental health counselor per 2,400 students. This funding increase would bring the ratio towards 1 counselor per 1,000 students (as recommended by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services). With CUNY students facing a record mental health crisis, it is vital that we increase funding for additional full-0time mental health professionals on CUNY campuses.

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$2 million for Increasing Graduation Rates by Funding Remediation: This would allow for the hiring of full-time instructors for remedial courses

$5 million for Expansion of Intensive English-Language Instructors: This would help support the CLIP program which has proven successful at opening the doors to new enrolled students while supporting some of the most vulnerable at CUNY and ensuring that they have the proficiency needed to enter the city's workforce

$4 million for Expansion of Childcare Centers: One in four college students across the country are parents with dependent children and over 40% are single mothers. This would ensure that existing centers also have the funding they need while supporting higher staff-to-student ratios for younger children.

$7 million for Revise Support for Senior Colleges: This would adjust for inflation in bringing the city's $53 million support (2019 levels) for senior colleges to $60 million (2022 levels)

$33.5 million for Capital Budget: This would support CUNY's capital budget request for its community colleges which are largely funded by the city.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to having the chance to further discuss CUNY's student priorities with you all.

Sincerely,

Salimatou Doumbouya

Thank you Chair Justin Brannan and committee members for hearing my testimony today as a representative of Dance Parade.

My name is Carlye Eckert and I'm the Community Engagement Director for Dance Parade. My responsibilities are to coordinate year round dance education outreach in schools and community centers across the boroughs which culminate in the Annual Dance Parade on Broadway and Festival in Tompkins Square Park. This past Saturday, we held the 16th annual Dance Parade and Festival in NYC. The theme was "Back to the Streets!" This was our first live event in two years with 10,000 dancers representing over 100 styles of dance. The Dance Parade and Festival was covered by ABC, NBC, CBS, Telemundo, NY1, Noticias and dozens of others including the print edition of the New York Times as the #1 Pick in their weekend roundup.

On Saturday, Folk Dance Club Kaleidoscope, a Brighton Beach based children's dance group led out the parade with a display of Ukranian and Russian dances. This beautiful and poignant performance shared with the public the similarities and differences of these two peoples and cultures embodied side by side and unified in dance.

Our mission is to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and cultural equity through the promotion of dance in all its forms. We foster DIVERSITY by recruiting over 100 unique styles of cultural dance to be presented in dance parade every year. We foster INCLUSION by making Dance Parade a participatory parade for each and every person who wants to be involved. We demonstrate CULTURAL EQUITY by respecting all cultural, socio-economic, genders, identities, or political affiliations. Throughout the year, we serve the dance community by employing scores of teaching and performing artists, of which 94% are BIPOC artists and immigrants. And through our programs, we reach over 150,000 New Yorkers each year. We believe that live dance performance has the potential to awaken a communal spirit, help the public and the dance community heal from the pandemic, and creates a more vibrant and equitable society.

This year, through our Community Engagement Programs, we have worked closely with 12 schools across the five boroughs to bring back in-person 10-20wk dance education programs to K-12 students which culminated in last Saturday's cultural event when students joined their teaching artists and danced down Broadway. Our teaching artists work in senior centers March through June, and thanks to a partnership with the Department of Aging, offer joyful physical activity that supports coordination, flexibility, improved circulation, honors life experiences, and strengthens connections between older Americans and vibrant NYC arts & culture.
Dance Parade has applied its stimulus money toward a Marginalized Community Fund to support the participation of Black, African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Central and South American, and People with Disabilities in the Parade and DanceFest through free

registration, audio rentals, parade floats, festival booths and artist provide stipends of $1-$2K.

Like many arts and culture organizations, our programming has been greatly affected by the pandemic, and even though the community has been able to come out in a show of force this year, we had a considerable amount of artist and student groups either unable to commit to our programming or drop out of the parade due to COVID-19. We appeal to the City Council to support funding to the cultural community that is still vulnerable to the pandemic and support an equitable return to normal for all.

Through our continued efforts and experiences of this time, we pledge to continue our work of bringing the joy of dance in all its forms to New Yorkers and to help strengthen the presence of dance in our city. We are grateful to DCLA and for the Council's effort to support the cultural sector. We ask the City Council for an additional $100 million investment in the cultural community bringing us closer to our goal of 1% for Culture.
Thank you very much.



Carlye Eckert
Community Engagement Director

Testimony to City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted to City Council Committee on Finance on May 25, 2022

Prepared by Dance/NYC

Presented by Ariel Herrera, Research and Advocacy Manager

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC (dance.nyc), a service organization that reaches over 5,000 individual dance artists, 1,200 dance-making entities, 500 non-profit dance companies, and the many for-profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area. Its areas of service are of special benefit to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color), immigrant, disabled, low-income and small budget dance workers. Dance/NYC is the only service organization for the dance sector in the metropolitan NYC area, and its action-oriented research and advocacy seek to represent and advance the interests of the dance field. It embeds the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of its operations and frames the following requests through the lens of those values.

Dance/NYC joins colleague advocates working across creative disciplines in thanking you for your leadership and requesting:

1. **A total $100 million investment in the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) for FY23 to augment NYC's economic recovery and ensure equitable sector growth inclusive of the Arts and Culture industry. This request will bring annual investment in culture to 0.24% of the City's total budget as a baseline, with a commitment toward the ultimate goal of reaching 1% spending for culture.** The $100 million request includes:
    - $50 million in baseline funding for key DCLA programs, split evenly between the Cultural Institutions Group and Cultural Development Fund;
    - $45 million in grants for five strategic initiatives to advance equity in the field, including:
        - $15 million for a Cultural Equity Fund

    - $10 million for tourism and marketing for culture across all five boroughs
    - $10 million for workforce development and support programs
    - $5 million for accessibility and inclusion of D/deaf and disabled communities
    - $5 million for individual artists, including the City Artist Corps program;
- $5 million to increase staffing at DCLA to provide efficient and comprehensive support to the field.

2. **A robust investment in arts education through the Department of Education, including:**
    - Boosting the per student arts allocation to $100 from $79.62;
    - Continued 20% allocation of the Fiscal 2023 American Rescue Plan Act Academic (ARPA) recovery funding–amounting to a ~$44,000 allocation per school–to expand standards-based arts instruction for all students and roll unused Fiscal 2022 ARPA arts funding into Fiscal 2023 for summer and school year programs;
    - $5.6 million in funding for arts and cultural partnerships and opportunities through Summer Rising, CASA, and Su-CASA initiatives; and
    - Restoring baseline funding of $24 million for Arts Services cut at the onset of the pandemic.

The growth and resilience of the cultural sector has long been impeded by historic underinvestment and underrepresentation in policymaking by the city government and agencies of BIPOC, disabled people, and immigrant arts workers and community-based cultural organizations who face persistent systemic barriers that have long perpetuated patterns of inequity in the field. This includes lack of access to funding at the governmental and philanthropic levels. **Independent arts workers and small-budget arts and cultural organizations, led by and primarily serving BIPOC, immigrants, disabled, and other underserved communities are deeply rooted in their communities and more representative of the rich and unique cultural diversity of our great city.** They are vital cultural assets critical to promoting healthy, thriving communities in New York City, and we need to do everything we can to ensure their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and that they continue to flourish.

Dance is consistently the least funded of all the performing arts, and dance workers face additional barriers to economic viability due to low levels of unionization in the field and a corresponding lack of wage standards and labor protections. Low wages within the sector can also be a deterrent for historically marginalized workers to remain employed sustainably in the field, particularly in small budget organizations that operate within their communities. Dance workers are a necessary and vital part of the City's social and economic fabric: dance workers are neighbors, parents, educators, service providers, and community leaders whose work deserves increased visibility and sustained, long-term investments.

The Arts and Culture industry is a major economic engine for the city:

- $110 billion in economic activity generated by the creative sector, comprising nearly 13% of the city's total economic output;[1]
- $300 million contributed annually by the dance industry, not including fiscally sponsored organizations, for profit enterprises, sole proprietorships, and individual dance workers;
- $1.6 billion generated by the expenditures of cultural tourists and the proceeds of touring companies as the number one driver of tourism to the City[2];
- 293,000 people employed and $30.4 billion in wages paid, of which over 62,000 workers are self-employed;[3]
- Over 1,000 theaters, venues, dance companies, and musical groups employing over 16,000 workers and paying over $1 billion in total compensation; and
- Interconnection with other industries and local economies: The average arts attendee spends approximately $31.47 per person per event beyond the cost of admission on meals, retail, parking, lodging, local transportation, childcare, and souvenirs.[4]

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[1] Office of the New York City Comptroller. *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City*. 2019. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/

[2] Americans for the Arts. *The Arts As an Industry: Their Economic Importance to the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region.* https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/the-arts-as-an-industry-their-economic-importance-to-the-new-york-new-jersey-metropolitan-region-0

[3] Office of the New York City Comptroller. *The Creative Economy: Art, Culture and Creativity in New York City*. 2019. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/the-creative-economy/

[4] Americans for the Arts. *Arts and Economic Prosperity 5*. https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf

Contributions of the Arts and Culture industry are essential to the City's overall economic health, and a number of studies have shown that the sector has sustained and continues to incur some of the worst impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Cultural organizations have accrued losses of over $6.8 billion[5];
- 95% canceled programming, 88% modified the delivery of their programs, and 11% had to stop providing products or services to their communities; and
- Dance organization, group, and project budgets shrunk by 31%, with the smallest organizations losing an average of 52%[6]; and
- Dance/NYC recognizes at least 26 organizations and facilities that have permanently closed their doors due to the pandemic; the majority of which includes studio facilities which are primarily small businesses and beacons in their communities.
- As of February 2022, total employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector remains 18.8% below pre-pandemic levels.[7]

Dance/NYC's own study[8] shows the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has had on small-budget groups and individual dance makers, which make up the majority of the dance-making sector but have historically lacked access to resources and support. Additionally, these impacts are felt most acutely by arts workers who identify as BIPOC, immigrants, and disabled, and among other communities with less access to capital reserves.

The City government must invest back its fair share in the Arts and Culture sector that more equitably reflects the sector's role in the City's economy and impact on the quality of life of New Yorkers. In addition to being an important economic engine, arts and culture are an integral part of a neighborhood cultural ecosystem that

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[5] SMU Data Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs' COVID-19 Impact on Nonprofit Arts and Culture in New York City.
https://culturaldata.org/pages/covid-19-impact-on-nonprofit-arts-and-culture-in-new-york-city/

[6] Dance/NYC. *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study Informational Brief*. 2021.
https://www.dance.nyc/uploads/Covid-Impact-Study-Brief-210316.pdf

[7] Office of the New York City Comptroller. *New York by the Numbers: Monthly Economic and Fiscal Outlook* no. 64, April 4, 2022.
https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/new-york-by-the-numbers-monthly-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-no-64-april-4th-2022/

[8] Dance/NYC (2021). *Coronavirus Dance Impact Information Brief - A Dance Sector in Peril*. Accessed
https://www.dance.nyc/programs/research/2021/03/Coronavirus-Dance-Impact-Information-Brief-A-Dance-Sector-in-Peril-/.

promote social well-being in the community.[9] Studies have shown that the presence of cultural resources is significantly associated with improved outcomes in mental health, education, youth involvement in the criminal justice system, personal safety, and other dimensions of well-being of a community. **The City government must invest in arts and culture in every community and build a city where every New Yorker can benefit from the community-strengthening power of culture:**

- **A baseline investment of $100M in DCLA** is critical to supporting the Arts and Culture industry's continued recovery and ensuring that organizations, institutions, and individual arts and cultural workers continue to prosper in our great city. $100M investment in arts and culture, which represents 0.24% of the City's total budget relative to the sector's contribution of 13% in the City's total economic output - $110B in 2017, alone - is not only a very reasonable request, it's an equitable investment.

- **A robust investment in arts education through the Department of Education**, including increasing the per student arts allocation to $100 from $79.62 will help bolster arts education – a key to strengthening student well-being and overall academic achievement, and creating a pipeline of arts and culture workers and advocates for the city.

The City's budget represents far more than a financial statement; it is a social contract that articulates to the public the values that the Council and administration place on specific constituencies and communities, including industries and workers. Dance/NYC joins the Arts and Culture sector in asking the City to ensure the vitality and sustainability of the creative industry.

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[9] Stern, M. and Seifert, S. (2017). The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts. Accessed https://repository.upenn.edu/siap_culture_nyc/1/, 27 May 2022.

Testimony of the Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair
At the FY 2023 Executive Budget Hearing

Presented by Gregory Brender, Director of Public Policy

May 25th, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and the members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender and I am here on behalf of the Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY), the membership organization of New York City's early childhood education provider organizations.

As providers of early childhood education, DCCNY members engage families at the crucial earliest stages of their children's development. The first years of a child's life are the only opportunity to provide them with the social-emotional development and early skills development that supports them throughout their education and throughout their lives. As such, DCNNY and its network of community based early childhood educators have long recognized that access to strong and stable early childhood education programs has profound effects on students' learning and academic achievements.

DCCNY and its members also recognize that child care is a necessity for working parents and thus a necessity for the City's recovery from the economic devastation of COVID-19. For New Yorkers to return to work, families with young children must have places that a safe, nurturing and educational when parents are working, including those parents who work non-traditional hours.

The City Council is an important voice for New York City's early childhood education sector and we are excited to work with you to strengthen early childhood education in New York City.

The Unfinished Work or Salary Parity

In 2019, the City made a historic commitment to put the City on a path towards salary parity between the early childhood education workforce in community based organizations and the workforce in public schools. While this agreement was a significant first step, the work remains unfinished.

As of September of 2020, certified teachers in community based organizations are earning salaries on par with the *starting salaries* of teachers in the public schools. Community Based Organizations are not funded to offer their teachers the longevity increases that public school teachers receive. This inequity remains stark. A certified early childhood educators in a community based organization may earn only 53% of what a similarly experienced certified teachers earns in a public school. This stark disparity

presents a constant challenge to organizations looking to retain teachers who have developed expertise in early childhood education from their years of experience.

The unfinished work of salary parity also includes the directors and support staff in community based early childhood programs who continue to receive significantly lower salaries than their counterparts in public schools. Many centers struggle to retain directors who could earn more as a DOE teacher than they can as a community based director.

DCCNY urges the City to close the remaining gaps on the path to parity so that the hardworking early childhood workforce can finally earn the compensation that their important work deserves through the following steps:

- Invest $21 million for program directors' salary increases. Directors of child care programs are working under expired contracts, and raising these salaries to ones on par with their DOE administrative counterparts will help both compensate them fairly and prevent the further resignation of CBO staff.
- Raise the minimum wage of support staff to at least $21 per hour, in line with the demands of the #JustPay campaign. Support staff in early childhood education programs - including aides, paraprofessionals, custodians, and cooks – help to keep centers running, but receive some of the lowest salaries in the system. Boosting their wages will help retain these workers, and also keep this workforce in the early childhood system so that they maintain continuity of care for the children and families they serve.
- Invest $30 million in pay parity for special education pre-k teachers. Teachers working in 4410 programs were not included in the 2019 salary parity agreement, and earn much lower wages than their DOE counterparts and center-based teachers in other classrooms. $30 million would bring these teachers to parity with their colleagues and bring stability to special education pre-k classrooms.
- Fund longevity increases for all teachers, staff and directors.

Enrollment Based Payments

When Department of Education released its Birth-To-Five and Head Start / Early Head Start RFPs, members of the City Council and leaders in the ECE field raised significant concerns and objections to DOE's plans to pay providers based on enrollment and to implement enrollment procedures which limited the ability to enroll children exclusively with DOE's Centralized Enrollment System.

Under this system, CBO providers had not guarantee that they would be able to serve families who wished to enroll their children in CBO programs and faced financial peril if they were underenrolled.

These issues have been exacerbated by volatile enrollment throughout the pandemic. Enrollment will likely continue to fluctuate as necessary changes are made in how New York City's economy reopens. Parents who are currently working from home or unemployed due to the pandemic are waiting until further reopening of schools and businesses to re-enroll their children.

As workplaces reopen, parents need to be able to quickly obtain safe, affordable child care for their children. To fill this need, providers must be able to maintain their staff and infrastructure to facilitate a more comprehensive reopening as more parents return to work.

Recently, Department of Education has taken steps towards holding providers harmless for undernrollment in Fiscal Year 2022. DCCNY is grateful for this reform and for DOE and the City Council's leadership on this issue. It is crucial that the City takes action to stabilize it community based early childhood education providers beyond this fiscal year. DCCNY urges the City to implement line-item budgeting for contracted early childhood education programs in FY 2023.

Improving Enrollment Procedures

As discussed in the previous section, the implementation of DOE's Centralized Enrollment System stripped community based organizations of the power to process their own enrollment. This change required all families to go through DOE's Centralized Enrollment System.

Under DOE's Centralized Enrollment System, there have been significant wait times for families' applications for child care subsidies to be approved leaving vacant seats in child care centers and family child care homes and putting stressors on parents' trying to access affordable child care. Moreover, many families, including many immigrant essential workers are weary of engaging with a government agency and feel safer with a community based organization with whom they already have a trusting relationship.

Over the summer of 2021, DOE briefly allowed providers to enroll families after the CBO itself has done a complete eligibility check. This empowered CBO's to start serving eligible families immediately and helped them to leverage their community relationships. However, this policy ended with the start of the school year on September 10th 2021.

Local community based early childhood providers have strong connections to the neighborhoods they serve. The City should leverage these strong relationships to ensure that families are able to quickly access the child care programs in which they want to enroll their children.

DCCNY urges the City to allow community based enrollment in contracted early childhood education programs.

Looking Ahead

DCCNY is excited to work with the City Council to ensure that all of New York City's children and families have access to strong and stable early care and education.

New York State's FY 2023 Budget includes the largest ever increase in funding for child care. Due to new State investments more families will become eligible for child care starting August 1st when families earning up to 300% of Federal Poverty Guidelines ($83,250 per year for a family of four) become eligible. The State will also be adjusting the market rate formula increasing the per child reimbursement that the City receives from the State.

Day Care Council of New York Testimony at the NYC Council Finance Committee FY 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing- May 25th, 2022

As the City works to further implement changes from the State or to enact its own early childhood policy agenda, it is crucial that the community based organizations who provide early childhood education are included in planning. DCCNY member organizations are hubs of innovation with deep histories and connections to the communities they serve. These organizations must be fully and stably funded to ensure the stability of services for children and families. DCCNY and our member organizations stand ready to work with the City to achieve an early childhood system that meets the needs of NYC families and businesses, teaches children to succeed and respects and fairly compensates the ECE workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for all your work to support early childhood education. DCCNY's policy platform is attached to this document. I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at gbrender@dccnyinc.org.

Day Care Council of New York Testimony at the NYC Council Finance Committee FY 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing- May 25th, 2022

Day Care Council of New York
FY 2023 New York City Platform

Day Care Council of New York is a membership organization of New York City's early childhood education providers. New York City's early childhood education system is at a pivotal moment. Below are immediate steps that the City leaders must take to strengthen early childhood education for New York City's children and families.

Invest in the Early Childhood Workforce

- Fund longevity increases for teachers in community based early childhood education programs
- Invest $21 million towards achieving salary parity for directors in community based organizations and $30 million towards achieving salary parity for teachers in 4410 Preschool Special Education Programs
- Increase salaries for support staff in community based organizations to at least $21 per hour.
- Increase rates for child care for infants and toddlers
- Support career advancement for early childhood teachers, directors and staff

Address Service Gaps

- Ensure all neighborhoods have access to Extended Day and Extended Year programs based on work schedules
- Increase center based capacity for child care for infants and toddlers
- Invest $10 million to support child care for undocumented children

Improve Enrollment Processes

- Suspend Department of Education's (DOE) Pay for Enrollment policy which penalizes providers financially for temporary fluctuations in enrollment
- Allow community based organizations with Department of Education contracts to directly enroll families

Commit to Working with Community Based Organizations in Planning Reforms to Early Childhood Education

- Ensure that community based organizations have a voice in planning early childhood policies and procedures

You can also find further explanation of these agenda items in Day Care Council of New York's report "Supporting New York City's Unsung Heroes: How the Next Administration Can Prime the Early Childhood Workforce for Success" and Campaign for Children's Policy Platform "A Call to Action: The Campaign for Children's Plan for Incoming City Leaders"

Testimony of Dilcy Benn, President of Local 1505, District Council 37
before the City Council Committee on Finance
FY 2023 Executive Budget
May 23, 2022

Good morning Finance Chair Brannan and fellow members of the City Council. My name is Dilcy Benn and I am the President of Local 1505 of DC 37 representing close to one thousand City Parks Workers (also known as CPWs), hundreds of seasonal workers, as well as members of the City Clean up Corps (CCC) who primarily work in the NYC Parks and Recreation Department in all five boroughs performing clean up and conducting maintenance in all city parks.

Once again, this year's executive budget does not include funding for the 100 CPW lines that the City Council restored last year. In addition, the funding for the 1800 CCC lines, which were originally funded by federal money, are not included in the executive budget. If these positions are not restored, this will result in these workers becoming unemployed effective July 1.

These workers stepped up during the heart of the pandemic when there was an outcry of how dirty parks were and garbage was piling up as New Yorkers heavily utilized neighborhood parks. How will the parks continue to be kept clean free of debris and garbage without adequate staffing levels to do the work?

My members are not viewed as frontline workers, but reported to work every day and worked twice as hard to clean and maintain parks, beaches, and pools during the height of the pandemic. These workers, who make $15.48 an hour (to start), were asked to do a lot more with fewer resources. Many of you know the value of my members who report to work daily with a smile on their face to serve the community. The administration needs to take a long, hard look at how it treats its workforce.

I am here today not only to ask the City Council to urge the Mayor to **restore and baseline the 100 CPW and 50 Gardener staff positions, but also to keep his campaign promise to fund the Parks Department at 1% of the city's total budget.** If this were to happen, we would not have to come back every year begging the administration with hat in hand to restore these worker lines. Furthermore, these same workers would not have to worry about whether or not they will have a job. We need to hold the Mayor accountable!

As the weather has gotten warmer and people are gathering more often, attendance in parks has increased tenfold. We cannot afford to go back to the days when parks were a sign of blight and filth.

On behalf of my members, I want to thank our partners in the Play Fair Coalition for standing with us and advocating alongside us for more funding for parks.

Lastly, I want to thank the City Council, Chair of the Parks Committee, Shekar Krishnan, and Speaker Adrienne Adams for supporting parks workers and recognizing the hard work they perform daily.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and I look forward to working with this City Council to urge the Mayor to fund the Parks Department at 1% of the city's budget!

Testimony of Vincent Musillo, President of Local 1508, DC 37
Before the Finance Committee
FY 23 Executive Budget
May 25, 2022

Good morning Chair Brannan and fellow City Councilmembers. My name is Vincent Musillo, President of DC37's Local 1508, which represents Administrative Park and Recreation Managers and Park Supervisors. I am a Park Supervisor Level 2 for the NYC Parks Department. I would like to speak on behalf of all Parks workers and New Yorkers that will be affected if NYC does not come through on their promise of 1% of the budget for the Parks Department.

Since the start of the pandemic, it was Parks that former Mayor Bill de Blasio urged New Yorkers to visit. It was the place of refuge and solace for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers during extremely trying times. And during these times, it was Parks staff, comfortably known as Parkies, that showed up day in and day out to clean, maintain and safeguard all of the Parks they were responsible for.

At a time when many were given an option to work from home, our dedicated Parkies that worked out in the field were not. We were deemed essential in the fight against COVID. Field workers stood up to the challenge and did their best to keep New Yorkers visiting the always beautiful greenspace and playgrounds throughout the City. Proudly, we arrived at work every day knowing at any moment, we could fall victim to COVID or a loved one could do the same. Parkies were lost. Loved ones were lost. Despite all of this, we continued to do our job as Parkies.

Many of these workers have established themselves within the community they were assigned. When a City Park Worker or a City Seasonal Aide is fixed post at the same location, they take these playgrounds in as their own. The community can put a smiling face to the playground they visited for the last 2 years.

If the budget for 1% for Parks does not pass, this will end. The effect it will have on the children and families will be enormous. Furthermore, this pales in comparison to the workers themselves. After the long hard road of working in unknown conditions throughout this pandemic, and deemed essential, the thank you they may receive is a pink slip? A termination letter? How much more

demoralizing can an individual feel if they put their heart and soul to serve New Yorkers to be told, "Hey, thanks for the hard work, but your time with Parks is over."

As a Park Supervisor, it is vital that we have all of the 1800 or so workers moved into full time positions to not only continue to perform at very high standards, but to serve our communities we work in at the highest quality. It should be overwhelmingly justified to include 1% of the NYC budget allocated to NYC Parks.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

END HUMAN TRAFFICKING.
PROMOTE HEALTH & SAFETY.

www.DecriminalizeSex.Work

May 25, 2022

To the City Council Committee on Finance:

We are joining allied organizations and activists to call for the disbanding of NYPD's Vice unit. Decriminalize Sex Work (DSW) is a national advocacy organization that works to support the rights, safety, and health of sex workers and survivors of human trafficking. We are writing to you as longtime advocates and attorneys for sex workers and survivors who are also born and raised New Yorkers. We know firsthand that the communities that we support and advocate for have been harmed by Vice enforcement, which has a long history of discriminatory and violent policing. This bias is felt deeply by impacted community members and supported by arrest and conviction data provided by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, complaints by attorneys and their clients, and investigative reports in local news publications.

The Vice squad is primarily tasked with policing offenses deemed immoral, such as consensual sex work, narcotics use, and gambling. Vice officers have a long history of exploiting sex workers, coercing sexual favors, and making false arrests of individuals profiled as sex workers and clients. Data and reporting have shown that Vice's aggressive and unethical policing tactics are used in communities of color at astonishingly disproportionate rates.

Vice also has a well-documented history of problematic massage parlor raids, with devastating and even deadly results. Vice officers can conduct undercover stings, visiting massage parlors in disguise and asking for a sex act at the end of an appointment. If an individual agrees, they are arrested for prostitution, but if they say no, the officer can still charge them with unlicensed massage. Massage parlor policing is justified as a human trafficking prevention measure, but it ultimately leads to the criminalization of an already vulnerable, marginalized population. Massage parlor employees are disproportionately immigrants, so arrests of any kind can have devastating consequences for their immigration status.

One of the most disturbing and well-known consequences of Vice policing tactics was the death of Yang Song in 2017, who jumped out of a third floor apartment above a massage parlor in Flushing as Vice officers tried to arrest her. In the months prior to her death, Song had been arrested for prostitution, assaulted and held at gunpoint by a police officer, reported that assault but received no response, and pressured by police to work for them as an informant. Her death – and all of her anguish preceding it – would never have occurred if not for Vice's overpolicing of massage parlors.

Song is one of countless victims of assault at the hands of the Vice department. There is a documented history of Vice officers engaging in sexual activity with unsuspecting sex workers before arresting them and sometimes even after. Arrestees have reported a whole range of sexual harassment, including being asked to undress for officers, being shown pornography, officers exposing themselves, being touched inappropriately, and sexual assault.

Anecdotes and data both show that Vice has a long history of intentionally targeting communities of color, regardless of the actual demographics of people buying and selling sex. This past February, DSW released a report compiling arrest data related to prostitution in New York to monitor trends and advocate for smarter policies. While there is no way to identify how

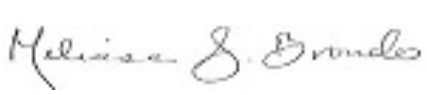
many of the arrests were made by Vice squad, the data we acquired for New York City in 2019 is illuminating nonetheless:

- There was significant targeting of Asian individuals for unauthorized practice of a profession in Brooklyn and Queens (98.7% of arrests were in those two counties). These charges often arise during Vice raids of massage parlors and in conjunction with prostitution-related charges.
- Asian women accounted for about 50% of citywide arrests and 65% of those arrested for prostitution in New York County and Queens.
- Black and Hispanic men were disproportionately arrested for patronizing sex workers. 76% of citywide arrests for patronizing prostitution in the 3rd degree were of Black and Hispanic men. In the Bronx, that number is 89%; in Brooklyn, it was 85%; and in Queens, Hispanic men made up 47% of arrests.
- 64% of citywide arrests for promoting prostitution in the 3rd and 4th degrees are of Asian or "other" identified individuals (meaning neither White, Black, nor Hispanic).
- 77% of those sent to prison for sex work-related crimes in 2019 were Black or Hispanic. 90% of those sent to jail for sex work-related crimes in 2019 were Black or Hispanic.
- 95% of trafficking arrests in NYC in 2019 were of Black and Hispanic individuals, which cannot possibly represent the actual demographics of traffickers.

These statistics make it clear that Vice and NYPD engage in racial profiling and discriminatory tactics in their enforcement of these crimes, with devastating effects. As a society, we need to distinguish between the true harms - not based on moral or personal beliefs - but rather what sex workers and survivors say they need to keep them safe and healthy. Police violence, sexual trauma, criminal records, the threat of deportation, and separation from family/community are neither helpful nor effective.

We are thankful for the opportunity to share our knowledge with the Finance Committee. In so doing, we call upon city officials to disband Vice and redirect funding to communities and organizations that support sex workers and survivors of trafficking. NYC desperately needs more funding for job training, housing, and economic survival programs for runaway and homeless LGBTQ+ young people; peer-led outreach to massage workers, street-based sex workers, and trafficking survivors in multiple languages; and harm reduction trainings. Further, peers should be used for non-carceral responses to community complaints while connecting workers with healthcare and legal assistance. Disbanding Vice will allow police to redirect their focus to targeting traffickers and supporting survivors rather than targeting and victimizing workers themselves.

Regards,





Melissa Sontag Broudo, JD, MPH
Legal Director, Decriminalize Sex Work

Rebecca Cleary, JD
Staff Attorney, Decriminalize Sex Work

Dear Committee Members:

As Managing Director of a small non-profit arts organization, I wanted to take a moment of your time to extend my sincere gratitude for the support extended by the City over the course of this pandemic crisis in the arts community. The pandemic has cast a harsh light on the vulnerability of our professional and aspiring performing artists, both financially and creatively. This population is the very core of dell'Arte Opera Ensemble's community, as we have been dedicated to nurturing the craft of opera creation for the past 20 years in NYC. We are redoubling our efforts to offer free training and enriching performance opportunities to emerging singers here, and to connecting with both opera fans and new audiences in a variety of online and live environments. We greatly appreciated this opportunity to express our appreciation, and to ask for your continued support as we strive to sustain vibrant artistic participation here in New York.

Karen Rich

Testimony for NYC Budget Hearing – May 25, 2022

My name is Donna Schneiderman, and I am a domestic worker employer, a member of Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network, and part of the New York City Coalition for Domestic Work. Our coalition, formed last year, is comprised of the National Domestic Workers Alliance NYC Chapter, Adhikaar, and Hand in Hand the Domestic Employers Network, and Carroll Gardens Association. Together we represent domestic workers and employers across New York City.

I'm here today to request your support for the Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative, a new City Council Initiative for FY23 that will provide much-needed funding to support outreach, education, and enforcement support to over 6,000 domestic workers this year.

As employers we need guidance from the government so we can do what is right. There are good laws including the Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, Paid Safe and Sick Leave, and most recently Intro 339, that most employers are not aware of. Employers are left to figure it out on our own, online, and not always finding the right information. The Initiative will enable outreach and education about domestic workers' rights to both workers and employers, support investigation of rights abuses, create referrals to the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) and Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), and broaden enforcement of the recently passed Intro 339 (also known as Local Law 88).

Having experienced the challenges navigating employment terms when my family employed a nanny, the structure offered in these provisions would’ve helped ensure we were being most fair as employer.

As I became active in the campaign work, and subsequently with Hand in Hand's efforts to educate employers about the Bill of Rights and their role as employers, I've had the honor of partnering with domestic workers, as an employer ally and advocate. I've learned over the years that while there are many employers aiming to be fair, despite the lack of standards, unfortunately there are many employers who actively take advantage of their employees, or who are willfully ignorant at the expense of their employees.

If the COVID pandemic has taught us anything - it's that domestic work is essential work; it is the work that makes all other work possible. We’re so pleased NYC has recognized this in passing Int339, but now we need to be sure that employers are familiar with these guidelines and to follow them. We need proper outreach and education to make that possible. This will allow for the law to be properly implements and ensure care work is valued, and care workers treated as any other employee – with respect and fair terms.

We need our city to support us just as we support the families, the homes, and loved ones. Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony. We look forward to working with you to build a city where domestic work is valued and dignified.

Thank you

May 24, 2022

Dear City Council Members,

Bright Horizons is a national child care provider that manages approximately 40 child care programs in New York City, including several that participate in the 3K and 4K For All Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program. We applaud the City's leadership and investment in quality child care and are excited about the upcoming expansion of services to more families.

Today we want to raise to your attention a serious concern related to the extreme delay in having **criminal background checks** completed for child care teachers in NYC. These delays impact almost every child care program in the City. We are very concerned about the impact the delays are already having on families and teachers and the potential critical risk of not completing the background checks in a timely manner.

DOHMH processes background checks for employees at child care programs in the City. Background checks play a critical role in assuring parents that their children will be safely cared for. Simply put a teacher can not supervise a classroom until they receive their clearance (or renewal) from DOHMH. The current length of time for clearances is undermining our ability to provide New York City's children with care and quality educational programming and is worsening a teacher staffing crisis.

We operate programs across the country and have not experienced delays anywhere close to what we are experiencing in NYC with DOHMH. Outside of DOHMH in NYC, typically comprehensive background checks are completed within 2 weeks and are almost always completed within 45-60 days. In NYC through DOHMH for Bright Horizons child care teachers and assistants the current average wait time for clearances is 243 days (8 months). This extreme delay compares to:

- The PreK for All programs in the City under the DOE that accomplishes their background check in 2 and 6 weeks.
- New York State OCFS that completes their turnaround for background checks similarly to NYC DOE with a mandate to not exceed 45 days.
- DOHMH own background check process for Education Directors and new child care centers of 2-6 weeks.

We briefly testified at the Council's previous DOHMH budget hearing about these extreme delays, and we are once again asking for your help to reduce the backlog as it is getting WORSE despite recent hew hires at DOHMH to address this issue. We believe part of the problem may stem from lack of dedicated resources for DOHMH specifically related to staffing required to complete the current manual background check process and funding for the future automation of the manual background check process.

We urge you to support:

- An immediate reallocation of funds to invest in additional temporary resources to address the current background check crisis with DOHMH.
- Consideration by the Council of having DOE or NYS OCFS (or some alternative agency) assist DOHMH with the extreme backlog of clearances.
- An investment in the upcoming budget for automating the DOHMH background check process.
- Action by the Council to prioritize first time background check completion over renewals for existing previously cleared staff and extend current clearances until the backlog subsides.
- Action by the Council to allow for portability of clearances so individuals can move between age groups, locations or organizations without undergoing a new background check.
- Action by the Council to establish accountability measures for DOHMH to complete background checks (Suggested target of two-weeks with outside mandate of 45-60 days).

Thank you for your time and consideration and please feel free to contact me at Michael.Day@BrightHorizons.com with any follow up questions or suggestions.

Respectfully,

Michael Day

Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Oversight Hearing

5/25/2022

May 11, 2022

The New York City Council, Committee on Finance
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Committee Members,

As we face unprecedented times in our country and families are endeavoring to go back to work, we should look for meaningful solutions that will help them with that process. Access to quality child care is a critical element in families getting back to work and our most precious beings getting the daily care and scholastic development they need. The Learning Experience provides high-quality child care and early education for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. Currently, we oversee operations in 10 child care centers, serving over hundreds of young children and employing over 100 staff in the City of New York. As one of the nation's fastest growing child care providers, The Learning Experience has more than 300 schools across the country and 200 more centers currently under development, including more than a dozen locations upcoming in New York City. We place a prominent focus on programs that promote a whole-child approach to growth and development that includes cutting-edge proprietary curriculum, with nine out of 10 TLE children entering Kindergarten already reading, and enrichment programs that foster social-emotional skills.

Recently, Mayor Adams along with city officials successfully motivated the legislature for appropriations and has secured much needed funding from the state to the tune of $4 billion dollars for child care needs within the city's borders; shortly after the mayor gave his 2022 budget presentation. Mayor Adams laid out his vision to increase access to child care for families in New York City, we are in full support of this mission and see the impact of this within our centers daily. There is real concern on our part on the ability to see the mayor's vision for an additional 10,000 child care seats be created and come to life in the near future without drastic delays. TLE is in support of this increase in service to families and children, but we should bring forth some significant hinderances that would prevent providers like ourselves from being able to be actively increase seats that the mayor's vision calls for.

As you may know, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene processes background checks for employees and volunteers at early childhood, after-school, and summer programs. These programs are vital to the developmental needs of children and youth, support working parents and employ a significant number of teachers and staff, many of whom are women and people of color. It is incontrovertible that background checks play a critical role in assuring parents that organizations and government have done their due diligence and that their children will be safely cared for. Providers support rigorous background checks for all staff. Nevertheless, the length of time for clearance is undermining providers' ability to provide New York City's children with quality educational programming.

Our principal concerns are as follows:

1. Extreme delays that last an average of six months to over a year, for comprehensive background checks to be completed for both new and existing staff. Most states are completing comprehensive background checks in two to

four weeks. New York State cannot exceed 45 days to carry out a background check in order to comply with the state's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan.

2. Providers are often not informed promptly of successfully completed background checks, or if applications are missing items needed to allow them to be processed.

3. There is a lack of responsiveness from Agency staff on pending applications.

As you can imagine, these lengthy delays interrupt the operations of providing early childhood, after-school, and summer-services, and impact families who require access to reliable child care. Staff cannot supervise children on their own until they are approved, resulting in staff shortages and difficulties in maintaining necessary child-to-staff ratios. To add to this, background checks must be renewed every five years or if a teacher changes settings or employers, so these challenges will continue to arise and classrooms will continue to close unless a permanent solution is put in place.

We believe there are ways to streamline the system. Potential policy solutions include establishing accountability measures, mandating a two-week timeframe for DOHMH to complete a background check and notifying provider organizations within 48 hours of an application's completion. This measure would align with the NYC Department of Education's (DOE) two-week timeline for background checks. The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) typically has a two-week timeframe for the process, and in special circumstances allows up to 45 days before providing a determination. The 45-day mark is a hard deadline for the state and federal level to ensure and maintain the timeliness of the process as a part of the NY CCDF Plan. Additionally, DOHMH should hire and/or assign additional staff and explore best practices in other jurisdictions. Moreover, allowing portability of clearances, with records maintained in a central database, would enable individuals the ability to move between locations or organizations without undergoing a new background check, which under current circumstances takes up to a year. Finally, DOHMH has revealed that they are in the process of developing an online platform that would allow providers to electronically upload comprehensive background check paperwork resulting in a more efficient process. We encourage DOHMH to expedite the development and roll-out of this platform as well as test the platform with providers before it is launched to ensure feedback can be provided.

The aforementioned issues and considerations stare in stark contrast to providers current ability to join in the mayor's quest to increase available child care seats by the thousands in a timeframe that one may consider reasonable. It is widely known that there is a shortage of licensed quality child care centers throughout the country, to include New York City. As mentioned previously, TLE is expanding within the city as we speak and is more than capable of bringing additional seats to the citizens that need them, but we are only able to do so if processes for hiring quality staff ceases to be stagnated by the current background check system with DOHMH.

We look forward to working with the committee members and council as a whole to resolve these issues and would welcome the chance to meet with you to provide additional background and answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Elisa Shepherd
Senior Director, Government Relations
The Learning Experience

City Council Hearing Testimony: Committee on Finance

May 25, 2022

My name is Boris Santos, and I am the Treasurer of the East New York Community Land Trust (ENYCLT). The ENYCLT is a collective of East New York and Brownsville residents that aim to acquire and steward community-owned land, especially public land, in our neighborhoods. We use community-based urban planning, what we call planning "by us, for us", to collectively determine what will be developed on the vacant and underutilized land that will be owned by the community land trust (CLT) and its members. We operate through a board composed of three equal parts: a third of our board of directors are residents from East New York and Brownsville (5 board members), a third will be future members that reside on CLT land (5 members), and another third are for skilled laborers/technicians or business owners connected to East New York and Brownsville (5 members).

I am bearing testimony to support the increase of funding to the CLT Initiative Funds from $1.5M (awarded FY22) to $3M. Since City Council began funding the City Council Initiative Funding in FY21, the ENYCLT, through our fiscal sponsor, the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation has received no more than $98K. For FY23 we are setting out to expand from a one-person staffed CLT. Despite our meager city-generated expense funding, we have been able to both fundraise and secure private grants by 1.5 times City funds.

We are currently planning for potential mixed-use development on City owned sites which will include over 120 units of affordable housing both

rental and homeownership (as of now). Our land report details all the public lots that the ENYCLT is targeting for ownership. Beyond working on this campaign to acquire public land, we spearhead the Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition, we are striving to bring Justice to the Jewels Streets, a Queens-Brooklyn border neighborhood that has long been neglected by our federalist system, and much more.

Beyond just supporting our operating costs, the city needs to invest its capital dollars specifically for CLT-led projects. In the long-term (post-FY23 budget), this means creating a CLT Acquisition Fund because we all know that vacant public land is dwindling and to remove speculation off the market, we do have to acquire costly private land. In the short term, we must increase the investments to HPD's Capital Budget to further increase production of affordable housing. These numbers, as reported by the New York Housing Conference will simply not cut it.

HPD Capital Budget

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Prelim FY2023	$1,521,315,000	$1,726,871,000	$1,498,414,000	$1,336,208,000	$1,561,787,000
Exec FY2023	$1,516,561,000	$2,098,720,000	$1,654,334,000	$1,682,156,000	$2,106,628,000
Increase (decrease)	-$4,754,000	$371,849,000	$155,920,000	$345,948,000	$544,841,000

Source: NYHC Analysis of NYC OMB Capital Commitment Plan

One of the projects we are planning for will aim to get roughly $11 million from HPD's Open Door Program, and we are projecting it to cost $32 million. With the investment the Mayor is looking to make in FY23, a project as the one we are planning for can only be replicated 194 times across the City, amounting to only 11,640 units of new housing construction. Our City needs

and deserves more. I want to thank the Committee Chair and the entire Council for this opportunity.

Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony to the Finance Committee

Testimony Submitted by
Shanon Morris, MS, RD, CDN, Executive Director, Edible Schoolyard NYC
Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25th, 2022

My name is Shanon Morris, MS, RD, CDN. I am the Executive Director at Edible schoolyard NYC. Thank you to Chairperson Justin Brannan as well as the members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Founded in 2010, Edible Schoolyard NYC's (ESYNYC) mission is to support edible education for every child in New York City. We partner with NYC public schools to cultivate healthy students and school environments through hands-on cooking and gardening education. We currently work with 10 schools, serving 3,500 students in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx, in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by food, health, and education system inequities. Our 10 school sites are located in districts 8, 10, 14, 16, 34, 36, 37, 42, 44, and 47.

Our programs sit at the intersection of food, health, education, and environment. In our programs, students work in the garden to care for the crops we harvest; cook plant-forward recipes, and learn about the connections between food, the environment, our communities, and our health. At the heart of our school programs are our gardens, which serve as a food production space and site for environmental learning, as well as a joyful and welcoming green space and outdoor classroom for the entire community--a place that has been increasingly valuable after a full year of remote and hybrid learning. Our programs support students to increase their preference for fruits and vegetables, grow socially-emotionally, enrich their core academic classes, and develop a commitment to food and environmental justice. We also work to expand families' access to plant-forward foods and support schools in prioritizing and implementing food and health activities.

ESYNYC also provides Professional Development workshops to educators across the city, teaching and inspiring them to implement food education in their own classrooms. We also collaborate with food and education organizations, coalitions, and community leaders to advocate for food education, school gardens, and plant-forward food access for every child. We are proud members of the New York City Food Policy Alliance and the Food Education Coalition.

New York City emerged as the first American epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic and two years later our school communities are still reeling from the health, economic, and educational crises caused by the pandemic. During the pandemic, food insecurity rose dramatically in NYC, and

For more information please contact:
Ally Miller, am@esynyc.org

frequent school closures exacerbated challenges for students, as they received fewer school meals and lost valuable academic and social-emotional learning opportunities. These consequences were experienced even more acutely by BIPOC students, as in-person schooling during 2020-21 was less available for Hispanic (3%), Black (1%), and economically disadvantaged (4%) students, compared to white students (13%) (NYS Education Department, July 2021). We observed this at many of our partner schools, where few classes were able to be in-person during 2020-21.

In 2021-22, schools have needed critical support to recoup health and educational losses experienced by BIPOC school communities. ESYNYC has been fully in-person and centered in school communities to build back from the challenges of the pandemic. We have renewed our school garden spaces for social-emotional and outdoor learning; we have expanded our work to new schools to support their outdoor learning initiatives this spring; we have increased our food distributions to support food security during and outside of the school day; and we have enriched students' education with supplemental learning to help recoup learning loss.

Community-based organizations, based in schools and otherwise, provide so many critical services that NYC residents and institutions need. One of these important services is food education for our students, so that they can build healthy relationships with food from the start, leading to a healthier NYC and a next generation of food justice advocates. We call on the City to **invest $37 million into the Department of Education so that all schools can have sustained, flexible funding to provide vital food ed programming.** Flexible funding—at $20,000 per school—would enable schools to build and maintain school gardens and outdoor classrooms, hire a School Wellness Coordinator, provide per session pay for teachers who lead after school programs, or partner with a food ed organization to help teachers effectively integrate food and nutrition education into their curriculum.

We also call on the City to invest in policies to support educational equity, economic opportunity, community wealth-building and community control over all aspects of the food system for the most marginalized communities, utilizing the food system as the catalyst. It is imperative that discretionary funding through individual Council Members, Caucuses and Delegations is fully funded, as these investments often represent a significant portion of small community based nonprofits' budgets, many of which are led by, serve and are embedded in communities of color.

As a member of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, we also support the following funding recommendations, which will support food access and equity across the city:

For more information please contact:
Ally Miller, am@esynyc.org

Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony to the Finance Committee

Utilizing The Food System As The Catalyst To Build Wealth In Communities

- **Allocate $5 Million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) that supports community-led projects to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities**. In *Food Forward NYC*, the MOFP calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We urge the City to create an initiative modeled on USDA's Community Food Project and Philadelphia's Food Justice Initiative. The purpose of the Initiative is to invest in community-based projects designed and led by people most impacted by race, social, health, and environmental injustices in order to improve healthy food access in our communities. We urge the City to invest in this program at $5 Million and offer grants of at least $500K to each grantee for both planning and implementation projects serving high need areas identified by Racial Equity Task Force. As this field of work requires long term investments, the MOFP should prioritize 2 year grant cycles and allow for flexibility on spending deadlines upon receiving grants. We also ask that the MOFP establish and provide compensation for an advisory board of NYC food systems practitioners to establish grant criteria, review grant RFPs and select awardees. Types of projects funded under this pilot should include:
    - The establishment of worker owned food cooperatives or funding for CBOs to support the creation of and provide technical assistance to consumer and worker-owned food businesses.
    - Community kitchen programs for CBOs to connect community based food businesses, chefs and caterers to affordable kitchen space to provide regular and emergency meal services offer culinary job training and programs like Red Rabbit and Hot Bread Kitchen.
    - Community based training and workforce development opportunities to support regional rural and urban agriculture enterprises, especially for youth and BIPOC farmers, such Green City Force and Farm School NYC to create a pipeline of urban farming and food systems career opportunities.
- **Invest in the establishment of food cooperatives and strategies to build community ownership within the local food system**, especially in BIPOC communities that have historically had low rates of business establishment by neighborhood residents.
- **Partner with and support community food hubs** like the Central Brooklyn Food Coop to leverage existing community-owned food, health and retail infrastructures. Funding a Community Food Hub Incubator, as outlined in the Growing Food Equity in NYC report, would also help coordinate interested communities in developing more local food businesses and farm-to-city food projects.

For more information please contact:
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- **Fully Fund the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative at $3 million.** Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT discretionary funding initiative has helped catalyze CLT organizing, education, training and technical assistance. We support the New York City Community Land Initiative in its call for full funding to support 20 organizations working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable housing, community and commercial spaces, and advance a just recovery in Black and brown NYC communities.

Emergency Food & Benefits Access

- **Increase funding with an additional $63.5 Million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Baseline budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program and continued need.** We thank the Mayor for the inclusion of $53.7M in total for EFAP in the Executive Budget, but due to the discontinuation of P-FRED it still would not fully meet the need across our City. While hunger rates in the City are thankfully lower now than they were at the peak of COVID, they are still much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. In response to food insecurity rates that increased by over 36 percent for all New Yorkers and 46 percent for children, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy administered a new $63.5 million program called the Pandemic Food Reserve and Emergency Distribution (P-FRED). Since 2020, P-FRED has provided over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries throughout the City. The Mayor's preliminary budget excludes funding for the continuation of P-FRED past June 2022 yet no formal announcement has been made indicating if the program will continue. However, Mayor Adam's announced his intentions to strengthen EFAP by establishing a produce procurement operation into the program for the first time in its 40 years of existence. We urge the City to increase funding for EFAP beyond its current baseline level of $23.8 million to a total of $87.3M to account for the loss of P-FRED and adequately invest in this expanded effort to include fresh produce.
    - With the addition of produce procurement into EFAP for the first time and the release of a new RFP in January 2022 calling for a vendor to support procurement, ordering & distribution for EFAP, we urge HRA to consider innovative joint proposals in response to the recently released RFP and proposer(s) that demonstrate a commitment to following values set by the Good Food Purchasing procurement framework. We also urge HRA to consider RFP responses that prioritize sourcing from BIPOC and/or historically disadvantaged producers, distributors, and other places along the food supply chain and adequately track value based procurement.

For more information please contact:
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  - Additionally, we urge the City to be more open and transparent in communicating with P-FRED providers about the future of the program. Many of the emergency food providers we work with have reported that P-FRED deliveries have stopped showing up and/or they have received reduced quantities of food without any clear communication from the City. Furthermore, without P-FRED some community providers will no longer have a source of food. Many of the groups that stepped up during the pandemic to serve their communities through P-FRED are mutual aid or community based groups that will not be eligible for EFAP membership because 1) they are not 501(c)(3), 2) do not have an Emergency Food Relief Organization (EFRO) ID#, and 3) do not have "other established sources of food and funding" - all of which are EFAP requirements. We urge HRA to provide guidance about potential alternatives for these providers once P-FRED winds down.

- **Invest $42.7 Million in new home delivered meals funding to combat hunger for older adults and prepare for the end of emergency DFTA Recovery Meals (formerly GetFood).** We applaud the Administration's inclusion of additional funding for DFTA home delivered meals programs to support increased contract reimbursement rates, with $9.41 million added for FY23 and beyond to bring rates up to $11.78 per meal. This increase addresses long-time underfunding, but there are additional funding needs for the HDM system including chronically low wages, inflation, and capital needs. In addition, we are glad the Administration pledged to invest $14.9 million in home delivered meals and case management programs to support roughly 3,000 new individuals that they expect will need meals with the termination of the DFTA Recovery Meals program (formerly GetFood) in June. However, additional funding is needed for this transition to support more older adults. Inclusive of the $14.9 million investment, the City should invest a total of $42.7 million into growing the home delivered meals program. This includes $9.7 million to support continued growth in demand for the home delivered meals program, $30 million to support the Recovery Meal clients transitioning to traditional home delivered meals, and $3 Million to support weekend and holiday home delivered meals not provided by current contracts. Additionally, DFTA should assess and fund the capital and infrastructure needs for HDM providers including van purchases and kitchen investments.
- **Increase HRA's budget baseline by $10 Million to engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications**. For the last several years, and especially during the pandemic, HRA's clients reported many issues to City Council and HRA with the closures of service centers, long phone wait times, problems returning missed calls from HRA, timely and accurate processing of applications, and the overall client experience. Despite these issues, the Preliminary Budget Plan does not include any additional funding for outreach or streamlining of social service program administration for the HRA. Additional administrative funding should also support the SNAP program (run

by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications. We urge the City Council to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

- **We support the Administration's inclusion of $250 Million per year for an Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion and call for the State to support this initiative.** As Mayor Adams mentioned in his recent testimony to the NY State Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee members, it has been 20 years since the City and State of New York increased the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Benefits low income families receive. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, EITC programs are a proven strategy for lifting families low to moderate income families out of poverty.[1] We support the Mayor's call to the State to authorize the City to increase EITC benefits and match the City's investment of $250 Million to expand EITC here in New York City.
- **We join our partners in calling for the City to invest in a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all human services workers.** Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant and at poverty levels in a City where costs are notoriously high. It is critical that the FY23 budget, and all future budgets, rectify this by automatically allocating a COLA for all human services workers.
- **Need for additional data from Grocery to Go Program.** According to the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, the new Grocery to Go program which received $6.8M in the FY22 Budget will be serving people who were previously receiving food through the COVID-19 Get Food Program, are 59 and below, and still need meal assistance. Program participants, which will be a maximum of 5,000 people who will be asked to opt-in, will receive $110 dollars per month to purchase groceries through Mercado, an online grocery ordering and delivery platform. In November 2021, the MOFP told members of our Alliance that the pilot program was slated to begin Dec 1st and is funded through the current fiscal year. We would like this committees help to obtain data on the program including the following:
    - How many people are enrolled and participating in the Grocery to Go Program?
    - What happens to unspent credits on the Mercado marketplace given to clients?
    - What will happen to unspent funds if the Grocery to Go program does not reach the 5,000 person cap or if funds are not expended by the end of the fiscal year?

[1] https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/the-earned-income-tax-credit

For more information please contact:
Ally Miller, am@esynyc.org

School Food & Nutrition Education

- **$3.5 million for additional school food managers in The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS).** OFNS at the NYC Department of Education has worked tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they need to succeed in school, and to ensure that these meals are high quality and culturally competent. OFNS needs more school food managers to better serve their school communities, implement appealing menus, provide professional development, partner with school leadership to create positive meal experiences, and increase participation in the school meals program. Funding for an additional 60 managers, at $57,291 per manager, would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn. In addition, it is critical to ensure that those school food managers as well as kitchen staff and teacher aids have sufficient training centered around wellness and supporting healthy nutritious meals for students.
- **Allocate an additional $50 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan towards a planned phase-in of 500 more cafeteria redesigns** to fully scale the highly successful Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) to all high schools and middle schools to support school food participation, student well being and reduced lunch lines.
- **Renew $500,000 in funding for Food-Ed Hub based within the Tisch Food Center.** With ongoing funding, the Hub can continue to provide tools, evidence-based recommendations, and capacity and professional development opportunities to CBOs and educators.
- **Invest $37 million so that all schools can have sustained, flexible funding to provide vital food ed programming.** For example, flexible funding—at $20,000 per school—would enable schools to build and maintain school gardens and outdoor classrooms, hire a School Wellness Coordinator, provide per session pay for teachers who lead after school programs, or partner with a food ed organization to help teachers effectively integrate food and nutrition education into their curriculum.

Urban Agriculture & Youth Development

- **We support the Administration's inclusion of $101.6M in baseline funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to cover the increase in job opportunities for NYC youth from 70,000 to 90,000.** We strongly support the Administration's increase in baseline funding of $57.2M per year over the next four years to support the expansion of SYEP jobs for youth ages 14-24. Mayor Adams has expressed his commitment to bringing green jobs to SYEP and investing in the future of urban agriculture, yet current DYCD regulations create a barrier for smaller worksites that would provide meaningful experiences for young people. To ensure the successful implementation of this expansion especially with food systems and urban agriculture worksite partners, we urge the DYCD to shift the weekly site visit requirement to something less burdensome for worksite partners.

For more information please contact:
Ally Miller, am@esynyc.org

    - The current DYCD requirement that SYEP providers conduct weekly, in-person site visits poses a dual challenge for worksites. Organizations are stretched for capacity so scheduling and accommodating these weekly visits is burdensome for the supervisors. In addition, an unintended consequence of these weekly visits is that SYEP providers tend to focus on partnering with businesses and organizations that can host multiple interns which can be a barrier for smaller worksites and those offering a meaningful work experience within the food system or urban agriculture.
    - We also urge the City to create a pathway to SYEP for all youth, regardless of citizenship status.
- **Funding for Work Learn Grow (WLG), the complementary school-year youth workforce program, sits at less than half of its pre-pandemic level, with no baselined investment.** The City should invest $20 million in baselined funding for WLG in the FY23 budget in order to increase opportunities for young people, help SYEP providers maintain relationships with employer partners year-round, and stabilize staffing structures for the system.
- **Fully Restore Funding for NYC Composting programs.** We were disappointed to see that the Administration cut funding for the re-introduction and planned expansion of the curbside composting program. If NYC is to meet its climate goals and zero waste goals and take the burden off of CBOs that have stepped in to fill this gap, NYC must reinstate and fully fund the City's composting program including $18.2 M to for Organics Curbside Collection, $3.5M for community composting and organic dropoff sites citywide, and $793,000 FY23 and in the outyears to expand the school organics collection program.
    - We also urge the City to provide mandatory curbside composting Citywide through Int. 0244 from Councilmember Hanif, which would phase in organic waste pick-up from residential buildings by mid-2023. According to the Independent Budget Office, citywide composting would save the City $33M a year after the first five years.
- **Allocate funding for the new Office of Urban Agriculture housed within the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) to hire a Director and staff.** The legislation to create the Office went into effect March 2022 and requires the hiring of a Director and at least one staff member. We urge the Administration to allocate $247,500, as outlined in the Fiscal Impact Statement, in the FY23 Executive Budget to ensure the success of the new Office. We also urge the City to allocate additional funding to provide stipends for subcommittee members.
- **Create a grant or low interest loan program** managed by the NYC Urban Agriculture Office targeted to residents in low income communities to invest in and provide technical assistance to urban agricultural startups and their acquisition of equipment, land and indoor growing space and staff.

For more information please contact:
Ally Miller, am@esynyc.org

- **Invest in GreenThumb** by hiring more outreach coordinators, creating a full-time Youth Leadership Council coordinator position, providing youth with compensation for their work and compensating community gardeners for taking leadership roles within programming and mentoring the youth in GreenThumb's youth program. Compensating community gardeners to teach workshops and train youth to run these programs will help make existing gardening programming sustainable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Shanon Morris, MS, RD, CDN
Executive Director, Edible Schoolyard NYC

For more information please contact:
Ally Miller, am@esynyc.org

Testimony for the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings
May 25, 2022

To Chairperson Brannan and Members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Meg Chappell and I am the Program Manager at Empire Liver Foundation. The **NYC Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative** funds 34 organizations to provide the most innovative and effective hepatitis B and C treatment, prevention, and linkage to care education initiatives in the country, as well as training and technical assistance for providers. We are grateful to the City Council for its inspiring national leadership with its Viral Hepatitis Initiative.

Since 2014, NYC council funding has enabled community health organizations to hire and train hepatitis B and C patient and peer navigators, train health care providers in hepatitis B and C screening, care, treatment and health care navigation, and educate NYC communities at risk to promote prevention and care.

Empire Liver Foundation was established by leading liver specialists dedicated to improving health in NYC communities at a time when NYC needed expert guidance on the novel hepatitis C treatment regimens. Relying on the expertise and leadership of our members, we have developed evidence-based hepatitis B & C clinical trainings for NYC's frontline primary care providers who serve communities most impacted by viral hepatitis. This past year, we have used funding to prioritize clinical trainings for over 400 providers who serve people at highest risk for hepatitis B and C, HIV, and overdose including the uninsured, immigrants, and people who use drugs**.** With the introduction of the first ever NYC Viral Hepatitis Elimination plan by 2030, continued support of the Viral Hepatitis Initiative is vital to the health and well-being of NYC's most vulnerable. For funding year 2023, we are asking for a minimal investment of 2 million to support the necessary work in order to achieve elimination.

Our organization continues to work alongside New York City stakeholders that serve marginalized communities often hit the hardest by disease burdens, especially viral hepatitis. We listen and amplify the voices of our New York City neighborhoods who greatly benefit from a variety of community-based health programs. Our organization's members lead in the latest medical advances for care of liver diseases. We recognize the stark gaps in health care access and work to expand viral hepatitis treatment prescribers so New Yorkers can access these life-saving treatments. Our organization is dedicated to reducing health disparities associated with viral hepatitis and advocate the needs of the community to our local, state, and national policymakers to bring essential resources to New Yorkers.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Empire Liver Foundation remains steadfast to our mission as we continue to deliver essential services to providers. With your help in supporting the Viral Hepatitis Initiative, we can continue to train more clinical providers to treat viral hepatitis and protect the health and lives of our NYC communities. With your continued support and funding, we believe that the City Council can play an instrumental role in eliminating viral hepatitis.

Sincerely,

Meg Chappell, MPH
Program Manager
Empire Liver Foundation

On behalf of the members of the Empire Liver Foundation

May 25th, 2022

Testimony of Gigi Verkaik, Director of Development, Encore Community Services

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Good morning/afternoon Council members. My name is Gigi Verkaik and I am the Senior Director of Development at Encore Community Services, a nonprofit that provides life-saving services to older adults in Manhattan. We are known for our scratch-cooked home delivered meals program, as each day we provide over a thousand meals to aging New Yorkers who cannot leave their homes. For many, that meal is their only source of nutrition. In fall 2021, we were contracted to administer roughly 70% of the city's Recovery Meals, an emergency food program designed to assist some 12-thousand seniors who were or became food insecure during the pandemic, many of whom we will continue to provide for - even as that program nominally ends at the end of this budget season.

Sadly, as has often been the case, when it comes to city budgets, including this year's executive budget, the books are being balanced at the expense of human service organizations like Encore, and even more concerning, at the expense of our aging population. This despite us being in an era where the 65+ population is growing at 12-times the rate of those under 65.

You may have heard this budget touted as generous. And that may be the case in some areas. But for an organization like Encore, it barely allows us to stay afloat. This as we take on more and more responsibility to ensure that our growing population of older adults is not going to bed hungry. The DFTA budget continues to make up less than half a percent of the overall budget.

For months, we've heard about the heroism performed by our essential workers. But this budget does not treat them as heroes: thousands rallied outside City Hall in March calling for Just Pay, a guaranteed cost of living adjustment, a 21-dollar-per-hour salary floor and a wage schedule for human services workers like the ones at Encore. And again, today we've taken to the streets outside City Hall. But are our voices being heard? When the human services industry continues to be the lowest paid in the state, when 15% of those workers qualify for supplemental nutritional assistance themselves, and 68% of nonprofits across our state say they cannot meet demand due to underfunding and staffing deficits?

As for what *is* in the budget, a 6-million dollar investment in case workers for older adults does very little where in reality case workers are already stretched to the brink. 8.8-million dollars for home delivered meals does very little when the human services sector estimated a need of 40-million just to keep things at the level they have been.

However, organizations like Encore always get it done. We find a way to make sure that seniors get their meals, whether tested by the extreme obstacles of the pandemic, be it the lack of working building buzzers and elevators, in spite of it all Encore delivers on the sweltering days of the summer, on the snowiest days of the winter, climbing up numerous of flights of stairs to

reach those who are homebound, hungry and in need. Encore will always come through, but we cannot continue to cover the funding gaps and claim success on the backs of our overworked, dedicated staff. We need investment in our infrastructure, our vans, our kitchen equipment and we need to scale *up* operations. The need is increasing, not decreasing, and we must account for seniors in the shadows – those who require help, but aren't yet connected to someone who can provide it.

The budget can go a long way in addressing these needs. It is up to everyone in this chamber, and the Mayor to do right by our older adults, and our human services workers. We're all aging, their future is our future and we owe it to an entire generation who helped to build this city to ensure that they're not just surviving, but thriving. But we can't do it alone. Thank you very much for your time today.

Testimony of Lorraine Y. Collins
Senior Director of Public Policy & External Affairs
Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

To the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Public Hearing on the FY 23 Executive Budget
May 25th, 2022

My name is Lorraine Collins and I am the Senior Director of Public Policy and External Affairs for the New York office of Enterprise Community Partners, a national nonprofit that exists to make a good home possible for the millions of families without one. We support community development organizations on the ground, aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance housing policy at every level of government, and build and manage communities ourselves. Since our New York office opened in 1987, we have committed more than $3.9 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community to create or preserve over 73,000 affordable homes across New York State.

On behalf of Enterprise, I want to thank Chair Brannan and the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify today on the FY 23 Executive Budget, and the tremendous housing needs that New Yorkers currently face. As you well know, New York City faced an affordable housing crisis prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, we continue to face an unprecedented crisis of housing insecurity and homelessness. We join our fellow advocates in calling for bold proposals to address our housing needs in the City's adopted budget.

Capital Budget

The executive budget proposes a housing capital plan to invest $5 billion over 10 years, which is not nearly enough to address New York's needs. As a member of the United for Housing Campaign, Enterprise joins a coalition of over 80 organizations in calling on Mayor Adams to commit to his campaign promise of investing $4 billion per year in housing capital.

HPD Staffing Shortages

The department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is also dealing with staffing shortages. Analysis from the New York Housing Conference has shown a loss of over 120 people since the pandemic began, particularly among project managers and lawyers, leading to delays for affordable projects in the pipeline. While understaffing may lead to short-term cost savings, the City will ultimately pay for decreased housing production, through increased shelter costs, as there will be fewer units of desperately-needed housing and services for people experiencing homelessness, or at risk of experiencing homelessness. We are also particularly concerned about staffing shortages within HPD's code enforcement ranks and marketing teams, teams that are not only responsible for ensuring that complaints about housing conditions are inspected but also that affordable housing units are quickly filled through the city's housing lottery and other placement programs. These teams are also critical to the city meeting its affordable housing goals. The city's housing budget should include resources which will allow HPD to hire to fully meet its staffing needs.

Family Homelessness

Enterprise co-leads the Family Homelessness Coalition with partners New Destiny Housing and Citizens' Committee for Children. Our steering committee is composed of a diverse group of affordable housing owners, advocates, and shelter and service providers who work to end family homelessness across the city. Together, we urge the Mayor and the City Council to take action to prioritize the needs of families experiencing homelessness.

One of our most pressing issues is the staffing shortages and low salaries at city social service agencies and nonprofits. Similar to HPD, it is imperative that the Human Resource Administration (HRA) receives sufficient funding to increase its headcount to perform critical functions to keep New Yorkers housed including processing federally-funded Emergency Housing Vouchers, compiling lease packages for households exiting shelter into permanent housing, and managing requests for and modifications to rental subsidies. These staff shortages are leading to detrimental impacts including people waiting longer for permanent housing when a unit is ready and available, and waiting longer to receive rental assistance.

#JustPay

At the same time, nonprofit providers, who are a crucial part of New York City's safety net, are chronically underpaid. This has led to chronic turnover and staffing shortages, with the Supportive Housing Network of New York estimating a 20% staffing vacancy rate across the sector. The 80,000

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workers in this sector are disproportionately women of color, making these low wages a significant racial equity and pay equity issue. We support the #JustPay campaign, which supports a living wage with annual cost of living increases for social service providers contracted through the City and State. This year, New York State included a significant cost of living adjustment for human service workers with State contracts, and we urge City leadership to follow suit with City contracts.

We urge city leaders to prioritize budget-neutral policy changes that will improve access to permanent housing for families with children. The city must enforce the mandate to set aside at least 15% of HPD-funded housing projects for people experiencing homelessness, and these units should be open to all city shelter residents, not only DHS shelter residents.

CityFHEPS Increases

Enterprise supported the push to increase the level of rent covered by the CityFHEPS voucher last year, and we applaud city leadership for raising the subsidy amount and increasing the income eligibility for renewals. This is a major step forward in the fight against housing instability, but requires additional funding to be truly effective. The Preliminary Budget allotted $210 million for CityFHEPS in FY23, but according to IBO estimates, at least $35 million more is needed to fully fund the program. We also urge City leaders to increase access to CityFHEPS by permanently removing program requirements that necessitate eviction filing, shelter history, or extremely low incomes to qualify.

Source of Income Discrimination

While robust funding for rental assistance programs is immensely important, these programs will not be effective if property owners unlawfully refuse to accept them. For this reason, enforcing New York's source of income (SOI) protections are a crucial component in the fight against housing instability and homelessness. In 2019, the Statewide Source of Income Coalition, which was started by ERASE Racism and is now co-led by Enterprise, successfully advocated to amend the State's Human Rights Law to expand the protected class list to include 'lawful source of income', effectively banning housing discrimination based on a tenant using non-wage income, like vouchers, to pay rent. Local protections have been on the books in New York City for over a decade, but SOI discrimination remains rampant. At the same time, New York City's Commission on Human Rights' SOI unit, the agency responsible for enforcing this law, has gotten smaller, with zero staff members currently. It is critical that we reverse this trend and re-staff the SOI unit. While we applaud the

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mayor for allocating an additional $452,000 to the SOI unit in the Executive budget, we join our partners at Neighbors Together and Unlock NYC in calling on the City to increase the budget for the SOI unit by $1 million total, to fully undo staffing cuts in recent years.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on the FY 23 Executive Budget and the tremendous housing need we are seeing. We look forward to working with you this year to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, affordable and stable housing.

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equity advocates

Testimony Submitted by
Leah Kabran Eden, Grassroots Advocacy Director at Equity Advocates.
Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25th, 2022

My name is Leah Kabran Eden, Grassroots Advocacy Director and co-founder of Equity Advocates. Thank you to Chairperson Justin Brannan as well as the members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Equity Advocates builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations to address the underlying causes of food inequity through policy and systems change. We partner with New York-based organizations working to alleviate hunger and poverty, providing them with the tools they need to be more civically engaged—including policy education, advocacy training and coalition-building services.

New York City emerged as the first American epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic and two years later our communities are still reeling from the twin economic and public health crises caused by the pandemic. In response in late March 2020, Equity Advocates launched the NYC Food Policy Alliance: a multi-sector alliance of 40+ food system stakeholders from across New York City, including frontline CBOs directly impacted by food insecurity. The Alliance's mission is to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that promote access to healthy and affordable food to both respond to today's crisis as well as address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system.

We respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the final FY23 New York City Budget. These investments in human and social service programs and organizations serving low income communities of color will help advance equity, addressing some of the existing systemic inequalities exacerbated by COVID. Due to systemic racism, Black New Yorkers face the widest racial wealth divide relative to their white counterparts. There are twice as many white entrepreneurs as Black ones in the city, according to the New York Urban League's 2021 report "The State of Black New York", and the Black-owned businesses that do exist makeup just 2% of the total. We call on the City to invest in policies to support economic opportunity, community wealth-building and community control over all aspects of the food system for the most marginalized communities, utilizing the food system as the catalyst. Finally, it is imperative that discretionary funding through individual Council Members, Caucuses and Delegations is fully funded, as these investments often represent a significant portion of small community based nonprofits' budgets, many of which are led by, serve and are embedded in communities of color.

For more information please contact:
Leah Kabran Eden, Grassroots Advocacy Director - leah@nyequityadvocates.org

NYC EXECUTIVE BUDGET FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Utilizing The Food System As The Catalyst To Build Wealth In Communities

- **Allocate $5 Million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) that supports community-led projects to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities**. In *Food Forward NYC*, the MOFP calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We urge the City to create an initiative modeled on USDA's Community Food Project and Philadelphia's Food Justice Initiative. The purpose of the Initiative is to invest in community-based projects designed and led by people most impacted by race, social, health, and environmental injustices in order to improve healthy food access in our communities. We urge the City to invest in this program at $5 Million and offer grants of at least $500K to each grantee for both planning and implementation projects serving high need areas identified by Racial Equity Task Force. As this field of work requires long term investments, the MOFP should prioritize 2 year grant cycles and allow for flexibility on spending deadlines upon receiving grants. We also ask that the MOFP establish and provide compensation for an advisory board of NYC food systems practitioners to establish grant criteria, review grant RFPs and select awardees. Types of projects funded under this pilot should include:
    - The establishment of worker owned food cooperatives or funding for CBOs to support the creation of and provide technical assistance to consumer and worker-owned food businesses.
    - Community kitchen programs for CBOs to connect community based food businesses, chefs and caterers to affordable kitchen space to provide regular and emergency meal services offer culinary job training and programs like Red Rabbit and Hot Bread Kitchen.
    - Community based training and workforce development opportunities to support regional rural and urban agriculture enterprises, especially for youth and BIPOC farmers, such Green City Force and Farm School NYC to create a pipeline of urban farming and food systems career opportunities.
- **Invest in the establishment of food cooperatives and strategies to build community ownership within the local food system**, especially in BIPOC communities that have historically had low rates of business establishment by neighborhood residents.
- **Partner with and support community food hubs** like the Central Brooklyn Food Coop to leverage existing community-owned food, health and retail infrastructures. Funding a Community Food Hub Incubator, as outlined in the Growing Food Equity in NYC report, would also help coordinate interested communities in developing more local food businesses and farm-to-city food projects.

- **Fully Fund the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative at $3 million.** Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT discretionary funding initiative has helped catalyze CLT organizing, education, training and technical assistance. We support the New York City Community Land Initiative in its call for full funding to support 20 organizations working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable housing, community and commercial spaces, and advance a just recovery in Black and brown NYC communities.

Emergency Food & Benefits Access

- **Increase funding with an additional $63.5 Million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Baseline budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program and continued need.** We thank the Mayor for the inclusion of $53.7M in total for EFAP in the Executive Budget, but due to the discontinuation of P-FRED it still would not fully meet the need across our City. While hunger rates in the City are thankfully lower now than they were at the peak of COVID, they are still much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. In response to food insecurity rates that increased by over 36 percent for all New Yorkers and 46 percent for children, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy administered a new $63.5 million program called the Pandemic Food Reserve and Emergency Distribution (P-FRED). Since 2020, P-FRED has provided over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries throughout the City. The Mayor's preliminary budget excludes funding for the continuation of P-FRED past June 2022 yet no formal announcement has been made indicating if the program will continue. However, Mayor Adam's announced his intentions to strengthen EFAP by establishing a produce procurement operation into the program for the first time in its 40 years of existence. We urge the City to increase funding for EFAP beyond its current baseline level of $23.8 million to a total of $87.3M to account for the loss of P-FRED and adequately invest in this expanded effort to include fresh produce.
    - With the addition of produce procurement into EFAP for the first time and the release of a new RFP in January 2022 calling for a vendor to support procurement, ordering & distribution for EFAP, we urge HRA to consider innovative joint proposals in response to the recently released RFP and proposer(s) that demonstrate a commitment to following values set by the Good Food Purchasing procurement framework. We also urge HRA to consider RFP responses that prioritize sourcing from BIPOC and/or historically disadvantaged producers, distributors, and other places along the food supply chain and adequately track value based procurement.

    - Additionally, we urge the City to be more open and transparent in communicating with P-FRED providers about the future of the program. Many of the emergency food providers we work with have reported that P-FRED deliveries have stopped showing up and/or they have received reduced quantities of food without any clear communication from the City. Furthermore, without P-FRED some community providers will no longer have a source of food. Many of the groups that stepped up during the pandemic to serve their communities through P-FRED are mutual aid or community based groups that will not be eligible for EFAP membership because 1) they are not 501(c)(3), 2) do not have an Emergency Food Relief Organization (EFRO) ID#, and 3) do not have "other established sources of food and funding" - all of which are EFAP requirements. We urge HRA to provide guidance about potential alternatives for these providers once P-FRED winds down.
- **Invest $42.7 Million in new home delivered meals funding to combat hunger for older adults and prepare for the end of emergency DFTA Recovery Meals (formerly GetFood).** We applaud the Administration's inclusion of additional funding for DFTA home delivered meals programs to support increased contract reimbursement rates, with $9.41 million added for FY23 and beyond to bring rates up to $11.78 per meal. This increase addresses long-time underfunding, but there are additional funding needs for the HDM system including chronically low wages, inflation, and capital needs. In addition, we are glad the Administration pledged to invest $14.9 million in home delivered meals and case management programs to support roughly 3,000 new individuals that they expect will need meals with the termination of the DFTA Recovery Meals program (formerly GetFood) in June. However, additional funding is needed for this transition to support more older adults. Inclusive of the $14.9 million investment, the City should invest a total of $42.7 million into growing the home delivered meals program. This includes $9.7 million to support continued growth in demand for the home delivered meals program, $30 million to support the Recovery Meal clients transitioning to traditional home delivered meals, and $3 Million to support weekend and holiday home delivered meals not provided by current contracts. Additionally, DFTA should assess and fund the capital and infrastructure needs for HDM providers including van purchases and kitchen investments.
- **Increase HRA's budget baseline by $10 Million to engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications**. For the last several years, and especially during the pandemic, HRA's clients reported many issues to City Council and HRA with the closures of service centers, long phone wait times, problems returning missed calls from HRA, timely and accurate processing of applications, and the overall client experience. Despite these issues, the Preliminary Budget Plan does not include any additional funding for outreach or streamlining of social service program administration for the HRA. Additional administrative funding should also support the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity

applications portal for joint applications. We urge the City Council to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

- **We support the Administration's inclusion of $250 Million per year for an Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion and call for the State to support this initiative.** As Mayor Adams mentioned in his recent testimony to the NY State Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee members, it has been 20 years since the City and State of New York increased the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Benefits low income families receive. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, EITC programs are a proven strategy for lifting families low to moderate income families out of poverty.[1] We support the Mayor's call to the State to authorize the City to increase EITC benefits and match the City's investment of $250 Million to expand EITC here in New York City.
- **We join our partners in calling for the City to invest in a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all human services workers.** Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant and at poverty levels in a City where costs are notoriously high. It is critical that the FY23 budget, and all future budgets, rectify this by automatically allocating a COLA for all human services workers.
- **Need for additional data from Grocery to Go Program.** According to the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, the new Grocery to Go program which received $6.8M in the FY22 Budget will be serving people who were previously receiving food through the COVID-19 Get Food Program, are 59 and below, and still need meal assistance. Program participants, which will be a maximum of 5,000 people who will be asked to opt-in, will receive $110 dollars per month to purchase groceries through Mercado, an online grocery ordering and delivery platform. In November 2021, the MOFP told members of our Alliance that the pilot program was slated to begin Dec 1st and is funded through the current fiscal year. We would like this committees help to obtain data on the program including the following:
    - How many people are enrolled and participating in the Grocery to Go Program?
    - What happens to unspent credits on the Mercado marketplace given to clients?
    - What will happen to unspent funds if the Grocery to Go program does not reach the 5,000 person cap or if funds are not expended by the end of the fiscal year?

[1] https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/the-earned-income-tax-credit

School Food & Nutrition Education

- **$3.5 million for additional school food managers in The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS).** OFNS at the NYC Department of Education has worked tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they need to succeed in school, and to ensure that these meals are high quality and culturally competent. OFNS needs more school food managers to better serve their school communities, implement appealing menus, provide professional development, partner with school leadership to create positive meal experiences, and increase participation in the school meals program. Funding for an additional 60 managers, at $57,291 per manager, would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn. In addition, it is critical to ensure that those school food managers as well as kitchen staff and teacher aids have sufficient training centered around wellness and supporting healthy nutritious meals for students.
- **Allocate an additional $50 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan towards a planned phase-in of 500 more cafeteria redesigns** to fully scale the highly successful Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) to all high schools and middle schools to support school food participation, student well being and reduced lunch lines.
- **Renew $500,000 in funding for Food-Ed Hub based within the Tisch Food Center.** With ongoing funding, the Hub can continue to provide tools, evidence-based recommendations, and capacity and professional development opportunities to CBOs and educators.
- **Invest $37 million so that all schools can have sustained, flexible funding to provide vital food ed programming.** For example, flexible funding—at $20,000 per school—would enable schools to build and maintain school gardens and outdoor classrooms, hire a School Wellness Coordinator, provide per session pay for teachers who lead after school programs, or partner with a food ed organization to help teachers effectively integrate food and nutrition education into their curriculum.

Urban Agriculture & Youth Development

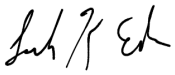
- **We support the Administration's inclusion of $101.6M in baseline funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to cover the increase in job opportunities for NYC youth from 70,000 to 90,000.** We strongly support the Administration's increase in baseline funding of $57.2M per year over the next four years to support the expansion of SYEP jobs for youth ages 14-24. Mayor Adams has expressed his commitment to bringing green jobs to SYEP and investing in the future of urban agriculture, yet current DYCD regulations create a barrier for smaller worksites that would provide meaningful experiences for young people. To ensure the successful implementation of this expansion especially with food systems and urban agriculture worksite partners, we urge the DYCD to shift the weekly site visit requirement to something less burdensome for worksite partners.

    - The current DYCD requirement that SYEP providers conduct weekly, in-person site visits poses a dual challenge for worksites. Organizations are stretched for capacity so scheduling and accommodating these weekly visits is burdensome for the supervisors. In addition, an unintended consequence of these weekly visits is that SYEP providers tend to focus on partnering with businesses and organizations that can host multiple interns which can be a barrier for smaller worksites and those offering a meaningful work experience within the food system or urban agriculture.
    - We also urge the City to create a pathway to SYEP for all youth, regardless of citizenship status.
- **Funding for Work Learn Grow (WLG), the complementary school-year youth workforce program, sits at less than half of its pre-pandemic level, with no baselined investment.** The City should invest $20 million in baselined funding for WLG in the FY23 budget in order to increase opportunities for young people, help SYEP providers maintain relationships with employer partners year-round, and stabilize staffing structures for the system.
- **Fully Restore Funding for NYC Composting programs.** We were disappointed to see that the Administration cut funding for the re-introduction and planned expansion of the curbside composting program. If NYC is to meet its climate goals and zero waste goals and take the burden off of CBOs that have stepped in to fill this gap, NYC must reinstate and fully fund the City's composting program including $18.2 M to for Organics Curbside Collection, $3.5M for community composting and organic dropoff sites citywide, and $793,000 FY23 and in the outyears to expand the school organics collection program.
    - We also urge the City to provide mandatory curbside composting Citywide through Int. 0244 from Councilmember Hanif, which would phase in organic waste pick-up from residential buildings by mid-2023. According to the Independent Budget Office, citywide composting would save the City $33M a year after the first five years.
- **Allocate funding for the new Office of Urban Agriculture housed within the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) to hire a Director and staff.** The legislation to create the Office went into effect March 2022 and requires the hiring of a Director and at least one staff member. We urge the Administration to allocate $247,500, as outlined in the Fiscal Impact Statement, in the FY23 Executive Budget to ensure the success of the new Office. We also urge the City to allocate additional funding to provide stipends for subcommittee members.
- **Create a grant or low interest loan program** managed by the NYC Urban Agriculture Office targeted to residents in low income communities to invest in and provide technical assistance to urban agricultural startups and their acquisition of equipment, land and indoor growing space and staff.

- **Invest in GreenThumb** by hiring more outreach coordinators, creating a full-time Youth Leadership Council coordinator position, providing youth with compensation for their work and compensating community gardeners for taking leadership roles within programming and mentoring the youth in GreenThumb's youth program. Compensating community gardeners to teach workshops and train youth to run these programs will help make existing gardening programming sustainable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Leah Kabran Eden
Grassroots Advocacy Director
Equity Advocates

Farm School NYC is a collaborative project created by individuals and organizations involved in New York City's food justice movement in response to the need for comprehensive farmer training made accessible to BIPOC communities underserved by traditional hierarchical educational institutions. Our mission is to train NYC residents in urban agriculture, in order to build self-reliant communities and inspire positive local action around food access and social, economic, and racial justice issues.

While living in the South Bronx, I have experienced moving into neighborhoods that were considered food deserts. But how could that be if I lived less than a mile away from either a grocery store or supermarket without a source of transportation. The issue was much more than its proximity to food providers, it was access to fresh foods. It was infuriating entering bodegas and supermarkets finding food that did not come from our community gardens or local farms. I always wondered why that was, and of course, it had plenty to do with the geo-politics of food distribution, socio-economic injustices, and lack of education. I yearned to grow food in my neighborhood that is native to the Bronx or food that may remind people of their homeland, so that I can serve and educate families living in what Karen Washington calls a food apartheid. Understanding that food injustice is a social justice issue impacting communities leads me to build upon what is available to me. In other words, because I live in an urban area, it inspires me to work in urban agriculture. Farm School NYC supports my belief that urban agriculture is the catalyst for sustainable community liveliness, which reminds me of a quote K. Rashid Nuri said in his novel Growing Out Loud: Journey of a Food Revolutionary, "There's no culture without agriculture". Being a part of Farm School NYC has pushed me closer to pursuing my dream of owning a food truck, which will provide a space for talented local home-chefs to serve and transform locally grown ingredients into delicious dishes.

I would like to thank you in advance for reading my testimony, and I appreciate Farm School NYC for creating a space where people, like myself, can find opportunities that build and inspire people to take positive local action around food access.

Flatbush Tenant Coalition
Building Tenant Power in Brooklyn and Beyond!

Flatbush Tenant Coalition Testimony
Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Finance Committee
May 25, 2022

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Please accept this testimony from Flatbush Tenant Coalition. The Flatbush Tenant Coalition is a member-led group of tenant associations in Flatbush, East Flatbush, and South Crown Heights working collectively to build tenant power.We educate tenants about their rights and how to organize to make change. We organize and support tenant associations and develop tenant leaders. We take united action in campaigns to strengthen tenant rights in NYC and across the state. Working together to build tenant power, we help to create a more just and equitable society.

We are proud Steering Committee members of the RTCNYC Coalition. And we too are proud of NYC's groundbreaking Right to Counsel legislation and applaud the City Council, the Mayor, and the Office of Civil Justice for its dedication to making the Right to Counsel available to all New Yorkers during this pandemic. Its undeniable that the law prevents evictions: 84% percent of tenants who had RTC won their case and stayed in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to protect and advance tenants' rights. Right to Counsel has also helped develop a body of more just case law, lower tenants' rents, re-stabilize apartments, and has forced landlords to make repairs.

As we have seen, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Right to Counsel is more important than ever before. We know that evictions and housing instability have a disproportionate impact on people of color, especially women and children of color. Evictions and housing instability also have significant impacts not just on people's housing, but on people's education, employment, family relationships, physical and mental health, and so much more. NYC's Right to Counsel moves us closer towards achieving economic, gender, and racial justice.

We are here today to urge this committee to immediately and fully implement Local Law 53 and to work with the courts to ensure that no case move forward without an RTC attorney.

Immediately and Fully Implement Local Law 53:

Local Law 53 is a mandate for the city to fund community organizing groups to do the necessary education and outreach work of RTC. Making sure tenants know about their right to counsel is crucial to ensuring that people stay in their homes. And making sure that this message is communicated by trusted tenant groups based in communities is a critical component of this.

The law has an effective date of November 2021. We are deeply disappointed that it has not yet been implemented.

To date and since we last testified at the General Welfare Committee Hearing on February 28, the Office of Civil Justice has failed to release the RFP or confirm funding for Local Law 53. Furthermore, we understand that OCJ and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit have engaged in efforts to inform the public of Right to Counsel. We want to be extremely clear - this is not a substitute or solution for failure to fund Local Law 53.

The intent of Local Law 53 is clear - to fund trusted tenant organizing groups working in low-income communities of color to lead outreach and education efforts through community meetings, workshops, Tenant

Association meetings, and more. This is the vital work of tenant organizers, and ensuring that tenants are informed of Right to Counsel and supported prior to an eviction case being filed. Tenants know about their rights and exercising them is a preventative and proactive measure.

With hundreds of thousands of households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 200,000 eviction cases filed across New York, tenants need this law now more than ever. We were told the city allocated $3.6 million towards this bill, had drafted the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was going to release it in November of last year. To date, we haven't seen it. We know the mayoral and city council administrations take time to transition but **with the expiration of the eviction protections almost 4 months ago and hundreds of eviction cases moving forward without Right to Counsel, we can't wait.** The city is now out of compliance with its own law and it needs to implement it now, in this current budget.

Why is this law important?

- Right to Counsel has been proven to stop evictions in NYC, but many tenants who are eligible for Right to Counsel don't know about it or are too afraid to use it. When tenants don't know or use their rights, they are more easily harassed out of their apartments. This leads to the displacement of mostly poor Black and brown New Yorkers.
- A survey done by volunteers at Bronx Housing Court found that **53%** of tenants who had Right to Counsel did not know about this right before arriving in court.
- When tenants don't know they have a Right to Counsel, they might decide not to appear in court, decline representation, sign agreements with their landlord's lawyer prior, decide not to ask for repairs in fear of being evicted, or face a variety of other serious consequences.
- Local Law 53 requires the city to support organizers who would work to ensure that tenants know about their Right to Counsel and feel supported using it. More tenants will be prepared to defend their homes against eviction and fight for their right to a safe, affordable home.
- Tenant organizing is the most effective means of ensuring tenants know about their rights. Tenant organizing groups create an environment where tenants feel supported by a community that is working together to combat landlord abuse, ensuring that a landlord cannot target an individual tenant for standing up for their rights.
- We need to stop informal evictions! 54% of forced moves that take place in NYC are the result of informal evictions, such as a tenant leaving due being told to leave, landlord harassment, a lack of repairs, etc. When tenants know they have the right to a lawyer and are organized, they can fight back when landlords try to push them out.

To meet the needs of tenants across the city, this law must be implemented now. **We urge this Committee to work with the necessary offices to release the RFP so that tenant organizing groups can do their work to educate and organize tenants across NYC during this incredibly scary time. We urge this Committee to call on Mayor Adams to fully fund and implement Local Law 53 and ensure the Office of Civil Justice is allocated $5 million.**

We look forward to working with you on this. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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Food Bank For New York City Testimony

for the

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing

May 25, 2022

Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Food Bank For New York City. My name is Leslie Gordon, President and CEO of Food Bank For NYC. Our organization partners with over 800 member charities across the five boroughs including food pantries and soup kitchens, shelters, senior centers, schools, and other providers of emergency food, income support services, and nutrition education to New Yorkers in need.

Addressing hunger in the wake of COVID-19 continues to be a marathon, not a sprint. The pandemic has precipitated a long-term crisis that will require a long-term response through funding for emergency food providers, improved access to benefits, and continued advocacy to ensure and expand New Yorker's access to federal nutrition programs. **This City's plan for long-term hunger relief should include ongoing expanded funding for food and infrastructure costs of emergency food distribution** through EFAP and other anti-hunger programs, and continued coordination with not-for-profit organizations like Food Bank for NYC and others who have the experience, operational capacity, and community connection to effectively address community needs.

About Food Bank For New York City

Food Bank's food distribution program provided **over 120 million free meals** for New Yorkers in need in FY21. This work would not be possible without the support of the City Council and partnership with many City administrative agencies. For 34 years and up until this fiscal year, Food Bank had been the distribution partner for New York City's Emergency Food Assistance Program (**EFAP**) which is the City's baseline support for food pantries and soup kitchens, providing food to over 500 direct service organizations. Additionally, the City Council has provided funding for key initiatives that are essential for Food Bank to feed our neighbors in need. The Council's **Food Pantries Initiatives has** supported over 200 emergency food providers across the five boroughs over the years. Its **Food Access and Benefits** initiative provides key funding for our income support services, helping New Yorkers apply and recertify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), providing free tax assistance, and building the capacity of our emergency food network to offer expanded benefits outreach and assistance. Combined, these **income support services put nearly $38 million** into the pockets of low-income New Yorkers last year. Food Bank's nutrition education programs support New York City public school teachers to provide curriculums, training and supplies that **empower nearly 23,000 children, teens and adults in the past year alone to sustain a healthy diet on a limited budget.** And

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with funding received from the Council's **Campus Pantries Initiative**, Food Bank operates pantry operations at more than **20 New York City K-12 public schools in 20 low-income communities of focus** across the five boroughs, which are the most vulnerable communities in the city identified by federal poverty rates, unemployment data, SNAP participation and utilizations rates, population demographics and prevalence of diet related diseases. Campus Pantry operation in FY22 included the distribution of over **1,040,000 meals to more than 24,000 students** and their families, complemented by the distribution of **235,140 pounds of soap, feminine products, shampoo, deodorant, detergent, and other critical essentials**.

Emergency Food Service Faces the Pandemic

Rising and Continuing Need

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, New Yorkers experienced a **Meal Gap of over 185 million meals.** The Meal Gap is New York City's measure for food hardship, and is the difference, measured in meals, between a household being food-insecure and food-secure. Today, the number of our New York City neighbors who are struggling to access a consistent source of nutritious food has **increased by more than 44% with more than 1.6M New Yorkers now experiencing food insecurity.**

COVID's impact on food pantries and soup kitchens in New York City was immediate. **By April of 2020, 75% of the food pantries and soup kitchens reported increased food need** since just months earlier, and more than **half of pantries reported running out of food.** Many parts of the network saw the average number of people served double, and our own direct service location **– The Community Kitchen of West Harlem (CKFP) – served nearly three times as many people compared to the same time period in 2019.** In this critical time, Food Bank more than doubled the amount of food distributed across the emergency food network – from 69 million pounds in FY19 to more than **145 million pounds in FY21** – because of the fast response of government partners like the City Council, because of the strength of the relationships and experience built by Food Bank over decades, and because of the data, analytics, and reporting infrastructure Food Bank has access to.

The elevated need for emergency food and the demands on the emergency food network continue even as emergency pandemic assistance expires. In the current fiscal year, so far, Food Bank has moved **90 million pounds** of food to emergency providers across all five boroughs, and this number is projected to be **95 million pounds in FY23.**

Expanding Service

As the pandemic put added strains on New Yorker households, it also strained the emergency food network, which relies heavily on charity and volunteer service. At the height of the pandemic during the NY PAUSE order, **over a third of emergency food programs were forced to make difficult decisions to suspend service.** Agencies that continued to serve quickly shifted their distribution to protect themselves and their clients, and Food Bank stepped up to support expanded distributions at agencies that were able to continue service. **Food Bank has seen an**

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increase of over 60% in food distribution since the start of the pandemic, which reflects both community need and our organization's capacity to serve. In FY21 alone, Food Bank invested over **$14 million in food, operational & capacity grants, healthcare partnerships and mobile pantry services.** This increased service has also expanded our operational costs, and in the past two years our **transportation costs** alone have increased 50% from pre-pandemic levels to nearly **$9 million**.

In FY21, Food Bank sourced and distributed more than **23 million pounds** of fresh produce to emergency food providers across the five boroughs. In fact, **Food Bank has grown its produce distribution by 130% since FY19**, with much of that impact achieved through the organization's comprehensive citywide COVID-19 emergency response. As food insecurity took New York City by storm, Food Bank didn't just respond with more food, we loaded our trucks with more pounds of fresh produce than ever before.

While responding to the COVID crisis, Food Bank strove to continue to expand access for the emergency food network to culturally appropriate food. In FY21, Food Bank distributed nearly **14 million pounds of kosher products** and more than 1,300 unique kosher SKUs to food pantries and soup kitchens serving a kosher-observant constituency across the city. Over the last 2 years, Food Bank has partnered with Islamic Relief USA, a trusted Islamic poverty-relief organization, and NYC Comptroller's Office during Ramadan to source halal meals prepared by third-party vendors and brought to the CKFP to distribute while COVID-19 restrictions prevented the use of Food Bank's kitchen facilities to prepare these meals on site. This partnership yielded the provision of **800 total halal meals** (200 per week), given out as part of daily community meal take-home bag distributions during the month of Ramadan. And in FY21, Food Bank dramatically increased the number of agencies participating in the distribution of **halal food to 192 agencies**, up from 10 the year before.

Access to Benefits and Income Support Services

While emergency food is the backstop against hunger, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is our nation's first line of defense protecting families from food poverty. **SNAP typically provides more meals in two months than NYC's emergency food network provides in one year.** SNAP is an effective counter-cyclical program: if household income declines, SNAP steps up to provide grocery assistance. As more New Yorkers face lost wages, the need to provide benefit access assistance has spiked. Food Bank's own **SNAP assistance call center has seen a 300% to 600% increase in daily call volume** since the start of the pandemic.

In response to the pandemic, Congress temporarily increased SNAP benefits in two ways: raising all benefits by 15% and boosting every household to the maximum benefit for their household size. The last of these temporary SNAP increases (known as Emergency Allotments, or EA) have been extended through July 2022 for what is expected to be the last time. It is vital to invest in SNAP outreach to allow as many New Yorkers as possible to access this resource and move closer to food security.

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We are grateful that New York City and State have worked in coordination to take essential actions that allow program flexibility to maximize SNAP and other federal assistance for New Yorkers in need. We applaud the Human Resources Administration (HRA) for this work as well as their partnership with the Department of Education (DOE) for their citywide outreach efforts for P-EBT. But even as more people have qualified for these benefits, and as benefit levels have increased temporarily, **the cost of meals prepared at home continues to rise, averaging over $4/meal across NYC and surpassing $6/meal in Manhattan in FY21** – double the national average, and only continuing to rise. This means grocery budgets are still falling short.

Food Bank's Income Support/Rapid Response Unit works to both connect food insecure individuals and low-income families to nutritious emergency food including fresh produce, and also connect in-need New Yorkers to critical public benefits such as SNAP, Earned Income Tax Credit and the Advanced Child Tax Credit. By investing in outreach for public benefits such as these, the City Council helps on the ground organizations connect New Yorkers impacted by hunger to critical resources to put them on the path to food and financial security. Food Bank also works to build and expand the capacity of community-based charities and schools across the five boroughs that serve communities in need, so that they can also provide additional anti-poverty and anti-hunger services to their communities.

In FY 2021, Food Bank facilitated over **$50 million cash** returned to NYC neighbors through SNAP and TAX programs. Through our tax program, **300 volunteers** prepared over **17,500 refunds, totaling over $30,800,000** with an average refund size of **$1,760 per family**. Through these services, funded by the New York City Council's Food Access and Benefits Initiative, thousands of New Yorkers are moved closer to food and financial security and New York City communities are strengthened economically.

Commitment to Fighting Food Insecurity Together

At the height of the pandemic, the City Council took swift action to establish **emergency funding for food pantries and soup kitchens** which provided food and essential operational support to the emergency food network. Food Bank worked closely with membership organizations and the Mayor's Office of Food Policy to administer these funds, and was responsible for coordinating with one third of the direct service organizations receiving support. These awards were instrumental in supporting the increased operations costs of the network as quickly as possible. In the FY21 and FY22 City Budget, New York also committed to significant additional funding for the Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution (P-FRED) program, which provided fresh produce to food insecure New Yorkers and is no longer being funded after current fiscal year. The proposed increases to EFAP paired with the elimination of P-FRED equal a significant reduction in overall emergency food spending. This comes at the same time that EA pandemic SNAP increases will also expire. The emergency food network is facing a dual set of challenges, as more New Yorkers will become food insecure at the same time that funding for emergency food is reduced.

As emergency assistance dwindles, the need faced by food insecure New Yorkers continues to grow. This is why the City must prioritize long term funding for food and infrastructure, and

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continue coordination with experienced not-for-profit organizations like Food Bank for NYC to connect food insecure New Yorkers not only to emergency food, but to resources and support that enable them to move toward stable and sustainable food security.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We are confident that our continued partnership will be essential for New York's fight against hunger.

###

GENERATION CITIZEN

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Testimony of Khin Mai Aung
New York Executive Director, Generation Citizen
May 25, 2022
New York City Council

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen ("GC") at the New York City Council Finance Committee. I'm Khin Mai Aung, the Executive Director at Generation Citizen New York ("GCNY"). GC is thankful for the Council's $500,000 investment this year in our programming and youth civics education through the *Civics Education in New York City Schools Initiative*. In Fiscal Year 2023, Generation Citizen seeks an increase of $100,000 for a grant of $600,000 to support our major expansion of programming throughout New York City.

In the current Fiscal Year 2022, Generation Citizen New York has embarked upon an ambitious programmatic expansion from 70 classes to over 150 classrooms, serving at least 3800 students. We have achieved this through systemic partnerships with school districts and networks - specifically, NYC DOE D5/Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline, NYC DOE D24, the Urban Assembly, New Visions for Public Schools and CUNY Medgar Evers. Through these partnerships, we are creating lasting communities of practice that can collaborate across networks for mutual support. In Fiscal Year 2023, we are on a trajectory to add even more classrooms through these and other systemic partnerships, and we wish to ensure sufficient funds and capacity to do so.

Via our "Action Civics" curriculum, secondary school students apply social studies learning to the real world by studying and advocating an issue of importance in their communities. This spring, Generation Citizen students advocated on a range of issues, including school-based campaigns like promoting the need for halal food options at lunch to curbing vaping in schools. Others focused on community concerns such as a localized campaign addressing the tragic January 22 fire in a Bronx apartment building by investigating more robust preventative measures, and broader issues like youth homelessess and rising food prices in New York City.

GC is an eleven year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for youth by bringing civics education into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. Action Civics is

a “student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice” (National Action Civics Collaborative). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any “hands-on,” project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

When faced with pandemic-related disruptions in spring 2020, GC nimbly shifted to remotely supporting teachers in implementing our programming and we look forward to continuing to leverage both in person and virtual supports to most efficiently support our educators in the field. GC also created online resources for educators and caregivers to engage young people and sustain high quality programming through the entirely online Kick Start Action Civics program. These resources are also available in Spanish here.

All students - especially youth of color, socio-economically disadvantaged youth, immigrant and refugee youth for whom our public education system may be their first exposure to our democratic process, and other youth from underprivileged or otherwise underrepresented backgrounds - need meaningful and empowering engagement within our political institutions as an integral part of their core social studies education.

GC is incredibly thankful for the City Council’s renewed funding despite myriad challenges and budgetary concerns in the past few years. GC hopes to continue partnering with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to bring civics education to schools as we continue safe operations of our schools moving forward.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I can be reached at kaung@generationcitizen.org with any questions or comments, and I have attached a one-pager with more information about our programming.

GENERATION CITIZEN

DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

Mission & Vision



Generation Citizen (GC) is working to transform civics education so that young people are equipped and inspired to exercise their civic power.

We envision a just, inclusive democracy that is responsive to all young people.

Our Work

For over a decade, GC has been transforming how civics education is taught by bringing the subject to life for students through real-world engagement with democracy. With Action Civics students address local community issues and develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills to learn and practice the behaviors of active citizenship within an academic setting.

We also provide thought leadership, conduct research, and build coalitions to advocate for state- and district-level policies that ensure schools prioritize Action Civics. By investing in teachers and their capacity to activate youth voices in the classroom and beyond, GCNY is enabling a movement of young people prepared to lead in our democracy.

Who We Serve

GC New York is supporting approximately 5,500 students in 220 classrooms across 47 schools statewide. To ensure that our democracy represents the voices of all people, we prioritize working with students from communities that have been historically excluded from the political process.

- Approximately 79% of Generation Citizen students identify as persons of color
- 72% of GC students are low-income, defined as “economically disadvantaged” by the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Education Department
- 55% of Generation Citizen students speak a language other than English at home



Civic Education in New York City Schools Initiative

The Civic Education in New York City Schools Initiative supports civic education programs that provide educators with content and expertise to lead semester-long Action Civics programs in DOE middle and high schools.

The New York City Council first granted funding to GC in 2017, and designated $500,000 for fiscal year 2022 in support of our Action Civics programming.

generationcitizen.org

Khin Mai Aung | New York Executive Director | kaung@generationcitizen.org

GENERATION CITIZEN

DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

Impact

Academics and experts in the field agree upon three indicators which best predict a student's likelihood of future civic engagement: Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills, and Civic Motivation.

CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

81%

of students could identify the best action to make to address an issue after completing their GC course

CIVIC SKILLS

71%

of students improved use of acquired skills to effectively participate in the political process. This includes oral and written persuasive communication, group-work, and critical thinking.

CIVIC MOTIVATION

70%

of students, after GC, believe they have the power to make a difference in their community

CLASSROOM FOCUS ISSUE EXAMPLES

- JUSTICE & EQUALITY: Bullying, Discrimination, Immigration, Affordable Housing & More
- HEALTH: Sex Education, PTSD among Veterans, Suicide Prevention & More
- ENVIRONMENT: Reducing Plastic Use, Water Conservation, Littering & More
- ECONOMY & JOBS: Youth Unemployment, Job Training, Employment Opportunities & More
- PUBLIC SAFETY: Police and Community Relations, Gun Violence, Safe Streets & More
- EDUCATION & STUDENT VOICE: Life Skills, Equitable School Funding, College Access & More

Classroom Highlight

Focus Issue: Educational Funding in Minority Schools
School: Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women

Students found that low funding is one of the root causes of inequality in NYC public schools. The quality of education students receive in low income and higher earning communities varies greatly largely due to funding and resource disparities. To find out more about this topic students invited Nequan McLean, President - District 16 Community Education Council, NYC to gather information and tactics for action steps. After this interview, students determined their goal would be for "Community education councils to require a student to advocate for the district. Furthermore, the mayor controls how schools are funded. Ultimately, don't be afraid to speak up to your principals and legislators, your voices matter." Students were also able to gather information from Larry Woodbridge, Senior Executive Director of NYC Department of Education. Students also created surveys to get the thoughts of their community stakeholders.

generationcitizen.org

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Girls for Gender Equity Testimony to the City Council
Committee on Finance - Executive Budget
Delivered by: Quadira Coles
5.25.22

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members and staff of the Committee on Finance. My name is Quadira and I am the Deputy Director of Policy at Girls for Gender Equity.

GGE is an intergenerational organization based in Brooklyn, New York committed to the all-around development of girls and young women. GGE challenges structural forces, including racism, sexism, gender-based violence, transphobia, homophobia, and economic inequity, which constrict the freedom, full expression, and rights of transgender and cisgender girls and young women of color, and gender non-conforming youth of color. We do this work through direct service, advocacy, and culture change. GGE has been a leader in the conversation around gender-based violence and consistent advocates against youth policing.

It makes sense to repurpose some of my old testimonies because here we are again, demanding, now a new council to prioritize police-free schools and invest in students' education with healing and restorative services, programs and support, despite our unwavering advocacy over the past few years.

I want to be clear, students are still feeling the pandemic's two-year impact. We are currently living through a nation-wide mental health crisis, with a general consensus amongst the students themselves and adult allies, that their emotional and mental well-being is and should be top priority right now. We can't ignore that. Funding to the School Safety Division which fosters harmful policing tactics and surveillance takes away from areas within our education system that need adequate and sustainable fiscal support, such as staff retention and restorative and extra curricular programing. During the pandemic, students have lost access to their school buildings, peers and teachers and had to rapidly adjust to new routines and a new method of learning that has exposed a multitude of educational inequities within the New York City school system. This has brought on a tremendous amount of stress and mental health issues that students are consistently uplifting. Neither school communities nor students were prepared for this, and we are still trying to play catch up.

So the plan to replenish officers in the School Safety Division seems absurd considering the many other things that need the investment and that will truly ensure holistic safety for students. And as we begin to see rollbacks on the progress this city has made to undo pathways to harm and abuse by the NYPD in our own communities, **we must ensure that we cut more than $400 million school policing budget. This includes money for school police as well as police officers the city calls "Youth Coordination Officers"** who are essentially tasked with surveillance of students in and outside of school. This kind of tactic never works. There's enough research to show the outcomes of youth interactions with police are negative. Student's do not need more antagonizing surveillance in the guise of "mentorship" from officers who are also being told to bring back heavy handed policing tactics on the quest to allegedly "get tough on crime", which disproportionately targets Black and brown youth.

Furthermore, we and that includes our fellow DSC advocates and students here, demand the city:

1. Hire 2,000 New Yorkers to Strengthen Schools

2. Invest $75 million to hire restorative justice coordinators in 500 high schools and $45 million to implement restorative justice practices

3. Direct $350 million in new funding to grow school climate supports

4. Baseline $5 million to sustain the mental health continuum initiative

And move money away from youth policing, period.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

greenguerillas

Testimony to the NYC Council
Hearing of the City Council Committee on Finance
FY23 Executive Budget Hearing

May 25, 2022

I'm Sarah McCollum Williams, Executive Director of Green Guerillas, a non-profit organization that supports community gardens. We use a mix of education, organizing and advocacy to help people cultivate community gardens, engage youth in historically underrepresented neighborhoods, and advance food and environmental justice. Our vision is for sustainable, equitable communities across NYC. I am here to speak in support of the budget requests of the Play Fair Coalition as well as the NYC Food Policy Alliance.

We are requesting 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks, a number Mayor Adams repeatedly committed to, and the funding of $6.5 million for the Parks Equity Initiative, and $4.5 million to protect and conserve our natural areas. With Covid cases again rising, this funding will prove vital during another busy summer. NYC's parks system has been underfunded and inequitably funded for 40 years, operating with just .5% of the city budget.

We ask the Council to invest in GreenThumb by hiring more outreach coordinators, providing youth with compensation for their work and compensating community gardeners for taking leadership roles within programming and mentoring the youth in GreenThumb's youth program. Compensating community gardeners to teach workshops and train youth to run these programs will help make existing gardening programming sustainable.

We urge the Council to utilize food systems as a catalyst for building community wealth. Among other things, this would include allocating $5 million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy that supports community-led projects to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities.

We request funding for the new Office of Urban Agriculture housed within the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) to hire a Director and staff. The legislation to create the Office went into effect March 2022 and requires the hiring of a Director and at least one staff member. We urge the Administration to allocate $247,500, as outlined in the Fiscal Impact Statement, in the FY23 Executive Budget to ensure the success of the new Office. We also urge the City to allocate additional funding to provide stipends for subcommittee members.

We request that the Council fully restore funding for NYC composting programs. We were disappointed to see that the Administration cut funding for the re-introduction and planned expansion of the curbside composting program. If NYC is to meet its climate goals and zero

waste goals and take the burden off of CBOs that have stepped in to fill this gap, NYC must reinstate and fully fund the City's composting program including $18.2 M to for Organics Curbside Collection and $3.5 million for community composting and organic dropoff sites citywide.

Community gardeners provide their neighborhoods with tangible resilience, create food access, foster life-giving connections between people and nature, strengthen community bonds, engage youth, empower seniors, and foster biodiversity and environmental resilience. The Council's investments in the above programs will help advance equity. We call on the City to invest in policies to support economic opportunity, community wealth-building and community control over all aspects of the food system for the most marginalized communities, utilizing the food system as the catalyst.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Written Testimony
New York City Council Finance Committee's Executive Budget Hearing May 25th at 10:00 AM

Ronni Marks
Founder/ED- Hepatitis C Mentor and Support Group, Inc.
35 East 38th Street, Suite #4G
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917-612-2731

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you today. I want to thank you for supporting the hepatitis community these past few years. I am a patient who was cured of Hepatitis C eight years ago. I facilitated support groups for 18 years at NYU Langone Health and am the founder and executive director of the Hepatitis C Mentor and Support Group,Inc. In addition to being a patient, I have experience working with both patients and providers

At HCMSG we provide education and supportive services for people living with Hepatitis C and co-infected with HIV throughout New York City. Educational groups and supportive patient mentoring services have been shown to be important elements of successful and cost effective medical care for patients with hepatitis C and other chronic health conditions. These services improve the quality of life, as well as medical outcomes for patients.

The training HCMSG provides for healthcare providers help them to have a better understanding of how to work with all patients with an emphasis on high risk populations, such as people with substance use disorder, those living with HIV and HCV, the LGBTQ community, children, adolescents and pregnant people dealing with Hepatitis C.

[1]Approximately 2.4% of NYC residents 20 years and older have hepatitis C and 1.2% have Hepatitis B. Many are walking around unaware they have it. The rates of liver cancer remains high among NYC residents.

This is why it is critical for the City Council to fully support the Unified Viral Hepatitis Preliminary Budget FY2023 proposal. I serve on the New York State Hepatitis C Elimination task force, and hope to see us provide the model for the entire country, with NY as the first City and State to eliminate Hepatitis C. We need increased services for hepatitis, peer navigators, harm reduction and syringe exchange services. As well as more Overdose Prevention Centers.

More education is needed in overdose prevention and Hepatitis. People need to understand the syndemic connection between substance use and infectious disease.

As a patient who has been cured from hepatitis C and one who works with patients, I can tell you firsthand what an impact this virus has on someone. It effects the whole body, not just the liver. Being cured has been the key to having people turn their lives around.

There is such power in having supportive services and patient navigators. It is essential for patients to work with people who understand what they are going through and can help them get through the process, making it easier for patients to adhere to treatment. In many cases it has helped to reduce the feeling of stigma associated with having hepatitis and living with HIV and HCV. Continued support of the Viral Hepatitis Initiative is vital to the health and wellness of New York's most vulnerable

Please help us ensure that all New York City residents have access to Hepatitis C testing, treatment and care regardless of race, gender, or economic status. We need a minimal investment of $2million to make this possible.

Thank You!
Ronni Marks

Reference:

1. NYC Department of Health; 2016 Annual Report: Hepatitis B and C. www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/hepatitis-b-and-c-annual-report-2016.pdf

Real Recovery with Community Public health Funding

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Chris Norwood, Executive Director of Health

People and co-founder of Communities Driving Recovery, a citywide network of community-based organizations focused on the key role of CBOs in Covid recovery.

I want to focus on two major points. First, we urge the Council to keep pursuing the $50

Million in Public Health Corps funds it requested from the Administration. It is hard to overemphasize how important these funds are. The Council might not fully realize that what DOHMH is calling a Public Health Corps was formed millions in CDC funds. The RFP the city put out for these funds had stipulations that I've NEVER seen before in a city RGP which fundamentally blocked smaller, neighborhood organizations from applying. Moreover, DOHMH completely ignored community pleas to include recovery and wellness projects along with vaccination in its request and plan. That means that, even though the city has now reached a very high vaccination rate, we cannot turn the CDC money to recovery ---and especially to addressing the terrible disparities---such as chronic disease control and prevention---that the epidemic show are so acutely needed.

Meanwhile, the T2 or Test and Trace Corps----the some 35 mainly smaller CBOs who were the first out there, relentlessly promoting Covid prevention and vaccination---and who were key to the city's success in attaining the highest big city vaccination rate in the nation---will be totally defunded and cast aside at the end of this month while the big organizations that were given CDC millions continue. We wonder why communities are in despair when those who risked their lives and helped make an enormous success get cast aside.

But, with the City Council continuing to pursue its own $50 million Public Health Corps request ---and pressing the administration to keep that in the budget---we can turn the T2 CBOs to other work for wellness and health that desperately needs to be done---like teaching the millions of New Yorkers with chronic disease the good self-care and self-management proven not only to improve their health---but make them far less vulnerable to an infectious epidemic like Covid.

This brings us to diabetes---actually the most widespread and damaging epidemic in the city for the last 20 years. And during that time, staggering but true the NYCDOH has never used one penny of city money to support proven diabetes prevention and self-care education. With Covid having made diabetes so much worse, we now have a tusami of sicker and sicker people. I'm baffled that the administration didn't yet respond to the Council's budget request for $500,000 in funding for proven, evidence-based diabetes education, but please, please, press that forward; it is key to health for our stricken communities. Thank you.

Written Testimony of Carol Verdi

I work at HeartShare Human Services of New York and oversee their school programs. I oversee four early childhood, one school age and 2 children's residential programs. I am writing today to speak about teachers who work in 4410 schools, which serve New York City public school children, who are the lowest paid teachers in New York City. When pay parity was put in place in 2019, the 4410 teachers were left out. The consequences of this exclusion are causing these 4410 programs to experience teacher vacancies in record numbers. We went from a 34%vacancy rate in October of 2021 to a 46% vacancy rate as of April of 2022. (This is documented in IAC data collected from member agencies)

These 4410 programs serve 88% of preschool students with disabilities in New York City. Eighty seven out of 119 approved 4410 classrooms are closed due to the inability to hire teachers due to this salary inequity. These programs have lost 102 teachers to higher paying jobs. This year, for the first time in 40 years, HeartShare Human Services has 8 dark classrooms due to the inability to hire. We receive daily calls from families and Committee on Preschool Special Education Administrators asking when will our classes open? I wish I had an answer to give them.

We are facing a dire situation which we fear will get worse as we approach September, where we historically lose many teachers to the NYCDOE. This year with the expansion of 3K and 4K we know that our 4410 teachers will be ripe for picking. It does appear that 3K and 4K for all is really only for some and the most vulnerable of students are being excluded. Please budget the 30 Million dollars in the budget for our 4410 teachers to receive what they should be entitled to. Our students deserve to have teachers to ensure that they have the best chance of developing their skills to be productive members of society living in this great City. I implore you to be their Champions and do right by them by ensuring that they have certified teachers to teach them.

Please see statistics below:

- Based on information in the Mayors Preliminary Management Report we know that 88% of the ***more than 25,803 preschool students with disabilities in NYC attend 4410 programs*** and the NYC DOE serves about 12%. (Page 197 of the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report February 2022).
- **17% -** this was the vacancy rate for certified special education teachers in 4410 programs the 2016-2017 school year.

- **46% ↑- this is now the average current vacancy rate for certified special education teachers based on the most recent survey data from IAC 4410 programs in NYC as of April 15, 2022.**
- **119** - the number of approved preschool special education classrooms in IAC 4410 programs that are currently closed in New York City because 4410 programs do not have enough teachers to re-open these classrooms. (Based on the most recent IAC Survey)
- **87** – this was the number of approved preschool special education classrooms that were reported closed in NYC as of October 15, 2021.
- **32 – the number of** additional preschool classrooms that have been closed since October 15, 2021, because they have been unable to hire new teachers and the NYC DOE recruiting their existing teachers.
- **102** - the number of certified special education early childhood teachers who left IAC 4410 programs in the last 6 months alone. (Based on survey from twenty-seven IAC preschool special education providers – April 2022)
- **900 -** the projected number of preschool special education class seats that are needed in NYC for Spring of 2022. (*NYC DOE Regional Need posting - November 2021)

Your administration has the opportunity this year to correct the critical failure of the previous administration to address this injustice and to commit to raising teacher salaries equal to the increases given to all other early childhood preschool special education teachers in NYC. We are asking that you include the 30 million dollars in the final city budget to raise teachers' salaries for early childhood preschool special education teachers (4410's) equivalent to the increase given to all other early childhood teachers three years ago.

hispanicfederation

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Testimony re: Budget Hearing
Submitted to
New York City Committee on Finance
Submitted by Ingrid Alvarez, Vice President of Policy & Strategic Engagement, Hispanic Federation

May 27, 2022

Thank you, Councilmember and Committee Chair Brannan, and all other committee members, for taking the time to read this testimony drafted by Hispanic Federation; a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy.

Addressing the Needs of the Latino Community Across New York City

My name is Ingrid Alvarez, Vice President of Policy & Strategic Engagement at Hispanic Federation, and I steadfastly advocate for Latinos across New York City. We are thankful to the administration for including a range of priorities that support our Latino students and families in the preliminary budget.

Our network of 150+ Latino community-based organizations, over 60 of which are in New York City, are front-line service providers for our neighborhoods and communities. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the health, financial security, and educational progress of the Latino community has been devastating. Latino workers already had lower pre-pandemic wages, and less access to job related benefits like health care and paid leave. Challenges faced by Latinos in terms of health outcomes and health care access have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. Furthermore, disrupted schooling has caused Latino students to fall behind at disproportionate rates. A just recovery is dependent on the way we prioritize resources aimed at improving the health and well-being of Latino communities.

Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF)

We thank you for the $2.5 million in continued support for the CCNSF in the FY'22 budget. This initiative has grown to serve over 250 community-based organizations across NYC that work directly in communities of color disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Now more than ever, as we continue to struggle through the direct and indirect effects of COVID-19, it is vital that the CCNSF receive funding to address the growing needs of our communities. As such, we respectfully ask for your continued support for the CCNSF with a $7 million budget allocation in the FY'23 budget.

Protecting and expanding the CCNSF is vital. Our underfunded and over stretched organizations are working night and day to provide for communities of color across New York City. Due to overwhelming need, they have been providing services that they were never built to provide. Larger, more-established nonprofits rely on endowments, affluent board leadership, and development teams to provide stability and expansion to their work. Communities of color-led nonprofits do not have access to these types of safeguards and staples due to historical funding inequities. The CCNSF funding is crucial in protecting nonprofits and saving critical service providers from succumbing to the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Not only are our nonprofits crucial to the social well-being of the city, but we also play a substantial role in the city's economy. Nonprofits alone account for 16% of the private workforce, compared to 10% nationally. The community-based organizations we proudly represent employ thousands of professionals and support staff across our five boroughs: from social workers and immigration lawyers to after-school program staff and health navigators. They serve the most vulnerable populations in our city and keep millions of our residents afloat financially, socially, and mentally.

As nonprofits are feeling the brunt of the harmful economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are providing services to those most affected by the current health crisis. An allocation of $7 million for New York City's Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund is essential to ensure that organizations that are led by and serve people of color survive during the pandemic and beyond.

Hunger Relief

The past two years have created unprecedented challenges for all communities worldwide. In the face of these devastating challenges, the Hispanic Federation has provided an unparalleled response by investing millions in emergency assistance to address inequities in COVID-19 response amongst the Latino immigrant community. Our COVID-19 Relief Fund has committed over $8.1 million dollars to provide vital food, health, housing, immigration, and employment services supporting 300 frontline Latino, Black, and immigrant-led organizations. These efforts have also provided direct relief to support struggling families and 711 small businesses with grants totaling $5.1 million dollars in addition to committing another $2.5 million dollars to address the growing concerns of food insecurity in communities of color by restocking food pantries.

HF's long-running *Lucha Contra El Hambre* hunger relief initiative provides food to pantries operated by HF member agencies and partners. In response to the exponential increase in food insecurity experienced by Latinos in New York City neighborhoods hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic, and because of HF's expanded hunger relief efforts, HF received $1 million from the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (NYC DYCD) last year to provide culturally competent food assistance to needy Latino families in partnership with our network of Latino community-based organizations in all five boroughs. Pantries run by HF members have multiplied their operations to meet the increased demand from their communities. Some sites have grown to become food hubs, distributing food to smaller operations and tenant groups providing mutual aid to their neighbors unable to access food support otherwise. In addition to supporting our hunger relief partners in meeting their increased demand, we have been able to support new partners fighting hunger. In some cases, these new partner organizations did not provide hunger relief prior to the pandemic but had to pivot their programming and services to meet the rise of food insecurity among their clients seeking help. We also purchased cooked meals prepared by local restaurants for distribution through local nonprofit partners in efforts to support small businesses while providing culturally appropriate foods for low-income Latino families. As a result of this boost, over 92,000 Latino New Yorkers in need have been served close to 300,000 meals via our expanded hunger relief efforts and our local restaurant hot meals initiative. We request $150,000 for this vital program.

Culturally Relevant COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Two years after the onslaught of the pandemic, the need for COVID-19 vaccine outreach and education for communities of color remains. Although Latino numbers have gone down significantly in certain age categories, they still have the highest proportional COVID related death rates of any group in the United States in every single one of the age categories. However, we know that our efforts are being effective. Vaccine outreach and education by trusted messengers within the community are working. The Center for Disease Control and various efforts across the country have made it clear that the impact of trusted messengers in local communities are the engine for recovery, as their message is the most effective with community members.

From August to December 2021, HF successfully launched a media campaign that has made nearly 20 million impressions via social, digital, tv, and radio media. We've held over 1,300 events across the state, engaged with nearly 1.2 million New Yorkers, and vaccinated over 10,300 individuals. Hispanic Federation has funded 36 organizations under this initiative and these agencies are working effectively and diligently. We must have the resources necessary to continue these extremely successful efforts, especially as children – toddlers and infants – become eligible for the vaccine. Our partners cover all of New York City and upstate New York, and are undertaking monumental efforts to provide linguistically and culturally relevant vaccine information to the community.

Through generous state funding, HF has been able to strategically support various nonprofit community health and human service organizations to continue increasing Latino vaccination rates across New York City and in the state by implementing:

- **COVID-19 Vaccine Education and Awareness:** Carrying out mass and micro-targeted public education efforts to dispel fears and misconceptions about the virus and inform vulnerable and eligible Latino residents where they can get tested locally, especially considering newly eligible age groups (children, toddlers, and infants expected in 2022).
- **COVID-19 Vaccination Case Management:** Providing active case management for vulnerable, at-risk and priority Latino residents who require help in getting vaccine information, immunization enrollment, and a continuum of care.
- **Establishment of COVID-19 Community Vaccination and Education Sites:** Activating and preparing local hubs/sites to serve as community vaccination centers for Latinos. In addition to conducting ongoing vaccination drives, grantees under this category will be required to conduct mass and micro-targeted vaccine education and awareness efforts.

Hate Crimes and Partners Against the Hate (P.A.T.H.) Forward Initiative

Hate crimes are a direct assault on our values and threaten the sense of security in communities across the city. Crimes motivated by bias, whether based on race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or gender identity are violations of our most cherished values as New Yorkers and Americans. We are grateful for the generous support for Prevention of Hate Crimes outreach and education during FY'22. Thanks to your commitment we were able to engage with a range of populations including young people from elementary schools to high schools, immigrant workers, tenants, low-income individuals, and more.

Hispanic Federation along with its five grantees; El Puente, Fifth Avenue Committee, New Immigrant Community Empowerment, Voces Latinas and La Colmena, have reached over 45,000 individuals through social media, virtual and in-person workshops, presentations, and other forms of outreach. With the goal to build awareness, Hispanic Federation launched a social media campaign targeting the Latino community encouraging them to take action and report hate crime incidents. As we build awareness on Hate Crimes, HF has taken a holistic approach to educate our community on critical services that are important to them and incorporates the topic into our everyday programs and events. In order to effectively tailor our outreach and messaging, two focus groups were designed to reach particular subgroups in the Latino community such as the youth, undocumented workers, and/or LGBTQ+ individuals.

As an anchor organization, it was important for Hispanic Federation to fund organizations that were connected to the prevention of bias and hate crimes. In choosing our grantees, we focused on ensuring not only diversity in geography but in the populations served. Each of our five grantees are committed to using education as a strategy for identifying, preventing, and treating hate crimes and discrimination in various ways. Individuals reached through this initiative received a variety of programmatic services including healing circles with staff and young people, workshops targeted to the day laborer and other cash workers, anti-bias, and anti-racism training, and more. Our grantees engaged in culturally appropriate hate crimes outreach, workshops, and trainings. NYC needs trusted messengers within the community to work **with** community members to decrease hate crimes. Providing resources to community organizations that have established meaningful inroads with local residents, and that facilitate culturally and linguistically relevant information and events to combat hate crimes.

Education

New York City is home to over 1.3 million students, many of whom are Latino, immigrant and Multilingual Learners. City government has taken many strides to create equity for all students; however, our work is not finished. We must ensure that our schools are welcoming spaces for all students and that the education system is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. The city has a responsibility to ensure that all students have access to high quality education, along with appropriate supports and services at home, in the community and in their neighborhoods.

Socio-Emotional/Mental Health Supports

NYC Council must ensure that classrooms are safe places where all students feel welcome and supported. This includes providing adequate social emotional learning (SEL) resources for teachers who are burnt out and overwhelmed due to the pandemic. Community engagement efforts must also be supported so that schools can continue to provide much-needed services like mental health counseling or behavioral interventions for students whose behavior has been affected by COVID-19. Investments in linguistically diverse and culturally responsive mental health counselors are crucial for our diverse school population.

Bold investments in restorative justice approaches including restorative justice coordinators, restorative circles, and trauma-informed schools will help establish healthy school climates. Restorative justice models are effective at reducing suspension rates among all students, but especially among Multilingual Learner and English Language Learner students due to their ability to create safe spaces and provide a space in which all voices can be heard. Schools throughout the city have noted increases in behavioral issues and suspensions. Restorative justice practices provide a helpful alternative that addresses the root of a child's misbehavior and helps to dismantle the school to prison pipeline that affects the large number of Black and Latino students on the receiving end of punitive practices like suspensions.

Ensuring A Diverse Teacher Workforce

The NYC Department of Education has about 142,000 English Language Learners – among the largest populations of ELLs in the country. A recent data report from the State Education Department highlights that the state experienced a nearly 10% increase in Multilingual Learners over a three-year period. The city must invest in bilingual education instructors or dual language teachers who speak Spanish across the city's elementary schools to support MLL students. The DOE has invested millions of dollars into hiring these teachers over the last couple of years, which is a step in the right direction, but it needs to continue moving forward so every school has access to bilingual educators.

With the existing teacher shortage, there is a dire need for direct investments to attract and retain teachers with specialized focuses. Having more bilingual teachers and instructors willing to assist these students can provide them with alternative learning methods and ways to measure their academic progress. Intentional investments in the city budget for MLL/ELL teachers can provide schools with the additional materials, services, and learning MLLs and ELLs need for academic success and college and career readiness. This includes consistent interpretation/translation services.

Parent Engagement

In addition to being underrepresented in higher education institutions, Latinos and Multilingual Learners have lower rates of high school completion than other racial groups. While there are many factors that contribute to this disparity — including socioeconomic status and language barriers — increased parent engagement can help improve Latino student achievement by creating positive home environments for learning. City council should include investments in the fiscal year 2023 budget for the DOE to strengthen relationships with parents, teachers and other school staff as well as engaging parents in decision making about their child's education inside and outside of school walls. This will help foster an environment where parents feel comfortable asking questions about their children's progress or concerns they may have about school policies or practices.

We know that parent involvement is crucial to student success, but many parents do not have the same access as others to resources like transportation or technology that can support their engagement with the school system. That's why ensuring that parents have access to the information they need about their child's education – whether it's through workshops about topics such as homework or discipline policies or by providing materials in Spanish so they can better understand what's happening at school – is extremely crucial.

Schools need to bolster their methods to engage with families, particularly undocumented and mixed-status families who historically have been hesitant of interacting with government and even schools, due to fear of deportation. This is a critical piece that can be supported by working with community-based organizations, parent groups, and/or other companies that disseminate information across the city through radio, TV, and print.

College & Career Supports

NYC's budget must ensure all students graduate from high school ready for college and career and eliminate the achievement gap between students of color and their peers. To mitigate this disparity, administration, counselors, and educators must collaborate to support students in greater capacities and guide students' transition to college and career. This includes providing equal access to advanced courses. In a study conducted by The Education Trust NY, 91% and 49% of Asian and White students, respectively, were enrolled in AP/IB courses, while only 36% of Black students, 35% of Latinx students and 17% of American Indian students were enrolled. Policies like automatic enrollment in advanced courses if a student meets the requisites significantly decrease these inequalities. Additionally, research indicates that students who take advanced coursework are more likely to graduate high school, go to college, and earn a degree. The opportunity to engage in AP courses will help Latino students not only enroll in college, but also persist and graduate. Now more than ever, postsecondary and career readiness is interconnected with economic opportunity, and we must ensure that our students are presented with more opportunities for advancement.

As our communities focus on rebuilding in the wake of the pandemic, we must intentionally work to meet the needs of communities of color. Hispanic Federation asks for your leadership to ensure the needs of our community are addressed. New York City must continue to prioritize funding that addresses expanded support for Latinos and minority communities by funding initiatives for nonprofits, hunger relief, health, combating hate crimes, and education. We look forward to working with you and we thank you for reading our statement today.

hispanicfederation

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Testimony re: Budget Hearing - Education

Submitted to:
New York City Council Committee on Education

Submitted by:
Tydie Abreu, Director of Policy and Social Impact at Hispanic Federation and
LEAD Coalition, a Project Powered by Hispanic Federation

May 10, 2022

Thank you, Chairwoman Joseph and all other committee members, for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Tydie Abreu, and I am the Director of Policy and Social Impact for Hispanic Federation (HF); a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy. HF's testimony is also informed by the Latino Education Advocacy Directors (LEAD) Coalition, which consists of leading educational advocacy organizations committed to improving Latinx academic outcomes and opportunities in New York State. Created by the Hispanic Federation, the coalition works to highlight and address the educational needs of Latinx students in the following ways: identifying and supporting effective practice; public policy advocacy and research; and the advancement of a shared educational agenda.

Investments to Support Latino Students

New York is home to over 1.3 million students, many of whom are Latino, immigrant and Multilingual Learners. City government has taken many strides to create equity for all students; however, our work is not finished. We must ensure that our schools are welcoming spaces for all students and that the education system is responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. The city has a responsibility to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education, along with appropriate supports and services at home, in the community and in their neighborhoods.

New York City's public education system is critical to ensuring that all students have access to high quality education, regardless of race or ethnicity. However, there are still challenges facing Latino students in our schools and in our neighborhoods. Many Latino students live in high poverty areas where they may lack adequate resources at home or have parents who work multiple jobs so they cannot attend school regularly or consistently attend parent-teacher conferences.

There are many ways that the City can support our schools and Latino students. This includes:

1. Investing in mental health supports for students (particularly restorative justice approaches and linguistically diverse counselors)

2. Bilingual educators for multilingual learners (MLL) and English language learners (ELL)
3. Improving parent engagement
4. Ensuring college and career readiness

Socio-Emotional/Mental Health Supports

NYC Council and the DOE must ensure that classrooms are safe places where all students feel welcome and supported. This includes providing adequate social emotional learning (SEL) resources for teachers who are burnt out and overwhelmed due to the pandemic. Community engagement efforts must also be supported so that schools can continue to provide much-needed services like mental health counseling or behavioral interventions for students whose behavior has been affected by COVID-19. Investments in linguistically diverse and culturally responsive mental health counselors are crucial for our diverse school population.

There should also be bold investments in restorative justice approaches, including restorative justice coordinators, restorative circles, and trauma-informed schools. Restorative justice models are effective at reducing suspension rates among all students, but especially among MLL and ELL students due to their ability to create safe spaces and provide a space in which all voices can be heard. Schools throughout the city have noted increases in behavioral issues and suspensions. Restorative justice practices provide a helpful alternative that addresses the root of a child's misbehavior and helps to dismantle the school to prison pipeline that affects the large number of Black and Latino students on the receiving end of punitive practices like suspensions.

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The NYC Department of Education has about 142,000 English Language Learners[6] – among the largest populations of ELLs in the country. A recent data report from the State Education Department highlights that the state experienced a nearly 10% increase in Multilingual Learners over a three-year period.[7] The city must invest in bilingual education instructors or dual language teachers who speak Spanish across the city's elementary schools to support MLL students. The DOE has invested millions of dollars into hiring these teachers over the last couple of years, which is a step in the right direction, but it needs to continue moving forward so every school has access to bilingual educators.

With the existing teacher shortage, there is a dire need for direct investments to attract and retain teachers with specialized focuses. Having more bilingual teachers and instructors willing to assist these students can provide them with alternative learning methods and ways to measure their academic progress. Intentional investments in the city budget for MLL/ELL teachers can provide schools with the additional materials, services, and learning MLLs and ELLs need for academic success and college and career readiness. This includes consistent interpretation/translation services.

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Schools need to bolster their methods to engage with families, particularly undocumented and mixed-status families who historically have been hesitant of interacting with government and even schools, due to fear of deportation. This is a critical piece that can be supported by working with community-based organizations, parent groups, and/or other companies that disseminate information across the city through radio, TV, and print.

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NYC's budget must ensure all students graduate from high school ready for college and career and eliminate the achievement gap between students of color and their peers. To mitigate this disparity, administration, counselors, and educators must collaborate to support students in greater capacities and guide students' transition to college and career. This includes providing equal access to advanced courses. In a study conducted by The Education Trust NY, 91% and 49% of Asian and White students, respectively, were enrolled in AP/IB courses, while only 36% of Black students, 35% of Latinx students and 17% of American Indian students were enrolled. Policies like automatic enrollment in advanced courses if a student meet the requisites significantly decrease these inequalities. Additionally, research indicates that students who take advanced coursework are more likely to graduate high school, go to college, and earn a degree. The opportunity to engage in AP courses will help Latino students not only enroll in college, but also persist and graduate. Now more than ever, postsecondary and career readiness is interconnected with economic opportunity, and we must ensure that our students are presented with more opportunities for advancement.

We ask that the NYC Council continues to prioritize funding for schools to maintain programs that address gaps that have arisen from or been further exacerbated by COVID-19. As we

recover from the pandemic, we continue an uphill battle to address the needs of our students and families, but the city can only recover if we continue to make bold investments in our education. Thank you for reading our testimony and I reemphasize how critical it is to focus on these priorities for the benefit of our students, communities, and in turn the entire city.

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Homeless Services United's Written Testimony for the NYC Council Finance Committee Hearing

on the FY23 Executive Budget on May 25th, 2022

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Thank you, Chair Brannan and Chair Ayala and members of the Finance and General Welfare Committees, for allowing me to submit written testimony.

Homeless Services United is heartened by the Council's FY23 Budget Response, but we urge Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Ayala, and the entire Council to preserve and bolster funding for critical government agencies and the nonprofit safety-net responsible for supporting low-income and unstably housed New Yorkers.

New York City's unemployment rate is double the National average, and woman with children are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as their male counterparts[1]. With the end of the eviction moratoriums, there's likely over a hundred thousand households in New York City with unpaid arrears[2] as well as over sixty thousand adults and children experiencing homelessness[3]. To ensure that New York City is well-prepared to aid the unstably housed, **the Council and the Mayor must make sure that both government agencies and City-contracted human services non-profit providers are well-resourced to have enough hands to do the work.**

HSU is grateful to the Council and the Mayor for making significant investments of $171.3 million for three additional Drop-in Centers and 1,400 additional safe haven and stabilization beds and cost increases. While extremely heartened by this robust response to assist people experiencing street homelessness, **we are concerned whether vacant positions at DSS and NYCHA will impact access to rental assistance vouchers like CityFHEPS and Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) as well as public assistance benefits and State FHEPS entitlements.**

Maintain Fiscal Viability of DHS-contracted Nonprofits

Nonprofit costs are rising, but funding in City contracts has not kept pace. The cost of everything from insurance to personnel has substantially increased over the years and, because nonprofit contracts do

[1] Haag, M., McGeehan, P. (2021, December 14). "The 'Double Whammy' That Is Slowing New York City's Job Growth." *The New York Times.* Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/14/nyregion/nyc-economy-jobless.html ; (2021, November 09). CCC Analysis: Findings from the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey 2021. *Citizens' Committee for Children.* Retrieved from: https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/keeping-track-of-child-and-family-well-being-amid-the-pandemic/

[2] Estimate based off extrapolations of the number of statewide applications received and number paid to the NYC jurisdiction from OTDA's ERAP program reports- https://otda.ny.gov/programs/emergency-rental-assistance/program-reports.asp

[3] 57,501 adults and children in DHS, HPD, HRA HASA and DV, and DYCD emergency and transitional housing and shelter from January 2022 Local Law 37 reports, plus an estimated 2,376 unsheltered individuals from the January 2021 HOPE Count https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/temporary_housing_report.pdf https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/hope-2021-results.pdf

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not have escalation clauses built in to right-size rates, any time a nonprofit incurs a new cost they must file a "new needs request" with DHS to request additional funding. That request must be approved and then registered as an amendment to the contract. This is a time consuming process and any delays in getting these costs approved have ripple effects on the fiscal viability of providers and the quality of services available to clients.

Insufficient DHS administrative funding contributes to the delays that non-profit contracted providers are experiencing with contract registration and invoice reimbursements. These delays are not insignificant, with some providers taking out private lines of credit to meet payroll for their programs with delinquent contract registrations.

We are doubly concerned, given these current contract and invoice delays, with the proposed elimination of 25 staff from **the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) in the February 2022 Plan's PEG Initiatives. MOCS and DHS must be well-resourced to be able to register City contracts and remit invoices quickly enough to resolve cash-flow delays for DHS-contracted homeless services providers. Otherwise, both deficiencies could snowball an already fraught financial situation into a sector-wide crisis which will diminish multiple homeless services providers' ability to maintain existing programs and be able to answer the City's future calls of services to assist New Yorkers in need.**

Protect Critical City Safety-Net Staff:

We urge the Council to exempt staff at HPD, NYCHA, DHS, HRA, and DYCD RHY who are responsible for addressing the crisis of homelessness from the Mayor's agency-wide Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs), as well as working with the City to remove hiring freezes for key positions responsible for processing public benefits and housing applications and payments. Proposed agency cost savings were largely achieved by **eliminating vacant positions**, and **HSU has significant concerns whether these City agencies would be left short-handed, creating bottlenecks for accessing public benefits and critical housing resources, as well as further delaying contract registrations and invoice reimbursements for DHS contracted agencies already struggling with chronic fiscal delays from the City.**

Robust staffing is necessary not only to help the growing numbers of tenants unable to pay their rent, but also to ensure the City can maximize the success of available housing resources, including CityFHEPS, State FHEPS, and Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) to significantly reduce the number of families and individuals experiencing homelessness in New York City.

An analysis of OMB Budget Documents by the New York Housing Conference (NYHC) found that DHS, HRA, and HPD's actual agency headcounts are significantly below even the reduced levels of FY23 appropriations. While HRA's strategy has been to leverage the AccessHRA application to reduce manual processing of applications, as Chair Ayala noted at the General Welfare hearing on February 28th of this year, many households still rely on face-to-face interactions with HRA caseworkers for assistance. Tenants at risk of eviction report not receiving callbacks from HRA for telephone interviews to complete their One-Shot Deal applications, which results in them being denied, and others report being turned away from HRA Job Centers or misdirected to Homebase when trying to apply for State FHEPS. HRA

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budget cuts could also impact application processing times for State FHEPS, payment processing times for CityFHEPS and State FHEPS, and applications for Public Assistance, Cash Assistance, One-Shot Deals, SNAP, and food stamps.

HSU is extremely grateful to Chair Ayala and Members of the Council for passing Intro 146 last session to raise CityFHEPS rent levels to Fair Market Rent (FMR), which will help thousands more households in the community preserve their housing as well as many more thousands currently experiencing homelessness to attain permanent housing. **To maximize the impact of this landmark legislation, as well** as other recent housing investments, like the recently **increased State FHEPS vouchers, and** the **Emergency Housing Vouchers** available for a limited time through Federal Rescue Funds**, City agencies must have enough hands to help the increased number of eligible households.** Locking in low headcounts will lock in delays which will only get worse as demand continues to rise. The FY23 Executive Plan proposes a reduction of $4.95 million for DHS Rental Assistance and Housing Placement programs. While there are additional housing resources like EHV vouchers now available, the City should not assume there will be a cost savings for CityFHEPS vouchers, which can finally pay realistic rent levels thanks to the City Council.

While we are heartened to hear that DHS is implementing process improvements to ease the Family Intake Process, HSU is concerned that the FY23 Executive Plan proposes a reduction of $4.36 million for Adult shelter intake and placement, as the number of single adults experiencing homelessness in New York continues to grow. And DHS' Admin line, while not being impacted by budget cuts, had 107 vacant positions listed in the FY23 Preliminary Budget, which is over 25% of the staff line**. If DHS does not have sufficient staff, delays processing CityFHEPS applications could result in families and individuals losing viable units and languishing in shelter longer, and landlords losing money and interest in the program if an application takes longer than 30-days to process.** (HRA removed signing bonuses for CityFHEPS "move" cases when implementing the higher rent amounts, so the only remaining financial incentives is a 30-day unit hold fee to compensate the landlord one month's rent while the application is in process, and a 15% broker's fee.) Households in shelter are already reporting significant lags in the processing of CityFHEPS and EHV rental assistance paperwork and lease signings, and delays will only grow if DHS and HRA cannot staff up quickly as demand continues to rise.

To reduce Source Of Income (SOI) discrimination when utilizing rental assistance vouchers, the City must enhance its headcount to provide timely assistance to prospective tenants to address instances of discrimination as they occur.

As the City continues to expand non-DHS initiatives to assist people experiencing street homelessness, such as the Behavioral Health Emergency Assistance Response Division (B-HEARD) through DOHMH and the Street Homeless Outreach and Wellness (SHOW) program through H+H, there must be an emphasis on coordinating care with DHS contracted outreach and street facing programs to help ensure that individuals are connected to case management services and permanent housing resources.

The Council should also direct additional funding to NYCHA and HPD departments responsible for processing Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), as low staffing levels at both agencies resulted in a slow rollout of these critical Section 8 vouchers. While over 7,000 new vouchers have been awarded the

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City, we have not seen a corresponding increase in NYCHA and HPD staff to process the additional applications. This once-in-a-lifetime infusion of Section 8 rental assistance is a game changer for reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness on the street and in shelter, but vouchers much be leased by 2023. To assist with helping as many tenants in the community apply for EHV vouchers, the City should adopt a no wrong door approach and grant legal services providers the ability to help tenants submit applications.

Providers are making every effort to enroll clients, but to date, only a fraction of households who submitted applications have resulted in attaining permanent housing. HSU will continue to work with providers and government partners to workshop and improve the process, but sufficient personnel on both the agency and provider side are necessary to capitalize on this resource.

Protect Investments in the City's Homeless Shelters

Under Mayor de Blasio, DHS made significant investments in repairing dilapidated shelter conditions which were ignored for decades by previous administrations. In creating the Shelter Repair Squad taskforce and addressing new needs, the previous administration was able to reduce shelter violations by more than 94%, however **HSU is gravely concerned by DHS' proposed $5 million cut to the Shelter Repair Fund and $528,000 cut for the Shelter Repair Squad for FY23 could undo all this good work**. We find it puzzling that one of the major pillars of Mayor de Blasio's Turning the Tide plan, which First Deputy Commissioner Park testified[4] effectively drove down shelter violations to an all-time low, is now at risk of being cut. While labeled as a "re-estimate", shelter providers are still awaiting New Needs requests for their facilities yet to be addressed by DHS. One of the top reasons people experiencing homelessness refuse to enter shelter is if they perceive them to be unsafe. The City must maintain funding to keep shelter facilities in good repair in order to ensure the spaces are clean, welcoming, and safe for the clients they serve.

We are grateful to the Council and Mayor for including $32.9 million to baseline prevailing wages for DHS security guards for FY23, but as noted in the Council Finance Division's Report on the Executive Plan, there must also be a funding commitment made for the out years. To also address shelter safety concerns, HSU recommends restoring $30 million to reinstate DHS Police Officers in DHS Adult Mental Health Shelters, previously cut from DHS' budget in a prior City Budget.

Protect Investments in the Non-profit Workforce

City-contracted human services organizations are currently struggling to hire and retain qualified staff because of extremely low wages set by their City contracts. Street outreach, shelter providers and Homebase programs are all effected, with at some programs exceeding 20- 25% vacancies for critical

[4] https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/testimony/DSS-Testimony_Single-Adult-Homelessness-12.6.2021.pdf

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roles like housing specialists. Without a way to attract and retain staff, it will take longer to help clients move out of shelter as remaining staff try to meet the need.

Homebase providers are also struggling with high vacancies and unable to attract enough qualified applicants, with some programs in the Bronx and Brooklyn currently working *at capacity* with caseloads of 65-70 per person and wait times for appointments *already* stretching 6 weeks out for non-emergency cases.

HSU is grateful that the Council's Budget Response acknowledged the need for a Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for human services workers including DHS-contracted homeless service providers. We are dismayed that there was no funding included in the FY23 Executive Plan to implement a COLA, but we feel the Council must go further than its initial proposal of $60 million for a 4% COLA. **We urge the City Council to commit $86 million in the FY23 Executive Budget to implement a 5.4% COLA, matching the State's human services COLA.** Programs utilize both City and State funding streams, and providers cannot selectively give higher COLAs to some staff but not others.

To address wage inadequacies, we urge the City to fund the requests of the Human Services Council's #JustPay Campaign[5], including:

- **Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts, with an $86 million investment for FY23 to implement a 5.4% COLA that matches the State's COLA**
- **Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.**
- **Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.**

Additional Housing Investments:

Homeless Services United, as a member of the United For Housing (UFH) Coalition, is dismayed that the Mayor's Executive Plan a fraction of the investments for affordable housing or rental assistance that he pledged during his campaign, and **we urge Chair Brannan and Chair Ayala and Members of the Council to continue to push for the inclusion of United For Housing's recommendation of $4 billion annual investment to preserve and create new affordable housing in the City in the FY23 Executive Budget.**

United For Housing's Recommendations:

- **$1.5 billion annual investment for NYCHA, matched by State funding, to fully restore NYC's public housing stock**
- **$2.5 billion annual investment in affordable housing rental and home ownership investments**

[5] https://www.justpayny.org/

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- **$200 million annual investment to cover enhanced rental assistance rents, matched by State funding**

Thank you Chair Brannan and Chair Ayala and members of the Finance and General Welfare Committees for holding hearings on the FY23 Budget. The City is at a pivotal point in its recovery, where robust safety net services is critical to preventing a wave of evictions and help those currently experiencing the trauma of homelessness. With key investments in government and non-profit workforce, as well as maintaining key services and housing resources, and investments, the Council can make a marked impact on housing instability and the number of people experiencing homelessness in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at elee@hsunited.org.

On behalf of Housing and Services, Inc., we are grateful for this opportunity to submit testimony for the NYC Council Finance Committee budget hearing.

Housing and Services, Inc. ("HSI") has been providing permanent supportive housing to formerly New Yorkers for over 35 years. HSI has 515 permanent supportive housing units in Manhattan, and will open a newly constructed 107 unit building in the Bronx in early June. HSI also has a 100 unit HRA scattered site contract. HSI's staff headcount is approximately 125, with approximately 100 full-time equivalent staff. HSI social services are funded with contracts with HRA/DHS, HRA/HASA and DOHMH.

HSI projects have approximately $50 million in capital funding from HPD's Supportive Housing Loan Program and YR 15 Program.

HSI is a member of the Supportive Housing Network of New York ("The Network") and supports all of The Network's advocacy points.

In this testimony HSI wishes to briefly supplement The Network's points on Just Pay for Our Staff. In addition, HSI wishes to more expansively discuss: 1) the need to reallocate NYC 15/15 Initiative unit to increase the congregate unit commitment, and reduce the scattered site unit commitment and, 2) the urgent need to invest in the HRA/DHS process for placing homeless shelter stayers into permanent supportive housing.

HSI is an experienced scattered site program provider and believes that the City's current expectations for scattered sites program in the midst of the affordable housing crisis is unrealistic. HSI and other scattered sites providers are struggling to maintain their current programs and are not interested in new programs that may rapidly become unviable. The City should reallocate more NYC 15/15 Initiative resources to congregate units that permanently address the affordable housing crisis.

Current City placement delays have significantly slowed the move-in of shelter stayers into permanent supportive housing projects. This has resulted in vacancy rates in excess of 10% and financially unsustainable vacancy losses. It is a bitter irony that funds are being spent to drive the homeless out of the subway and encampments, while thousands of permanent supportive housing units sit vacant. The most immediate and significant challenge to HSI's financial stability in decades is HRA/DHS's inability to timely perform their contractual placement obligations.

#JustPay for Our Staff:

HSI asks that the Council:

1. insist that the FY 23 Adopted Budget include a 5.4% COLA for all human service contracts and
2. establish, fund and enforce a living wage floor of no less than $21 for all City-funded human services workers

As a permanent supportive housing provider, HSI is a social justice organization and subscribes to the #Just Pay movement. Through a decade-old HSI Board resolution, HSI is committed to finding ways to provide its employees a living wage and has used a continuing MIT living wage study https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/36061 as guidance. HSI has been disappointed by the continuing chronic under-funding of NYC human services contracts, which has been the single largest impediment to HSI achieving its goals.

The vast majority of HSI staff are black and brown front desk and building maintenance workers. Our case management team cannot begin their work if our projects are not clean and safe. Front desk and maintenance workers are the foundation of our work, despite their services being held in low esteem by society, as evidenced in our contract funding. It is a bitter irony that our impoverished tenants (94% meet HUDs definition of extremely low income) may enjoy more housing stability than our lowest paid employees servicing them.

Even worse is the omission of a 5.4% COLA despite the truly heroic 24/7/365 on-site efforts of our front desk and maintenance staff to keep our tenants and fellow staff safe not only during the height of the pandemic but also through its continuing grind. Despite many misgivings, all of our staff complied with the congregate vaccine mandate and HSI staff have been 100% percent vaccinated since fall 2021. In addition, despite relaxed NYC public in-door masking requirements, HSI staff must still comply with the congregate setting in-door masking requirements mandated by DOHMH.

Our 24/7/365 on-site staff risked their and their families lives to protect our tenants and fellow staff members. They have willingly embraced all pandemic public safety measures despite personal misgivings and continued discomfort. The lack of a 5.4% COLA, and a meaningful effort to establish a living wage floor, is a demonstration of how little the City values the lives and efforts of human service workers. Instead, we have been offered zero-sum options. With some fanfare, some of our funders have informed us that they will accept one-time "incentive payments" on FY 22 contract close outs. However, there will be no increase in the FY 22 contract value. Our contracts rarely cover all associated costs, so allowing "incentive payments" only allows us to remove a previously funded cost from the contract, and add another previously unfunded cost to the contract. Bottom-line, no new cash to pay for incentives.

HSI is not asking the City to bear the complete costs of a COLA and living wage floor. HSI is just asking the City not to be the barrier to HSI's achieving a living wage. Social service contracts are a limited tool and typically do not cover the cost of maintenance workers and administrative staff. HSI provides equitable COLA's whether a staff member is on a City contract or not. HSI has been resourceful in providing just pay. For example, in 2020 when the City provided no workable or equitable way of providing pandemic incentive pay, HSI used $722,000 in PPP loans to fund fair and equitable bonuses to its employees. HSI is asking the City to acknowledge the value of its staff by funding meaningful COLA's and a living wage for employees on City contracts.

As discussed below, it is a bitter irony, that while HSI is pleading for increases to its contracts, due to dysfunctions in the HRA/DHS housing placement process, HSI is losing tens of thousands of dollars each month in vacancies that these same contracts should be filling. Monetarily, these contracts are not at standstill but rather moving HSI backwards on achieving its #Just Pay goals.

HSI believes that its situation is the same as all supportive housing providers with NYC contract funding. On behalf of its own staff and all other human services workers, HSI requests that the Council insist upon the 5.4% COLA, and start efforts to establish a $21 low wage for all contracted human services workers.

Reallocate the NYC 15/15 Initiative 50/50 commitment for congregate and supportive housing:

NYC 15/15 is the City's commitment to develop 15,000 units of supportive housing in 15 years. Launched in 2017, the commitment is split 50/50 between 7,500 newly developed congregate residence site units and 7,500 scattered supportive housing units wherein a provider builds a portfolio of leases from third-party landlords, and uses the units to provide housing and supportive services to the formerly homeless.

As discussed below, HSI is an experienced provider and is proud that its clients have thrived in the scattered sites model. However, as scattered site rents continue to exceed the City's reimbursement limits, the model is financially very flawed and HSI may be forced to surrender its current City contract rather than become a provider of substandard housing in poorly maintained buildings in unsafe neighborhoods.

Accordingly, until such time as scattered site rents are increased to market, HSI is not interested in pursuing additional scattered sites units, nor are other long-time scattered site providers. Therefore, HSI recommends that the number of scattered sites in the 15/15 Initiative be reduced to 25%, and that 75% of the 15/15 units be allocated to congregate units.

Programmatically, scattered sites programs are very effective and productive for persons who do not need the intensive 24/7/365 services of a congregate supportive housing project. In the scattered sites program, a client can live more independently but still receive services and assistance dealing with landlords on rent and building maintenance issues. In a scattered sites program, a provider obtains leases from third-party landlords and places formerly homeless clients in need of services in the leased apartments. The leases are in the name of the housing provider. The client pays 30% of their income to the housing provider, and the provider pays the balance of the rent using City subsidy funds. The tenants receive social services from the housing provider. Both the housing provider's client apartment rents and social services are funded by a government contract.

In theory, scattered sites programs can be launched much faster than the development of congregate housing that can easily take up to 4 years from site acquisition. The reality is very different. All scattered sites have the same huge financial and operational flaw. Contracted funded client apartments rent do not keep up with market rents, which results in housing providers often having leases in substandard apartments with unscrupulous or negligent landlords. The scarcity of affordable and well maintained scattered sites apartments is a subset of the nation-wide affordable housing crisis.

HSI has a 100 unit scattered sites contract with HRA/HASA for formerly homeless single adults living with HIV/AIDS and family households wherein at least one household member is living with HIV/AIDS . Pre-pandemic, the contract required a minimum of one monthly home visit by the client's case manager, and one monthly visit to the case manager's office by the client. HSI's program also includes a full-time maintenance worker to assist the client in home repairs that landlords would typically expect a tenant to perform, or more frequently repairs that are the landlord's responsibility - but the landlord either will not make or will not make on a timely basis.

HSI has had HASA scattered sites contracts since the mid-1990's that usually allowed for no rent increases over three or six year contract periods. Accordingly, as rent rose, services had to be cut. About three years before the passage of the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (the "Act"), HASA provided 2% annual increases to contract rent budgets. However, HSI lease portfolio costs - which was then not subject to rent stabilization - arose at 3% and 4% levels. The Act provided some

relief to HSI's program. Prior to passage of the Act, landlords could raise the rents to any levels they pleased and could summarily terminate leases without cause. However, the continued failure of contract rent budgets to realistically reflect market rates have hugely limited HSI's ability to find reasonable and well-maintained apartment leases.

While there is no clear standard for an affordable and well-maintained apartment rent, HUD FMR seems a reasonable start.

Following is an analysis of HSI's lease portfolio:

Studio/zero bedrooms	2
One bedroom	73
Two bedroom	23
Three bedroom	1
Four bedroom	1
Total	100

Lease portfolio March 2022 rent at FMR $213,923

Actual lease portfolio March rent $156,058

While we do not mean to imply that our lease portfolio is 73% equivalent of well-maintained FMR housing units, the comparison shows how far below FMR our portfolio is, and how much effort it takes to weed out apartments with negligent landlords and find habitable new apartments within HASA budget constraints.

Our current contract, along with 16 other providers', are up for competitive re-bidding, with a "place holder" due date of June 1, 2022. While we earnestly hope that HASA will raise rent caps, following is a comparison of HASA's current RFP rent caps to 2022 FMR:

	0 BR	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR
FMR	$2.018	$2,054	$2,340	$2,952	$3,173
HASA RENT CAP	1,486	1,559	1,805	2,322	2,505
FMR excess over HASA rent cap	$ 532	$ 495	$ 535	$ 630	$ 668

Currently, HASA's RFP applies the rent caps to the entire lease portfolio and not individual leases. So any one lease can be above or below the rent cap but the sum of the actual lease portfolio's monthly rent must be equal to or less than the sum of the entire portfolio - priced out at HASA's rent caps.

We are not optimistic that NYC's affordable housing crisis will improve anytime in soon. With much effort, we are currently satisfied with the quality of our scattered sites housing. However, we are beginning to have grave concerns about the significant probability that the low HASA rent caps will force us into substandard housing, and effectively make us part of the affordable housing problem and not part of the solution. While we want to continue serving our scattered sites clients, we are currently having internal discussions about the ethics of continuing a program where we may inevitably become the providers of substandard housing.

We also note that our HASA scattered sites program is also expected to suffer financially from MOCS's interpretation of the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) to scattered sites programs. The ICR Initiative was well-publicized as a way to finally reimburse providers for indirect costs formerly not allowed to be charged contracts. However, in HSI's case, application of the ICR for FY 20- FY 22 will actually decrease reimbursement of indirect costs by almost $150,000 per year. MOCS's directives allow for either application of simplified allocation method to calculate the ICR, or development of an alternative allocation method that requires a costly auditor's review. HSI elected the simplified allocation method only to find that MOCS considers scattered sites apartment rents to be "distortive" and excluded from costs eligible for ICR reimbursement, despite that fact the apartment rents typically comprise up to 75% of a contract's total value. Therefore, HSI will obtain a costly auditor's review so that the apartment rents will be eligible for ICR reimbursement in the FY 23- FY 25 cycle.

While the ICR glitch is a small issue compared to the lack of affordable housing suitable for scattered sites programs, it further convinces HSI and other scattered sites providers that the City expectations for scattered sites programs are not realistic. HSI and other scattered providers are struggling to maintain their current programs and do not have any interest in taking on new scattered sites program.

Rather than having the scattered sites 15/15 Initiative undersubscribed, HSI recommends that the City increase the congregate component to 75%, which will actually contribute to the increase of permanent supportive affordable housing - so necessary in the current affordable housing crisis.

Invest in HRA agencies and systems responsible for referrals and placements into permanent supportive housing:

HRA/DHS acts as the coordinator of the process of placing individuals in the HRA/DHS shelter system into supportive housing. Supportive housing providers are historically prohibited from working directly with the shelters, and instead must work with DHS placement services who liaison with the shelters.

The City has doubled its supportive housing production over the last five years. However, it appears that HRA has not increased their internal staff capacity for housing placements from the DHS shelter system and HASA system to keep up with production. Even before the pandemic this was an issue. It now appears that HRA housing placement teams have apparently not been provided with the resources to deal with the movement of homeless individuals within the HRA system between shelters and hotels, the logistics of working remotely, and other pandemic constraints. This lack of resources has created deficiencies in coordination and communication that have greatly increased the time it takes to move an individual from the shelter system into supportive housing. This slow-down in housing placements has increased supportive housing providers' vacancy rates to financially destabilizing levels. The high vacancy rates have become the single largest threat to our projects' financial stability.

While we are not privy to all details surrounding the population of congregate permanent supportive housing units, we understand that currently there are around 39,000 housing units within NYC and that, due to HRA capacity issues, congregate housing projects are running vacancy rates in excess of 10%. So approximately 4,000 units currently stand vacant. Given normal tenant turnaround, vacancy rates should be between 3% and 5%.

As the pandemic has compelled HRA/DHS to move individuals out of shelters and into hotels and sometimes transfers to other hotels before returning to shelters, we believe that HRA/DHS has simply not been provided the resources to track the individuals in the shelter and coordinate required interviews and income verifications. This has resulted in the large no show rates and the long period of time between intake and move-in. Starting in January 2022 we have become increasingly alarmed as HRA/DHS placement personnel have been slow to respond to many referral requests due to pandemic constraints. In addition, where we have been allowed to contact shelters directly about no-shows, the shelters have indicated that they were never informed by HRA/DHS placement staff that an in-take had been scheduled.

During the pandemic the average number of days from Cecil referral request to tenant move-in has approximated 120 days with the fastest being 77 days and the longest 156 days. The average number of days for referral request to schedule an in-take has been 30 days with fastest being 13 days and longest 78 days. The average number of days from in-take to move-in has been 98 days, with the fastest at 61 days and the longest at 139 days.

From the period of January 1, 2021 to March 8, 2022, Cecil submitted 47 referral requests and had 18 no shows for in-take (a 38% rate), yielding 29 intakes scheduled. Of these, 15 referrals declined to accept housing (a 32% rate), 2 referrals required a level of care beyond what Cecil can provide and 3 intakes are scheduled in late March, yielding 9 referrals accepted for housing. Of those 9 accepted, 5 moved in and 4 are still pending income verification.

Cecil annual tenant turnover rate is approximately 10%, or 9 tenants a year. At 120 days from referral request to move-in date, Cecil tenants are leaving at a much faster rate than moving in and Cecil's' vacancy rate has soared.

Cecil's annual residential rent approximates $1.3 million for 89 housing units. For calendar 2021 Cecil's vacancy rate was 8%, yielding a $103,000 vacancy loss. For February 2022, it was 15.76%. Without a solution to the capacity problem, Cecil's 2022 loss could approximate $250,000.

We believe that like Kenmore, Cecil's in-take no show rate and long process from in-take to move-in is the result of lack of HRA/DHS resources to track individuals due to the pandemic. We note that the significantly longer in-take to move-in time than at Kenmore. The reason for this is that Cecil has HPD project-based Section 8 that effectively results a second review of tenant paperwork where HPD has often has issues with the timeliness and legibility of HRA/DHS provided documentation.

Pre-pandemic on-site intakes also included showing the referral the actual housing unit they would lease if the referral accepted admission. When the pandemic compelled in-takes to be performed virtually, HRA/DHS required, and we eagerly agreed, to provide HRA/DHS with a brochure with pictures describing the project and photos of the housing unit to be occupied so that the referral can "see" the project and housing unit before accepting tenancy. As one of the first NYC supportive housing projects (1986), Cecil is a converted SRO with shared community bathrooms and kitchens, a fact featured in the brochure. We understand that the majority of these referrals did not receive these brochures and did not know that Cecil is a converted SRO when they applied for tenancy. This accounts for the unusually high rate of referrals who declined housing upon in-take.

HSI's Narragansett project has two housing and social services contracts with HRA/HASA. Unlike HRA/DHS that insists that it coordinate between the shelters and supportive housing providers, HASA requires that housing providers coordinate with HASA referrals and their HASA case managers directly. Generally this has enabled Narragansett to book in-takes faster than Kenmore and Cecil. In calendar 2021, Narragansett's 60 unit contract had 58 clients from January 2021 to November 2021, and 59 in December 2021. Narragansett's 18 unit contract had 17 clients for ten months in 2021, and two months with 16 clients. Accordingly, Narragansett has not experienced the ruinous vacancy rates that Kenmore and Cecil have suffered. However, despite social services staff's best efforts, the two contracts have remained below full contract utilization. We note that, for the period of January 1, 221 to March 2022, Narragansett requested 120 referrals of which 42 could not be reached with the contact information provided by HASA.

HSI's social services contracts require a 95% occupancy rate and allow for the imposition of financial penalties if the 95% rate is not achieved. We have provided corrective action plans amply documenting that the failure to achieve the 95% is the result of a break down in the HRA/DHS placement process. However, we still do not know if the penalties will be waived. It would be a cruel irony if we were to suffer contract penalties on top of the devastating vacancy losses we are incurring.

In summary, we believe that an immediate investment in HRA placement capacity is required to cure the slow placement rates that are creating needless and devastating vacancy losses to supportive housing providers, and additional shelter costs to the City for perhaps up to 4,000 individuals. (If the annual costs of a single adult in the shelter system is $31,000 that calculates to approximately $85 per day times 4,000 individual amounts to unnecessary daily costs of $340, 00.) . A static or even reduced HRA capacity budget will not save costs but only increase costs to providers and the City and prolong the incalculable suffering of homeless individuals needlessly languishing in the shelter, while up to 4,000 permanent supportive housing units remain vacant.

We understand that the prohibition of supportive housing providers' direct communication with shelters began approximately 15 years ago. Prior to that time, we are able to maintain robust relations with shelters to speed homeless individuals' transition to permanent supportive housing. During this vacancy rates were typically around 3%. We were informed that the imposition of DHS coordination and the prohibition of providers working directly with shelters resulted from providers' "creaming", i.e., accepting only the easiest individuals and avoiding more challenging prospective tenants. However, we were not provided with any evidence of creaming. Upon the imposition of the prohibition, HSI vacancy rates trended up to 5%, an unhappy, but manageable increase. The current needless and ruinous slow move-in situation may provide an opportunity for the City to reconsider HRA/DHS's coordination role in the placement of homeless individuals into supportive housing.

We understand that as a supportive housing provider we only see part of the picture. There are likely a number of other challenges and solutions that could help the current bottleneck best known to those inside HRA/DHS. It is our sincere desire that HRA/DHS obtain all the necessary support from the City required, because we must and can do better for New Yorkers experiencing the trauma of homelessness.

Testimony of Housing Works
Before
The New York City Council Committee on Finance
Regarding
The New York City Fiscal Year 2023 Budget
May 25, 2022

Thank you, Chairperson Brannan and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to appeal urgently for Council support for vital NYC public health initiatives that will address our City's ongoing HIV epidemic, and the related crises of hepatitis C, overdose fatalities, and the record number of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. My name is Valerie Reyes-Jimenez, and I am the NYC Community Organizer for Housing Works, a healing community of people living with and affected by HIV. Founded in 1990, we now provide a range of integrated medical, behavioral health, housing and support services for over 15,000 low-income New Yorkers annually, with a focus on the most vulnerable and underserved—those facing the challenges of homelessness, HIV, mental health issues, substance use disorder, other chronic conditions, and incarceration.

Housing Works is a founding member of the **End AIDS NY Community Coalition** (EtE Coalition), committed to ending AIDS as an epidemic in all New York communities and populations, and we fully support each of the *Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2023 Budget* proposed by the ETE Coalition to fill key funding gaps in our NYC HIV response – which are attached and incorporated by reference as part of my testimony. I will highlight just few of these critical proposals here and offer comments on our City's failed response to the crisis of homelessness that continues to drive poor individual and public health outcomes among NYC's most vulnerable residents.

New York City and State have made significant progress implementing the historic 2015 *Ending the Epidemic (EtE) Blueprint* recommendations developed collaboratively by HIV community members, providers, advocates, and public health authorities. HIV surveillance data shows that, by the end of 2019, EtE efforts enabled us to "bend the curve" by decreasing HIV prevalence for the first time since the epidemic began, and to bring new HIV infections to an all-time low. However, the data also shows that while HIV health outcomes have improved across all communities, unacceptable disparities persist in HIV's impact on Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, and in certain key populations including young men who have sex with men and transgender women. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these inequities, suppressing HIV prevention, testing, and connection to care, and there has been a steep increase in premature mortality among people with HIV due to heightened vulnerability to severe COVID-19 disease. The COVID-19 crisis has also brought tragic increases in substance use disorder and opioid overdose at a time when we are already falling short of EtE goals to improve drug user health and eliminate new HIV infections attributed to injection drug use.

Confronting these challenges to end the HIV epidemic for all New York communities requires bold new action to advance health equity, including: continued and new investments to fully restore services; overcoming the social barriers that drive HIV health inequities; and concrete efforts to improve drug user health, support sexual health and wellbeing, and end the co-occurring hepatitis C epidemic.

I will outline just a few of these critically needed investments:

- Continued support for organizations funded through the *NYC Council Ending the Epidemic Initiative*, which provides community-based, culturally competent HIV prevention and care services that are critical to reaching members of priority populations and will ensure continued and equitable progress towards the City's EtE goals. Further, we are asking for an increase from $8.7M to at least $10M in FY23 to fund additional services such as citywide HIV peer citywide peer navigation and linkage to care initiatives.
- Council funding to mitigate the anticipated loss of $1.7M in NYC's federal Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) grant. Such funding will ensure that no current HOPWA-supported housing service provider is defunded as a result of level federal HOPWA funding despite the addition of new jurisdictions eligible for formula grants.
- We also urge the Council to sustain its current $1.4M in support for the delivery of a range of harm reduction services by four proposed overdose prevention center operators. This funding is critical to ensure the ongoing delivery of services that support program participants and that will complement broader access to overdose prevention services.

In addition to these Council initiatives, Housing Works and the EtE Community Coalition urge your support for essential Administration investments:

- We fully support the Council's call for at least $10M annually in NYC support for Overdose Prevention Center (OPC) services, including support for the two programs already operating so successfully, and to expand the initiative to include at least one OPC operating in each NYC Borough. We also urge clear direction in the budget to lift restrictions currently imposed by NYC on the use of public funding for OPCs, to allow support of all components of the delivery of overdose prevention services. It is increasingly clear that the Biden Justice Department will not continue the wrongheaded Trump application of the federal "crack house" statute to challenge this evidence-based public health approach to preventing overdose deaths. It is time to provide full public support for lifesaving OPC services.
- We urge Council support for greater wage equity for human services workers. Non-profit human service organizations and their employees have been on the front lines of both the HIV and COVID responses, delivering vital public services as NYC vendors. Inadequate NYC contract reimbursement rates have resulted in poverty-level wages for many human services workers, who are predominantly women and people of color. We call for a $21/hour wage floor for all NYC funded human services workers and for an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). At a minimum, this year's budget must include a 5.4% COLA for essential human services workers who have not seen any increase in City contracts in the last two years.
- To accelerate our NYC and NYS plans to eliminate hepatitis C, we call on the Administration to ensure the sustainability of critical patient navigation services by baselining the $3.5M in past year funding for Check Hep B and Check Hep C Patient Navigation Programs.
- As you may know, DOHMH has also released our NYC plan for federal Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) goals. To advance those efforts and address health inequities, the EtE Community Coalition calls for additional funding in several key areas. It is essential, for example, to provide $10M in baselined funding to reopen the NYC Sexual Health Clinics that remain closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, including the clinics established to serve Crown Heights/Brooklyn, Central Harlem and Riverside/Manhattan, and Corona/Queens,

and to enhance the services available at all clinics to better support the sexual health of New Yorkers. NYC's sexual health clinics are a vital public health resource, providing sexual, reproductive, and harm reduction services for New Yorkers regardless of ability to pay, insurance coverage, or immigration status.

- Other key investments include: $200K in new DOHMH funding to support technical assistance to emergency departments on routine testing needed to address the dramatic and sustained increase in congenital syphilis in NYC through routine syphilis testing for women who may only be seen in ERs; $980K in new funding to support culturally competent comprehensive health services for un/underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers; and funding to support targeted HIV prevention services for key populations including Black and Latina women, Young Black and Latino MSM; and funds to strengthen and support grassroots CBOs uniquely qualified to serve transgender New Yorkers and other vulnerable populations.
- Finally, the EtE Community Coalition strongly urges the Council and Administration to exempt the Department of Social Services and the Department of Homeless Services from the citywide Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) savings plan. These agencies provide basic survival services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers and face unprecedented new challenges as we continue to confront the COVID-19 crisis' sustained effects on low-income communities.

In addition to these and other priorities identified by the EtE Community Coalition, Housing Works stresses the need to ensure the most productive use of resources provided to address the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, and for increased NYC resources and the commitment needed to transform our failed response to homelessness.

We support the City Council proposal to include $50 million in community public health funds as part of the city's FY23 budget. We are part of Communities Driving Recovery, a community and faith-based alliance of organizations seeking to ensure a just pandemic recovery. The $50 million should be allocated to focus on COVID-19 outreach and recovery efforts and other chronic disease screening methods by partnering with CBOs and FBOs who have already been engaged in these efforts. Community- and faith-based based organizations have demonstrated the impact they can have when they work together with city health officials to tackle the devastating disruptions to public health and neighborhood stability during the pandemic. As we seek answers to address the city's glaring racial health disparities laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to ensure that we continue to build on a community-based model of service delivery that has been shown to be most effective in reaching vulnerable communities.

The Council and Administration must also take decisive action to transform the City's inhumane and ineffective response to the homelessness crisis. Through our work over the past two years providing COVID isolation and quarantine services for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, Housing Works has come to deeply appreciate how awful and dehumanizing the City shelter system is, and the urgent need to transform the way homeless people are treated in New York City. We must stop criminalizing and harassing people experiencing homelessness through sweeps of the subways and encampments of those who opt for survival in public rather than entering frightening shelters. We urgently need new approaches and a new vision for what is acceptable.

Addressing homelessness of course requires substantial new City investments in housing with deep affordability, meaningful rental assistance with a single payment standard such as the City FHEPS program approved by the Council, and supportive housing units for those who need it. We must also meet the needs of the many sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness who are coping with untreated or undertreated chronic medical and/or behavioral health issues. We must stop treating mental illness and substance use disorder among low-income New Yorkers as criminal justice rather than public health issues, and instead adopt harm reduction approaches that provide every New Yorker with the safe, stable housing necessary to engage in behavioral health care, including private rooms for those struggling with mental health issues. We have a unique opportunity to meet these needs through hotel conversions to very low-income permanent housing and urgently needed stabilization and transitional housing – a strategy that Housing Works strongly supports although we are deeply concerned that Mayor Adams has given the Hotel Trades Council authority to veto and conversion that they do not approve.

In conclusion, Housing Works calls on the Council and the Administration to continue to be bold when it comes to addressing NYC's unprecedented public health crises. Our historic progress towards ending the HIV epidemic shows us what can be achieved by implementing evidence-based policies.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
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Key Funding Gaps in the New York City Plan to End the AIDS Epidemic
Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2023 Budget

NYC ETE Initiative	Description of City Council ETE Request	Funds Required
Ending the Epidemic Initiative – FY23	Organizations funded through the NYC Council Ending the Epidemic Initiative provide community-based, culturally competent HIV prevention and care services that are critical to ensure continued and equitable progress towards the City's ETE goals. These services are more essential than ever to overcome continued barriers to engagement and retention in effective care presented by the COVID-19 crisis. Efforts funded include innovative approaches to improve health care coordination and data-to-care strategies, targeted services designed to meet the unique needs of members of priority populations, and efforts to expand equitable access to comprehensive HIV prevention including PrEP. In addition to sustaining ongoing initiatives, new investments are needed, including $1M in funding to implement a citywide peer navigation and linkage to care initiative that will increase opportunities for employment, vocational services, and peer workforce placement for people living with HIV. We request an increase from the FY22 funding level of $8,671,446.	$10M
Harm Reduction Services Delivered at Overdose Prevention Center Sites	Sustain current NYC Council funding that supports the delivery of a range of harm reduction services by four proposed overdose prevention center operators. This funding is critical to ensure the ongoing delivery of critical services that currently support program participants and will complement the delivery of the proposed full delivery of overdose prevention services.	$1.4M
Mitigate the Loss of Federal HOPWA Funding to Preserve Essential HIV Housing Services	Provide local funds to mitigate the anticipated loss of NYC Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) funding by ensuring that no current HOPWA-supported housing service provider is defunded as a result of reduction of the federal grant. The cut to NYC's grant is the result of level HOPWA funding in the federal budget despite an increase in the total number of jurisdictions now eligible for HOPWA formula grants. Safe, stable housing is essential to support effective HIV treatment that sustains optimal health and prevents sexual transmission, making access to housing supports a key component of NYC's plan for Ending the Epidemic. NYC's HOPWA formula grant funding currently supports essential housing services for people with HIV experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity who are ineligible for NYC/NYC housing assistance administered by HASA, so do not have an alternative source of housing support.	$1.7M

NYC ETE Initiative	Description of Administration Request	Funds Required
Expansion of Overdose Prevention Centers	The ETE Community Coalition fully supports the Council's call for at least $10M annually in NYC support for Overdose Prevention Center (OPC) services, including funding to support the delivery of overdose prevention services at the two programs already operating, and to expand the initiative to include at least one OPC operating in each NYC Borough. The funding provided must stipulate the removal of restrictions currently imposed by NYC on the use of public funding for OPCs, to allow support for all components of the delivery of overdose prevention services.	$10M
Wage Equity for Human Services Workers	Non-profit human service organizations and their employees have been on the front lines of both the HIV and COVID responses, delivering vital public services as NYC vendors. Inadequate NYC contract reimbursement rates have resulted in poverty-level wages for many human services workers, who are predominantly women and people of color. Essential human services workers are among the lowest paid employees in the NYC economy, resulting in high turnover and serious disadvantage in an increasingly competitive labor market. We call for a $21/hour wage floor for all NYC funded human services workers and for an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) based on the consumer price index. At a minimum, include a 5.4% COLA in this year's budget for essential human services workers who have not seen any increase in City contracts in the last two years.	$108M
Expand Housing and Services for Runaway and Homeless Youth	Address NYC's homeless youth crisis and provide housing supports as an HIV prevention intervention by funding 40 additional Runway and Homeless Youth (RHY) beds for 21 to 24-year-olds.	$2.22M
Sexual Health Clinics	NYC's Sexual Health Clinics are a core component of the City's "status neutral" ETE efforts, providing sex-positive, gender-affirming sexual, reproductive, and harm reduction services for New Yorkers, regardless of ability to pay, insurance coverage, or immigration status. It is critical to reopen the clinics that remain closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, including the clinics established to serve Crown Heights/Brooklyn, Central Harlem and Riverside/Manhattan, and Corona/Queens. In addition, all Sexual Health Clinics must offer comprehensive, state-of-the-art sexual health and supportive services needed to effectively address the full range of overlapping sexual health needs. Additional investments are needed to:	$10M Baselined, effective FY23

	• Expand clinic hours of operation and the services offered at each clinic, including PrEP initiation and care, contraception services, and supportive services (e.g., social work services, patient navigation, behavioral health services); • Launch new clinic services, including hepatitis B vaccine, hepatitis C treatment, syringe service programs (SSPs), and gender-affirming care; • Establish youth-focused and women-focused practices at one or more clinics; • Establish "Quickie Labs" at additional clinics (currently, only Chelsea has a Quickie Lab) to provide "express," automated and streamlined STI testing; • Increase awareness of clinic services, including expanded and new services, through social marketing campaigns and community outreach; • Support continued necessary facility and infrastructure renovations at clinic sites.	
Support for Routine Testing to Address Congenital Syphilis	The dramatic and sustained increase in congenital syphilis in NYC underscores the need for additional action to identify new syphilis infections, particularly among women of childbearing age seen in emergency departments who might not otherwise present for prenatal care. Funding is requested to launch a new DOHMH program to deliver technical assistance to emergency departments on implementing routine syphilis testing among all people who are or could become pregnant who present in emergency departments.	$200K
Check Hep B and Check Hep C Patient Navigation Programs	Ensure the sustainability of critical patient navigation services in order to accelerate efforts to eliminate hepatitis B and C in New York City by 2030, per NYC DOHMH's 2021 viral hepatitis elimination plan, by moving to a multi-year baseline funding model.	$3.5M Baselined, effective FY23
Health Services for Un/Underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers	Increase funding for agencies to support LGBTQ-affirming and culturally competent comprehensive health services – including primary, behavioral, sexual, and reproductive health services – for un/underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers.	$980K
Harm Reduction as HIV Prevention	Expand the number of City-funded sites that offer syringe service programs (SSPs), harm reduction education including on overdose prevention, HIV and hepatitis testing, HIV and hepatitis prevention education, linkage to HIV and hepatitis prevention and care services, and onsite supportive services, including behavioral and mental health services, drop-in services, food and nutrition services, and hygiene services.	$9M Baselined, effective FY23
HIV Prevention for Black and Latina Women	Launch multi-pronged, community-informed programming focused on HIV prevention among Black and Latina women.	$4.5M Baselined for FY23-25
HIV Prevention for Young Black and Latino MSM	Launch multi-pronged, community-informed programming focused on HIV prevention among Black and Latino gay and	$4.5M Baselined for FY23-25

	bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) ages 13-29 years.	
Micro-Contracts for Grassroots CBOs	Launch a next wave of micro-contracts, which utilize a microfinancing model to support grassroots CBOs to design and implement projects focused on building resilience, promoting sexual health as essential to HIV prevention, and developing community leaders.	$200K
#OurStories NYC	Launch a next phase of the #OurStoriesNYC storytelling initiative, which utilizes multimedia storytelling to reduce health- and identity-related stigmas, build resilience, and increase effective community engagement, and to create a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ people of color to come together and connect through shared experiences.	$100K
Transgender Organizational Support and Capacity Building (TOSCB) to Advance Ending the HIV Epidemic	Launch a next phase of the TOSCB initiative by funding select agencies (that were previously funded to receive organizational support and technical assistance to strengthen their ability to serve transgender New Yorkers) to deliver HIV and sexual health services to transgender New Yorkers, including HIV and STI testing, prevention, care, and supportive services.	$3M Baselined for FY23-25
	Prevent Harmful Cuts to Essential Survival Services	
Sustain Funding for DSS and DHS Through Exemption from the Citywide PEG	The NYC Department of Social Services (DSS) administers essential benefits and services for vulnerable New Yorkers, including the lifesaving housing assistance and benefits provided through its HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA). The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) is responsible for providing basic survival services for the growing number of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. HASA is chronically understaffed and under-resourced, and both DSS and DHS face new challenges posed by the disparate impact of COVID on low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. It is essential, therefore, that both DSS and DHS be exempted from the citywide Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) savings plan.	

Testimony of Joel Berg
CEO, Hunger Free New York City
Before New York City Council Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing, May 25, 2022

Good day. I am Joel Berg, CEO of Hunger Free America, a nonprofit direct service and advocacy organization which works citywide and has offices in the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan. Hunger Free New York City is a division of Hunger Free America. I am honored to testify today on behalf of the approximately 1.164 million city residents who now struggle against hunger.

My message today is simple: even as the pandemic slowly becomes less deadly, we still face massive hunger and food insecurity crises citywide, and we need a massive response from the City that goes way beyond merely nominally increasing funding for emergency food distributions.

The most impactful and cost-effective way for the City to fight hunger is to increase participation in the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called the Food Stamps Program). Doing so would dwarf any other effort. If current caseloads and benefits levels stay stable, federal SNAP spending in New York City over the next year would be $5.4 billion, which would equal 90 times the amount of funding ($60 million) that the City Council previously allocated to emergency food programs through EFAP and P-FRED. If the City did more to work with nonprofit groups on SNAP outreach and access and were able to raise the SNAP caseload and SNAP spending by merely five percent, that would equal $270 million in extra federal spending on food relief, 4.5 times the money allocated to emergency food programs.

It is important to note that, not only is every penny of SNAP benefits paid for by the federal government, but any City money also spent on approved SNAP outreach and enrollment activities – including money sub-granted to nonprofit groups for such purposes – is matched 100 percent by the federal government, though the State. For all those reasons, the most cost-effective way for the City to reduce hunger – by far – is to fund efforts to increase enrollment in SNAP and other federally-funded nutrition benefits. For example, **every City dollar that Hunger Free America spends on SNAP outreach work generates at least $60 in federal benefits that fill the grocery carts of struggling new Yorkers.**

We are grateful that Council Speaker Adams has placed a high priority on fighting hunger. In her State of the City Address this Sunday, which I was honored to attend, stated that there was a lot we can learn from the role of new communal aid societies in the pandemic. She is correct, but I think the biggest thing we learned is just how inadequate they are compared to living wage jobs, affordable health care and

childcare, and yes, SNAP and WIC. A few weeks ago, I saw a community fridge in Williamsburg. It was mostly empty, excerpt for four cans, and a few disgusting looking containers of restaurant leftovers. This is not a serious not a serious answer to hunger impacting 1.1 million City residents.

That is why the Council is 100% correct to call for the City to create a $10 million line item for nonprofits to aid food benefits access. We hope the Council insists that these funds be included in the final budget deal.

Background on The Current State of Hunger In New York City

According to raw USDA data analyzed by Hunger Free America:

Between 2018-2020, 14.0 percent of the New York City's population – equaling 1.164 million people – suffered from food insecurity, unable to afford a sufficient supply of food, including 19.0 percent of all children, 9.0 percent of all employed adults, and 11.0 percent of all older New Yorkers. The overall number of people who were food insecure represented a significant jump over the 2013-2015 time period, when 12.8 percent of the New York City's population – equaling 1.094 million people – were food insecure. Per the chart below, we continue to have a much higher food insecurity rate that the state or the national average.

Changes in Food Insecure Individuals from 2019 to 2020

	2019	2020
National	35,206,852 (10.9%)	38,286,433 (11.8%)
New York State	2,229,028 (11.6%)	2,199,833 (11.5%)
New York City	1,132,547 (13.7%)	1,302,974 (15.9%)

The Bronx remains New York City's hungriest borough in every category with, in 2018 – 2020, more than one in four Bronx residents (25.4 percent) experiencing food insecurity. This includes 35.8 percent of all children, nearly 18 percent of working adults, and more than 21 percent of older residents. **But every borough continued to have a serious hunger problem.**

Citywide in New York, in a Hunger Free America survey, 84 percent of responding food pantries and soup kitchens reported that they served more people in 2021 than 2020.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of City residents eligible for federally funded benefits do not receive them. The best under-participation estimates that we have for SNAP that are official are old (for 2018, pre-pandemic). For technical reasons I would be glad to discuss, I think USDA's estimates, even in 2018, undercounted those who are eligible but did not then receive SNAP. But even if USDA's numbers were correct, that still meant that 1-10 people overall, 25 percent of working people, and 30 percent of older New York State residents who were eligible for SNAP did not get it. Given the huge spike in unemployment since then, those numbers are surely far higher now. The percentages are likely even higher for the City than the State as a whole.

As for federally funded WIC benefits (for pregnant women and children under five), also in 2018, USDA estimated that whopping 39 percent of the pregnant women and children under five eligible for WIC statewide did not get it. Unlike SNAP, WIC has no immigration restrictions in the program and has slightly higher income eligibility than SNAP, so this under-participation in WIC is especially harmful. The percentages are likely even higher for the City than the State as a whole.

Steps the City Council Should Take to Better Fight Hunger:

- **Increase and formalize funding to nonprofit groups (including Hunger Free America) that increase access to government food benefits**. As detailed above, every City dollar spent on SNAP outreach can generate up to $60 in federal SNAP benefits. Just as P-FRED and EFAP have formalized a way for emergency food programs to receive funding from the City, the Council should authorize a specific long-term source of benefits outreach funds. The Council's budget response calls for the City to create a $10 million line item for nonprofits to aid food benefits access. We urge the Council to make it a top priority to include that funding in the final budget deal.

- **Fund pilot projects to enable the state government to work collaboratively with New York City to make it easier for eligible New Yorkers to apply for multiple food benefits online, as a first step toward doing so for all anti-poverty benefits.** At a bare minimum, the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) should have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing the proposal of mayor Eric Adams to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications.

- **Urge the State to end the sub-minimum wage for tipped food service workers.** Currently, workers in the food service industry are guaranteed minimum wages of between $8.35 to $10 per hour, depending on where they live in the State. When tips do not provide much more than that (as they often do not) these workers and their families live in poverty. Because so many workers have left or are leaving the industry because of lessened tips and increased hostility and harassment during the pandemic, hundreds of restaurants in the State are raising wages voluntarily; but those forward-thinking restaurants say that they are at a disadvantage if they do it alone, which is why they want the State to set a level playing field with the uniform, higher wage. Governor Hochul has the legal ability to unilaterally end this sub-minimum wage, if she does not do so, the state legislature should.

- **Enact and fund a SNAP-like program, to be funded by the City, to give extra grocery funds to immigrants and working poor New Yorkers who are ineligible for federal SNAP benefits.** California recently started such a program: https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2021-07-13/california-takes-a-nibble-at-offering-food-stamps-to-undocumented-immigrants

- **Ensure that all classes in all New York City public schools provide either in-classroom school breakfasts or grab and go breakfast in their hallways**. Currently, New York City has the lowest school breakfast participation rate out of any big city school system in the United States, with fully 55.4 percent of kids who get school lunches failing to get school breakfasts.

- **Enact, fund, and implement a government-wide "Assets Empowerment/Middle Class Wealth Generation Agenda" to dramatically increase economic opportunity and mobility by enabling more families to transition from *owing* non-productive debt interest to *owning* assets such as first homes and small businesses.** While extra funding from the

Council would be helpful in this regard, the Adams Administration can start much of this work with existing funding.

I hope you can take all or some of these actions rapidly. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Ice Theatre of New York

CELEBRATING THE JOY OF DANCING ON ICE

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May 24, 2022

Re: New York City Council Budget Hearing – written testimony

Dear Members of the City Council:

I am submitting this testimony as Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ® in support of a robust City budget for Culture.

ITNY's mission is to celebrate and advance dance on ice as a performance art. Through its performances in both traditional and site-specific venues, ITNY presents ice dance that helps to open one's eyes to seeing skating in new and unexpected ways. ITNY was the very first ice dance company to receive dance program funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

As we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, including the Key to NYC mandates ITNY sees it as imperative, even as we care for the neediest among our fellow citizens, that the overall NYC budget for Culture increase.

NYC's cultural programming and specifically ITNY's programming brings benefits for life in NYC, from our general audiences to the NYC public school children we serve. We bring joy with our free public performances to dance enthusiasts, figure skating fans and all passers-by of our performances on the seasonal ice rinks all over New York City.

In our outreach programs for NYC public school children we expose them to a new art form, introduce them to a new sport, which they can practice in their local community, in the winter outdoors, with great health benefits (physical and mental), as well as introducing them to potential local jobs in a new industry. Even after pivoting to virtual programming, we are still engaging hundreds of children in arts programming.

Ice Theatre of New York commissions choreographers and performance artists to create new works for the company, nurtures emerging artists and celebrates recognized artists and coaches. ITNY explores what is possible with artistic theatrical dance movement on ice.

ITNY maintains a professional Ice Dance Ensemble and a Junior Ensemble for aspiring young performers; conducts weekly Master Edge Classes at Sky Rink open to all ice artists; presents the free City Skate Concert Series at Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park and other outdoor seasonal rinks; and offers its educational outreach program, "New Works and Young Artists Series", in Brooklyn, Queens and Harlem to NYC public school children.

We continue to collaborate with choreographers from both the dance and skating worlds, while exploring creatively, innovative relationships with artists from theatre, music and new media disciplines.

I want to join my colleagues in the Cultural sector in support of the FY23 NYC Culture Vibe proposal. Our sector is requesting an additional $100 million investment from NYC in FY23 to augment NYC's economic recovery and create an inclusive sector growth towards a future- focused and equitable economy. Investing in culture means investing in the long-term financial health of our city. The $100m request will bring the annual investment in culture to .24% of City's total budget and will represent a commitment to our ultimate goal of reaching 1% for Culture.

I urge you to continue funding the arts. Culture is a small part of NYC's budget that returns great rewards. The DCLA budget and such programs as the NYC Artists Corps affect not only our constituents, but also the 40 or so artists we employ every year. These artists add to the health, diversity and dynamism of NYC. Culture is what makes NYC different from most other major cities.

Ice Theatre of New York is looking forward to continuing as part of the essential cultural framework of the City, which generates 110 Billion Dollars in economic activity annually.

> *"Skating…combines and surpasses the joys of flying and dancing: only in a certain type of a dream do we ever else attain a higher degree of the same ravishing experience of exultantly skimming the earth."*
>
> —Ernest Jones, Biographer of Freud

I thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,



Jirina Ribbens
Executive Director, Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ®

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New York City Council FY 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022

We would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Finance for holding this important hearing on the City's Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget. INCLUDEnyc (formerly Resources for Children with Special Needs) has worked with hundreds of thousands of families since our founding nearly 40 years ago, helping them navigate the complex city and state service and support systems.

We testify today to highlight the urgent need for the City to continue prioritizing the needs of young people with disabilities in the FY23 budget. This includes the Council maintaining $3.2 million funding for the Autism Awareness Initiative. Children on the autism spectrum and their families continue to be among the most in need of support and services the last two plus years. During this time, INCLUDEnyc served more than 14,000 people looking for information to help a young person with suspected or known disabilities, including more than 1500 people who identified either as a young person with autism, or a family member/caregiver of someone with autism. This initiative provided us the resources we needed to help these families during the height of COVID-19 and our now new on and off again COVID surging times . We have deep gratitude to this Council for our ability to carry on being the largest recipient of this initiative.

We also have deep appreciation for the Mayor and Chancellor for proposing $7.4 million in this budget for supporting students with dyslexia by means of early screenings and new citywide literacy initiatives. Research shows the earlier a student receives supports and services the more likelihood they will make educational progress, be educated in less segregated settings, and have better post secondary outcomes, including employment.

However, a New York City Comptroller's report released last month stated the NYCDOE had only spent 12% of the $250 million in federal COVID relief funding allocated to provide extra support for students with disabilities in FY22 accordingly. We sadly were not surprised by this as we heard from many families this school year who either did not know Special Education Recovery Services (SERS) were available for their child or that their child was not receiving these services, despite

the City allocating money to provide these services after-school or on Saturdays to all students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

We urge this Council to ensure the City allocates and spends the relief funding from the federal government accordingly that specifically targets the provision of special education supports and services to the 300,000+ students with disabilities ages 3-21 living in New York City. In addition, the City must provide students with disabilities equitable access to all COVID recovery supports and opportunities, including transportation to and from students' homes and all Summer school programming this July and August, and all related programs all of next school year.

Thank you for taking the time today to consider this important matter. We look forward to partnering with you to improve equity and access for all young people with disabilities in New York City.

Sincerely,

Lori Podvesker
Lori Podvesker
Director of Disability & Education Policy

INDIA HOME
A CENTER FOR SENIOR CARE

Commitment to Improve
Quality of Life

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

To: New York City Council Committee on Finance
From: India Home, Inc.
Re: Executive City Budget Public Hearing

We thank the Council Committee on Finance for helping India Home to continue its efforts in supporting the South Asian and Indo-Caribbean immigrant community.

About India Home
The mission of India Home is to improve the quality of life for South Asian and Indo-Caribbean older adults by providing culturally appropriate social, psychological, recreational, and spiritual services. India Home has grown tremendously in the last two years to fulfill our mission and meet the growing needs of our vulnerable low-income and immigrant older adults. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic last March, we have achieved great milestones: we've launched our ongoing daily virtual programming for over 2 years now, 277+ new seniors have joined our programs, and we have also been awarded the Lehrer Prize for our robust COVID-19 prevention & awareness community outreach. We have recently transitioned to limited in-person senior center activities (along with our virtual program activities) and also opened a new senior center in Flushing, Queens and hope to expand to more locations.

India Home Clients
Currently, India Home has grown to serve 1670 total registered seniors in and outside of NYC. 100% of the seniors India Home serves are foreign born and nearly 80% of them have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), which limits their access to mainstream services. Our clients come to us from the heavily South Asian neighborhoods of Sunnyside, Jackson Heights, Briarwood, Jamaica, Richmond Hill, and Queens Village. They also live in growing communities found in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and beyond.

Critical Issues Faced by AAPI Serving CBOs
Despite our resilience and continued advocacy, India Home and many other Community Based Organizations (CBOs) serving the AAPI (Asian American & Pacific Islander) community are operating on severely underfunded budgets and have only minimally received the benefits of the City Council's newly approved baseline budget increase.

India Home and other immigrant-led organizations that serve seniors fill a critical gap in serving a diverse and vulnerable population – those who are immigrants, LEP, and low-income. Food

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insecurity has consistently remained to be the highest priority concern of this population; in fact, 51% of Asian Americans surveyed in a 2021 NYC COVID-19

Community Health Resources and Needs Assessment (CHRNA) Report reported needing help with access to culturally appropriate food and 85% mentioned changing their food habits during the pandemic to overcome hunger (CACF, 2021) . Every week, for two to three days, we provide Grab & Go meals to between 90 to 120+ seniors who visit our center's food pantries to pick up nutritious and culturally competent ready-made meals. We are also providing Halal/ vegetarian home delivered meals to 35 vulnerable homebound seniors three times a week. Despite these efforts, India Home and other CBOs dedicated to serving immigrants have together witnessed the growing food security needs of our community, but we are filled to capacity and are stretching our resources thin. We request that this city budget expands support for food programs that serve our seniors, like the Recovery Meals program and DFTA's home-delivered meals. Otherwise, thousands of seniors will be at risk of losing critical food assistance unless this budget adds $40 million in funding.

We also need to ensure greater attention is made to support effective mental health programs and resource distribution to immigrant communities, older adults, and youth through entrusting CBOs like ours to continue their culturally competent mental health initiatives and help scale these efforts with the funding that has been allocated for this specific goal. India Home has been running daily in-language wellness checkup calls for over 200 South Asian seniors since the pandemic, which has helped many of our clients to feel less isolated, depressed, and have a sense of meaningful human companionship during the pandemic.

Additionally, our diverse array of virtual programming activities has helped 225+ regularly attending seniors stay socially connected, healthy, and immersed in fun activities that brightens their day. These are all important and culturally competent services that are greatly improving the physical and mental health of our seniors, and we need more funding to ensure that we can not only continue but also expand these services. The Council has prioritized $11 million for mental health services for the 33 communities hit hardest by COVID, and mental health clinicians for 108 senior centers. Due to the stigma that comes with utilizing mental health services in their communities, Asian immigrants and older adults alike have historically lacked access to receiving such services even though it's still necessary, as such we request that the city ensure funding is allocated towards this population.

Lastly, addressing language barriers is a critical change that will help this city become more efficient and an inclusive place for our immigrant populations. NYC is known as the melting pot of

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cultures and diversity in America, yet our telephone and written language translation services fail to represent the diverse languages and spoken dialects of our immigrants, especially when they

are trying to access important services such as healthcare, government benefits/ public resources, business inquiries, transportation, education, and more. In fact, 34% of Asian American adults reported having experienced

language barriers during the pandemic, including problems such as insufficient access to interpreters and written materials in their preferred language (CHRNA, 2021). Language access remains an entrenched barrier for 1.8 million New Yorkers with limited English proficiency. Our city's limited & insufficient translation services do not effectively support immigrants, especially immigrant older adults, in navigating daily necessities and resources in NYC.

Recommendations
India Home and other community-led organizations have long stepped in to fill the gap and unmet needs of the immigrant communities we serve, but we need more funding to continue providing these critical services to our clients. We try to address the growing need for all these services, however, we are in need of more expense funding to better serve the growing aging community.

India Home makes the following recommendations:
1. Asian-led organizations provide the most effective culturally competent and language accessible services that are largely utilized by and meet the needs of our diverse community. We request **NYC Council to support the increase of discretionary dollars given to AAPI community-based organizations.**

2. **Support AAPI CBOs' collective ask of $6 Million for the AAPI Community Support Initiative,** which provides valuable programming for Asian American and Pacific Islander communities including direct services, mental health support, youth programs, racial literacy, and other culturally competent services.

3. **Support the allocation of $7 million to the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund initiative** that supports the capacity building, strengthening, and rescuing of nonprofit human service providers serving communities of color and community outreach.

4. **Support the designation of $300,000** to fund the development of a worker cooperative for Asian language interpretation.

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Along with these recommendations, please also increase funding to the **Support Our Seniors Initiative**, **Senior Centers for Immigrant Populations initiative, and Geriatric Mental Health Initiative,** as funding in these senior-specific initiatives will help India Home to better serve the South Asian immigrant older adult community.

Sincerely,

Vasundhara D. Kalasapudi, M.D.
Executive Director, India Home, Inc.

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Testimony before the New York City Council Finance Committee – Budget Hearing Public Testimony

Submitted by
Christopher Treiber
Associate Executive Director for Children's Services

On behalf of
INTERAGENCY COUNCIL of
Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.
150 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001
(212) 645-6360
chris@iacny.org

May 25, 2022



Good afternoon, Council Chairs Brannan, Joseph and members of the City Council, my name is Christopher Treiber, and I am the Associate Executive Director of Children's Services for The Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. (IAC). The IAC was formed in 1977 as a not-for-profit membership organization. Comprised of voluntary service providers supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities in the greater metro-New York area, IAC currently represents over 140 member agencies and organizations helping more than 100,000 individuals and their families in New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Orange counties. Support programs and services offered by IAC member agencies include early intervention, Pre-K for All, special education preschool and school-age programs, as well as residential services, job training and employment programs, day habilitation programs, home and community-based supports, recreation, clinical and health services, and an array of supports to families. The IAC has a long history of working in partnership with the New York City Department of Education to improve the quality of services and programs for young children with developmental disabilities and their families.

On behalf of the IAC and our preschool special education provider's I would like to thank the New York City Council Finance Committee for holding this public budget hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony here today.

I am testifying today to advocate for Salary Parity for the early childhood teachers in Preschool Special Education programs or 4410's. I am here today to speak on behalf of preschool children with developmental disabilities and their families. Special education preschools, or 4410 programs, provide special education services to children with disabilities ages 3-5. Many of these young children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, or other developmental disabilities. These children live in your neighborhood and would have attended a 3-K or Pre-K for All program if she or he did not have a disability. Every child who attends a 4410 special education preschool are public school children. Their parents do not pay for these preschools and their children are placed in our schools only after a determination has been made by a local Committee on Preschool Special Education that there is no other educational option for these students. These 4410 programs work in partnership with the NYC DOE to serve many of New York City's most vulnerable children and help the city meet its legal responsibility under the Federal Law to provide a "free and appropriate public education" (FAPE) to all New York City children regardless of disability. Based on information in the Mayors Preliminary Management Report we know that 88% of the ***more than 25,803 preschool students with disabilities in NYC attend 4410 programs*** and the NYC DOE serves about 12%. (Page 197 of the Preliminary Mayor's Management Report February 2022).

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2022/2022_pmmr.pdf

4410 preschools operated by community based organizations are New York City's early childhood programs for children with the highest levels of educational need.

Salary Parity Agreement In New York City – Unfinished Business

While we recognize that this agreement was a significant accomplishment for the teachers in the early childhood Community Based Organization's in New York City we are alerting the New York City Council that the consequence of this agreement has had a devastating impact on our special education preschool programs or 4410's and their ability to retain certified special education teachers. Early Childhood Special Education Teachers in 4410 programs were not included in the salary parity agreement and the result is that ***the majority of teachers in our 4410 preschools are now the lowest paid early childhood teachers in NYC.***

Every certified teacher at early childhood education programs in NYC (except for 4410 teachers) have received the following salary increases over the past three years.

Increase Schedule	With Master's Degree	With Bachelor's Degree
10/1/19	$53,581	$48,372
10/1/20	$62,295	$55,651
10/1/21	$68,652	$61,070

However, our 4410 teachers have been excluded, and they believe they have been forgotten by the city. We ask that you not forget our preschool children with developmental disabilities and their teachers who provide critical special education

services. Our 4410 teachers worked every day during the pandemic to provide special education services and offered in-person instruction even when the public schools were only providing remote instruction. Over the past two years the City Council prioritized ensuring that all early childhood teachers in NYC continued to receive the salary increases based on the parity agreement despite the budget challenges caused by the pandemic. Since October of 2019 every early childhood teacher in New York City received salary increases totaling almost $15,000 dollars - ***EXCEPT OUR TEACHERS*.**

Teachers in 4410 special education preschools are all certified special education teachers and work 12 months a year and are paid almost 40% less than public school teachers. Based on data from the New York State Education Department we know that the average salary disparity between what our 4410 schools can pay teachers and the public schools pay exceeds more than $37,000 a year.

The "Tale of Two Teachers" illustrates the significant difference in salary and benefits for a certified special education teacher in our school and a teacher in public school.

A Tale of Two Teachers



- I teach in a 4410 or 853 State Approved Special Education program
- I am a certified special education teacher with 5 years experience
- I get paid $51,000 dollars a year*
- I work 12 months a year
- I have to pay for my medical insurance, and I have no pension.
- My average fringe benefit is worth 23 % of my annual salary*



- I teach in a public schoolSpecial Education program
- I am a certified special education teacher with 5 years experience
- I get paid $87,000 dollars a year*
- I work 10 months a year
- I will get lifetime medical insurance and a full pension.
- My fringe benefit is worth is 63.89% of my annual salary*

*Data provided by the New York State Education Department

InterAgency Council 2019

School districts can pay their teachers between $30,000 and $40,000 dollars more than our schools. As a result, children with the highest levels of educational need in the state are being taught by new and inexperienced teachers.

This huge salary disparity makes it extremely hard for our schools to retain their teachers and recruit new teachers and the majority of our 4410 schools have many teacher vacancies. Our schools are facing a dire staffing crisis that is getting worse every day and threatens the viability of these services. The Part 200 New York State Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and Article 47 of the New York City

Childcare Regulations require that children in our 4410 preschools are taught by a certified special education teacher. It is important to remember that only a certified special education teacher can implement an Individualized Education Program (IEP). ***Our children have a right to have a certified special education teacher, but it is almost impossible to guarantee this anymore. Especially since the NYC DOE is constantly recruiting our teachers.***

Our 4410 preschools have a high number of teachers who leave each year. We have many students who have more than one teacher in one year.**When a teacher leaves,**

it is devastating to the child but for a student with a developmental disability it can be heartbreaking. ***How do you tell a student her teacher left because the public school pays more?***

The struggle to recruit and retain certified teachers is making it increasingly difficult for our 4410 schools to continue to provide a quality education to our students. We have schools that are considering closure simply because they can no longer recruit new special education teachers.

Today I want to share with you some numbers based on a recent IAC survey of our 4410 preschool special education providers. The numbers below illustrate the extent of the crisis facing our 4410 preschools and the children and families who depend on the critical services.

I know that numbers can sometimes be overwhelming but want to remind you that **behind these numbers are preschool children with developmental disabilities.** Young children with developmental disabilities who do not have an experienced special education teacher. Children with disabilities that were making progress and are now regressing and losing skills because their teacher left to go work for the NYC DOE.

The Current State of Preschool Special Education In New York City in 2022

4410 programs have far too many vacant teacher positions – the survey data from IAC's 4410 programs over the last few years documents the dramatic increases.

Five years ago, the Teacher Vacancy Rate was manageable, but it has increased by 29% and is now threatening the provision of services

- **17% -** this was the vacancy rate for certified special education teachers in 4410 programs the 2016-2017 school year.
- **28% ↑-** this was the vacancy rate for certified special education teachers in 4410 programs from 2017 through 2019.
- **33% ↑ -** this was the vacancy rate for certified special education teachers in October of 2021. (IAC did not conduct a survey during the 2019-2020 school year because of the pandemic)
- **46% ↑- this is now the average current vacancy rate for certified special education teachers based on the most recent survey data from IAC 4410 programs in NYC as of April 15, 2022.**
- **65%** - the percentage of IAC preschool special education providers that have a vacancy rate for certified special education teachers above forty percent.
- **Fall 2022 – What will the vacancy rate be in 6 months?**

- **119** - the number of approved preschool special education classrooms in IAC 4410 programs that are currently closed in New York City because 4410 programs do not have enough teachers to re-open these classrooms. (Based on the most recent IAC Survey)
- **87** – this was the number of approved preschool special education classrooms that were reported closed in NYC as of October 15, 2021.
- **32 – the number of** additional preschool classrooms that have been closed since October 15, 2021, because they have been unable to hire new teachers and the NYC DOE recruiting their existing teachers.
- **102** - the number of certified special education early childhood teachers who left IAC 4410 programs in the last 6 months alone. (Based on survey from twenty-seven IAC preschool special education providers – April 2022)
- **900 -** the projected number of preschool special education class seats that are needed in NYC for Spring of 2022. (*NYC DOE Regional Need posting - November 2021) - https://infohub.nyced.org/working-with-the-doe/early-childhood/regional-need-for-preschool-special-education

Based on survey data from 32 IAC 4410 programs in NYC

- **100%** of IAC preschool special education providers in NYC report that they are receiving fewer resumes for open positions than in previous years.
- **97%** of IAC preschool special education providers in NYC report that they are experiencing a higher rate of potential teacher candidates not accepting positions due to salary than in previous years.
- **100%** of the IAC preschool special education providers in NYC surveyed report that they have needed to use school administrators or non-teaching personnel to cover classrooms due to staffing shortages this school year.

The numbers that I have shared with you document the devastating impact of excluding 4410 teachers from the early childhood salary parity agreement has had on preschool children with disabilities and their families.

This year the staffing crisis is unlike other years and poses a real threat to the viability of these 4410 preschool programs

Our 4410 preschools have struggled with staffing for many years but this time it is different. Based on survey data from our 4410 programs, we know that our 4410 preschools lose the majority of their certified special education teachers and certified teacher assistants to the NYC Department of Education from the end of August until the middle of October each year as public schools recruit teachers and other teaching staff. We refer to this as the Cycle of Loss. The preschools then spend the next few months filling their vacant teacher positions and by February of March they are usually almost fully staffed **but NOT THIS YEAR.** In 2021-2022 preschools are continuing to:

- Lose teaching staff every day to public schools
- Teachers are resigning without any notice because the New York City Department of Education requires immediate start date. Teachers are expected to report the very next day to the NYC DOE school. They are given no time to say good-bye to their students – our preschool children with disabilities are New York City public school students!
- Schools losing senior education staff who they never thought that they would lose. In a recent survey almost 90% of our school leaders report they have lost senior staff they never thought would leave their school.
- Administrators are teaching in classrooms and providing classroom supports.

- **Schools are constantly advertising for the vacant teacher positions but they are not receiving any resumes. Many of these teacher positions have been vacant all year and there are no candidates interested in these positions.**
- If teachers continue to leave and there is no one to replace them how much longer can these schools continue to provide services?

We are highly concerned for Fall of 2022

- Our 4410 preschools have never entered the “cycle of loss” with vacancy rates approaching 50%. If our preschool programs lose just the same number of teachers and assistants, they lose in a typical year during the end of August to the beginning of October the vacancy rates for certified teachers will climb even higher. How many more approved classrooms will be closed and how many preschool children with disabilities will be siting at home in the fall of 2022 waiting for a preschool seat.

Preschool children with disabilities are sitting at home because there are no preschool special education seats available.

Preschool 4410 programs are closing at an alarming rate. In the past several years more than 63 preschool special education programs have closed. 34 of them in the five boroughs of New York City. We are losing high quality programs because they can no longer afford to stay open due to the inequity in funding and the significant unreimbursed costs of re-opening school to in-person instruction. We are genuinely concerned that if nothing is done to address this funding inequity more preschools will

close their doors and preschool children with developmental disabilities will wait months for seats. New York City must prioritize providing fiscal support for 4410 schools who serve New York City's most vulnerable children and ensure that there is a certified special education teacher in every classroom.

There are three guiding principles that are at the heart of our advocacy today:

1. Children who attend 4410 preschool programs are public school children and should receive equitable funding with public school children.
2. All children with disabilities who attend 4410 preschools must have access to a certified special education teacher, certified teacher assistants and all required clinical and related services staff, to ensure that their IEP can be fully implemented.
3. New York City must guarantee that every preschool child with a disability, who needs a special education seat, has one available to meet their educational needs as required by Federal Special Education Law under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In Conclusion:

I ask the members of the City Council today:

How can NYC continue to justify paying early childhood teachers for children with disabilities substantially less than all other early childhood teachers in NYC?

Are preschool children with disabilities valued any less by NYC than all other preschool children?

You have the opportunity this year to correct the critical failure of the previous administration to address this injustice and to commit to salary parity to our early childhood preschool special education teachers in NYC.

We implore you to include the 30 million dollars in the final city budget for salary parity for 4410 teachers and tell parents of preschool children with disabilities that NYC cares about their children and will guarantee that every preschool student with a disability will have a certified special education teacher in their classroom and every child will receive the special education services they need.

Thank you

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council
May 25, 2022

Hello, my name is Jessica Chen, and I am the Artistic Director and Choreographer of J CHEN PROJECT, a contemporary dance company.

Thank you, Chair Brannan and Council Members for the opportunity to testify.

New York City is a place where culture thrives, and trends are set. The arts are vital to our city's soul and our collective humanity, as well as being an essential driver of the economy.

According to the New York City Comptroller's Report, before the pandemic, New York City's creative industries employed nearly 300,000 people—more than finance, tech, or education. NYC's creative sector accounts for 13 percent of the city's total economic output– totaling $110B.

We need arts and culture to make New York City thrive!

As the most populated city in the United States, we have the power to set trends globally. Let's use this power to make a positive change in our city and our country. Trends I would like to see reflected in the city budget include:

1. *A significant investment in the arts*
    - *I support my colleagues at New Yorkers for Culture and Arts and their request for a $100million investment from NYC in FY23 to culture. This is .24% of the city's total budget. Let's start there*
2. *Budget equity for the AAPI community*
    - *We are in a moment of "anti-" sentiment. The compilation of hate crime data, published by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, revealed that anti-Asian hate crimes saw a 343% increase in New York City in 2021.*
    - *At the same time, API is the fastest-growing racial group in NYC. Last year when I testified here, the 18% and growing campaign by the Coalition for Asian American Children + Families was 15% and growing. The campaign, our API population grew 3% in a year.*
    - *We are advocating for budget equity.*

J CHEN PROJECT's mission is to create dance works that emphasize identity, cultural diversity, and belonging. Recently we brought our newest dance, "You Are Safe," to perform for UN Heads of State in a special event at the MOMA Museum of Modern Art.

Our work challenges stereotypes and negative biases. We use movement as a vehicle to heal wounds, share stories that go unheard, and record the present moment in time through artistic expression.

We believe that culture connects and representation matters.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have to help navigate the budget negotiations.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jessica Chen
Artistic Director of J CHEN PROJECT

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jchenproject@gmail.com

Testimony of Christine James-McKenzie, Manager, Communications & Policy
JobsFirstNYC
before the
5/25 Hearing of the City Council Committee on
General Budget Hearing

Greetings Committee Chair Brannan and the distinguished members of the City Council Committee on Finance. Thank you for allowing JobsFirstNYC to provide testimony today on important issues affecting New York City's budget. Thank you to the members of the committee that we have had the opportunity to meet with to discuss advancing workforce development.

My name is Christine James-McKenzie, and I'm the Communications & Policy Manager at JobsFirstNYC, which provides research and develops systems that impact how Philanthropy and Gov. invest in workforce development. We create systems that focus on making NYC more INCLUSIVE and ADVANCES ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR ALL YOUNG ADULTS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY CALL HOME.

In 2021, JobsFirstNYC published a report titled ***Equitable Recovery for Young Adults: An Agenda for Young Adult Workforce Development in New York City*** which provides a set of citywide policy priorities rooted in the real needs of young people, the perspectives of on-the-ground practitioners, and the literature on successful policies and interventions. It details the changes needed to quickly connect 18- to 24-year-olds to employment now and to effectively prepare them for the future of work in a rapidly shifting, increasingly virtual economy. It builds on JobsFirstNYC's comprehensive, system-level view of the City's young adult workforce ecosystem and proposes an actionable, realistic, and timebound framework to foster citywide systems change in the young adult workforce development field.

We must act now to connect young adults to training, education, and work opportunities; and to advance them along educational and career pathways. Our report outlines six recommendations for the city that were informed by a diverse coalition of workforce development and education stakeholders and 18- to 24-year-olds. To enact these recommendations, JobsFirstNYC calls for a $770 million increase in annual investment by New York City.

This proposed funding would support:

- $100 million for bridge programming
- $150 million for sectoral training

- $357 million for subsidized jobs
- $105 million for high school degree attainment and career preparation
- $58 million for capacity building and system enhancements

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Finance Committee and are looking forward to your leadership to address the crises that young adults in NYC face. JobsFirstNYC is particularly concerned about the reported 100,000 young adults between the ages of 16 - 24 who are out-of-school and out-of- work in New York City. JobsFirstNYC supports The Council's Budget Response, that recommends investing in specific programs and priorities that will help ensure that we remain on our path to recovery for all New Yorkers. We are asking the Finance Committee to direct resources to programs that support young adults. We work with over 160 partners to create and advance bold solutions that break down silos and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in their pursuit of economic opportunities.

We stand ready to support the City's efforts to find solutions for our young people in New York. With over 16 years of experience, JobsFirstNYC identifies, designs, and advances practices and policies that achieve better outcomes for employers and workers. We create localized solutions that respond to the unique needs of neighborhood communities with high numbers of young adults who are out of school and out of work and our research with educational institutions have improved leaky educational pipelines and built equitable pathways to postsecondary education and career opportunities.

My colleagues and I will follow up with members of the committee to schedule time to share more details in our report and ways we can partner to expand the council's support of workforce development in your districts and throughout New York City.

Thank you very much.

Testimony of the Article 10 Family Defense Organizations:
Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Center for Family Representation, and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem

Presented Before
The New York City Council Finance Committee

Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022

This testimony is submitted jointly by the Bronx Defenders (BxD), Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS), Center for Family Representation (CFR) and the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS) (collectively the "family defense organizations"). Our offices are the primary providers of mandated legal representation to indigent parents in Article 10 cases filed in family court in each of our boroughs.[1] Together, we have created a model of interdisciplinary representation for parents charged with neglect or abuse and at risk of family separation. Our model, which provides comprehensive representation to low- and no-income parents through teams of attorneys, social workers and parent advocates, is nationally recognized as the most effective model of representation of its kind.[2] Together, we have prevented thousands of children from needlessly entering and languishing in the foster system and have reduced the foster system census in New York City by almost 50%.[3] This translates to nearly $40 million in annual savings in foster system expenditures for New York City,[4] and the preservation of family bonds that are priceless to our clients, their children, and society at large. We thank the Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony about the critical services our agencies provide to New York City and the need to ensure that these services are fully funded.

The family defense offices have followed the leadership of directly-impacted people and adopted the phrase "Family Regulation System" or "Family Policing System" to describe what has traditionally been called the "child welfare system" or the "child protection system," to reflect the system's prioritization of and roots in surveillance, punishment, and control rather than genuine assistance to and support of families living in poverty.[5] The primary goal of our representation is to provide high quality legal representation to parents in high stake family regulation cases and ameliorate the underlying issues that drive families into this system, such as lack of access to quality health and mental health treatment, basic necessities and appropriate education and services for children with disabilities. We also aim to reduce the harm of the

consequences of system involvement, such as criminal charges, housing and income loss, education issues and inability to adjust immigration status. Collectively we represent over 12,000 respondent parents each year. Since 2007 when New York City first contracted with family defense organizations to represent parents, we have represented more than 40,000 parents in family court, touching the lives of more than 80,000 children, the vast majority of whom are Black and Brown and live in the most marginalized, low-income communities in New York City.

Since fiscal year 2020, we have also provided two critical additional services to low-income parents, made possible only with City Council funding of the **Right to Family Advocacy Project** through the Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support Initiative:

- We provide support, guidance, and legal counsel to parents during an investigation by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), with the primary goal of preventing family separation and unnecessary family court filings.

- We provide legal representation in administrative proceedings to help parents clear or modify their Statewide Central Register (SCR) records that result after ACS investigations, thereby preserving and expanding their employment opportunities.

The City Council plays an important role in monitoring the provision of ACS's services and in ensuring that the families affected by ACS involvement have legal representation that is adequately funded to achieve positive outcomes for families. This testimony addresses the importance of adequately funding the family defense organizations' provision of legally mandated representation to parents charged with abuse and neglect and increasing funding of the City Council's Right to Family Advocacy Initiative. Specifically,

- **We are asking the City to allocate an additional $ 40 million to fully fund the Article 10 work and so that our offices can meet the caseload standards instituted by the New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services and guarantee the services and representation our clients need and deserve when facing family separation.**

- **We are asking the City to continue funding for the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative which provides support, guidance, and legal counsel to parents in ACS investigations and avoids family separation and court filings and provides parents with representation in SCR hearings that increases employment opportunities.**

I. The City Should Adequately Fund Mandated Institutional Representation for Parents in Article 10 cases.

The family defense organizations provide an essential service on behalf of the City, fulfilling its legal mandate to provide legal representation to parents who cannot afford to hire an attorney. The model also saves the city millions of dollars by reducing the time children spend in foster placements, shrinks the foster system which disproportionately harms families of color, and provides needed support to families.

A. Providing Interdisciplinary Representation reduces the time children spend in the foster system.

In New York, parents charged with abuse or neglect in family court are legally entitled to an attorney if they cannot afford one, both by statute and under the New York State Constitution.[6] In 2007, New York City dramatically changed its parent representation system by offering contracts to multidisciplinary organizations which employ lawyers, social workers, parent advocates, and investigators and have expertise in a wide range of legal matters including housing, public benefits, mental health, criminal justice, educational law, and immigration defense. Since 2007, our offices have represented the vast majority of parents in Article 10 proceedings and all related matters, including interim appeals, custody, visitation, family offense, paternity and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings.

Over the last 13 years, our offices have developed family defense practices that serve as a state and national model and have been recognized as the most effective model of representation for parents in family regulation cases.[7] The Commission on Parental Representation, established by Chief Judge DiFiore to examine the state of representation for indigent parents in New York State, issued an interim report in February 2019 following extensive hearings, recommending that New York City's model of parent representation in family regulation cases be adopted state-wide. The Commission concluded that:

> the best chance of successful implementation of its recommendations is through statewide expansion of institu-tional providers and attorneys specializing in child welfare law. The use of attorneys dedicated to, and proficient in, such representation would improve the quality, efficiency, and cost-effec-tiveness of parental representation statewide.[8]

The benefit of New York City's contract with family defense organizations to fulfill the mandate of parent representation cannot be overstated: our work dramatically reduces the number of families separated by ACS as a result of an investigation, as well as the amount of time children spend in the foster system.[9] Our offices actively litigate emergency hearings under Family Court Act §§ 1027 and 1028, to ensure that children never enter the foster system unless

absolutely necessary and, if they do, that the amount of time they spend in the foster system is as short as possible. After the start of the Article 10 case, our interdisciplinary teams fight at every stage to achieve family reunification as quickly as possible and maintain it, through advocacy at case conferences, active motion practice, investigation of the facts, and the litigation of fact finding, disposition, and visitation and permanency hearings. Adequately resourcing interdisciplinary family defense representation also ensures that the court is provided with all the information necessary to properly follow the law in maintaining family relationships. Zealous in-court representation with additional out-of-court advocacy and support of families is the only way to secure the rights of parents and children while ensuring the fairness and effectiveness of the family regulation system.

Our effectiveness in reducing the length of foster system involvement is well documented. The largest study of parental representation in family court ever conducted found that holistic, interdisciplinary institutional representation in New York City significantly reduces the time children spend in the foster system.[10] This study compared length of foster stays for the children of BxD, BDS, and CFR's clients with the children of parents who were assigned solo attorneys pursuant to Article 18-b of the County Law, Indigent Defense Legal Panel Plan. The study found that representation by multidisciplinary offices reduced children's time in the foster system by nearly 4 months during the 48 months following the filing of the petition, through earlier reunification outcomes translating to up to nearly $40 million in annual savings in foster system expenditures for New York City.[11] According to the study, these outcomes were achieved without any difference in safety to children between the two groups.[12]

B. Most Article 10 cases stem from poverty and its related stressors, and families benefit from the support services the family defense providers offer.

The vast majority of the parents we represent are facing allegations of neglect, not abuse. These cases are poverty-related, and the allegations often include poor or unstable housing conditions, income and food instability, allegations that children are not attending school, domestic violence in the home, excessive corporal punishment or inadequate childcare. Many of our clients struggle with untreated underlying mental health and/or substance use disorders which are exacerbated by the stress of poverty, or are facing other challenges, such as cognitive disabilities. Many of our clients are or were in the foster system themselves.

While the parents we represent may face challenges that impact their ability to keep their families together, research and our experience shows that the vast majority of these families suffer more trauma and deeper harm from being separated than from staying together with support systems in place. Family separation is traumatic for children and causes short and long-term harm,[13] and the state's highest court has recognized separation as a harm to children.[14] When children are separated from their parents for a long period of time, studies have shown that they remain on high alert, and their bodies endure prolonged and severe toxic stress as a result. If

continuously exposed to toxic stress over time, damage done to the child's brain cannot be mitigated.[15] Quality representation for parents prevents needless harmful family separation, brings children home as soon as possible, and ensures that beneficial, family strengthening services are in place. As a result of our representation, many of our clients' families stay intact during the pendency of the legal case while the parent, child, and family receive needed services.

Fewer than 10 percent of our cases involve allegations of abuse. These cases involve more serious allegations, and these children often are removed from their families immediately. These are some of our most complex cases and often require extensive litigation and expert testimony as well as full investigations to uncover claims of innocence, underlying medical explanations of apparent injuries, or mitigating factors. Our offices are staffed with highly qualified, experienced, and zealous attorneys that are ready to litigate more complicated claims and protect the due process rights of our clients.

C. Interdisciplinary Representation Reduces the Harm of Structural Racism Inherent in the Foster System

The foster system punishes, controls, surveils, and forcibly separates low-income Black and Brown families in numbers strikingly disproportionately to the percentage of the overall population of New York City. Just like our modern police systems are directly descended from slave patrols, the Family Regulation System comes from our country's history of separating Indigenous, Black, and low-income children from their families.

The Family Regulation System's origins are in the separation of enslaved Black children and parents to profit from their labor, and in the government-supported separation of Indigenous children from their parents meant to destroy the Indigenous communities whose land the government was seeking to colonize. The System continued with "Orphan Trains" of the late 1800s and early 1900s, when The Children's Aid Society, still in operation in New York City today, separated thousands of poor Italian and Irish immigrant children from their families, and sent those children to the Midwest to work in indentured servitude. Family connections in impacted communities were considered inferior and therefore breaking those connections was considered to their, and more importantly, to society's benefit.

The Family Regulation System we fight today is rooted in this history, but its funding did not explode until public assistance programs were slashed in the 1980s and 1990s in response to Black families demanding equal access to social programs through the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. These cuts were coupled with billions of dollars in new funding for the foster system. In 1981, the federal foster system budget stood at less than $500 million. By 2003, it was at $4.5 billion. With this huge increase in funding, Family Policing agencies targeted the Black community, using the same racist and classist logic motivating the War on Drugs and the cuts to public assistance.

Research from all corners, from the Federal Children's Bureau to the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges to numbers reported by ACS itself, demonstrates that Indigenous, Black, and Brown families are disproportionately represented in reports, investigations, and prosecutions by the Family Regulation System and that Indigenous, Black, and Brown children are disproportionately represented in the foster system. This is not the work of a few bad apples. These outcomes, demonstrated reliably and consistently across a variety of social research, are a result of structural racism masquerading as social betterment.

When people from low-income communities of color in NYC are investigated by ACS, caseworkers often use misinformation and the threat of family separation and police involvement to coerce families to relinquish their constitutional rights before a court is even involved. Hospitals target pregnant low-income Black and Brown parents to drug test them without consent, regardless of whether there are any actual child safety concerns, a legacy of the now-debunked racist "crack baby" myth. The Family Regulation System empowers the violence of greedy landlords, jilted lovers, and vengeful family members by allowing anonymous reports to be filed, leaving families to pick up the pieces after the resulting intrusive investigations.

All these processes create a dynamic that entangles low-income Black and Brown families into a system that, more often than not, tears them apart. The work we do to provide representation to parents in family court and as part of City Council's Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is an essential service for New York City's families that are targeted and harmed by these processes and history.

D. The family defense model provides consistent high-quality representation through the following key elements:

Interdisciplinary practice: Our interdisciplinary practices, which treat lawyers, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates as equal partners in our client-centered representation, is the key to our success. Parent Advocates are often parents with lived experience of child welfare involvement, "credible messengers" that offer peer-to-peer support for parents experiencing the family regulation system. Social work and parent advocate support is vital to addressing the complex needs of our clients and ensuring that we support them both inside and outside of the courtroom. Social workers and parent advocates support clients through every step of their family court case, often meeting them on their first day in court and connecting them immediately with services, such as domestic violence shelter placement, family therapy, education consultants, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, or other vital resources needed to avoid family separation. Paralegals help attorneys file motions, in particular, motions seeking the return of children home or increased visits which are so crucial to family reunification, assist attorneys with obtaining, digesting and organizing discovery, draft subpoenas; help with appeals and assist with intake of new clients.

Social workers, parent advocates, attorneys and clients work closely as a team to develop a legal strategy and a service plan based on the client's goals and the needs of their family. Unlike ACS caseworkers, defense parent advocates and social workers center parents in solutions for their families and work to support the family together, rather than through separation or the threat of separation. Social workers perform comprehensive and on-going family assessments that help identify the family's needs to ensure that appropriate services and interventions are put into place. Social workers advocate for clients at ACS and foster-care agency conferences and collaborate with attorneys to ensure continuity between in-court advocacy, agency practice and the evolving circumstances of our clients' lives.

One of the most important roles of our social work and parent advocate teams is to build trusting relationships with clients and ensure their voices are heard outside of court. Social workers and parent advocates attend ACS and foster agency conferences across the five boroughs to advocate for appropriate visitation and service plans that meet the needs of the individual family and move the case towards family reunification. Our out-of-court staff use their deep understanding of each individual client's situation and their knowledge of New York's social services landscape to connect parents with the material resources they need to care for their children, and help parents navigate the shelter and benefits systems. Social workers also help mediate and problem-solve issues that can arise between clients and ACS and foster agency workers, foster parents and/or service providers.

Our offices develop close relationships with community-based programs serving New York's immigrant communities to connect clients to culturally competent service providers and access to services in their native language. For clients who do not qualify for medical insurance, our social workers identify programs that will accept clients on a no-fee basis.

Training of staff: Our extensive and in-depth training of new staff imparts the information and skill-building they need to provide high quality representation in a complex area of law from the very start. Our offices provide extensive training programs for new attorneys, social workers, and parent advocates covering every aspect of Article 10 proceedings, including both substantive law and practical litigation skills for attorneys. Our offices also collaborate to present regular workshops and trainings to enhance staff's professional development and build on their substantive knowledge and skills.

Language access: Our offices recruit staff from different backgrounds who speak many languages because clients greatly benefit from working with staff who speak their primary language. Bilingual staff also develop contacts with community-based agencies and are familiar with a client's cultural or religious background, a factor which is often relevant in an Article 10 case. Attorneys who can communicate with clients in their primary language enhance the attorney-client relationship and vastly improve the quality of representation.[16]

Specialized expertise in substantive areas: Over time our offices have identified attorneys and social work staff who specialize in particular areas of law or practice, thereby developing skills and institutional knowledge and improving the quality of representation and making our practice more efficient, including expertise in appeals, custody, Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), education, immigration and medically complex matters.

Technology/data that provides accountability: Our offices have online case management systems, developed and improved over many years, enabling our offices to produce data on client demographics and court procedures and outcomes for the city, ensuring accountability. These systems also allow staff members to access up-to-date information on cases, enhancing our ability to respond to frequent emergencies, and enable our attorneys and out-of-court advocates to share information about cases. Our relationship with the court has allowed us to access court data as well, which enhances our ability to advise clients and ensure our records are updated.

Leveraging pro bono and law school and social work resources: Our offices expand our limited resources through collaborations with the major New York City law firms which co-counsel with us on some of our most complex cases. Clinics from the New York City area law and social work schools also greatly enhance the efficiency of our practices with added resources to support the work of our attorneys and social workers.

II. The city must allocate an additional $40 million to our function and fully fund the essential work of the family defense providers.

Despite nearly 15 years of excellent interdisciplinary representation that has saved the city millions of dollars and the vast improvements our model has made to parent representation, the city has never adequately funded parent defense. Unlike the area of criminal defense which has seen a statewide effort to reduce caseloads for staff and make quality improvements, parent defense does not receive any funding from the state. Recent caseload standards implemented by New York's Office of Indigent Legal Services [17] (ILS) make clear what we have been arguing for years: our contracts have been deeply underfunded, putting at grave risk the benefits of our model of representation for both the City and our clients.

A. Recent caseload standards developed by the State's Office of Indigent Legal Services require that family defense budgets more than double in size.

The underfunding of our contracts is clear from the caseload standards that were recently announced by ILS. Following the recommendation of the Commission on Parental Legal Representation in June 2021, ILS developed *Caseload Standards for Parents' Attorneys in New York State Family Court Mandated Representation Cases* (ILS Caseload Standards). ILS is a state agency with a legislative mandate to analyze and set standards for indigent representation.

The standards are based on a multi-prong statewide study that articulates the minimum attorney hours required to provide effective representation.

Based on our average intake over the last three years, our budgets cover less than half the staff required to meet the ILS standards. The ILS standards have confirmed what we have testified to in prior years: the current contract budget is insufficient to meet the needs of our practices. The city must meet its obligation to provide adequate funding to bring us into compliance with the new guidelines.

The additional amount needed to bring our offices into compliance is a combined $40 million for the providers. We are asking the City Council to ensure that this additional funding is added to the Article 10 budget overseen by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice.

B. The budget shortfall is more acute because of the court backlog and the pandemic.

The budget shortfall has been made more acute over the past two years as the backlog created in the courts, which has been significantly worsened by the pandemic, has made it more likely that clients will face supplemental proceedings; when it takes longer to resolve a case, there is a greater likelihood that additional matters—TPR petitions, custody petitions, and new allegations of neglect—will be filed against a client, creating an expanded need for critical casework outside of court by our social workers and other support staff to achieve positive outcomes in our cases.

Historically, almost half of ACS petitions sought solely court-ordered family supervision. In this scenario, the children remain home, and the family court supervises the family and ensures compliance with a service plan. Since the beginning of the pandemic, however, ACS has only filed petitions in cases in which they seek to remove children and separate families. Cases involving family separation are far more resource intensive and make up the bulk of our current workload. While the absolute number of ACS filings has decreased since the pandemic, our offices represent the same number of separated families working to reunify. Even as family court has gradually expanded its virtual capacity, our ability to vindicate our clients' due process rights remains dramatically limited due to court restrictions. This is particularly true for those hearings in which we advocate for children to leave the foster system and reunite with their families. Family court has adjourned hundreds of cases for several months in the future despite our efforts to progress them. These limitations and delays only make it more likely that complicated supplemental proceedings like TPRs and custody petitions will be filed. The work required to reduce the backlog will be time consuming, complicated, and staggering in scale. It is essential that we are fully staffed and prepared for that eventuality.

C. COVID-19 has caused an increase in our clients' needs and resulted in a growing backlog of court cases having a detrimental impact on workload and pending caseload.

Our offices are experiencing unprecedented attrition of staff; insufficient funding and the impact of the changing work environment during the pandemic has kept workloads unmanageable and difficult to maintain. We need an influx of funding in FY23 to stem attrition and to begin to build capacity toward meeting the ILS caseload standards.

The work we do as family defenders is challenging to begin with—day in and day out we provide compassionate, effective, and zealous advocacy for our clients, many of whom are separated from their children, the most harrowing experience a parent could have. The various ways in which the pandemic has changed our work has made it much more difficult.

Before the pandemic, our initial contact with clients was in family court, face-to-face, when clients came to court after ACS told them that a case would be filed. We would meet with clients and walk them through the intake and arraignment process, advocating with ACS every step of the way. Our clients were able to quickly develop the trust needed to delve into their personal lives in part because they were able to read all the non-verbal cues that communicated that we were competent, passionate advocates with positive reputations in court. We were able to make eye contact with our clients and reassure them that they could trust us to fight as hard as we could to keep their families intact. In the pandemic, our initial attempts to contact clients often result in endless ringing and unanswered voicemails. When we can reach our clients, we are not much more than a disembodied voice on the other end of a call from an unrecognized phone number. It takes much longer to build trust and rapport, which makes it that much more difficult to get the information from clients that we need to effectively advocate for them.

In cases where families are separated, our clients are granted visitation with their children by family court, often—at the request of ACS—initially supervised by ACS, a foster agency, or a family member. For these separated families, the court and ACS often require significant supervised visitation before expanding to partially supervised visitation, then to unsupervised visits, overnight visits, extended visits, and ultimately reunification. This process can take months, sometimes years and requires persistent motion practice by our offices. Throughout the pandemic, supervision of visits by ACS has been unreliable at best, and nonexistent at worst, resulting in extremely inconsistent visitation between parents and children and unnecessary delays of reunification. Initially, ACS required that all visitations be held virtually. While video visitation was a lesser but workable alternative for families with older children, younger children, for whom maintenance of the parental bond is so much more important, did not have the attention span to spend more than a few minutes on a video chat and therefore could not meaningfully spend time with their parents for many months. When new variants emerged with waves of infections ravaging our city, and when vaccines were mandated for city employees, visits were canceled, delayed, reduced, or made virtual for lack of staff to supervise, delaying reunification.

In almost all our cases, ACS requires our clients to engage in services such as individual therapy, dyadic and family therapy, parenting instruction, and in some cases anger management courses and treatment for substance misuse, regardless of whether they have been found to have engaged in any wrongdoing. If family court makes a finding against our clients, they are often required to do similar services. For clients whose children have been separated from them, these services can be especially important, as compliance with services is often the material that paves the way to reunification, along with visitation. During the pandemic, unfortunately, many service providers drastically reduced their capacity, canceled services for significant periods of time, or closed altogether, leaving our clients unable to work towards reunification and/or unable to comply with court orders requiring engagement in services, both circumstances leading to delay in family reunification and resolution of cases.

As the family court limped towards creating protocols and processes for conducting virtual court proceedings, our respective staff met the challenge, litigating virtual hearings and trials from their homes. These trials are a pale comparison to in-person proceedings and greatly hamper our client's due process rights. Although our staff has adjusted and risen to the challenge, regular technological issues, including the inability of the court to admit parties and attorneys from the virtual waiting room, uncooperative computer microphones and cameras, background noise and feedback, and subpar bandwidth in our clients homes have made and continue to make ordinary trial procedures, like cross-examination, use of an interpreter for non-English speaking parties, objections and admission of evidence, incredibly difficult, inefficient, and time consuming. Again, the absence of non-verbal cues of the courtroom, such as where each party and attorney sit in relation to the judge and the presence of court officers and clerks, has made it difficult for our staff to help clients navigate the process. Where we would have leaned over and whispered assurances to our client during a difficult moment in a proceeding, we now text and message them, and hope they are able to access our communication while they also pay attention to what is happening in the proceeding. Many clients have complained that during virtual court, they don't know who everyone is, who is talking or what is happening, leaving them confused and hopeless after court appearances. Most difficult has been defending against TPR petitions, where so much is at stake, but we only have the milquetoast facsimile of virtual court in which to vindicate our client's rights and keep their families together.

These extreme challenges in doing the basic work in the pandemic combined with the isolation of working from home, has led to very high rates of attrition across all our practices. When an attorney or social worker leaves a family defense practice, their cases must be transferred across remaining staff. Although a case can easily be transferred, the relationship between advocate and client cannot and both have to work very hard to build trust and cooperation once again, sometimes in the middle of a consequential moment of the case. Finding the time and bandwidth to dedicate energy to building a new foundation with a client whose case has been transferred can be very difficult to do as most attorneys are already representing far greater numbers of clients than recommended by ILS when they receive these transfer cases. Bandwidth and

capacity of staff continues to spread thinner, resulting in more attrition, spinning this cycle faster and faster. New staff are hired, but many are recent graduates who don't immediately have the capacity to take on a full caseload or the demands of more than a few transfer cases.

There is no quantitative or qualitative metric that can capture the cascading impact this pandemic is having on New York City's families with ACS involvement. All these changes have amplified the gravity of separation between parents and children in the foster system and, by default, increased the length of stay for children in the system and, as a result, the likelihood of a TPR petition being filed. Our continued ability to work around these obstacles and implement creative solutions is more critical than ever.

IV. Right to Family Advocacy Initiative

The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative is a City-Council funded program that guarantees parents will have an attorney to advise them during an ACS investigation. We also utilize this funding to help people clear their records at the State Central Registry, so they are not arbitrarily limited from obtaining certain jobs. These funds, provided equally to our four offices, has enabled us to provide representation to low-income parents in deeply invasive, high-stakes ACS investigations, as well as in hearings with the Office for Children and Families (OCFS) to amend or seal an indicated case from the State Central Register. This undertaking, called the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, provides desperately needed due process legal representation and advocacy services to individuals and families involved in the family regulation system. Our Article 10 contracts with MOCJ do not fund us to provide this critical representation and, without these advocacy services, the low-income Black and Brown parents targeted by the family regulation system would not have access to counsel at these critical junctures.

The need for the services funded by this initiative continues and has become even more essential during the pandemic. Therefore, this year we are asking for $3.2 million dollars ($800,000 per organization) to provide these vital services in FY 2022.

A. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel during ACS investigations, resulting in unnecessary traumatic and harmful family separations and case filings.

Currently, parents with family regulation involvement who cannot afford to hire counsel are not provided assigned attorneys until ACS files an abuse or neglect case against them in family court. Before a case is filed in court, however, critical decisions are made that have grave consequences for how cases proceed, including whether the family will be diverted to prevention programs and services, whether the case will be filed in court, and, most significantly, whether children will be separated from their parents and, if so, who will care for them. Without access to counsel during this critically important investigative stage of an Article 10 case, parents are

forced to meet with ACS, make critical decisions impacting the integrity of their family, discuss the allegations against them, and navigate the state's intervention in their family without any formal support. In contrast, ACS has access to legal representation throughout their investigation. The result is catastrophic for the families targeted by the Family Regulation System–families that are invariably low-income and predominantly Black and brown. Too many cases are filed unnecessarily and too many children are unnecessarily traumatically separated from their parents.

Because families are often unnecessarily separated by the Family Regulation System, the Commission on Parental Legal Representation established in 2018 by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore recommended that parents be granted access to counsel during a child protective investigation.[19] In addition, the standards of practice for parents' attorneys adopted by the American Bar Association in 2006 recommend that attorneys actively represent parents during an investigation.[20] In recently-issued eligibility standards, ILS also recommended that counsel be assigned to parents during the investigation stage of a case. Representation at the investigation phase of a case is an effective and much needed bulwark against a multitude of avoidable harms to the low-income, mostly Black and Brown families most often targeted by the family regulation system.

B. Low-income parents do not have access to counsel in SCR hearings and are unjustifiably denied opportunities in employment and to care for children.

At the conclusion of an investigation, ACS will determine whether the report should be "indicated," which results in the name of the person being investigated being placed on the SCR. This is true regardless of whether the case is ever brought to court and a parent is assigned an attorney and a judge determines whether the allegations are supported by evidence. Indeed, the majority of indicated cases are never brought to court for review, yet the consequences for an indicated case are enormous, can last for decades, and fall disproportionately on families of color.

Despite Black and Hispanic children making up 59.4% of the child population in New York, they represent 86.8% of all SCR reports.[21] For every SCR report made regarding a white child, 6.6 are made for Black children and 4.8 are made for Hispanic children.[22] New York parents who are listed on the SCR are routinely denied employment as daycare workers, nannies, teaching assistants, substance abuse counselors, home health aides, medical supply delivery people, drivers for the disabled, an array of positions in hospitals, and more, based on unproven allegations of child abuse and neglect.[23] Black and Brown New Yorkers are disproportionately impacted by the loss of opportunity in these professions: eighty-five percent of care workers, such as nannies and health aids, are women of color.[24] SCR records remain accessible to employers and others for years and restrict parents' ability to work and support their families.

The impact of an indicated case also goes beyond employment. Courts making custody determinations frequently consider indicated reports of child abuse or maltreatment and are significantly less likely to award custody to a parent with an indicated report. Moreover, an indicated report may pose risks for an individual assuming custody of children through kinship care—an alternative to the traditional foster system where care is provided by relatives. When parental care is not available, kinship care is widely recognized as the next best option. Yet kinship care arrangements are routinely rejected based on indicated reports, even if the report was outdated and the only other option is foster placement with strangers.

Although there is a process to challenge this outcome in a hearing through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), under current law, parents are not generally given access to counsel in these OCFS hearings that are necessary to amend or seal an indicated case from the SCR. At SCR hearings in New York City, ACS is always represented by counsel. The decisions often hinge on the interpretation of statutory and legal terms, such as "person legally responsible," "collateral estoppel," and "dismissed on the merits." Yet parents are not provided with an attorney to inform them of their right to challenge their listing on the SCR or to represent them. In January 2022, the laws governing SCR hearings were changed and an entirely new legal standard and process was put in place. The interpretation of many of the new provisions is being actively litigated in nearly every hearing now. Our offices represent parents during these critical proceedings thanks to the City Council's Right to Family Advocacy initiative. Legal representation has had a significant positive impact on individuals who had an indicated case but who were able to clear their record with our assistance. There are thousands of people who need assistance, and we hope to continue this project.

C. The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative avoids unnecessary removals and removes barriers to employment for hundreds of low-income NYC parents.

Through the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative, low-income parents in New York City have access to attorneys through hotlines, emails, and walk-in hours when they are faced with an ACS investigation or have been denied employment due to having an indicated case on the SCR. Teams of attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and parent advocates are available to advise parents about their rights, their choices, and the consequences of decisions during an ACS investigation. As a result, parents are more meaningfully engaged in the process and ACS is better informed about a family's situation. We are able to assist parents in providing helpful information to ACS, identifying their strengths and resources, accessing services and material assistance and addressing the issues that brought their children to the attention of ACS in the first instance. Our advocates attend conferences at ACS, schools, and with medical providers alongside our clients. This support often results in resolving cases without ACS having to go to court.

Data from the four family defense organizations demonstrates that the Right to Family Advocacy Initiative works. With the funding provided by the City Council in the period FY 21 and first six months of FY 22, the family defense organizations collectively represented nearly 1200 parents and caretakers during child welfare investigations and SCR hearings. Our success in having SCR reports amended or sealed—which ranged from 95% to 100% among the provider organizations—has enabled parents to access employment and support their families. Through early advocacy and identification of appropriate services and resources, we avoided unnecessary and traumatic family separations and, often, kept family court cases from ever being filed against the families we assisted. Our representation during ACS investigations has also resulted in tremendous fiscal savings for the city by avoiding removals and reducing court filings, preserving valuable court resources and time for cases that require court intervention. By way of example of the extent of these savings, in FY 21, 72% of the cases where BxD represented parents during an ACS investigation were not filed in court. For the cases that were filed in court, early advocacy had an impact on what happened in the case. In 96 % of the cases that were ultimately filed, children stayed home or were placed with family rather than in the foster system. The Right to Family Advocacy Initiative saves families and money.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have, and you can reach us at the contact information provided below.

The Bronx Defenders, Emma Ketteringham
emmak@bronxdefenders.org

Brooklyn Defender Services, Lauren Shapiro
lshapiro@bds.org

Center for Family Representation, Michele Cortese
mcortese@cfrny.org

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, Zainab Akbar
zakbar@nds.org

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[1] New York has long recognized a parent's right to counsel in child protection proceedings. In a pioneering 1972 decision, *Matter of Ella B.*, 30 N.Y.2d 352, the New York Court of Appeals recognized the equal protection and due process right of indigent parents to assigned counsel in child neglect and abuse cases. Three years later, sections 261, 262, and 1120 of the Family Court Act codified a broad parental right to counsel. Additionally, numerous provisions throughout Article 10 of the Family Court Act address implementation of the parental right to counsel in child welfare proceedings.

[2] *See* Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore 27-28 (February 2019)*; see also* Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, *A New National Movement in Parent Representation*, 47

CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 44, 45 (2013), available at https://cfrny.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-New-National-Movement-in-Parent-Representation-Clearinghouse-Review.pdf.

[3] Commission on Parental Legal Representation, Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore (February 2019)

[4] *Id*. at 21.

[5] S*ee*, Dorothy Roberts, *Abolishing Policing Also Means Abolishing Family Regulation*, The Imprint (June 16, 2020), https://imprintnews.org/child-welfare-2/abolishing-policing-also-means-abolishing-family-regulation/44480.

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[8] *Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore* at 26.

[9] Center for New York City Affairs, The New School, *Watching the Numbers: A Six-Year Statistical Survey Monitoring New York City's Child Welfare System* (November 2016), available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5849a22f725e254385d753eb/1481220657883/FINAL_Watching+the+Numbers_2016.pdf.

[10] *See* study at *https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019074091930088X; see also Providing Parents Multidisciplinary Legal Representation Significantly Reduces Children's Time in Foster Care,* by Martin Guggenheim & Susan Jacobs, June 4, 2019.

[11] *See id*.

[12] *See id*.

[13] Shanta Trivedi, *The Harm of Child Removal*, 43 New York University Review of Law & Social Change 523 (2019). Available at: https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all_fac/1085. Vivek Sankaran. "A Cure Worse Than the Disease? The Impact of Removal on Children and Their Families." Christopher Church and Monique Mitchell, co-authors. *Marq. L. Rev.* 102, no. 4 (2019): 1163-94.

[14] *See, e.g.*, *Matter of Jamie J.*, 30 N.Y.3d 275, 280 n.1 (2017); *Nicholson v. Scopetta*, 3 N.Y.3d 357 (N.Y. 2004).

[15] *See* Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Brain Development, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw&feature=youtu.be.

[16] *See, e.g.*, Jayesh M. Rathod, *The Transformative Potential of Attorney Bilingualism*, 46 U. Michigan J. Law Reform 863-920 (2013).

[17] New York State Office of Indigent Legal Services, *Caseload Standards for Parents' Attorneys in New York State Family Court Mandated Representation Cases* (June 4, 2021), Available at https://www.ils.ny.gov/files/Caseload%20Standards%20Parents%20Attorneys%20NYS%20Family%20Court.pdf

[18] In addition, we have received an NAE award for FY22 and FY23 to allow MOCJ to issue an RFP to cover contract awards in FY24 and beyond.

[19] *Interim Report to Chief Judge DiFiore*.

[20] *See* American Bar Association, Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Parents in Abuse and Neglect Cases 10 (2006), available at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/aba-parent-rep-stds.pdf

[21] City of New York, Oversight—Racial Disparities in the Child Welfare System 5

[22] Off. of Child. & Fam. Servs., Disproportionate Minority Representation 2020, https://ocfs.ny.gov/reports/sppd/dmr/DMR-County-Comparison-2020.pdf.

[23] *See* Nikita Stewart, The Child Abuse Charge Was Dismissed. But it Can Still Cost You a Job, N.Y. Times (Feb. 25, 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/25/nyregion/ny-child-abuse-database.html.

[24] *See* N.Y.C. Dep't of Consumer Affs., Lifting up Paid Care Work (2018).

Junior Achievement of New York

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Testimony to New York City Council Finance Committee Executive Budget Hearing
Re: Junior Achievement of New York Budget & Policy Priorities
Wednesday, May 25th, 2022

Chairperson Brannan and Members of the City Council:

Junior Achievement of New York is the local affiliate of Junior Achievement USA, and the largest non-profit organization in the Greater New York area dedicated to creating pathways to economic empowerment for young people from kindergarten through the 12th grade.

Our mission is to teach and inspire young people to understand the economic world around them, plan for their financial futures, and make the most of their potential, with the premise that knowledge and access leads to empowerment. JA New York provides programming at no cost to students or schools, and we seek to expand our horizons to ensure our programming is accessible to students throughout the five boroughs.

As you know, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and workforce readiness are not part of the required curriculum in New York State schools. That means that most students graduate without any meaningful exposure to basic pocketbook economics or to the larger topic of how our economy works. Without this kind of literacy, our students are at risk of becoming adults without learning how to make smart financial decisions and plan for their futures.

Students in underserved and high-need communities face a host of barriers to success. JA programs help prepare students to believe in and shape their futures by helping them develop good personal finance habits, teaching them leadership and soft-skills, and fostering an "entrepreneurial mindset" they can use to achieve economic freedom and career success no matter what paths they ultimately pursue.

We create partnerships between hundreds of businesses and over 300 local schools across the New York region that give professionals the opportunity to help guide and shape our next generation of community leaders, workers, consumers, and innovators.

In the wake of the disruptions created by COVID-19, JA New York responded quickly and strategically by redesigning its educational programs for virtual delivery, ensuring that students continued to have access to JA learning experiences whether they were learning remotely or in classrooms. And even as we have begun to get back into classrooms this year, we continue to see tremendous opportunity for these exciting virtual programs and flexible implementation models which will allow us to reach students in new ways and in geographically harder-to-access

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communities, connecting them with business and community volunteers who might not have the capacity to engage with students in person due to these limitations.

Key signature programs offerings like our *JA Finance Park* program and our newly launched *JA Inspire Virtual* initiative offer new ways for us to reach and interact with schools, educators, volunteers, and students. These programs utilize digital resources and curriculum in ways that ensure we can reach more students than ever with critical financial literacy, personal budgeting, and career awareness and skills knowledge in new and flexible ways that meet them where they are and make the barriers for participation lower than ever.

These are just some of the ways that we have begun re-envisioning, and re-positioning, JA to align with the "new normal", incorporating technology and new tools to reach students in new and exciting ways, and which can be offered more broadly and scaled up quickly.

In this transformative moment for our country, as we tackle critical societal issues around access, equity, and the legacy of institutional racism to ensure a more just society for people of color, Junior Achievement can play a critical role. Empowering young people with the economic knowledge, skills and resources they need is critical to helping young people fully benefit from our economic system and can serve as a key component in addressing inequities and inequality. We aim to break the cycle of generational poverty.

JA students are reflective of the New York City communities we serve: one-fifth of JA students are Black; a quarter are Asian; and nearly 50% are Latino. Nearly three-quarters of the students we serve qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program and many come from immigrant communities and will be the first generation in their family to graduate high school or attend college.

There is a growing demand for financial literacy programs throughout the five boroughs. In order to meet the needs of our community, we turn to the City Council to provide additional support through initiatives such as Digital Inclusion and Literacy, College and Career Readiness, Afterschool Enrichment, and the Young Women's Leadership Initiative. We are extremely grateful for that support and leadership from the Council and the Speaker, and respectfully urge the Council to expand these allocations for fiscal year 2023.

Now more than ever, young people need to envision a future that they can shape and look forward to. As one of my staff members put it, "The new normal is not the old normal", but as the city begins to open back up and settle into new routines and ways of interacting, JA New York will be here to continue to celebrate and inspire our young people, more grateful and more resolved than ever.

Junior Achievement™ of New York

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testify on behalf of Junior Achievement of New York and in support of the tens of thousands of students we serve every year.



Betty Garger
President and CEO

New York City Presbyterians
Justice Ministries Committee

RTCNYC Coalition Testimony
Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Finance Committee
May 25, 2022

Dear Finance Committee -

Please accept our testimony on behalf of the Justice Ministries Committee of the New York City Presbytery. We are supporters of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, which led and won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction. We are proud of NYC's groundbreaking Right to Counsel legislation and applaud the City Council, the Mayor, and the Office of Civil Justice for its dedication to making the Right to Counsel available to all New Yorkers during this pandemic. The law had tremendous impact in just the first few years since it passed: 84% percent of tenants who had RTC won their case and stayed in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to protect and advance tenants' rights. Right to Counsel has also helped develop a body of more just case law, lower tenants' rents, re-stabilize apartments, and has forced landlords to make repairs.

As we have seen, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Right to Counsel is more important than ever before. We know that evictions and housing instability have a disproportionate impact on people of color, especially women and children of color. Evictions and housing instability also have significant impacts not just on people's housing, but on people's education, employment, family relationships, physical and mental health, and so much more. NYC's Right to Counsel moves us closer towards achieving economic, gender, and racial justice.

We are here today to urge this committee to immediately and fully implement Local Law 53 and to work with the courts to ensure that no case move forward without an RTC attorney.

Immediately and Fully Implement Local Law 53:
The expansion of RTC to work with and fund community organizing groups to do the necessary education and outreach work of RTC, Local Law 53, is so incredibly critical. While we applauded the city for passing legislation in May of last year, with an effective date of November 2021, we are deeply disappointed that it has not yet been implemented.

To date and since the Coalition last testified at the General Welfare Committee Hearing on February 28, the Office of Civil Justice has failed to release the RFP or confirm funding for Local Law 53. Furthermore, we understand that OCJ and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit have engaged in efforts to inform the public of Right to Counsel. *We want to be extremely clear - this is not a substitute or solution for failure to fund Local Law 53.*

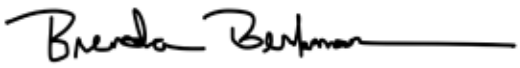
The intent of Local Law 53 is clear - to fund trusted tenant organizing groups working in low-income communities of color to lead outreach and education efforts through community meetings, workshops, Tenant Association meetings, and more. This is the vital work of tenant organizers, and ensuring that tenants are informed of Right to Counsel and supported prior to an eviction case being filed. Tenants know about their rights and exercising them is a preventative and proactive measure.

With hundreds of thousands of households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 200,000 eviction cases filed across New York, tenants need this law now more than ever. We were told the city allocated $3.6 million towards this bill, had drafted the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was going to release it in November of last year. To date, we haven't seen it. We know the mayoral and city council administrations take time to transition but **with the expiration of the eviction protections almost 4 months ago and hundreds of eviction cases moving forward without Right to Counsel, we can't wait.** The city is now out of compliance with its own law and it needs to implement it now, in this current budget.

Why is this law important?

- Right to Counsel has been proven to stop evictions in NYC, but many tenants who are eligible for Right to Counsel don't know about it or are too afraid to use it. When tenants don't know or use their rights, they are more easily harassed out of their apartments. This leads to the displacement of mostly poor Black and brown New Yorkers.
- A survey done by volunteers at Bronx Housing Court found that **53%** of tenants who had Right to Counsel did not know about this right before arriving in court.
- When tenants don't know they have a Right to Counsel, they might decide not to appear in court, decline representation, sign agreements with their landlord's lawyer prior, decide not to ask for repairs in fear of being evicted, or face a variety of other serious consequences.
- Local Law 53 requires the city to support organizers who would work to ensure that tenants know about their Right to Counsel and feel supported using it. More tenants will be prepared to defend their homes against eviction and fight for their right to a safe, affordable home.
- Tenant organizing is the most effective means of ensuring tenants know about their rights. Tenant organizing groups create an environment where tenants feel supported by a community that is working together to combat landlord abuse, ensuring that a landlord cannot target an individual tenant for standing up for their rights.
- We need to stop informal evictions! 54% of forced moves that take place in NYC are the result of informal evictions, such as a tenant leaving due being told to leave, landlord harassment, a lack of repairs, etc. When tenants know they have the right to a lawyer and are organized, they can fight back when landlords try to push them out.

To meet the needs of tenants across the city, this law must be implemented now. **We urge this Committee to work with HRA to release the RFP so that tenant organizing groups can do their work to educate and organize tenants across NYC during this incredibly scary time.**
We urge this Committee to call on Mayor Adams to fully fund and implement Local Law 53 and ensure the Office of Civil Justice is allocating $5 million towards Local Law 53.
We look forward to working with you on this. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.



Brenda Berkman
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New York City Presbytery
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***
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Testimony of Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center for New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the proposed budget. My name is Steve Held and I have been the Executive Director of Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center for the past 42 years. Our program has educates over 1200 children between the ages of birth to 5 with and without disabilities each year and today I would like to speak to you about our Far Rockaway school.

Since NYC opened 3K and UPK for all and negotiated staff salaries to align with their public school counterpart, Just Kids has struggled to retain special education staff at our Far Rockaway site. Our reimbursement is promulgated by the SED and it cannot support NYC's 3K and UPK staff salaries. In fact, our staff have been solicited by the BOE to come work in 3K and UPK at their higher salaries.

Importantly, I was at least 5 staff short as of March 16 and, based on the SED regulations, I was required to submit my "intent to close" our Far Rockaway site no later than April 1 (in 10 days) if positions remain unfilled. This would have meant as of July 1 nearly 100 children will need a placement in an existing program. This was heartbreaking to me. Our site is the only program in the area and our special education children present with profound developmental delays.

I decided to "roll the dice" with the sincere hope that the Mayor and City Council would facilitate the enhanced tuition rate based on our conversations with the BOE and our willingness to make the necessary program changes. Just Kids advertised for Special Education teachers for the July 1, 2022/2023 school year at BOE UPK/3K salaries. We are pleased to report that these positions are now filled for July based on these increased salary offerings.

Now we are waiting for the BOE to get back to us. Our understanding is that they would like us to agree to limit a 12-seat classroom to 6 or 8 in order to meet our areas LRE for children awaiting placement by the BOE. We have agreed and the BOE is waiting on this Council's decision to support these enhancement grants.

I would respectfully request that the Council support this initiative with the dollars needed for your children and their families. Please know that for too long preschool children with disabilities have not had equal access to your wonderful programs. Our children were determined to need an individual education contract with many specialized services and 3K and UPK cannot provide these mandated services and sadly, are often left at home without a program to go to.

Please consider your support of the BOE's proposals and please visit our program. We promise you will enjoy the children.

Thank you.

Steve Held
Executive Director

Testimony to the City Council
May 25, 2022

Jeanne Alter, Executive Director of the Kennedy Children's Center

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address the City Council on the early childhood special education crisis. My name is Jeanne Alter, the Executive Director of Kennedy Children's Center located in East Harlem and the South Bronx. For the 30 years that I have been working in NYC 4410 programs, salary parity has always been an issue but I have never witnessed staff turnover as bad as this school year.

Since July 1, 2021, 50% of our staff have left our school leaving children and families behind. Most of these staff have left for higher paying 10-month positions at the NYCDOE. We have three classrooms of children waiting to start school, but we cannot bring them onsite because we cannot hire enough 12 month staff for the three additional classrooms. In addition, many of our students are not receiving much needed speech, physical, and occupational therapy services due to the shortage of licensed clinicians. Rehiring inexperienced or not fully certified staff requires finding time for training and supervision. Make no mistake; it does affect the quality of education we can provide.

4410 programs like Kennedy Children's Center provide mandated preschool special education programs for NYCDOE students. Like the NYCDOE, Kennedy is publicly funded and relies on certified special education teachers, certified teacher assistants, and licensed related service personnel to provide children with mandated IEP services. Why should our staff make any less money than DOE staff who are doing the exact same work with the exact SAME credentials? If you truly care about equity in education, you cannot continue to discriminate against one sector of providers.

The lack of salary parity denies these NYCDOE preschoolers and their families the **same** certified and qualified staff they deserve simply because they attend a 4410 program. The lack of funding and support for staff like ours is to blame for our current staffing crisis. This is a problem that has been simmering for decades, the pandemic only made it worse.

I urge you to provide salary increases to preschool special education teachers and staff in order to address the shortage of classes and the ability of schools like ours to pay **our** staff the **same** as NYCDOE staff.

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Kissena Corridor Park Conservancy, Inc.

A natural park for people, birds and wildlife

P.O. Box 520627, Flushing, NY 11352
KCPconservancy@yahoo.com

To:testmony@council.nyc.gov
New York City Council

Executive Budget Hearing
New York City Council
Wednesday May 25, 2022

Honorable Members:

Kissena Corridor Park is a 1.74 square miles parkland. It is located between the Queens Botanical Garden and Kissena Park in Flushing. Visitors to the park are of a large diverse population of low and middle income families.

On a normal day, the Park is filled with people engaging in activities from dawn to sunset. Residents use the Park's paths to get to schools and to work. The IS 237 and the East and West School for International Studies use park facilities for outdoor educational programs. The park also has the city's largest community garden with three hundred memberships who come to the garden from March to November.

The Kissena Corridor Park has been an essential place for residents to enjoy their lives and outdoor activities. It has proven to be even more important during the pandemic period. We are grateful that the Parks efficiently provided an open space to the public for outdoor activities to relieve stress from their often small living facilities.

It is indisputable that Park's conditions reflect on the quality of life and security in our neighborhood. Its cost benefits for a community is immeasurable. We would like to propose that the Parks annual budget be appropriated one percent of City's total budgets for maintenance to ensure uninterrupted services. Our community will continue to work closely with the Parks Department for a healthy and prosperous New York City life.

Thank you

Respectfully
Dorothy Woo
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Testimony for the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings
May 25, 2022

To Chairperson Brannan and Members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Paul Lee and I am a Grant Officer at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS). The **NYC Council Viral Hepatitis Initiative** currently funds 34 organizations to provide hepatitis B and C prevention and access to care services, as well as training and technical assistance for providers. The Initiative currently fully supports employment for more than 50 people: syringe exchange program peers, patient navigators, and training and technical assistance providers.

The Viral Hepatitis Initiative serves people at highest risk for hepatitis B and C, HIV, overdose and coronavirus, including the uninsured, immigrants and people who have used drugs. The Initiative has served over 15,000 people at risk for hepatitis B or C in navigation programs and linked over 6,500 to care. The initiative has trained and employed over 58 patient navigators and over 111 Peers from syringe exchange programs, and has trained over 2,000 clinical providers in hepatitis B and C testing and treatment. With the introduction of the first-ever NYC Viral Hepatitis Elimination Plan by 2030, continued support of the Viral Hepatitis Initiative by the NYC Council is vital to the health and wellness of some of NY's most vulnerable. In FY23 the Viral Hepatitis Initiative is asking for a minimal investment of $2 Million to support this work.

As a program provider of the Viral Hepatitis Initiative since 2014, KCS has dedicated itself to the prevention of hepatitis B through widespread free testing, education, and providing culturally competent patient navigation services for Koreans and Asian Americans with chronic infections. The vast majority of those we serve are community members of immigrant backgrounds, low-income status, limited English proficiency, and lack of healthcare coverage. Moreover, since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the enactment of the statewide PAUSE order, KCS has been on the frontlines assisting the many suffering individuals across the city and sustaining our support for existing patients.

Although the impact of COVID-19 has had far-reaching consequences on the city's financial wellbeing, I would like to emphasize the widespread impact that the on-going pandemic has had on our community, especially for those living in Queens, and the individuals we serve through the Viral Hepatitis Initiative. As highlighted before, the majority of our patients are immigrants who face significant disparities in accessing health services and outcomes. Likewise, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate effect on these same demographics many of whom live in Queens.

While navigating the crisis is of the foremost importance for the sake of all New Yorkers, our collective health, and economic stability; I ask you all to keep in mind that hepatitis B/C and other health issues have not disappeared, and will only exacerbate the current hardships for many vulnerable residents. In spite of the difficult economic situation and budgetary concerns the city and state faces, I ask that you continue to support the Viral Hepatitis Initiative in the upcoming fiscal year. Not only is sustaining this initiative a comparatively small expense in the larger context of the budget, the resulting effects and work made possible by this support will help drive down the overall financial impact that hepatitis B and C have on our health system every year, and also sustain the nearly 170 health workers who provide critical patient/peer navigation for suffering individuals.

Without your continued support, thousands of New Yorkers will face severe health complications from hepatitis, and innumerable others will be at risk of contracting the disease. These individuals already face disproportionate socioeconomic inequalities, and the culturally competent programs funded by the Viral Hepatitis Initiative make a tangible and efficacious impact on the on-going hepatitis epidemic. Approximately 230,000 NYC residents are estimated to be infected with chronic hepatitis B, and 116,000 people are believed to be infected with chronic hepatitis C. Given these high rates of infection, it is crucial to sustain the Viral Hepatitis Initiative not only to address this largely overlooked health crisis, but as New York City currently serves as both a model and beacon of hope for similar initiatives across the nation and the world.

I sincerely thank the members of the City Council and Committee on Finance for supporting the efforts of CBOs like KCS in the past and pray that your support will continue into the future. Truly, without your backing, our work for the community and assistance for at-risk individuals would not be possible. I would also like to praise you for the dedication and work you have all done on behalf of NYC residents like myself. We are all in this together and with your leadership, I am confident that we will emerge stronger, more empathetic, and more unified than ever before.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul Lee
Grant Officer
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)

Climate Jobs NY Carbon Free and Healthy School Campaign, 5/25/22

New York City Council Finance Committee Testimonial:

Good morning,

My name is Beth Cheverie and I work for the NYS Laborers' Labor Management Cooperation Trust. I am here on behalf of Local 79's Business Manager Mike Prohaska. Local 79 represents over 8,000 members working in construction in New York City. Mr. Prohaska sits on the Executive Board of Climate Jobs NY.

Climate Jobs New York is calling for the City to make public schools and housing carbon-free by 2030, and we are running out of time.

The Carbon Free and Healthy Schools initiative is a concrete plan that would help the City tackle its climate crisis, and create good union jobs that will employ workers from the community. The initiative will address economic inequity in by investing in neighborhoods that have been overlooked in the past. The City needs to prioritize the transition to carbon-free schools to ensure these buildings create a healthy learning environment for the Cities 1.2 million students and staff.

By retrofitting all Public K-12 Schools to be carbon-free by 2030, the City would create over 62,000 good paying middle class union jobs that will revitalize the local community. Over time, the conversion is projected to and save millions annually in energy costs, which could be reinvested into our school system.

Many of the Cities school buildings are currently in need of basic repairs and maintenance. By making the investment in carbon free schools, the city has the opportunity create a model on decarbonization, that can be replicated on other private and public buildings.

Thank you for your consideration.

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LAURIE M. TISCH CENTER FOR FOOD, EDUCATION & POLICY
PROGRAM IN NUTRITION
TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Testimony Submitted By:

Sara Abiola, PhD, JD, Executive Director
Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy
Teachers College, Columbia University

New York City Council Finance Committee Hearing
May 25, 2022

The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University (the "Tisch Food Center") conducts and fosters research about the connection between a just and sustainable food system, public health, and healthy eating and translates this research into recommendations and resources for educators, policy makers, and community advocates. Founded in 2012, the Tisch Food Center is based in the nation's oldest Program in Nutrition and we have more than twenty years of experience working in NYC public schools, collaborating with countless educators, parents, students, food service professionals, and school wellness programs.

In September 2019, the Tisch Food Center established the Food Ed Hub with the support of the New York City Council. The Food Ed Hub fosters collaboration and coordination among school-based food and nutrition education organizations to align resources, increase efficiency, and identify best practices that can be brought to scale. Within the Food Ed Hub, we launched the Food Ed Coalition, a diverse group of over 300 food and nutrition education advocates, program leaders, and school community members.

Much of our work[1] over the past two years has focused on public institutions' response to the COVID-19 food and nutrition security crises. We appreciate the opportunity to share a specific budget recommendation for the City Council to consider as we look ahead to protect the health of all New York City residents.

1. Renew Funding for the Food Ed Hub: A Critical Support for NYC Food Education

Before facing the acute public health challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City residents faced – and continue to face – an epidemic of diet-related chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers. An estimated **987,000[2] NYC residents have type 2 diabetes** and more than half[3] of adult New Yorkers have overweight or obesity. Almost half of elementary school children in NYC do not have a healthy weight, which puts them at increased risk of metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.[4]

[1] New York Food 20/20: Vision, Research, and Recommendations During COVID-19 and Beyond. The Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center; The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, Teachers College, Columbia University; and, The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. September 2020. https://www.tc.columbia.edu/tisch/research/news/new-york-food-2020/
[2] Type 2 Diabetes. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/diabetes.page
[3] Obesity. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/obesity.page
[4] Obesity. Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health. Updated January 24, 2022. https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/columbia-center-childrens-environmental-health/obesity

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these conditions,[5] typically due to a variety of factors like physical inactivity, stress, and limited access to healthy food options. Moreover, when New York City was the U.S. epicenter of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, **New York City experienced the largest increase of any urban area in the U.S. in nonrespiratory deaths, due to heart disease (398%) and diabetes (356%)**.[6]

The Food Ed Hub facilitates coordination and collaboration among food and nutrition education ("food ed") programs across NYC; promotes inclusiveness and equity in food ed and food access; advocates for policies that support healthy school food and food ed; convenes stakeholders; develops capacity among organizations; and provides resources and professional development opportunities to educators.

The Food Ed Hub supports the most marginalized school communities in NYC through our partnership with organizations and advocates who offer virtual and in-person food ed, build and maintain school gardens, help implement school wellness policies, support healthy meals, and promote food assistance.

In the wake of the pandemic the City cannot afford to lose a critical resource designed to maximize impact, increase efficiency, and ensure that services are equitably distributed. With ongoing funding, the Food Ed Hub can continue to provide tools, evidence-based recommendations, and capacity and professional development opportunities to community-based organizations and educators.

For more information, please contact:

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[5] Noguchi Y. Obesity Rates Rise During Pandemic, Fueled by Stress, Job Loss, Sedentary Lifestyle. NPR. September 29, 2021. https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/09/29/1041515129/obesity-rates-rise-during-pandemic-fueled-by-stress-job-loss-sedentary-lifestyle

[6] Woolf SH, Chapman DA, Sabo RT, Weinberger DM, Hill L. Excess Deaths From COVID-19 and Other Causes, March-April 2020. JAMA. 2020;324(5):510–513. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.11787

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TESTIMONY BEFORE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

Presented on May 25, 2022

My name is Sharone Schwartz Kaufman, and I am the Deputy Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit (ILU) at The Legal Aid Society (LAS). For 145 years, LAS has been a tireless advocate for those least able to advocate for themselves. ILU, founded in the 1980s, provides legal representation to vulnerable New Yorkers seeking relief for themselves and their families. We assist those in detention and fighting unlawful deportations, and represent low-income individuals in gaining and maintaining lawful status. Combining this representation with affirmative litigation work, we strive to ensure that families are able to stay together and stabilize their living situations.
Over the most recent year, ILU assisted in over 5,200 individual legal matters benefiting over 12,300 New Yorkers citywide.

A. New York City Council Funding Requests – Immigration

We are grateful for the Council's support for legal services for low-income immigrant New Yorkers, who are among the City's most vulnerable populations. The Council's commitment to ensuring parity of justice and access to comprehensive legal services for our immigrant communities is central to our work and establishes New York City's approach as among the most progressive in the nation. Thanks to support from the New York City Council and the Human Resources Administration, LAS currently conducts the following immigration-related programs:

1. **The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)**, a collaboration between The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders, has represented over 3,500 detained immigrants facing deportation since 2014, helping to ensure New York families are not separated simply because they cannot afford an attorney. The nation's first universal legal representation program for detained immigrants, NYIFUP provides high quality, holistic representation to New Yorkers detained and facing deportation who cannot afford an attorney. NYIFUP attorneys carry a full caseload of

deportation defense cases, and provide services including master calendar, bond and individual merits hearings, appeals, and social work services. Many of our NYIFUP clients are long-term permanent residents or other non-citizens with strong family ties and long work histories in the U.S.

Since March 16, 2020, LAS alone has secured the COVID-19 related release of 242 clients incarcerated by ICE, through a combination of individual and group habeas petitions, bond redetermination hearings, and successful requests for humanitarian parole by ICE. **The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting an increase to $18,000,000 for NYIFUP in Fiscal Year 2023, split evenly by the three NYIFUP providers in the amount of $6,000,000 each**.

2. **The Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families (UMFI) Initiative** has been providing free legal assistance to Unaccompanied Children and Adults with Children fleeing endemic gang violence and domestic abuse since 2014, with the support of the New York City Council. With the NYC Bar Association's resolution supporting universal access to legal services for children in removal proceedings, LAS, along with our partners in the citywide Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE), are evaluating this initiative closely to determine how best to scale the program and realize the Bar Association's vision of universal representation. This traumatized and vulnerable population is especially in need of highly-competent legal representation to advance their claims for asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and other forms of immigration relief.

   From 7/1/20 – 6/30/21, LAS worked on 222 ongoing representation matters that had not concluded by the end of Fiscal Year 2020. During this period, we achieved successful outcomes for 84 removal defense cases, with one individual granted asylum, eight individuals granted Special Findings Orders; eleven children granted Special Immigrant

Juvenile Status (SIJS), 34 individual who were granted Motion to Terminate, and 30 individuals who were granted adjustment of status. We have successfully terminated proceedings for just over 215 minors before the Immigration Court since the start of ICARE, and anticipate additional successful outcomes in FY23. **The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting an enhancement to $1,075,000 for UMFI in Fiscal Year 2023, out of $4,570,000 being sought by ICARE as a whole.**

3. **Federal Immigration Representation for New Yorkers (FIRNY)** is currently a small but mighty LAS initiative that provides federal court representation to protect immigrant New Yorkers from aggressive and unreasonable immigration enforcement. Funding will increase our capacity with a flexible team that can respond rapidly to changes in the political climate, whether filing writs of habeas corpus in federal district court and petitions for review in federal courts of appeal, or ensuring LAS's capacity to pursue federal impact litigation on behalf of our immigrant clients. FIRNY will ensure we remain nimble and have dedicated staff available to respond to the needs of our clients during this period of tumultuous changes to immigration policy. **The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting $710,000 to support this essential work.**

4. **The Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)** serves immigrants and new Americans who are seeking citizenship, permanent residence, or another immigration status or are seeking employment legal services after having been exploited by their employers. Legal services are provided through our Immigration Law Unit, Employment Law Unit, and Family Law and Domestic Violence Practice, with support of 23 subcontracting agencies, including legal services providers and community-based organizations with deep ties to marginalized communities. In FY21, we served over 4,000 individuals seeking assistance with an immigration, employment, or family law matter. This funding has supported a significant expansion in the provision of removal defense legal services throughout New York City. **The Low-Wage Worker Initiative (LWWI)** serves low-wage workers who

live or work in the City of New York who are seeking enforcement of workers' rights, with a particular emphasis on low-wage workers who have been exploited by employers. LWWI is the only dedicated funding servicing worker's rights and allows us to advocate on behalf of low-wage New Yorkers against wage theft and workplace discrimination, for safe and healthy workplaces, and vindicate the rights of workers. We thank the city for renewing our funding for the LWWI and we ask that this funding be baselined.

B. Our Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on our immigration work defending some of our city's most vulnerable residents. By Policy Memorandum 20-10, issued on March 18, 2020, the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR, comprised of the immigration courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals) had suspended hearings in non-detained courts. Hearings began to resume slowly and incrementally through July 5, 2021, finally resumed in full on July 6, 2021. In New York, the suspension of hearings had affected the immigration courts at 26 Federal Plaza and 290 Broadway, as well as non-detained cases at Varick Street. However, court deadlines were not tolled during the suspension period. We were forced to continue to prepare motions and submissions with clients remotely, with the added challenges of obtaining criminal records and other necessary documents complicating our ability to submit prompt submissions. After hearings had resumed, attorneys were appearing in court either in person or via WebEx video teleconferencing. With the rise of Omicron, the Immigration Courts announced on January 11, 2022 that all hearings for unrepresented respondents are suspended pending further notice, while hearings for represented respondents will proceed only remotely, by either WebEx video or OpenVoice audio.

USCIS resumed in-person interviews on June 15, 2020. Although it has been over a year and a half since USCIS announced its policy that representatives may appear by telephone during the pandemic at most USCIS offices, USCIS officers have in practice often continued to refuse to call the representatives, leaving our clients in the uncomfortable position of either proceeding on their own or seeking an adjournment. We continue participating in local advocacy to challenge these unreasonable restrictions. The USCIS policy of allowing an additional 60 days to respond to

Requests for Evidence (RFE), Notices of Intent to Deny (NOID), Notices of Intent to Revoke (NOIR) and Notices of Intent to Terminate (NOIT), and appeals/motions to reopen or reconsider has been extended incrementally to notices issued between March 1, 2020 and March 22, 2022. We have been meeting with some clients in our office for urgent matters that cannot be delayed, and our clients have at times begun appearing in doctors' offices for medical examinations or other vital appointments in support of their applications. Our office had somewhat reopened on November 15, 2021. However, given the rise of the highly contagious Omicron Variant of COVID-19, our office closed again on December 28, 2021, and is set to reopen again on March 14, 2022. Also, due to the Omicron Variant, traveling by public transportation and attending appointments had been fraught with the risk of exposure. With the courts and agencies operating in a limited fashion, it remains difficult to obtain criminal records and other necessary documents - making responding to USCIS requests in a timely manner difficult.

Heedless of the dangers of COVID transmission in detention centers, ICE has continued to arrest and detain people in its jails.[1] Since the pandemic's inception, ICE has failed to adequately follow public health guidance to protect the health and lives of people in its custody. As of March 11, 2022, 41,289 people in ICE custody nationwide had reportedly tested positive for COVID-19,[2] a possible undercount due to the lack of testing during the first months of the pandemic and during national outbreaks.[3] Moreover, the court-ordered release of people from ICE custody during the past two years has increased community health and safety during the pandemic, aptly demonstrating that the continued detention of thousands of our community members is unnecessary and unjustifiable.[4]

The policy of New York State Family Courts within New York City to hear and determine only emergency petitions in Family Court during the pandemic has impacted our Youth Project

[1] Ryan Devereaux, How ICE Operations in New York Set the Stage for a Coronavirus Nightmare in Local Jails, The Intercept, Mar. 27, 2020, https://theintercept.com/2020/03/27/immigrants-coronavirus-ice-detention-new-york/
[2] *See* U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE Guidance on COVID-19 , https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus (last updated Mar. 11, 2022).
[3] *See* Noelle Smart and Adam Garcia, Tracking COVID-19 in Immigration Detention , THE VERA INSTITUTE.
[4] *See* , e.g. , Matt Katz, "ICE Quietly Releases Hundreds Of Local Immigrants As COVID-19 Tears Through Jails," Gothamist (April 14, 2020), https://gothamist.com/news/ice-quietly-releases-hundreds-local-immigrants-covid-19; Chantal Da Silva, "Judge Orders ICE to Immediately Release At-Risk Detainees at Facilities with COVID-19 Cases," Newsweek (March 27, 2020)

clients. For youths seeking SIJS, that has meant that while attorneys are now able to file new petitions for guardianship and custody, the courts are generally only hearing those cases when a young person will turn 21 (and thus age out of eligibility) in 90 days or less. For cases where the young person is not close to turning 21, petitions have regularly been set for return dates before the court seven months or longer after filing. This means that cases, although able to be filed in Family Court, are taking longer than ever to reach final conclusion. This extended wait time impacts both the length of time that SIJS-eligible youth must wait to petition for SIJS and later for permanent residency, as well as increasing the length of time that the case stays active in immigration court. All of this weighs heavy on our young clients. A recent report by the NYC Bar and the Fund for Modern Courts has detailed the family courts' inept response to COVID-19 as well as the widespread challenges faced by those seeking family court intervention in the midst of COVID-19.[5]

C. Our Work in Immigration Court

Multiple challenges continue to confront our attorneys in their representation of our clients in immigration court.

Our removal defense litigation has continued with a mix of in-person, WebEx, and telephonic appearances, which has proven challenging. We are also given limited notice of how we are expected to appear in court, with each judge being permitted to set their own preferences for appearances. We continue to file and defend appeals at the Board of Immigration Appeals, which strains the resources of our staff whose trial-level representation responsibilities continue unabated and all-consuming. This is made even more challenging with remote working and our limited ability to meet in person with our clients.

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has implemented its revised policy memorandum regarding the implementation of an "enhanced case flow processing model."[6] The new procedures outlined in the memorandum apply to non-detained cases in which an attorney has

[5] *See* https://www.nycbar.org/member-and-career-services/committees/reports-listing/reports/detail/family-court-covid-19-impact

[6] EOIR PM 21-18, *Revised Case Flow Processing Before the Immigration Courts* (Apr. 2, 2021), https://www.justice.gov/eoir/book/file/1382736/download

entered a notice of appearance, and in which the case has not been placed on the court's status docket. The memorandum outlines a process by which represented respondents will be expected to advance cases through increased motion practice and without the use of master calendar hearings. This is problematic for practitioners in that the simple acts of scheduling merits hearings or discussing logistical matters during an in-person hearing will now need to take place through motion practice, thereby prolonging the process and adding to the number of filings that are needed in a given case. Moreover, the new case flow process limits an attorney's opportunity to advocate for their client in critical moments in the client's case, such as taking pleadings and/or contesting the government's allegations against their client. New York immigration court officials have stated that vulnerable populations are reportedly not subject to the new memorandum, although vulnerable populations are not clearly defined.

The implementation of this new case flow policy has been detrimental to our ability to manage our workflow. Since the policy entered into effect, we have received many orders directing us to submit evidentiary submissions (which can run hundreds of pages) and legal arguments within mere weeks of the issuance of the order. These orders are usually issued in cases that have no upcoming hearing scheduled, and for which the attorneys have no reasonable expectation of an imminent submission deadline. Due to ever-growing court backlogs, the legal arguments submitted will likely be outdated and the evidence will grow stale by the time a trial is calendared, requiring our staff to readjust their legal strategy and restart the evidence gathering process at that point. This is one of the many ways in which the dysfunction in the Courts has impeded the efficient and timely resolution of our cases.

In 2018, the Attorney General issued three damaging decisions related to immigration court docket management. In *Matter of Castro-Tum*, immigration judges' ability to administratively close removal proceedings was virtually eliminated, and the government began re-calendaring long administratively closed cases, at times because of a recent criminal arrest, but more often for no discernible reason. In *Matter of L-A-B-R-*,[7] the Attorney General made it more difficult for

[7] 27 I&N Dec. 405 (A.G. 2018).

immigration judges to grant continuances. This was further codified by EOIR PM 21-13, issued on January 8, 2021.[8] In *Matter of S-O-G- & F-D-B*,[9] the Attorney General narrowed immigration judges' ability to terminate removal proceedings.

Happily, under the Biden Administration, administrative closure is again available. Attorney General Merrick Garland vacated *Matter of Castro-Tum* on July 15, 2021 in the *Matter of Cruz-Valdez*.[10] EOIR Director David Neal then issued DM 22-03 on November 22, 2021,[11] reaffirming the availability of administrative closure in immigration court proceedings. But the other two harmful decisions, regarding continuances and termination, remain standing at this time.

One positive development in immigration court proceedings has been the rise of the government's use of prosecutorial discretion, at least in some cases. Initially, on May 27, 2021, the Biden Administration issued a memorandum with revised immigration enforcement priorities encouraging the ICE trial attorneys to exercise prosecutorial discretion in non-priority matters. This policy was quickly enjoined by a federal district court in Texas on August 19, 2021. The Biden Administration then issued revised enforcement priorities on September 30, 2021, and April 3, 2022[12] which remain in effect at this time. Under the new guidance, ICE attorneys in removal cases are frequently agreeing to dismiss Youth Project immigration cases or to exercise other forms of favorable discretion, but only for young clients who have had no prior contact with law enforcement authorities.

By contrast, over the last year, our NYIFUP staff have prepared numerous applications requesting prosecutorial discretion from ICE in various forms, such as requests for stipulation to relief, termination of proceedings, or administrative closure for our detained clients' cases. For them, ICE requires voluminous documentation to assess each request and often fails to reach decisions

[8] EOIR PM 21-13, *Continuances* (Jan. 8, 2021), https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1351816/download
[9] 27 I&N Dec. 462 (A.G. 2018).
[10] 28 I&N Dec. 326 (AG 2021).
[11] EOIR DM 22-03, *Administrative Closure* (Nov. 22, 2021), https://www.justice.gov/eoir/book/file/1450351/download
[12] Memorandum from Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, *Guidelines for the Enforcement of Civil Immigration Law* (Sep. 30, 2021), https://www.ice.gov/doclib/news/guidelines-civilimmigrationlaw.pdf, and Memorandum from Kerry Doyle, Principal Legal Advisor, *Guidance to OPLA Attorneys Regarding the Enforcement of Civil Immigration Laws and the Exercise of Prosecutorial Discretion* (April 25, 2022), https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/opla/OPLA-immigration-enforcement_guidanceApr2022.pdf

before the day of trial. Since there is no consistency in the adjudication of these requests or clear guiding principles, we need to submit these requests for virtually every client. This has increased our NYIFUP staff workload due to the need to engage in additional evidence collection, written advocacy, and negotiation. This is compounded by the unreasonable enforcement actions taken against our adult clients by ICE detention and removal officers, including the unannounced transfers of our clients to remote detention centers across the country, the revised enforcement priorities notwithstanding.

D. Our Youth-Related Work

1. Status Docket

In New York Immigration Court, the harmful impact of *Matter of Castro-Tum* (administrative closure), *Matter of L-A-B-R-*, and *Matter of S-O-G- & F-D-B-* (termination), all discussed above, was largely avoided by our young clients because of the existence of the "status docket" beginning in early 2017. Since then, pending SIJS applications, granted SIJS cases awaiting a current priority date, and asylum applications by unaccompanied minors pending at the asylum office have all been regularly placed on the status docket by immigration judges. Attorneys simply had to report on the current status of cases a month before their status docket date, which was often one year or more away. However, failure to timely submit an update could result in an *in absentia* removal order. Since most of the cases remained pending or were waiting either for their priority date to advance or for a decision from the asylum office, most cases would simply remain on the status docket.

Unfortunately, on August 16, 2019, James R. McHenry III, the Director of EOIR, released a memorandum titled "Use of Status Dockets" limiting the types of cases that immigration judges may place on the status docket.[13] Under the memorandum, there are only three types of cases that may permissibly be placed on the status docket:

[13] Memorandum from James R. McHenry, III, Director, EOIR, *Use of Status Dockets* (Aug. 16, 2019), https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1196336/download.

1. Cases in which an immigration judges is "required to continue the case pursuant to binding authority in order to await the adjudication of an application or petition" by USCIS
2. Cases where the immigration judge is "required to reserve a decision rather than completing the case pursuant to law or policy," and
3. Cases that are "subject to a deadline established by a federal court order."

The memorandum states that cases where a "confirmed unaccompanied alien child" has filed for asylum with USCIS are properly placed on the status docket, but glaringly absent from the memorandum is any mention of SIJS cases, which are subject to years-long waits for priority dates to advance, for individuals from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. In practice, since the release of the memorandum, some judges at New York City Immigration Courts will place on the status docket only SIJS cases that are approved but awaiting priority dates to become current; others will place only pending SIJS applications on the status docket, while others refuse to place any SIJS-based cases on the status docket. Attorneys in the Youth Project have drafted and circulated on both local and national listservs a template motion for placement of SIJS cases on the status docket, or in the alternative a long continuance, and preserving the issue of whether administrative closure is proper. Fortunately, many ICE attorneys are exercising their renewed prosecutorial discretion authority and agreeing to join our motions for placement of cases on the status docket. Usually, when both the government and respondent's counsel join in the request, immigration judges are granting it.

We note the development of the dumbfounding position of some immigration court judges as well as of ICE that SIJS is not a form of immigration relief if the priority date is not current. This has meant that several SIJS-approved youth who were awaiting priority dates to become current were ordered removed. LAS worked hard to fight this notion, filing a challenge in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in *Escobar-Argueta v. Barr*, 20-1752 (2d Cir.), a case brought by LAS challenging the order of removal of an approved Special Immigrant Juvenile. Unfortunately, this challenge became moot when the respondent plead guilty to a crime that essentially revoked his SIJS status.

LAS also consulted on the case of an *R.F.M. v. Nielsen*[14] Class Member before the Federal District Court of the Eastern District of Virginia, *Joshua M. v. Barr*, Civil Action No. 3:19cv770 (E.D. Va), who similarly has SIJS granted but was ordered removed. This case was eventually settled in Joshua M.'s favor. LAS has also assisted with drafting and signed amicus briefs for similarly-situated SIJS recipients challenging orders of removal in the Sixth and Tenth Circuits; both of those cases were also favorably settled.

2. SIJS Backlog

LAS is on the steering committee of the End SIJS Backlog Coalition (www.sijsbacklog.com), a national group of directly-impacted youth and over 70 allied advocate organizations across the country, working to educate Congress, relevant administrative agencies and the public about the harmful impacts of immigrant visa caps on vulnerable immigrant children, and to advocate for an end to the SIJS backlog. On December 2, 2021, the Coalition released its report, "Any Day They Could Deport Me,"[15] which illustrates the costs of the SIJS backlog to directly-impacted children, child welfare agencies, as well as to immigration legal providers, immigration agencies and the courts. The report offers recommendations to end the backlog, including specific federal legislative amendments that could solve the problem and provide permanent protection, as Congress intended, for the tens of thousands of vulnerable immigrant children. As part of the steering committee, LAS continues to look for ways to push the Biden administration to make commitments to protect SIJS youth, including leading outreach to The White House's Domestic Policy Council.

3. New SIJS Regulations

In October 2019, the government announced that it had reopened the comment period for proposed regulations regarding the implementation of the SIJ statute.[16] The proposed regulations had originally been promulgated in 2011, in response to and in order to implement the Trafficking

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[14] *R.F.M. v. Nielsen*, No. 18-CV-5068, 2019 WL 1219425 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 15, 2019), discussed below.

[15] https://www.sijsbacklog.com/any-day-they-could-deport-me

[16] https://www.uscis.gov/news/uscis-clarifies-special-immigrant-juvenile-classification-better-ensure-victims-abuse-neglect-and-abandonment-receive-protection

Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA),[17] which expanded the availability of SIJS. Those proposed regulations were never enacted. In November 2019, LAS submitted a robust comment to the proposed regulations, which appears to seek to impermissibly limit SIJS eligibility by expanding USCIS's "consent" function and limiting the definition of "dependency," among other issues.

LAS's Youth Project, in collaboration with LAS's Law Reform Unit, the nonprofit organizations of Public Counsel and Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), and *pro bono* partner Milbank LLP, prepared to challenge the new regulations upon implementation to prevent any negative practices from taking effect. After fully preparing a complaint and motion for a temporary restraining order, as well as recruiting amicus support from nonprofit legal services providers and academics across the country, the Trump Administration was ultimately unable to publish the detrimental regulations before the Biden Administration took office. The Biden Administration initially withdrew the proposed regulation, but published it on March 8, 2022.

4. Interpretations of the SIJS Statute and New York Law

LAS and Latham & Watkins LLP filed a class action lawsuit in federal District Court in Manhattan in June of 2018, *R.F.M. v. Nielsen*, challenging USCIS's interpretation of the SIJS statute and New York Family Law[18] that intended to eliminate SIJS for youth who are over 18 but under the federal statutory age limit of 21 ("Over-18 Denial Policy"). On March 15, 2019, the District Court issued an Opinion & Order finding entirely in our favor and granting class certification, the ability to proceed anonymously and summary judgement, having found USCIS's Over-18 Denial Policy unlawful. On May 31, 2019, the Court entered an Amended Judgement, which granted final declaratory and injunctive relief to *R.F.M.* Class Members. Pursuant to the Amended Judgement, USCIS must adjudicate the applications for *R.F.M.* Class Members with a pending petition in accordance with the Opinion & Order. Remarkably, the government informed the plaintiffs and the Court that they believe the Class consists of over 6,600 members.

The litigation has entered the "compliance" phase, meaning that the government must periodically report to the court the actions it has taken to carry out the court's Amended Judgment.

[17] Section 235(d) of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA).
[18] *R.F.M. v. Nielsen*, No. 18-CV-5068, 2019 WL 1219425 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 15, 2019).

To date, the government has informed the Court that over 6,000 *R.F.M.* Class Members' SIJS petitions have been granted. At the beginning of 2021, Class Counsel knew that many remained pending, including dozens that had been pending for very long periods of time without adequate explanation by the government as to why the cases seemed stalled. After several conferences with government lawyers, USCIS agreed to provide regular case-level detailed updates on matters where a Class Member or their counsel requested Class Counsel's assistance in determining the status of the stalled cases. Unfortunately, USCIS rarely provides much illuminating information preferring instead to confirm that cases simply "remain pending." On the bright side, however, there exists only a handful of outstanding cases that remain pending.

5. Universal Representation for Unaccompanied Minors Bill

In Spring of 2019, LAS became aware of a proposed bill, sponsored by New York State Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi, to provide free assigned counsel for unaccompanied minors residing in New York State.[19] Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE) providers, including LAS, were deeply engaged in shaping an amended version of the bill and supporting its passage. To that end, LAS provided in-depth analysis of the positive and negative attributes of the bill, meeting with Assembly Member Hevesi to explain our rationale, and advising his team on how to improve the bill and expand coverage to all unaccompanied minors in the state. While the Assembly did pass the bill, regrettably the Senate did not take it up in 2019. Assembly Member Hevesi reintroduced the bill in 2021, incorporating many of ICARE's suggested edits, but once again it has not been taken up. ICARE remains in contact with Hevesi's office regarding this legislation. LAS has also endorsed Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's FAIR Proceedings Act, which would provide access to counsel for vulnerable individuals, including children, in immigration proceedings.[20]

6. Other Challenges for Unaccompanied Minors and Undocumented Immigrant Youth

In addition to the above, the sheer numbers of youth in need of legal and social work assistance continues to grow. In particular, there continues to be a dearth of representation for

[19] New York State Assembly Bill A.7815.
[20] https://digismak.com/senator-gillibrand-and-80-organizations-promote-law-to-provide-legal-aid-to-children-in-deportation-proceedings/

undocumented and unaccompanied youth in New York City's surrounding counties, including Westchester, Nassau, and Suffolk. There is limited funding to provide legal representation to children who are non-NYC residents and the Youth Project has struggled to assist these populations with existing limited resources. Youth Project staff continue to train and support Family Court assigned counsel panel attorneys in those jurisdictions. In addition, Youth Project staff continue to seek other providers in Long Island and Westchester County to take on some of these cases *pro bono*. We are grateful to the Gimbel Foundation, which provides our sole source of funding for non-NYC youth cases.

Undocumented and unaccompanied youth face not only formidable legal obstacles, but also significant social service needs. This population is extremely vulnerable, and often suffers from severe trauma from experiences that led them to flee their home countries, troubles they encountered *en route* to the U.S., as well as difficulties in assimilating to new lives and a new culture. These youth are in dire need of social service support to obtain counseling and mental health care as well as access to appropriate educational opportunities. These challenges are exacerbated by the short supply of linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive mental health services. Counseling is often a prerequisite for eliciting cogent, credible testimony about past traumatic experiences in immigration cases. Untreated trauma and mental health issues may impede effective representation. Cultural stigmas about mental health and a lack of Spanish-speaking providers create a scarcity of resources in an area where they are sorely needed for both the children's well-being as well as to assist in legal representation.

E. Our Federal Work

Our Federal team engages in broad impact litigation and individual cases in federal district court and in the circuit courts of appeals.

1. **Challenging arbitrary and capricious agency action under the Administrative Procedure Act and the Due Process Clause**

As discussed above, in *R.F.M. v. Nielsen*[21] (decision issued March 2019, SDNY), LAS and *pro bono* co-counsel Latham & Watkins LLP filed a federal class action lawsuit under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) challenging a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) policy barring 18-21 year-olds from obtaining Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) (Over-18 Denial Policy). This abrupt and unlawful policy change threatened to prevent an estimated 6,600 New York resident youths from accessing a vital form of immigration relief for undocumented youth. On March 15, 2019, the Court certified the class and found the Over-18 Denial Policy unlawful, and shortly thereafter granted final declaratory and injunctive relief to *R.F.M.* class members. We have closely monitored compliance of the injunction over the last three years, negotiated protections with government counsel, and worked closely with individual class members and their attorneys to make sure that they benefited from the decision. Our litigation in this matter ensured that the rights of 8,000 New York resident youths to regularize their status and eventually pursue citizenship remain protected. According to USCIS, the number of SIJS adjudications this fiscal year was 61% more than those completed in previous and the highest in the last five years, which is likely attributable to the resolution of *R.F.M*.

In *Make the Road et al. v. Cuccinelli*[22] and *Make the Road et al. v. Pompeo*,[23] LAS, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, as well as the National Immigration Law Center on the *Pompeo* case, led litigation and advocacy to stop the public charge rules issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS), which threatened to penalize noncitizens for accessing vital benefit programs. Our suit blocked the rule from going into effect nationwide for several months, although the Supreme Court ultimately ordered the nationwide relief we had obtained stayed pending further review. On March 9, 2021, LAS stipulated with the Biden Administration to dismiss the Supreme Court certiorari petition and the pending Second Circuit appeal. In light of other dismissals in the Seventh and Ninth Circuits, the DHS public charge rule has been vacated and is no longer in effect. The DOS public charge rule remains

[21] *R.F.M. v. Nielsen*, No. 18-CV-5068, 2019 WL 1219425 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 15, 2019).
[22] Case 1:19-cv-07993-GBD (S.D.N.Y.).
[23] Case 1:19-cv-11633-GBD (S.D.N.Y.).

enjoined nationwide due only to our litigation. The potential impact of the new public charge rules – had our intervention not been successful – cannot be overstated. An estimated 23 million noncitizens and citizens in immigrant families currently access benefits and would have been forced to disenroll or face long-term consequences to their ability to pursue permanent residence or citizenship.

In *Zabaleta v. Nielsen*,[24] LAS, working in conjunction with Make the Road NY and the Center for Constitutional Rights, filed an APA complaint challenging USCIS's denial of a SIJS petition based on attenuated allegations of gang membership and competent jurisdiction grounds. The Trump Administration had weaponized allegations of gang affiliation as a means of accomplishing removal of immigrant youth by any means necessary. One such mechanism used by the administration was the expansion of USCIS' "consent" function outside of the scope of the statute. On March 20, 2019, the Court issued an Opinion & Order granting summary judgment in favor of Mr. Zabaleta, finding USCIS had violated the APA by acting outside the scope of its consent authority. This case preceded the *Saravia v. Sessions* case brought by the ACLU[25] and paved the way for the settlement agreement in which USCIS agreed not to use gang allegations as a reason to deny SIJS.

In *Jagitay v. DHS*,[26] LAS, working with Latham & Watkins, filed an APA action seeking to set aside the wrongful denial of a SIJS-based adjustment of status application. In this case, the plaintiff was granted SIJS over 15 years ago, but – because of various statutory and regulatory obstacles – was prevented from seeking permanent residence based on his SIJS approval. When he was finally able to submit his application, it was denied by USCIS because the agency could not find his initial approval documentation within its internal files, despite ample documentation provided by the plaintiff. We filed suit based on the agency's arbitrary and capricious denial. Shortly after filing this suit, USCIS reopened and approved our client's previously denied application for lawful permanent residency.

2. Challenging unlawful detention

In *Velasco Lopez v. Decker*,[27] LAS challenged the prolonged immigration detention of Mr. Velasco Lopez, a young man and former Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient

[24] Case No. 1:18-cv-01802-JGK (S.D.N.Y.), decision issued in March 2019.
[25] Case No. 3:17-cv-03615-VC (N.D.Cal).
[26] Case 1:20-cv-11071-PKC (S.D.N.Y.), settled June 2021.
[27] *Velasco Lopez v. Decker*, 978 F.3d 842 (2d Cir. 2020).

who entered the United States at the age of six. We prevailed with a landmark decision, in which the Second Circuit held that when the government seeks to detain a noncitizen under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a) for a prolonged period of time, the government must justify such detention by clear and convincing evidence. This case has significant implications for our ability to secure the release of other noncitizen clients held in detention, which had been constrained by agency policies improperly requiring noncitizens to bear the burden in bond hearings. Our decision was cited extensively by the First Circuit in *Hernandez-Lara v. Lyons*,[28] in which that court followed suit.

Coronel v. Decker[29] and *Arriaga v. Decker*[30] are a pair of groundbreaking district court decisions in which the Southern District of New York and the District of New Jersey ordered the immediate release of groups of immigration detainees at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Coronel* was one of the first two cases in the nation ordering the release of people in immigration custody due to COVID-19, and it has been repeatedly cited by district courts around the country since it was issued – helping secure the release of countless noncitizens across the U.S. facing unparalleled danger in detention during the pandemic. *Arriaga*, which was decided a few weeks later, was one of the first such cases out of New Jersey, and several courts have since cited to its thoughtful and detailed analysis. LAS co-counseled *Coronel* with The Bronx Defenders, and co-counseled *Arriaga* with The Bronx Defenders, the ACLU, and the ACLU of New Jersey.

In *Fernandez Aguirre v. Barr*,[31], LAS obtained one of the only district court decisions in the Southern District of New York to order the immediate release of a noncitizen in removal proceedings because an immigration judge failed to provide him with a constitutionally-adequate bond hearing. The Court acknowledged that the petitioner, who had been subject to severe abuse during his childhood, was suffering irreparable harm in detention, which was retraumatizing him and preventing him from fully participating in his removal defense. *Fernandez Aguirre* offers a creative new path forward to ensure that the government complies with constitutional mandates when it detains

[28] *Hernandez-Lara v. Lyons*, 10 F.4th 19 (1st Cir. 2021).
[29] *Coronel v. Decker*, 449 F. Supp. 3d 274 (S.D.N.Y. 2020).
[30] *Cristian A.R. v. Decker*, 453 F. Supp. 3d 690 (D.N.J. 2020).
[31] *Fernandez Aguirre v. Barr*, 1:19-cv-07048-VEC, 2019 WL 4511933 (S.D.N.Y. Sep. 18, 2019).

noncitizens. The decision is regularly cited by other district courts confronted with similar claims of governmental non-compliance.

H.L.V. v. Decker[32] is a habeas petition LAS filed in the SDNY for a SIJS-eligible immigrant youth, H.L.V., who is a labor trafficking survivor and asylum seeker. Soon after we filed the habeas petition, the government agreed to release H.LV. – who had been detained for over a year – on an Alternatives to Detention program.

In the habeas petitions *Andres Oballe v. Decker*,[33] *L.M.U v. Decker,*[34] and *W.L.G. v. Decker*,[35] LAS has challenged the prolonged immigration detention of immigrant youth, who are pursuing relief such as Special Immigration Juvenile Status ("SIJS") and child-based asylum claims in immigration court. We were able to obtain releases in all three cases.

3. Challenging unjust removal orders

In *Millan Hernandez v. Barr*,[36] LAS and co-counsel Prisoners' Legal Services obtained a precedential Second Circuit decision reversing the agency's denial of a suppression motion. In this case, a local police officer unlawfully prolonged a traffic stop in order to engage in immigration enforcement; the record suggested that the officer engaged in racial profiling. *Millan Hernandez* provided helpful guidance on how suppression hearings should work in immigration court while also acknowledging how racial profiling affects immigration enforcement. The Court issued the decision at a time when a serious national conversation had begun around unjust and racially disparate policing.

Akre v. Garland[37] is an asylum case that turned on internal relocation questions. LAS and co-counsel Cravath, Swaine & Moore obtained a summary order granting the petition for review. The panel found that 1) the IJ erred finding Mr. Akre's identifiability as a member of a particular tribe in an area where tribe members are scarce in the North; 2) the BIA applied the incorrect standard by improperly placing the burden on the respondent; and 3) the agency erred by finding country

[32] Case 1:20-cv-10190-JPC (S.D.N.Y.), settled December 2020.
[33] Case 1:21-cv-03253-VSB-KNF (S.D.N.Y.)., settled July 2021.
[34] Case 1:21-cv-03978-PGG (S.D.N.Y.), settled July 2021.
[35] Case 1:21-cv-04014-ER (S.D.N.Y.), settled May 2021.
[36] *Millan-Hernandez v. Barr*, 965 F.3d 140 (2d Cir. 2020).
[37] *Akre v. Garland*, 955 Fed. Appx. 59 (Mem.) (2d Cir. 2021).

conditions evidence regarding unrest and harsh conditions stale because the evidence indicated that similar conditions remained and were relevant to internal relocation. The Circuit also found the agency's conclusion that he could relocate in southern Ivory Coast was not supported by substantial evidence.

In *Alexandre v. Garland*,[38] LAS and co-counsel Hughes, Hubbard and Reed obtained a summary order from the Second Circuit reversing the denial of asylum, withholding of removal, and relief under the Convention Against Torture based on an improper and race-based adverse credibility finding.

H.L-D-P v. Wilkinson[39] is a petition for review filed by LAS for a young man who was abused as a child and who faced persecution and torture based on his bisexuality if returned to Guatemala. The agency initially rejected his claim because – as a young man coming to terms with his sexuality – L-D-P was unable to clearly articulate his sexual identity, even as he was able to talk about a past same-sex relationship and his continued feelings for his former partner. After an initial round of briefing, we were able to secure a stipulated remand and, after filing a habeas petition on his behalf with co-counsel Davis Polk, were able to negotiate for his release after more than two years of detention.

Zavala Almendades v. Garland[40] is a petition for review brought by LAS, arguing that the agency erred when it concluded that a young Salvadoran man could not seek asylum and withholding of removal based on persecution he encountered due to his status as a churchgoing youth. The agency disregarded the youth component of his claim and viewed it as merely a religious persecution claim, thus misunderstanding the persecutors' motives and nature of the harm our client faced. In a lengthy summary order, the Second Circuit vacated the removal order on the grounds that the BIA had misused our client's asylum application to help DHS meet its burden of proof.

[38] *Alexandre v. Garland*, 851 Fed. Appx. 233 (2d Cir. 2021).
[39] Case No. 19-3053 (2d Cir.), settled February 2021.
[40] *Zavala Almendades v. Garland*, 853 Fed. Appx. 727 (Mem.) (2d Cir. 2021).

G. Conclusion

We thank the City Council for its steadfast support of immigration legal services, which allow us to serve some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted,



Sharone Schwartz Kaufman
Deputy Attorney-in-Charge
Immigration Law Unit
The Legal Aid Society

New York Immigrant Family Unity Project
FY 2023 Budget Request

Now entering its 9th year, the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project ("NYIFUP") remains the national model for universal representation for immigrants facing deportation. As the global pandemic continued in 2021, NYIFUP staff fought for the release of immigrant New Yorkers detained in dangerous conditions, advocated for over a thousand clients in the community, and utilized policy shifts made by the Biden Administration for the benefit of our clients.

<u>During the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic</u>:

- NYIFUP continued to advocate for the release of all clients from dangerous ICE detention, through release requests, bond hearings, and *habeas corpus* petitions in federal district court.
- NYIFUP social workers, attorneys, and legal advocates supported over 1,000 clients with pending deportation cases during continued difficult economic times where they faced housing, food, and employment crises, particularly those who were not eligible for pandemic-related benefits.
- NYIFUP staff represented clients before the Second and Third Circuit Courts of Appeals and secured multiple favorable precedential decisions.

<u>Our Needs for the Coming Year:</u>

- NYIFUP providers represent over 1,000 pending non-detained clients, which will require extensive client support and litigation over the next year.
- As ICE policing and detention escalates under the Biden administration, NYIFUP providers are seeing an increase in our intake as compared with a few months ago and are prepared for additional increases as the pandemic recedes.
  The vital remedy of prosecutorial discretion that we have successfully utilized to stop deportations of many clients in the past few months continues to present opportunity, but also requires more staff time for litigation, research, and advocacy. NYIFUP staff are reviewing every current client's case to determine how prosecutorial discretion might benefit each client and preparing tailored requests to DHS advocating for the favorable exercise of their prosecutorial discretion based on each client's circumstances and case posture.

In FY23, the NYIFUP providers – Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, and The Legal Aid Society - seek funding of $18 million total to continue to respond quickly and creatively to shifts in ICE surveillance and arrests, as well as changes in immigration law policy and precedent ensuring that all detained New Yorkers have counsel and the many New Yorkers released through NYIFUP representation in the past can continue receiving excellent representation. While we will continue advocating for the abolition of the immigration detention and deportation systems, it is essential that we have the resources to support community members and interrupt the harm caused by ICE policing in the meantime.

Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Efforts (ICARE)

ICARE is a coalition of legal services organizations dedicated to representing children and families in removal proceedings.

No child should appear in immigration court alone.

Request: $4.57 million

Each year, 2,000 children - some as young as infants - appear in immigration court in New York City without an attorney. With the City's help, ICARE provides free legal services for children and families fighting deportation.

Children and families represented by ICARE have won their cases

We offer know-your-rights trainings, legal screenings, and connections to city and social services, and ensure that vulnerable immigrants do not have to face court alone. Our goal is to provide universal representation for unaccompanied minors and to increase representation for families.

Many of the children and families we represent leave their home countries because their lives are in danger, and come to the US looking for a better life and opportunities. Although the new federal administration has changed some of the harmful immigration policies of the previous administration, there is still much that needs to be undone. ICARE attorneys still experience challenges when assisting children and families facing deportation, but our coalition continues to be a resource for these vulnerable families. Without the City Council's continued support of our work, thousands of children and families will be left to fend for themselves, without attorneys, at risk of rapid deportation.

Continued support from the New York City Council will ensure we can keep fighting for over 2,000 children and families.



Our Impact:

Represented **2073** children and families since 2018

Obtained relief for **647** children and families since 2018

Screened over **1663** children and families for relief in FY22

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CIVIL

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May 25, 2022

Testimony of The Legal Aid Society in Support of the Proposed Pride at Work Initiative

Presented to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Submitted by Ricky Blum, Staff Attorney, Employment Law Unit and Erin Beth Harrist, Supervising Attorney, LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit

The Legal Aid Society is the oldest and largest not-for-profit public interest law firm in the United States, working on more than 300,000 individual legal matters annually for low-income New Yorkers with civil, criminal, and juvenile rights problems in addition to law reform representation that benefits all two million low-income children and adults in New York City. Legal Aid delivers a full range of comprehensive legal services to low-income families and individuals in the City.

The Employment Law Unit (ELU) of Legal Aid's Civil Practice provides representation, community education, and advice to low-wage workers regarding a variety of employment issues, including unemployment insurance benefits, leave rights, and wage theft, as well as employment discrimination.

The LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit works across all of Legal Aid's practice areas to create, support, and sustain affirming and safer spaces, practices, and policies for LGBTQ+ clients within Legal Aid and throughout New York City and New York State. It furthers this mission through training, public education, policy and legislative advocacy, and strategic litigation.

The Legal Aid Society supports the proposed Pride at Work Initiative. Legal Aid sees firsthand the poverty inflicted on LGBTQ+ New Yorkers because of serious employment discrimination, particularly for workers whose gender identity or expression does not conform to traditional societal expectations. This discrimination impacts both hiring and conditions on the job for those members of the community who are able to obtain employment. For instance, a survey by the New York City Comptroller in June 2017 found that 21 percent of LGBTQ respondents reported they were denied a promotion, not hired, or were fired or forced to resign due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.[1] As a result, there exists an urgent need for programs to help LGBTQ+ New Yorkers access and succeed in good union jobs.

In particular, transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary workers face intense discrimination in trying to obtain jobs in the first place. Using testers, Make the Road New York has documented an "astonishingly high" degree of discrimination against transgender job applicants

[1] *Results of a Survey of LGBTQ New Yorkers* (NYC Comptroller's Office Bureau of Policy and Research June 2017), *available at* https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Results_of_a_Survey_of_LGBTQ.pdf.

among retail businesses in New York City.[2] In 2017, the Comptroller's survey found that a shocking 42% of transgender or non-binary respondents experienced job discrimination based on their gender identity.[3] We know from our own practice areas that transgender and non-binary clients, particularly those from communities of color, find themselves enmeshed in underground economies and the criminal system because they cannot obtain jobs in the regular economy.[4]

For those who are able to obtain jobs, discrimination all too often makes the workplace unbearable and even leads to termination or constructive discharge. In its *amicus* brief to the United States Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 140 S.Ct. 1731 (2020), Legal Aid told the stories of clients who were subjected to on-the-job harassment and driven from their jobs. By way of example, at a panel discussion on workplace bullying sponsored by Queers for Economic Justice, a lesbian who had worked for several years at construction sites in New York City and who taught about diversity in the workplace for a union shared that she had never encountered an out gay man on any of her sites. It was simply too dangerous to be out at work.

All of these experiences point to the profound need for programs that help LGBTQ+ New Yorkers obtain and keep good union jobs. Unions provide a critical bulwark against discrimination and, in particular, harassment. Union jobs offer pay and benefits that enable people the freedom to live their lives as they see fit.

For these reasons, The Legal Aid Society supports the proposed Pride at Work Initiative and urges the Council and Mayor to make it a reality.

[2] *Transgender Need Not Apply: A Report on Gender Identity Job Discrimination* (Make the Road New York May 2010), *available at* https://www.issuelab.org/resources/15050/15050.pdf.
[3] *See supra* note 1.
[4] For further information on this topic, *see It's Still War In Here: A Statewide Report on the Trans, Gender Non-Conforming, Intersex (TGNCI) Experience in New York Prisons and the Fight for Trans Liberation, Self-Determination, and Freedom* 10-12 (Sylvia Rivera Law Project & TakeRoot Justice June 2021), *available at* https://takerootjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Its-Still-War-In-Here-1.pdf (explaining how lack of access to legalized employment contributes to the disproportionately high exposure to arrest, police harassment, incarceration, and violence low-income TGNCI people experience).

Legal Information for Families Today's (LIFT) Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Finance

Wednesday, March 25, 2022
Justin Brannan, Chairperson

My name is Cathy Cramer and I am the Chief Executive Officer at Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT). Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify about the tremendous need for free legal services for families with cases in New York Family Court.

On behalf of LIFT, I'd like to thank the New York City Council for its continued support and focus on matters impacting New York's parents and caregivers in Family Court. Without funding from the New York City Council and specifically from the Family Advocacy and Guardianship Support Initiative, Legal Information and Support for Families Initiative, and the Legal Services for Veterans Initiative we could not do our vital work to assist families confronting issues at the heart of their well-being.

LIFT's mission is to increase access to justice in New York State Family Court. We combine legal guidance, easy-to-access technology, and compassionate support to help unrepresented parents and caregivers self-advocate on critical family law issues, while working on reform that improves the system for everyone. We work primarily on cases of child support, custody and visitation, parentage, guardianship, and domestic violence. All of our cases have children involved.

LIFT was launched inside the Manhattan Family Courthouse in 1996, providing on-the-spot help at a table in the lobby where we answered questions and distributed Know Your Rights pamphlets. Before LIFT, sources of information or guidance for pro se litigants in the Family Courts were severely limited. Today, LIFT continues to fill this gap in the system.

In 2018, LIFT significantly expanded our service offerings by introducing limited legal advice and consultations for clients with more complex cases. By providing limited scope legal services to pro se litigants during critical phases of their case, we help clients to achieve the positive outcomes they need for their families. We are also maximizing the number of clients we serve, thus both broadening and deepening our impact.

Families are a pivotal stabilizing force in our communities, but the New York City Family Courts have been overburdened and under-resourced for decades. Even before the pandemic, the New York City Family Courts were hearing over 200,000 cases per year. Unlike in a criminal court, most of these cases are not eligible for court-appointed representation, so 80% of litigants come to Family Court without a lawyer. Unrepresented litigants in New York City are disproportionately low-income, from communities of color, often undocumented immigrants, or speak monolingual Spanish or some other language.

LIFT has worked closely with the Court to close these economic and racial justice gaps, with outreach targeted to high-needs groups. For example, we present Know Your Rights workshops

to make sure undocumented immigrants are aware of their right to file in court and right to a translator, and help parents appoint a “standby guardian,” someone who is preapproved to take care of their children in the case of the parent’s removal from the country. All our programming is available in Spanish, and 14% of LIFT clients are monolingual Spanish-speakers.

We also help veterans and active military service members navigate child support and the additional complex policies they face because of their military service. When child support has been improperly withheld or the amount owed is incorrect, it can affect a veteran’s VA disability benefits or military pensions and cause financial hardship. Similarly, we help previously-incarcerated parents address child support arrears and help them with custody and visitation petitions so they can remain involved in their children’s lives. Many parents do not know that being incarcerated is an accepted reason to modify their child support order to a lower amount, but they have to petition for a modification BEFORE they go to prison. Otherwise, their debt will accumulate at the same rate they were paying before their incarceration, which means many people leave prison owing thousands of dollars in arrears. This debt deeply impacts their ability to reenter society, get a job, find housing, and fully participate as returning citizens after having served their time.

LIFT is a leader in utilizing technology to increase access to justice. Our Digital Justice Initiative, for which we seek support from the Speaker’s Initiative in FY23 was developed to address the gaps in the Family Court’s online resources and increase access to justice for families who do not have access to computers or a reliable internet connection. We are creating practical tools like guided court forms, which help litigants fill out and upload court documents and petitions without expensive software or equipment. Our Family Law Navigator tool gives parents and caregivers a helpful starting point to begin addressing their family law issue and a customized report tailored to their individual situations. All of our tools will be available on mobile devices, the technology most accessible to pro se litigants.

While we are proud of the work we have done, the existing justice gaps in the Family Court have only worsened since the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Court was only hearing what it deemed “emergency” cases, and as a result, LIFT had record-breaking numbers of requests for help on our Helplines – over 22,000 people called LIFT in 2021, an increase of 53% since 2019, and our legal advice consultations grew by 185% over the last two years, to nearly 3,000 consultations. Despite growing and relentless client demand and increasingly complex cases, LIFT staff rose to the challenge. This would not have been possible without the City Council’s deep support.

Now, the Courts have begun hearing more virtual or hybrid cases, but there are still many challenges for unrepresented litigants. There are frequent problems with connectivity. If people are even 5 minutes late, possibly due to connectivity issues, hearings are adjourned, or worse, dismissed. Our attorneys spend much of their time now filing to re-calendar cases for clients who had technology problems. We have opened a Tech Hub in our Brooklyn office to provide tech support to litigants, and will soon be expanding this pilot into the Bronx and Queens to meet the high need for technical support in these boroughs.

There is also a significant backlog of cases that is causing serious delays for families. We have seen:

- Child support cases not get scheduled for a first hearing until over a year from filing;
- Cases where one parent has lost a job and cannot get a support modification and is daily accruing debt he or she cannot pay;
- Parents who cannot visit with their children because they have been relocated or kept from the parent in violation of a court order;
- Adoption cases which linger on far too long and cause unnecessary stress and worry.

As the recent New York City Bar Association report on New York Family Court showed, New York City families were particularly hurt by the pandemic, and the City is just getting back on its feet.

LIFT's on-the-ground work with Family Court litigants helps families get the support they need to effectively self-advocate in Court. There is no question that getting someone legal guidance from the very beginning helps expedite what can be a long, difficult process and helps the Court and the litigants more efficiently achieve desired goals for themselves and their children.

Every family deserves the opportunity to create stability, security, and emotional well-being. With ongoing committed support from the City Council, LIFT can continue to be part of the solution and improve the welfare of our great city.

Thank you for the time and continued support.

FY 2023 LIFT Applications Submitted
Renewed Applications:
118656 - Legal Services for Veterans for $60,000
124669 - Family Advocacy and Guardianship for $150,000
129563 - Legal Information and Support for $550,000
First Time Applications:
129831 - Speakers - Digital Justice Program for $200,000
129881 - Immigrant Opportunities for $50,000
129885 - Alternatives to Incarceration for $75,000
129884 - Anti-Poverty for $10,000
129886 - Innovative Criminal Justice $75,000



NYC Council Finance Committee Budget Hearing Testimony
May 25, 2022

Good morning Chairman Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. I am Kathy Nizzari, Founder and Chair of the Lights Out Coalition, a diverse alliance of roughly 40 animal welfare, environmental, scientific, and veterinary organizations, dedicated to protecting New York's wildlife. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. We stand with the parks advocates in urging you to allocate 1% of the City's budget to the NYC Parks Department. Funds that were cut desperately need to be restored, particularly for maintenance, messaging, and enforcement.

Just as the city grapples with increased municipal waste on its streets and sidewalks, so do our parks. On a recent walk around Central Park's Reservoir, we observed one piece of trash or more per foot, not including the piles of waste along the water's edge like diapers, wee wee pads, scores of cigarette butts and syringes. The health and safety hazards posed by this trash to both humans and animals alike is no less serious, and actually moreso, than street trash. However, it is given much less attention and coverage. Of particular concern to us is the derelict fishing gear – fishing wire and hooks that are discarded either in the water or along its edges – that cause harm and death to the many species of birds and other wildlife like turtles {as well as pets like dogs} who call these parks home {or visit}.

It is important to acknowledge that Central Park has the most money and is in the best condition of any city park. The Central Park Conservancy aids the Parks Department in maintenance utilizing private funds. Only a few of our parks have conservancies or partners, found in more well-off neighborhoods, which point to environmental injustices. Further, it is problematic that the parks in the lower income and/or minority neighborhoods suffer the worst of these problems. The garbage, unregulated fishing and littered fishing gear, and injured wildlife are significantly higher in these parks, where people need these spaces the most.

While little data exists, we can say with certainty that, in just a single park, one rescue group has reported upwards of 250 birds, mammals and reptiles that were seriously injured from derelict fishing gear, and also off-leash dogs per year. Bear in mind, this is one small group in one park for roughly three hours per day. As 150 of our parks have bodies of water, we can expect the total number of injuries to be easily in the tens of thousands. Of that, roughly 2/3 of these injuries result in death.

The Parks Department has stringent laws regarding fishing: You must be licensed; you must properly dispose of fishing lines and hooks; you can only do catch and release; fish must be immediately released; and the use of lead weights {which are toxic}, barbed hooks and traps are strictly prohibited. Additionally, harming, stealing and dumping animals, which often result in death as well, are also prohibited by these and the New York State Animal Cruelty Laws. All of these violations come with fines up to $1,500 and/or jail time up to 20 days per offense.

We doubt most people are aware of these rules. In order to save thousands of birds, turtles and other wildlife from unnecessary and preventable violence and death, we must be proactive in alerting park visitors of both the rules and penalties if they do not comply. Penalizing them afterwards does not protect our wildlife. For this, we need: increased clean up of the large amount of trash that is not put into trash cans but instead deposited in the water and ground - especially in parks where people fish; to fund and empower employees who are responsible for surveillance and enforcement; to educate the public with adequate visible signage in multiple languages specifying the laws and consequences; proper trash receptacles particularly near fishing areas with regular pickups to prevent overflow. Perhaps cameras should be installed in the most vulnerable areas. This has been effective in reducing speeding on our city streets by 72%. I think we can all agree that, as the city is committed to reforming criminal justice,

prevention not only saves thousands of avian and other lives, but is preferable to cash fines and/or jail time.

The Council should also consider the thousands of dollars that the necessary medical treatment costs. This is all selflessly paid out of the pockets of the rescuers who do this difficult and emotionally taxing work voluntarily without any personal gain. Perhaps a fund can be created to cover these costs which, of course, would not be incurred if we did more on prevention.

This is an issue that is not just important to a small group of advocates, but to the literally millions of New Yorkers who are birders. Ours is one of the best states for birding, most notably in parks. This activity also boosts tourism, particularly during migration season, which is a revenue stream for the city. However, the trash problem is rampant and harms both birds and other local wildlife recognized by the Mayor's Office as New Yorkers.

Just as many people are unaware of the rules, we recognize many of the Council Members may not be aware of this problem and just how out of control it truly is. In just the short time I am writing this, we were alerted to two more birds entangled in fishing lines and a caged rabbit abandoned in a Brooklyn park. A few days ago in a Queens park, either pig, goat, or human remains were found by a rescuer while the park staff was unavailable to inspect. Recently a group stole a duck from a park pond and barbecued him. Another intentionally killed a swan. Earlier this month a man was spotted inadvertently hooking a duck with his fishing lure yet, rather than help free her, he merely cut his line, tied on another hook, and continued fishing while she struggled. Turtles are poached from parks and there is a strong probability they and others might be offered for sale either as pets or food - which is a health hazard to humans. Should you like to learn more, we have much photo and video documentation that we are happy to share with you.

No animal is immune to the dangers of derelict fishing gear, neither wild nor domestic. A local dog group informed us about dogs visiting parks getting entangled in wire and being gored by hooks in their mouth and paws. This can be fatal. To further illustrate the seriousness of fishing lure, the feline Instagram star Mavi suffered neurological distress from a hook. Studies have shown one-third of examined turtles swallowed hooks and different animals ingest hooks from fish who were caught and released. Many wild animals die after ingesting fishing gear while still others drown trying to free themselves, their bodies not discovered until it's too late. These

instances that we are aware of are a mere fraction of the injuries that actually occur. So there is really no way to determine the actual extent this problem causes.

Lights Out is pleased and grateful that the Council recognizes the maintenance problem in city parks and swiftly passed Intro 173. This is a great first step that needs proper funding. We must do more in the areas of education and prevention. With the warmer weather upon us, this problem will only worsen and many more animals will die.

Lights Out Coalition is happy to work with you on these initiatives. Thank you again for your time. Please adequately fund our parks.

Kathy Nizzari, Chair
Lights Out Coalition
kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com
5.26.22

LINCOLN CENTER
70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023-6583 | LincolnCenter.org

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.
FY23 Executive Budget Testimony
May 25, 2022

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance.

Lincoln Center, a member of the City's 34-organization Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), was established to be an artistic and civic cornerstone for New York City. Founded for the purpose of cultivating, fostering, and centering socially-engaged arts programs within civic daily life, Lincoln Center is home to eleven nonprofits in the arts and education, host to emerging and established artists, presenter of artists' work, civic partner to community-based organizations, and an iconic New York City destination. Lincoln Center makes free and low-cost programming for all New Yorkers centrally accessible.

We as an institution are part of an ecosystem of cultural organizations, creative workers, and educators woven into all aspects of the daily life of New York. The cultural sector and all the creativity and artistry it produces is the secret to New York's success. This sector is responsible for 13% of the city's total economic output (NYC Comptroller, October 2019). From ticket sales to artist commissions, one out of every eight dollars of economic activity in the city can be traced back to the cultural sector. As a proud member of the CIG, composed of the performing arts, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens across all five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers, we are united in this request to invest in Culture for All.

Culture creates jobs, is a part of the ecosystem supporting small businesses, and is economic development. From our stagehands to construction workers, we work to support union jobs. At a time of high unemployment, Lincoln Center accelerated its timeline for the new David Geffen Hall to get New Yorkers back to work by supporting 6,000 jobs, awarded 43% of construction contracts to MWBEs and developed a workforce development program with Turner Construction that put 30 local residents on track for full-time union positions.
Culture is a pathway for upward mobility for the leaders of tomorrow. Lincoln Center invests in students through programs like the DOE's Middle School Audition Camp, participating in the Summer Youth Employment Program, Ladders for Leaders, and CUNY Cultural Corps. We know arts education and exposure to the arts is how we foster growth for the next generation of New Yorkers working as artists and arts administrators.

Art is healing. Throughout the past two years of uncertainty, culture played an essential role in the city's pandemic response. Despite incredible loss, organizations found new ways to engage audiences to help us process our collective grief, grapple with heart-wrenching injustices and continue to heal. At Lincoln Center, we firmly believe in the rejuvenating power of the arts. In fact, we have dedicated our season, *Summer for the City* with hundreds of free events for all New Yorkers to rejoice, remember, and reclaim a city built on equity and inclusivity.

Art is interwoven in social service and civic life. At Lincoln Center we strengthened our commitment to positioning **arts at the core of daily life as a civic hub** presenting socially engaged artistic works while meeting community needs. Last year, we welcomed over 250,000 people to campus for outdoor performances, we hosted 16 public school graduations livestreamed across 40 countries, saved nearly 1,500 lives through

Community Blood Drives with the New York Blood Center, fed nearly 5,000 individuals in partnership with the Food Bank for New York City, hosted naturalization ceremonies with USCIS, and vaccinated 275 people against COVID to keep our community safe.

Art is economic development. Funding culture will bring economic resiliency and growth, kickstart a return of tourism, and lay the foundation for an equitable, educated, and safe city - resilient enough to withstand the shocks of future disasters and downturns. The reopening of cultural organizations and the return of audiences to our museums and galleries marks a pivotal moment in the City's recovery. As a part of that recovery, Lincoln Center joined 300+ partners to launch **Festival of New York**, a citywide collaborative movement to celebrate the best this city has to offer. From Memorial Day to Labor Day every neighborhood will be active with live performances, citywide dance parties, neighborhood sports, and volunteer opportunities in all five boroughs, across all sectors. This summer is just the start of something much bigger for Lincoln Center and for the whole City.

Art is healing. At Lincoln Center, we firmly believe in the healing and rejuvenating power of the arts. In fact, we have dedicated the comeback of our full-scale season, *Summer for the City* with hundreds of free events for all New Yorkers to rejoice, remember, and reclaim a City built on equity and inclusivity. *Summer for the City* is an opportunity to come together again to experience the community brought together only by live performance. Whether it is dancing the night away on the city's largest outdoor dance floor with a 10' disco ball, **the Oasis**, joining pandemic newlyweds for the memorable group celebration that was missed at **Celebrate LOVE: A (Re)Wedding**, or celebrating the lives of iconic individuals, **James Baldwin, Biggie Smalls, and Greg Tate**. Summer for the City offers a warm welcome to all New Yorkers to come together safely after so much time apart.

Art is inclusion. For FY23, we are bringing back full **in-person programming** for Lincoln Center Moments, a program serving seniors and older adults living with dementia across the five boroughs. We are also planning to be back in schools through our partnership with the NYC Department of Education for the Middle School Arts Audition Camp with a potential expansion into 6th grade, and the Big Umbrella Festival, neuro-diverse programming serving young people living along the autism spectrum. Public investment is imperative to the long-term attainability of these programs whether you live on the Upper West Side or in Far Rockaway. We are immensely grateful for the City Council's Autism Awareness and Geriatric Mental Health Initiatives that have been critical to continuing these programs in-person and hybrid during the pandemic.

City support remains vital for the survival and renaissance of the arts in New York City. Maintaining funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs and supporting initiative and member items allows our sector to work with and for New Yorkers in ways that would otherwise be impossible. Culture has the data-proven ability to strengthen communities, improve education outcomes, decrease youth involvement in the criminal justice system, and improve the mental health and well-being of neighborhoods.

Our organizations and cultural workers need city support to adjust to the impacts of the pandemic and bring our city back safely. New York City's arts and cultural organizations are an integral part of our city's resurgence, helping us get back to a better, more equitable and inclusive normal where the arts are central to the well-being of every New Yorker.

Lincoln Center unites with our colleagues on the CIG and within the sector to ask for your support for NYC VIBE, a Visionary Investment in Building the NYC Economy. We need the City to put in an additional $100 million in FY23 for the arts and cultural sector and the long-term financial health of our city.

This includes:

- **$50 million in baseline funding split evenly between the Cultural Interest Group and the Cultural Development Fund**
- **$15 million to create a Cultural Equity Fund to support BIPOC-led and -serving organizations**
- **$10 million for tourism and marketing for culture across the five boroughs**
- **$10 million for workforce development and support programs**
- **$5 million for accessibility and inclusion of Deaf/Disabled communities**
- **$5 million for individual artists and renewing the City Artist Corp**
- **$5 million to increase staffing within the Department of Cultural Affairs**

In addition, we ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, including Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, Arts as a Catalyst for Change, CASA, and SU-CASA, which deliver the arts directly to New Yorkers.

City funding allows the cultural sector to fulfill its role within a healthy democracy as spaces for convening, learning, healing, supporting, and uplifting all New Yorkers across every neighborhood district regardless of race, age, ability, creed, gender, or socioeconomic status. The pandemic showed us the dangers of social isolation. At no time has investment in the arts been more critical for the well-being of our city.

I thank the members of the Committee on Finance, and the City at large, for your time. I urge you to support the cultural community with this additional $100 million request. By investing in culture, you are investing in New Yorkers and New York City's recovery.

Thank you again for your continued leadership. Lincoln Center is committed to New York City as a place where everyone is welcome and where they belong, and we continue to engage as lifelong learners to do better as an arts, education, and civic hub for all.

Please reach out should you have questions or would like to hear more about Lincoln Center's plans.

Respectfully submitted,

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FY23
NYC Culture VIBE

Fund Culture: A Visionary Investment in Building the NYC Economy

The cultural sector is requesting an additional **$100 million investment from NYC in FY23** to augment NYC's economic recovery and create an inclusive sector growth towards a future-focused and equitable economy. Investing in culture means investing in the long-term financial health of our city. **The $100m request will bring the annual investment in culture to .24% of City's total budget and will represent a commitment to our ultimate goal of reaching 1% for Culture.**

CULTURE FOR ALL

The FY23 $100M request includes:

- **$50M in CIG and CDF baseline funding** (split evenly between the Cultural Institutions Group and the Cultural Development Fund) to provide critical core support that will stabilize NYC's cultural community, allowing organizations to address their most-pressing logistical and mission-centric expenses. This will support their core work as community anchors and tourism magnets.
- **$45M in grants for 5 Strategic Initiatives** that advances a revitalized and equitable city:
  - $15M for a Cultural Equity Fund, to support BIPOC-led and -serving organizations;
  - $10M for tourism and marketing for culture across all 5 boroughs;
  - $10M for workforce development and support programs;
  - $5M for accessibility and inclusion of Deaf/ Disabled communities;
  - $5M for individual artists and renewal of the City Artist Corps program
- **$5M to increase staffing at DCLA** for the agency to provide efficient and timely support to the field






Lincoln Center

FY23 Discretionary and Special Initiatives Requests

As New York City's only cultural civic hub designed to house an interdisciplinary consortium of the arts, Lincoln Center is committed to inclusive excellence in artistic performance, serving our neighborhood community and the City of New York, and ongoing learning and innovation to ensure that the arts can meet the challenges of today. During the pandemic Lincoln Center immediately and successfully pivoted to leverage its digital channels and its ample outdoor spaces to better serve New Yorkers.

We at Lincoln Center believe that the arts are an essential part of civic life. They reflect and inform the world in a process that is inherently democratic—valuing freedom of expression and open exchanges of ideas and calling for active participation by artists and audiences. We fulfill this set of values through:

- **Providing platforms for socially engaged artists** to respond to the greatest social issues facing our communities and expanding their ability to reach new audiences;
- **Responding to the needs of our local community**, including blood donations, food drives, serving as a polling location, a vaccine center and much more;
- **Lifting up ways to amplify our audience's voices in the world**, hoping that the passion and curiosity that drives our participants' love for the arts will also ignite a commitment to making positive contributions in their local communities.

$150,000 to Support Free Year-Round Public Programming (Application ID: 131327)

Founded as an 'experiment in cultural democracy,' we believe fundamentally in the importance of access to the arts. Building on the success of ReStart Stages, which transformed the campus creating 10 outdoor performance and rehearsal spaces and other civic venues over three months in the summer, we are seeking to make these types of free activations year-round by leveraging our indoor venues.
FY23 Season to include:

- **Summer (June – August 2022):** Outdoor activations across 10 stages, including the Damrosch Park Bandshell and Josie Robertson Plaza by the fountain under a summer festival theme, part of a broader citywide series of free arts programming, educational activities, and civic activations at various partner sites in the five boroughs to stimulate the economy and honor the diversity and spirit of our city. The program will include partnerships with public schools for graduation, a naturalization ceremony, blood donation drives, and much more.
- **Fall (September – November 2022)** kicks off our inaugural season of programming in the freshly transformed David Geffen Hall featuring a sidewalk lab, media wall for livestreaming and welcome center. Each of these spaces will offer the public free programming to experience the arts in new ways.
- **Winter (December – February 2023)** cross collaborations among the 10 resident organizations to highlight their seasons.
- **Spring (March-May 2023)** with a mix of free civic-oriented programming in the Rubenstein Atrium featuring Latin Dance Night, theatre, talks, and social services. It will also feature the American Songbook bringing together music from around the world that exemplifies the American diaspora. The season will close with the "Search for Spring" all city volunteer choir performing at Lincoln Center.






$10,000 to Invest in the Next Generation of Young Artists (Application ID: 124738)

Education and youth programming will focus on direct engagement with students through an expansion of the highly successful Middle School Arts Audition Camp, bringing back the Future Artist Pipeline, and orchestral mentorships. Each of these programs is designed to narrow the disparity gap in access within arts education and foster a sense of inclusion within the arts community.

- Middle School Arts Audition Camp serves students in Title I NYC public schools train free of charge with teaching artists from Lincoln Center and other top-tier artistic institutions, in partnership with the NYC Department of Education. The program consists of intensive 1:1 coaching and group masterclasses, anticipated to serve 400 New York City middle school students in FY23.
- The Future Artist Pipeline is a pilot program to inspire artists as early as 6th grade over two semesters.
- Orchestral mentorship program works with young musicians over a 5-day immersive experience where they are coached by and play with leaders in their instrument. Students hail from over 12 local music programs and public schools. The program builds social-emotional development through artistic expression.

$150,000 to Support Free Programming for Individuals with Autism (Application ID: 119612)

In the Summer 2021 Big Umbrella Festival – Outdoors (due to COVID) reached over 500 participants primarily from New York City. Last year the festival served a greater age range of the audience, expanded the interactive experiences to include more art forms, and utilized the outdoor campus to highlight sculptural work created specifically for multi-sensory experiences. Big Umbrella is a large-scale performing arts festival designed for young audiences on the autism spectrum, caregivers, and families. The festival includes performers from around the world with activities designed to raise awareness for the unique role of the arts in the lives of young people with special needs. Accessibility programming is year-round with culmination at the third Big Umbrella Festival expected Summer 2022.

$150,000 to Support Accessibility Programming for Older Adults with Dementia (Application ID: 121004)

Accessibility Programming, including targeted programs like Lincoln Center Moments: Performance programming for individuals with dementia and their caregivers, and accommodation services to serve older adults with disabilities attending public performances. Moments offers fall and spring seasons of programming, featuring both in-person and virtual programs to meet the varied needs of individuals with dementia. Each program includes world-class artistry, across artistic disciplines, and interactive and supportive arts-based activities designed to foster self-expression and social connection. All programs are free of charge and take place on the Lincoln Center campus or virtually on weekday afternoons in the fall and spring. The program serves up to 1,000 people annually, with an estimated 250 unique visitors. Funding from the City Council would support the FY23 season of accessibility programming, including Lincoln Center Moments. The funding would be allocated to providing ongoing programming to this constituency and extending relationships with community-based partners.

Literacy Assistance Center

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair

Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022

Testimony of Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Ira Yankwitt, and I am the Executive Director of the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), a 39-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening and expanding the adult education system and to advancing adult literacy as a core value in our society and a foundation for equal opportunity and social justice. The LAC is also a proud member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (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.

Currently, there are more than 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English proficiency or who lack a high school diploma. Many of these New Yorkers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic, performing the essential work that has been sustaining our communities for the past two years – as grocery workers, delivery workers, home care workers, and parents. Others are service workers and domestic workers who lost their jobs and incomes and have faced a harsh reality with little or no safety net. While adult literacy education is only one part of the solution, it is essential to a fair, just, and sustainable recovery.

Adult literacy education is an immigrant rights issue, a feminist issue, a racial justice issue, and an issue of educational justice. The majority of adults in NYC with limited literacy skills are women and people of color. Over 75% are immigrants, including many who are

undocumented. Others are BIPOC who were born in the US and underserved by the public school system. According to the most recent census, 30% of all parents in New York City have limited English proficiency, and, for immigrant parents, that number is 52%. Adult literacy education can provide the foundation for greater security and autonomy, as well as the tools to access, navigate, analyze – and ultimately transform – social, political, and economic systems and conditions.

When it comes to city and state funding for adult literacy education, there are three fundamental issues:

1) Combined city and state funding is so limited that fewer than 4% of the 2.2 million adults who could benefit from adult basic education, high school equivalency, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are able to access seats in any given year.
2) The level of investment per student is so low that programs are unable to provide the full range supports, services, and resources that students need and deserve.
3) Funding places such an emphasis on increasing test scores, accruing credentials, and achieving workforce outcomes that it fails to recognize and honor the full breadth of students' goals and the myriad ways that programs work to build the collective power of individuals, families, and communities.

Last year, the City Council made great strides in addressing these issues by pushing then-Mayor de Blasio to baseline $8 million in year-to-year funding for adult literacy education, creating a total of $13.5 million in baselined funds, and by allocating $2.5 million of Council Discretionary funding to a first-of-its-kind pilot project that provided 20 programs with between $70,000 and $150,000 of additional funds to invest in full-time teachers, counselors, expanded student support services, professional development and planning time for staff, and upgrades to technology to support digital literacy development. The pilot also recognized and encouraged a

broader range of outcomes, including support for health literacy, financial literacy, immigrant rights, workers' rights, housing advocacy, culturally responsive education, and student leadership development.

Higher levels of literacy are associated with greater health knowledge, use of healthcare services, and the ability to manage chronic health conditions and communicate with healthcare providers. Moreover, according to the National Institutes for Health, "a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income."

In addition, we know that greater levels of literacy can lead to greater economic security for individuals and families. A national study from Gallup shows that the average annual income of adults who reach the minimum level of proficiency in literacy (level 3 on the international PIAAC assessment) is nearly $63,000, substantially higher than the average of $48,000 earned by adults who score just below proficiency (level 2), and much higher than those at low levels of literacy (levels 0-1), who earn just over $34,000 on average. Yet, in parts of New York City, well over 50% of adults fall below level 3: In the Bronx, 81% of adults are below level 3 and 50% are at or below level 1 in reading. Similarly, census data show that median wages for adults with a high school diploma or its equivalent are 24% greater than for those without a diploma; and immigrants who speak English "very well" are half as likely to live in poverty as those who do not.

Increased literacy not only benefits individuals, it also drives broader economic growth. The same Gallup study finds that "getting all U.S. adults to at least a Level 3 literacy proficiency would generate an additional $2.2 trillion in annual income for the country," and that large cities like New York would see a 10% increase in gross domestic product.

Clearly, adult literacy education is vital to the health and economic recovery of our city, to the ability of parents to support their children's education, and to ensuring greater quality of life for all. It is time that we stop treating adult literacy education as a supplement to the education system and start recognizing it as a right of all those that need it.

So what do we need to do?

1) First, the city must **maintain the $13.5 million in previously baselined funds and increase the baseline funding by an additional $13.5 million** in order to double the level of investment per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP. Astonishingly, Mayor Adams has actually proposed a $1.7 million cut to the $8 million that was baselined last year.

2) Second, the City Council should **extend the Adult Literacy Pilot Project for a second year and expand it to $5 million** to continue to support the 20 programs currently funded as well as to include another 20 programs to address the wider need for additional student supports, services, and resources.

3) Third, the City Council should **renew the $4 million of Council Adult Literacy Discretionary funding** to continue to provide for program sustainability.

Adult literacy education is about cultivating individual leadership and building community power, and it is an essential piece of broader movements for racial, social, and economic justice. Adult literacy education can provide the space for community members to read, write, and speak the truth of their lived experience; to build understanding and solidarity across differences; to examine historical and current systems of oppression and envision alternatives; and to act to transform the cultural, social, political, and economic structures that circumscribe their lives.

Literacy skills give individuals the power to understand and command information, to communicate in the language of access, to make informed choices, to access critical resources and opportunities, to stand up for themselves in the workplace, to fully participate in civic life and institutions and, ultimately, to transform their lives and the world around them. A substantial investment in adult literacy education will mean that more people will have the skills to access better jobs and higher wages; more parents will be able to support their children's education; more families will be healthier; more people of all backgrounds will know and speak up for their rights; and more New Yorkers will participate in the democratic process. If we are truly a city committed to equality and justice, we should commit to no less.

Thank you.

Submitted by:
Ira Yankwitt, Executive Director
Literacy Assistance Center
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City's First Readers
An initiative of the New York City Council

Committee on Finance – Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony Submitted by City's First Readers
May 25, 2022

City's First Readers: Closing Early Learning Opportunity Gaps

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the **New York City Council's *only* early literacy initiative, City's First Readers**.

Children start learning from the moment they are born and need access to early learning experiences to support their brain development. With the FY23 Executive Budget being reviewed, LINC would like to remind you of the critical importance of ensuring the well-being and school readiness of our most vulnerable and youngest children. Thousands of New York City families are parenting while facing basic services, housing, food, or income insecurities–challenges made worse by COVID-19.

- There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC. **44.5% of them live in low income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - $25,750 for a family of four), and **76% of children under the age of five are children of color**.
- The number of homeless New Yorkers has risen to the highest point since the Great Depression, and the largest demographic within the homeless population is children; approximately 45% of the children in Department of Homeless Services facilities were 5 or younger even prior to COVID.

City's First Readers partners work in every Council District to thwart this opportunity gap from becoming an achievement gap. Literacy, INC is proud to facilitate this effort.

LINC bases its programs on strategies that research has proven have both immediate and long-term impact for children and families. LINC's approach to building literacy moves beyond the child as the sole unit of change and addresses a much broader issue: family and community literacy. The benefits are beyond literacy development. Since our program is 2-Gen and promotes the engagement of both parent and child, there is a strong social emotional component. Instilling the practice of reading into a family's daily routine ensures comfort and cuddle time, and a positive association with books, despite uncertainty in other parts of life. LINC provides the books that make home libraries possible and the strategies that allow parents to share picture books and stories, regardless of their own literacy level or language capacity. Parents who attended our programs know how to create literacy-rich homes:

- 95% of the parents who attended our programs know the importance of reading to their child.

- 90% of our Very Involved Parents read aloud more often with their children and feel more knowledgeable about child development.
- 95% feel more confident talking to neighbors about the importance of reading to children.
- 100% tell other parents and caregivers about LINC and our programs.
- 89% of LINC parents engage during reading by asking questions about pictures, contrasted with only 61% of others.
- 75% of LINC parents reported reading 5 or more days every week, contrasted with only 42% of others.
- 72% of LINC parents have established a routine of reading together at bedtime compared to only 26% of others.

LINC understands the strong ties between access to early literacy, educational justice and equity. If we are to remove the obstacles created by historic and systemic inequities, and use this imposed opportunity to rebuild a more equitable city, early learning services are central to this goal.

Any public budget is a statement of social priorities. Please ensure that the FY23 New York City Executive Budget includes enhanced funding for City's First Readers. Every New York City child deserves the opportunity to learn to read and unlock the door to success, in school and beyond.

Thank you for your favorable consideration.

Shari Levine
Executive Director

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Chair, Council Member Brannan
May 25, 2022
Oversight - Executive Budget Hearing

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at the Executive Budget hearing.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, including Older Adult Centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, NORCs, and case management. LiveOn NY is also home to the Reframing Aging NYC Initiative, part of the national Reframing Aging Initiative aimed to counteract ageism and improve the way policymakers, stakeholders, and the public think about aging and older people. With our members, we work to make New York a better place to age.

As New York City recovers from a pandemic that took the lives of tens of thousands of individuals, this budget will set the trajectory for years to come and must bolster the City towards a future that supports *all* New Yorkers. Yet for too long, older adults have not been prioritized by the City and the pandemic has exposed the many systemic inequalities and challenges older adults face including an over-reliance on institutionalization, chronic social isolation, and an inequitable care system.

Within the Executive Budget, LiveOn NY is appreciative of the following investments to better support the needs of older New Yorkers including: $14.9 million for the Recovery Meal Program transition, a continued commitment to the home-delivered meal reimbursement rate increase; and $3.2 million for Department for the Aging (DFTA) Geritriac Mental Health Program expansion. These investments are a step towards bolstering a system that has been essential to supporting older New Yorkers through COVID-19, and will continue to be essential in the years to come.

Nonetheless, the Mayor's Executive Budget fell short in addressing some of the most pressing issues facing older New Yorkers and the aging services sector; this, most evidenced by the lack of a cost-of-living adjustment for the aging and human services workforce at-large. As a result, today, the DFTA budget remains at less than 1% of the overall City budget despite older adults representing a rapidly increasing 20% of the population. To create an equitable budget that supports all New Yorkers, the City must prioritize long-term investments that reflect the growing demand for community-based aging services and that leaves no New Yorker behind.

Therefore, LiveOn NY's recommends the following investments, many of which were championed in the City Council's Preliminary Budget Response, and we hope to see continued prioritization of as the City reaches a final budget:

Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Recommendations

1. **The City must just pay all essential human service workers a liveable and equitable wage.** Without Just Pay, the wages of workers under these contracts, the majority of whom are women and people of color, are slated to remain stagnant in a City where costs are notoriously high and

inflation continues to rise. The decision to actively avoid building in the true costs of a core function of City government will put further strain on the diverse workforce that has worked tirelessly to support New Yorkers, particularly during the pandemic. To address this crisis, the City must address the inequitable pay of human services workers, including:

- Establish, fund, and enforce a 5.4% automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) or fund $86 million for wage increases for all human services contracts.
- Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all human service workers.
- Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field

2. **$42.7 million in additional funding to meet the home-delivered meal (HDM) demand**.

Despite the Recovery Meal program being set to end this Fiscal Year, we are confident that many clients will continue to need nutritional support – support for which there is not enough funding available to provide. Ideally, these clients will transition to the traditional HDM program, which already serves approximately 20,000 older New Yorkers. An investment of $30 million will allow for a smooth transition to ensure every older New Yorker continues to receive a meal after the termination of this program.

In addition, an investment of $9.7 million will support the continued growth in demand for the HDM program, and at least $3 million to support **weekend and holiday home-delivered meals**, which are not provided through current contracts, and did not receive the same investment to address reimbursement rate as weekday meals received.

Furthermore, DFTA must assess and invest in home-delivered meal provider's capital needs, including van purchases and other infrastructure needs. Many of LiveOn NY's members have raised concerns about capacity issues including the need for larger kitchen spaces, new refrigerators, and van purchases in particular as they work to meet rising demand.

Just as funding is needed to support home-delivered meals, the City must also increase funding for congregate meals in Older Adult Centers as a response to the significant inflationary impacts on raw food.

3. **Allocate funding to develop 1,000 units of affordable senior housing with services per year.**

LiveOn NY joins the United for Housing Coalition in calling for a $4 billion annual investment to fund a comprehensive affordable housing plan that must include a minimum target of 1,000 new units of affordable senior housing with services per year, as part of a total target to construct no fewer than 8,000 new units of housing dedicated to serving extremely low income and homeless households annually. As waitlists and limited housing stock pose an acute challenge for older New Yorkers, and with the number of older adults experiencing homelessness expected to triple by 2030 without significant intervention, a considerable investment and consistent unit targets per year will be critical to paving a pathway out of this crisis.

LiveOn NY
Making New York a better place to age

LiveOn NY also recommends the City increase the per unit reimbursement rate for City's Senior Affordable Rental Assistance (SARA) services from $5,000 per unit, to $7,500 per unit, allowing for increased staff to more adequately address social isolation and significant case assistance needs.

4. **Allocate an additional $40 million to build upon DFTA's Community Care Initiative and bolster mental health supports**

   The Community Care Plan, initiated by DFTA, works to expand investments in critical services to support an older adult's ability to age in place. Building upon this plan and recognizing the growing mental health needs across the City, LiveOn NY recommends:

   - A new $7.5 million **technology** investment to expand DFTA virtual programming accessibility, through an online database, devices and connectivity. This would also create a new program to promote tech literacy among older adults by funding community-based organizations to offer this support.
   - $5 million to support growth in demand of the **case management** program to ensure all clients can be screened and receive this critical service should they be eligible. In addition, fund $28 million to support growth in demand for the **home care** program, including expanding the service hours available to older adults requiring additional support.
   - $8.7 million to expand the **Geriatric Mental Health** program that provides critical mental health services to older adults

5. **Fund an additional $2.6 Million for Support our Seniors and continued full funding for all discretionary initiatives.**

   Many programs, particularly smaller, hyper-local nonprofits that serve hard-to-reach senior populations rely on discretionary funding to ensure their communities can be served. Therefore, it is critical that all aging services discretionary initiatives, including for programs such as Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) and Social Adult Day programs, are fully funded in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

   As long-standing supporters of NORCs, the Council plays a key role in supporting this system. This year, we call on the Council **to restore its NORC Council Initiative at close to $6.4 million**. For the portion of these funds that cover nursing services, about $2.1 million, the Council should reflect the rising hourly rate of nurses from the provider, VNS, from $85 to $95 per hour. This brings the nursing funding need to $2.265 million this year. This full initiative should also be restored to support existing recipients, including State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs which do not have City contracts. While a few Council-funded NORCs received new DFTA contracts this year, we hope the Council will continue to support the ongoing development of new NORCs with this initiative.

   LiveOn NY is also requesting an additional **$2.6 million for the Support Our Senior Initiative** that would provide an additional $50,000 per district on average to better support older New Yorkers, in particular for services or programs including transportation, social isolation,

technology and more.

We believe that every New Yorker deserves the ability to age in community with access to services regardless of one's zip code or background. To truly make New York a better place to age, where we can all thrive in community, we must build a caring economy that supports all older New Yorkers regardless of their background. From a livable wage for *all* human services workers to policies and programs that support all New Yorkers, New York can become a more equitable place to age.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.

Testimony of Rui Fang Feng for New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

My name is Rui Fang Feng and I live in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. I work as a school social worker with 3 to 5 year-old students with a disability at The Guild for Exceptional Children (GEC), a preschool for special education students. I am here today to support calls for higher salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs). This is not just important to teachers and other staff at the schools; it's also very important for children with disabilities and their families who need good teachers and staff in their classrooms.

Our school has lost too many staff since I started more than 3 years ago. We have lost 9 teachers, 11 teacher assistants, 2 education supervisors, 5 speech therapists, 2 occupational therapists, 2 school psychologists, 1 school social worker and 3 secretaries. Our school struggle to hire and retain staff prior the pandemic and the pandemic made the situation even harder. We had to close 4 classrooms and a large number of students are uncovered in speech therapy due to recent turnover in Feb and April 2022. Our students and parents depend on us to provide services on the IEPs to address the developmental needs of the students. Teachers and TAs are very information to support, educate and guide the students to adjust to school routines, follow directions, acquire pre-academic skills, improve social skills, build up receptive and expressive language skills and manage behaviors. Without a stable teaching team, students is lacking consistency to acquire all the skills listed previously as efficiency as possible. The primary concerns of parents is speech delay. Parents have been calling myself and my social work colleague to follow up when their kids can receive therapy but we made them disappointed each time. We are not able to hire to cover all the staff who have been left us. Our students have been missing music lesson from a stable staff more than 3 years and have not had gym lesson for 2 years and we constantly have students are not seen by speech therapists due to shortage. We have not been able to hire a Bilingual Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin) Speaking therapists for 2.5 years. Center-based preschools run by CBO are not as competitive as DOE and private programs to attract and retain staff. Our dearest younger generation and their families suffer the most from the shortage especially given all the hardships family face since the pandemic. The City Council please address to staff shortage at center-based preschool programs and to help our families to provide salary parity for these programs to provide accessible and quality education to the preschoolers most in need of services.

Two years ago, the City agreed to increase the salaries of 3-K and Pre-K general education teachers at CBOs, but left out preschool special education teachers. Today, there is a shortage of preschool special education classes, and the City will not be able to open the classes we need if preschool special education teachers at CBOs are paid less than other teachers. I want to thank the City Council for including in your budget response the need for $30 million to increase salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs. Please ensure this funding is in the final budget this year.

Thank you for your time!

Best Regards,

Rui Fang Feng, LMSW

LES Ecology Center

Lower East Side Ecology Center
Testimony to New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022

The Lower East Side Ecology Center started its programs in 1987 by offering community based recycling opportunities for paper, bottles and cans by creating community based drop off programs in the Lower East Side. Currently, we provide opportunities for New Yorkers to compost and recycle electronic waste, environmental stewardship opportunities, and educational programming. Through our programs New Yorkers can learn how their everyday choices impact the long-term sustainability and health of our city and our neighbors.

We are testifying to urge the City to include funding in the FY23 budget for:

- Meeting the growth in demand for Community Composting programs
- Continuing the expansion of the Curbside Composting program
- Creating an achievable plan for providing a citywide Mandatory Curbside Composting program.
- Expanding access to electronic waste recycling

By supporting these four items in the FY23 budget, the city shows its support for working towards zero waste and environmental justice.

Expand funding for Community Composting

New Yorkers are eager to compost their food waste. Over the last year we have seen participation at our food scrap drop off sites grow more so than ever before. The growth being significant enough that we are nearing the capacity of our current program and would need extra funding to support our work should the growth trend continue.

We urge that the city not only maintain the FY22 level of funding, but to expand funding to account for the growth in demand for these community composting programs run by GrowNYC and the NYC Compost Project partners, which LES Ecology Center is a part of. For the last 30 years these programs provide an expansive network across the 5 boroughs of food scrap drop-off sites for NYC residents and compost education to hundreds of community groups to then build up their own community composting programs. These programs contribute to the health of our community, create green jobs and job training opportunities, and offers community engagement and education through volunteer opportunities and workshops. These programs are critical to public education around all things compost and the expansion of these programs complement the success of a curbside composting program.

Restore funding for curbside composting expansion

After over a decade of public investment in composting, the proposed cuts to the curbside composting expansion represent a massive setback to the city's efforts to establish composting programs and reach zero waste goals. The city must fully invest in a robust, equitable, and

accessible composting program and this is not achieved by removing the funding for such a program. The start and stop nature of the curbside compost over the last few years has led to more confusion, reduced participation and eroded trust in city waste diversion programs. This cannot go on like this.

The Future of Mandatory Curbside Composting

We urge the City Council not to stop here, but to introduce and pass legislation for mandatory citywide curbside organics collection program. An important step to realizing this is to allocate funding to do this important planning work to create a successful universal curbside composting service.

Organic materials make up 30% or our overall waste stream, scaling up composting by diverting this portion of the waste stream away from landfills and incineration will not only save the City money in waste disposal costs, but will bring environmental justice to communities by reducing truck traffic to waste transfer stations, create local green jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Electronic Waste Recycling

NYC residents are currently faced with few options for responsible recycling of e-waste due to the service reductions in DSNY's curbside e-waste collection program. Meanwhile, many retailers that recycle electronics either do not accept bulky items, such as televisions, or they charge a recycling fee. The FY23 budget needs to support opportunities for electronics recycling through SAFE events and the hazardous waste drop-off centers.

We also encourage the city to bring back its curbside e-waste collections. Many New Yorkers lack transportation or physical mobility to bring these often heavy electronics to a drop-off site. By bringing back curbside e-waste collection, the city can provide equitable access to electronics recycling.

Thank you for creating the opportunity to share our thoughts. We look forward to working with the City to implement these goals and create access to organics recycling through a citywide curbside program a reality.

Sincerely,
Renee Crowley
Deputy Director
Lower East Side Ecology Center

Legal Services NYC
DEMAND JUSTICE

Legal Services NYC
Written Testimony Submission for Executive Budget Hearing,
New York City Council

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify at this budget hearing. Legal Services NYC's ("LSNYC") (https://www.legalservicesnyc.org/about-us) mission is to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New York City residents. Through litigation, advocacy, education and outreach, LSNYC has advanced the interests of our clients and created systemic changes that strengthen and protect low-income communities. We work to protect the rights of veterans, immigrants, the LGBTIQA+ community, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable constituents. We are deeply appreciative to the City Council for its many years of support for legal services, and for its championship of our mission and our work.

The Education Rights practice at LSNYC assists hundreds of New York City schoolchildren and their families each year to ensure access to education. We support English Language Learners (ELLs), limited English proficient (LEP) students their parents, and other vulnerable student populations and their families with a host of education issues including school enrollment, language access, special education, disciplinary proceedings, transportation, disability accommodations, and academic intervention services. Over 80% of our student clients are children of color and/or immigrants ranging in age from 3 to 21. Our clients experience a range of disabilities, including learning, developmental, physical, behavioral and emotional, as well as the disabling impacts of trauma/adverse childhood experiences that affects their ability to learn and grow academically and socially. Our goal is to support vulnerable populations by improving educational outcomes and removing systemic inequities.

As you know, this is the third year that New York City schools have been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, most recently by the Omicron and other COVID-19 variants. The pandemic has hit students in vulnerable populations significantly hard. These populations include students with disabilities who were unable to meaningfully benefit from remote learning and continue to struggle with the return to in-person learning; students from households where English is not the first language; and students from households where technological and academic skills have not been available over the last two years.

Throughout the pandemic, LSNYC has continued to advocate and protect students' access to their education. Our education advocates represent parents citywide, at IEP meetings, administrative hearings, and mediations, and in suspension hearings to protect the academic rights of their children. We have secured special education supports and services necessary for our clients with disabilities to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and have successfully secured compensatory education services for clients to make up for special

education instruction and services the Department of Education failed to provide during the pandemic. We have advocated with schools to ensure that families are able to access information and necessary resources for their children's well-being in this time.

I am here today speaking as not only a legal services advocate, but as a parent leader in education reform, and as someone who attended several New York City schools throughout the five boroughs. I went through so many schools, and in each one I felt adrift and alone. How different might my education have been had a guidance counselor or social worker been available to me as a resource, to guide me academically, and support me emotionally! Now, as a parent to a child attending New York City schools, I continue to see how the inequities in our public-school system impact children and why it is essential that we prioritize healing centered practices within our schools.

It is no secret by now that the pandemic has shown how trauma can have far-reaching impact on the cognitive and behavioral development of children. All too often students who have been exposed to trauma or adverse childhood experiences ("ACEs") engage in behaviors that educators interpret as defiance or aggression. A growing body of research has concluded that punitive responses to students coping with trauma exacerbates those behaviors.

And yet we still see school staff responding to students in a punitive manner, with little regard for a student's disability, personal history, or underlying or mitigating circumstances of each incident. Take for example the story of M, a 15-year-old student in Staten Island who was suspended for allegedly pushing school staff when she tried to enter the school's cafeteria. The school failed to acknowledge the pattern of prior incidents that had occurred upon her return to in-person learning, and insisted that she be disciplined without regard to her disability or its impact on her emotional functioning.

M's suspension is just one example of a steady uptick in school staff implementing excessive, and often unnecessary, discipline since schools returned to in-person learning in September 2021. Our office recently helped an eleven-year old student with a disability in Brooklyn who was suspended for behaviors directly related to his disability. The school staff, including members of the child's IEP team, failed to recognize the direct connection, but with our help, the student was transferred to another school and is now receiving the social emotional support he needs in order to participate in school. Our efforts in this case are reflective of how critically important our services are in ensuring students' rights are protected when they face suspension or exclusion from their class.

Over the last three years, LSNYC has led the advocacy for more appropriate responses to students impacted by trauma and ACEs with the Healing Centered Schools Working Group. As the aforementioned experiences with school discipline make clear, school staff needs training to respond with appropriate supports to those students coping with stressful experiences in their lives. Our efforts to bring trauma-responsive and healing-centered practices to NYC schools have become critical since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the DOE has recognized the importance of addressing trauma, and the need for healing practices in schools by

offering the Working Group's Roadmap as a resource in the prior school year,[1] and has implemented an important Wellness Healing Ambassador and Healing Centered Pilot Schools programs this year, it is clear that there is a long road ahead as we strive to educate staff, parents, and students on the need for healing-centered approaches as part of the education recovery plan for students.

In addition to helping students with disabilities, and those facing school discipline, LSNYC advocates have witnessed low-income English Language Learners (ELL) and limited English proficient (LEP) students suffer higher rates of learning loss due to the digital divide. Statistically, these immigrant families were less likely to have access to computers and high-speed internet and have overall lower digital skills and training than their English-fluent counterparts.[2] Moreover, students from households where English is not the primary language experienced additional learning loss and academic setbacks due to the DOE's inadequate interpretation and translation services for limited English proficient parents.[3] With roughly 396,000 students (42%) speaking a language other than English at home, the wide reaching, and long term consequence, of this loss on immigrant communities cannot be ignored.

These students have fallen behind and require systems in place to ensure they are getting the language support they need, are in the appropriate classrooms, and in some circumstances can receive compensatory services and support to help them make progress. Take N., a nine-year old special education student in Queens who struggled to both learn English and keep up in school these last three years. Remote learning made learning English all but impossible and she grew frustrated and stopped participating in all her other classes. Now, having returned to in person learning, she has struggled to keep up with assignments, stay engaged with the work, and develop language skills. With the help of our advocates, N. was placed in a more appropriate classroom setting with increased English language learner support, and is slowly making progress in school.

The need for LSNYC's education services far outstrips our resources. Our representation and advice have made a positive impact in low-income and communities of color but the need, exacerbated by the inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, is great, and our capacity is limited. With a staff of eight attorneys, one paralegal, and one social worker, our city-wide Education Project can only assist a small volume of clients directly. Therefore, we work to address systemic issues through litigation and policy advocacy designed to make an impact beyond our individual clients.

Our recommendations center around the vulnerable communities we serve and are rooted in equity.

Recommendations:

[1] *New York City Department of Education Bridge to School: Strengthening Community and Fostering Resiliency,* https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/bridge-to-school-plan-08272020

[2] *See* Office of the Comptroller of the City of N.Y., Overcoming NYC's Digital Divide in the 2020 Census at 5 (July 2019), https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wpcontent/uploads/documents/Census_and_The_City_Overcoming_NYC_Digital_Divide_Census.pdf ("2019 Comptroller Report").

1) **Expand assistance to students with disabilities and students who have fallen behind grade level to receive compensatory educational services.** Many low-income students were academically delayed prior to the pandemic and the transition to remote learning. We must ensure that students harmed by lost educational opportunities receive the services they need to make academic progress. Tutoring supports and other services are desperately needed for these students who lost out on their education during the pandemic and are now further behind.

2) **Expand assistance to students who have experienced trauma and will need social/emotional support.** Countless students and their families have experienced food insecurity, loss of income, isolation, sickness, increased racial hostility, and death during the pandemic. Students impacted by the trauma of COVID-19 and those experiencing emotional vulnerabilities will need increased resources, services and programs to address their social-emotional and developmental needs. Additionally, investments in mental health services are necessary to meet the higher-level needs of those students more severely impacted by both the pandemic and the long history of poverty and racism.

3) **Expand assistance to students and parents who do not speak English as their first language.** English Language Learner (ELL) students have struggled to learn while their Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents have faced numerous obstacles navigating the school landscape, both online and in person. LSNYC has a lawsuit pending in Federal court regarding the NYC DOE's failure to provide mandated interpretation and translation to LEP parents. Ensuring adequate resources for ELL students and their families is particularly important now as they face these ongoing challenges with remote and blended learning.

4) **Expand assistance to reduce the digital divide.** Continue our advocacy to promote concrete steps to bridge the digital divide and to ensure that students have functioning devices, high speed internet, and training and support to ensure remote access capability for all New York City public school children.

LSNYC is working hard to address the issues raised above, and asks that you provide $500,000 to support our Access to Education Project, which will deliver legal services designed to help children catch up and keep up with their educations so that they are not further hurt by this pandemic. Our representation and advice have made a positive impact in low-income and communities of color, but these students also need access to fine arts education, sports, and other extracurricular activities in order to overcome inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our services will help kids with special needs and disabilities, will provide language access advocacy for ELL students and their limited English proficient parents, and will work with the schools to implement restorative healing programs so that all students can be responded to with measures that are supportive and not punitive.

LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE WORKING POOR

City Fiscal Year 2023

City Council Executive Budget Hearing

May 25, 2022

Introduction

Thank you Chair Ayala, Committee on General Welfare and to the New York City Council at large for the long-standing support of the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition. My name is Janet Miller. I am an Executive Vice President at CAMBA Legal Services, one of the five members of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition that includes Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC), Mobilization for Justice, NMIC, and TakeRoot Justice. The Coalition was created 18 years ago, with support from the City Council, to address the civil legal needs of working poor and other low-income New Yorkers whose income is slightly higher than the poorest New Yorkers. Their income renders them ineligible for free civil legal services, and yet they often are one missed paycheck away from facing eviction or other dire consequences. LSWP's services are critical to allowing working New Yorkers to maintain financial independence and preserving economic stability in communities across New York City.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the LSWP initiative was funded at $3,205,000 from the City Council, with each of the five Coalition members receiving $455,000. In FY 23, CAMBA Legal Services, as a member of the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition, is requesting an allocation of $600,000 from the City Council to support civil legal services provided to working poor New Yorkers. A $600,000 request reflects a restoration of $455,000 allocated in FY 22 plus an enhancement to support legal services in the areas of employment, immigration, consumer and benefits law and other areas of civil practice outside of housing court matters covered by the Right to Counsel initiative. Additional legal services in these areas are needed to support working poor New Yorkers, particularly as they were and continue to be disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working poor New Yorkers, who struggle to make ends meet, can face catastrophic consequences as a result of a civil legal problem, such as not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime; identity theft; the freezing of a bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they did not even know about; or being denied public benefits to which they are entitled. The consequence of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. These working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor if they do not have access to lawyers to assist them. Our legal services organizations represent these New Yorkers in all five boroughs in housing, consumer, foreclosure, immigration, benefits, and employment matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

Consequences of COVID-19 on the Working Poor

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, working poor New Yorkers continue to disproportionately face legal problems in unprecedented numbers. Even before the COVID-19

crisis, tens of thousands of New Yorkers were hanging on by a thread to their homes, their families, their well-being, and their dignity. As the crisis has laid bare, neighborhoods of color and immigrant communities across the City have been especially hit hard by health and economic disparities. The crisis has resulted in unprecedented problems related to unemployment insurance, as well as workplace safety concerns, price gouging, and scams, and has caused many New Yorkers to incur unexpected debt, which will mean an increase in debt collection litigation, and for some, bankruptcy. Those working poor who are adversely affected will need members of our Coalition to advise them, help them navigate various complex legal processes, and fight their legal battles by representing them in the cases against them, and by advocating for them in the multiple systems that impact them. But for our legal services, the working poor community would be detrimentally impacted, and the cascading effect of not being able to support working poor families at this time will quickly lead to greater economic and food insecurity, homelessness, poorer health outcomes, job loss and overall instability.

Conclusion

This Council's funding for Legal Services for the Working Poor is the only funding that specifically targets the civil legal needs of working people to ensure continued self-sufficiency for families struggling to survive in New York City. If we are not able to meet the legal service needs of the many people who seek our help, particularly those affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the human consequences will be dire: immigrant families will leave their homes because their landlords threaten to report them to ICE; children whose families have been wrongly denied unemployment benefits, public assistance, or SNAP/food stamps will go hungry; families whose homes could be saved through aggressive foreclosure or eviction defense will become homeless;

people with disabilities will be denied the disability benefits they need to live with dignity; and workers who have been cheated of wages by unscrupulous employers will go unpaid.

For the above reasons, it is vitally important that the City Council not only continue to support this flexible funding stream, but increase it so that the legal service organizations are able to meet the needs of their clients by providing a diverse array of civil legal services to working poor New Yorkers. We urge the Council to fully fund civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for the Working Poor allocation in particular. This year, we ask that the City Council restore FY 22 funding levels of the Legal Services for the Working Poor initiative and consider enhancing funding for the 5 Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition members. The positive benefits of civil legal services funding for the city's budget and its economy make it the right choice for economic, social, and humanitarian reasons. Thank you.

Make the Road New York
FY2023 Executive Budget Testimony
New York City Council - Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022

Good Afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Kenny Minaya and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Make the Road New York. I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to share our perspective on the FY2023 Executive Budget, particularly how it will impact our youth, immigrant, and working-class communities of color.

Make the Road New York (MRNY) is a non-profit community-based membership organization with over 25,000 low-income members dedicated to building the power of immigrant and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. MRNY's three community centers in the New York City area provide a broad array of support to thousands of New Yorkers in Jackson Heights, Bushwick, Port Richmond, and surrounding communities every year.

I would like to thank the City Council for past support of our programming which has been essential, particularly during these immensely difficult past couple of years. But I would also like to highlight several areas of service, supported by city funding, that play a key role in our overall strategy to support and uplift immigrant and working-class families that must be preserved or expanded.

Community Schools

Last year, the Department of Education's (DOE) new funding formula for community schools resulted in a $9.16M funding cut for 52 community schools. This cut was ultimately restored because the city recognized the harm that would befall affected students if the cut remained and services decreased. We are extremely concerned that last year's intervention was only a stopgap measure and that the FY2023 Executive Budget does not address this funding gap in a permanent

way. **We echo the Speaker's call for DOE to restore and baseline $9.16M for all 52 community schools facing cuts.**

Community Schools have a proven success record. Their relevance and necessity have only become magnified. Community schools provide critical services to some of our city's most vulnerable youth, especially as they struggle to re-engage with school after the pandemic's disruptions. MRNY is the non-profit community-based partner at the Bushwick Campus Community School and we know first-hand the harm that our youth will experience if the proposed cuts of nearly 40% are implemented. These cuts must be permanently restored.

Support for Low-Wage Immigrant Workers

Every year, an estimated 2.1 million New Yorkers are victims of wage theft, robbed of $3.2B in wages and benefits they are owed.[1] In New York City alone, low-road employers steal nearly $1B per year from low-wage workers, including by paying workers less than the minimum wage, not paying nonexempt employees time-and-a-half for overtime hours, stealing tips, or requiring off-the-clock work. Immigrant workers are even more vulnerable to workplace violations and face much higher barriers to enforcing their rights.

Despite strong laws on the books, enforcement has simply not been robust enough to ensure that workers are getting the benefit of higher wage and benefits standards that the city and state have passed in recent years. Effective enforcement of basic workplace protections requires the city to commit consistent resources for legal services and outreach for immigrant workers so they can enforce their rights. MRNY and our partners in the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC) fill the gap in services for low-wage immigrant workers. We are able to do this primarily through city funding, especially the Low Wage Worker Initiative (LWWI).

Created in 2019, LWWI is the only dedicated city-funded program that provides free, individually-tailored, employment civil legal services and case management support to low-wage workers in NYC. The LWWI has helped low-wage workers recover millions of dollars in stolen wages from their employers, fight sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination, protect their right to paid leave, and safeguard their right to protest violations free of retaliation. **But HRA has not yet committed to sustaining this funding stream for FY2023 and beyond.** The uncertain future of the LWWI places CILEC's work at risk and workers' well-being at jeopardy, just as the need for employment legal services has never been more urgent.

Separately we urge the City Council to restore discretionary funding for Low Wage Worker Support (LWWS), a citywide initiative. The LWWS provides funding for outreach and organizing efforts to low-wage workers. Unfortunately, last year, the Council decreased funding for the LLWS. Sustained, dedicated city funding for low wage essential workers in need of employment-related civil legal services is critical to our city's economy and the well-being of its most essential workers. **The Council must ensure that the Administration commits to increase funding for LLWI at the $4M level and the Council must increase discretionary**

[1] Center for Popular Democracy, *By A Thousand Cuts: The Complex Face of Wage Theft in New York* (November 2015).

funding to $1M per year for outreach and organizing to these workers. Without ongoing robust and sustainable funding, our organizations' ability to continue to effectively address the employment-related legal needs of the city's low wage essential workers, and retain and hire new staff for this crucial work, is in jeopardy.

Adult Literacy

In New York City, there are 2.2 million adults who lack English language proficiency, a high school diploma, or both. Over 75% of them 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.

MRNY serves approximately 700 students a year across our Staten Island, Queens, and Brooklyn offices. Since about half of our grants covering NYC come from DYCD, MRNY's adult literacy program is especially vulnerable to future instability.

Instead of proposed cuts, MRNY joins the City Council in calling for the following investments in adult literacy: First, **the city must double the baselined funding for adult literacy programs to $27M** including a restoration of the $1.7M that was cut in the Preliminary Budget to continue DYCD's Adult Literacy case management pilot; second, **the city must increase discretionary funding for the Adult Literacy Pilot Project to $5M**; and third, the City Council must **renew the $4M allocated to the Adult Literacy Initiative in FY 22**.

These investments will better serve over 2 million new yorkers with limited English proficiency, no high school diploma, or both, and better cover the costs of the work so that community based organizations don't have to choose between financial stability and critical community services provision for the long term.

NYPD Budget

MRNY calls for cuts to the NYPD expense budget of at least $1 billion and that all savings be redirected to non-police health and safety solutions.

We are also calling for a full divestment and complete dismantling of school policing infrastructure, culture, and practices in NYC schools and the reinvestment of those funds into support for youth. This includes, but is not limited to, removing all police personnel, metal detectors, and all forms of invasive surveillance equipment from school buildings, as well as eliminating zero tolerance policies that push students into the school to prison and deportation pipeline. The over $400M spent on the NYPD's School Policing division should be redirected to fund the resources, staff and restorative practices that support every young person to learn and grow. No new funding should be allocated for new or existing student surveillance and scanning equipment. Nor should the NYPD fill the vacant 800 positions in the School Policing division.

Lastly, the city should reallocate $12M in funding from the NYPD Vice unit to services for individuals involved in the sex trades. City funding should be used to support people in the sex trades instead of being used to make arrests. The reallocated funds should go to the COIN Clinic housed in the Callen Lorde facilities; increasing access to health and wellness services, competent legal representation, and educational opportunities; and to non-profit organizations working with individuals involved in the sex trades.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by again thanking Chair Brannan and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify. MRNY looks forward to working with you to ensure that the adopted FY2023 budget reflects our collective commitment to social justice and serving the needs of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by Barry Grove, Executive Producer
May 25, 2022

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. I am writing on behalf of Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC), a not-for-profit theatre company founded in 1970 and dedicated to producing new plays and musicals and sharing them with broad audiences. In a normal season, we present a repertoire of eight plays across our three stages, one Broadway and two Off-Broadway, that are attended by over 200,000 people. Each year, MTC Education connects about 2,500 students and family members with free theatre and playwriting programs. We offer residencies in 30 high schools and alternative schools around the City, as well as community engagement, summer and afterschool programs.

We applaud the Mayor's and the Council's commitment to helping New York City and our economy recover equitably and inclusively. We continue to strive to make our productions as accessible as possible to NYC residents, who form the majority of our audiences. Ticket prices for our Broadway theatre are approximately 40% lower than the Broadway average, and we are offering over 28,000 free or highly subsidized tickets in FY22 alone. We are also focused on ensuring strong representation of BIPOC and traditionally underrepresented artists on our stages.

MTC Education aims specifically to connect young people from communities historically underrepresented in the arts to theatre, and about 33% of our students are attending professional theatre for the first time. Typically, over 90% of our students are BIPOC, and 65% are experiencing poverty. We have worked with young people overcoming involvement with the justice system for over 25 years.

MTC's theatres, rehearsal studios, office, and website are ADA accessible. We offer wheelchair seating; assistive listening and hearing-aid compatible devices; front orchestra seating for people with limited vision; Braille and large print Playbills; live captioning and audio description at select performances; and on-demand open captioning and audio description at Broadway productions.

Following a season of virtual programming in 2020-21, we were thrilled to welcome audiences back to our theatres this season for an exciting season of six compelling plays. Although our productions this season have drawn rave reviews from critics and audiences alike, reopening has been extremely challenging financially. Because most of our budget goes to creating the work on our stages, our expenses rebounded to nearly pre-pandemic levels almost immediately after we reopened our theatres. Unfortunately, income is returning much more slowly, as some audience members are reluctant to come back to the theatre. We are also spending more than $250,000 on COVID testing, PPE, and related costs this season. If it were not for Federal relief funding through the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant and PPP loan programs, MTC would be facing an operating deficit of nearly $9 million this season.

While Federal relief programs have been a lifeline in FY22, most of them will not be available in FY23, and we are currently projecting a large operating deficit next season. We will need the City's support to continue creating jobs and making theatre accessible to New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds as we continue to recover from the pandemic. Specifically, we urge you to support increased funding for cultural organizations, as well as to advocate for renewal of the Federal Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program. We also need the City's help attracting audiences to theatres, including new audiences as well as veteran theatregoers. In addition, we encourage the City to support arts education funding, both through DCLA as well as other channels, to help ensure young New Yorkers can access the City's cultural resources and cultivate future audiences. Finally, we urge you to support cultural capital funding, which will not only support construction jobs but also build a foundation for long-term recovery.

MARINE PARK ALLIANCE

4/30/2022

Mayor Eric Adams

City Hall, New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams,

It is paramount that I share with you the concerns of my organization and the constituency it advocates for, particularly regarding the lack of resources and support parks receive to fulfill their critical role in our communities.

The city's parks have received inadequate funding for over four decades, and the meager funds that are allocated to them are inequitably distributed. Marine Park, the largest city park in Brooklyn has nearly 800 acres of green space across its natural grasslands, salt marshes and its recreational areas. It has a range of uses including leisure and sporting activities, ecological conservation, and outdoor recreation. With proper support it could stand alongside the likes of Central and Prospect Parks as a preeminent NYC destination. Yet it has nowhere near the needed amount of staffing and upkeep for a park of its size and potential.

As things stand, even if it were to receive additional staffing and resources, this would likely come at the expense and to the detriment of another city park. Marine Park Alliance works hard to bridge this gap, providing volunteer programs to maintain the park and free recreational and cultural programming to enrich the experience of all park visitors. Yet MPA and other charitable organizations that champion Marine Park can only do so much. For a thriving, healthy green space, services like these should be ensured through the city's budget.

Furthermore, as a vital point of connection between social service providers and the people who depend on those services, parks should have an ample budget, not face steep budget cuts that result in the loss of critical Parks jobs and services. The Covid-19 pandemic has only underscored the need for parks and shown just how stretched their already thin resources are.

I implore you to change this disheartening status quo - please dedicate 1% of the budget to New York City's Parks.

Sincerely,

Maria Carro - D'Alessandro, Board Chair

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MEDICARE RIGHTS CENTER

TESTIMONY

ON THE FY 2023 NYC EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Submitted to

The City Council Committee on Finance

MAY 25, 2022

NEW YORK, NY

SUBMITTED BY:

FRED RICCARDI, PRESIDENT
friccardi@medicarerights.org

Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan, and distinguished members of the City Council, I am Fred Riccardi, President of the Medicare Rights Center. Medicare Rights is a nonprofit organization that, since 1989, has worked to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs, and public policy initiatives. We testify today in support of our FY 2023 budget request of $200,000 to fund our efforts to maximize awareness and access to health benefits throughout all five boroughs.

Half of New Yorkers with Medicare live on incomes of $26,200 or less annually, and these individuals on average **spend more than one-quarter of their incomes** on health care. Many New Yorkers of color live on much less and spend much more on care. Unfortunately, many of these residents are often unaware of, or unable to access the benefits they are entitled to. It is our goal to help bridge that gap. Each individual Medicare Rights can help enroll into a Medicare Savings Program ("MSP") and the federal Extra Help prescription drug subsidy saves a minimum of $6,700 in out-of-pocket health care costs annually and gains access to needed care.

To that end, Medicare Rights provides multilingual services and resources to people annually with Medicare, family, caregivers, and professionals as they navigate their health insurance, appeal coverage denials, and try to determine which coverage best suits their health needs. I thank the City Council for its history of support for Medicare Rights, which has allowed us to continue providing critical counseling to New Yorkers with limited incomes, including older residents and those with disabilities, around their Medicare health care rights, cost-assistance programs, and other options. In total, our work has delivered $65 million in benefits to City residents and their families.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic our services have been in high demand. Many eligible families include caregivers and frontline workers whom require and deserve as much assistance as they can get to stay healthy. Our counselors have strived to meet the need, answering thousands of questions for city residents in all five boroughs over the past year. To that end, Medicare Rights saved city residents more than $6.9 million *last year alone*, through benefits enrollment and working to improve access to needed health care.

As the health and economic effects of the pandemic persist, Medicare Rights is aiming to enroll as many New Yorkers as possible in Medicare cost-saving benefits, including MSPs and Extra Help. Medicare Rights championed the effort to increase Medicare Savings Program eligibility and the Governor raised its income eligibility in the recent state budget to expand access to Medicaid for older adults and people with disabilities. Benefits will be extended to people with income up to 186 percent of the federal poverty level, up from 135 percent. That is a substantial increase in monthly income from $1,529 to $2,107 for single individuals (for married couples, the comparable increase is from $2,060 to $2,838). In addition, Medicare Rights expects that over 200,000+ New York City residents, previously shut out of benefits, will now be eligible for an MSP and Medicaid under new state guidelines expanding eligibility. To ensure that older adults and people with disabilities who qualify for these cost-saving programs receive them, we must increase our outreach and enrollment efforts.

With your support this year, $200,000 in City funding would allow Medicare Rights to expand support staff and improve local access to benefits in all five boroughs by 1) providing in-person

and citywide telephonic counseling, screening, and enrollment assistance, and 2) building on its decades of neighborhood-based support to train city community-based organizations on how to enroll clients in needed benefits, and 3) directly enrolling individuals. This funding would enable Medicare Rights to not only to provide one-on-one counseling and casework assistance to New Yorkers with Medicare, but also to support more than 200 city organizations serving people with Medicare. Through our work with these Community Partners, we empower city professionals to answer Medicare questions and process cost-saving program applications for their own clients, increasing capacity in all five boroughs and strengthening city infrastructure to serve some of our most vulnerable residents. Last year, we provided new trainings to 37 organizations throughout the City.

In summation, we thank you for your consideration of the Medicare Rights Center's budget request for $200,000 in citywide funding. Given that the pandemic has changed how New Yorkers navigate health care and increased the need for enrollment into Medicare cost-saving programs, an investment in Medicare Rights is an investment in the future of our individual neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

On behalf of the Medicare Rights Center, I thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony. I will gladly provide more information or respond to any questions you may have.

Norah Yahya
Sr. Government Affairs Officer

T 212 650 2122
Norah.Yahya@metmuseum.org

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Executive Budget Testimony
The New York City Council
FY 2023

Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Ossé and the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Groups for the opportunity to submit testimony.

The Met is known for its iconic permanent collection spanning over 5,000 years of artifacts, objects and art from around the world, and its current, must-see exhibits, but the Museum also serves as a unique destination for training programs, educational opportunities for all ages and abilities as well as supporting world class research divisions in preservation, conservation, and archeology. Further, the Met's multi-disciplinary offerings are available both virtually and in-person, and in recent years, brought nearly 3 million attendees to over 30,000 tours and events.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is proud to be a member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a coalition of 34 non-profit museums, performing art centers, historical societies, zoos and botanical gardens across the five boroughs with an espoused commitment of serving all New Yorkers. The Met, like many of our partner arts and cultural organizations in the City, has faced challenges due to the pandemic and subsequent economic fall-out with lingering effects that are likely impact us and our partners for years to come. As a result, the Met has faced a $150M revenue shortfall due to the closures during the pandemic, and faced an attendance drop off of 80 percent, with previous visitor numbers at about 7 million annually.

Despite a healthy outlook for the tourism industry and visitors beginning to return in numbers more like those of the years prior to the pandemic, arts and cultural organizations are long overdue an investment that reflects their corresponding importance as drivers of economic development in New York City. According to recent statistics from the NYC comptroller, the creative sector in the city contributes $110 billion to the regional economy, comprising roughly 13% of the economic output of New York City. The Met itself is a robust contributor to these figures, with the museum directly

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

employing over 1600 individuals, many of which are unionized, and attracting millions of visitors annually.

It is clear however that the Met and our partner organizations in the arts will need stronger support from our counterparts in government to continue to meet the changing landscape and uncertainty that persists in this time. The Met, like many others, was not eligible for much of the targeted relief program funding. A strong investment in the arts to support organizations of all sizes that serve all audiences is long overdue and critically necessary to ensure that these organizations can thrive and serve their communities in New York City. We urge you to support the Cultural Institutions Group ask of $100M for FY23, comprised of a baseline $50M for the CIGs and CDF groups, to help ensure that the recovery is equitable one, and that the economic health of the city remains as diverse as the offerings that make New York the unrivaled arts and culture destination that it is.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

Montefiore
Inspired Medicine

Thank you for providing this space to advocate for our initiative, I'm speaking on behalf of the Check Hep C Program at Montefiore Medical Center which has been providing comprehensive services to hepatitis C patients in the Bronx since 2014. City Council has supported our program since 2017. I would like to ask for your continued support of the NYC Council's Viral Hepatitis Initiative by increasing the City Council's Schedule C funding to programs that address Viral Hepatitis in NYC. According to NYDOH, the Bronx has the highest rate of new HCV infections (76.2 ppl per 100,000). The goal of the Hepatitis C Treatment Network is to identifying patient with chronic HCV infection and engage them in HCV care and to eliminate this disease in the Bronx. Our program combines HCV care and treatment, primary care, mental health, social services, and substance use treatment.

With the amount of $111,454, the funding will cover our full time Care Coordinator, Program Director and Medical Director positions and incentives and resources to encourage patients to remain engaged during treatment and achieve cure. This will meet the growing need for Hepatitis C services in our Bronx community. During 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we enrolled 154 HCV patients, and 70 initiated HCV treatment. Our team identified and addressed barriers to HCV care while minimizing the risk of exposure to COVID-19, for example, we arranged medication delivery or curbside pickup, this was valuable especially for patients who immunocompromised. The Montefiore Check Hep C Program would like to continue to provide high quality to the Bronx community.

Thanks to the dedicated support of New York City Council, the Viral Hepatitis Initiative has supported our program in the Bronx offering screening, care, education, prevention, and treatment of Hep C. However, it is imperative that we have your continued support of the Viral Hepatitis Initiative if we want to achieve elimination of viral hepatitis in New York City by 2030. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kiara Lora, Program Director
kialora@montefiore.org
1-844-CURE-HCV

Mount Sinai

SAVI
Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program

Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearings

TO: Finance Committee Chair, Councilmember Justin Brannan
FROM: Angela Fernandez, Assistant Director, Mount Sinai's Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention (SAVI) Program
DATE: May 25, 2022

Dear Councilmember Brannan,

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on Finance on behalf of Mount Sinai Hospital's Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention (SAVI) Program and the NYC Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI). The Mount Sinai SAVI Program is dedicated to validating, healing and empowering survivors and their supporters to lead safe, healthy lives through advocacy, free and confidential counseling, and public education. SAVI was founded in 1984 and from its inception, has been a program that has recognized how paramount it is to provide free services that address the needs of survivors who have experienced sexual and/or intimate partner violence (IPV), especially those with limited resources or limited access to them. SAVI not only provides high-quality direct clinical services to survivors of various forms of sexual and/or intimate partner violence and their loved ones, but strives to improve system responses to survivors, raise awareness about the power/control dynamics in which these forms of violence are rooted, and advocate for policy and legislative changes on behalf of survivors and their communities across Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn.

Several years ago, SAVI joined four other NYC-based sexual violence intervention programs to form the citywide Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI), together serving over 6,500 clients annually across all five boroughs. Each of our programs serves a unique population under the SAI umbrella and collectively serve survivors of sexual assault, sexual abuse and sex trafficking, of all ages and across the racial, gender and socioeconomic spectrum representing the full diversity of our city. SAI's mission is to support victims in their healing and support positive systemic changes that make sexual violence less likely to occur and ensure that support for victims is survivor-centered, holistic and trauma-informed.

We understand you have challenging decisions ahead as there are many important issues that New Yorkers are facing, and we are extremely grateful for the discretionary funding we have

received over the years that has made many of our services possible. We also know that for many of our sexual assault survivors there are other social determinants of health that impede their ability to access much needed and deserved services that can drastically improve their healing and recovery. There has been important discussion about social justice, racial and gender equity, and economic mobility as the COVID-19 pandemic shined a light on what has been called the "tale of two cities" in NYC. Unfortunately, we have also seen this in the populations and communities most impacted by sexual and intimate partner violence. The National Center to End Sexual Violence noted that nearly 40% of rape crisis centers saw an increase in demand for services since the beginning of the pandemic. In 2021 New York State reported 75% of programs saw an increase in requests for services and noted higher demand for more complex survivor needs and longer waiting lists for trauma-informed therapy, counseling services, and support groups.

Clearly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased needs and compounded the trauma, adverse outcomes and confusion experienced by survivors. The strain on our health systems, law enforcement and courts has slowed or changed many survivors' access to services and legal remedies. Our SAI programs have adapted to support survivors with counseling and up-to-date guidance for navigating modified and complex city services to support their physical and emotional health, their safety, and potential paths to justice.

Our ability to provide accessible, high quality services impacts not only the recovery from sexual violence for which people seek us out but also allows for survivors to address the multitude of needs their victimization exacerbates and to which there are often barriers to resources. Those needs have only grown and intensified as has the need for us to be available to as many survivors as possible to strengthen and support New York City in *its* recovery as well. Therefore, in order to continue to provide services with the breadth and depth needed to be able to respond to the increased volume and complexity of our survivor communities, I write to today to ask for the Finance Committee's continued support to insure we have the financial resources to meet the challenges we face now and which undoubtedly lay ahead.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Humbly yours,

Angela Fernandez
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MWA
MUSIC WORKERS ALLIANCE

May 18, 2022

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Music Worker's Alliance in regard to the City Council Budget hearings and Committee of Finance held jointly with the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations and the Committee on Parks and Recreation. We are a Music Worker center created with the shared purpose to empower music workers by engaging in collective action to create a community where music is valued financially and culturally, and music workers benefit and achieve dignity in our lives.

Over the past two years, members of Music Workers Alliance have witnessed the failure of the theory that funding venues and major institutions will "trickle down" to performing artists. Only a fraction of COVID affected presenters used the massive SVOG ($2B for NY State venues) funding or NYSCA ($100M in 2021) increases to employ performing artists. Many are reported to have spent funds on capital improvements, further grant seeking, or other institutional goals, while still enforcing "force majeure" clauses leaving artists who canceled due to COVID, to absorb transportation, hotels and other sunken costs without pay.

NYC's performing artists continue to suffer the effects of COVID disruptions. Positive tests still trigger mandatory quarantine, force majeure cancellations of contracted work without notice or pay, and may still prevent boarding return flights to the US, leaving musicians stranded on tour at their own expense. Major markets such as China, New Zealand, Japan, remain closed. While investors remain skittish and ticket buyers remain wary.

We ask that the City Council, the Mayor, and the Department of Cultural Affairs consider the working artists who are the bedrock of this City's cultural economy. MWA proposes the following as a means to help rejuvenate and sustain the working class of performance artists:

1. City Artist Corps that Prioritizes Working Artists and Those Who Lost Work During COVID

A reinvestment in New York City Artist Corps of $50 million that prioritizes funding for performing artists: music, dance, and theater. State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli reported that art forms depending on live performance were the most disrupted by COVID-19, and as such, those should be prioritized for funding. This fund should prioritize working artists, particularly those whose work was actually disrupted by COVID-19. The 2021 NYC Artist Corps contained no merit based, prior work, or 'work lost to COVID' criteria. Marginalizing working artists by funding the non-covid affected, and those who never worked or lost work in the first place, does little to

“stabilize” our community, restore NYC’s music economy, or provide our culturally underserved communities with the excellent art, or access to careers in the arts, they deserve.

2. Racially and Economically Equitable Music and Arts Policy

The biggest obstacle to the participation of members of economically marginalized communities in NYC’s music economy is the barrier posed by low paying or non-paying work. NYC, birthplace of hip hop, punk, salsa, many jazz movements and DJ, techno, and EDM subcultures, is already home to a working music community of enormous racial and cultural diversity. If we want to enable these music workers to access sustainable opportunities, we must ensure that these creators reap a fair share of our culture’s benefits. NYC can further this goal by enacting laws that ensure all presenting organizations that receive New York City public arts funding adhere to the following:

- Honor contracts with artists in the event of force majeure venue closures by permitting the substitution of Live Streaming where live events have been forbidden, or paying a minimum of 50% of the agreed on fee for events canceled on less than five weeks notice.
- Ensure no performer receives less than a prevailing wage minimum of $250.00 per performance and a wage minimum of $500 for band / performance leaders.
- Require that a minimum of 40% of all City public arts funding must be paid as salaries / performance fees to performers
- Enact a prevailing wage and living wage code for music workers through the comptroller's office, in-line with The Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, for when music workers are employed through City agencies, City service contractors and subcontractors or when any entity is using City funds

3. A New NYC Music Survey

New York City’s status as a world class music city is not determined solely by the quality of the finished products presented on its local stages, but by its function as a key center for the industry that produces those products. That industry’s markets are global. Music workers' largest single source of income is from touring, much of it Global, which both depends on recorded product for its promotion, and in turn functions to promote recorded product. Local NYC live performance generates a fraction of actual NYC music producers’ income. And yet, the 2017 MoME study contains almost no reference to the labor force of creatives that make up the music economy or to the global touring that provides the majority of their income.

NYC policy makers can’t plan effectively while lacking key information on how music producers’ economies function. Funding local presenters is a very important PART of Cultural Economic recovery, but this alone won’t restore productivity if it ignores the hidden bulk of music's economic iceberg and chief sustenance of the local working musicians/DJ’s communities: our export economy. A failure to recognize and help stabilize this sector will leave NY’s economy as impoverished as Texas and Iowa’s would be if they attempted to manage a global disruption in their oil and wheat industries exclusively by funding their states’ local gas stations and bakeries.

We ask that a survey be conducted from the City's comptroller's office to measure NYC's indie music economy that employs the large majority of working musicians/DJ's/techs. This survey must be conducted by qualified independent sociologists, not professional consultants who are politically beholden to powerful stakeholders and design surveys to produce outcomes favored by those stakeholders. The survey should include working indie musician/DJ voice in the selection of the group conducting the survey and in the questions and methodology.

We ask that the City Council, the Mayor, and Department of Cultural Affairs consider the working artists who are the bedrock of this City's cultural economy when determining who and what gets funded in the 2022-23 City Budget.

Sincerely,
Music Workers Alliance

RE: Investments to Address a Second Pandemic, the Mental Health Crisis, in NYC

Good Morning Chair Brannan and Members of the City Council's Committee on Finance. My name is Kimberly Blair, and I am here testifying as the Manager of Public Policy and Advocacy for the National Alliance on Mental Illness of NYC (NAMI-NYC), one of the largest affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a grassroots mental health advocacy organization. More importantly, I am testifying before you as a peer with lived experience navigating mental health challenges and as a supportive family member to someone living with serious mental illness.

For 40 years, NAMI-NYC has provided free, groundbreaking advocacy, education, and support services to individuals affected by mental illness and is the only organization in NYC to extend these services to their family members, caregivers, and friends, completely free of charge. Our organization does this so that these individuals can serve as a strong support system for their loved ones with mental health conditions.

Today, I would like to highlight **four priority areas** the City can invest in to support the mental health community and address the second pandemic – the mental health crisis – currently affecting *all* New Yorkers, not just those with formal diagnoses.

1. NON-POLICE RESPONSE TO DECRIMINALIZE MENTAL ILLNESS

First, **in the area of decriminalizing mental illness, our organization would like to see $112 allocated to fund a peer-led, non-police response to mental health crisis calls instead**, or at a minimum, the $55 million currently allocated for the city's B-HEARD program redirected to fund Correct Crisis Intervention Today-NYC (CCIT-NYC)'s peer-led response proposal. As consistently iterated by numerous community-based organizations (CBO's), it is crucial for this and future crisis funding to go towards **a proven model that works** by centering peer crisis workers and independent Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) as first responders to mental health crisis calls. If the City cannot commit funding to this evidence-based model that has proven successful elsewhere, then the City should at least consider adjusting the B-HEARD model to adopt our peer-centered approach, especially in light of the new, nationwide 988-crisis number, which will take into effect this summer on July 16th, 2022.

In addition to the reallocation of these funds, NAMI-NYC would like to see the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health invest into a public education campaign to prepare our community

members for the upcoming 988 number. NAMI-NYC has taken the initiative to educate as many of its community members as possible so that people who may need to utilize the number will know of its existence, its purpose and its impact, especially in historically marginalized communities. However, CBO's can only do so much. We need the city to support the work that our organization and others have been doing to promote public awareness around 988 in order to reach broader audiences. **At minimum, funding should be available for community outreach workers, advertisements on mass transit, commercials and other materials distributed to community health centers, religious institutions.**

2. INCREASING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTHCARE

However, in order to truly decriminalize mental illness and address the growing mental health crisis, the city needs to increase equitable access to mental healthcare for all New Yorkers. One way to do so is to invest in behavioral workforce development. **Now, more than ever, it is imperative for the city to make a financial commitment towards the recruitment and retention of BIPOC mental health professionals**. For example, investing in CUNY graduate students, or recent CUNY graduates, from diverse backgrounds and who will enter the mental health and behavioral health sectors could cultivate the amount of culturally competent and linguistically appropriate mental health care across our city. The city needs to prioritize workforce development in the behavioral health sector now more than ever so that we can address the growing mental health needs of New Yorkers from diverse communities since the onset of the pandemic. Many of our BIPOC community members living in "mental health care deserts" and if there are any available clinicians to tend to their needs, then they often might lack cultural competency or ample knowledge of the neighborhood they provide services in. A loan forgiveness program or fellowship through the city's public university graduate programs could incentivize mental health clinicians to commit towards providing local support post-graduation.

Alongside this investment in more BIPOC professionals, we would like to see **funds available for CBO's, such as ours, who invest in family support systems** to build the protective factors necessary within an individual's environment to encourage long-term, positive mental health outcomes. Our organization would especially like to see grants go towards family support groups and courses, which help caregivers and loved ones provide the support someone living with a mental health condition needs to thrive. **It is also necessary to fund CBOs, such as Community Access, who operate crisis respite centers, which serve as alternatives to psychiatric emergency rooms currently operating at reduced capacities.** Grants would allow these CBOs to open new, 24/7 crisis respite centers in each borough to respond to increased mental health needs at this moment. The grants would also allow the CBO's to expand their crisis services in preparation for the launch of 988 this summer, which will utilize and need these centers to provide follow-up, community-based care and resources to individuals calling in crisis.

3. EDUCATION

Moreover, we would like to see **funding for more mental health clinicians in all schools**, especially grades pre-K through 12, to respond to the increased mental health needs and post-COVID trauma that students have been experiencing. The City should then use the data obtained by the universal DESSA screening it initiated last Fall 2021 to gauge the needs of our student population and hire more mental health professionals in each school, as needed, to support our next generation. Funding should also be available for community-based organizations to come into schools to conduct trainings, such as NAMI-NYC's "Ending the Silence" training, with all teachers and students on mental health, breaking stigma and support mechanisms to provide each other during these tumultuous times.

4. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to see the **funding proposed under Mayor Adam's and Governor Hochul's "Subway Safety Plan" to instead go towards peer outreach workers and more supportive housing– not towards police outreach on the subways or co-response teams.**

So far, this plan has not addressed the mental health crisis on the subways; it has only shifted the crisis to our city's streets and shelters. We need to redirect funding from this plan to go towards funding for peer outreach workers who would aid in the psychoeducation and relationship- and trust-building often needed to motivate individuals on the subway and city streets towards engaging in their own recovery journey and support services. Currently, our organization and other CBOs still receive many calls and messages during these times from people looking for resources to support people experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges. Police officers may be removing individuals in crisis from the subway, only for these same individuals to end up back on the streets shortly after. This is due to the fact that the city did not prepare ahead of launching this plan by making sure we had enough hospital beds back in the psychiatric emergency rooms (many of which were taken during the pandemic). The city also does not have enough crisis respite centers, alternatives to the psychiatric hospitals, or mental health clinicians available in shelters to respond to the mental health crisis now being redirected from the subway to these facilities. It is therefore imperative that we see an increase in these resources as well to truly address the secondary mental health pandemic occurring in our City.

Finally, evidence shows that supportive housing can serve as a crucial first step in setting up an individual experiencing mental health conditions and homelessness towards their life-long recovery journey. **While there has been some increase in funding for supportive housing made available at both the city and state level, it still does not seem enough to address current needs based on the requests for resources many of the city's CBO's have been receiving.** The

recently approved New York State budget allocates $11 billion to support the operation of shelter and supportive housing units across New York State, but how much of that is going towards our city is unclear. City Council needs to assess the state funds currently allocated towards supportive housing in our city, alongside the small number of supportive housing included in the Mayor's Subway Safety plan, and determine whether it is enough, especially now in response to the individuals facing displacement under the Subway Safety Plan. While we do not see the subway as an appropriate home for anyone, it is a policy failure to remove a substantial number of individuals with mental health disorders, substance use disorders, and/or other disabilities from what may likely be the only safe haven they know while navigating recovery. It is especially problematic to do this without providing the adequate alternative resources, such as supportive housing, in place beforehand to aid them in reaching recovery.

CONCLUSION

For all of these reasons, we hope you consider our testimony and commit the funds necessary in this next fiscal year budget to tackle the secondary pandemic, our city's mental health crisis.

Thank you for your time,

Kimberly Blair, MPH (she/her/hers)
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Dear Committee of Finance of New York City Council

I am Lily Liang, the NYC Organizer of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, the only national organization for reproductive justice and economic equity of AAPI women.

I testified with the panel 38 at the hearing of Committee of Finance on May 25, 2022.

New York City has a population of 8.2 million. Three million are immigrants. Asians Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) total a population of 1.2 million and account for 15 percent NYC's population. AAPI immigrants with a population of 845,000 account for 28 percent of NYC's immigrants, and 10 percent of NYC's total population. AAPI immigrants are the second largest immigrant group after the Hispanic immigrants of 948,000.

AAPI immigrants are also one of the most diverse racial groups in the City. We represent more than 30 different ethnic groups and speak more than 50 languages. AAPI and Hispanic immigrants also have the highest poverty rates of all immigrant groups (24 percent). Among the API immigrants, Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants have the highest poverty rates (32 percent and 29 percent). Poverty rate for the City's 418,000 Chinese immigrants, which account for one half of the API immigrants, is 22 percent.

New York City's Human Resources Administration administers NYC's public benefits programs and has about 100 languages appearing on the introduction pages of programs on the agency's website. However, the application forms, which are necessary to complete the application process, are only in English, Spanish, Russian, Korean, Chinese and Haitian-Creole. We have found many translation errors in the foreign-language forms both online and in papers. For example, in the SNAP Chinese online form, when asking what type of housing an applicant lives in, one answer listed is "a place only for living." Such errors create confusion and de facto delays if not prevents applicants from enrolling into NYC benefits.

Reportedly, the translations provided by HRA are performed by computer software rather than human beings. Past efforts to communicate with HRA on improving NYC's translation services have gone unanswered. Recently, when reaching out to HRA's hotline under "Helping with Forms" we were informed that applicants who have difficulties filling out forms because of language barriers should go to large community-based organizations (CBOs) to get assistance.

However, many CBOs are reporting that they don't receive adequate funding from the City to meet the demand in our communities which can mean community members must wait in long lines or face delayed applications for crucial social safety net programs. We have heard that some CBOs will sometimes receive $20,000 for signing up 10,000 applicants; a rate of $2 per person. This rate is insufficient and does not take into account that navigating benefits applications in languages other than English take significantly more time. Meanwhile, many smaller CBOs that have great potential to be this

bridge for language access due to their language skills and strong relationships in immigrant communities face dim prospects of getting funded by the City Council.

This why we, the undersigned organizations, are writing in support of the 18% and Growing Campaign's discretionary asks FY 2023 Budget Priorities:

Enhance the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $6 million to expand social services by AAPI-led and -serving community-based organizations to address the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities, while laying the groundwork for long-term healing for AAPI New Yorkers.

Enhance the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF) to $7 million to provide capacity building support to Black, Latinx, and AAPI-led community-based organizations.

Enhance the Access Health Initiative to $4 million to support community-based organizations (CBOs) who provide education, outreach, and assistance to marginalized New Yorkers on how to access health care and coverage.

We appreciate the leadership of the New York City Council for creating the AAPI Community Support Initiative in last year's budget and call upon the Council to improve and expand on its commitment to supporting AAPI New Yorkers and the CBOs that serve them.

We look forward to speaking further about creating a dedicated funding stream to provide integrated in-language navigation services to AAPI immigrants to apply for NYC's benefits programs. In the meantime these key programs support organizations doing this work and is a good first step towards a fair and equitable budget that meets the needs of those most vulnerable in NYC.

Sincerely,

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

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*All demographic data cited in this letter come from A Demographic Snapshot: NYC's Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Immigrant Population, by NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (link)

National Domestic Workers Alliance
Marrisa Senteno, NY Director
May 25, 2022
NYC 2022 Budget Hearing Testimony
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

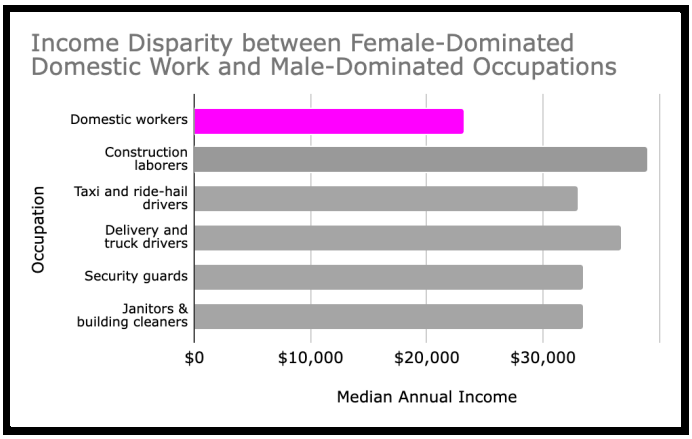
Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Marrisa Senteno and I am the New York Director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. I am here to testify in support of the Domestic Workers and Employers Empowerment Initiative in this year's Schedule C budget proposal. The National Domestic Workers Alliance and the NYC Coalition for Domestic Worker partners are asking for $300,000 for this initiative to engage in education, outreach and referrals for domestic workers and employers. The National Domestic Workers Alliance is the leading voice for domestic workers in building power, dignity and raising standards for the nannies, house cleaners and care workers across the country. In New York alone we have over 300,000 domestic workers. My organization has a state chapter of 18,000 contacts, most of whom work and reside in NYC. My team is small but mighty and we work hard to make sure that as many domestic workers as possible know and are educated and empowered about their rights. This is work that is done behind closed doors doing the care work for our children, loved ones, homes and even ourselves when we need care. Last year NYC Domestic workers were able to create historic change by passing legislation to get domestic workers included in NYC's human rights law. Not only that, domestic workers were also able to get legislation to update the city's paid safe and sick leave to more fully bring domestic workers up to the city's standards. All this is for naught if we don't also ensure the resources to implement, educate and reach out to the thousands of workers and employers. Getting them connected to city agencies, understanding the new standards of domestic work.

In New York City:

- **1 in 8 women of color is a domestic worker. (In the Bronx, the number is 1 in 6.)**
- **1 in 6 immigrant women of color is a domestic worker. (Bronx: 1 in 4. Brooklyn: 1 in 5.)**
- **1 in 7 low-income women is a domestic worker. (Bronx: 1 in 5. Brooklyn: 1 in 6.)**

Source: Analysis of 2019 American Community Survey by Isaac Jabola-Carolus. Estimates include only those who live in New York City. Note: Low-income is defined as less than 50% of the NYC Area Median Income ($46,700 for a single adult as of 2022). This category includes "very low income" and "extremely low income" individuals.For income categories, see: https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/area-median-income.page

We also see income disparity for gendered workplaces in which domestic workers are at the bottom of that workplace wage parity.
Domestic workers are predominantly women. They earn much less than their counterparts in male-dominated working class occupations:



Occupation	% Male	Median Annual Income (adjusted to 2022 dollars)	Rounded	Occupation Code
Domestic workers	6.2	$23,157	$23,160	multiple
Construction laborers	97.5	$38,967	$38,970	6260
Taxi and ride-hail drivers	96.8	$32,955	$32,950	9142
Delivery and truck drivers	95.7	$36,740	$36,740	9130
Security guards	73.0	$33,400	$33,400	3930
Janitors & building cleaners	72.5	$33,400	$33,400	4220

Source: Analysis of 2019 American Community Survey by Isaac Jabola-Carolus. Estimates include only those who work in New York City. Domestiic workers include home care aides, nannies, and housecleaners.

By passing this initiative we can more fully bridge the gap in gender wage disparity because for every domestic worker that is educated and empowered about their rights, we have workers that can more effectively raise standards in the domestic workplace. A city that upholds the rights and standards of domestic workers is also investing in the future of care work and care instructure. We urge the city council to pass this initiative and to place value in the workers that care for all of us.

NATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
COALITION

Hello, my name is Jose Martinez. I am the Hepatitis C & Harm Reduction Associate for National Harm Reduction Coalition, a national advocacy and capacity building organization whose main office is in midtown Manhattan. Under my role I am responsible for providing a general support system for Hep C Navigators throughout New York City. Support may be assisting the navigator with creating new outreach methods and approaches, navigating resources for community members, workforce development or support with personal issues. Whatever support the navigators ask for I try to provide them with.

The Viral Hepatitis Initiative (VHI) has played a vital role in harm reduction efforts to combat viruses that affect our communities like the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and HIV. Since 2014 we have been responsible for over 10,000 linkages to care, many of which have led to community members being cured of Hep C. Many of our navigators who were responsible for keeping community members engaged in care, have done it with very little funding and resources. The Viral Hepatitis Initiative for the last 8 years has been that little bit of funding and resources for Hep B & C Navigators. With this funding we have been able to compensate Navigators and Peers for their expertise and time, provide community members with awareness, education, and Hep B & C testing, & provide engagement efforts & incentives for participants of the program.

My experience with VHI has been a lesson every day. My work has allowed me to see how our community is affected by Hep C and how much services we really need and how much more we can do with a little more focus on this problem. I am not living with Hep C. I was introduced to the program when I used to go to the Hep C group in St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction. I was in a bad space in my life and would go to the group to receive the MetroCards. After a month of attending the groups, I became more interested in being a part of the efforts to tackle hep C than receiving the MetroCards. I was asked to be a navigator and I began my work history in harm reduction. Though I was not personally affected by hep C, I saw myself in a lot of the community members. I saw how something they are living with can affect not only their mental health, but also their livelihood and perspective on life and that gave me the push I needed to figure out where I wanted to be in life and what part I wanted to play in society. VHI has allowed me to explore how I want to show up for my community while also equipping me with tools, skills, and experience that I can take with me and apply wherever I decide to go. So, for me, a man with just a GED, the VHI has been an empowering experience that opened doors for me. Today I have a full time job working for the leading national harm reduction organization in the nation teaching other navigators what I have learned throughout my career and I am recognized throughout the States for my expertise on hepatitis c and outreach engagement skills.

NYC Councils Viral Hepatitis Initiative also allows my organization the funding to provide various Hep C related training like Hep C Basics, Overdose Prevention for Hep C Navigators, Hep C Medical Care & Treatment Update, and Patient Navigation. With these workshops we provide Navigators throughout the city with skills and information they can use to help them reach and assist the community members they are seeking more efficiently. Something worth looking at is

NATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
COALITION

that during this Fiscal year the HCV Navigators throughout NYC have been able to test over 1500 community members and have link about half of them into care with close to 50 participants cured of hepatitis C and with more funding and focus we can do better and have higher expectations in meeting the World Health Organization's goal of eliminating hepatitis C by 2030. This funding has also allowed me to provide our Peers ad Navigators workforce development support to help them grow at their job. Throughout the pandemic it has allowed us to collaborate with the HCV Navigators more frequently to draw up more creative ways of engaging the community. We appreciate your time and to hear our concerns we implore to consider continuing funding the Viral Hepatitis Initiative.

In Solidarity

Jose Martinez - ***Hepatitis C & Harm Reduction Associate***
Martinez @Harmreduction.org
22 west 27th Street 5th floor
New York New York 10010

New York City Council
Finance Committee Hearing on FY 23 Executive Budget
May 25, 2022

Testimony By: Aaron Sanders, Natural Areas Conservancy, Associate Director of Advocacy & Policy

My name is Aaron Sanders and I am the Associate Director of Advocacy and Policy at the Natural Areas Conservancy. Thank you Chair Brannan, for the opportunity to provide testimony about the proposed FY23 Executive budget. The Natural Areas Conservancy is a nonprofit organization founded in 2012 with the goal of increasing the capacity of NYC Parks and its partners to restore and manage the 10,000 acres of forests and wetlands and 300 miles of trails under the agency's jurisdiction. Today, I represent our organization and the Forest for All coalition. I am testifying today to highlight the importance of NYC's urban forests, Wetlands, and to express our support for 1 percent baseline funding for NYC Parks.

New York City's urban forest provides a multitude of benefits— they mitigate extreme heat, improve air quality, support biodiversity, increase property values, and provide exceptional access to nature. A signature project of our organization is the Forest Management Framework for New York City, which we released in partnership with NYC Parks in 2018. This plan includes ecological and social metrics for the care of the city's natural area forests and calls for an investment of $385 million to manage them over the next 25 years. In order to ensure that NYC's urban forest, including our natural areas, thrives and provides benefits to residents now and in the future, NYC Parks needs at least 1% of the total city budget to support its maintenance and operations. Natural Areas only an average of 0.7% of the total expense budget for Forest Care. If the New York City Council commits to 1 percent for parks, $4 million of that funding would be appropriated to support the Forest Management Framework.

Wetlands are a valuable natural resource that needs support from City Council. Recognizing their ever-increasing importance, in 2021 the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC) and NYC Parks released the *Wetlands Management Framework for New York City*. This framework presents a bold vision for the restoration and long-term care of New York City's wetlands. The NAC hopes to mobilize the city around this new framework and seeks support to build investments, staff, and volunteers to save these natural areas. This plan calls for $550,000 in expense funding and $22 million in capital funding over 10 years.

As a leading member of the Forest for All coalition, the Natural Areas Conservancy is a supporter of the Urban Forest Agenda. The NYC urban forest is composed of all 7 million trees in the city, and the physical and socialinfrastructure that support them. It spans public and private property and every neighborhood in NYC - from street trees to private backyards to NYC Parks. The NYC urban forest cools the air, offers shady respite from heat, sequesters carbon, increases energy efficiency, and contributes to New Yorkers' health and wellbeing, and yet it

does not serve New Yorkers equitably. To fully support the operational needs of the Urban Forest, Forest for all requests 60 million in expense funding. For long-term funding, Forest for All is requesting $60 million in capital funding over 10 years.

Finally, I want to call attention to the need for 1% baseline funding for the NYC Parks. New York City parks cover 14% of NYC, but the NYC Parks budget is just 0.5% of the total City budget – even with the FY22 NYC Parks budget being the largest ever adopted by the city. NYC's parks are critical infrastructure that has been overlooked and underfunded for too long. The pandemic laid bare the inequities in NYC's park system and highlighted the dire need to fund and build more parks to ensure equitable access for all New Yorkers. The FY23 proposed budget would hinder the department's ability to support and maintain parks and open spaces. NYC Parks funding in FY22 supported many climate resilience projects. Supporting one percent for parks in the FY23 budget, includes an allocation of $4 million to support natural areas managment and staffing needs at New York City Parks Department. Adequate funding for Parks would also help support our city trails and wetlands, both valuable climate-friendly resources. Through this funding, we can support the Forest Management Framework.

In closing, we support an increase in the budget for the care of the urban forest. The NAC feels strongly that it is important to retain existing tree protections. Moreover, baseline funding for the urban forest and parks will help us achieve that goal.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to express our support for NYC's urban forest.

Respectfully Submitted,
Aaron Sanders

May 25, 2022

NYC Council
City Hall Office
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Brannan and esteemed Committee members,

We, the undersigned, are members of Forest for All NYC, a broad and diverse coalition of over 50 organizational members. Our ranks include non-profits, businesses, academics, and government partners, from all five boroughs, working together to protect, maintain, and grow the urban forest in New York City. We write to ensure that the NYC urban forest is fully funded in this year's budget. We envision a healthy, accessible, well-understood, and resilient urban forest that justly and equitably delivers its multiple benefits to all residents of New York City. We are working to implement the NYC Urban Forest Agenda, which elevates the need for increased funding for the NYC urban forest.

The urban forest in NYC is made up of over seven million trees on both public and private property, as well as the physical and social infrastructure that support them. It provides mental and physical health and quality of life benefits, which have become even more vital during the COVID-19 pandemic, as New Yorkers have sought refuge and outdoor activity in our green spaces. The urban forest provides nearly $260 million annually in essential benefits and services, from cleaning our air and water to providing respite from urban heat. By shading and cooling buildings, the urban forest saves an estimated $17.1 million in residential energy costs each year. It reduces air pollution by 1,106 tons of pollutants annually, benefiting public health. It mitigates climate change by storing carbon and reduces stormwater runoff by 69 million cubic feet per year, helping protect people and properties in flood-prone areas from damage.[1] In addition to the broad benefits of the urban forest above, NYC's forested natural areas provide other important benefits to the city including high-quality recreation and enhanced biodiversity. However, because the urban forest is inequitably distributed across the city, lower-income communities and communities of color tend to have less tree cover and therefore generally receive fewer of its benefits.

Despite the urban forest's essential role in the health and resiliency of our city, it has faced chronic underfunding and has been vulnerable to disproportionate cuts during times of financial hardship. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which is responsible for 53.5% of tree canopy in NYC, received an annual average of 0.34% of the total City Other than Personal Services (OTPS) expense budget from FY18 to FY22. The portion allocated to urban forestry work was only 0.04% of the total City OTPS expense budget (or an average of $23 million per year, adjusted for inflation). This funding limits critical maintenance activities necessary to keep trees healthy, like pruning, stump removal, and pest and disease management. It also constrains the number of new tree plantings each year, despite a large potential for this activity; as of 2015, there was capacity for an additional 250,000 trees to be planted along NYC streets. In addition to limited funding, the urban forest also suffers from inconsistent funding, and is vulnerable to drastic cuts. Between FY20 and FY21, when the City's OTPS expense budget was reduced by 6.2%, DPR's forestry budget was cut by 85% (from $17.4 million, adjusted for inflation, to $2.6 million). While the budget was restored in FY22, these funding fluctuations interrupt cycles of

[1] Nowak DJ, Bodine AR, Hoehn RE, Ellis A, Hirabayashi S, Coville R, et al. The urban forest of New York City. Newtown Square, PA: USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station; 2018 Sept. 1–82. Report No.: NRS-117. doi: 10.2737/NRS-RB-117

regular tree maintenance and long-term planning that are essential to a long-lasting, healthy urban forest.

We commend City Council for your advocacy for the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation's budget, and we commend the Mayor and Administration for their commitments to capital investments in NYC Parks, including funding to plant 20,000 street trees. But this funding would not provide sufficient care and maintenance for the whole of the urban forest, nor would it invest in all parts of the forest, including forested natural areas. This puts this valuable asset at risk. To support the entire urban forest's growth and maintenance, and in turn, its benefits to New Yorkers, consistent, sufficient, baselined funding for both capital and operations expenses is needed.

While DPR maintains over half of the tree canopy in the city, the agency is chronically underfunded with hundreds of diverse organizations from across NYC calling for the agency to be funded at 1% of the city budget. Fully funding DPR and its Forestry and Natural Resources Group specifically—including capital, expense, and personnel—would allow for sufficient staffing, technology, and other resources to provide care for street trees, park trees, and forested natural areas which provide crucial benefits to New Yorkers.

To sustain and expand the urban forest under DPR's care, we project the following approximate capital needs:

- To fully plant our streets and landscaped parks: $60M per year for 10 years
    - This will stock our street and parks, fulfill service requests, and increase trees and canopy, and should be focused especially in our most heat vulnerable communities
    - Additional funds will be required for hazardous trees removal and replacement
- To conduct forest restoration, management, and ongoing expansion and planting as outlined in the Forest Management Framework for forest restoration, $4M per year for 10 years

To care for, protect, and maintain the urban forest under DPR's care, we project the following approximate operational and expense needs. Given the investments required to build an effective workforce, we support baselining these ongoing needs to create predictability and to make best use of public dollars, as well as to secure good jobs for New Yorkers:

- $21M annually to maintain trees in our streets and parks, which includes inspections, pest management, tracking, and various maintenance work
- $3.5M annually to care for, steward, and maintain our forested natural areas and implement the Forest Management Framework for NYC
- $2M annually to maintain and improve trail access for New Yorkers
- $1.2M annually to enforce tree preservation and protect trees during permitted development
- Full funding for urban forest canopy tracking through LiDAR data collection at least every five years
- There is also an existing backlog of 20k work orders which requires a one-time investment of approximately $30M.

Beyond the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, other agencies also maintain important portions of the urban forest and require funding to do so and to invest in ongoing planting. While more information is required to fully quantify these needs and opportunities, some specific examples are below. Greening and maintaining these areas are crucial to advancing equity and justice as, particularly

in the case of NYC Housing Authority, which provides some of the primary green spaces in our most heat vulnerable communities. We urge City Council to also include funding for urban forest planting and maintenance for other agencies:

- NYC Housing Authority: approximately $1M annually for tree pruning and $2.4M annually for planting 12,000 trees over 10 years plus associated maintenance and operational costs
- NYC Department of Transportation: ongoing maintenance contracts including tree pruning and vegetation management, and in house tree planting costs
- NYC Department of Education/School Construction Authority: opportunities for both new plantings and ongoing maintenance in all NYC schoolyards and along streets adjacent to schools

We, as members of Forest for All NYC, are deeply committed to seeing the budget for care and expansion of our urban forest grow to ensure this critical resource thrives and its benefits are more equitably accessible. In the face of climate change, increasing heat waves and flooding, growing inequities, and an ongoing pandemic, our urban forest is a resource that New Yorkers need to thrive. Our organizations stand ready to support initiatives that invest in the urban forest and look forward to continuing to work with the Council and the Administration to address this important issue. Together we can ensure the urban forest provides New Yorkers with its crucial benefits in a manner that advances equity, health, quality of life, and resilience.

We are happy to discuss this further at your convenience. Please contact Emily Nobel Maxwell, The Nature Conservancy in NY Cities Director, at emaxwell@tnc.org when we may be of any assistance.

Thank you for considering the urban forest and the benefits it provides New Yorkers as you continue to work on the next City budget.

Sincerely,

American Society of Landscape Architects, New York Chapter
Audubon New York
Broadway Mall Association
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative
Brooklyn Queens Land Trust
City Parks Foundation
Design Trust for Public Space
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Green-Wood Cemetery
Jackson Heights Beautification Group
James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center
Love Your Street Tree Day
Lower East Side Ecology Center
Madison Square Park Conservancy
Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, P.C.
Natural Areas Conservancy
New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
New York League of Conservation Voters
New York Restoration Project
New Yorkers for Parks

North Brooklyn Neighbors
Queens Chamber of Commerce
Real Estate Board of New York
The Friends of Governors Island
The Nature Conservancy
Trees New York
Tri-Lox
Urban Arborists, Inc.
Urban Systems Lab, The New School
Washington Square Eco Projects
West 80s Neighborhood Association

CC:

Councilmember Keith Powers
Councilmember Gale A. Brewer
Councilmember Diana Ayala
Councilmember Marjorie Velázquez
Councilmember Pierina Ana Sanchez
Councilmember Amanda Farías
Councilmember Francisco Moya
Councilmember Julie Won
Councilmember Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Councilmember Crystal Hudson
Councilmember Chi Ossé
Councilmember Charles Barron
Councilmember Farah N. Louis
Councilmember Ari Kagan
Councilmember Kamillah Hanks
Councilmember David Carr

New York City Anti-Violence Project
116 Nassau Street, 3rd Floor
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AVP FY23 Budget Request Summary
Prepared for New York City Council

We appreciate the Council's past support of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP), and our work with and for LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence. During this time of crisis, AVP's core client base, those most impacted by violence and underserved by other organizations and agencies, are even more vulnerable and are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The people we serve include: low-income (including homeless) individuals; transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) communities; undocumented immigrants including those seeking asylum; people of color; individuals who are incarcerated or involved in the criminal legal system; sex workers; and those at the intersections of these identities.

We know that intimate partner violence, economic insecurity, housing instability, trans health inaccessibility, and dangerous conditions in jails and immigration detention facilities is rising due to the COVID-19 crisis, demonstrating that AVP's work on LGBTQ survivor support and counseling, legal services, and advocacy, needs support more than ever.

AVP respectfully requests support from the Council on the following:

- General Operations (Member-Specific Requests under $10,000) pg 2
- Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative (District-Specific) pg 2
- Speaker's Initiative: General Operating Funds (Restoration of $125,000) pg 2
- DoVE (citywide) (Restoration of $60,000) pg 3
- Speaker's Initiative: Outreach Work to Connect Persons Involved in the Sex Trades with Supportive Services. (Restoration of $100,000) pg 3
- Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative (Restoration of $77,500) pg 4
- Legal Services for the Working Poor (Restoration of $47,500) pg 5
- Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence (Restoration of $55,000) pg 6

The following packet details AVP's requests to the Council with funding amounts.

1. General Operations (Member-Specific Requests under $10,000)

AVP is the only LGBTQ and HIV-affected specific anti-violence organization in New York City, working on domestic, sexual, and hate violence through direct client services, including a 24-hour hotline, counseling, legal services, community organizing and public advocacy. Funds would be used to provide citywide **direct social services, outreach, education, information, safety planning, and community leadership development to LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence** for the districts and neighborhoods in which funding is secured.

2. Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative District-Specific (Various Amounts)

AVP requests a restoration of funds for DoVE from various districts where we serve survivors of violence. Funding will allow AVP to continue its core work with LGBTQ survivors of violence and their specific needs when experiencing intimate partner (domestic) violence. AVP will provide intake, crisis intervention, safety planning, and case management, including counseling, information, and referrals to **provide support and safety for LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence.**

3. Speaker's Initiative / General Operating Funds (Restoration of $125,000)

Supports AVP's citywide direct social services, outreach, education, information, safety planning, and community leadership development to LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence. In FY20, we received $125,000 for this fund from the Speaker's initiative.

Funds would support AVP's general operations in supporting AVP's work as the only LGBTQ and HIV-affected specific anti-violence organization in New York City, working on domestic, sexual, and hate violence through direct client services, including a 24-hour hotline, counseling, legal services, community organizing and public advocacy. Funds would be used to provide citywide **direct social services, outreach, education, information, safety planning, and community leadership development to LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence** for the districts and neighborhoods in which funding is secured.

AVP is the most expert organization in New York City to address the needs of LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence. AVP in the only organization of its kind, guiding and supporting individuals through:

- 24-hour Spanish/English crisis intervention hotline
- Counseling: one-on-one and support groups
- Economic Empowerment: including tax workshops, credit & debt, resumes & cover letters
- Legal Services: civil representation or referrals on immigration (including asylum claims), housing, family court, orders of protection, public benefits, and more.
- Leadership Development: including job readiness and paid internships, civic engagement, and more.
- Community Organizing: including outreach in all 5 boroughs, know-your-rights trainings, and more.

- Policy Advocacy: work with City Council on community forums and policy solutions to violence and anti-LGBTQ discrimination, including anti-hate violence, criminal justice reform, and bathroom access campaigns.

As a part of our policy advocacy, AVP created and coordinates the New York State LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence Network, a coalition of anti-violence service providers, activists and policy-makers that focus on improving service provision for LGBTQ survivors of violence. AVP also leads the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), a network of 40+ organizations across the country dedicated to ending violence in all its forms against LGBTQ people.

4. DoVE (citywide) (Restoration of $60,000)

AVP requests a restoration of funds for DoVE (Citywide). Restored funding will allow AVP to continue its core-to-mission work with LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence and their specific needs when experiencing intimate partner (domestic) violence. AVP will provide intake, crisis intervention, safety planning, and case management, including counseling, information, and referrals to provide support and safety for LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors.

5. Speaker's Initiative: Outreach Work to Connect Persons Involved in the Sex Trades with Supportive Services. (Restoration of $100,000)

LGBTQ people, especially TGNC people, disproportionately participate in the sex trades by choice, circumstance, and coercion. A study by the Urban Institute found that LGBTQ youth in New York City enter the sex trades at seven to eight times the rate of their cisgender and heterosexual peers, and a report by the National Coalition for Trans Equality and Red Umbrella Project found that nearly 40% of Black trans survey respondents participated in the sex trades. Poverty, criminalization, and stigma make LGBTQ people in the sex trades extremely vulnerable to violence. AVP's approach supports survivors of violence with services that attend to emotional, legal, and social needs as they heal from violence and develop strategies to move forward.

AVP seeks to restore funding to support outreach staff and distribute stipends to community members who will conduct outreach to LGBTQ people who may be engaged in the sex trades and connect them to the services of the center for people in the sex trades. This work includes:

- Outreach worker planning and implementing targeted outreach to LGBTQ people in the sex trades, particularly trans and gender non-conforming people of color, in both work and social settings in the five boroughs of New York.
- Outreach would target people in a variety of sectors of the sex trade, including street-based workers, independent escorts, brothel workers, dancers, massage parlor workers, fetish workers, and internet-based workers.
- Outreach worker would recruit and train LGBTQ people currently and formerly involved in the sex trades to do outreach and organizing in their own communities.

AVP's staff conducts outreach to community members to offer supportive sessions and make referrals to services centers and track basic demographic information about contacts, serving as a liaison with AVP's services department to help ensure timely and appropriate delivery of services. Data is tracked and stored in a trauma-informed way that protects the identities and legal status of contacts, modeled after AVP's work with survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence

In two years of funding, this funding has allowed AVP to:

- Fund community organizers to do outreach work to sex worker communities
- Build curriculum for Sex Worker Community Builds
- Conduct targeted outreach and one-on-ones
- Conduct online webinars on safety for LGBTQ people in the sex trades
- Host an online town hall to gather needs assessment for LGBTQ people in the sex trades
- Offer an online monthly community peer-to-peer support space for LGBTQ people in the sex trades (the Sex Worker Community Build)

Planned activities:

- Support staff to do outreach to connect current/former sex workers to resources and servies
- Stipend sex workers to do sex work advocacy
- Participate in coalition work with other organizational partners on sex work advocacy

6. Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative (Restoration of $77,500)

The New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (AVP) requests a restoration of $77,500 in funds from the Hate Crimes Prevention initiative.

2021 was the deadliest year for hate violence against trans women, in the last several years, surpassing 2020 which was also a record year of violence. Our bi-monthly bystander intervention training work aims to put the impetus back on communities to address violence in our proximity. AVP also led sessions on mental health and community building for survivors of anti-LGBTQ hate violence, and is planning to start another cohort this year.

Our goals to promote safety for LGBTQ survivors experiencing hate violence are as follows:

1. We continue to build a base of community members trained in bystander intervention in districts across the city, focusing bystander intervention work in the districts where there are higher reported incidents of hate violence. We will be holding these bystander intervention workshops every other month.

2. To outreach to new community members in specific districts, AVP will partner with council districts and council candidates across the city.

3. We aim to build on the past sessions AVP has held on mental health and community building for survivors of anti-LGBTQ hate violence and provide that offering to LGBTQ survivors in an additional cohort.

AVP has been a leader in hate violence response and prevention since our inception in 1980, and respectfully requests continued and increased support to address escalating hate violence

against our communities and others in New York City. With support, AVP would achieve the following, in addition to the goals listed above:

- Continue to deliver Bystander/Upstander intervention trainings to empower community members to ally themselves with victims when an incident of hate or harassment is underway in public. Importantly, this also included training community members to lead trainings in their own communities, thus creating a ripple effect throughout the city.
- Community-based, culturally competent reporting of hate violence incidents. Marginalized communities feel safest reporting incidents to community-based organizations, which can help them to make a safety plan and determine whether or not they would like to report to law enforcement or another city agency. AVP runs a 24-hour Spanish/English crisis intervention hotline, hosts online reporting on our website, and has recently launched a text-to-get-support service connected to our hotline.
- Canvassing in impacted neighborhoods in the aftermath of violence
- Community care and counseling and peer support services for survivors of violence.
- Rapid incident responses that may include community alerts, town hall meetings, neighborhood safety events, and will also create space for targeted school-based and neighborhood education across multiple identities.

7. Legal Services for the Working Poor (Restoration of $47,500)

Supports AVP in providing legal services for LGBTQ low-income New Yorkers on a range of matters including benefits access. In FY22, we received $47,500 to do this work.

The New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project seeks a restoration of funding so that AVP's Legal Services department will continue to provide low-income LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence throughout NYC with free and confidential direct legal services in areas including immigration, family, housing, public benefits, and other civil legal issues. Our legal team provides free comprehensive legal intakes, advice and counsel as well as representation on issues such as orders of protection, child support, child custody, legal separation/divorce or dissolution, immigration matters, housing matters, name changes, and representation as complaining witnesses in criminal court.

Given how important housing issues are to low-income New Yorkers and LGBTQ survivors of violence, AVP offers legal representation in eviction proceedings, representation in Housing Court for non-payment and holdover proceedings, and advocacy with landlords and representation in HP Actions in Housing Court in regards to neighbor-related harassment.

AVP also aids in costly legal matters that affect low-income LGBTQ survivors through our free legal services, including name change and identity documents, legal name change, and identity document correction by assisting community members in updating their identity documents (NYS ID, Social Security Cards, Passport, Birth Certificates, etc.) to reflect their true gender.

8. Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence (Restoration of $55,000)

Supports AVP in providing services specifically for immigrant survivors of domestic violence that may include interpretation, referrals, counseling and legal representation for U Visas and T Visas. In FY22, we received $55,000 to do this work.

AVP respectfully requests a restoration of funding to allow the AVP's Legal Services department to continue to provide LGBTQ and HIV-affected immigrant survivors of domestic violence throughout NYC with free and confidential direct legal services in areas including immigration, family, housing, public benefits, and other civil legal issues.

Our legal staff have expertise in working with LGBTQ and HIV-affected immigrant survivors of violence (including specific types of immigration relief such as asylum, VAWA petitions, U and T visas). We also offer free and confidential direct civil legal services in family law, housing, public benefits, and more. Of note, recently AVP developed curriculum along with Make the Road NY with the support of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and HRA and is now delivering a 3-part training series for attorneys on working with TGNCNB immigrants. Nearly all our clients are low-income and would not otherwise have access to these crucial services. Of note we consistently reach more marginalized communities, including undocumented immigrants that are survivors of intimate partner violence (domestic violence).

Testimony Submitted by
Judith Secon
Deputy Executive Director
New York Common Pantry
Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing
May 25th, 2022

My name is Judith Secon, Deputy Executive Director, New York Common Pantry. Thank you to Chairperson Justin Brannan as well as the members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance for holding today's hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

New York Common Pantry (NYCP) reduces hunger and promotes dignity, health and self-sufficiency. Since opening in 1980 as Yorkville Common Pantry, NYCP has grown into one of the largest food pantries in New York City, addressing food insecurity with healthy nutritionally balanced grocery packages and meals. Our innovative whole person approach builds guests' financial security by assisting them with government entitlements acquisition, including SNAP, SSI, and the Excluded Workers Fund established during the pandemic. Choice Pantry provides grocery packages appropriate to family size every two weeks. Members choose from multiple options in each food group for custom grocery packages, ensuring they receive food meeting their preferences and dietary needs. This helps families stretch their budgets, reallocating resources to housing, clothing, health care and education. Hot Meals, our soup kitchen, serves nutritionally balanced meals daily, providing outreach to the homeless and hungry, so we can connect them with care and support. We address diet-related illnesses prevalent among food insecure New Yorkers with nutrition education initiatives and partnerships with clinicians in low-income areas to connect their patients with our services. Mobile Pantry brings the fresh healthy food and social services support available at our East Harlem and Bronx Choice Pantries to underserved neighborhoods in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. NYCP saw over 500,000 individual visits in FY21, providing more than 7.9 million meals and accessing $4.3 million in resources.

New York Common Pantry is a member of The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access, a group of emergency food providers in New York City that came together starting in 2018 to work together to explore and pursue opportunities for collective purchasing and collaborative advocacy work. Together we envision a City where emergency food providers have greater capacity and autonomy to meet the demand of their communities and offer more nutritious, culturally relevant food. At the same time we want to see the City reimagine its investments in emergency feeding programs with reduced administrative burden, streamlined reporting and additional flexibility for providers. Finally, we urge the City to invest in and help seed innovative programs, collective action, delivery models, solutions and communication with customers within the emergency feeding system.

To help meet these goals, we respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the final FY23 New York City Executive Budget:

Increase funding with an additional $63.5 Million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Baseline budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program and continued need. We thank the Mayor for the inclusion of $53.7M in total for EFAP in the Executive Budget, but due to the discontinuation of P-FRED it still would not fully meet the need across our City. While hunger rates in the City are thankfully lower now than they were at the peak of COVID, they are still much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. In response to food insecurity rates that increased by over 36 percent for all New Yorkers and 46 percent for children, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy administered a new $63.5 million program called the Pandemic Food Reserve and Emergency Distribution (P-FRED). Since 2020, P-FRED has provided over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries throughout the City. The Mayor's preliminary budget excludes funding for the continuation of P-FRED past June 2022 yet no formal announcement has been made indicating if the program will continue. However, Mayor Adam's announced his intentions to strengthen EFAP by establishing a produce procurement operation into the program for the first time in its 40 years of existence. We applaud this as it will allow EFPs the ability to purchase more fresh and culturally specific food products. We urge the City to increase funding for EFAP beyond its current baseline level of $23.8 million to a total of $87.3M to account for the loss of P-FRED and adequately invest in this expanded effort to include fresh produce.

- With the addition of produce procurement into EFAP for the first time and the release of a new RFP in January 2022 calling for a vendor to support procurement, ordering & distribution for EFAP, we urge HRA to consider innovative joint proposals in response to the recently released RFP and proposer(s) that demonstrate a commitment to following values set by the Good Food Purchasing procurement framework. We also urge HRA to consider RFP responses that prioritize sourcing from BIPOC and/or historically disadvantaged producers, distributors, and other places along the food supply chain and adequately track value based procurement. These

considerations will enable more EFPs to bid on and receive direct or subcontracted EFAP contracts or a portion of the contract.

- We also urge the City to allow a broader range of emergency food providers to provide food safety certifications training under EFAP to allow for greater flexibility in administering and accessing this training.
- Additionally, we urge the City to be more open and transparent in communicating with P-FRED providers about the future of the program. Many of the emergency food providers we work with have reported that P-FRED deliveries have stopped showing up and/or they have received reduced quantities of food without any clear communication from the City. Furthermore, without P-FRED some community providers will no longer have a source of food. Many of the groups that stepped up during the pandemic to serve their communities through P-FRED are mutual aid or community based groups that will not be eligible for EFAP membership because 1) they are not 501(c)(3), 2) do not have an Emergency Food Relief Organization (EFRO) ID#, and 3) do not have "other established sources of food and funding" - all of which are EFAP requirements. We urge HRA to provide guidance about potential alternatives for these providers once P-FRED winds down.

Increase HRA's budget baseline by $10 Million to engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications. For the last several years, and especially during the pandemic, HRA's clients reported many issues to City Council and HRA with the closures of service centers, long phone wait times, problems returning missed calls from HRA, timely and accurate processing of applications, and the overall client experience. Despite these issues, the Preliminary Budget Plan does not include any additional funding for outreach or streamlining of social service program administration for the HRA. Additional administrative funding should also support the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications. We urge the City Council to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

We join our partners in calling for the City to invest in a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all human services workers. Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant and at poverty levels in a City where costs are notoriously high. It is critical that the FY23 budget, and all future budgets, rectify this by automatically allocating a COLA for all human services workers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Judith Secon

Deputy Executive Director

Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation

www.newyorkedge.org

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing – Finance Committee

Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

Thank you Chair Brannan and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE).** I am here today to ask that you continue that support by prioritizing our FY 23 citywide funding request of $1,200,000 under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative.

Established in 1992, New York Edge is the largest provider of afterschool and summer programs in New York City, having been created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities. We serve students of all ages, races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. **Our entire student population is 90% or more African American or Hispanic, with an approximately equal number of males and females. More than 85% come from low-income households eligible for Title 1 free or reduced-price lunches.** We offer culturally relevant programs that are tailored to students' needs and interests as well as their social and cognitive development. Activities blend academic, recreation, arts, social emotional learning, and other pursuits, so that the learning feels fun and the fun is developmental.

Our goal is for every single student who participates in our programs to find something to get truly excited about, and engaged in. Students need healthy minds, bodies and relationships, as well as creative outlets, to thrive. Our programs help them develop all four. From homework support and engaging academic activities to sports and movement, to social-emotional learning and creative activities, our programs offer opportunities to develop in every aspect of their lives. **And according to evaluation**

reports by DYCD, we ARE succeeding, excelling in student engagement, staff feedback and administrative management.

With the NYC Council as our partner, New York Edge has become one of the largest providers of school-based programing in New York City and the metropolitan region, serving youth in ALL five boroughs. We are a leader in the afterschool community, well-regarded for our evidence-based approach to afterschool programming, grounded in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) AND one of the city's largest providers of college access programs.

Core components of our programming include:

- **Academics/STEAM Education**
- **Social-Emotional Learning**
- **Sports & Wellness**
- **The Arts**
- **College and Career Readiness**
- **Summer Camps**
- **Learning Labs**

With funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative we annually impact tens of thousands of students in grades K-12 from over 100 sites across the city through our school year and summer programs. Programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been extremely challenging for us all but through adversity comes strength, resiliency and, often, new opportunities. **T**he past two years have brought us new collaborators and partners including Teach Rock, founded by legendary guitarist Steven Van Zandt, Mets on the Move, the US Olympic Handball Team, the NY Knicks and Hip Hop Heals. **We have also created a Student Book Publishing Initiative, which published its first book – *The Magical Bakery* - last year (available at Amazon**

and Barnes and Noble), and a student led podcast – *Formative* – where the leaders of today are interviewed by leaders of tomorrow!

I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality.

For 30 years, New York Edge has been able to substantially impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of New York's most vulnerable youth by leveraging City Council funding not only to run our flagship New York City Council Summer Camps but to bring our school year leagues, special events, weekend programs, and holiday break programming to youth across the five boroughs.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past three decades of support from the New York City Council. We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 23 citywide funding request of $1,200,000. ***These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the EDGE they need to succeed!***

Thank you.

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
May 31, 2022

Title: NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS

I want to thank Chair Brannan, the members of the Finance Committee and the rest of the City Council for accepting my testimony on the importance of Cultural institutions, especially science-based institutions, on youth and workforce development programming, and providing us with STEM based opportunities.

My name is Christopher Cumbe, and I am a local resident of Corona, and I am currently studying civil engineering at the City College of New York. I am part of the Science Career Ladder at the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI), and serve as an Explainer.

NYSCI's mission is to nurture passionate learners, critical thinkers, and active citizens through an approach called ***Design, Make, Play.*** Located in Queens, NY– one of the most multicultural and diverse communities in New York City, NYSCI is committed to creating a world where diversity unlocks innovation, and where people learn to use science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to tackle complex 21st century challenges.

NYSCI has inspired and guided young people, like myself, to pursue careers in STEM, through the Alan J. Friedman Center for the Development of Young Scientists. The Science Career Ladder (SCL) is NYSCI's signature youth and workforce development initiative and has impacted the lives of nearly 4,000 young people since its inception through paid employment opportunities and a comprehensive system of professional development; near-peer and professional mentorship; college and career readiness; and STEM career exposure and exploration activities.

When I joined the Science Career Ladder as an Explainer back in 2015 I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Growing up, the only time I learned anything science related was in school and there were some topics that were interesting and some, not so much. I had no problem learning the science content, but to be able to teach it in front of visitors is a whole other level for me. During my first few years I was a very nervous, quiet, and shy Explainer. It was hard for me to approach visitors and strike up a conversation about science. I would often do everything in my power to try to stay away from visitors, just like running away from strangers that tell me I'm going to win an award. But with a little bit of time, practice, and help it became easier to be an Explainer.

For the past 6 years I've been working in the Science Career Ladder and within those 6 years I've learned a lot. I've learned that you don't necessarily have to be the smartest person in the world to be an Explainer. If you're determined to learn something, then eventually it'll be easier to teach it to others. Another thing I've developed overtime was how to be more resilient.

We've all experienced failure at some point in our lives some more than others. I happen to have a good share of failures myself working at NYSCI, maybe too much. But these failures are what's going to shape our success. I was able to learn from my mistakes, develop new skills, and to always remain persistent when things get rough. And these past 2 years have been rough on all of us including me. Even before the pandemic I was struggling with countless failure after failure with both school and in life. There have been times where I thought I wasn't cut out to be an engineering major and that I should quit this career path entirely. But what kept me motivated the most was the support I had from the Explainer leadership team and the rest of my fellow Explainers, and I thank them for that.

Meeting such wonderful people who worked in this department both past and present has helped me become the best Explainer I can be. We choose what holds us back, but we also choose what moves us forward and I choose to go the extra mile and continue this engineering path.

IMPACT

NYSCI strives to create a space where Explainers perceive themselves as people who can do STEM and understand how their experiences and perspectives broaden the ways to explore the world around us. This is not just another youth program, Explainers are an integral part and valuable contributors to NYSCI's mission and programming to make STEM exciting, appealing and inviting to everyone.

As well,NYSCI Science Career Ladder is part of **SCI Network NYC**, which is composed of the eight science-based cultural institutions: American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden, New York Hall of Science, Queens Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo, Wave Hill, and the Wildlife Conservation Society, which includes the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo and Queens Zoo.

SCI Network NYC programs combine education, workforce development, networking, and outreach to increase opportunities for over 1,200 youth throughout New York City. Collectively, the youth working in these institutions earn a livable wage that allows us to pursue our dreams and open us to new experiences that build meaningful careers in STEM. Investing in

Funding programs like SCI Network NYC allows the diverse youth of New York City to build meaningful careers at NYC's cultural institutions, and supports the educational, workforce development and essential services they provide to their communities. It helps build financial awareness and independence, as it empowers teens to feel accomplished and provides greater autonomy to develop our skills and how to succeed in the world around us. Investing in youth and in cultural institutions has lasting prolonged effects on our communities and city, please continue to invest in Sci Network NYC in the upcoming budget.

Respectfully submitted by:

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New York City Council
FY 2023 Executive Budget Hearing
Public Session

May 25, 2022

Testimony in support of

NYJTL Funding Under The

NYC Council Physical Education & Fitness Initiative

Submitted on behalf of

New York Junior Tennis & Learning
36-36 33rd Street, Suite 504
Long Island City, NY 11106
Udai Tambar
President & CEO

Presented by

Scott Daly
Senior Director
Community Tennis Programs

Thank you Chair Brannan and members of the committee for allowing us to testify today. **New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL (**legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.**), as the nation's largest scholastic tennis program, looks forward to working with all of you on behalf of the youth of our city. For 50 years, with the Council as our partner, NYJTL has been a driving force for New York City's youth and tennis communities, traditionally reaching over **85,000** youngsters annually throughout the five boroughs.

It is our belief that talent is universal but access and opportunity are not. That is why we have strived over the past 50 years to introduce the sport of tennis to ALL children, including those with special needs. NYJTL programs offer the youth of our city much more than the chance just to learn tennis. They have the opportunity to become physically fit; the opportunity to reach new educational heights; and the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their immediate world. NYJTL helps young people build self-esteem and learn the affirmative values of perseverance, cooperation, fairness and respect.

We are seeking a $1,000,000 allocation under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness Initiative.* This represents an increase of $200,000 over our FY 22 allocation and would be our first increase/enhancement in **14 years**. **Council citywide funding of $1,000,000 will enable us to continue to provide SAFE, ENGAGING and much needed physical activity for children in EVERY Borough AND in EVERY Council District throughout the city as follows:**

- **Community Tennis Programs (CTP)** – Reaches children ages 5-18 throughout all FIVE boroughs during Spring, Summer & Fall; Provides trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, & special events; Provides tennis instruction to over 1,000 Special Population/ District 75 children during the Summer; Offers educational supports, including FREE SAT Prep, as well as special Tournaments and Events, including trips to the US Open Qualifiers and to Arthur Ashe Kids Day and various pro events and tournaments.

- **Winter Weekend Indoor Program -** Part of CTP - Enables players to continue their progress during this 20-week Indoor Season on Saturdays and/or Sundays; in addition to instruction there are 13 days of FREE tournaments for participants during the two school vacation breaks and the 3-weekend long culminating Hartman Cup tournament.

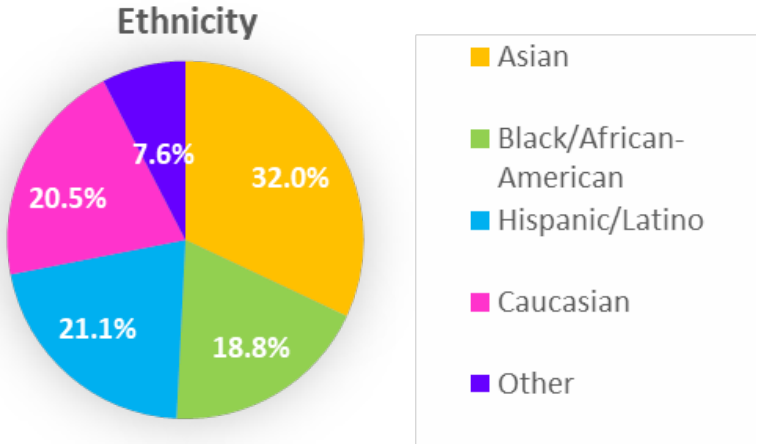
- **CTP+ Program** – Located in Brooklyn & Queens, CTP+ is open to NYJTL participants from all five boroughs. The goal of CTP+ is to develop tennis skills of dedicated CTP participants at a higher level. It is designed for players who have demonstrated competitive ability and potential beyond the level of those at their current CTP location. At no cost to players or families, CTP+ provides extended hours of play and a smaller coach to student ratio.
- **School-Time Tennis Program (STP)** – Physical education teachers are trained by NYJTL's professionally certified coaches on how to incorporate tennis into their school's curriculum. NYJTL traditionally holds 6 training sessions each school year serving approximately 250 teachers/schools. All teachers and school-based staff are given a tennis curriculum, lesson plans, tennis equipment (rackets & balls) and ongoing onsite support if needed and requested. NYJTL is a NYSED Approved provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit. Training participants each receive for FREE 6.5 CTLE hours.

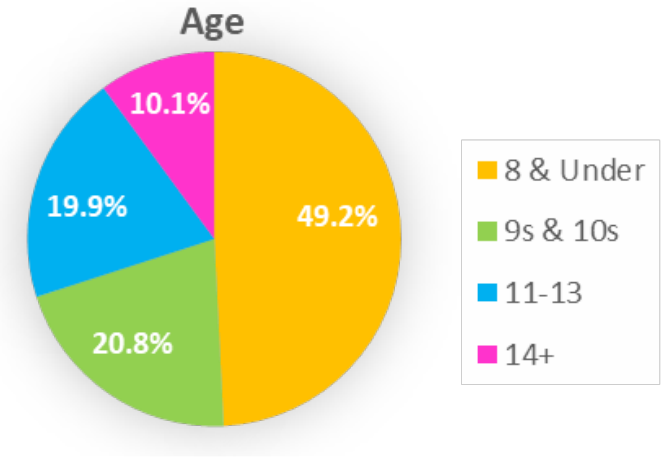
Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various times throughout the four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter).

NYJTL's FREE programs take place throughout the year (spring, summer, fall and winter) in schoolyards and public parks throughout the five boroughs. In non-COVID years, through our Community and School Time Tennis Programs, we annually reach over **85,000 young people citywide, in EVERY Council District in the city.**

The overwhelming majority of the young people we serve are Black, Latino, Asian, and new immigrant populations. **Nearly two-thirds of our participants are 10 and under AND virtually all come from low-income families and neighborhoods, where young people lack access to the opportunities typically available only to youth in affluent neighborhoods, suburbs and private schools.**

NYJTL Community Tennis Program Demographics[1]





Ethnicity	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	32.0%	**8 & Under**	49.2%	**Male**	48.3%	**New**	65.9%
Black/ African-American	18.8%	**9s & 10s**	20.8%	**Female**	51.4%	**Returning**	34.1%
Hispanic/Latino	21.1%	**11-13**	19.9%	**Non-binary**	0.3%		
Caucasian	20.5%	**14 +**	10.1%				
Other	7.6%						

[1] – Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 85,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually

Studies have proven that the sport of tennis offers young people numerous physical and psychological developmental benefits. **Regular tennis play has been demonstrated to improve a youngster's development the following areas (including but not limited to)**:

Physical Fitness	Psychological Development
Aerobic & Cardiovascular Fitness	**Discipline**
Anaerobic Fitness	**Sportsmanship**
General Body Coordination	**Teamwork**
Bone Strength & Density	**Social Skills**
Hand-eye Coordination	**Resiliency**

With COVID-19 still present in our lives, many kids are getting less exercise and less social interaction. Since August 2020, when our coaches returned to the courts, NYJTL has been able to provide an escape to the loneliness and the uncertainty experienced by many NYC youth as well as an outlet for their stress and anxiety. NYJTL has provided and continues to provide an opportunity for socialization and physical activity, done safely, which can positively affect children's physical and mental health.

Continued funding of NYJTL in the FY 23 budget is crucial to our vision and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families.

On behalf of the youngsters and parents annually served by NYJTL, I thank you for the Council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your sustained support of NYJTL.

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

New York City Council Finance Committee
Hearing on FY2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

Good morning. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Communications at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank the Committee Chair Justin Brannan as well as the other members of the City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify about the 2023 executive budget.

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

We are leading United for Housing, a coalition of more than 90 organizations that developed consensus recommendations to address the housing and homelessness crisis. Our coalition was united that the city needs to increase investment in housing resources if we are to make meaningful progress fighting the crisis. In New York City more than 68,000 people experience homelessness on a given night and nearly 1 million people are rent burdened. The crisis is only getting worse and we are at an inflection point – with Mayor Eric Adams soon to outline a new direction in housing policy for the next eight years, we must set the stage to address the crisis now before it is too late.

Last year United for Housing called on the city to double housing investment to $4 billion per year in capital spending, including $2.5 billion for HPD and $1.5 billion for NYCHA. We appreciate the City Council's support in the Council's budget response, in a press conference last month, and in Speaker Adrienne Adams's State of the City Speech.

Make no mistake – raising housing capital spending to $4 billion per year is fiscally responsible while assisting thousands more New Yorkers. The city is currently well under the capital spending benchmark of debt service being no more than 15 percent of total taxes and it would remain under the benchmark with the added capital spending. It currently ranges from 10.3% to 13.3 percent. Raising spending as we have proposed would raise debt service to no more than 13.9 percent of total taxes by our calculation.

As a candidate, Mayor Eric Adams supported spending $4 billion per year on housing capital, calling it a smart ask. But he has yet to deliver on that promise. Mayor Adams did increase housing capital spending by $5 billion over ten years – roughly $500 million more per year. This would mean roughly $2.5 billion per year for housing capital total.

While we appreciate increases in housing spending, it is insufficient to meet the crisis. The increased funding for HPD - $3.6 billion over ten years – will mostly cover rising interest rates and construction costs and will not generate additional units beyond what has been achieved in the past. The funding is also unfortunately backloaded – with roughly $400 million per year in the first four years and $560 million per year in the years 5-10. Given the nature of the crisis, we need to be more ambitious and increase spending now.

And the additional funding for NYHCA in Mayor Adams's budget is also insufficient. Residents in NYCHA are living with unsafe and unhealthy conditions. The authority needs $40 billion in repairs and while there was optimism last summer that Build Back Better would provide needed funding, there is now little hope of the federal government coming to the rescue.

The mayor's executive budget plan proposes $1.4 billion over ten years for NYHCA, which includes $200 million in funding for Wyckoff and Gowanus houses agreed to in the Gowanus rezoning and $1.2 billion in support for PACT projects.

However, the added funding for NYCHA will not assist any of the 110,000 units not slated for PACT. While the NYCHA Preservation Trust would assist these units, and we hope City Council members will support legislation in Albany for the trust, the city and state must do their part and provide more capital funding. We need everyone to contribute. We cannot afford to lose a single NYCHA unit and we must act now.

In order to address the crisis, we need a housing plan that can build units with deeper affordability to address homelessness and housing insecurity, can expand homeownership, and can preserve affordable housing for the next generation. The additional $360 million per year for HPD ($3.6 billion of the $5 billion over ten years goes to HPD) will not cut it.

In order to do this, we must redouble our efforts by doubling our investment. Mayor Adams's plans to address homelessness so far have largely ignored the role that housing plays is ending homeless episodes. He needs to make affordable housing a bigger part of these plans and he will need to increase funding in order to accomplish that.

We also want to continue to sound the alarm about the staffing crisis at HPD and other agencies that address housing insecurity. We were relieved to hear HPD leadership address the issue in budget testimony highlighting important steps they are taking to bring on new staff quickly. However, there are further steps the city can do to hire and retain staff. Our recent policy brief looks at the causes and recommendations to address understaffing at HPD.

Our recommendations include increasing staff pay to compete with the private sector, decreasing bureaucratic oversight of hiring and promotions by OMB, which slows the process down and causes applicants and staff to leave, increasing workplace flexibility to compete with the private sector, and finding flexibility within and outside the civil service system. We hope the administration will consider our recommendations and continue to work quickly to add and retain staff at HPD so they can fully carry out their mission to add and preserve affordable housing.

This month we released the New York City Housing Tracker, showing housing stats by City Council district, including affordable housing production over the past eight years. What we found was that we are not building enough affordable housing to meet the demand in any neighborhood and that housing production is not spread equitably across the city. All districts need to build more affordable housing, but some districts are not doing their fare share and need to increase efforts to add housing. We hope you will take a look at the tracker and see how the data supports the need for more affordable housing in all neighborhoods.

Executive Budget Hearing Testimony Before the New York City Committee on Finance

May 25, 2022

Presented by:
Saroya Friedman-Gonzalez
New Yorkers for Children
sfriedman-gonzalez@newyorkersforchildren.org

New Yorkers for Children (NYFC) improves the well-being of youth and families in the child welfare system with an emphasis on older youth aging out of the system. NYFC provides direct educational, financial and emotional support and develops programs in partnership with foster care agencies, community organizations, and the NYC Administration for Children's Services.

https://www.newyorkersforchildren.org/

Hello, my name is Saroya Friedman-Gonzalez, Executive Director of New Yorkers For Children (NYFC), a non-profit that works to improve the well-being of children and families in the child welfare system, with a particular focus on those aging out of the foster care system. As a matter of fact, we are the only organization in the city who has a connection with nearly every single young person who has aged out of foster care.

NYFC provides direct educational and financial support to youth, and we support other child welfare-focused organizations by developing innovative initiatives to fill gaps in the system. We do this through our long-standing partnership with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the 26 contracted foster care agencies, and many community partners.

The need for services is great because the challenges this population faces are significant. Youth in or aging out of foster care do not receive many of the same familial supports as their peers who have not experienced foster care and as a result:

- Only half of youth attained gainful employment by age 24;
- Fewer than 3% earn a college degree in their lifetime;
- One in four will not graduate high school; and
- After aging out of the system, 20% will become instantly homeless.

NYFC typically serves about 1,000 youth per year, and since 2018 we have directly supported more than 3,500 youth as they transition out of the child welfare system and into adulthood. For youth who have experienced foster care, this is the moment when their need for support is great, yet few resources are available to them. NYFC's Signature programs - our scholarships, Back to School packages, emergency financial grants, and our peer mentoring program - provide youth with holistic support to excel in college and to take the first steps toward adulthood.

Our programs make a difference in the lives of the youth we serve. For example, as a result of wraparound support to youth in college, participants boast a 78% graduation rate.

While NYFC has been around for more than 25 years, the past few years have proved to be an inflection point. In particular, at the height of the pandemic, NYFC served more than 2,000 youth, distributing more than $1.8M in direct cash transfers to youth and families. We are a key resource and trusted partner to the young people we serve. I share this to highlight the immense needs for this population.

Beyond our direct services work, NYFC designs, pilots, and manages city-wide initiatives designed to fill gaps in existing services. Since our founding, NYFC has served as a longstanding partner to ACS, managing multiple grant projects that spur innovation and improve the child welfare system. Additionally, we've launched community partnerships for transformative initiatives supporting over 14 other New York City child welfare-focused organizations, big and small. We aim to improve the child welfare system by supporting organizations doing innovative work in areas such as transition age youth who could benefit from holistic community-based support, education and career development, mental health needs, permanency for youth exiting the foster care system to adoption or KinGap, parenting youth, youth who are victims of sex trafficking, and two generational caregiver support.

I write today to advocate for additional investments in discretionary funding for this critical work. Additional funds will allow us to both deepen our existing program service offerings that we provide directly to young people and to support other smaller organizations in the child welfare landscape doing impactful work on the ground. Together, we believe these steps will more effectively reach and support youth who are aging out of foster care.

Additional investments by the city are needed to strengthen the full menu of program offerings available to youth, including college scholarships, academic coaching, peer mentoring, emergency direct cash funding, networking events, youth development workshops, and more.

We need more services because we see greater demand for services than our funding allows us to provide, and an increase in capacity is desperately needed. We support increasing funding to Fair Futures, which provides a companion to the services we do, and we believe additional investments are needed particularly for youth who have aged out of foster care.

Beyond our direct services, we believe smaller organizations must be better represented in the service delivery continuum and it is essential that we bring together multiple organizations to achieve collective impact. As we try to navigate how to best support youth aging out of foster care - whose needs have only deepened since the pandemic - we feel that a collective approach of smaller grassroots organizations is most effective and personalized. NYC needs to better support youth who have experienced foster care as they enter and graduate college by providing them with additional financial and emotional support, and locally grown, community-based organizations are the best positioned entities to deliver these services and reach those who could benefit.

With funding from the city, we hope to achieve increased well-being among youth participating in these programs, increased persistence and graduation rates for youth in college, expanded service delivery capacity for organizations, a smoother continuum of care throughout the foster care landscape, and reduced wait times for vulnerable youth accessing services.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I'm hopeful that with support from the City Council, we will be able to build a stronger child welfare landscape.

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

NY4CA.org

May 25, 2022

Finance Committee Hearing on the FY23 Budget

My name is Lucy Sexton and I lead the cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts. I'm here to ask you to include an additional $100M in the city budget for culture, as detailed in the CultureVIBE ask.

The cultural sector is united in our ask for Culture's Visionary Investment to Build the Economy. It calls for equity in every part of the ask, from a $50M increase in DCLA's funding baseline, to adequately serve organizations of all sizes in the citywide cultural ecosystem, to the Cultural Equity fund which at long last BEGINs to address historic underfunding of BIPOC orgs serving communities of color, to the fund to increase access for deaf and disabled communities. I want to note that we have not had an increase to the baseline since 2009, despite the fact that the creative economy generates $100B in economic activity

for the city! It is past time for this $50M add to the DCLA baseline.

Culture was the first to close, and we are still struggling to reopen. Federal relief for those of us lucky enough to receive it runs out next month. Meanwhile audiences and other income are still not up to pre pandemic levels. Hard to see how to make next year's budgets work. The slower culture takes to recover, the slower the city will take.

But if you invest this relatively small amount----less than a quarter of a percent of the city's budget!---into culture now, you will seed a robust recovery for every neighborhood. We bring visitors, we bring folks back to offices, we drive traffic to restaurants and local businesses, we improve education outcomes, we improve mental health, we create strong communities and are key to public safety. When youth have places to make music, dance, theater, science, When communities have places to gather and connect, When folks caught in the criminal justice system have places to tell their stories, we build strong safe neighborhoods. Data backs this up. The more cultural assets, the safer the neighborhood. Let's

invest in a strong economy and a safer more vibrant city by investing in culture for every New Yorker.

FY23
NYC Culture VIBE

Fund Culture: A Visionary Investment in Building the NYC Economy

The cultural sector is requesting an additional **$100 million investment from NYC in FY23** to augment NYC's economic recovery and create an inclusive sector growth towards a future-focused and equitable economy. Investing in culture means investing in the long-term financial health of our city. **The $100m request will bring the annual investment in culture to .24% of City's total budget and will represent a commitment to our ultimate goal of reaching 1% for Culture.**

CULTURE FOR ALL

The FY23 $100M request includes:

- **$50M in CIG and CDF baseline funding** (split evenly between the Cultural Institutions Group and the Cultural Development Fund) to provide critical core support that will stabilize NYC's cultural community, allowing organizations to address their most-pressing logistical and mission-centric expenses. This will support their core work as community anchors and tourism magnets.
- **$45M in grants for 5 Strategic Initiatives** that advances a revitalized and equitable city:
  - $15M for a Cultural Equity Fund, to support BIPOC-led and -serving organizations;
  - $10M for tourism and marketing for culture across all 5 boroughs;
  - $10M for workforce development and support programs;
  - $5M for accessibility and inclusion of Deaf/ Disabled communities;
  - $5M for individual artists and renewal of the City Artist Corps program
- **$5M to increase staffing at DCLA** for the agency to provide efficient and timely support to the field

The New York City Council Committee on Finance

Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair

Re: FY 23 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

Testimony of Next100

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the proposed budget. My name is Chantal Hinds and I am a policy entrepreneur at Next100, a startup think tank working to diversify the public policy sector. As a policy entrepreneur at Next100, I conduct original research and provide policy recommendations at the intersection of foster care and education—an intersection I am familiar with having advocated on behalf of these students and families for seven years. Prior to Next100, I was an attorney at Advocates for Children of New York, where I represented students and families in foster care in New York City, ensuring those students received the supports and services they needed to succeed.

As an advocate who has worked closely with students in foster care for many years, I have seen the need for investments in education to help these students thrive. I am here to ask the City Council to support students in foster care by: first, ensuring the Department of Education (DOE) will follow through on its commitment to create and ***fully*** **staff the promised foster care office**; and second, for the budget to include $5 million to ***guarantee*** **transportation for students in foster care**.

It's important to understand who these students are—students in foster care are disproportionately Black and come from the city's poorest communities. In 2019, over half[1] of the children and youth in the foster system were Black, even though Black children only make up about 22 percent[2] of New York City's child population. Furthermore, both Black and Latinx children and youth make up about 80 percent[3] of the City's foster care population while only representing about 57 percent[4] of the total child population. Additionally, according to 2020

[1] "Watching the Numbers 2020: Covid-19's Effects on Child Welfare System," Center for New York City Affairs, accessed May 31, 2022, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/6022e617bc08751953d504b2/1612899865597/WTN_Data_020921.pdf.
[2] "Child Population," Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, accessed May 31, 2022, https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/table/98/child-population#11/18/62/a/a.
[3] Center for New York City Affairs, "Watching the Numbers 2020: Covid-19's Effects on Child Welfare System."
[4] Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, "Child Population."

data[5], over half of the children in the City's foster care population are in the Bronx and Brooklyn. In 2019 the top five foster care placements[6], by borough, were in the following Community and City Council Districts: Staten Island (Community District 1/City Council Districts 49 and 50), Bronx (Community Districts 1, 3, and 6/City Council Districts 8, 15, 16, and 17), Brooklyn (Community Districts 5 and 16/City Council Districts 37, 41, and 42), Queens (Community District 12/City Council Districts 23, 24, 27, 28 and 31), and Manhattan (Community District 11/City Council Districts 4, 5, 8, and 9).

Many students in this unique population have significant academic needs—nearly half of them have special education needs and less than half graduate high school in four years. At the City Council Committee on Education's recent oversight hearing[7] on April 20, 2022, the Department of Education testified that nearly half of its students in foster care have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and nearly half of those students are in a special education class, compared to 30 percent of students overall with IEPs. Additionally, over 20 percent of students with IEPs in foster care are in District 75—the city's most restrictive specialized district that solely serves students with significant special education needs—compared to a little under 10 percent of students with IEPs who are not in foster care. Students in foster care are also overaged and under-credited at a rate of 6.5 percent as compared to the citywide rate of 2 percent. According to New York State Education Department data, in June 2021[8], only 40 percent of students in foster care graduated from high school after four years—almost 40 percentage points below the overall City graduation rate of 78 percent. Additionally, a recent study[9] from New York City's Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence reveals even more startling numbers—students in the 2015 cohort who were in the foster system for at least seven days during high school had a four-year graduation rate of only 25 percent. It is imperative that the City make significant investments to appropriately serve these students' needs—the need is clear and the time is now.

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[5] "Foster Care Population," Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, accessed May 31, 2022, https://data.cccnewyork.org/data/table/1399/foster-care-population#1399/1661/99/1/d.
[6] Center for New York City Affairs, "Watching the Numbers 2020: Covid-19's Effects on Child Welfare System;" "Political and Administrative Districts - Download and Metadata," New York City Department of City Planning, accessed May 31, 2022, https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/districts-download-metadata.page.
[7] Oversight - Foster Care Students in the DOE System, Before the Committee on Education, New York City Council Session 2022-2023 (2022) (John Hammer, Chief Executive Director, Office of Special Education, New York City Department of Education), https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/Calendar.aspx.
[8] "NYC Public Schools Graduation Rate Data 4 Year Outcome As of June 2021," New York State Education Department, accessed May 31, 2022, https://data.nysed.gov/gradrate.php?instid=7889678368&year=2021&cohortgroup=1.
[9] New York City Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, "Education Outcomes of NYC Youth in Foster Care," May 2022, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/Education_Outcomes_May19_2022.pdf.

The DOE must move quickly to hire and fully staff its first-ever team focused on students in foster care. Despite the obvious and urgent needs of students in foster care that the City has struggled to meet,there is not currently a single person at the DOE focused full-time on meeting the needs of these students—resulting in barriers to education for this population often remaining unaddressed. **The DOE should create an office focused on these students** to improve policy development, educational interventions, and data collection and transparency. We should be able to learn more about this population's educational outcomes and experiences beyond City Council hearings or Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests. In addition to regular data collection and reporting, the DOE can ***review and analyze*** **this data to make appropriate decisions regarding academic and social emotional interventions for these students**. Finally, such an office can improve the DOE's ability to work with other agencies to improve coordination and services for these students.

This fall, the DOE finally announced that it would hire a small team of staff to focus on students in foster care. However, none of the positions have been filled. While the DOE has started posting the positions, ***it is important that the DOE hires all eleven of the promised positions*** **focused on students in foster care***.* So far, the DOE has posted less than half of the promised positions.

The DOE must ***guarantee*** **bus service or comparable door-to-door transportation to students in foster care**, as children cannot succeed in school if they aren't able to get to school. Federal and state law requires the City to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer schools. However, since this law went into effect in December 2016—nearly 6 years ago—the DOE has refused to guarantee bus service or another comparable mode of transportation to these students. As a result, students who cannot travel to school on their own have been forced to transfer schools, or even transfer foster homes, even when it is not in their best interest. During the 2019-20 school year, one in five NYC students in foster care had to change schools upon their initial placement in foster care. **The City should include and baseline in the final budget $5 million for the DOE to provide bus service or other door-to-door transportation to the small number of students in foster care who need it to maintain school stability**.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for considering the importance of funding and support for students in foster care.

Submitted by:

Chantal Hinds
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Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2023

May 25 2022
Submitted by No Kid Hungry New York

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance of the New York City Council. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Director of No Kid Hungry New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2023.

First, we thank the City Council for your continued commitment to protect New Yorkers from food insecurity. The City Council has long been a leader in addressing food insecurity, from supporting Breakfast in the Classroom to the expansion of universal school meals to leading the charge for increased, baselined funding for food pantries and soup kitchens to ensuring addressing food insecurity remained a top priority throughout the pandemic. Now more than ever, we are grateful to count you as our partner in the fight against food insecurity. We are grateful that Speaker Adams' recent State of the City address included strong recommendations to addressing food insecurity.

No Kid Hungry New York is a campaign of Share Our Strength, a national organization dedicated to ending hunger and poverty. Using proven, practical strategies, our No Kid Hungry campaign builds public-private partnerships with the goal of ensuring children have access to the healthy food they need, every day. Since March of 2020, No Kid Hungry New York provided more than $2 million in emergency grants and support across New York City and Puerto Rico. In addition to our grant-making, we also offered strategic assistance to hundreds of local organizations and advocated for policies to address the unique barriers and unprecedented level of need brought on by the pandemic. This included national child nutrition waivers, which allowed meal providers to adapt and streamline their federal child nutrition program operations so they could keep serving meals to kids, other program flexibilities for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Pandemic EBT to help reach more kids in need. No Kid Hungry will also continue to operate a local text line this summer – "NYC FOOD" or "NYC COMIDA" to 304-304 to help families locate meals, and No Kid Hungry New York will continue to work closely with the New York City Department of Education to customize the service to reflect their specific offerings. Since 2011, our No Kid Hungry New York campaign has helped connect millions of

children across the state with school breakfast and summer meals.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HUNGER AND POVERTY IN NEW YORK CITY

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all parts of our lives as New Yorkers. For many of our city's children and families, the pandemic and its economic consequences have had a disastrous impact on food security. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 5 children in New York City were food insecure. ***Recent estimates show that 1 in 4 New York City children may face food insecurity this year*** and the numbers would likely be higher without interventions from the federal, state and city governments.[1]

No Kid Hungry New York believes that all children, no matter their borough or circumstance, deserve the opportunity to be nourished and safe, so they can live up to their full potential and thrive. Adequate nutrition, both at school and at home, helps lay the foundation for a child's physical and emotional development, educational attainment, and health and well-being. Years of data and research have demonstrated that federal nutrition programs are our nation's most effective defense against hunger and food insecurity and have helped lift millions of families out of poverty.

As the impact of the pandemic lingers, there are numerous investments that can and must be made in FY 2023 to improve food access and food security for children and families across New York City. By providing needed support to expand participation in federal nutrition programs and increase coordination and innovation, New York City can help to reduce food insecurity for New Yorkers in every borough and continue to reverse the trend of drastically increased food insecurity.

NEW YORK CITY HUNGER SURVEY

In April 2022, No Kid Hungry engaged in a new polling project in New York City that shows that many New Yorkers report experiencing hunger in the past 12 months due to lack of money or other resources. The numbers are impactful, particularly among parents of school age children.

Here are some of the key findings:

- A majority (62%) of New Yorkers say it is harder to afford groceries for their household than it was before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 87% of respondents support expanding access to school-based programs that provide meals to children and families, like Grab-and-Go Breakfast and breakfast delivered to the classroom
- 36% report they had to skip a meal at least once.
- Nearly half (46%) of all respondents say they were unable to afford to eat healthy food. Families with kids in public school were the most likely to be forced to skip meals or to run out of food in the home.

[1] New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. *Food Insecurity and Access in New York City during the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020-2021*. Epi Data Brief, No. 128, Nov. 2021. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief128.pdf.

An overwhelming majority (85%) of New Yorkers agree that ending childhood hunger should be a top priority for elected officials in New York. Similarly, 79% agree that elected officials in NYC should do more to help families put food on the table.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 NEW YORK CITY BUDGET

Full Implementation of Breakfast After the Bell

In 2015, New York City made a bold commitment to equity, requiring all city elementary schools to implement Breakfast in the Classroom and ensuring students in those schools could start the school day with a nutritious breakfast. New York City became a national model for child nutrition programs and paved the way for New York State, which passed legislation in 2018 requiring breakfast be part of the school day for more than 1,400 schools statewide, including over 1,000 schools in New York City. Despite these agreements, many schools chose not to participate and claimed there were operational barriers to offering grab and go breakfast or breakfast delivered to the classroom. Since the pandemic, all New York City public schools have provided alternative breakfast options and this program expansion must become permanent. Students who start the day with breakfast have higher attendance, better test scores and fewer chronic health problems. We urge the Council to support funding that ensures the Department of Education has appropriate funding to fully implement Breakfast After the Bell.

Culturally Relevant Meals

The New York City Department of Education has prioritized offering kosher and halal meals to children and families across the city. Each year, they have also expanded vegetarian and now vegan options. Failure to accommodate cultural food preferences can discourage children from participating in school, out-of-school time, and childcare nutrition programs, so this expansion has helped increase participation. New York City should continue to expand diverse food options and provide city agencies with training and tools to engage communities and plan culturally relevant menus.

Summer Meals Accessibility

Summer meals historically reach far fewer eligible students than meals served during the school year, making summer the hungriest time of the year. In New York City, barriers to access often include accessibility of meal sites and lack of program awareness among families. Broad promotion of the summer meals program and available meal sites is integral to reducing summer hunger among New York City's children. Ensuring that information regarding meal sites comes from trusted messengers, such as schools, local elected officials, principals, parent advisory councils, and faith leaders, is an important way to encourage families to participate in the summer meals program. Many families also struggle with reaching meal sites, especially if meal sites are not close to home or when facing extreme weather. Expanding the number of meal sites and strategically placing them to avoid gaps in service are both essential strategies to increase summer meals participation. We also urge the Council to help promote summer meals to your own constituents.

Provide Adult Meals at Summer Meals Sites

The summer is often referred to as the hungriest time of year. Asked why they did not participate in the summer meals programs before COVID, many parents responded it was because only the child could eat and there weren't meals available for adults. So, starting in the spring of 2020, New York City took the extraordinary step of providing meals to adults at the City's own expense during the school year and through summer 2021. New York City should invest City Tax Levy dollars or funds from the American Rescue Plan to continue to provide adult meals at all summer meal sites so that each member of the family can have regular access to meals. While the New York City Department of Education runs the Summer Meal program, expansion to adults would require support, resources and funding from additional city agencies.

Expand School Pantries and Mobile Markets

In 2016, New York City created first-in-the-nation food and hygiene pantries in New York City public schools. The school pantries provide food, cleaning supplies, menstrual products, and tools to address hygiene for families in the school community. Investing in new school pantries would help families put food on the table, and pantry location could be determined based on food insecurity rates, if the school was in an area considered a food desert or did not have an emergency food provider in proximity. Knowing how many communities across the city struggle to access fresh produce, partnering with other city agencies and nonprofit organizations to set up mobile markets could also increase access to fresh produce and resources for families. School pantries also provide another opportunity to promote other programs to families. We support the Council's proposal to increase support so that more schools across New York City can offer food pantries and mobile markets to their families.

Provide Support and Protection for Nutrition Staff Working to Serve Families and Children

We also want to recognize the members of the Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services staff who have been on the front lines of the pandemic serving school meals to kids and families. The entire New York City school system relies on the incredible men and women of Local 372, DC 37 to provide nutritious meals to children year-round. We must ensure the Department of Education has appropriate supplies, tools and resources to protect staff members as they continue their essential work of feeding children. We also owe them tremendous gratitude for these heroic efforts.

Increase Awareness, Outreach and Enrollment for Nutrition Programs

With many New Yorkers still facing unemployment and underemployment, especially in the face of rising food prices and rent, safety net programs are more important than ever. Federal programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Medicaid and the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) exist to help families get back on their feet during hard times. However, these programs only work when people can access them. As many New Yorkers are qualifying for benefits for the first time and

the chilling effect of the rescinded Public Charge rule is still being felt by immigrant families, accessing public benefits can be confusing and lead to lack of confidence in enrolling or utilizing programs. New York City must prioritize funding for outreach and education efforts to help immigrant families enroll in programs, including food and nutrition programs, for which they or their children are eligible. Schools are an important and trusted vehicle to communicate about these programs with families.

CONCLUSION

New York City is recovering from a prolonged period of unprecedented loss and challenges. Throughout the pandemic, city agencies and nonprofit organizations sustained and fed children and families. With the city reopening for business and communities slowly returning to pre-existing operations, it is essential that no New Yorkers are left behind. As you deliberate the FY23 New York City budget, we urge the New York City Council to prioritize funding programs that ensure none of New York's children face hunger. No Kid Hungry New York stands at the ready to work with the New York City Council and our fellow New Yorkers to ensure all children and families have access to the food they need to thrive.

Testimony of Nontraditional Employment for Women

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing Testimony

Good morning. I am Kathleen Culhane, President of Nontraditional Employment for Women, or NEW, a nonprofit with a 44-year record of transforming the economic prospects for women through careers in the skilled, unionized construction trades.

As you are well aware, New Yorkers are facing uncertainty and multiple challenges at this moment in time. New York City has lagged behind the nation as a whole in recovering jobs lost during the pandemic. Women, particularly Black and brown women, are bearing disproportionate effects on multiple levels, including income loss, job loss, and being pulled out of the workforce due to childcare responsibilities. In the face of such stark inequality, partnerships between organized labor and community-based organizations like NEW thus become all the more important to infuse equity in our economic recovery.

City efforts and employer efforts to restore our economy must be done responsibly, with apprenticeship requirements, union worker protections, and diversity goals, so that we do not simply recover, but also blunt the effects of future crises. City efforts in capital construction, building retrofits, new building operations protocols, and other projects can become engines of an inclusive recovery through investments in workforce development programs like NEW. We are eager to continue working together with our City of New York partners, so that all New Yorkers have access to opportunity and are able to build a stable life for themselves and their families.

NEW is pleased to work with its union partners and other employers to help its graduates access careers with middle-class wages and benefits, safety protections that are even more important during the pandemic, and representation that counteracts employer abuses. For sixteen years, the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York and its affiliate unions have set aside apprenticeship opportunities for graduates of NEW, 85% of whom are Black or brown women, and whose incomes are on average tripled simply by starting their careers in the building trades. As of 2018, the BCTC expanded its commitment by a historic 50% increase in set asides for women – 15% of apprenticeship slots are now reserved for graduates of NEW. Because of the workforce diversity goals that NEW promotes on local projects through our NEW Signature Projects program, NEW has been named as a partner in New York City's Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) to increase hiring of NYCHA residents and individuals from low-income areas.

Along with a group of tradeswomen, I had the privilege to speak to the City Council on April 19, 2022 regarding Gender Diversity in the Trades, where we shared in greater detail how NEW is helping to address workplace inequities that have marginalized many working women. Allow me to emphasize now that, by continuing to partner with NEW, the City Council can continue to make progress for women,

and particularly Black and brown women, in accessing economic opportunity. NEW is seeking continued funding from the City Council, with select, targeted enhancements from FY22 and new funding, as follows:

Renewal and Enhancements

- $250,000 from Speaker Initiative funding (a $50,000 increase from our FY22 funding to account for the increased demand for services among our community)
- $175,000 from Young Women's Initiative funding to support young women and girls in exploring trade careers in partnership with New York City Public Schools (a $40,000 increase from our FY22 funding to further expand this program)

New Funding Requests

- $200,000 from the Job Training and Placement Initiative
- $150,000 from the Construction Site Safety and Training Initiative to enhance safety training
- $100,000 from the Pride at Work Initiative to enhance access to skilled trades careers among the LGBTQIA+ community

Thank you for your time and history of support for NEW and our community.

RTCNYC Coalition Testimony
Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Finance Committee
May 25, 2022

Dear Finance Committee -

Please accept our testimony on behalf of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY. We are members of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, which led and won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction. We are proud of NYC's groundbreaking Right to Counsel legislation and applaud the City Council, the Mayor, and the Office of Civil Justice for its dedication to making the Right to Counsel available to all New Yorkers during this pandemic. The law had tremendous impact in just the first few years since it passed: 84% percent of tenants who had RTC won their case and stayed in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to protect and advance tenants' rights. Right to Counsel has also helped develop a body of more just case law, lower tenants' rents, re-stabilize apartments, and has forced landlords to make repairs.

As we have seen, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Right to Counsel is more important than ever before. We know that evictions and housing instability have a disproportionate impact on people of color, especially women and children of color. Evictions and housing instability also have significant impacts not just on people's housing, but on people's education, employment, family relationships, physical and mental health, and so much more. NYC's Right to Counsel moves us closer towards achieving economic, gender, and racial justice.

We are here today to urge this committee to immediately and fully implement Local Law 53 and to work with the courts to ensure that no case move forward without an RTC attorney.

Immediately and Fully Implement Local Law 53:

The expansion of RTC to work with and fund community organizing groups to do the necessary education and outreach work of RTC, Local Law 53, is so incredibly critical. While we applauded the city for passing legislation in May of last year, with an effective date of November 2021, we are deeply disappointed that it has not yet been implemented.

To date and since the Coalition last testified at the General Welfare Committee Hearing on February 28, the Office of Civil Justice has failed to release the RFP or confirm funding for Local Law 53. Furthermore, we understand that OCJ and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit have

engaged in efforts to inform the public of Right to Counsel. *We want to be extremely clear - this is not a substitute or solution for failure to fund Local Law 53.*

The intent of Local Law 53 is clear - to fund trusted tenant organizing groups working in low-income communities of color to lead outreach and education efforts through community meetings, workshops, Tenant Association meetings, and more. This is the vital work of tenant organizers, and ensuring that tenants are informed of Right to Counsel and supported prior to an eviction case being filed. Tenants know about their rights and exercising them is a preventative and proactive measure.

With hundreds of thousands of households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 200,000 eviction cases filed across New York, tenants need this law now more than ever. We were told the city allocated $3.6 million towards this bill, had drafted the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was going to release it in November of last year. To date, we haven't seen it. We know the mayoral and city council administrations take time to transition but **with the expiration of the eviction protections almost 4 months ago and hundreds of eviction cases moving forward without Right to Counsel, we can't wait.** The city is now out of compliance with its own law and it needs to implement it now, in this current budget.

Why is this law important?

- Right to Counsel has been proven to stop evictions in NYC, but many tenants who are eligible for Right to Counsel don't know about it or are too afraid to use it. When tenants don't know or use their rights, they are more easily harassed out of their apartments. This leads to the displacement of mostly poor Black and brown New Yorkers.
- A survey done by volunteers at Bronx Housing Court found that **53%** of tenants who had Right to Counsel did not know about this right before arriving in court.
- When tenants don't know they have a Right to Counsel, they might decide not to appear in court, decline representation, sign agreements with their landlord's lawyer prior, decide not to ask for repairs in fear of being evicted, or face a variety of other serious consequences.
- Local Law 53 requires the city to support organizers who would work to ensure that tenants know about their Right to Counsel and feel supported using it. More tenants will be prepared to defend their homes against eviction and fight for their right to a safe, affordable home.
- Tenant organizing is the most effective means of ensuring tenants know about their rights. Tenant organizing groups create an environment where tenants feel supported by a community that is working together to combat landlord abuse, ensuring that a landlord cannot target an individual tenant for standing up for their rights.

- We need to stop informal evictions! 54% of forced moves that take place in NYC are the result of informal evictions, such as a tenant leaving due being told to leave, landlord harassment, a lack of repairs, etc. When tenants know they have the right to a lawyer and are organized, they can fight back when landlords try to push them out.

To meet the needs of tenants across the city, this law must be implemented now. **We urge this Committee to work with HRA to release the RFP so that tenant organizing groups can do their work to educate and organize tenants across NYC during this incredibly scary time.**

We urge this Committee to call on Mayor Adams to fully fund and implement Local Law 53 and ensure the Office of Civil Justice is allocating $5 million towards Local Law 53.

We look forward to working with you on this. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

New York New Jersey Regional Joint Board

JULIE BRACERO-KELLY, *General Manager*
International Vice President
FRED J. KAPLAN, *Secretary-Treasurer*

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearing Testimony

May 27, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in regards to the FY2023 NYC Council budget. My name is Clara Wheatley-Schaller and I am the Political Director at the NY NJ Regional Joint Board of Workers United/SEIU. Our union is a proud member of the NY Healthy Nail Salons Coalition, which supports nail salon workers through organizing, legislative campaigns, and training and education, namely the NY Nail Salon Worker School. **This year, we are advocated for increased funding for the NY Nail Salon Worker School, and for the budget to recognize the important work of immigrant women workers in our city.**

The NY Nail Salon Worker school is a program administered by the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH), in partnership with our union and Adhikaar. Thanks to funding from the City Council, the school has been able to teach nail salon workers – mainly Latina and Asian immigrant women – important on-the-job skills, and prepare them to become licensed manicurists in our state. Once a technician receives her license, she is able to perform her work in safer and healthier ways for herself and customers and she is able to more confidently advocate for applicable standards in her salon and the industry at large. Without access to training, unlicensed nail salon workers are more vulnerable to exploitation in an industry marked by low wages and unsafe working conditions. The School, by moving nail salon workers from trainees to licensed manicurists, has become an essential workforce development program for New York City and a core component of fighting worker exploitation in the industry.

Funding women's workforce development, like the NY Nail Salon Worker School, is essential to create equity in New York City's workforce. Workforce development dollars traditionally go towards male-dominated workforces, which can contribute to the gender pay gap. For example, in the Biden Harris Administration's infrastructure jobs proposals, 90% of the funding would go towards male-dominated industries. With the new City Council being women-led, we are hopeful that NYC initiatives that direct dollars towards women, particularly immigrant women of color, will be a priority. We are requesting a Speaker's Initiative to fund immigrant women workers in the amount of $500,000.

In addition to training workers to become licensed manicurists, the school requires that students take know your rights workshops and has become a base for creating community among nail salon workers, many of whom are from communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, and allowing workers to organize to advocate for better conditions in the industry. In 2019, nail salon workers - many of whom were graduates of the school or current students - successfully won One Fair Wage for their industry,

Clara Wheatley-Schaller, Political Director
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and workers are currently advocating for new legislation at the state level to improve working conditions.

The school has been very successful due to the funding from the NYC Council. To date, the New York Nail Salon Worker School has a 95% pass rate on the written exam and 100% pass rate on the practical exam, which is the highest pass rate for beauty schools in the state. More than 876 students have graduated since the School's founding in 2016. We continue to work with students to see that no one is left behind regardless of literacy or language barriers and have successfully advocated for the exam to be administered verbally to accommodate low-literacy students.

Hundreds of women are signed up to enroll in our school, which utilizes participatory-based education techniques to ensure our high success rates. We teach workers in a fundamentally different way than proprietary schools and include information that goes beyond the required curriculum. Many nail salon workers have never taken a written test before, for example, and NYCOSH's school incorporates these kinds of basic skills into its curriculum to ensure workers can be successful.

Our education techniques account for the astounding pass rate for graduates of the New York Nail Salon Worker School, which is precedent-setting for workers in the industry. However, NYCOSH has a backlog of students who need our trainings. We are seeking funding to increase our capacity to meet the needs of our student body. New York has the highest concentration of nail salon workers in the United States, and the need for these types of training in this community is enormous. Our coalition plans to use FY 2023 funds to expand the program to Vietnamese with our partners Mekong NYC. Our School, with this expanded funding, would have the capacity to offer courses in English, Spanish, Nepali, and Vietnamese.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I will leave you with this testimony from Dapalmu Sherpa, graduate of NYCOSH Beauty School and member leader of Adhikaar:

"*I first came to know about [the school] from a friend of mine and then became a member in 2017. I came just for license inquiry during that time, but they have supported me beyond my needs. It has supported me in obtaining a trainee license and later I was able to join the 26 hours nail salon permanent licensing course which was all in Nepali, the language I am very fluent and comfortable with. Along with training, they also provided additional information on my rights as a nail technician. After the training, I took the State licensing exam but unfortunately I could not pass. But I never gave up or lost hope, nor did the trainers. They provided me with additional support and study sessions, after which I passed the State exam with full colors. I was very relieved and no longer feared sudden checking by the state, where if you failed to show your license then you got fined. Permanent license is important for all nail technicians and I am thankful for supporting me as a Nepali speakers with limited English language and literacy."*

Clara Wheatley-Schaller, Political Director
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New York City Arts in Education Roundtable

Written Testimony - Committee on Finance (May 25, 2022)

Good evening everyone. First a huge thank you to Chair Brannan, fellow Committee Members and City Council staff, we are so grateful for your passion, leadership, endurance, and support of arts education in NYC schools.

My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, teaching artist working at P396K a District 75 school in Brownsville, and an adjunct professor in the Graduate Program in Educational Theatre at the City College of New York.

NYC's public school students have been through a lot the last two years during COVID:

- Lost learning time
- Suffering from the mental and emotional strain of remote learning
- Processing trauma associated with pandemic and racial injustices in our city and country

Transforming our city's schools starts with the arts. That is what I am here today to call on our City to invest in dance, music, theater, visual arts, and media in the DOE budget.

The arts provide evidence-based solutions for engaging students in learning, increasing our parent involvement, improving academic outcomes, supporting student mental health, and promoting well-being.

We know an excellent arts education is the foundation and launching pad to success in school and life. However, under-investment in Arts Education in NYC has been recurrent. Prior to COVID-19, 67% of principals noted funding for the arts was generally insufficient. Only 34% of middle schoolers are meeting the state arts learning requirements. 17% of schools still lack a certified arts teacher. Almost 30% of schools no longer partner with an arts or cultural organization.

We want safe, inviting, colorful, vibrant, and thriving school communities — that starts with the arts.

The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable recommends that the DOE makes sure all schools can provide required arts instruction to all students by taking the following steps:

1) Baseline Per Capita Arts Education Funding

In the 2021-22 school year, the DOE recommended that schools use just $79.62 per student of their FSF allocation for arts. We recommend boosting the per student arts allocation to $100 from $79.62. These funds give schools the resources needed to meet NYSED arts instructional requirements and are spent at each principal's discretion for hiring new art teachers, buying supplies, and building community partnerships to meet the unique needs of their school community (Pre-COVID, 67% of principals reported that funding for the arts was "insufficient").

The NYC Arts in Education Roundtable recommends that the DOE makes sure all schools can provide required arts instruction to all students by raising the per student arts allocation to $100 per student per year and by requiring the funding be spent on the arts.

There is a precedent for required per capita spending in arts education. Per the former Comptroller Scott Stringer's 2014 State of the Arts report, "In 1997, BOE created Project ARTS, the first per capita funding allocation for arts education since the 1970s. Project ARTS funds were targeted for direct instruction in core

arts areas, related equipment, resource materials and supplies and partnerships with arts and cultural services." In FY 2008, the Bloomberg administration eliminated Project ARTS due to the financial crisis of 2007–2008.

2) Center Arts and Cultural Education in Summer Rising, After School, and Tutoring

Mayor Adams has announced plans to continue and expand the Summer Rising program and has indicated that the City will improve after school and tutoring programs available to families. The cultural community has long partnered with schools to enrich programming, improve instruction, and provide out-school experiences for students. In the first year of Summer Rising alone, 225 schools partnered with arts and cultural organizations to create hundreds of murals and community-rooted pop-up performances.

We request that the DOE build on success by continuing to direct at least $5.6M in funding for arts and cultural partnerships and opportunities during Summer Rising. We also call on the City Council to continue funding the CASA and Su-CASA initiatives.

3) Continue American Rescue Plan Act Academic Recovery Funding for Arts Instruction

Continue 20% allocation to standards-based arts instruction to promote social, emotional and academic support for all students

For the current school year, the DOE set aside $70 million or twenty percent of the $350 million in American Recovery Plan Act funding for academic recovery services specifically for the Arts. Engagement in the arts is not only therapeutic but also boosts academic achievement and school attachment. As we all know, schools were in pandemic response mode for much of this year and recovery will last for several years.

The DOE must devote 20% of the Fiscal 2023 American Rescue Plan Act Academic Recovery funding to expand standards-based arts instruction for all students and roll used Fiscal 2022 ARPA arts funding into Fiscal 2023 for summer and school year programs. The pandemic recovery will take years and these vital supports for arts-based interventions should remain in place. This ~$44,000 allocation per school represents a down payment on what should be the universal right and access to quality arts education for all students, which begins by prioritizing students with disabilities, English Language Learners, students with economic need, and those in neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19.

4) Restore Cuts to Arts Services

The DOE must restore and baseline the $24 million for Arts Services cut when the pandemic hit New York City's economy. This budget line includes Arts Partnership Grants that provide targeted opportunities for diverse groups of students, with a focus on English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Family Engagement programs.

These arts services were among the first items cut in 2020 yet boost student achievement in and through the arts, while developing and promoting best practices in arts education, and supporting strong partnerships with community-based organizations.

The arts are an essential part of every student's academic program and the very fabric of NYC. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to our students.

NEW YORK CITY CHARTER SCHOOL CENTER

It's about great public schools.

The New York City Charter School Center

Erik Joerss, Director of Government Affairs

Testimony Presented to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Hearings

May 25, 2022

The New York City Charter School Center (Charter Center) respectfully submits the following testimony. The Charter Center thanks the New York City Council Committee on Finance for providing the opportunity to comment on the Executive Budget Hearings on behalf of the New York City charter school sector.

For over twenty years, public charter schools have been an integral part of the public education system in New York City (NYC), and in the 2021-22 school year there are 271 public charter schools operating in the five boroughs. These public schools employ an estimated 11,400 public school teachers and educate over 140,000 students, representing over 14% of public school students, of which 90% are Black/African American or Latinx. New York's public charter schools are serving primarily low-income NYC families (80% are economically disadvantaged), offering additional high-quality educational options for families.

The students (and families) who attend NYC's public charter schools represent some of the communities hardest hit by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Across the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the disparities that exist amongst communities, and NYC is no different. The pandemic has also further illuminated and exacerbated the disparities certain student groups within NYC. One such disparity we hope to correct is the exclusion of charter school students from Local Law 2016/02, which provides a reimbursement program for private schools that provide security services in their school.

In 2016, the Council created a $19.8 million School Safety reimbursement fund with taxpayer dollars for non-public schools with over 300 students to cover the cost of keeping their school facilities safe through contracts with private security firms. The Department of Education (NYC DOE) employs school security guards in all of their buildings with a partnership with the New York City Police Department. This means that students in private schools with over 300 students, district students, and charter students in DOE buildings have security officers in their building. The only group of students attending K-12 schools in NYC that do not receive access to security officers are charter students in private space settings. This exclusion has meant that the approximately 185 charter campuses must fund security costs out of per-pupil funding or redirect teachers and staff to provide security services. Some of these students at private space charter schools are the same students that do not receive rental assistance under a 2014 state law. These students are already receiving $4,863 less per pupil than district schools[1] For those private space charter schools that do receive rental assistance, they are receiving $2,057 less per pupil than district schools. The totality of these realities further demonstrates the ways in which public charter schools' stresses are exacerbated and resources are stretched. Charter schools are continuously asked to do more with less, and while the sector has continued to grow and conquer obstacles, the safety, security, and education of children must be non-negotiable.

There is room in the current School Safety reimbursement fund for charter students because most of the $19.8 million has been left on the table. In 2020, $14.2 million was unused, while $13.6 million remained in the pot untouched in 2021. These leftover funds amount to money and resources that can be directed to charter schools – we have estimated that the inclusion of the 185 excluded charter schools representing 65,000 students would cost $5 million per year, well within the amount left in the pot the past few years. Instead of diverting funds set aside to provide equitable access to security and safety measures and precautions, NYC has chosen to leave charters to fend for themselves in creating a secure environment in which schools can direct their time and attention to providing quality education to some of the most impacted students in the city. If the Council takes up 70-2018, which proposed to grow the number of eligible schools and double the current reimbursement fund, the city's public charter schools would expect to be included, as well.

All students deserve to feel safe and free to focus their energy on their academic growth, and under current law, public charter schools in private space are the only schools in NYC – public or private – that are forced to divert money and resources out of the classroom to provide the basic security every other school enjoys. Even some of the city's wealthiest private schools like Spence, Dalton, Chapin, and Brearley enjoy access to security funding, whilst the 185 public charters that educate primarily low-income students of color whose families are community members and constituents deserving of the same treatment as all other New Yorkers. The 65,000 students in private space charters are made up of 43% Black/African American, 46% Hispanic/Latinx, 81% Economically Disadvantaged, 11% English language learners and 19% are students with disabilities.

Mayor Adams has been vocal about creating a safe city for all in an ever-changing, and both the Mayor and NYC DOE Chancellor Banks have been vocal about scaling educational excellence. To reimburse public charter schools in private space to hire security guards helps us all achieve these common goals, while centering all NYC students – public and private, alike. In fact, Mayor Adams (then Brooklyn Borough President) advocated for the inclusion of charter schools in Local Law 2016/02 stating, "Our tax dollars should protect all our children," adding that he believed this could be passed by the Council. The NYC Council should amend Local Law 2016/02 to include public charter schools. Absent legislation, the City Council should ask City Hall to add funds into the budget for these already underfunded charter schools, many of whom are among the worst-funded public schools in NYC.

With respect to the 2022-23 New York State Fiscal Year Executive Budget Proposal, we were disappointed to see that among the influx of both federal and state money, the NYC DOE has not reinstated the District-Charter Partnership (DCP) program. The DCP program, which was one of the Equity and Excellence initiatives established in 2015, provided opportunities for over 350 charter and district schools to come together in a variety of forums to learn from and share with each other. This work has included School-to-School Partnerships; Professional Learning Partnerships; and Systemwide Partnerships. Following Mayor Adams's and Chancellor Banks's desire to scale up educational excellence, the DCP program is an ideal vehicle for educators to exchange ideas and collaborate for the betterment of all New York City students. While it is understandable why program cuts such as this one had to be made to the budget in a time when all budgets were being cut, there is no reason the DCP program should not being reinstated in the 2022-23 school year. We provide two examples of the important work the DCP program started and request that funding is reinstated in this year's budget so it can continue.

As part of the School-to-School Partnership program, Campus District–Charter Partnerships (CDCOP) were created to build positive cross-sector relationships in more than 150 school buildings where district and charter schools are co-located. CDCP fostered collaboration between charters and district schools that share a campus through structured meetings focusing on topics of shared interest, including improving campus-wide instruction, student engagement, and parental involvement. These partnerships are even more important as schools acclimate to in-person, unmasked learning environments and work together to maintain the health and safety of all in the buildings.

Another important DCP program was the District–Charter Special-Education Partnerships. While charter schools are autonomous in many respects, the NYC DOE is the local education agency (LEA) for special education in NYC charter schools, which means all decisions about the provision of special education services for charter students is made by the DOE's Committees on Special Education (CSEs). Students with disabilities make up 18.1% of charter school students (which is comparable to the percentage of students with disabilities in the district), representing 25,390 students. All charter schools and families benefit from the central support for the CSEs that has been improved and expanded under this program. As charter schools work in partnership with the CSE to ensure students with disabilities receive all they need to make up for lost time, it is critical that funding for this partnership be restored along with the central DOE positions that support the provision of special education services to charter students.

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New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023
Executive Budget Hearing Testimony

May 27, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in regards to the FY2023 NYC Council budget. My name is Charlene Obernauer and I am the Executive Director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) and Co-Director of the New York Nail Salon Worker School, which is the program that we are seeking funding for today.

Thanks to funding from the City Council, the school has been able to teach nail salon workers – mainly Latina and Asian immigrant women – important on-the-job skills, and prepare them to become licensed manicurists in our state. Once a technician receives her license, she is able to perform her work in safer and healthier ways for herself and customers and she is able to more confidently advocate for applicable standards in her salon and the industry at large. Without access to training, unlicensed nail salon workers are more vulnerable to exploitation in an industry marked by low wages and unsafe working conditions. The School, by moving nail salon workers from trainees to licensed manicurists, has become an essential workforce development program for New York City and a core component of fighting worker exploitation in the industry.

Funding women's workforce development, like the NY Nail Salon Worker School, is essential to create equity in New York City's workforce. Workforce development dollars traditionally go towards male-dominated workforces, which can contribute to the gender pay gap. For example, in the Biden Harris Administration's infrastructure jobs proposals, 90% of the funding would go towards male-dominated industries. With the new City Council being women-led, we are hopeful that NYC initiatives that direct dollars towards women, particularly immigrant women of color, will be a priority. We are requesting a Speaker's Initiative to fund immigrant women workers in the amount of $500,000.

In addition to training workers to become licensed manicurists, the school requires that students take know your rights workshops and has become a base for creating community among nail salon workers, many of whom are from communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, and allowing workers to organize to advocate for better conditions in the industry. In 2019, nail salon workers - many of whom were graduates of the school or current students - successfully won One Fair Wage for their industry, and workers are currently advocating for new legislation at the state level to improve working conditions.

The school has been very successful due to the funding from the NYC Council. To date, the New York Nail Salon Worker School has a 95% pass rate on the written exam and 100% pass rate on the practical exam, which is the highest pass rate for beauty schools in the state. More than 876 students have graduated since the School's founding in 2016. We continue to work with students to see that no one is left behind regardless of literacy or language barriers and have successfully advocated for the exam to be administered verbally to accommodate low-literacy students.

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Hundreds of women are signed up to enroll in our school, which utilizes participatory-based education techniques to ensure our high success rates. We teach workers in a fundamentally different way than proprietary schools and include information that goes beyond the required curriculum. Many nail salon workers have never taken a written test before, for example, and

NYCOSH's school incorporates these kinds of basic skills into its curriculum to ensure workers can be successful. Our education techniques account for the astounding pass rate for graduates of the New York Nail Salon Worker School, which is precedent-setting for workers in the industry. However, NYCOSH has a backlog of students who need our trainings. We are seeking funding to increase our capacity to meet the needs of our student body. New York has the highest concentration of nail salon workers in the United States, and the need for these types of training in this community is enormous. Our coalition plans to use FY 2023 funds to expand the program to Vietnamese with our partners Mekong NYC. Our School, with this expanded funding, would have the capacity to offer courses in English, Spanish, Nepali, and Vietnamese.

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Inc.

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Testimony of Justin Wood
Director of Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Hearing on the FY23 Executive Budget
May 25, 2022

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to share testimony on the preliminary FY23 budget.

After two years of budget cuts and austerity amidst the worst public health, environmental, and economic crises in generations, we want to thank Speaker Adams and the City Council for proposing a budget that would move New York away from a harmful cycle of stop-and-start program and staffing cuts, and toward long-term investments in infrastructure, education, and workforce programs necessary to address the root causes of racial and social inequality in our city.

To this end, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) is pleased to offer the following six priorities that we feel are integral to increasing health justice, environmental justice, and disability justice in New York City:

1. **Fully fund the City Council's Immigrant Health Initiative.** NYLPI is privileged to be part of the City Council's Immigrant Health Initiative, and we thank you for that support. During this unprecedented public health crisis, funding for this initiative has allowed us to expand our work and continue to provide critical services to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers have access to healthcare, and we ask that this vital program continue in FY 2023 for both NYLPI and our partners. Since 2017, NYLPI has used this funding to provide free immigration representation, holistic wrap-around services, comprehensive health screenings and organ transplant advocacy for undocumented New Yorkers and people detained in immigration detention facilities and jails.

The Immigrant Health Initiative has allowed us to expand our work and provide legal representation for transgender, gender-nonconforming, intersex (TGNCI) folks and/or HIV+ individuals. For example:

- Last year NYLPI filed an affirmative asylum application for a gender nonconforming individual living in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn who has been perceived as a "gay man." They have suffered past harm by the Venezuelan government and were stabbed because of their sexual identity. We were able to submit their asylum application only days before the deadline, which also made the client eligible to receive critical public benefits, including healthcare.

- Christina, another client living in Corona, Queens, recently received a life-saving kidney transplant after our immigration and health advocacy, thanks to this Council initiative.

2. **Commit to major upfront investments in organic waste recycling, commercial waste reform programs, and infrastructure that advances waste equity and creation of good green jobs.** We are pleased to see full funding for implementation of the Commercial Waste Zones program in the proposed budget, and look forward to working with DSNY, the City Council, and the administration to implement this landmark reform of the sprawling commercial waste system in the coming months.

Major investments in universal curbside compost service and other diversion programs are urgently needed on the residential side. While the restoration of school organic waste collections and limited community drop-off sites in the executive budget are a positive signal, transformation of our landfill- and incinerator-based solid waste system can only begin once the Council and administration mandate a timeline and plan for implementation of a universal, citywide compost program that will achieve economies of scale, robust participation in multifamily buildings, facilitate long-term savings by replacing garbage disposal routes with organics routes, and begin to move the needle on our climate emissions and waste reduction goals.

3. **Make immediate investments in renewable energy, battery storage, and sustainable waste infrastructure on Rikers Island.** The City must move as swiftly and boldly as possible to transform Rikers Island from a deadly and dysfunctional carceral site to a renewable energy, recycling, and jobs hub as mandated by the Renewable Rikers Act of 2021. Moreover, investments in local renewable energy and storage solutions cannot come soon enough as New Yorkers face skyrocketing energy bills and the prospect of a sweltering summer while the downstate electric grid continues to rely on highly polluting and expensive fossil fuel peaker plants clustered in the same communities that suffer from the worst impacts of mass incarceration.

We therefore strongly support the Council's proposal in the FY23 Budget Response to install a large-scale solar array and energy storage on the approximately 50 acres of land on Riker's Island that have already been transferred from Corrections to DCAS. Riker's Island also has great potential for sustainable waste management facilities including composting or anaerobic digestion of organic food waste, far beyond the current limited composting operations for food waste generated by Department of Corrections.

4. Fully implement Local Law 97 of 2019.

Recent near-record heat, air quality health advisories, and escalating electric bills are also stark reminders that urban heat island effects, energy burdens, and air pollution are highly unequal burdens that will worsen for low-income communities and communities of color across NYC if we do not take systemic, urgent action.

Weatherization, energy efficiency upgrades, green roofs, and rapid development of local renewable energy resources are among the investments that can mitigate these climate change impacts, while reducing our city's overall greenhouse gas emissions. We echo the Council's call to baseline full funding and staffing for the Office of Building Energy and Emissions Performance (OBEEP) to implement and enforce Local Law 97 of 2019 in the FY23 budget and going forward.

5. Utilize the $55 million allocation for B-HEARD to fund the CCIT-NYC non-police mental health crisis response system.

After nearly a year in business, the City's B-HEARD program, which was intended to be a non-police response to mental health crises, *continues to dispatch police to more than 80% of mental health crisis calls.* For a city where 19 individuals experiencing mental health crises have been killed at the hands of the police in the last seven years alone, B-HEARD continues to present enormous dangers for individuals with mental disabilities.

NYLPI urges full funding for a truly non-police model of the sort proposed by Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC (CCIT-NYC) that, unlike B-HEARD, will:

- use the federal 988 hotline rather than the police-run 911 system;
- engage community members and individuals with lived mental health experience in the design, implementation, and oversight of crisis response — most crucially as members of the crisis response teams;
- be available 24/7; and
- have a response time comparable to that of other crises.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and look forward to working with Speaker Adams and the members of this council to implement a budget that advances our shared vision for a more equitable, sustainable, and thriving New York City.

JUSTIN WOOD
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Founded 45 years ago by leaders of the bar, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) is a community-driven civil rights organization that pursues justice for all New Yorkers. NYLPI works toward a New York where all people can thrive in their communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. In NYLPI's vision, all New Yorkers live with dignity and independence, with the resources they need to succeed. NYLPI's communitydriven approach powers its commitments to civil rights and to disability, health, immigrant, and environmental justice. NYLPI seeks lasting change through litigation, community organizing, policy advocacy, pro bono service, and education.

New York University (NYU Grossman School of Medicine)
City's First Readers: Video Interaction Project

Testimony Submitted to the
NYC City Council **Committee on Finance** Hearing

May 25, 2022

May 25, 2022

I, Alan Mendelsohn, MD, am writing on behalf of New York University, Video Interaction Project, and City's First Readers to provide testimony as to why it is absolutely critical to continue to support the **City's First Readers** Initiative, including the Video Interaction Project, during the terrible period fostered upon us by the COVID pandemic. I make this request not only as a pediatrician, professor, and scientist at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue, but also as a parent of two grown children and resident of New York City.

With the FY23 Executive Budget being reviewed, NYU's Video Interaction Project would like to remind you of the critical importance of ensuring the well-being and school readiness of our youngest and most vulnerable children.

- There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC. **44.5% of them live in low income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - $25,750 for a family of four), and **76% of children under the age of five are children of color**.
- The number of homeless New Yorkers has risen to the highest point since the Great Depression, and the largest demographic within the homeless population is children; approximately 45% of the children in Department of Homeless Services facilities were 5 or younger even prior to COVID.

City's First Readers partners work in every Council District to thwart this opportunity gap from becoming an achievement gap.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catastrophe for families with very young children, and continuing to provide programming through City's First Readers is **essential** for their wellbeing. Parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers have been required to shelter in place at home; preschools, childcare centers, playgrounds, and in-person support groups have been closed or limited; and many other vital services have been cut or inaccessible. Parents are under incredibly high levels of stress due to loss of employment and income, lack of access to food, worry about protecting their children, and grieving over deceased or ill family members. All families are suffering greatly, but low-income families are being hit the hardest by this crisis and will struggle the most to recover both financially and emotionally. A report published by the United Hospital Fund illustrates some of the devastating ways that children in New York have been and will continue to be deeply affected by this crisis: https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/covid-19-ripple-effectimpact-covid-19-children-new-york-state/

Our specific role at New York University as a partner in the City's First Readers coalition is for the Video Interaction Project (VIP). VIP is a low-cost parenting program designed to break the cycle of poverty and prevent achievement gaps among low-income children before they emerge. This program uses routine pediatric healthcare appointments to support parents and children through promotion of positive parenting behaviors.

The programming offered through City's First Readers, such as my program (VIP), can help families cope with stressors of parenting, reduce maternal depressive symptoms, reduce early harsh discipline that can lead to child maltreatment, and prevent child behavior problems that interfere with learning. My research, funded in part by the National Institutes of Health, has shown this scientifically. VIP has among the strongest evidence bases of any early childhood program, with findings sustained at least 1.5 years after program completion. As

shown in multiple analyses published in prominent peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at high-profile academic and policy conferences, VIP results in large impacts in three areas that are critical to reducing poverty-related disparities: 1) Enhanced parent-child relationships, 2) Enhanced coping with stressors common in families facing poverty and racism, and 3) Enhanced child development, strongest in the area of social-emotional development. **By helping parents cope with the stressors of this crisis and even maintain some possibility of normalcy in their relationships and activities with their children, City's First Readers has the potential to protect children against long-term impacts on mental health and school achievement, and even reduce large costs that the city will otherwise face to address this calamity.**

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis two years ago, all of the City's First Readers partners have quickly adapted our services in order to best meet the needs of incredibly vulnerable families during this time. My program, Video Interaction Project, is being delivered in a hybrid format with a return earlier this year to in-person delivery. Remote delivery is still available by internet or phone to families across New York City at NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue, Woodhull, Gouverneur, Queens, and Elmhurst and at multiple NYU Langone Brooklyn Family Health Centers in Sunset Park, and at Children's Aid locations in the Bronx and in Harlem, reaching over 2,500 high-risk families in NYC in 2021. This is possible as a direct result of New York City Council support and **is helping support families throughout the COVID pandemic.**

It is critical that we are able to continue to provide City's First Readers' services for parents and young children in Fiscal Year 2023, when we anticipate that the need for both in person and remote parent support will continue to be vital for family well-being.

COVID has isolated our city's youngest children and kept them from experiencing the social interactions and stimulation that are the building blocks of acquiring literacy. If we are to remove the obstacles created by the pandemic and use this imposed opportunity to rebuild a more equitable city, early literacy and related early childhood services must be viewed as the key to this goal.

Any public budget is a statement of social priorities. Please ensure that the FY23 New York City Executive Budget includes enhanced funding for City's First Readers. Every New York City child deserves the opportunity to learn.

Please find attached some additional information on my program, the Video Interaction Project, and some of our accomplishments over the past few years.

Sincerely,



Alan L. Mendelsohn, MD
Professor of Pediatrics and Population Health
Director of Clinical Research, Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics
Director, Video Interaction Project
NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue
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City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

The Challenge:

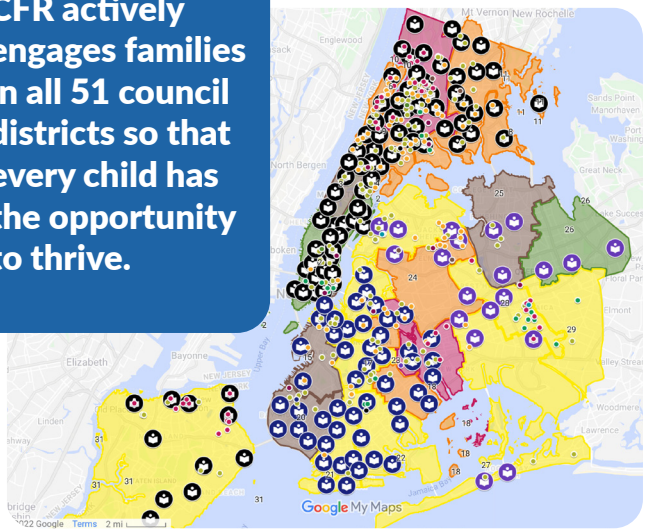
The **31%** of children under five in NYC living in poverty face opportunity gaps. As a result, compared to their higher income peers, they enter school with fewer pre-reading skills that come from talking, playing, drawing, singing and reading with their families. This early gap has long term educational, fiscal, social and health implications.

The Solution: City's First Readers

Create equity of opportunity. City's First Readers harnesses the collective energy of 17 early literacy partners working across NYC surrounding families and children birth-five with free community-driven programming that builds a strong pre-reading foundation.



CFR actively engages families in all 51 council districts so that every child has the opportunity to thrive.



View this map in full online at bit.ly/cfrmap22

How We Do it:

- **Free, high quality early learning programs** for parents and families that meet the cultural and linguistic needs of our communities
- **Book and toy distribution** that promotes reading and play every day
- **Coaching and support** for parents to strengthen their home learning environments
- **Professional development and training** for early literacy professionals and advocates
- **Robust public public education campaign** that engages families and amplifies the importance of early literacy

Our FY 21 Successes:

Distributed **379,637** books to encourage reading and build home libraries

Engaged **737,761** families, providing critical support amidst the ongoing pandemic

Carried out a **public education campaign** to amplify messages about early literacy



5030 Broadway, Suite 641, New York, NY 10034 • 212-620-5462 • citysfirstreaders.com •

City's First Readers is *the* Coalition with the Capacity to Build an Equitable City

The New York City Council took decisive action in 2014 to address the literacy crisis in New York City by initiating City's First Readers. **City's First Readers continues to fight for education justice through impactful and coordinated programs across New York City communities.**

A budget of $6.5 million in FY23 will allow City's First Readers to continue and expand its powerful work with children and families including:





Extended outreach efforts to connect with the hardest to reach families through "hot spot" interventions

A **targeted public education** campaign to deepen families' engagement with CFR partners

Strong **evaluation and impact assessments** to inform coordinated programming

Deepened **capacity-building practices** that will result in stronger and even more effective CFR partners

Graphic icon credits, left: Helping Hand by Kylie Whittaker, Education by alimasykurm, Paperwork by nareerat jaikaew, and Growth by Andreas Vögele from NounProject.com

In 2021 we continued to grow, welcoming two more organizations to the CFR family!

City's First Readers
An initiative of the New York City Council

Arab-American Family Support Center · Bklyn Public Library · The Child Center of NY · CHCF · Family Health Centers at NYU Langone · Hunts Point Alliance for Children · JCCA Repair the world child by child · Jumpstart Children first. · LINC Literacy INC · Literacy Partners · La Fuerza de Familias Latinas · New Alternatives for Children · New York Public Library · ParentChild+ Equal Possibilities From The Start · Queens Public Library · Reach Out & Read Greater New York · SCO Family of Services · Video Interaction Project

5030 Broadway, Suite 641, New York, NY 10034 • 212-620-5462 • citysfirstreaders.com •

HASSENFELD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT NYU LANGONE

Video Interaction Project (VIP)

VIP is a **unique**, **impactful**, **low-cost** program that uses pediatric healthcare to prevent achievement gaps before they occur. The program has grown to 11 sites in 3 states and is ready for **large-scale expansion**.

Poverty And The Achievement Gap

Decades of research all point to the same conclusion: Poverty causes significant barriers to a child's scholastic success and reduces opportunities for early learning and educational achievement. These poverty-related gaps in achievement originate in infancy, continue into early childhood, and grow wider over time in the absence of intervention. **Although the causes of disparities in school achievement among children are complex, we know that children from poor and low-income households often face two common challenges:**

1. Lack of readiness to learn (e.g. inability to pay attention or control behavior)
2. Lack of attainment of early reading and math skills

Parents Hold The Key

50 percent of disparities in school achievement in children of low-income families can be traced to fewer opportunities for early learning activities with parents, including talking, teaching, playing, and reading.

The VIP Solution

VIP reduces educational achievement gaps before children reach the classroom by **utilizing pediatric primary care** to:

1. Help parents understand their critical role in their child's development; and
2. Arm parents with the skills and confidence to engage in activities that will stimulate brain development and foster the behavioral skills needed to learn effectively

Research Findings

VIP is especially helpful for *preventing* child behavior problems that interfere with learning. For example, the percentage of families with significant child hyperactivity at school entry was *reduced* from 9.1% to 2.8% overall and from 15.8% to 0% for those at the highest risk —a reduction of between 70 and 100%. VIP has a **strong body of evidence** showing large and sustained benefits for parents and children, including:

1. **Increased Reading Aloud, Play, & Talking**
2. **Enhanced Parent-Child Relationships**
3. **Improved Child Development**

Roby et al., Pediatrics, 2021; Mendelsohn et al., Pediatrics, 2018; Cates et al., Pediatrics, 2018; Weisleder et al., Pediatrics, 2016; Canfield et al., J of Dev Beh Peds, 2015; Burkule et al., Clinical Pediatrics, 2014.
For a list of publications: www.videointeractionproject.org/publications.html

Video Interaction Project
play • read • grow • together

2 in 5
Number of children living in poverty in the U.S.

50%
Number of children living in poverty who lack skills needed for learning at school entry

25
Minutes required for each VIP session

22
Number of age-specific VIP sessions available between birth and age 5

~ $250
Approximate cost of VIP per child, per year

12
Number of locations delivering VIP in 2022

City's First Readers
An initiative of the New York City Council

How VIP Works

VIP is an **individualized program** delivered at the time of **every pediatric well visit** from birth - five years.



At each session:

1. A VIP coach leads a 5-10 minute discussion of child development, including suggested activities & goal-setting with the parent

2. Families receive a developmentally appropriate toy or book to take home

3. A short video is made of the parent(s) interacting with their child during reading or play

4. The coach watches the video with the parent, reinforcing strengths and identifying opportunities for further interaction

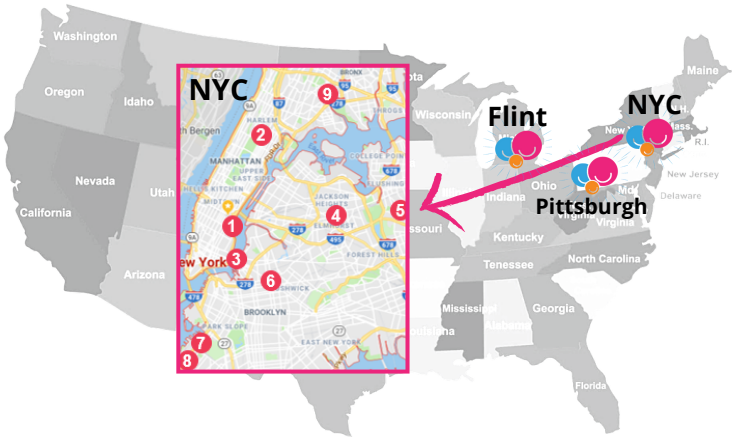
Why is VIP Unique?

Although a host of programs exist to support early learning through enhanced parenting, *few of them have VIP's level of evidence*, and the cost of those programs can be a barrier for widespread dissemination.

1. VIP is designed to take place in **pediatric primary care**, and can seamlessly be integrated into existing clinical services and flow
2. VIP is a **primary prevention program**, which means that it prevents problems in the parent-child relationship and in child development before they occur
3. VIP is **evidence-based**, and has already been shown to have impacts in randomized controlled trials
4. VIP **costs less** than 1/10 of many home visiting programs at approximately $250 per child per year

VIP is at an inflection point for growth with plans for widespread expansion, led by the VIP Center of Excellence.

Current VIP Locations in 2022



VIP Center of Excellence

Launched in 2016 at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, guided by a business plan for initial expansion. The VIP COE provides centralized support for all locations, including program implementation, training, supervision, and maintenance of fidelity.

In addition, the VIP COE works centrally to continuously study and optimize VIP, and adapt to the needs of new sites and populations. The VIP COE has developed a comprehensive implementation package so that VIP can be delivered anywhere with quality and fidelity.

The Road Ahead: 2022 - 2026

VIP seeks to reach 30,000 - 40,000 children annually by the end of 2026, by expanding to 50-100 sites

5-year Strategic Plan includes:

- Site Expansion
- Delivery Optimization
- Financial Stability
- Infrastructure Development
- Research & Quality Improvement

Funding

VIP in NYC is supported by: NIH / Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Children of Bellevue, Inc.; Marks Family Foundation; Tiger Foundation; Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, Inc.; Rhodebeck Charitable Trust; KiDS of NYU; NYU Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI); Academic Pediatric Association; NYU Langone Community Service Plan; New York Community Trust, New York City Council Early Literacy Initiative (City's First Readers); New York City Councilmembers Stephen Levin, Antonio Reynoso, and Keith Powers; NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

videointeractionproject.org

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NYU Langone Health, Department of Pediatrics
Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics

Monica Camafreita
Opera for Earth
Clinton Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11205

25 May 2022

New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Chair Justin Brannan and Members of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding building the NYC economy after these past two+ years of pandemic. My name is Monica Camafreita, and I am co-founder and Vice President of, Opera for Earth, a 501c3 organization that uses musical performance to raise awareness and funding for environmental education, and recipient of a grant through the 2021 City Artist Corps program which allowed Opera for Earth to produce Verdi's *Macbeth* to both a live and virtual audience.

As an active participant in the NYC cultural sector, I am writing to request an additional $100 million investment from NYC in FY2023 to augment NYC's economic recovery and create and inclusive sector growth towards a future-focused and equitable economy. Without a doubt the workers in NYC's cultural sector suffered some of the worst financial crises of the pandemic. This request will bring the annual investment in culture to .24% of NYC's total budget and will represent a commitment to the ultimate goal of reaching 1% of the City's budget for Culture in the future.

This FY23 $100M request incudes:

- $50M in CIG and CDF baseline funding (split evenly between the two organizations) to provide critical support that will stabilize NYC's cultural community, allowing organizations to address their most-pressing logistical and mission-centric expenses.
- $35M in grants for 5 Strategic initiatives.
    - $15M for a Cultural Equity Fund
    - $10M for tourism and marketing for culture across the 5 boroughs
    - $10M for workforce development and support programs
    - $5M for accessibility and inclusion of Deaf/Disabled communities
    - $5M for individual artists and renewal of the City Artist Corps program
- $5M to increase staffing at DCLA

Thank you for your consideration and the shared desire to see NYC support the ideal of "Culture for All".

Sincerely,

MCamafreita

Monica Camafreita

Email: camafreita@gmail.com

Written Testimony for the NYC City Council Committee on Finance

Budget Hearing

May 25, 2022

Tanya Krupat, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy
Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations
Osborne Association
www.osborneny.org

Osborne

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the NYC FY23 Budget. My name is Tanya Krupat and I coordinate Osborne's policy and advocacy efforts, including working towards the goals of public health and public safety, strengthening communities, and decarceration. Osborne offers a wide range of diversion and reentry programs at sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem, Buffalo, and Newburgh, as well as services at more than thirty New York State prisons and New York City jails including Rikers Island. We now serve more than 12,000 New Yorkers a year. We are grateful for the Council's support in the past and look forward to working with new Council members alongside longtime colleagues.

Osborne is a member of the ATI & Reentry Coalition, and as such, we are part of the funding request for the 11 members (for a total of $12,857,000, and an increase of $100,000 per member this year) so that we can collectively continue to provide essential services to individuals across the criminal legal system continuum, and to their children and families. As you know, this funding allows us to respond to emerging and urgent needs thanks to its flexibility. As you also know, ATI providers are vital to the goals of reducing the jail population and closing Rikers, goals this Council supports.

Osborne is thrilled to soon be offering reentry housing. The housing crisis in the City is significant and those reentering from jail and prison not only encounter the shortage of affordable housing, but also housing discrimination due to their convictions (we urge the Council to pass the Fair Chance for Housing bill[1]). According to the *State of the Homeless 2022* report, 43% of the thousands of people released from New York State prisons to New York City in 2020 were released directly to shelters.[2] This is not an acceptable transitional plan and often yields negative outcomes (including people being violated by parole for being out of place because they do not feel safe in the shelter). To address the dire need for reentry housing, Osborne will soon open two new housing sites:

The **Marcus Garvey supportive housing program** will offer 52 studio and one bedroom apartments (permanent housing) to people who are formerly incarcerated, prioritizing people who are over 50; this includes future residents like Mr. Wray, who spent 42 years incarcerated, and at age 73, loves to cook and is excited to have his own kitchen.

The **Fulton Reentry and Community Development Center** will provide 135 transitional housing beds and an array of reentry services in the former Fulton Correctional Facility. We are requesting City Council funding in the amount of $250,000 for Fulton to support our offering: 1) programs to the surrounding community/general public including an "internet cafe" with free broadband internet access; 2) pro bono civil legal services; 3) video visiting programs, connecting families with their incarcerated loved ones; and, 4) community meeting space for

[1] For more information, please visit https://www.fairchancehousing.org/

[2] https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/StateofThe-Homeless2022.pdf See page 45.

additional activities. We ask you to please continue and increase our Council funding for Fulton. We are proud to partner with the Council to increase housing options.

While we have submitted 11 funding requests, and each one is important, I would like to highlight five among these, including one new request and four renewal requests that support innovative and acutely needed programs. Each of these requests addresses our current moment: **we are at a crossroads here in NYC and as a country. How are we going to respond to rising violence, access to guns, increasing mental health needs and isolation stemming from the pandemic, an ongoing and evolving pandemic, and the lack of adequate housing contributing to rising homelessness? How are we going to respond to the humanitarian crisis at Rikers that has been and continues to kill people, and is a threat to the well-being of everyone- incarcerated and staff- who spends time there.**

I keep coming back to the closing quote from this article in the *New York Times* a few weeks ago: **"You need to defeat the things you do not love by building the things you do." All of our funding requests are about building, building what we need more of that address root causes and promote positive outcomes:** reentry support; housing; programs and mental health supports for young people; consideration of children by all City agencies, including NYPD; and accessible and welcoming healthcare services.

The programs we seek funding for include:

Bronx Osborne Guns Avoidance Program (BOGAP): this new request would allow us to expand a pilot program developed with the Bronx DA for 16- 30-year-olds that provides an accountability-based alternative to the 3.5-year mandatory minimum prison sentence for carrying a loaded gun in the absence of any other crime. We have submitted a letter of support from the Bronx DA's office with this testimony. We are requesting $350,000. (As you know, it costs more than $500,000 to incarcerate one person on Rikers for one year, so this is a cost-effective program that achieves better outcomes.) With our requested funding, we can increase the number of annual slots from 25 to 50 as well as provide enhanced Credible Messenger mentoring services and intensify our case management and employment services.

In FY22, City Council funded Osborne to work with the NYPD to **Safeguard Children at the Time of Their Parent's Arrest.** The funding allowed us to assist NYPD in complying with the newly passed Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests the parent/ caregiver of a child. Our role has been to assist in developing and delivering training, provide technical assistance to the NYPD regarding data collection, and building a network of community-based providers who can provide post-arrest support to children and families. This work is well underway but far from complete, and there are additional elements that are key to reducing trauma to children that have not yet been addressed, such as pre-arrest planning and

executing warrants. We are requesting $275,000 to continue the work underway and are submitting a letter of support from the NYPD Commissioner with this testimony.

To address the increased and ongoing need for **trauma and mental health supports for young people**, our funding request for renewed support for our children, youth, and family services would support assessing and addressing mental health and trauma in youth involved with or affected by the criminal legal system through treatment options that alleviate stress, improve functioning, and reduce trauma symptoms. This funding supports our ability to connect young people to traditional mental health treatment and non-traditional responses to trauma (yoga, dance, arts, gym membership, equine therapy etc). We are requesting $200,000 for these critical services.

Our **Parole Violation Mitigation Program** which was established with discretionary funding from the Council in support of former Speaker Johnson's priority to reduce the population on Rikers Island, to create an alternative to re-incarceration for the high number of people with technical parole violations in DOC custody, mainly held on Rikers Island. We worked remotely, by phone and video, throughout the pandemic and were successful in our goal of reducing the length of stay of parole violators on Rikers Island, avoiding unnecessary returns to state prison, and linking people on parole to needed community-based services. This work is necessary to reduce and keep down the population in DOC custody.

We had anticipated that with the passage of Less is More, the need for our Parole Violation program focusing on people detained on violation warrants would be less, not more. Unfortunately, the opposite seems to be occurring. We must remain vigilant to keep the jail population down. There are still hundreds of people on Rikers with a parole violation on any given day (on 5/25, there were 242 people in custody with a parole violation). We are now working on cases that are not just technical violations and are shifting focus to those cases where people have both new criminal charges and a parole violation, working towards both an ATI and restoration to Parole. We are also educating diverse stakeholders about the law and current processes. Our program has generated success in more than 90% of cases. We request a renewal of the $900,000 we received this current year.

Health and Wellness We request a slight increase in funding to provide HIV prevention services for Bronx community members through community-based outreach and education. Last year we received $75,273 which helped us provide group support to 170 individuals; provide 1,351 referrals; and host 22 group events (so far to date). This year, we are requesting $100,000 which would allow us to serve and support even more people.

<u>One final note about addressing the crisis on Rikers</u>- whether a receivership happens or not, the population of people living on and employed by Rikers needs to be reduced:

Jail populations are a function of just two numbers: ***Numbers of Admissions*** and ***Length of Stay***. Reducing one or both of these factors is what you have to do to reduce the population, and neither of these factors is *typically* within the control of the Department of Correction. Length of stay is a function of judges, DAs, and defense counsel, and how long it takes to complete a detainee's case. Or, in the case of parole violation warrants, how long from arrest to final hearing. **Investment in ATI and discharge planning programs, as well as arrest diversion, pretrial release and diversion programs, can reduce length of stay, reduce the human costs and collateral consequences- including for children and families- of incarceration, and also lead to long-term success.**

While people are now dying in DOC custody at a rate closer to once per week rather than once per month, we have to stay focused on improving conditions immediately while continuing to pursue the closure of Rikers. It is an impossible ask of the Commissioner and staff to improve conditions while we continue to allow the population to rise. Now is the time to do whatever it takes to manage the humanitarian

Greater decarceration efforts are possible. The decision-making that led to a census of 3,800 people detained on Rikers during the height of the pandemic in 2020 should be reinvigorated. An obvious step is to **return to Article 6-A** that authorizes DOC to allow sentenced individuals to serve the remainder of their time at home. In addition, *the Council should consider a law that would allow the Commissioner of the Department of Correction to determine where detention can take place, including house arrest with an electronic bracelet.*

We live here, in NYC, too. We understand the anxiety people feel about increasing violence. But what causes violence that undervalues human life is a system that undervalues human life.

We join you and acknowledge your ongoing commitment to invest in communities: supporting the well-being of individuals, children and families where they live, and increasing the opportunities we all need to survive and live our best lives. We hope you will continue to invest in effective programs that build more of what we need in order to defeat what we don't need, which harms us all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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646-964-2160



Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022

Eric Rosenbaum, President and CEO
Project Renewal

Project Renewal's mission is to end the cycle of homelessness by empowering individuals and families to renew their lives with health, homes, and jobs.

www.projectrenewal.org

My name is Eric Rosenbaum. I am the CEO of Project Renewal, a New York City homeless services nonprofit agency that provides health, homes, and jobs to empower more than 16,000 New Yorkers each year, with a focus on those affected by mental illness, substance use, and criminal justice involvement. Thank you to Speaker Adams, Finance Chair Brannan, and fellow City Council members for giving me this opportunity to submit testimony.

We are deeply grateful for the City Council's support of our services. As we move towards the path to recovery, it is critical for the City government to invest in the human service workforce and the providers on the frontlines of meeting the full range of housing and health needs facing at-risk and justice-involved New Yorkers. For FY23, we are seeking your support for our programs in the following critical areas:

- substance use treatment and harm reduction services,
- housing and services for justice-involved New Yorkers,
- workforce development for formerly homeless and low-income New Yorkers,
- veterans services,
- and cost-of-living adjustments for human services workers

Substance Use Treatment and Harm Reduction Services

Project Renewal operates a distinctively comprehensive continuum of substance use disorder services and treatment for clients in our shelter and housing, patients of our health care programs, and individuals on the street. Through the innovative use of certified-peer Recovery Coaches, nurse care management, and telehealth, we are improving the accessibility of substance use disorder services. Using a trauma-informed and harm reduction approach, we guide clients into treatment options along our continuum that includes occupational therapy, medication assisted treatment, counseling and group work, and case management.

While Project Renewal has offered substance use disorder treatment since its founding in 1967, our current model is newly developed—it integrates best practices in the field not traditionally available to smaller or more siloed organizations. It is also producing impressive results: over the past year, 93% of the 67 individuals who experienced a non-fatal overdose in Project Renewal shelter or housing were successfully outreached by a Recovery Coach, and 91% participated in meaningful engagement (peer counseling, harm reduction counseling, or accepting a referral for treatment).

This programming is effective yet underfunded. City Council support would allow us to continue strengthening this model, increase the number of clients served, and ultimately reduce opioid-related harms among New York City's homeless and at-risk population, which is why we are seeking first-time Council support of $100,000 from the Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Services Initiative and/or the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative to enhance our substance use treatment services to the more than 1,000 clients each year.

Housing and Services for Justice-Involved New Yorkers

Project Renewal provides numerous solutions to the cycles of homelessness, poor health, unemployment, and incarceration among justice-involved New Yorkers. Our Parole Support and Treatment Program (PSTP) provides housing and support services to parolees with mental illness—including 90 transitional housing beds and 45 units of permanent supportive housing. We help clients manage mental illness and substance use; develop independent living skills; and set long-term goals for education and employment. PSTP has helped hundreds of clients transition to supportive or permanent housing, reunite with family, and/or complete parole. In addition, we collaborate with the Sing-Sing Correctional Facility to prepare mentally ill inmates for release through workshops and by identifying individuals that qualify for PSTP.

Another program, Project Renewal's Support and Connection Center (SCC), provides stabilization and treatment services for adults experiencing mental health and/or substance use crises in partnership with DOHMH. Guests are referred by the NYPD as an alternative to arrest, summons, or the emergency room. It's the only program of its kind in the city.

SCC opened permanently in late 2020 at reduced capacity due to COVID, with up to 10 people in residence at a time, each staying for up to five days. With peer-led, guest-centered engagement, SCC an on-ramp to services for New Yorkers who are often disconnected and traumatized. We have now served hundreds of New Yorkers at SCC. Upon completion of their stay, 54% of guests have remained engaged with our after-care services, which include group counseling, long-term treatment, and housing.

City Council funding will help fill critical budget gaps these programs, and expand onsite harm reduction and relapse prevention activities, as well as educational activities. In FY23, Project Renewal is seeking $100,000 in funding from the Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative and/or Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative to support the expansion and enhancement of our multidisciplinary housing and support programming for the thousands of under-resourced parolees and individuals with justice involvement in NYC that we serve each year.

Workforce Development

Project Renewal's workforce development programs helped nearly 1,000 homeless, at-risk, and just-involved New Yorkers train for, achieve, and grow in employment in FY21. Sixty-three percent of new enrollees were placed into jobs, despite COVID-related obstacles. Half of our clients placed into jobs successfully retain them for more than a year—12% better than the national average for similar programs serving a primarily homeless population.

Our programs include:

1) The Next Step Internship Program (NSIP): Paid, eight-week, on-the-job training for positions in the human services field, where our trainees are uniquely equipped to draw on personal experience to perform empathetic and thus highly effective work. The program enrolls 75-100 clients per year, helping them earn up to four industry-recognized credentials and boasting a 87% job placement rate for graduates.

2) The Culinary Arts Training Program (CATP): A six-month classroom, internship, and job placement program empowering homeless adults to build careers in New York City's food services industry. Thanks to the Council's support through the ***Speaker's Initiative***, CATP annually enrolls 120+ individuals and places 74% of graduates into jobs. Many graduates are hired by City Beet Kitchens, Project Renewal's social enterprise caterer that serves thousands of meals per day to homeless services agencies and other frontline agencies across the city.

3) Assisted Competitive Employment Program (ACE): An evidence-based job placement program serving 175 clients annually who have been diagnosed with serious mental illness.

Additionally, Project Renewal recently launched our new Career Advancement Program (CAP) to help graduates of our training programs to grow in their jobs with additional skills, networks, mentorship, education, technology practice, and job opportunities typically available to those with more privilege. As a result, they will earn higher wages, feel confident about a career path, and ultimately find economic stability. Preliminary data from the first six months of CAP is promising: of 40 inaugural enrollees, 50% have achieved at least one career advancement goal, including 20% who have already earned wage increases.

We are confident in CAP's success, yet funding for long-term retention work is challenging to come by. We are grateful for the consideration of ongoing City Council funding to support our workforce development programming, as well as an increase in our award to help CAP fully realize its initial goals and enroll 85 new clients in FY23.

Veterans Services

The City Council has generously supported Project Renewal's homeless prevention services for veterans through the Homeless Services Prevention for Veterans Initiative—support that has been crucial for us to help veterans across all of our programs.

In FY21, we provided healthcare to 148 veterans through our four clinics located within our shelters and our three mobile healthcare vans. We welcomed 23 veterans into emergency shelters in FY21 and ensured 65 additional veterans were safely housed within Project Renewal where they benefitted from enhanced services, including occupational therapy, hot meal delivery, and tele-psychiatry to combat stress and anxiety. Eighty-six percent of veterans admitted to our supportive housing successfully maintained their housing for at least one year. Additionally, in FY21, 32 veterans enrolled workforce development programs described above.

Project Renewal is proud to serve those who have bravely served our country and sincerely appreciate the Council's consideration of increased support so that we may build upon these efforts.

Cost-of-Living Adjustments for Human Services Workers

The work of human services nonprofit agencies like Project Renewal is undermined by the low salaries and lack of cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for our frontline employees—which are dictated by government contracts. As a result, we have a hard time keeping the staff we have,

much less recruiting to fill new programs. Project Renewal's turnover rate is 58% and we currently have 80 staff vacancies. Neither figure is uncommon in the broader human services sector. This is why we have joined nonprofits across the city in calling for the changes outlined in the #JustPay Campaign, including an automatic annual 5.4% COLA on all human services contracts.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to submit testimony. We are proud to be a longtime partner with the New York City Council to deliver much-needed services to low-income and homeless New Yorkers – especially those at the intersection of mental health, substance abuse, and justice-involvement. While the pandemic uncovered new inequities, it has only deepened the inequities and challenges that so many our clients have historically faced, and we are committed to continuing the important work with the Council to move towards an equitable, and inclusive, recovery.

PROJECT GUARDIANSHIP
Changing the way we care for people.

Testimony for the NYC Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Submitted by Kimberly George, President and CEO, Project Guardianship

Thank you, Chair Brannan and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony today. I am Kimberly George, President and CEO for Project Guardianship.

Project Guardianship was founded in 2005 as a social justice initiative of the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera). In partnership with the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA), Vera launched a pilot program called The Guardianship Project to fill a gap in the guardianship and elder services safety net for New Yorkers. In 2020, The Guardianship Project became Project Guardianship, Inc., an independent non-profit organization providing comprehensive, court appointed guardianship services to hundreds of limited capacity New Yorkers citywide. We serve clients regardless of their ability to pay and provide services for some of the most compelling and complex cases in the city. We also share research and recommendations for a better guardianship system and advocate for a more equitable response to providing services for people in need of protective arrangements.

As you may know, New York's aging population is growing rapidly. Across the state more than 3.2 million New Yorkers are over the age of 65, and by 2030, nearly one in four New Yorkers will be an older adult. In NYC alone, older adults are projected to reach 1.86 million - or 20.6 percent - of the City's population by 2040. One-third of older adults identify as Black, Latinx, Asian or non-white, and the number of older immigrants statewide is growing at nearly double the rate of U.S.-born older adults. At the same time, nearly 1 in 7 older New Yorkers is living in poverty. Older, lower income adults are at the center of the housing affordability and homelessness crises, especially older adults of color. These older, vulnerable adults are disproportionately impacted by abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.

Despite increased state and federal investments directed towards care for aging and disabled New Yorkers, far too many will be denied the opportunity to benefit from these programs because they are physically or cognitively unable to navigate our complex social service network. This is where legal guardianship often steps in. Nonprofit guardianship programs work to secure the public benefits, housing, healthcare, and other supports that this population needs to improve outcomes and promote safety and stability. Our clients include older New Yorkers, those living with serious disability, physical impairments, mental health issues, dementia, substance abuse, Traumatic Brain Injury, and other conditions that negatively impact their ability to make decisions.

PROJECT GUARDIANSHIP
Changing the way we care for people.

Our model has demonstrated how a good guardian can prevent institutionalization and support these populations right in their own communities. Not only do these efforts stimulate the local economy by redirecting this funding back into the community, but guardianship also saves public dollars by decreasing Medicaid spending on unnecessary hospital and nursing home stays.

Mayor Adams has indicated he is committed to reducing ageism and making New York City as age inclusive as possible. As our city recovers from the Coronavirus pandemic and looks to rebuild for the long term, supporting our most vulnerable should be at the top of the priority list in our local budget. As you know, the Council has been critical in supporting guardianship services across our city for years, and we are grateful for that support. As we look ahead to a post pandemic future, we not only seek to restore our current funding, but to partner with you, the larger Council and the administration to shine a spotlight on guardianship and the need for quality guardianship services citywide. We call upon the Council to continue championing older New Yorkers and funding initiatives like Support our Seniors which provides flexible funding streams to organizations supporting older New Yorkers equitably and comprehensively.

We also hope to deliver more services to the most vulnerable among us, securing positive outcomes for our older neighbors in housing, healthcare, public benefits and more. The time is now; we must stand ready for the increased need as our city ages. With your continued support, we will be able to meet that need and make New York City the equitable, age inclusive and age friendly place it strives to be, where everyone can fulfill their potential regardless of functional limitations or other challenges.

Thank you.

Please contact Kimberly George at kgeorge@nycourts.gov with any questions or requests for additional information.

Prospect Park Alliance
95 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Tel (718) 965-8951
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prospectpark.org

Testimony of Deborah Kirschner, Vice President of External Relations, Prospect Park Alliance
Committee on Finance: Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2022

I am Deborah Kirschner, Vice President of External Relations at Prospect Park Alliance, the non-profit organization that sustains Prospect Park in partnership with the City. I am here today to support the efforts of the Play Fair campaign to advocate for critical funding for parks in the upcoming budget, and for the City to fulfill the Mayor's campaign promise of 1% of the city budget for parks.

COVID-19 has made it resoundingly clear that parks and open spaces are essential to the well-being of our communities. Prospect Park is truly "Brooklyn's Backyard," and welcomes more than 10 million visits each year from every zip code in Brooklyn and beyond. As a community park, Prospect Park is a critical gathering space for family reunions, birthday parties and all manner of picnics and barbecues. Its 585 acres provide fresh air and respite to Brooklyn residents, who have the least amount of green space per capita in all of New York City. Making Prospect Park a welcoming and accessible space for the diverse communities of Brooklyn is a key part of our mission, and without the support of the City and our elected officials our work would not be possible.

Visitorship to city parks during the pandemic has increased significantly: in Prospect Park we have seen a record number of visitors to the park, and the resulting impact in terms of significant wear and tear in the park. At the same time, NYC Parks experienced significant budget cuts, and Prospect Park Alliance relies on its partnership with the New York City Parks Department for essential maintenance, trash management and general upkeep.

Parks are essential infrastructure that are critical to our health and well being, and are drivers of social equity. NYC Parks have been operating with an austerity budget for more than 40 years, with just 0.5% of the city budget allocated to parks despite the fact that parks comprise 14% of city land. This chronic underfunding, with additional loss of staff and a hiring freeze in recent years, has been devastating for our parks. In 2020, the care of our parks by NYC Parks was the most challenged on record since NYC Parks began recording their condition in 2004. The biggest issues were accessibility (for example: comfort station closures), safety and park conditions (for example: trash management). There are not nearly enough City Park Workers, Gardeners, Urban Park Rangers and PEP Officers to care for our parks. 300+ PEP Officers are expected to patrol 14% of NYC land, and in the summer, they're pulled to pools and waterfront parks, while the remainder of our parks suffer from lack of enforcement during our busiest time of year.

While the additional $40.6 million in baseline funding for Parks is a step in the right direction, the proposed budget still falls short of what the city needs to sustain its parks. We implore the Council to provide the following additional funding: renewing all Play Fair positions (100 City Parks Workers, 50 Gardeners, 80 PEP Officers, 50 Park Rangers, 15 GreenThumb and 40 Forestry professionals); $6.5 million for the Parks Equity Initiative; and $4.5 million to protect and conserve our natural areas. We applaud the City Council for considering the critical need to increase funding for city parks in the upcoming budget cycle, and recognizing our parks as essential infrastructure by not only restoring budget cuts, but moving beyond a cycle-to-cycle funding model: 1% of our city budget must be for parks.

Dear Council Member:

We are writing as community college Chapter Chairs and Community College Officers of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC/CUNY) to ask you to recommit to supporting CUNY's community college students in the upcoming budget. Mayor Adams is calling for a PEG that will necessitate cuts at our community colleges, leaving them unable to provide the neediest and least prepared students in New York City the education they deserve. After decades of austerity funding for CUNY, there are no more efficiencies to be found. Each and every dollar taken away from CUNY will directly harm our students.

Earlier this year the city council passed a resolution (VERIFY) calling on the state legislature to enact the New Deal for CUNY. While Albany did not fully fund all of CUNY's needs, they did make an historic down payment in CUNY funding. This occurred, in part, due to your advocacy on CUNY's behalf. Today we are calling on you to make the same investment in the future of New York City.

We are also calling upon you to strengthen CUNY as a commitment to equity and inclusion for all people, many of whom have been left behind for far too long. The community colleges embody the promise of open admissions. After the end of remediation at the senior colleges, we are left as the sole institutions of higher education in CUNY that open up opportunities for thousands of students who, for many reasons, need additional academic preparation. In a time when institutional racism has finally been more fully recognized, the community colleges have a history of providing opportunities for people of color and immigrants. We have achieved great success with programs such as ASAP, Veterans Programs, and Adult and Continuing Education. As a result, many of our students have gone on to obtain advanced degrees and recognition within their chosen professions.

Specifically, we ask that you support the budget priorities listed below.

1. Fund ASAP for all (20 million)
2. Replace lost full-time faculty (14.6 million)
3. Hire more mental health counselors (10 million)
4. Increase graduation rates by funding remediation (2 million)
5. Expand intensive English-language instruction (5 million)
6. Expand child care centers (4 million)
7. Revise support for senior colleges (7 million)
8. Support CUNY's capital budget (33.5 million)

Our city is at a critical juncture. The time to rebuild a better and more equitable New York City is now. And Bronx, Hostos, Borough of Manhattan, Guttman, Queensborough and Kingsborough Community Colleges will be at the forefront of that future.

We thank you for your support.

Kathleen Offenholley, Chapter Chair, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Maggie Dickinson, Chapter Chair, Guttman Community College
Craig Bernardini, Chapter Chair, Hostos Community College
Lara Beaty, Chapter Chair, LaGuardia Community College
Laura Tanenbaum, Vice Chair, LaGuardia Community College
Emily Schnee, Community College Officer, Executive Council, Kingsborough Community College
Aaron Botwick, Secretary, Hostos Community College
Sharon Utakis, PSC Vice President for Community Colleges, Bronx Community College
Heather James, PSC Legislation Committee; Executive Council, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Sharon Persinger, PSC University-wide Officer, Bronx Community College

TESTIMONY OF DR. JAMES DAVIS, PRESIDENT
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS

May 25, 2022

Good morning, I am James Davis, President of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC). We represent 30,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York. Thank you Chairman Brannan and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify today and for your passage of the Council resolution in support of the New Deal for CUNY state legislation in March. As you know, support for higher education in Albany reached historic levels this year with $220 million in additional funding. This year the value of public higher education resonated because PSC members came together with CUNY students and community allies to amplify our message to Governor Hochul and legislators in Albany.

CUNY needs this level of support from the New York City budget too. We are counting on you to build off the work done in Albany and deliver for our members and students. We are asking for an additional $62.6 million above last year's City budget. An investment in students, workers, and communities will uplift New York in its continued recovery from the pandemic. Last year, Comptroller Scott Stringer's office released a report finding that in 2019, CUNY graduates paid $4.6 billion in state taxes and earned $28.6 billion more than they would have without a postsecondary degree. Moreover, in 2017, a team of economists at Stanford found that "CUNY propels almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class and beyond as all eight Ivy League campuses, plus Duke, M.I.T., Stanford and Chicago, combined." CUNY is a sound fiscal investment and an unrivaled vehicle for economic mobility and racial equity.

CUNY must be excluded from the Mayor's Program to Eliminate the Gap cuts

The PSC is opposed to the Mayor's insistence on leaving 128 faculty positions vacant in order to achieve a $14.6 million PEG reduction. Governor Hochul and the State Legislature just invested in new faculty for the first time in recent memory, adding 540 new full-time faculty lines in its April budget. The Mayor's cut would seriously impede CUNY's ability to replenish the full-time faculty lost to attrition or retirement. According to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget, CUNY would be able to fill only 18 of the 146 full-time faculty positions lost since the pandemic began, leaving 128 or 88% unfilled to satisfy the PEG.

Our community colleges were already struggling before the pandemic. Federal stimulus funds helped, but they have not made CUNY whole and are not expected to. I could tell you many stories. Libraries cannot afford to buy books or subscribe to databases that support research for faculty and students. Colleges are unable to properly staff computer and science labs and other academic support facilities. These are not extras, they are fundamental services that go to the core functions of a university. CUNY already lacked full-time faculty before the pandemic; a

report by the University Faculty Senate last fall showed that colleges that serve high proportions of students of color are less likely than colleges with whiter student bodies to have access to full-time faculty, deepening racial inequity. If CUNY is deprived of the City funding to fill those 128 faculty lines, the racialized disparity in access to full-time faculty will increase. Simply stated, CUNY must be exempt from the mayor's PEG.

The Mayor has made two proposals that would impact CUNY: $4.8 million for the CUNY Inclusive Economy Initiative, an investment in connecting students to growing industries and improving their employment opportunities and; $2 million in a partnership with the Mayor's office of Media and Entertainment to develop a degree program in Game Design. While we appreciate targeted programs at the forefront of emerging fields, these programs should not advance until and unless our existing programs are fully funded and properly staffed.

CUNY laid off nearly 2,000 adjunct faculty during the pandemic, along with hundreds of adjunct lab technicians. The pressure that creates on those who remain is immense; they often face larger classes and it is difficult for students to find the classes they need to meet degree requirements. Investing in our community colleges means returning faculty and staff to classrooms and labs and reducing class size.

CUNY Reconnect; Complements PSC Budget Priorities

Speaker Adams has proposed a $23 million "CUNY Reconnect Initiative," a welcome proposal that complements our union's priorities. To bring back students who have obtained college credits but not completed a degree, staff are needed to support their return and transition, to guide them through their academic experience to graduation. They need access to full-time faculty, not only in gateway classes but also as they advance through innovative curricula that meet the needs of the future workforce. CUNY can be the centerpiece of the city's revitalization and strong academic programs and wrap-around supports will help make it happen.

Make Programmatic Investments in CUNY

1. Move toward ASAP for All with an increased investment of $20 million.

ASAP provides comprehensive student support and advising (ideally at a ratio of 150 students to 1 advisor), career services, tuition assistance, free MetroCards, and free textbooks. It has been widely touted and serves as a model that community colleges seek to emulate across the country.

ASAP's three-year graduation rate is more than double that of non-ASAP associate degree students at CUNY's community colleges; a CUNY analysis found that the program narrows existing graduation gaps for Black and Hispanic males. A move toward ASAP for All would provide many more students with access to advising and the wrap-around support they need to

graduate. The city should baseline this increase in funding and dramatically expand this program.

2. Increase the City's lump sum funding for CUNY's Senior Colleges from $53M to $60M to account for inflation.

City funding for Senior Colleges has not increased since 2019. The money could fund programmatic costs of important services such as mental health and academic advisors.

3. Council funded initiatives will help reach this goal. Please support our Council-funded priorities in this budget cycle by including an additional:
    a. *$10 million for Mental Health Counselors:* CUNY now averages one mental health counselor for every 2,700 students. Funding would help bring this ratio closer to 1:1,000 as per the International Accreditation of Counseling Services. Services are especially needed to support students since the pandemic.
    b. *$2.5 million for Remediation:* Properly supported remediation programs help to increase graduation rates. CUNY Start provides the least prepared students with dedicated advising and small class sizes, but some instructors are part-time hourly employees, creating inequity and insecurity. Funding for full-time hires (and to expand the program overall) is needed to ensure student success. For $500,000, the CLIP program, which provides intensive English-language instruction, could be expanded to better serve the city. This program helps generate new enrollment and serves the most vulnerable, but at BMCC, for example, a CLIP program had a waitlist of 125 due to low capacity.
    c. *$4 million for Investment in Childcare:* Students cannot come back to campus without viable childcare options. Nationally, one in four college students are parents with dependent children, and over 40 percent of those are single mothers.[1] The State FY23 budget proposes expanding childcare to the eight CUNY campuses without centers. However, existing centers need more funding, especially for younger children who are more expensive to care for.
    d. *$33.5 million to support CUNY's capital request:* This spring students and PSC members took to Twitter with the hashtag #CrumblingCUNY. The images are breathtaking. CUNY facilities are badly in need of repairs and upgrades to become safe and welcoming spaces to learn once again.

Your support and advocacy with the Mayor for CUNY students and our members - especially to relieve CUNY of his 3% cut - is not only the right thing to do, it will also help our communities thrive, because CUNY works to address life-defining racial disparities in college attainment and

[1] Institute for Women's Policy Research
https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent-success-initiative/4-8-million-college-students-are-raising-children/

is an economic engine for the city. We know that CUNY helps to transform the lives of our students, approximately 80% of whom are people of color and 35% foreign-born; half come from households with annual incomes below $30,000. The faculty and staff serve CUNY's mission to uplift those most in need. Increasing funding for the City University of New York will promote racial equality, boost our economy, and ensure safer communities through higher education and skills development.

Thank you.

LUISA PINEDA – TESTIMONY FOR WORKERS, NYC COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 25, 2022 – 10:00am
Budget Response Hearing

Good afternoon and thank you Chair Justin Brannan, and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Luisa Pineda and I have worked in the human services sector for over ten years. I currently work as a College Retention Specialist at the College Access and Success Program at Queens Community House, where we provide individuals and families with the needed tools to enrich their lives and build healthy inclusive communities. We are a supporter of the #JustPay Campaign, a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government's exploitation of human services workers by demanding that sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

I am thankful for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Queens Community House and human services workers. We appreciate the City Council's partnership in addressing issues faced by the sector.

Essential human services sector workers earn one of the lowest wages in New York's economy due to the chronic underfunding from New York City government contracts. If we learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of human services because they are just that HUMAN! The government is the predominant funder of human services contracts and is therefore the main driver of human services wages. Queens Community House takes on a significant amount of government contracts, and therefore City government is the setter of wages and doesn't provide enough funding to pay fair wages. My organization fundraises and uses private philanthropy to try to raise wages but we need government to do their fair share as it is not enough.

Human services workers generally make about $20,000 a year less than a public sector worker with a comparable education. I make 70 percent of what I would make if I worked in government. The sector is facing high turnover rates, and we need human services workers, but it is hard to recruit and retain them when the government pays so little. Within the last year, many programs under Queens Community House have been understaffed as many leave due to their low wage salary, which means many are taking on more work due to the shortage of staff for the same pay.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the burden on workers like myself carrying out Queens Community House's wrap around services has grown. We provide services such as housing assistance, food access, child care network, adult education, services for the older adult population and LGBTQ population; and also, young adult services, from learning to work programs, youth employment services, to afterschool and summer camp programs and other essential services for New Yorkers. As a result, the burnout human services workers experience has increased. New Yorkers across the city rely on me and my team to provide them with a broad network of comprehensive services at 34 sites in 14 neighborhoods, yet I do not make enough to sustain myself nor do I qualify for any additional services, which leaves me to take on additional work to try to make some extra income.

I am a dedicated worker and I love to support the community I grew up in. For the last two years I have been working with Queens Community House and despite the challenges it's a wonderful feeling to know that I am able to support and guide students through their personal barriers, some achieving their college degree, while others complete a trade or certificate program. Providing students with opportunities to increase their academic performance, leadership skills as well as supporting them with college and career guidance. Not only do I support students, but I also connect them and families to internal and external resources (ie:

housing/eviction prevention; immigration services, childcare, the list goes on). I advocate for my students when they have no one else to turn to, providing them with the guidance they need to move forward and have a better future. I serve the children and youth, the young adults and families, older adults and the LGBTQ population to provide them with my time and understanding in connecting each of them with the resources that will empower them and help them achieve wellness and life-long security.

With all these challenges providing these services, some of us sector workers are still required to work multiple jobs to cover minimal living expenses. The City has relied on the nonprofit human services sector workers since the start of the pandemic. We need the City to acknowledge our work and to address the crisis in the sector and save jobs of selfless human services workers. We are asking the City to adapt these core reforms that the #JustPay Campaign is fighting for.

- Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.
- Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
- Create, fund and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

We are asking the City Council support an equitable COVID-19 recovery by ensuring that a COLA and other reforms are adapted for human services workers to finally earn adequate pay for our essential labor.

Thank you again for providing me with this opportunity to testify and for your partnership in all the issues impacting our sector.

Testimony of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA)
to the
New York City Council
Joint Committee of Finance and Parks and Recreation
May 25, 2022

My name is Deborah Maher and I am submitting this testimony as President of the Randall's Island Park Alliance (RIPA).

Randall's Island Park is located in the East River between East Harlem, the South Bronx, and Astoria, Queens. RIPA develops, sustains and maintains the Park, provides and facilitates extensive free public programming to all New Yorkers, and serves as a community park to our neighbors in East Harlem and the South Bronx. To do so, we work in close partnership with the NYC Parks Department.

Like many nonprofits and our City partners, the last two and a half years has severely impacted the organization and RIPA's operating budget has taken an enormous hit. During this time, the Park has seen record-breaking public use, averaging a continued increase of 70% more visitors over pre-pandemic numbers. Parks are critical infrastructure and essential for public safety and both mental and physical health.

Though we continue to see an increase in park usage, not only at Randall's Island Park but across all City parks throughout the boroughs, we have not seen a budget sufficient to accommodate this clear and critical public need for the City's available parks and open spaces. NYC Parks is chronically underfunded and understaffed and we are once again at a tipping point. Cuts have meant a loss of essential Parks employees including PEP Officers, City Parks Workers, Park Rangers, and forestry professionals, to name a few. These staff are crucial as we work together to ensure that our parks offer a clean and safe space for all New Yorkers. This is a loss that we cannot afford to have, especially with rising COVID cases; history has shown how vital a role parks serve as a respite for all New Yorkers during stressful times.

It is imperative that NYC Parks receives 1% of the city budget. When looking at the City's budget, one should see evidence that parks are valued, not that they are an afterthought. The last few years have clearly highlighted the critical role played by our public parks -- and New Yorkers deserve a parks system that is safe, clean, and equitable. Thank you.

Reach Out & Read
GREATER NEW YORK

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Dear Councilmember,

Thank you for your commitment to New York City children and youth. As one of seventeen partners in the Council's own Early Literacy Initiative, **City's First Readers**, Reach Out and Read of Greater NY (ROR GNY) is grateful for your participation on the Youth Service's Committee.

With the FY23 Executive Budget being reviewed, ROR GNY would like to remind you of the critical importance of ensuring the well-being and school readiness of our youngest and most vulnerable children.

- There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC. **44.5% of them live in low-income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - $25,750 for a family of four), and 76**% of children under the age of five are children of color**.

City's First Readers partners work in every Council District to thwart this opportunity gap from becoming an achievement gap.

Addressing these needs for over 20 years, **Reach Out and Read of Greater New York** has partnered with health care providers to put books and literacy resources in the hands of children and their caregivers. During regular pediatric checkups, our pediatricians, family physicians, and nurse practitioners give new, developmentally appropriate and culturally appropriate books to children from birth through 5 years old and advise parents and caregivers about the importance of reading aloud.

For many children, these are the very first and sometimes only books they have at home.

We partner with **144 of these hospitals, clinics, and pediatric care sites** in New York City. In 2021, we **served over 250,000 children** with books and literacy resources through our network of over 1,000 medical professionals. However, there is much more we can do. At our current funding rates, we are not able to meet the book need for 31% of the children in New York City. That means thousands of children are leaving their doctor's office without a book because we don't have the funding to support them in the way they need. We are hoping to change that with the continued and increased support of the NY City Council.

Any public budget is a statement of social priorities. Please ensure that the FY23 New York City Executive Budget includes enhanced funding for CIty's First Readers. Every New York City child deserves the opportunity to learn.

Thank you for your support,

Kari Kurjiaka

Senior Manager, Literacy & External Affairs

▪ **ADDRESS:** 105 W 86th Street #330, New York, NY 10024
▪ **PHONE:** 646-453-6322 ▪ **FAX:** 212-725-9744 ▪ **WEB:** reachoutandreadnyc.org
Affiliated with the nationwide school readiness initiative Reach Out and Read, Inc.

May 27, 2022

Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor of the City of New York
New York City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mayor Adams:

Our parks and recreation centers deserve to be protected and conserved year-round, but that isn't possible if the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation is under-staffed, and their employees are overworked and under-resourced. Case in point, the Red Hook Recreation Center where I hang out and use the weight room, the basketball gym, and the swimming pool, has been in need of major repairs and maintenance for decades. Year after year, these needs get shuffled to the side because of a lack of funding and staff to maintain the building and its many spaces. The result is a structure that is crumbling inside and outside, one that easily floods whenever there is significant rainfall, a roof that leaks, and bathrooms at the rear of the building that have been closed for years because of collapsed ceilings. For decades flooding has rendered the recreation center's basement with its many rooms including bathrooms off limits for any programming activities, damaged the HVAC system so that the building is currently getting heat and hot water from a temporary boiler stationed on the street, and led to repeated building closures over the years, thus leaving the community time and again without an important and safe gathering and recreational space.

The Recreation Center and the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) staff are doing their best with what they have, but it's not enough! For years the M&O staff has been caring for 53 sites with less than 20 permanent employees and a smattering of short-term labor. When will the mayor understand that maintenance of this important infrastructure is critical to the world class city we'd all like to live in? How many more times can the Red Hook Recreation Center flood, or there be a lack of permanent staff to manage the extraordinary work that is required to keep the center functioning and our parks clean, beautiful, and vibrant.

I make these observations because I've been intimately involved for the past 10+ years in supporting parks projects in the community and programming at the Red Hook Recreation Center. As the founder and executive director of Red Hook Conservancy (RHC), I, RHC members and volunteers from Red Hook and outside the community have contributed our free time and in-kind donations to support activities at the recreation center, and have continually cared for street trees, parks, ballfields, and playgrounds in the neighborhood.

My story about the state of these critical infrastructure is not unique to Red Hook. Across Brooklyn, and NYC, parks and recreation centers are showing their age because of the City's neglect, underfunding, and lack of investment in staffing. In my capacity as co-founder and chair of Brooklyn Parks and Open Spaces Coalition, a volunteer-led parks advocacy organization, I'm in an unparalleled position to hear similar stories from community groups across the borough who help support and maintain our parks, playgrounds, nature preserves, gardens, and other open spaces. Unfortunately, our free volunteer labor has covered up the low staffing levels and inequities that have been occurring for decades, thus enabling elected officials to turn a blind eye to the needs of all our parks and recreational spaces. During the Covid-19 pandemic, understaffing in our parks and open spaces, as well as a stoppage in volunteer labor, spotlighted the historical underinvestment in what is considered the backyards of all NYers.

More can be done. You the mayor can do so much more to turn around this system of underinvestment in our parks that has been happening for decades. We expect you to make good on your promise to allocate 1% of the City's FY23 executive budget for NYC Parks. If we want NYC to be a world class city we must show it by significantly investing in NYC parks and recreation centers. Now is the time to act!

Sincerely,

Marlene Pantin
Executive Director, Founder
Red Hook Conservancy

Chair, Co-founder
Brooklyn Parks and Open Spaces Coalition


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Rethink Food

The New York City Council
FY23 Executive Budget Hearing – Committee on Finance
Wednesday May 25th, 2022 10 A.M.

TO: The Finance Committee
FROM: Kathleen DiPerna, Rethink Food NYC, Inc.
DATE: Wednesday May 25th, 2022 at 10 AM

Good Afternoon Chairperson Brannan and Finance Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Rethink Food. My name is Kathleen DiPerna, and I am the Director of Government Relations at Rethink, a New York City-based nonprofit with the mission to create a more sustainable and equitable food system - one where every New Yorker has access to dignified, culturally responsive and nutritious food.

We seek support for our citywide funding requests from the council which include the Speaker's Initiative, Food Access and Benefits, Food Pantries, Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education, and A Greener NYC. We operate in 35 council districts across all 5 boroughs and have plans to expand to 40 council districts by Fiscal Year 2023. Support and partnership with the Council will be critical to ensuring that Rethink can continue to operate its programs to support the lives of our fellow New Yorkers.

Rethink was founded in 2017, operating the Rethink Commissary kitchen by transforming excess food from restaurants, corporate kitchens, and grocery stores into meals delivered to CBOs – a model that concurrently tackles food waste and food insecurity. Today the kitchen prepares an average 7-8,000 meals per week and distributes to 8 CBOs in Queens, Brooklyn and Manhattan.

Our work has evolved to include another innovative solution to address food insecurity – the Rethink Certified restaurant program. Launched at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, with food insecurity escalating and restaurants facing widespread closures, Rethink leveraged its experience to partner with restaurants to prepare meals for the community. In exchange, we provide grants to support food, operating, and staffing costs. We had a unique opportunity to distribute meals to vulnerable communities, and help restaurants stay open and retain staff. In 2021, Rethink and its partners delivered nearly 3.3M meals to 88 CBOs, invested $15.7M into 76 restaurants (75% of which were minority and or women owned) and recovered nearly 500,000 pounds of excess food.

Rethink's services are greatly needed now more than ever across the city because nearly 1 out of every 4 New Yorkers is experiencing food insecurity[1], and due to the COVID-19 pandemic the existence of up to 50% of NYC restaurants are endangered. We cannot let our neighbors continue to wonder where their next meal will come from, allow restaurants to close when they are a viable conduit for feeding their community, all while perfectly edible food is continuing to be wasted.

[1] Politico, "Number of New Yorkers without enough food will hit 2 million, de Blasio says"

Additionally, Rethink is a member of the NYC Food Policy Alliance organized by Equity Advocates, which convenes organizations across the food landscape in NYC looking to build a better food system. Within this coalition, we respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the final FY23 New York City Budget.

Utilizing The Food System As The Catalyst To Build Wealth In Communities

- **Allocate $5 Million to establish a new Food Justice Grant Program housed within the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) that supports community-led projects to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities**. In *Food Forward NYC*, the MOFP calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We urge the City to create an initiative modeled on USDA's Community Food Project and Philadelphia's Food Justice Initiative. The purpose of the Initiative is to invest in community-based projects designed and led by people most impacted by race, social, health, and environmental injustices in order to improve healthy food access in our communities. We urge the City to invest in this program at $5 Million and offer grants of at least $500K to each grantee for both planning and implementation projects serving high need areas identified by Racial Equity Task Force. As this field of work requires long term investments, the MOFP should prioritize 2 year grant cycles and allow for flexibility on spending deadlines upon receiving grants. We also ask that the MOFP establish and provide compensation for an advisory board of NYC food systems practitioners to establish grant criteria, review grant RFPs and select awardees. Types of projects funded under this pilot should include:
    - The establishment of worker owned food cooperatives or funding for CBOs to support the creation of and provide technical assistance to consumer and worker-owned food businesses.
    - Community kitchen programs for CBOs to connect community based food businesses, chefs and caterers to affordable kitchen space to provide regular and emergency meal services offer culinary job training and programs like Red Rabbit and Hot Bread Kitchen.
    - Community based training and workforce development opportunities to support regional rural and urban agriculture enterprises, especially for youth and BIPOC farmers, such Green City Force and Farm School NYC to create a pipeline of urban farming and food systems career opportunities.
- **Invest in the establishment of food cooperatives and strategies to build community ownership within the local food system**, especially in BIPOC communities that have historically had low rates of business establishment by neighborhood residents.
- **Partner with and support community food hubs** like the Central Brooklyn Food Coop to leverage existing community-owned food, health and retail infrastructures. Funding a Community Food Hub Incubator, as outlined in the Growing Food Equity in NYC report, would also help coordinate interested communities in developing more local food businesses and farm-to-city food projects.

- **Fully Fund the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative at $3 million.** Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT discretionary funding initiative has helped catalyze CLT organizing, education, training and technical assistance. We support the New York City Community Land Initiative in its call for full funding to support 20 organizations working to develop and preserve deeply-affordable housing, community and commercial spaces, and advance a just recovery in Black and brown NYC communities.

Emergency Food & Benefits Access

- **Increase funding with an additional $63.5 Million to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Baseline budget to accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program and continued need.** We thank the Mayor for the inclusion of $53.7M in total for EFAP in the Executive Budget, but due to the discontinuation of P-FRED it still would not fully meet the need across our City. While hunger rates in the City are thankfully lower now than they were at the peak of COVID, they are still much higher than the levels seen prior to the pandemic. In response to food insecurity rates that increased by over 36 percent for all New Yorkers and 46 percent for children, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy administered a new $63.5 million program called the Pandemic Food Reserve and Emergency Distribution (P-FRED). Since 2020, P-FRED has provided over 14 million pounds of fresh produce to food pantries throughout the City. The Mayor's preliminary budget excludes funding for the continuation of P-FRED past June 2022 yet no formal announcement has been made indicating if the program will continue. However, Mayor Adam's announced his intentions to strengthen EFAP by establishing a produce procurement operation into the program for the first time in its 40 years of existence. We urge the City to increase funding for EFAP beyond its current baseline level of $23.8 million to a total of $87.3M to account for the loss of P-FRED and adequately invest in this expanded effort to include fresh produce.
    - With the addition of produce procurement into EFAP for the first time and the release of a new RFP in January 2022 calling for a vendor to support procurement, ordering & distribution for EFAP, we urge HRA to consider innovative joint proposals in response to the recently released RFP and proposer(s) that demonstrate a commitment to following values set by the Good Food Purchasing procurement framework. We also urge HRA to consider RFP responses that prioritize sourcing from BIPOC and/or historically disadvantaged producers, distributors, and other places along the food supply chain and adequately track value based procurement.

    - Additionally, we urge the City to be more open and transparent in communicating with P-FRED providers about the future of the program. Many of the emergency food providers we work with have reported that P-FRED deliveries have stopped showing up and/or they have received reduced quantities of food without any clear communication from the City. Furthermore, without P-FRED some community providers will no longer have a source of food. Many of the groups that stepped up during the pandemic to serve their communities through P-FRED are mutual aid or community based groups that will not be eligible for EFAP membership because 1) they are not 501(c)(3), 2) do not have an Emergency Food Relief Organization (EFRO) ID#, and 3) do not have "other established sources of food and funding" - all of which are EFAP requirements. We urge HRA to provide guidance about potential alternatives for these providers once P-FRED winds down.
- **Invest $42.7 Million in new home delivered meals funding to combat hunger for older adults and prepare for the end of emergency DFTA Recovery Meals (formerly GetFood).** We applaud the Administration's inclusion of additional funding for DFTA home delivered meals programs to support increased contract reimbursement rates, with $9.41 million added for FY23 and beyond to bring rates up to $11.78 per meal. This increase addresses long-time underfunding, but there are additional funding needs for the HDM system including chronically low wages, inflation, and capital needs. In addition, we are glad the Administration pledged to invest $14.9 million in home delivered meals and case management programs to support roughly 3,000 new individuals that they expect will need meals with the termination of the DFTA Recovery Meals program (formerly GetFood) in June. However, additional funding is needed for this transition to support more older adults. Inclusive of the $14.9 million investment, the City should invest a total of $42.7 million into growing the home delivered meals program. This includes $9.7 million to support continued growth in demand for the home delivered meals program, $30 million to support the Recovery Meal clients transitioning to traditional home delivered meals, and $3 Million to support weekend and holiday home delivered meals not provided by current contracts. Additionally, DFTA should assess and fund the capital and infrastructure needs for HDM providers including van purchases and kitchen investments.
- **Increase HRA's budget baseline by $10 Million to engage community based organizations (CBOs) in benefits outreach and streamline benefits applications**. For the last several years, and especially during the pandemic, HRA's clients reported many issues to City Council and HRA with the closures of service centers, long phone wait times, problems returning missed calls from HRA, timely and accurate processing of applications, and the overall client experience. Despite these issues, the Preliminary Budget Plan does not include any additional funding for outreach or streamlining of social service program administration for the HRA.

Additional administrative funding should also support the SNAP program (run by NYC HRA) to have a joint application with the WIC program (run by NYS DOH). This would be a great first step in implementing Mayor Eric Adams' campaign pledge to create a MyCity applications portal for joint applications. We urge the City Council to increase funding for the agency and CBOs engaged in benefits outreach to meet ongoing demand and improve the administration of critical food benefit programs.

- **We support the Administration's inclusion of $250 Million per year for an Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion and call for the State to support this initiative.** As Mayor Adams mentioned in his recent testimony to the NY State Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee members, it has been 20 years since the City and State of New York increased the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Benefits low income families receive. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, EITC programs are a proven strategy for lifting families low to moderate income families out of poverty.[2] We support the Mayor's call to the State to authorize the City to increase EITC benefits and match the City's investment of $250 Million to expand EITC here in New York City.
- **We join our partners in calling for the City to invest in a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all human services workers.** Throughout COVID-19, human services workers across sectors have stepped up to provide critical services in new ways. Despite this, the wages of these workers, the majority of whom are women and Black and brown individuals, are slated to remain stagnant and at poverty levels in a City where costs are notoriously high. It is critical that the FY23 budget, and all future budgets, rectify this by automatically allocating a COLA for all human services workers.
- **Need for additional data from Grocery to Go Program.** According to the Mayor's Office of Food Policy, the new Grocery to Go program which received $6.8M in the FY22 Budget will be serving people who were previously receiving food through the COVID-19 Get Food Program, are 59 and below, and still need meal assistance. Program participants, which will be a maximum of 5,000 people who will be asked to opt-in, will receive $110 dollars per month to purchase groceries through Mercado, an online grocery ordering and delivery platform. In November 2021, the MOFP told members of our Alliance that the pilot program was slated to begin Dec 1st and is funded through the current fiscal year. We would like this committees help to obtain data on the program including the following:
    - How many people are enrolled and participating in the Grocery to Go Program?
    - What happens to unspent credits on the Mercado marketplace given to clients?

[2] https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/the-earned-income-tax-credit

- What will happen to unspent funds if the Grocery to Go program does not reach the 5,000 person cap or if funds are not expended by the end of the fiscal year?

School Food & Nutrition Education

- **$3.5 million for additional school food managers in The Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS).** OFNS at the NYC Department of Education has worked tirelessly to make sure that students have the food they need to succeed in school, and to ensure that these meals are high quality and culturally competent. OFNS needs more school food managers to better serve their school communities, implement appealing menus, provide professional development, partner with school leadership to create positive meal experiences, and increase participation in the school meals program. Funding for an additional 60 managers, at $57,291 per manager, would enable OFNS to better achieve these goals, helping to ensure that children are well-fed and ready to learn. In addition, it is critical to ensure that those school food managers as well as kitchen staff and teacher aids have sufficient training centered around wellness and supporting healthy nutritious meals for students.
- **Allocate an additional $50 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan towards a planned phase-in of 500 more cafeteria redesigns** to fully scale the highly successful Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) to all high schools and middle schools to support school food participation, student well being and reduced lunch lines.
- **Renew $500,000 in funding for Food-Ed Hub based within the Tisch Food Center.** With ongoing funding, the Hub can continue to provide tools, evidence-based recommendations, and capacity and professional development opportunities to CBOs and educators.
- **Invest $37 million so that all schools can have sustained, flexible funding to provide vital food ed programming.** For example, flexible funding—at $20,000 per school—would enable schools to build and maintain school gardens and outdoor classrooms, hire a School Wellness Coordinator, provide per session pay for teachers who lead after school programs, or partner with a food ed organization to help teachers effectively integrate food and nutrition education into their curriculum.

Urban Agriculture & Youth Development

- **We support the Administration's inclusion of $101.6M in baseline funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to cover the increase in job opportunities for NYC youth from 70,000 to 90,000.** We strongly support the Administration's increase in baseline funding of $57.2M per year over the next four years to support the expansion of SYEP jobs for youth ages 14-24. Mayor Adams has expressed his commitment to bringing green jobs to SYEP and investing in the future of urban agriculture, yet current DYCD regulations create a barrier for smaller worksites that would provide meaningful experiences for young people. To ensure the successful implementation of this expansion especially with food systems and urban agriculture worksite partners, we urge the DYCD to shift the weekly site visit requirement to something less burdensome for worksite partners.
    - The current DYCD requirement that SYEP providers conduct weekly, in-person site visits poses a dual challenge for worksites. Organizations are stretched for capacity so scheduling and accommodating these weekly visits is burdensome for the supervisors. In addition, an unintended consequence of these weekly visits is that SYEP providers tend to focus on partnering with businesses and organizations that can host multiple interns which can be a barrier for smaller worksites and those offering a meaningful work experience within the food system or urban agriculture.
    - We also urge the City to create a pathway to SYEP for all youth, regardless of citizenship status.
- **Funding for Work Learn Grow (WLG), the complementary school-year youth workforce program, sits at less than half of its pre-pandemic level, with no baselined investment.** The City should invest $20 million in baselined funding for WLG in the FY23 budget in order to increase opportunities for young people, help SYEP providers maintain relationships with employer partners year-round, and stabilize staffing structures for the system.
- **Fully Restore Funding for NYC Composting programs.** We were disappointed to see that the Administration cut funding for the re-introduction and planned expansion of the curbside composting program. If NYC is to meet its climate goals and zero waste goals and take the burden off of CBOs that have stepped in to fill this gap, NYC must reinstate and fully fund the City's composting program including $18.2 M to for Organics Curbside Collection, $3.5M for community composting and organic dropoff sites citywide, and $793,000 FY23 and in the outyears to expand the school organics collection program.
    - We also urge the City to provide mandatory curbside composting Citywide through Int. 0244 from Councilmember Hanif, which would phase in organic waste pick-up from residential buildings by mid-2023. According to the Independent Budget Office, citywide composting would save the City $33M a year after the first five years.

- **Allocate funding for the new Office of Urban Agriculture housed within the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability (OLTPS) to hire a Director and staff.** The legislation to create the Office went into effect March 2022 and requires the hiring of a Director and at least one staff member. We urge the Administration to allocate $247,500, as outlined in the Fiscal Impact Statement, in the FY23 Executive Budget to ensure the success of the new Office. We also urge the City to allocate additional funding to provide stipends for subcommittee members.
- **Create a grant or low interest loan program** managed by the NYC Urban Agriculture Office targeted to residents in low income communities to invest in and provide technical assistance to urban agricultural startups and their acquisition of equipment, land and indoor growing space and staff.
- **Invest in GreenThumb** by hiring more outreach coordinators, creating a full-time Youth Leadership Council coordinator position, providing youth with compensation for their work and compensating community gardeners for taking leadership roles within programming and mentoring the youth in GreenThumb's youth program. Compensating community gardeners to teach workshops and train youth to run these programs will help make existing gardening programming sustainable.

Thank you for reading our testimony, and we look forward to continuing the conversation on how in partnership, we can feed the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen DiPerna

From: damianmcshane@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 10:34 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Finance committee testimony

To all committee members,
I represent the Riverdale Main street Alliance - a registered nfp in the NW Bronx dedicated to business and civic issues in our community. We dedicate a significant portion of our limited budget on beautification efforts in Van Cortlandt park.

We urge the City Council to commit 1% of the overall city budget to NYC parks, to address both Capital projects and operating needs. As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, access to safe, clean open spaces is more critical than ever.

Damian McShane
Presdient
Riverdale Main Street Alliance

https://rmsabx.org/

ROW NEW YORK
PULLING TOGETHER TO PUSH AHEAD

Dear Council Members:

On behalf of Row New York, I would like to thank you for your support of the Sports Training and Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS). With funding from the New York City Council, STARS partner organizations have continued working to develop the life and leadership skills of NYC girls through athletic, academic, and arts programming throughout Covid-19.

As a STARS partner, we at Row New York are doing everything we can to support the girls we serve. Although, Covid-19 dramatically disrupted our students' lives, we responded by providing a consistent, structured academic and athletic program that students can rely on, while also offering readily accessible counseling services to make sure our participants were safe, supported, and on track to meet their goals. This year, we were so excited to be able to provide rowing for high school students that resulted in an exciting finish at State Finals. We also were able to provide year-round College Support and Success services including tutoring, academic workshops, SAT prep, support with the college application, and ongoing support for our alumni now enrolled in college.

Our program staff are also continuing to provide individualized case management services to assist students and their families. Staff engage students individually on a weekly basis to assess how they are responding to Row New York's programming, discuss progress towards rowing and academic goals, and determine if further support is needed to help with additional challenges. If students indicate that they are experiencing issues like food or housing insecurity or anxiety our social work staff work to identify and connect them with resources and agencies that can provide further assistance. By helping in this way, Row New York works to ensure that all participants are prepared to graduate from high school on time, gain admission to college, and have the skills and opportunities to seek meaningful employment in adulthood.

Though Covid changed our students' lives, support from STARS and the participating partner organizations have made sure that the girls in our communities still have access to the programming that keeps them healthy and engaged. We are so grateful for the City Council's leadership and their support of STARS. We thank you on behalf of the girls of this city that have received invaluable support throughout this pandemic, and urge you to increase your support to $2,000,000 for fiscal year 2023.

Sincerely,

Rachel Cytron, Executive Director of Row New York

RTCNYC Coalition Testimony
Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Finance Committee
May 25, 2022

Dear Finance Committee -

Please accept our testimony on behalf of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY. We are members of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, which led and won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction. We are proud of NYC's groundbreaking Right to Counsel legislation and applaud the City Council, the Mayor, and the Office of Civil Justice for its dedication to making the Right to Counsel available to all New Yorkers during this pandemic. The law had tremendous impact in just the first few years since it passed: 84% percent of tenants who had RTC won their case and stayed in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to protect and advance tenants' rights. Right to Counsel has also helped develop a body of more just case law, lower tenants' rents, re-stabilize apartments, and has forced landlords to make repairs.

As we have seen, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Right to Counsel is more important than ever before. We know that evictions and housing instability have a disproportionate impact on people of color, especially women and children of color. Evictions and housing instability also have significant impacts not just on people's housing, but on people's education, employment, family relationships, physical and mental health, and so much more. NYC's Right to Counsel moves us closer towards achieving economic, gender, and racial justice.

We are here today to urge this committee to immediately and fully implement Local Law 53 and to work with the courts to ensure that no case move forward without an RTC attorney.

Immediately and Fully Implement Local Law 53:

The expansion of RTC to work with and fund community organizing groups to do the necessary education and outreach work of RTC, Local Law 53, is so incredibly critical. While we applauded the city for passing legislation in May of last year, with an effective date of November 2021, we are deeply disappointed that it has not yet been implemented.

To date and since the Coalition last testified at the General Welfare Committee Hearing on February 28, the Office of Civil Justice has failed to release the RFP or confirm funding for Local Law 53. Furthermore, we understand that OCJ and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit have engaged in efforts to inform the public of Right to Counsel. *We want to be extremely clear - this is not a substitute or solution for failure to fund Local Law 53.*



The intent of Local Law 53 is clear - to fund trusted tenant organizing groups working in low-income communities of color to lead outreach and education efforts through community meetings, workshops, Tenant Association meetings, and more. This is the vital work of tenant organizers, and ensuring that tenants are informed of Right to Counsel and supported prior to an eviction case being filed. Tenants know about their rights and exercising them is a preventative and proactive measure.

With hundreds of thousands of households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 200,000 eviction cases filed across New York, tenants need this law now more than ever. We were told the city allocated $3.6 million towards this bill, had drafted the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was going to release it in November of last year. To date, we haven't seen it. We know the mayoral and city council administrations take time to transition but **with the expiration of the eviction protections almost 4 months ago and hundreds of eviction cases moving forward without Right to Counsel, we can't wait.** The city is now out of compliance with its own law and it needs to implement it now, in this current budget.

Why is this law important?

- Right to Counsel has been proven to stop evictions in NYC, but many tenants who are eligible for Right to Counsel don't know about it or are too afraid to use it. When tenants don't know or use their rights, they are more easily harassed out of their apartments. This leads to the displacement of mostly poor Black and brown New Yorkers.
- A survey done by volunteers at Bronx Housing Court found that **53%** of tenants who had Right to Counsel did not know about this right before arriving in court.
- When tenants don't know they have a Right to Counsel, they might decide not to appear in court, decline representation, sign agreements with their landlord's lawyer prior, decide not to ask for repairs in fear of being evicted, or face a variety of other serious consequences.
- Local Law 53 requires the city to support organizers who would work to ensure that tenants know about their Right to Counsel and feel supported using it. More tenants will be prepared to defend their homes against eviction and fight for their right to a safe, affordable home.
- Tenant organizing is the most effective means of ensuring tenants know about their rights. Tenant organizing groups create an environment where tenants feel supported by a community that is working together to combat landlord abuse, ensuring that a landlord cannot target an individual tenant for standing up for their rights.
- We need to stop informal evictions! 54% of forced moves that take place in NYC are the result of informal evictions, such as a tenant leaving due being told to leave, landlord harassment, a lack of repairs, etc. When tenants know they have the right to a lawyer and are organized, they can fight back when landlords try to push them out.



To meet the needs of tenants across the city, this law must be implemented now. **We urge this Committee to work with HRA to release the RFP so that tenant organizing groups can do their work to educate and organize tenants across NYC during this incredibly scary time.**

We urge this Committee to call on Mayor Adams to fully fund and implement Local Law 53 and ensure the Office of Civil Justice is allocating $5 million towards Local Law 53.

We look forward to working with you on this. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.



RTCNYC Coalition Testimony
Hearing on the Executive Budget of the Finance Committee
May 25, 2022

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Please accept our testimony on behalf of the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, which led and won the campaign to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction. We are proud of NYC's groundbreaking Right to Counsel legislation and applaud the City Council, the Mayor, and the Office of Civil Justice for its dedication to making the Right to Counsel available to all New Yorkers during this pandemic. The law had tremendous impact in just the first few years since it passed: 84% percent of tenants who had RTC won their case and stayed in their homes, landlords are suing people less and community groups are actively using the Right to Counsel as a powerful tool to protect and advance tenants' rights. Right to Counsel has also helped develop a body of more just case law, lower tenants' rents, re-stabilize apartments, and has forced landlords to make repairs.

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We look forward to working with you on this. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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safehorizon
moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

Testimony of
Jimmy Meagher, Policy Director
Safe Horizon

On the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget

Committee on Finance
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair

New York City Council

5.25.2022

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jimmy Meagher, and I am Policy Director at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim services organization. Safe Horizon offers a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. We are increasingly using a lens of racial equity and justice to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the positions we hold.

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are proud to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We look forward to helping you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping survivors of all ages access desperately-needed shelter, support services, legal assistance, and counseling.

The City Council has also championed the human services nonprofit sector. Our sector desperately needs your help to ensure that human services workers across our sector receive the compensation and support we need.

The City of New York contracts with nonprofits to deliver the essential services so many New Yorkers rely on – for food, for safety, for shelter, etc. However, the City too often asks our community of nonprofits to do more with less and to accept the bare minimum. This means that many - too many - nonprofit human services workers, the majority of whom are women and people of color, are barely surviving on the wages paid by underfunded City contracts. Because many survivors come into victim services work to help other survivors, City funding for the nonprofit victim services sector is an economic justice issue for survivors. To live up to our shared values of equity, equality, and supporting communities, our City must commit to fully funding the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA), the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative (ICR), and other fair and just investments to our sector and to fully funding city contracts at appropriate levels to allow non-profits to offer competitive living wage salaries. Pay equity is a racial justice issue, a gender justice issue, and an economic justice issue.

My testimony today will focus on the needs of the nonprofit human services sector, with specific focus on the core asks of the #JustPay campaign. I will also highlight the City Council discretionary and initiative funding that Safe Horizon relies on to provide essential services to survivors of violence and abuse across the five boroughs. Lastly, Safe Horizon is a proud member of both the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC) and Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), and we wholeheartedly endorse their budget recommendations.

#JustPay

Safe Horizon is a proud member of the #JustPay campaign, which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers. The #JustPay campaign is demanding that sector employees under contract with New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

1. Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.
2. Set a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.
3. Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

The COLA is the biggest action that can be taken right now, during this budget season. We ask that the Council include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally, we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a **5.4% COLA**.

We thank the City Council for leading the way in supporting fair wages for the human services sector by including a 4% (COLA) in your response to the FY23 preliminary budget. However, a **5.4% COLA**, or an **$86 million increase**, is needed to address the crises facing our sector.

These actions would be meaningful to organizations like ours that never stopped providing critical services during this pandemic.

Initiative and Discretionary Funding

City Council Initiative and Discretionary funding supports the following Safe Horizon programs:

Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative

Since 2006, the New York City Council's DOVE Initiative has provided critical resources to communities impacted by domestic violence. Recognizing that survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence have varied needs and may not always access the criminal justice system, the City Council partnered with Safe Horizon to create the DOVE Initiative to provide a neighborhood-based response to survivors and their families. The DOVE Initiative was funded at $11.5 million in FY22, with Council Members then allocating funding to local providers in their district.

Currently, over 120 organizations across NYC use DOVE funding to address domestic violence in the community by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, counseling,

support groups, outreach, education, and training. Safe Horizon oversees this entire project and ensures program compliance. We provide in-depth training on program development and evaluation to help organizations stay competitive in future funding environments, as well as networking opportunities to help DOVE-funded organizations learn from each other and coordinate services. DOVE has always been important, but in this environment, at this moment in our history, it is literally a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and every community who are navigating a pandemic and violence in the home. As we advocate for options for victims and survivors both inside and outside traditional criminal justice responses, DOVE is pivotal. DOVE directs funds to the organizations rooted in community that have been able to pivot to provide necessary and life-saving supports to survivors during a pandemic.

We are very grateful to the City Council for supporting the DOVE Initiative for over a decade. We are seeking a restoration of $11,500,000 so our network of CBOs can continue to reach survivors in every neighborhood and every district across New York City.

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)

Child abuse cases grab at the heartstrings of every New Yorker. We recoil at the very thought of someone knowingly harming a child, and we entrust a number of different agencies - the police, prosecutors, child welfare specialists, doctors - to investigate and respond to these cases and help ensure the safety of children placed in harm's way. For many years, these agencies worked almost entirely in silos, focusing on their specific roles in uncovering what took place, or responding to the child, or holding the offender accountable. Such a disconnected approach required that children disclose repeatedly the painful details of the harm they endured in a variety of settings not commonly thought of as "child-friendly" – police precincts, district attorneys' office, and hospital emergency rooms. Over and over, children would be asked to talk about the violence they suffered, only to have to repeat their story yet again every time a new investigator stepped into the picture. Each time, the child wondered how many more times they would have to relive this pain so that another adult could write down some notes and ask yet another round of probing, deeply personal questions. Many child victims were left feeling as if no one believed them and felt to blame for causing disruption to their families. This method of investigating incidents of abuse was traumatizing, stigmatizing, and unjust.

For many years now, child victims in New York City who experience severe physical or sexual abuse are brought to Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs), which are at the forefront of the city's response to child abuse. At our CACs, child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse receive the help they need quickly and in one location. The police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers are all under one roof in a child-friendly environment that minimizes trauma and facilitates healing. This allows us to facilitate a swift, comprehensive, coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team response that significantly reduces the number of times children must disclose details of their abuse. This coordinated, trauma-informed response to abuse helps to prevent the re-traumatization of the child during each re-telling of the violence that took place. In FY21, our CACs - which have remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic - provided services to over 8,000 children and over 3,800 caregivers throughout the five boroughs. The City Council supports our CACs through the **Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault.**

We are requesting a restoration and an enhancement to $1,000,000 in FY23 to sustain general operations in our CACs across the five boroughs so we can continue to provide healing and support to child victims. Additionally, we are seeking for this core funding to be baselined to ensure the City's continued investment in the CAC model.

Streetwork Project

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and so much more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 13 to 25. We work with homeless and street-involved young people to help them find safety and stability. Many homeless young people face a day-to-day struggle to survive, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. Homeless youth may have experienced family abuse, violence, rejection, and instability that led to their homelessness. We welcome these young people, help them navigate complex systems, and provide essential resources at our Drop-In Centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams. This work can be incredibly challenging but also rewarding. Our work at Streetwork did not pause during this pandemic. Rather, our dedicated team continued to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter, services, and understanding. Streetwork has been doing this community-based work since 1984, and we will continue to do so for as long as our services are needed.

In FY21, our Streetwork Project provided services to nearly 600 clients across our drop-in centers and overnight shelter, while our overnight street outreach team engaged in over 4,300 contacts with homeless and at-risk young people. The City Council supports Streetwork Project's work through the **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative** and the **Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative**.

The **Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative** bolsters Streetwork's ability to provide services and access to housing to young people engaged in the sex trade. With this funding, we have been able to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the Drop-In Center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade and to connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare. Safe Horizon is seeking a restoration of $456,697 to continue to bolster our response and offer critical services to this vulnerable population navigating a pandemic, homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.

The **Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative** helps Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project increase our capacity to connect potentially Hepatitis C-affected clients to testing, medical care, treatment, and infection control services. We are seeking a restoration of $35,060 - so we can link runaway and homeless youth to the medical supports they need and deserve.

Legal Services: Immigration Law Project & Domestic Violence Law Project

Safe Horizon’s Immigration Law Project (ILP) and Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLP) provide expert legal services and guidance to at-risk New Yorkers seeking relief in immigration

proceedings and on family and matrimonial law matters. Our team of attorneys and paralegals help their clients access temporary and permanent residency, work authorization, orders of protection, custody, visitation, child support, and divorces. Even as most courthouses moved to a virtual setting, our Immigration Law Project still provided full representation, advice, and consults to over 830 clients, and also provided nearly 4,300 telephonic information and referral services, while our DV Law Project provided services to over 1,600 clients and offered telephonic helpline services to nearly 400 callers seeking assistance. The City Council supports ILP & DVLP through the **Safe Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative, Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI),** and the **Young Women's Initiative (YWI)**.

Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence Law Project utilizes funding through the **Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative** to provide direct legal services to indigent victims of domestic violence in Family, Supreme, and Integrated DV Courts throughout the city. Our dedicated legal staff assist with orders of protection, child support, custody, visitation, and divorce proceedings. We also operate a legal helpline that provides information, referrals, and assistance to domestic violence survivors. In the months and years ahead, as our City recovers from COVID-19, our legal services, and the services provided by our legal partners across NYC, will be critical for the many, many survivors who are waiting for the courts to return to normal. We are seeking a restoration of $275,000 so our Domestic Violence Law Project can continue to serve survivors with the legal services they require to find safety and healing.

Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project utilizes funding through the City Council's **Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)** to provide expert legal advice and representation to undocumented victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist them with applications for U-Visas, T-Visas, VAWA self-petitions, asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense. Over the last 5 years, as a result of the prior administration's immigration policies, Safe Horizon's ILP has seen an increase of survivors seeking our immediate assistance. In addition, the current global pandemic caused by the coronavirus and its variants have exacerbated already tenuous circumstances for survivors, making them even more desperate and in need of legal support and services. To help ensure that our Immigration Law Project has the capacity to respond to pressing legal cases for immigrant and undocumented survivors, we are seeking an enhancement to $100,000 to Safe Horizon through IOI in FY23.

The City Council's **Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative** – part of the **Young Women's Initiative (YWI)** – allows Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project to provide full representation to 60 additional immigrant victims of domestic violence, including direct representation to 45 survivors and 15 additional consultations. The majority of these cases include clients or families where there is a survivor of domestic or sexual violence and where the victim is between the ages of 16 and 24. To help ensure that we have the capacity to respond to pressing legal cases for immigrants, we are asking the City Council to restore $75,000 to Safe Horizon through the YWI - Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence Initiative in FY23.

Counseling Center

Safe Horizon's Counseling Center has provided mental health treatment to adult and child victims of violence and abuse since 1988. We provide ongoing support and counseling services during victims' recovery and healing journey. We offer supportive counseling without judgment, and we work with survivors to develop coping strategies. Our Counseling Center is one of the only New York State-licensed mental health clinics focused solely on treating trauma reactions that many victims of crime and abuse experience. Using telemedicine during the pandemic, our Counseling Center provided over 7,300 therapy sessions to nearly 400 clients in FY21. The City Council supports our Counseling Center's work through the **Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative** and **Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative**.

The City Council's **Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative** allows us to address the impact of traumatic experiences that are so often at the root of behaviors that precipitate involvement in family court of children and youth aged 7 to 17. There is growing recognition of the many types of trauma (interpersonal violence, community violence, historical racism, systemic violence, and daily experiences of racism and other forms of oppression) that impact young people. Our project involves the enhancement of trauma-informed care for youth by creating training, providing training, and cultivating trainers for a short-term trauma-focused intervention. Staff learn how to implement this intervention with youth and caregivers that helps survivors identify specific trauma reactions and to practice coping strategies for managing them. In addition, staff are supported to provide training to additional staff in this intervention. We are seeking a restoration of $140,000 so we can continue to do this work in a meaningful way.

The City Council's **Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative** supports our work with infants and toddlers who are survivors of crime, as well as their families, through training of clinicians and staff in evidence-based treatment for this population. The Counseling Center continues to adapt training, co-facilitate training, and recruit trainers for a curriculum on how exposure to domestic violence, the dynamics of domestic violence (DV), and the systems of oppression families experiencing DV often encounter all come together in ways that can disrupt the bond between infants and their caregivers. The training uses real (but de-identified) case vignettes to bring those ruptures into view and to explore how attachment-based intervention facilitates healing in those relationships. This training is also structured to provide a practical introduction to the impact of DV on very young children and the healing power of attachment relationships as well as specific interventions to promote attachment. A unique element of this training initiative is that is holds space for training participants to reflect on the fact that, as shelter staff, they are also caregivers, and they, too, are impacted by trauma in this environment and in their lives. By training a greater number of individuals who come into contact with these children to recognize signs of trauma, we can prevent lifelong developmental consequences while providing healing and relief. We are seeking a restoration of $115,385 in FY23 to continue supporting young children who have been victims of or witnesses to crime.

Community Programs and SafeChat

Safe Horizon offers a continuum of service for all victims of crime through telephonic, live chat, and/or in-person supports. With sites that serve all five boroughs, our compassionate Community Program staff provide safety planning, advocacy, case management, information and referrals, supportive counseling, and support groups. Clients are connected to our continuum of services by

calling our citywide Helpline (1-855-234-1042). Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally. Crime victims utilize their computer, phone, or tablet to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat with trained Safe Horizon Live Chat Specialists by visiting safehorizon.org. Live Chat Specialists utilize a best practice, client-centered approach to engage with victims by providing information and referrals across NYC, supporting victims in fully assessing their safety, and collaborating with victims to develop comprehensive safety plans. Live Chat Specialists conduct safety assessment, safety planning, crisis counseling, supportive counseling, psychoeducation, information about and referrals to supporting resources. In FY21, our Community Programs provided services to 2,245 clients, the Helpline provided telephonic services to 1,463 clients, and SafeChat responded to nearly 2,000 chats from survivors.

The City Council supports our Community Programs and SafeChat through the **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative** and a **Speaker's Initiative**.

The work of the **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative** aligns with Safe Horizon's commitment to working with young Black and brown men who have experienced harm and violence. One of SafeChat's main goals is to increase accessibility to needed services for young men of color through a specific microsite geared directly to young men of color. Research shows that young men of color are more likely to experience harm, yet Safe Horizon recognizes that boys and young men of color are not accessing our services. This funding increases our capacity to connect community members who have experienced harm, with a particular focus on young men of color, to our continuum of services, including counseling and mental health supports. Our Helpline and SafeChat serve as a first point of contact, linking to Community Programs for ongoing coordination within Safe Horizon and beyond. Our services are offered telephonically, remotely, and in-person at our Community Program offices, ensuring that folks have options. We are seeking an enhancement to $200,000 in FY23 funding to hire additional staff to support this essential healing work.

In FY22, Safe Horizon was awarded **Speaker's Initiative** funding to launch a SafeChat microsite intentionally directed towards young men of color. The site provides educational materials related to trauma and provides access to our live chat platform. This year, we are requesting $200,000 in Speaker's Initiative funding to expand operations and add additional SafeChat staff positions to respond to survivors. By expanding this program further, we create accessibility and intentionally build avenues for young men of color to access supportive services and healing.

Conclusion

As the City Council and the Administration sets the budget for the next fiscal year, it's imperative that our City expands, perfects, creates, and invests in programming that provides healing and support to people who have experienced harm, violence, and trauma. When we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of individual New Yorkers, we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of New York City as a whole.

And it is essential that the City invest in the nonprofit human services workforce that we collectively rely on to support our safety net. We urge you and your colleagues to listen to providers and implement the three core asks of the #JustPay campaign.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony. We are available to provide more information and answer any questions you may have.

safehorizon

moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

Safe Horizon FY23 Expense Funding Requests

Speaker's Initiative – $200,000 in *new* funding for SafeChat (Application ID #130563)
Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally and to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat. This funding would allow SafeChat to expand operations and add additional staff positions to respond to young men of color seeking help.

Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault – Restoration, Enhancement, & Baselining of $1,000,000 (#125152)
Supports operations at the city's five Child Advocacy Centers, where Safe Horizon coordinates police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers to respond to children who have experienced severe physical and/or sexual abuse.

DOVE Initiative – Restoration of $11,500,000 gross ($859,000 to Safe Horizon) (#125655)
Currently, over 120 organizations across NYC use DOVE funding to address domestic violence by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, outreach, education, and training. Safe Horizon oversees this entire project and ensures program compliance.

Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade – Restoration of $456,697 (#130511)
Allows Streetwork Project to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the drop-in center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade.

Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative – Restoration of $275,000 (#130712)
Supports Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence Law Project in providing direct legal services to indigent victims of domestic violence in Family, Supreme, and Integrated DV Courts throughout the city.

Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations – Restoration and Enhancement to $200,000 (#130594)

Supports Community Programs and SafeChat in connecting community members who have experienced harm, with a particular focus on young men of color, to our continuum of services, including counseling and mental health supports.

Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative – Restoration of $140,000 (#130763)
Allows Safe Horizon to create and provide training for short-term trauma-focused interventions that help survivors identify specific trauma reactions, practice coping strategies for managing them, and address the impact of traumatic experiences that are so often at the root of behaviors that precipitate involvement in family court.

Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative – Restoration of $115,385 (#130724)
Supports our work with infants and toddlers who are survivors of crime, as well as their families, through training of clinicians and staff in an attachment-based intervention that facilitates healing and supports healthy development.

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) – Restoration and Enhancement to $100,000 (#130687)
Supports Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project and its ability to provide expert legal advice and representation to undocumented victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture.

Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence – Restoration of $75,000 (#130661)
Allows Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project to provide full representation to 60 additional young immigrant victims of domestic violence, including direct representation to 45 survivors and 15 additional consultations.

Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative – Restoration of $35,060 (#130641)
Allows Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project to increase our capacity to connect potentially Hepatitis C-affected clients to testing, medical care, treatment, and infection control services.

For more information, please contact Michael Polenberg, VP of Government Affairs at michael.polenberg@safehorizon.org or 212-577-7735

Testimony of Desireé C. Hernández Sánchez
Safe Passage Project
Finance Committee
May 25, 2022

Thank you to the Finance Immigration for inviting testimony today. My name is Desireé Hernández Sánchez and I am the Interim Executive Director at Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We serve children who live in the five boroughs of New York City and in the two counties of Long Island. The support of the City of New York has been instrumental in our work.

No immigrant, not even a child, is appointed a lawyer in immigration court. If a child cannot afford to hire a lawyer, they will be forced to defend themselves alone, against a trained government prosecutor and a judge, with deportation back to dangerous conditions as the likely outcome. Safe Passage Project helps correct this injustice by providing free attorneys to kids. Beyond legal services, our social work team addresses the broader needs of clients, such as school enrollment, homelessness, access to health care, psychological services, and public benefits.

The City Council has been a stalwart support that allows us to fight on behalf of young immigrants: you fund our work through the Unaccompanied Minors Initiative and the IOI grant stream. Without your unwavering support, which we've had since 2014, we would not be able to serve the over 1,200 clients that Safe Passage serves. In fact, the City Council's support for the ICARE collaborative is groundbreaking on a national level, and has shown that local initiatives that support universal representation for immigrants –essentially filling a gap where the federal government refuses to act – is not only possible, but successful. Thank you.

Organizations like Safe Passage that provide free representation to immigrants are facing unprecedented challenges. First, a record number of unaccompanied children arrived at the US/Mexico border in 2021—over 100,000. Some of these young people had been expelled from the border under the Trump administration due to specious "public health" rules and are only now being processed according to the law. At least 10% of them are headed to New York to reunite with family members, but they will simultaneously be placed into removal proceedings and will need attorneys.

Second, cases continue to take an extremely long time to resolve, meaning that we cannot turn over cases as rapidly as we once could. Our caseloads continue to grow.

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and heightened many of the inequalities in our system. Undocumented immigrants may work in essential jobs, but most lack job security, are less likely to have health insurance, can be hesitant to seek emergency medical treatment. To

compound these problems, undocumented immigrants have been deliberately excluded from most economic recovery programs. At the same time, our immigration work didn't stop. Filings still had to be made on time. Kids were still being entered into removal proceedings and they needed lawyers.

The pandemic has proven that small organizations like Safe Passage and our partners are well-positioned to deliver the aid and resources that immigrant families need. Since the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in New York City, our social work team worked to connect young people with essential resources including food, housing, and medical help. We are proud to have connected so many families with badly needed resources, but we know that many clients continue to struggle with food and housing insecurity. We likewise continued the fight on the immigration front: In FY2021, we conducted 354 legal intake screenings and filed hundreds of applications and motions with immigration services and with various courts.

The stakes have never been higher, and our already hard-working staff will be pushed to do more. Funding for organizations like ours is never guaranteed. The ICARE Collaborative was very successful in ensuring that New York's child immigrants are represented in court, but the Robin Hood portion of the funding from this public-private partnership is coming to a close. We recognize that these are very uncertain times, particularly from a budgeting perspective, but I ask that the City Council continue to elevate the need for these services for immigrant children facing deportation.

With the City Council's support, Safe Passage Project and our partners will hopefully help even more clients navigate the maze that is the immigration system, defend themselves against deportation, and access stability and essential services during this difficult period. Safe Passage Project offers our sincere thanks to the City Council for being a leader on the issues of legal representation in immigration court, especially for children, and for caring for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status. Thank you.

Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Finance
FY23 Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Delivered by:
MJ Okma, Senior Manager of Advocacy and Government Relations

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the New York City Council's Committee on Finance. My name is MJ Okma and I am the Senior Manager of Advocacy and Government Relations at SAGE, the country's first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older people.

SAGE has been serving LGBTQ+ elders and HIV-affected older New Yorkers for over four decades. With the support of the New York City Council, we provide comprehensive social services and community-building programs through our network of six LGBTQ+ older adult centers along with extensive virtual programming, and services for homebound LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV. SAGE also made history for our city in 2020 and 2021 when SAGE and our developer partners opened New York's first LGBTQ+ welcoming elder housing developments: Stonewall House in Brooklyn and Crotona Pride House in the Bronx.

Aging alone can be wrought with challenges, including social isolation and diminished income. For LGBTQ+ older people, however – many of whom have experienced stigma and discrimination throughout their lives as a direct result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity – the deck is stacked against them, and they are more likely to struggle financially.[i] LGBTQ+ people face disproportionate rates of discrimination and poverty, including a shared history of community trauma involving both interpersonal and systemic discrimination. This has impacted LGBTQ+ elders in a myriad of ways around disparate health outcomes and unequal access, in particular around housing.

In New York City, housing challenges are particularly acute. Countless LGBTQ+ older people find themselves priced out of the neighborhoods in which they have lived for years due to rising rents and financial insecurity as they age. Unless effectively addressed, this housing crisis among LGBTQ+ older people will only worsen as the LGBTQ+ elder population doubles and more "out" LGBTQ+ people age into their retirement years. In fact, research estimates there are between 2.5 and 4 million LGBTQ+ older adults in the United States – and this population will double by 2030.[ii] Yet today, there are less than 500 units of affordable housing in existing LGBTQ+-welcoming complexes nationwide.

Communities like Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House not only help fill this direct need for stable housing, but they also serve as an entry point for LGBTQ+ competent aging services

for residents and community members. Both Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House feature a ground-floor state-of-the-art SAGE Center, open to residents and members of the surrounding community. Through the SAGE Centers, SAGE offers care management and support services.

These SAGE Centers bring much needed services to neighborhoods lacking in LGBTQ+ supports and SAGE is reaching elders who were previously isolated from services. This includes many elders who struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, food insecurity, and homelessness – all of which have been significantly exacerbated by the pandemic – and require intensive care management and social service support.

The need for services and supports was – and continues to be – further exacerbated by the pandemic. LGBTQ+ elders are living at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not only because of their age but also because of high levels of underlying health conditions like HIV and diabetes, higher levels of poverty and food and housing insecurity, lower access to health care and supportive services, increased social isolation, and thin support networks and mistrust of government and other institutions based on historical and current discrimination and mistreatment. All of these challenges are even further exacerbated for transgender elders and LGBTQ+ older people of color.

Throughout the pandemic, SAGE has supported the tenants in our City's and State's very first LGBTQ+-friendly elder housing developments. Many of our residents present with complex needs, including significant medical and behavioral health issues, since they have so often been disconnected from the social safety net. To support SAGE housing residents who are acclimating to their new homes and new neighborhood during a pandemic, SAGE staff were onsite to conduct wellness checks door-to-door, deliver groceries, and coordinate care with other providers and caregivers, all while following public health safety protocols. The team is continuing to provide social services by email, telephone and Zoom, in addition to in-person services. Additionally, SAGE Centers offered over 100 virtual programs each week, along with technical support and education, and supported thousands of elders through compassionate weekly phone calls.

Today, as we return to a new sense of normalcy, SAGE continues to redesign our program and services delivery to provide a variety of in-person, virtual, and hybrid options including providing both grab-and-go and congregate meals at each SAGE Center. SAGE Center and care management staff also assist elders with a variety of emergency needs including addressing social isolation; screening and enrollment in benefits; Medicare, Medicaid, and prescription drug assistance; access to caregiver respite; financial assistance; housing advocacy and navigation; and more. Wider access to services under this hybrid delivery model has also increased demand by providing more opportunities for LGBTQ+ elders who are employed, disabled, or who might not be comfortable being seen accessing LGBTQ+ services in person.

These vital services offered through the SAGE Center Brooklyn are made possible by the partnership of the New York City Council and have been funded by the LGBTQ Senior Services in

Every Borough Initiative. Since the creation of this program in 2015, SAGE has partnered with GRIOT Circle, New York City's only community-based organization specifically serving LGBTQ+ elders of color, through subcontracting the majority of the $300,000 allocation of initiative funding for Brooklyn to GRIOT Circle for our joint SAGE-GRIOT Center on Flatbush Avenue. With the recent opening of SAGE Center Brooklyn at the Stonewall House, LGBTQ+ elders in Brooklyn now have more options for services and support, and enhanced funding is needed to address the growing demand among this population. An enhancement of $300,000 to the LGBTQ Senior Services in Every Borough Initiative would maintain steady funding levels for SAGE and Queens Community House and allow GRIOT Circle to apply for $300,000 directly to fund their services to LGBTQ+ elders of color in Brooklyn and across New York.

Without this enhancement, SAGE will be unable to meet the growing service needs of older adults living in Stonewall House, on the surrounding public housing campuses (Ingersoll, Whitman, and Farragut Houses), and across Brooklyn. This modest investment by the Council will ensure that more older LGBTQ+ people, including many older LGBTQ+ people of color, can access the programs, services, and supports that they need and deserve – and that no elder will be turned away for lack of resources.

Over the last two years, one thing has become starkly clear: poor communities, those living at the intersections of oppressed identities, those with chronic health conditions and isolated people have and continue to bear the brunt of this catastrophic illness. LGBTQ+ elders are among those who are most at risk. As our city continues to navigate a return to this new normalcy, we must prioritize adequately resourcing programs and services for older people in our City's elder residences.

Thank you, Chair Brannan and Speaker Adams for your leadership of our great City and for providing me with the opportunity to testify. SAGE deeply values our partnership with the Council and looks forward to working with members of the Committee on Finance and the entire New York City Council to address the needs of LGBTQ+ elders in every district.

MJ Okma, Senior Manager for Advocacy and Government Relations, SAGE
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[i] AARP NY, "Disrupting Disparities: Solutions for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers 50+," January 2021 https://aarp-states.brightspotcdn.com/ca/eb/c2353b1e45b3a7fa0f15991c47a6/disparities-lgbtq-full-final-spread-v4.pdf
[ii] Choi, S. and Meyer, I. (2016). LGBTQ+ Aging: A Review of Research Findings, Needs, and Policy Implications. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

sage | Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ+ Elders

We refuse to be invisible®

City Fiscal Year 2023: Requests for New York City Council Funding

SAGE is the nation's first and largest non-profit organization providing direct services and advocacy for LGBTQ+ older people. Founded here in New York City in 1978, SAGE has provided comprehensive social services and community-building programs for our city's LGBTQ+ elders for over four decades. SAGE's services and programs impact the lives of LGBTQ+ older people in your district, and in all five boroughs of New York City. Support from the City Council funds services and programs offered through our citywide network of SAGE Centers including robust virtual programming and case management; reinforces services to LGBTQ+ older veterans; fuels our services for the residents of New York City's first LGBTQ+ welcoming elder housing developments located in Brooklyn and The Bronx; and supports mental health services for homebound LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders.

In Fiscal Year 2023, SAGE is seeking the following restoration of funding support:

- **Citywide Council Initiative – LGBTQ Senior Services in Every Borough – $1,200,000:** SAGE seeks a restoration of its $1,200,000 in Council Initiative funding and an enhancement to the overall initiative to support services and programs offered through SAGE's expanded network of LGBTQ+ older adult centers (called SAGE Centers) and outreach to engage more LGBTQ+ older New Yorkers in services and supports. Funding from this initiative supports SAGE Center Harlem, SAGE-GRIOT Center in Brooklyn (through a sub-contract to GRIOT Circle), SAGE Center Bronx, and SAGE-Pride Center of Staten Island (through a sub-contract to the Pride Center of Staten Island). With the opening of the new SAGE Center Brooklyn at Stonewall House, the demand for LGBTQ+ aging services in Brooklyn is growing rapidly. An enhancement of $300,000 to the LGBTQ Senior Services in Every Borough Initiative would enable direct support to GRIOT Circle, New York City's only staffed community-based organization specifically serving LGBTQ+ elders of color, and for SAGE's funding to be restored to support the new SAGE Center Brooklyn, located in the ground floor of Stonewall House, our State's first LGBTQ+-welcoming elder housing development.
- **LGBTQ Caucus Funding – Providing Support and Care Management to Diverse LGBTQ+ Elders – $100,000:** A restoration of $100,000 from the Council's LGBTQ Caucus will fund linguistically-competent experienced care management services offered at SAGE's sites in Harlem, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Many of the LGBTQ+ older people who attend the SAGE Centers struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness, requiring intensive amounts of Care Management and social service support. With new SAGE Centers opened these last two years in our City's first two LGBTQ+-welcoming elder housing developments in Brooklyn and The Bronx, the demands on SAGE's care management services continue to expand and SAGE continues to evolve our services and supports to meet elders' needs, including the expansion of services provided in Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese.
- **Geriatric Mental Health Initiative (GMHI) – Ensuring Mental Health Supports for LGBTQ+ Elders – $100,000:** A restoration of $100,000 will allow SAGE to continue to provide crucial mental health services to LGBTQ+ older people most at risk, including those who are frail and homebound, through comprehensive mental health and substance abuse screenings, home visits and support groups, and referrals to deeper support.
- **Citywide Council Initiative – Senior Centers, Programs, and Enhancements - $150,000:** SAGE seeks restoration of $150,000 under the Senior Centers, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative to support SAGE's care management and social services for LGBTQ+ elders and older adults living with HIV across the city. Services include a broad range of holistic, LGBTQ+-affirming, and age-competent supports to LGBTQ+ elders, older New Yorkers living with HIV, and their caregivers. Services include crisis intervention, care assistance, caregiving services, individual and group counseling, friendly visiting for homebound elders, legal services, mental health referrals, and more.
- **Citywide Council Initiative – Veterans Community Development - $125,000:** SAGE seeks restoration of $125,000 in Citywide Council Initiative (Veterans Community Development) funding for the SAGEVets program, which helps older military service veterans who are LGBTQ+ improve their access to Veterans Administration benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals to counsel regarding discharge status upgrades – all while improving veterans-serving organizations' LGBTQ+ competency.

For more information, please contact: MJ Okma, Senior Manager for Advocacy and Government Relations
mokma@sageusa.org | 929-458-2153

Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition
http://sdrpc.mkgarden.org/

My name is K Webster I am the current President of the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition that began in the early 80's. We are a Manhattan park that spans seven city blocks and is one city-block wide.

We firmly believe in the healing powers of green spaces and the right of everyone to share in such spaces. Parks are the last democratic meeting spaces where everyone has a welcomed. Vital in a democracy.

Many of us who are involved in Sara Roosevelt come out of a Community Garden ethos. We are volunteers and organizations who share plants, labor, resources and expertise. We do a lot with a little.

There is an array of volunteers and organizations here: VP Bob Humber and the M'Finda Kalunga gardeners, the former ED of the Battery Park Conservancy, the guy called the 'Father' of the LEED concept, Pam Ito and the Horticultural Society, The Hua Mei birders, Tenement Museum staffers. Our homeless volunteers: Jose, Prince, Omar, Richard, Marvin built a memorial garden for 'Uncle Kwok' and other homeless people. Volunteers from the Citizen's Committee's corporate sponsors, the 5th Precinct's Youth Explorers, our local High Schools, individual neighbors and our local non-profit organizations and small businesses all contribute.

I learned of Sara Roosevelt Park in 1977 when I moved across the street. The street was lined with young African Heritage women who were addicted to heroin and sold to older white men. Pimps and drug dealers threatened anyone who dared to walk in the park, gangs fought for turf here, and a child was murdered in one of the abandoned parkhouses.

The park was taken back by a diverse group who risked their lives and devoted decades of effort to turn it around.: doing bike patrols, organizing festivals, leading sports for teens, and building gardens. The M'Finda Kalunga Garden and the Hua Mei Bird Sanctuary still survive from that time.

In the early days of the pandemic we plastered the park with "standing with our Asian neighbors" signs - created out of the effort of every race in the park. We posted COVID information for homeless people who slept here to avoid unsafe congregate shelters.

Recently the brutal killings of sleeping homeless men nearby are added to the brutal killings of a 51 year old father, and of a young Korean woman and to the murders of homeless men in the park and nearby. We've seen numerous stabbings throughout the

park and the brutal beating of an elderly woman. Years ago, I held the head of a teenager as he died of a stab wound after a fight in the park.

We also have a drug market that preys on and destroys the minds of those who are homeless. Drug dealers are back out on the street mere days after they are arrested.

We lost AudubonNY and a proposed demonstration bird garden and much of the public over fears for their safety. We lost yet another local business run by a woman of color who helped her neighbors, including the homeless here. We can't afford this attrition.

We know how bad it can get when a community no longer feels safe in a park. Too few community-responsive resources are offered, and a bureaucracy can't seem to quickly and effectively respond to the crisis. Fencing off sections of the park doesn't make a park safe nor a park a community can use.

We know people will only come back when we have established anchors of safety and of positive use here. We temporarily need our police and PEP to be deployed, but they agree, they are not a permanent solution.

Fix the City's broken capital construction process.

Sara Roosevelt Park is home to four parkhouses: Three of them closed to the local community to serve the needs for all Manhattan or all five borough's parks.

Only one Parkhouse is a hub of activity as a low-income nutrition center for seniors who are predominately Asian women. The Center has been waiting now 7 years for a fully funded repair of the windows and doors. PEP officers sit in the doorway to ensure the seniors feel safe enough to come here.

Return Parkhouses to create anchors of active positive use

We need NYC Parks to return buildings in our park to active community use by reputable non-profits who know how to engage the neighborhood because they have a track record of doing so. One parkhouse has been promised for return for 30 to 40 years. Funding was found for Parks to move out. Still no date because they cannot find another site to use.

Our Parkhouses are needed, especially now, for public uses that are not for profit: meeting sites for Community Boards, centers for seniors, centers for youth, children and families, AA meetings, resiliency/recovery centers for emergencies, job (bike repair) training, centers to promote and model sustainable practices, etc. These buildings should be active hubs of local activity. We need to train our younger homeless men in trade skills so they can work - most of them want desperately to work.

Staffing

Even with our volunteers and a dedicated Park staff we cannot keep up with the work of

maintaining it. Though our park is far from neglected by this community, our citizens and sparse Park's crews cannot take care of it alone.

Future

Equity in parks is not only a matter of gardens and sports fields. Park equity preserves the life of our neighborhoods and sometimes it means literally preserving our lives.

We need the Play Fair for Parks and Parks and Recreation Chair Shekar Krishnan's clear recommendations to immediately secure 1% of the City's budget for Parks, a streamlined capital construction and repair process, and a City that respects its armies of park volunteers and no longer tolerates the conditions in a park like mine.

As Chair Krishan said: "it's been, for a long time, a long standing issue of systemic inequality."

I only updated this testimony with a few more murders because nothing has changed here.

Thank you.

K
K Webster
President
Sara Roosevelt Park Coalition
http://sdrpc.mkgarden.org/

Shareing & Careing

BREAST CANCER SUPPORT SERVICES · FOUNDED 1994

FY 2023 Executive Budget Hearing

Finance Committee

Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair

May 25, 2022

Submitted on behalf of:

Laura Jean Hawkins

Advisory Board Chair

Astoria/Queens SHARE-ING and CARE-ING, Inc.

(dba SHAREing & CAREing)

45-02 Ditmars Boulevard

Suite 1016

Astoria, NY 11105

718 777-5766

www.shareing-careing.org

Thank you Chair Brannan and Members of the Committee for the Council's past support of SHAREing & CAREing and all the groups funded under the Council's Cancer Services Initiative.

Due to the increased need for our services which has developed, and continued, over the past 2 years, we are seeking $200,000 in the FY 23 Budget, a modest increase of $50,000 over last year's allocation.

As we have testified previously, the onset of the pandemic in 2020 changed our world and that of the city's most vulnerable populations including cancer survivors. The pandemic, and its resulting social and economic impact, triggered a significant amount of fear, anxiety and concern among cancer survivors resulting in an increased demand, 25% over 2019, for our services, specifically the need for individual and group counseling and emergent needs assistance. People who pre-pandemic would have been considered job, housing and food secure were no longer and turned to us for help.

At the same time, the restrictions put in place in 2020 and 2021 regarding group gatherings basically eliminated all of our traditional fundraising activities resulting in a loss of over $300,000 in revenue. **This loss of revenue has been compounded by the fact that as of TODAY, we still HAVE NOT received ALL of our FY 21 funding from the Council due to delays at the Department of Health (our fourth quarter reimbursement is still pending) AND our FY 22 contract is NOT yet registered.**

Despite almost exhausting all of our reserves, we fulfilled all of our FY 21 and FY 22 obligations under our Council funding. We are a small non-profit and this delay on the part of DOHMH has been devastating. I am at a loss of words to express the full impact that the agency's inaction has had on our organization. The City of New York could not have come up with a better plan to kill non-profits if it tried.

Our doors remained open and the staff paid only due to the understanding of our landlord who deferred our rent until our FY 21 reimbursements starting coming in.

SHAREing & CAREing was founded 28 years ago by four breast cancer survivors to address the needs of Queens women living with breast and/or ovarian cancer. It was our position then, and remains so today, that Queens residents should not have to leave the Borough for quality cancer treatment, care and support. Through the years, our reach has expanded and we now serve women and men with all types of cancer.

SHAREing & CAREing's Advisory Board, which I Chair, is made up of dedicated community members who give of their time and talents. Unlike nonprofits in other boroughs, we do not have deep pockets nor do we have big businesses or foundations to tap. **Many, if not most, of the private/foundational grants for cancer are for research not to support direct services and needs of cancers survivors, their families and caregivers.**

I am therefore asking that the Council restore funding to the Cancer Services Initiative and that you support our request of $200,000. This funding will enable us to keep up with the increased demand for our services and allow us to continue to assist those living and coping with cancer in Queens County.

On behalf of my fellow Board Members and those we serve, I thank you.



Special Support Services, LLC | 1060 Ocean Avenue, Suite F8 | Brooklyn, NY 11226 | 631-403-0569

Testimony regarding DOE Spending on COVID relief

New York City Council Finance Committee

May 25, 2022

I am Jennifer Choi and I am a special education advocate at Special Support Services, a parent-led consulting group. I'm also a parent of two public school students with IEPs in Queens. The New York City Comptroller's report revealed that the DOE had spent only 12% of the $251 million dollars of federal COVID relief funding allocated for students with disabilities.

To provide the council with a picture of just one way this can happen. I'll share with you my own child's story: He's an 18-year-old student with dyslexia, autism, and ADHD who used to go to every class every day and attend hours and hours of tutoring to make progress in school. The pandemic changed all that. Zoom in a room or Zoom at home did not work for him. He became addicted to the computer and lost his motivation. Today, I wake up every morning not knowing if he will go to school. He misses classes. He won't listen to teachers. He cannot fill out college applications, he cannot manage money, nor his hygiene. Now, my son is failing and will not be graduating with his peers next month. I asked to send him to a therapeutic boarding school but the school said no because he will probably graduate in January. Why do schools STILL not know that the purpose of the IEP is not just about getting a diploma? The purpose is to help students with disabilities pursue further education, employment, and independent living.

This month, my agency released a survey report on students with disabilities refusing school. 57% never refused school before the pandemic and 34% are expressing self-harm. My child is just one of these students. I request this council to please add items to the budget to police not our students but instead the NYC DOE administrators to stop wasting money, stop breaking the law, and stop ruining the lives of students with disabilities.

Thank you.



Jennifer Choi

Managing Member and Advocate

Special Support Services, LLC

THE ARMORY FOUNDATION

May 25, 2022

Dear Committee on Youth Services,

Good morning from The Armory!

To some, The Armory, in Washington Heights, is the home of the National Track & Field Hall of Fame, and the Fastest Track in the World. To others, more importantly, The Armory is where magic happens, both on our track, and in our classrooms.

Our mission is "Keeping Kids on Track"

WHAT: Track & Field accommodates all body types and temperaments, and running is not only the basis of many sports, but is also a sport many can do for the rest of their lives with only a pair of sneakers. Track & field also opens doors for non-runners, those who prefer the high jump, long jump or pole vault, and those who would rather throw the shot put or weight throw. Through it we are able to touch so many lives in a meaningful way from among the more than 300,000 visits each year to The Armory.

WHO: Thousands of NYC high school track athletes call The Armory home for both training and competition. For the past 30 years, on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon from mid November through the end of March, we will have up to 1500 athletes that come to train with their coaches and teams from over 80 NYC public, independent and parochial schools. More than 100 track meets happen during these months, with some of our larger high school meets involving up to 6000 athletes.

COMMUNITY: In 2017 we piloted Little Feet, a no-cost program that welcomed over 200 elementary school children from Washington Heights, Inwood and Harlem to run, jump, throw and giggle, twice a week from October through the middle of May. In 2018 it continued and expanded to now include children in grades 2 through 5. In addition to the sport programing, we punctuate the year with some "special days". One of those days is Real Heroes Day. So often children meet the people we would consider Real Heroes (firefighters, police officers, EMTs) in situations that are scary. Every year we invite our local real heroes in to interact with our children in a safe and fun setting and this is what happens:

(please copy and paste this link into your browser)
https://vimeo.com/271302689

In addition to Little Feet, we have a long running program for middle school children. The CityTrack program has been offered at The Armory for 23 years, imparting the joy of moving and promoting healthy habits for children in grades 6-8. Both CityTrack and Little Feet are offered at no cost to all the families of our participants. With more than 200 children registered this year, and the return to in person programming, most sessions drew close to a hundred

THE ARMORY FOUNDATION | 216 FORT WASHINGTON AVENUE | NEW YORK, NY 10032
ph 212.923.1803 | fax 212.923.1645 | www.Armory.nyc | www.ArmoryTrack.com

children who were all closely coached by our coaches. For many years we wrapped up our year of Little Feet and CityTrack with the Uptown Games, Uptown Games (please copy and paste this link into your browser) but have now moved it to Halloween. https://vimeo.com/273740397

During the time of quarantine, we ran this program four times a week live online with world class athletes as guest coaches: Olympians, World Record Holders, top high school and college athletes all have helped make CityTrack & Little Feet a fun and exciting workout. District 6 invited every District 6 student to participate. Now we are back in The Armory, in person and are delighted to be welcoming our young athletes back.

ARMORY COLLEGE PREP: So you do not get the idea that all we do is fun and games - we also work with our track & field athletes to help them gain access to great high schools and four-year colleges, with the funding to make a college degree a reality. Armory College Prep is a dynamic after-school program that puts students in grades 4-12 on track for lifelong success by helping them to and through college. College choice exploration, test prep, college visits, personal statement creation, financial aid counseling, application and testing fees are all covered by our sponsors of Armory College Prep. For the last six years 100% of our seniors were admitted to 4-year colleges. Williams, Amherst, Cornell, Haverford, and Dickenson are just a few of the colleges attended by the students of Armory College Prep. Armory College Prep (please copy and paste this link into your browser) https://vimeo.com/306452431

MODEL PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: In the 1980's The Armory was a homeless shelter. 1000 homeless men lived on the space that is currently the track. The film, The Saint of Fort Washington, with Matt Dillon and Danny Glover was filmed at The Armory. A few years ago, I was touring The Armory with a client and when I looked over tears were streaming down her face - I paused and asked if she was OK - she looked at me and said 'I was on the crew that filmed the Saint of Fort Washington and cannot believe the transformation'.

Today The Armory is a representation of a public/private partnership that has had the great privilege to be part of the development of many of the world's top track & field athletes. We call our track "the Fastest Track in the World" because more records have been set on this track than any other indoor facility on the planet. You may recognize some of these faces: Elite Athletes (please copy and paste this link into your browser)
https://vimeo.com/288732621

A few summers ago, like much of New York, we were heartbroken at the plight of the migrant children who were being separated from their families at the southern border and relocated around the country. We learned that hundreds of children were right here in Manhattan.

We offered to show the children a day of fun and track & field at The Armory, and our invitation was accepted, both years so long as we did not alert the press or take any photos. To date, we have welcomed close to 1000 children who were separated from their families or were unaccompanied minors.

We did our best to provide them with a break from their day to day. While we could not take photos, the Care Center, who has custody of the children, did and put this short video together after the first Run Love Day.(please copy and paste this link into your browser) https://business.facebook.com/CayugaCenters/videos/311006539476023/

We have now extended same the invitation to the families from Afghanistan who have sought refuge in NY State.

One of the reasons The Armory is able to provide our ongoing programming is because of the funding received through the Sports Training and Role-Models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI)

I want to be sure to thank the City Council for their tremendous support of STARS CGI for the past 8 years and to ask for your continued support – by ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY2022 budget.

The last two years have been a time of upheaval for our planet, and especially for the young woman and gender non-conforming youth of color we serve. As a collective, we have shared our talented teams, our programming, and ideas to create very strong STARS programming.

We would like to stress to the Council that our track record (forgive me!) of excellent, high impact programming will continue and we ask the Council to help make that possible.

We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by reinstating our City Council funding of $2,000,000 in FY22.

On behalf of girls and gender non-conforming youth of color across New York City, **thank you in advance for your continued support.** We look forward to our work together ensuring the social-emotional wellbeing of our communities.

Please come visit us! We have more than 100 track meets per season showcasing the entire range of track & field from the youngest runners who will join us for the Uptown Games to the Olympians who compete at the Millrose Games. Our educational programs run year-round and we also have a list of wonderful special events outside track season.

Many thanks for your attention!

With thanks,



Rita Finkel
Co-President
The Armory Foundation

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Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
May 25, 2022

Re:
NYCC # 126608 – support for Stonewall Village NYC through citywide initiatives (Support Our Seniors, NORC, LGBT Community Services) (DFTA)

NYCC# 126163 – support for our program Leave No Veteran Behind through the Speaker's Initiative and citywide initiatives (Homeless Prevention Services for Veterans, Citywide Homeless Prevention Fund) (HPD)

Good Afternoon
My name is Paul Nagle, and I am the Executive Director of Stonewall Community Development Corporation.

Our mission is to see LGBTQ older adults in safe welcoming housing they can afford, with access to health and mental health services that meet their unique needs. Our services are available to all NYC older adults.

The housing innovations and solutions we create are meant to be universal and replicable for all seniors, but we know that by centering LGBTQ older adults in the creation and piloting of these models, our needs will not be ignored, as so often happens.

New York City is facing an unprecedented senior housing crisis, as Baby Boomers age in. A report on the 2010 census from the NYC Planning Dept. projected a 40% increase in New Yorkers over 65 between 2010 and 2040 - from 1 million to 1.4 million. Where will they live?

A study by the Equal Rights Center published in 2014 conducted in 10 states uncovered a 48% discrimination rate against same-sex older adult couples in housing inquiries.

(more)

LGBTQ+ elders face a number of challenges beyond those of the general elder population.

They are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to:

- lack support networks
- lack family
- live in poverty
- experience increased co-morbidities attributed to living lives of anxiety in constantly hostile environments
- experience discrimination or fear of discrimination in housing and health care delivery

On the flip side, the LGBTQ community has elements that uniquely position us to successfully pilot innovative housing solutions – we have a shared lived experience, a history of building networks of support and a deep well of creativity.

This year we are seeking support from the Speaker's Initiative for *Leave No Veteran Behind* a project that we are piloting in the Bronx with a 2-year grant from the New York Community Trust, which will create LGBTQ-welcoming supported home shares for 14 older adult veterans.

Community-based housing solutions will be critical to meeting the challenges of the coming housing crisis for seniors. Please keep your eyes and your attention on innovations emerging from grassroots groups like ours and support them through the budget process.

Thank you for your time.

Paul Nagle
Executive Director
(347) 855-1502

the Network
Supportive Housing Network of NY

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Oversight: FY23 Executive Budget
Submitted by the Supportive Housing Network of New York
May 25, 2022

Hello Chair Brannan and members of the NYC Council Finance Committee. My name is Tierra Labrada, and I am the Associate Director of Advocacy and Outreach at the Supportive Housing Network of New York. The Network is a statewide membership organization representing the nonprofit developers and operators of supportive housing, a proven affordable housing model with wraparound support services for individuals and families with a history of homelessness who face additional barriers to obtaining housing on their own. We are responding to the Mayor's Executive Budget for fiscal year 2023.

The Adams administration is in a remarkable position to seriously address the homelessness crisis, given the resources and development initiatives in the city's portfolio. Allocating funds appropriately, with a focus on improvements to NYC 15/15, preserving older and under-funded programs, investing in more development and city staffing, and importantly, ensuring workers are paid fairly and equitably, the city can make strides in decreasing shelter and street homelessness, and lifting human service workers out of poverty[1]. The Network makes the following recommendations to the Council on how the city could effectively address the homelessness and affordable housing crisis:

INVEST $4 BILLION ANNUALLY IN AFFORDABLE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

#JUSTPAY OUR STAFF

FULLY FUND OLDER SCATTERED-SITE CONTRACTS

IMPROVE NYC 15/15 INITIATIVE

INVEST IN THE COORDINATED ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT SYSTEM (CAPS)

INVEST IN MOBILE TREATMENT TEAMS SPECIFICALLY FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING RESIDENTS

PRESERVE 300 SINGLE-SITE UNITS A YEAR

CITY AGENCY STAFFING AND EFFICIENCIES

PROTECT NONPROFIT OWNERSHIP OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

IDENTIFY PUBLIC SITES

[1] Henry, C. (2022, May 7). *Want to combat homelessness? give Social Service workers a raise*. New York Daily News. Retrieved May 11, 2022, from https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-homelessness-raise-social-service-20220507-ui6gw6eg3vhd3ot6xlabbscyeu-story.html

Invest $4 Billion Annually in Affordable and Supportive Housing

The Network is a proud member of the United for Housing coalition, a group of more than 80 organizations that came together to make recommendations for the new administration, including ***investing $2.5 billion annually in affordable and supportive housing development and $1.5 billion in public housing.*** We commend the Council for including this investment in its preliminary budget response[2] and ask the council to continue to push for this necessary capital during budget negotiations.

#JustPay Our Staff

The Network is also a member of the #JustPay campaign and we want to thank the Council for its staunch support thus far. We were disheartened when the Mayor omitted a 5.4% COLA in the Preliminary and Executive budgets. Chronic underfunding of our sector has led to a staggering 20% staff vacancy rate within the supportive housing workforce. When our employees, who are predominantly women of color (serving predominantly Black and brown residents) are underpaid, they, their families and their communities suffer. ***We ask that the Council continue to support the COLA and insist the Mayor include at least a 5.4% COLA in the FY23 Adopted Budget, and to establish, fund and enforce an automatic cost-of-living adjustment.*** Additionally, we ask that the City ***establish and fund a living wage floor of no less than $21 an hour*** for all City–funded human services workers and ***create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule*** for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

Fully Fund Older Scattered Site Contracts

In addition to single- site preservation, providers operating scattered site supportive housing (housing on the private market with mobile services) are struggling. Their contract rates are not keeping up with private market rents, and their service budgets are also grossly inadequate. Earlier scattered site contracts under the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) have total combined funding as low as $16,000 per unit meant to cover both rent and services. Meanwhile according to HUD, the 2022 FMR for a studio apartment in New York City is $24,216[3], The consequences of low scattered site contract rates were documented in a recent City Limits article, which describes how providers need to "scrape the bottom of the barrel" to find apartments to rent within the contracted rates.[4]

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[2] Hon. Adrienne Adams, Speaker; Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair, Finance Committee; Tanisha S. Edwards, Esq. (2022, April 1). *The New York City Council's*. council.nyc.gov. Retrieved May 12, 2022, from https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/04/Fiscal-2023-Preliminary-Budget-Response-1-2.pdf

[3] HUD Economic and Market Analysis Division. (n.d.). *FY 2022 Fair Market Rent Documentation System*. FY 2022 Fair Market Rent Documentation System - Calculation for. Retrieved May 11, 2022, from https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2022_code/2022summary.odn

[4] Brand, D. (2022, April 9). Dilapidated apartments, lousy landlords plague NYC's sprawling 'scattered-site' supportive housing network. City Limits. Retrieved May 11, 2022, from https://citylimits.org/2022/03/02/dilapidated-apartments-lousy-landlords-plague-nycs-sprawling-scattered-site-supportive-housing-network/

The enacted State budget[5] recognizes the crisis of low rates for older supportive housing contracts, especially for scattered site programs, and includes funding to increase rates. The State Office of Mental Health (OMH) received an increase of $65 million in FY 23 for mental health housing programs, on top of the 5.4% COLA. ***The City needs to at least match the State's investment in these old, underfunded contracts in order to ensure that tenants can receive the housing and services they deserve.***

Improve NYC 15/15 Initiative

NYC 15/15 is the city's commitment to develop 15,000 units of supportive housing in 15 years. Launched in 2017, the commitment is split 50/50 between newly developed single site residences and scattered site supportive housing (private apartments in which mobile services are delivered). Although the Initiative is meeting many of its targets, improvements are necessary.. According to the Network's internal tracking, 1,055 homes that were developed and financed through the NYC 15/15 program are now open, with ~1,700 more in construction and 1,000 more in the development pipeline going through due diligence and awaiting financing.

In this calendar year, 2022, 1,000 NYC 15/15-funded homes are slated to open, all of them in single-site congregate residences. With some setbacks due to Covid and lack of staffing at HPD and other agencies, the development pipeline is ramping up as expected. After a supportive housing program is announced, there is at least a 2-4 year lag in production as developers acquire sites and investors get to know and become confident underwriting the program. Once a project receives all its financing, construction typically takes 2 years. Additionally, while NYC 15/15 was ramping up, developers were still busy with our previous supportive housing initiative, NY/NY III, which was still producing units as it phased out. With all this in mind, calendar years 2020 and 2021 showed strong growth in the program.

**Because of the nature of scattered sites, there is no guarantee of new 15/15 scattered site awards in 2022 and 2023. As the above chart illustrates, there are congregate projects that are currently in the development pipeline, projected to open in 2022 and 2023.*

Scattered site supportive housing, in theory, has a much shorter lag time because no development and construction are required. NYC 15/15 scattered site started with some initial interest, but has faltered significantly in the last five years. Only half of the projected scattered site units are open: 1,255 compared to the 2,500 that should have come on line between 2017 and 2021. This is due to stagnant contract rates that cover both rent/operations as well as for services. (For example, for a single adult program service funding for NYC 15/15 congregate is $17,500 and for scattered sites it is only $10,000). Further, due to chronic underfunding of earlier/older scattered site contract, nonprofit providers are unwilling to take on new scattered site contracts. (**see:** Fully fund older scattered site contracts)

In order to ensure that the NYC 15/15 program reaches its crucial unit targets, the City must reallocate the 50/50 split between congregate and scattered sites to a 75/25 split, respectively. As you can see

[5] https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy22/ex/index.html

from the chart, the program is close to producing congregate units at the needed rate of 750 units per year. This must be formalized and included in a plan for HPD capital.

85% of NYC 15/15 units are targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness, which follows HUD's definition[6] while the remaining 15% of units are for single young adults and young adult families. The HUD definition excludes thousands of people in need of supportive housing, including those who have been incarcerated. On May 13, 2022, 51% of the population in the New York City Department of Corrections (DOC) system, had a Brad H designation[7], meaning they were identified as needing mental health treatment upon release.[8] Approximately half of all people released from state prisons to New York City go to a city homeless shelter.[9] ***The City must create new supportive housing units to meet the needs of people leaving jail, prison, or long-term hospital stays, who are currently left out of NYC 15/15 because of the "chronic homeless" definition.***

Invest in the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS)

The Coordinated Assessment and Placement System is a web-based system that determines client eligibility for various housing options, centralizes data, pulls documents from various systems and recommends housing placement types. CAPS was created in response to a HUD mandate to create a "coordinated entry" system for federally funded housing options for people experiencing homelessness[10] and the City took the initiative to expand CAPS across the City's entire portfolio.

Although the city has developed a robust and sophisticated software system, the majority of the work to move someone from shelter into supportive housing – including reporting and confirming the vacancy, matching eligibility, and scheduling the interview - is still being done manually. Significant staff shortages partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic led to a backlog in referrals. In addition, providers are required to submit several reports that must reconcile before meetings can be scheduled with prospective tenants. Redundant reporting, manual processing, increased supportive housing production, staffing shortages and the pandemic caused a 10% vacancy rate in the supportive housing portfolio. Vacant supportive housing units are egregious in an environment with thousands of people experiencing homelessness and also pose a financial threat to the supportive housing buildings and programs, reducing their rental income, and sometimes causing a threat to their compliance with their funding sources.

If the city invested in fully building out the system, the work that is currently being done manually for supportive housing referrals -- reporting and confirming vacancies, scheduling interviews and getting people placed—could speed the process exponentially. ***The City should at least match the federal***

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[6] "Here's What You Need to Know About HUD's New Chronic Homelessness Definition." National Alliance to End Homelessness website, 16 December 2015, https://endhomelessness.org/heres-what-you-need-to-know-abouthuds-new-chronic-homelessness-definition/

[7] "People in Jail in New York City: Daily Snapshots." Vera Institute of Justice website. https://greaterjusticeny.vera.org/nycjail/. Accessed 7 January 2022.

[8] Saulny, Susan. "City Agrees to Help Care for Mentally Ill Inmates After Release." The New York Times, 9 January 2003, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/09/nyregion/city-agrees-to-help-care-for-mentally-ill-inmates-after-release.html?smid=url-share

[9] Gross, Courtney. "The New York Prison-to-Shelter Pipeline." NY1, 27 February 2018, https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2018/02/27/ny1-investigation-more-inmates-released-upstate-prisons-going-into-nyc-shelter-system

[10] *Coordinated entry policy brief - hud exchange*. HUD Exchange. (2015, February). Retrieved May 12, 2022, from https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Policy-Brief.pdf

financial investment to build out this system to its full capacity, and conduct the testing and training necessary for DHS, HRA and supportive housing providers to utilize it. Additionally, after a prospective tenant accepts the unit there is still a cumbersome and lengthy process to gather all the documentation necessary to satisfy regulatory requirements from capital sources like Low Income Housing Tax Credits, or rental assistance sources like Section 8. HPD and NYCHA have oversight over these processes and are responsible for interpreting and following federal guidance. ***There needs to be stronger collaboration between DHS, HRA, NYCHA and HPD to streamline these processes, and a high priority placed on supportive housing re-rentals.***

Invest in Mobile Treatment Teams Specifically for Supportive Housing Residents

The City has been contracting with nonprofits to provide supportive housing for more than 30 years. In most cases, these older contracts are underfunded, and rates have not kept up with the service needs of the population. Meanwhile, the State has been steadily disinvesting in community-based mental health housing that provides a higher level of care than supportive housing and includes services like medication management and psychiatric services. As a result of the pandemic, the mental health and substance use services that our community needs have only intensified, and underfunded and understaffed supportive housing programs struggle to keep up. Investments in additional mobile treatment teams, which include medical and behavioral health professionals as well as peers, specifically targeted for supportive housing tenants are necessary. We would be happy to discuss this in more depth with the committee and the Council.

Preserve 300 Single- Site Supportive Housing Units Each Year

Of the approximately 420 single-site supportive housing residences in New York City with almost 27,400 apartments, 160 (38%) were opened before the year 2000 and many of those were only moderate rehabs of much older buildings. Many of these buildings need significant capital investment to continue to provide safe and healthy living environments for their tenants and to meet the City and State's ambitious mandates to reduce carbon emissions from buildings. Service and operating budgets must also be increased to modern standards after decades of stagnation. Some of these older buildings have combined service and operating contracts as low as $2,400 per unit per year, compared to NYC 15/15 which boasts $17,500 just for services with additional funding for rental assistance close to the Fair Market Rent (FMR) standard. ***The City needs to dedicate HPD capital, services and operating funding to holistically preserve 300 supportive housing units per year***.

Preservation of these older single-site residences is critical not just because the City cannot afford to lose a single unit of supportive housing but also because it furthers Fair Housing goals. Many of the older supportive housing residences are converted hotels in whiter, wealthier Manhattan and Brooklyn neighborhoods, where new development is costly and rents are high. Existing supportive housing provides racial and economic integration in these neighborhoods that would be extremely difficult to recreate.

City Agency Staffing and Efficiencies

The Network is very concerned about the critical lack of staff capacity at HPD, and we know the Council shares our concerns. We would like to thank the City for taking measures to speed the review process by outsourcing projects to attorneys. This should have a demonstrable and positive impact on the pipeline. The City should explore other efficiencies that reduce the review process, including making an effort to cut down on the agency review of tenant income documents, which could save time and reduce the burden on tenants.

Like all new construction, the development of affordable and supportive housing requires extensive review, permitting, and inspection processes from the Department of Buildings (DOB) and FDNY. The Department of Transportation (DOT), Parks Department, and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are often also involved. Connections with private utilities such as Con Edison or National Grid are required before tenants can move in. Developers are left to navigate each of these agencies on their own, met with no recognition that their buildings are fulfilling a crucial need for the City. Delays stemming from these agencies are frequent, meaning that people are staying longer than necessary in shelters and on the streets. To combat this, the City should ***create an Ombudsperson at City Hall to conduct interagency coordination, fast-tracking all necessary approvals for affordable and supportive housing.***

Protect Nonprofit Ownership of Supportive Housing

As the City puts significant resources into preserving affordable and supportive housing, it must also be vigilant to protect nonprofit owners' rights through the Right of First Refusal (ROFR) for the 171,000 NYC apartments developed with the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. [11] LIHTC is a Federal program created in 1986 that allows nonprofits and other developers to create and maintain affordable housing in exchange for Federal tax credits, which they can sell to investors. It is the primary tool the City has to develop new affordable housing. Regrettably, across the country, unscrupulous investors have been trying to distort the program and deny nonprofits their ROFR at the end of the compliance period. These disputes are often occurring in gentrifying neighborhoods in which investors hope to eventually reap financial rewards by presumably selling the buildings at a profit or increasing rents.[12] This nationwide trend is an existential threat to affordable and supportive housing. ***The City must support Federal legislation and work with the State to enact consistent local policies protecting the Right of First Refusal to ensure long-term affordability***. The 2021 HPD Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), the document required by LIHTC allocating agencies to outline the local requirements and priorities for the program, was a step in the right direction, including points for projects that abided by clear guidelines for how the nonprofit is able to exercise its ROFR. The City must build on this first step to ensure that nonprofit ownership of LIHTC-financed affordable and supportive housing remains sacrosanct.

[11] Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Data. *CoreData.nyc. NYU Furman Center website.* https://furmancenter.org/coredata/directory/entry/low-income-housing-tax-credit. Accessed 10 March 2021.

[12] Healy, Beth and Willmsen, Christine. "Investors Mine for Profits in Affordable Housing, Leaving Thousands of Tenants at Risk." WBUR, 21 April 2021, https://www.wbur.org/news/2021/04/29/investors-low-income-housing-boston-south-end.

Identify Public Sites for Affordable and Supportive Housing

While the need for supportive and affordable housing necessitates significantly increased capital investment, the City must also make sure that capital is being used efficiently. Public sites are a resource with tremendous untapped potential, especially in communities in which land prices are expensive. Decreasing the purchase price substantially lowers the total development cost and, by extension, the capital investment required from the City. Because of the siloed approach to housing and homelessness policy in New York City, only HPD, DHS, and Health and Hospitals (H+H) have examined their portfolios and allocated land to the cause of developing affordable and supportive housing.[13] Meanwhile, agencies such as the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) all have potential sites that merit consideration for supportive housing development. A 2019 study by a group Urban Design Forum Forefront Fellows identified 48 sites prime for supportive housing development under the jurisdiction of those three agencies alone.[14] ***The City should be required to survey its entire portfolio of land to assist in the efficient and equitable creation of supportive housing.***

Conclusion

The City has long struggled to effectively meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, and although we have seen a decrease in homelessness over the last few years, the most recent annual Point-in-Time count estimates more than 65,000 people in our shelter system, with nearly 2,400 people living on the streets and subways of New York City.[15] Too many of our neighbors are without safe, stable, homes.

While we commend Mayor Adams on his investments in safe havens and stabilization beds, we know that is a short-term fix to a much larger societal issue. A holistic, multi-system improvement approach will be necessary. We look forward to continuing our work with the City to ensure decent, stable, sustainable supportive housing is available and accessible to all who need it.

[13] While H+H has allocated land to supportive housing development, it is still in the process of doing a full analysis of its portfolio and has potential for increased supportive housing development opportunities.

[14] Amin, A, Kaikai, J, McIntyre, A, Nguyen, C, Sauer, R. (2020) "Supportive Housing in New York City." Urban Design Forum. https://urbandesignforum.org/proposals/supportive-housing-in-new-york-city/

[15] HUD 2021 Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations, NY-600 New York City CoC, 26 January 2021, https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2021_NY_2021.pdf.

TAKEROOT JUSTICE

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF THE CITYWIDE IMMIGRANT LEGAL EMPOWERMENT COLLABORATIVE ("CILEC") IN SUPPORT OF RENEWING LOW-WAGE WORKER INITIATIVE ("LWWI") AND LOW-WAGE WORKER SUPPORT FUNDING ("LWWS") FOR FY23

Testimony from Antonia House,
Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative Coordinator, TakeRoot Justice
Before New York City Council Committee on Finance
May 25, 2022

My name is Antonia House, and I am employed by TakeRoot Justice as Coordinator of the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Low-Wage Worker Initiative (LWWI) and Low-Wage Worker Support funding (LWWS), which are essential programs in the fight for workplace justice in New York City. Rebuilding the City's economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic requires dedicated funding for employment-related civil legal services and other support for NYC's low-income and immigrant workers. These workers have long been vulnerable to wage theft, which takes almost $1 billion from their pockets annually, as well as unsafe working conditions, unlawful discrimination, retaliation, unpaid sick and emergency leave, and wrongfully denied unemployment insurance benefits; and the pandemic exacerbated this vulnerability. **We urge the City Council to demonstrate its commitment to NYC's low-wage and immigrant workers by increasing its funding for the Low-Wage Worker Support citywide initiative to $1 million in FY23 and by calling on the Administration to baseline the Low-Wage Worker Initiative as part of the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative.**

TakeRoot Justice is a non-profit organization whose mission is to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression by strengthening the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City through legal, participatory research and policy support. Our work includes the coordination of several coalitions, including CILEC. CILEC is a collaborative of legal service providers and multi-lingual base-building organizations that work throughout the City to strengthen low-income immigrant communities. Our member organizations deliver high quality employment and immigration legal services and engage in culturally sensitive outreach to low-income immigrant New Yorkers. The Office of Civil Justice provides funding for our work through the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative (IOI).

For the past four years, the Administration has provided additional annual funding through LWWI to IOI recipients that provide employment-related legal services to low-income

New Yorkers.[1] This dedicated funding is to support the staffing and administrative structures needed to deliver high-quality, culturally sensitive, and trusted legal services to low-wage workers in New York whose workplace rights have been violated. LWWI is complimented by LWWS, a discretionary City Council initiative, which funds community-based organizations to engage in outreach on workers' rights issues, conduct trainings and identify workers in need of legal support.

This work is critical. As we all know, the pandemic was an economic catastrophe for many families, causing job loss, financial insecurity, and a rise in workplace exploitation, mistreatment and retaliation. At the same time, many immigrant workers were excluded from critical federal safety-net programs, further exacerbating stark social and economic disparities in our city. Our clients and members experienced first-hand this devastation that the COVID-19 has wrought on low-wage and immigrant workers and workers of color.

In the face of this crisis, LWWI has allowed TakeRoot Justice and our CILEC partners Make the Road New York and Catholic Migration Services to represent over 1660 workers in legal actions to recoup unpaid wages and enforce laws relating to sick leave, discrimination and retaliation; in doing so, we have obtained over $9 million dollars in settlements and judgements for low-wage workers since March 2020. In that time, LWWI and LWWS funding together have enabled these three organizations, as well as New Immigrant Community Empowerment (a CILEC member and current LWWS recipient), to provide case management alongside representation in over 900 cases, to offer over 200 community trainings on workplace rights during a period of rapid change, and to connect over 7,500 low-wage immigrant workers to organizing.

Fighting to vindicate workers' legal rights in this way is a vital avenue to fight for social justice. The COVID-19 pandemic brought attention to the grueling hours, unsafe conditions and persistent wage theft faced by low-wage workers who keep our city running. But, when people assert and protect their rights at the workplace, the sense of mobilization, empowerment and consciousness they gain carries into every other part of their lives, as people realize they are change-agents. Furthermore, our work strengthens the efficacy of agencies such as the

[1] These include CILEC member organizations TakeRoot, Make the Road New York, and Catholic Migration Services, as well as other IOI recipient organizations: Legal Aid Society, Legal Services NYC, and the New York Legal Assistance Group.

Department of Consumer and Worker Protection and the New York State Department of Labor, because when workers prevail in these forums, it creates confidence that these agencies can protect their rights and enforce the law.

LWWI and LWWS are the only city funding streams dedicated to this work, yet they have lagged behind other funding priorities, requiring last-minute saves from workers' rights advocates and allies within the city government, such as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the City Council, to ensure that these crucial services continue to be funded. In FY21 and FY22, the Low-Wage Worker Initiative was initially excluded from the Executive Budget before the Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) restored its $2 million funding, while Low-Wage Worker Support was renewed at severely diminished levels (from $500,000 to $120,000).

Meanwhile, workplace rights violations are rarely resolved within one fiscal year. Failure to renew and expand these funding streams will have a devastating impact on low-wage workers, who may be left with pending claims and no legal representation, or representation by legal service providers that are far stretched beyond capacity due to reduced staff. Our organizations' ability to maintain the necessary staff and administrative infrastructure to continue this life-sustaining work requires expanded, multi-year funding for LWWI and LWWS.

We call upon the Administration and City Council to continue supporting the City's low-wage and immigrant workers by renewing LWWI and providing $1 million in LWWS funding, so we can continue to offer holistic employment-related legal services and culturally sensitive outreach to the City's low-wage and immigrant communities. We further ask this Committee to recommend that OCJ pour LWWI funding into the IOI contract, to create a future where support for low-wage workers is not subject to the whiplash of the budget process.

We look forward to working with the Administration and City Council to ensure that New York's low-income and immigrant communities are not deprived of vital services that support their livelihoods and advocate for their rights under the law.

Thank you.





fighting predatory equity and tenant harassment

organizing nyc tenants for the right to stay in our homes and communities

Testimony Concerning:

The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023

May 25, 2022

Presented Before:

NYC Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, NYC Council Finance Chair Justin Brannan
and The New York City Council's
Committee on Finance

Presented By:

Jackie Del Valle

Stabilizing NYC Coordinator

TakeRoot Justice

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FY 2023 Initiative Funding Requests

- **$4 mil for Stabilizing NYC**
- **COLA for all Discretionary Awards**
- **Enhancements for CLT, WBCDI, LSWP and CHPSI**

Please find below our presentation remarks; an overview of the Stabilizing NYC Budget Request; and an overview of TakeRoot Justice's Budget Priorities

Thank you **to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and the Finance Committee** for your leadership at this pivotal time for NYC. We are thrilled for the new opportunities to deepen this work with the new and returning Council Members. **Council Members Carlina Rivera and Keith Powers continue to champion our work and have been joined by Housing and Buildings Committee Chair Council Member Pierina Sanchez**.

Verbal Testimony

My name is Jackie Del Valle and I am the **Coordinator of Stabilizing NYC at TakeRoot Justice**.

TakeRoot is a founder and coordinator of Stabilizing NYC, a coalition of grassroots organizations that combines tenant organizing with legal representation to combat tenant harassment and preserve affordable housing for the New Yorkers who need it most. The City Council has funded Stabilizing NYC every year since 2014 and we are looking for an enhancement to $4 million dollars from $3.75 million to bring the SNYC organizing groups to equal levels.

TakeRoot Justice and the 19 grassroots groups that are part of Stabilizing NYC **form and strengthen hundreds of tenant associations.** Despite the limits of the pandemic, SNYC groups continued to organize tenant associations and represent tenants across the City. Many groups organized outreach programs aimed at tenants vulnerable to evictions, ensuring that tenants in the communities not only know their rights about housing court, evictions, and accessing rent arrears funds like ERAP and Excluded Workers Fund, but also had hands on assistance to access these and other resources.

As a result, the tenant associations we organize won rent strikes, held their landlords accountable for incorrect rent amounts and received the ERAP protections that they're entitled to their benefit in housing court. Through organizing, tenants are stopping evictions from moving forward in court and fighting to keep one another in their homes. Tenants connect their individual building experiences to the wider fight for housing justice. Through mass rallies and trips to Albany, tenant leaders connect with fellow members of the working class to fight for racial& economic justice

I don't think I need to spend a lot of time explaining our housing crisis and its disparate impacts across the City and the tolls of the pandemic on housing and community stability. Speaker Adams herself spoke passionately in her State of the Speaker's address about the importance of having people "living in good conditions" and that "the foundation of health for every neighborhood in our city is safe and stable housing."

We are also advocating for COLA increase for all the discretionary awards and enhancements for the **Community Land Trust initiative**, whose work is critical to help build equity and limit speculation in our neighborhoods; **Legal Services for the Working Poor; Worker Coop Business Development (WCBDI);** and **Community Housing Preservation Strategies.**

(if time) Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and the Finance Committee for your leadership at this pivotal time for NYC. We are thrilled for the new opportunities to deepen this work with the new and returning Council Members. Council Members Carlina Rivera and Keith Powers continue to champion our work and have been joined by Housing and Buildings Committee Chair Council Member Pierina Sanchez.

Overview of Stabilizing NYC Budget Ask

Stabilizing NYC requests $4,000,000 in City Council initiative funding for the ninth year of our highly successful program to combat harassment, evictions and the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity investors.

We are thrilled for the new opportunities to deepen this work with the new and returning Council Members. Council Members Carlina Rivera and Keith Powers continue to champion our work and have been joined by Housing and Buildings Committee Chair Council Member Pierina Sanchez.

The work of keeping tenants safely in their homes and building community power has never been more critical! Organizers and attorneys are speaking with hundreds of tenants about their rights and resources they can access. Organizing is essential to keep communities safe and to address the unjust impacts on the communities we organize.

During this unprecedented crisis, **Stabilizing NYC Coalition groups have been a life-line for tens of thousands of NYC families.** Over the last 9 years, Council funding has allowed us to create and strengthen vast networks of tenant associations across the city. These families now turn to us as trusted, multilingual community groups to know their rights and access critical resources. Our organizing work is essential to keep NYC families safely in their homes and to address the pre-existing disparities the pandemic has so clearly exposed to the world.

The 20 Stabilizing NYC members:

Manhattan:	CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities ● Cooper Square Committee ● Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) ● Housing Conservation Coordinators ● Met Council on Housing
Bronx:	Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) – New Settlement ● Mothers on the Move ● Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition ● Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association
Brooklyn:	Fifth Avenue Committee ● Flatbush Tenant Coalition ● IMPACCT Brooklyn ● Neighbors Helping Neighbors ● St. Nicks Alliance ● Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB)
Queens:	Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) ● Catholic Migration Services ● Chhaya CDC ● Woodside on the Move
Citywide:	TakeRoot Justice

Last year, the City Council generously awarded us $3,750,000 to continue our work, allowing us to expand to upper Manhattan and South Brooklyn. Critical to maintaining the program, we are looking to bring all of our coalition members up to the same standards of compensation. This year, we are seeking a $250,000 increase to

ensure the organizing amounts are the same for all the Coalition partners. With the additional increase of $250,000 we can protect more homes, win more building improvements and strengthen community organizing across the City.

Each year, **Stabilizing NYC groups form and strengthen hundreds of tenant associations,** as well as coalitions of tenants across landlord and bank portfolios. Thousands of families learn their rights as tenants and fight back collectively against disrepair, buyouts, evictions and all forms of harassment and displacement. We organize Low English Proficiency tenants in 16 different languages. We target some of the worst Predatory Equity landlords and the banks that finance them. We counsel hundreds of tenants on landlord-tenant issues, and annually represent over 200 tenants in litigation against abusive landlords. We have taken on Steven Croman, Ved Parkash, ZARA Realty, Raphael Toledano/ Madison Realty Capital and Moshe Pilar to name a few.

Our work results in an improved and well-maintained NYC housing stock that's kept affordable for our working-class families. **Tenant organizing creates communities where people with varying levels of vulnerability or marginalization, including immigration status, support each other.**

While our organizing work helped secure the $2.7 billion in rent relief, and that number is growing. As we recover from the pandemic, evictions, displacement and widespread homelessness loom on the horizon. The eviction moratorium is set to expire- again. We expect a massive flood of eviction cases as families struggle to pay their rent. Article after article, as well as our own experiences with our tenants, report thousands of families in NYS have not paid rent since this crisis began.

Organizing is critical to ensure that tenants who most need it are able to access the rent relief that is coming. As our experience with the ERAP program has shown, there are significant disparities in who can access and apply for rent relief in NYC. In addition, identity theft and financial scams promising access to rent relief will intensify. Community organizing and outreach through TRUSTED networks will be critical to ensuring that when rent relief finally arrives, tenants facing language, technological, and other barriers are able to access the available rent relief and avoid eviction.

At the same time, after more than a year of tenants being unable to pay rent, we are seeing an increase in repair issues that endanger families' health and safety. Leaks and mold, as well as rodents and pests -- with the respiratory and immunological health problems they create -- are especially insidious as we struggle out of the COVID pandemic.

Finally, **housing justice is racial justice**. Decades of government disinvestment in communities of color has been exacerbated by redlining, speculation, and overleveraging. Landlords continue to benefit from systemic racism by going unpunished, face little accountability, and are rewarded for their negligent behavior. Landlords wield power over communities through denial of services, neglect repairs, illegal construction, etc and are rarely held accountable by city and state agencies. Private equity companies and spectators are working every day to find "opportunities" in this crisis as they commodify housing and seek to displace our communities for their profit.

Our work as **Stabilizing NYC will continue prioritizing and empowering tenants to fight for their rights** in the courts and the street (social distancing of course); analyzing landlord behavior and trends; working on fair and reformative housing and lending policies; building new models of community ownership and preventing eviction that will preserve the communities we cherish as a city. To that end, we also support increased funding for the **Community Land Trust Initiative (CLT)** to build equity and limit speculation.

Further our work would not be possible without funding from the New York City Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection program (AHTP) and CHPSI Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative and **we ask for your continued, and enhanced support for these initiatives as well.**

Unlike the Universal Access to Counsel program (UAC, or "right to counsel"), which funds only individual eviction defense, these grants (AHTP, HPI, CCI, and Stabilizing NYC) allow us to provide a wide range of legal services, including affirmative litigation against tenant harassment, neglect, rent overcharge, and illegal lockout.

For example, two years ago, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, one of TakeRoot's community partners, alerted us to an unfolding crisis in Sunset Park, where a landlord had badly neglected three adjoining, rent stabilized buildings, allowing them to fall into disrepair while simultaneously bringing a wave of frivolous eviction lawsuits against tenants. While the organizer helped the tenants form a tenant association, TakeRoot won the dismissal of all the eviction cases and then brought lawsuits against the landlord for repairs in all three buildings, leading to multiple court orders, and restoration of heat and cooking gas. Facing over $300,000 in civil penalties and a rent strike by the tenants, the landlord finally came to the table and negotiated 75% to 100% rent abatements for each tenant, representing over $100,000 in savings in 2021. Despite many tenants having lost jobs and wages during the Covid-19 pandemic, none owe rent now, and no tenant has been evicted.

This victory would not have been possible without the flexibility of funding from AHTP, HPI, CCI, and Stabilizing NYC, which allowed for a multi-faceted approach combining tenant organizing, eviction defense, affirmative litigation for repairs, and general legal support to the tenant association.

In addition to these existing initiatives, in May 2021 the Council passed **Local Law 53,** which mandates funding for community organizations to educate and inform tenants of their rights as part of the Universal Access to Counsel Program. Funding of Local Law 53 will further support critical tenant organizing and advocacy.

Overview of TakeRoot Justice's Budget Priorities

TakeRoot Justice

TakeRoot Justice provides legal, participatory research, and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic, and social oppression. TakeRoot has a twenty-year history of partnering with grassroots and community-based organizations that build leadership and power within New York City's low-income communities, particularly communities of color, immigrant communities, and others traditionally excluded from policymaking.

We work side-by-side with tenants as they fight against gentrification to demand better living conditions, affordable rents, and a voice in the policies that shape their neighborhoods. This advocacy has resulted in millions of dollars' worth of repairs in low-income housing and has kept New Yorkers in their homes.

Cost of Living Adjustment Across All Awards

TakeRoot Justice (TRJ) and our coalition partners ask the City Council to fund Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) across all our discretionary contracts. We've all felt the heavy impacts of unprecedented inflation during a global pandemic. We need real COLA increases to properly compensate our staff to prevent further attrition during this time of the Great Resignation.

Initiatives (all previously funded)

TakeRoot participates in several citywide council funding initiatives designed to provide critical services to low-income NYC communities.

Stabilizing NYC: $4,000,000

TRJ requests Stabilizing NYC Initiative funding as member of this City-wide coalition that combats the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity companies and defends low-income tenants in predatory equity buildings from harassment and eviction. Our work combines legal, advocacy and organizing resources into a City-wide network to help tenants take their predatory equity landlords to task for patchwork repairs, bogus eviction cases, and

harassment. Advocates are looking for an enhancement from $3.75M to bring all groups equal levels.

Legal Services for the Working Poor: $3,600,000

This initiative provides access to justice for the working poor so families can obtain free legal services across a variety of issues: to reduce consumer debt, access benefits, obtain unpaid wages, address domestic violence and immigration issues, and more. This is a time like no other and the disproportionate challenges faced by the working poor during the pandemic brought to light how needed and critical this program is. Last year the initiative received $3.2M.

Worker Coop Business Development (WCBDI): $5,012,552

WCBDI supports the growth and sustainability of cooperative businesses that provide a path for low-income and immigrant New Yorkers to access employment, build wealth, and gain entrepreneurial skills. An increase from last year's $3.8M in funding will allow the organizations in the initiative to support the start-up of 38 new worker cooperative small businesses, with positions for 140 new jobs in cooperatives, assist existing cooperatives through 1,952 service requests, and outreach to 2,961 cooperative entrepreneurs, a substantial increase from last year's deliverables.

Community Land Trust (CLT): $3,000,000

The CLT initiative provides support for 20 organizations working to develop CLTs and permanently affordable housing, commercial and community spaces The coalition combats displacement and promotes community-led development in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest-hit by the pandemic – by incubating CLTs and providing comprehensive outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical support. TakeRoot, allocates its portion of the CLT Initiative funding to provide legal services to CLTs in New York City: everything from education on orientation and incorporation, to transactional representation in negotiating ground leases and joint venture agreements. Advocates are seeking an increase from $1.5M to $3M this year to grow initiative membership and scope.

Community Housing Preservation Strategies: $4,360,000

Housing advocates are calling for this Initiative to be enhanced from its current level of $3.6M to $4.36M to support tenants' rights legal services that fight for the preservation of affordable housing for middle and low-income people citywide at a time when such housing help is sorely needed because of rising rents, harassment, gentrification and displacement. In addition to direct legal services, TakeRoot's Housing Justice Team partners with community-based groups across NYC to build power through organizing campaigns, workshops and legal clinics.

TAKEROOT JUSTICE

Testimony to the New York City Council

Committee on Finance

FY 2023 Executive Budget Hearing

May 25, 2022

Good afternoon, Committee Chair and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Višnja Vujica, and I am speaking today as Staff Attorney in the Equitable Neighborhoods practice of TakeRoot Justice. TakeRoot Justice works with grassroots groups, neighborhood organizations and community coalitions to help make sure that people of color, immigrants, and other low-income residents who have built our city are not pushed out in the name of "progress."

I am here today to testify on two of our budget priorities: the CLT Initiative and funding for NYCHA public housing.

NYCHA Public Housing: Redirect the $1.2 billion that the executive budget allocates for PACT development to fund NYCHA capital and operating budget instead

We are all painfully aware of the deteriorating housing conditions in NYCHA public housing developments— as amplified by what seems to be a new news story every day, with collapsed ceilings, moldy walls, and rats that chew trough steel wool becoming something like throwaway lines. I've personally represented many NYCHA residents living in these kinds of conditions, and can assure any skeptics that those are not exaggerations— but the very real, painful consequences of decades of failure to adequately fund our public housing.

While NYCHA has a plan to slowly renovate some of the older, more in need developments through conversions to Project Based Section 8 under private management through the controversial PACT program— the PACT program, even at its best, is not a cure all. It is a development by development, slow, multi-year process. And it is a process that requires the private developers to fund, with a plethora of financing options.

We are here today to bring attention to the immediate repairs needs of NYCHA residents, whom we have failed to care for as a city. We cannot simply leave them waiting for some magical solution that could be years down the road. We must ensure that NYCHA has sufficient capital and operations funding to adequately maintain their buildings while it owns them— and that it is

able to provide safe and healthy homes to the over half-million New Yorkers who call our public housing home.

PACT conversions are well funded by private financing and deep federal subsidies. Why give away additional funding to well-resourced PACT conversion projects, when the remaining traditional Section 9 public housing has such a deep need for capital and operations funding, which has been neglected for so long?

We support the call of the NYCHA residents, and urge the City Council to redirect the $1.2 billion that the executive budget allocates for PACT development to fund NYCHA capital and operating budget instead.

CLT Initiative: Increase CLT Initiative funding to $3 million

TakeRoot and 19 partner organizations are part of a citywide Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative that seeks $3 million in City Council discretionary funding in FY2023, to develop CLTs and permanently affordable housing, commercial and community spaces, in all five boroughs of NYC. CLTs are organizing in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods across NYC to stabilize housing, combat speculation, and ensure a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Launched in FY2020, the citywide CLT Initiative has catalyzed CLT organizing in the South and Northwest Bronx, East Harlem, Richmond Hill, Brownsville, East New York and beyond. CLTs are community-controlled nonprofits that own land and ensure that it is used to provide permanently affordable housing and other community needs. CLTs are flexible and can support permanently affordable rental housing, limited-equity cooperatives, and 1-4 family homes at risk of foreclosure, as well as commercial and cultural spaces, community gardens, community-owned solar, microgrids and other infrastructure.

The CLT Initiative has made major strides— engaging thousands of renters, homeowners and small business owners in education and organizing; developing CLT steering committees and founding boards; incorporating new CLTs; and acquiring and preserving hundreds of permanently- and deeply-affordable housing units as well as community and retail spaces. Emerging CLTs have completed comprehensive property research and planning in their CLT catchment areas, and formalized developer and other strategic partnerships.

At TakeRoot, we use the CLT Initiative funding to provide legal services to CLTs in New York City— everything from education on orientation and incorporation, to transactional representation in negotiating ground leases and joint venture agreements. This fiscal year, we represented the East Harlem El Barrio CLT on a precedent-setting transaction, in which they took title to four City-owned buildings— which had been in the limbo of the Tenant Interim Lease program for decades. We worked to negotiate the terms of the deal, *and* to make sure that residents and CLT board members were included in these technical conversations so they could drive decision-making. We also represented the Bronx CLT and Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition as they established their CLT as an independent organization, developed board members, and have been exploring both preservation and development projects. In addition, we regularly advise groups that are considering forming community land trusts about the considerations and path to formation—

several of these groups are today, sharing their stories with this council and seeking funding so they can take next steps on the path. Finally, in addition to direct legal services, we provide technical assistance and trainings on topics like the preservation potential of properties with municipal, CLT governance, and potential ground lease terms to other members of the initiative.

Renewed FY2023 discretionary funding will build on this tremendous progress, as more groups secure legal and technical assistance, launch CLT operations, sustain comprehensive organizing and community planning, and acquire and steward properties for long-term preservation. In the coming year, we will be working with East Harlem El Barrio CLT as they close out their construction loans and enter into their permanent legal structure with the Mutual Housing Association that they have incubated to be the owner of the buildings on their land. We will support the legal formation of community land trusts in Edgemere, Queens and Flatbush, Brooklyn, where we are already working with steering committees aiming to establish CLTs to stabilize their neighborhoods.

We would like to be able to meet the need for both trainings and individual representation more fully— as the CLT network grows, and individual CLTs begin to develop and require more advanced legal support, we will need additional resources for be able to provide that support. The increase in funding that the Initiative is seeking would be instrumental for us to be able to do that.

CLTs are a powerful tool to expand community control of land and stabilize housing in the wake of the pandemic. Strong CLTs, combined with policymaking that removes land and housing from the speculative market, will be key to a just recovery in Black and brown neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic.

We urge the City Council to redouble its commitment to CLTs at this critical time, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Contact:

Višnja Vujica, Staff Attorney
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(929) 506-0365

Association of Legal Aid Attorneys
UAW 2325 (AFL-CIO)

May 25, 2022

Testimony of The Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, UAW Local 2325 in Support of the proposed Pride at Work Initiative

Presented before the New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor

Submitted by Lisa Ohta, President, UAW Local 2325

My name is Lisa Ohta and I am the president of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (ALAA), UAW Local 2325.

ALAA is the nation's oldest union of legal service workers. We represent approximately 2,700 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and administrative staff at indigent legal service providers throughout New York, including the Legal Aid Society of New York City (LASNYC), among many other organizations. Our union exists to both empower workers, and to make the systems that indigent New Yorkers must exist in more equitable. The LGBTQ+ caucus is a group of ALAA attorneys who identify as LGBTQ+ within the LASNYC attorney chapter. This caucus works to ensure the recruitment, retention, and support of LGBTQ+ persons within LASNYC and advocates for the rights of its members and LASNYC clients.

The ALAA supports the proposed Pride at Work Initiative. Through our members' work in many practice areas and through our own life experiences, we see firsthand the poverty inflicted on LGBTQ+ New Yorkers because of intense employment discrimination, particularly for workers whose gender identity or expression does not conform to traditional societal expectations. This discrimination impacts both hiring and conditions on the job for those members of the community who are able to obtain employment. As a result, there exists an urgent need for programs to help LGBTQ+ New Yorkers access and succeed in good union jobs.

Transgender workers and other workers whose gender identity or expression does not conform to an employer's expectations face intense discrimination in trying to obtain jobs in the first place. Using testers, Make the Road New York documented an "astonishingly high" degree of discrimination against transgender job applicants among retail businesses in New York City. https://www.issuelab.org/resources/15050/15050.pdf Unfortunately, there is little reason to believe that this pervasive barrier to employment has lessened significantly since the study was done. We know from our own practice areas that transgender and other gender nonconforming clients find themselves enmeshed in underground economies and the criminal system because

they cannot obtain jobs in the regular economy. Arrest and/or conviction records place further barriers on their access to jobs.

For those who are able to obtain jobs, discrimination all too often makes the workplace unbearable and even leads to termination or constructive discharge. In its *amicus* brief to the United States Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 140 S.Ct. 1731 (2020), the Society told the stories of clients who were subjected to on-the-job harassment and driven from their jobs. Less than a decade ago, at a panel discussion on workplace bullying sponsored by Queers for Economic Justice, a lesbian who had worked for several years at construction sites in New York City and who taught about diversity in the workplace for a union related that she had never encountered an out gay man on any of her sites. It was simply too dangerous to be out at work.

All of these experiences point to the profound need for programs that help LGBTQ+ New Yorkers obtain and keep good union jobs. Unions provide a critical bulwark against discrimination and, in particular, harassment. Union jobs offer pay and benefits that enable people the freedom to live their lives as they see fit.

For these reasons, the ALAA supports the proposed Pride at Work Initiative and urges the Council and mayor to make it a reality.

Sincerely,

/s/
Lisa Ohta
President ALAA, UAW Local 2325
LOhta@alaa.org

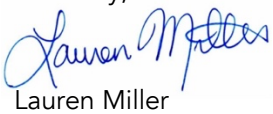
My name is Lauren Miller and I am the Development Director of The Bushwick Starr, a nonprofit theater dedicated to innovative performance and our Brooklyn community in districts 34 and 37. Our theater employs 500+ artists each year and 10 year-round staff, engages 6000+ audiences from Brooklyn and beyond, and educates 135 learners aged 9 to 90 in Bushwick each year.

We and our peer organizations who specialize in the development of emerging artistic works and voices represent a critical part of the cultural ecosystem. Every artist working in small venues like ours today, may one day define the future of NYC's world-class cultural institutions and the American canon at large. If you've been tracking the arts organizations that have closed since 2020, you'll see that our city has largely lost mission-driven developmental spaces like our own that offer free and affordable admissions. That trend is a direct result of the fact that federal relief like the Shuttered Venue Operator Grants was intended solely to recover lost earned income – consequently, **those organizations who offer the most affordable access subsidized by private and public support are now most at risk of shuttering our venues.** We have been left behind at the federal level, so we depend even more on the city and state to ensure our survival. This is why the Starr stands firmly with our colleagues in support of the $100M ask for the Culture VIBE proposal so powerfully represented in this hearing. Beyond $50K in baseline CDF and CIG funding, we ask for: $5M to adequately staff DCLA to empower and serve the field with timely payments; $15M to establish a Cultural Equity Fund to begin to address the chronic underinvestment in communities of color like Bushwick; $30M in other strategic investments supporting disability access, workforce development, and tourism. In addition, we support the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable's "It Starts with the Arts" proposal for a required $100 arts spend per student.

We want to be clear that this is not an ask for "extraordinary funding for extraordinary times" - $100M is a necessary level of investment relative to the extraordinary arts economy of New York. This funding will retain and grow our world class workforce, create opportunity for emerging leaders, and share the wealth of culture in every district and borough. Our work directly benefits the city's general health and welfare, and the activity of our arts businesses indirectly generate even more economic activity in dozens of related industries in hospitality, tourism, and more - some studies have determined that every dollar spent on the arts compounds into $11 back to our local economies. If ever there was a time to invest in that eleven-fold return, it's in this urgent moment of recovery. The Starr for example expends over $1m annually, largely on personnel costs for fairly paid creative jobs, but the result of this expenditure also drives traffic to local business. Take each audience member and artist's dining and shopping while they visit our theater – conservatively, we estimate that our performances alone account for between $200-300K in direct effect on local business each year. **Even as a small theater, we make a resounding impact, not just in dollars and cents, but in the hearts and minds of our neighbors.** By providing affordable, accessible arts experiences and fairly paid arts jobs, we are able to generate an extraordinary amount of cultural and economic activity with comparatively little public support (typically, only 10-15% of our activity is supported by federal, state, and city funding combined.)

We urge you to take this first step by funding the arts at just 0.24% of the FY23 budget, towards our ultimate goal of a meaningful 1% investment that will lead to beneficial returns for every New Yorker.

Sincerely,



Lauren Miller
Development Director – The Bushwick Starr

The Education Trust–New York

Testimony for New York City Council
Committee on Finance, re: Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget
From The Education Trust–New York

May 25, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the proposed budget. I am Dr. Dia Bryant and I am the executive director of The Education Trust–New York. We are a statewide research, policy and advocacy organization working to eliminate the gaps in equity and opportunity that hold back too many students from reaching their full potential, especially those who are low-income or students of color, in order to enable all students in New York State to achieve at high levels — from early childhood through college.

We commend the City Council for including $30 million in your preliminary budget to address disparities in salaries between preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) and their counterparts at Department of Education (DOE) sites. This is a critical step toward recognizing the enormous impact of early education educators, and ensuring we are able to recruit and retain this vital workforce.

As you know, two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs, but excluded teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs. This exclusion hurts children with disabilities and their families.

The City must act immediately to achieve salary parity for DOE-contracted preschool special education teachers - who work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs.

The pandemic has exacerbated inequities in the services and support students with disabilities and their families receive. They have experienced delays in services, loss of instructional time, and poor transportation for in-person learning. What was already a shortage of seats in preschool special education classrooms prior to the pandemic has worsened, leaving preschoolers with disabilities without the support they need and have a legal right to receive. According to the DOE's own projections, the City is short by more than 900 seats in preschool special education classes.

CBOs have indicated that the biggest barrier to opening new preschool special education classes, is the lack of salary disparity. Without parity, CBOs will continue to lose teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to other jobs where they can earn higher compensation. And our youngest children will pay the highest price.

We understand the City has a plan to open 800 much-needed preschool special education class seats starting next year by offering a "contract enhancement" to the CBOs that run these classes, but the City has yet to commit to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it's hard to see how the City will be able to hire and retain enough qualified staff to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide.

It is imperative that the FY23 budget include $30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that preschoolers with disabilities get the support they need and deserve.

The Education Trust–New York

Thank you,

Dr. Dia Bryant
Executive Director
The Education Trust–New York

Gowanus Canal CONSERVANCY

Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation
City Council, NYC Parks Budget Hearing
Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Gowanus Canal Conservancy Testimony for City Council, NYC Parks Budget Hearing

I'm Andrea Parker, Executive Director at Gowanus Canal Conservancy, where we advocate and care for ecologically sustainable parks and public spaces in the Gowanus lowlands while empowering a community of stewards. We are a proud member of the Forest for All NYC Coalition and the Play Fair Coalition, and are here today to ask this Council to fight for a budget that prioritizes equitable management of our shared public realm, which provides critical services to support health, quality of life, resilience, and justice for all of us. In particular, we need to see full capital and expense funding for the urban forest, increased funding for the Parks Equity Initiative, and holding Mayor Adams to his commitment to dedicate 1% of the city budget for Parks.

Our urban forest includes more than 7 million trees across public and private lands which provide critical ecosystem services to NYC residents, services that are becoming all the more important as our climate changes. Trees enhance quality of life and improve health and wellbeing for people by cleaning and cooling the air and reducing heat-related illness. They help tackle the causes and effects of the climate crisis by supporting energy efficiency, strengthening our shoreline, and absorbing carbon dioxide. Trees also absorb stormwater before it pollutes our waterways - this last one is especially critical in Gowanus where the canal receives 363 million gallons of Combined Sewer Overflow per year.

In Gowanus, 670 young trees installed over the past decade are growing to help fill a neighborhood wide gap in the urban canopy. When mature, these trees will provide critical benefits of flood management, cooling, shade, but surviving to maturity depends on adequate maintenance and protection, from the Parks Department, local organizations and volunteers. In Gowanus, we empower a network of volunteer tree stewards, who water, weed, prune, and remove litter and debris. The Parks Equity Initiative has provided essential support for this work, as it does for thousands of volunteers across the City, and this initiative should be increased in order to cultivate social and ecological infrastructure.

But street trees also need maintenance that cannot be done by volunteers, such as structural pruning, stump removal, sidewalk repair, and invasive species control. This Council must end the long term underfunding of the Parks Department and the workers who care for these trees, and hold Mayor Adams accountable for baselined funding of 1% to Parks, to ensure that our young trees are able to provide critical services neighborhood across NYC.

Sincerely,
Andrea Parker
Executive Director
Gowanus Canal Conservancy

REGINA OPERA COMPANY

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718-259-2772

PRESIDENT
Francine Garber-Cohen

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT/ SECRETARY
Linda Cantoni

TREASURER
Joseph Delfausse

TESTIMONY TO NYC COUNCIL - BUDGET HEARING MAY 25, 2022

I'm Fran Garber-Cohen, President of Regina Opera Company. For 52 years, Regina Opera has offered fully-staged operas with full orchestra and English supertitles, in Sunset Park – an underserved and low income community. We also present many free concerts in public, accessible spaces in Sunset Park, Bay Ridge, and other sections of Brooklyn.

We provide affordable, professional-level entertainment in accessible venues for people who may not otherwise attend live performances. The performances bring happiness to all, and help people identify with the human frailties visible on our stage. Our operas and concerts bring people of all ages together, and are especially important to Senior Citizens, who make up about 65% of our audience, and who meet younger music lovers in our theater. The need for this cultural enrichment is reflected in the fact that over 4000 people usually attend our performances each season.

Due to COVID-19 Regina Opera lost the ticket income from almost 2 years of shows and most of our individual, private sponsorships, and we have relied upon public funding from DCLA and Council Member Brannan and former Council Member Menchaca, to keep our company " alive" and in the public eye, during these trying times.

From the March 2020 shut down until May 2021, when we were again permitted to present live, outdoor performances, we never gave up the task and joy of bringing music to our friends and neighbors. We offered

archived operas and newly recorded concerts online and then sang outdoors in local streets and parks.

We have now returned to fully-staged operas with full orchestra, but Audiences are just 50% of prior attendance, greatly reducing earned income and causing a shortfall. Donations and grants have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, making it difficult to plan for the 2022-2023 Season.

Additionally, many philanthropies are in the process of restructuring their programs, diminishing those funding sources.

Due to loss of funds, we cannot retain singers, staff, and orchestra members. Many have not returned to our company after being laid off, and current staff are leaving for opportunities that pay better. With our organization's reduced income and a deficit looming, we cannot pay competitively.

Regina Opera, as well as the huge number of arts and cultural organizations, have relied upon public funding from NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, but the contracts and funds are delayed due to what our Program Officer says is staffing shortage and an increasing number of proposals submitted for the Cultural development Fund.

We believe that $50 million for the DCLA, as outlined in NYC Culture VIBE, would alleviate some of the problems: $45 million additional funding for arts organizations like ours, and $5 million to help DCLA hire additional staff needed to process grant proposals. We at Regina Opera urge that these additional funds be allocated in the NYC Budget.

Thank you.



Francine Garber-Cohen
President, Regina Opera Company

therapy&learningcenter

Brooklyn's Early Childhood Program for All Learners
1723 Eighth Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11215 • Phone (718) 290-2700 • Fax (718) 290-2800
www.tlckids.org

May 25, 2022

RE: Preschool Special Education Salary Parity for 4410 Teachers

Testimony of Therapy & Learning Center, Inc for NYC City Council Committee on Finance

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the proposed budget. My name is **Karen Arkin** and I am the **Executive Director of Therapy & Learning Center, Inc. (TLC)**. For over 25 years, TLC has provided a safe and supportive educational preschool program for young children with disabilities in Brooklyn, NY.

We thank the City Council for including in your preliminary budget response the need for **$30 million to address disparities in salaries between preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) and their counterparts at Department of Education (DOE) sites**. Two years ago, the City reached an agreement to raise the salaries of most certified early childhood teachers at DOE-contracted CBOs, but excluded teachers of DOE-contracted preschool special education programs, who work 12-month jobs serving young children with the most intensive needs. The City has not yet committed to salary parity for these educators, even as a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes has left preschoolers with disabilities without the support they need and have a legal right to receive. According to the DOE's own projections, the City is short by more than 900 seats in preschool special education classes. CBOs have indicated that, in order for them to open new preschool special education classes, the City needs to address the salary disparities that are causing their teachers, teacher assistants, and staff members to leave for other jobs where they can earn higher compensation. The City has a plan to open 800 much-needed preschool special education class seats starting next year by offering a "contract enhancement" to the CBOs that run these classes, but the City has not yet committed to increased staff salaries as part of the contract enhancement. Without increased salaries, it's hard to see how the City will be able to open the classes it needs and is legally required to provide. **Please ensure that the FY 23 budget includes $30 million to provide preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs with salaries on par with their 12-month DOE counterparts so that preschoolers with disabilities get the support they need.**

Sincerely,

Karen Arkin, SBL, LMSW'
Executive Director

This Land Is Ours CLT
61 East 4th Street, #1E, New York, NY 10003- (212) 228-8210

Testimony to the New York City Council

Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing for FY 2023

May 25th, 2022

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Brannan, and members of the Finance Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Valerio Orselli, and I am the Project Director at This Land Is Ours Community Land Trust. TLIO CLT is one of the newest CLT's in NY. TLIO is composed of housing activists and organizers committed to the development and preservation of deeply affordable housing, with our focus on public land, decommissioned religious properties and troubled HDFC's.

This Land Is Ours Community Land Trust and nineteen partner organizations are part of city-wide CLT Initiative seeking to develop CLT's and permanently affordable housing, commercial and community spaces, in all five boroughs of NYC. CLTs are organizing in Black, brown and immigrant neighborhoods across NYC to stabilize housing, combat speculation, and ensure a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge the Committee and Council to support full funding of $3 million for the Citywide CLT Initiative, in the FY2023 budget. (Please see attached one-pager.)

We further urge the City Council to ensure the final budget includes robust capital funding for the construction and preservation of affordable housing–including deeply and permanently-affordable housing; and to prevent budget cuts to HPD, DSS, and DHS that would threaten the housing security of thousands of New Yorkers.

Until now the City has relied on legal documents, such as Regulatory Agreements, deed restrictions, enforcement mortgages or, more recently a spot monitor, to ensure long-term affordability of the housing. We believe in "feet on the ground." CLT's convey the buildings to HDFC's but retain ownership of the land. By this process, CLT's play a dual role: 1. Co-governance by having representation on the HDFC board, providing expertise and technical assistance; 2. stewardship, with the power to remove a non-compliant or corrupt HDFC board. CLT's also create an economy of scale by bringing together multiple properties, otherwise financially unviable, into a single structure sharing all income and expenses, with a common

This Land Is Ours CLT
61 East 4th Street, #1E, New York, NY 10003- (212) 228-8210

reserve fund, thus promoting long-term affordability

The CLT Initiative has made major strides--engaging thousands of renters, homeowners, and small business owners in education, organizing, and development. TLIO CLT working with all our political representatives, secured a commitment from the NY Archdiocese to engage in a community planning process for the redevelopment of the closed St. Emeric's Church on East 13th Street for three hundred units of permanently affordable housing.

It has secured an agreement from NYCHPD for the redevelopment of a parking lot on East 5th Street for eighty senior apartments. It is working in partnership with the 6th Street Community Center on the proposed redevelopment of a NYCHA parking lot on East 6th Street, for 70 senior or family apartments and a community facility. We are working on a similar agreement with Emmanuel Presbyterian Church also on East 6th Street.

We stand united around two basic principles: Housing for People- Not for Profit and Public Land for the Public Good.

We urge the City Council to redouble its commitment to CLTs at this critical time and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Public Hearing
Make the Road NY | Testimony
5.25.22

Spanish below

Good afternoon, thanks everyone for this public safety hearing. My name is Dulce, I am a member of Make the Road NY, I am a trans person from El Salvador, an immigrant, a resident of Queens and a sex worker.

Vice has criminalized my community for many years, especially my trans sex worker sisters, who have been deported for raids and wrongful arrests made by the Vice squad. I am here to raise my voice and make it clear that New York City needs to dismantle Vice Police Units.

I know that in the recent city budget there was an adjustment that reduces the funding of the Vice units to 12 million dollars but I demand that New York City, and Mayor Eric Adams, stop providing more money to Vice units and instead invest in our communities.

The rate of discrimination in unemployment, food insecurity, trauma, unstable housing and police abuse are issues that are little heard of, but a reality that we face in my community. Many of our community members are at increased risk for anxiety, depression, suicide, low life satisfaction, self-harm, isolation, PTSD, HIV, and incarceration. Therefore, it is necessary to invest in programs for our communities and stop investing in police squads that constantly harass our community, and use racist and sexist tactics to criminalize us and put barriers in our futures.

These raids and arrests lead to barriers to obtaining a decent job, housing and being able to fix our immigration status. So it's time for New York City to transfer the money that has historically been allocated for the Vice squad, and reinvest it in social programs for our community.

Original version in Spanish

Buenas tardes, gracias por esta audiencia qqwrrq la seguridad pública. Mi nombre es Dulce, soy miembra de Sé hace Camino NY, soy una persona trans de El Salvador, inmigrante, residente de Queens y trabajadora sexual.

Vice ha criminalizado a mi comunidad por muchos años, especialmente mis hermanas trans trabajadoras sexuales que han sido deportadas por redadas y arrestos

injustificados hechos por el escuadrón de Vice. Estoy aquí para levantar mi voz y dejar claro que la ciudad de Nueva York necesita desmantelar las Unidades policíacas de Vice.

Sé que en el presupuesto reciente de la ciudad hubo un ajuste que reducen los fondos de las unidades de Vice a 12 millones de dólares, pero demando que la ciudad de Nueva York, y el alcalde Eric Adams, no provea más dinero a las unidades de Vice y a cambio, invierta en nuestras comunidades.

La taza de discriminación en el desempleo, inseguridad alimentaria, trauma, vivienda inestable y abusó policial son temas poco escuchados, pero una realidad que en mi comunidad enfrentamos. Muchos de los miembros de nuestra comunidad corren un mayor riesgo de ansiedad, depresión, suicidio, baja satisfacción con la vida, autolesiones, aislamiento, PTSD, VIH y encarcelamiento. Por lo tanto, se necesita invertir en programas para nuestras comunidades y dejar de invertir en escuadrones policiales que constantemente hostigan a nuestra comunidad, y utilizan tácticas racistas y machistas para criminalizarnos y poner barreras en nuestros futuros.

Estas redadas y arrestos conlleva a barreras para poder obtener un trabajo digno, viviendas y poder arreglar nuestro estatus migratorio. Así que es hora de que la ciudad de Nueva York transfiera el dinero que se ha usado históricamente para el escuadrón de Vice, y lo reinvierta en programas sociales para nuestra comunidad.

Public Hearing
Make the Road NY | Testimony
5.25.22

Spanish below

Good morning, my name is Katy Bravo, and I am a leader with the Trans Immigrant Project from Make the Road New York. I want to thank the council members for creating this public hearing. It is important that our voices, especially those of trans women, are heard.

I am here to demand that the funds historically given to Vice units be reinvested in our communities. It is essential that the city generates funds for housing assistance, access to health, job opportunities, etc. for our trans communities.

In the past, I was a survivor of the constant harassment and police arrests due to sex work. I have no doubt that the police officers who arrested and harassed me and many of my trans sisters were from the vice units. They used to walk by us as undercover cops, ask us how much we charge for our services, and then three or four blocks later we would end up arrested. The times I was arrested I remember that the police harassed us, told us that we had no rights, piled us into the police van, shook the van violently, and took the money that we had with us.

This type of behavior is abusive and violent, and therefore these Vice units should not exist. Not only do these raids and arrests lead to barriers to obtaining a decent job, housing and being able to fix our immigration status, but also trigger trauma in our communities. So it's time for the city of New York to transfer the money that has historically been used for the Vice squad, and reinvest in social programs for our community.

Thank you very much.

Original version in Spanish

Buenos días mi nombre es Katy Bravo, y soy una líder del Proyecto trans Inmigrante de Se Hace Camino Nueva York. Quiero darle las gracias a los concejales por crear esta audiencia pública. Es importante que nuestras voces, especialmente las de las mujeres trans sean escuchadas.

Estoy aqui para demandar que los fondos que se le han dado históricamente a las unidades de Vice sean reinvertidos en nuestras comunidades. Es esencial que la ciudad genere fondos para asistencia de vivienda, acceso a la salud, garantías de empleo, etc. para nuestras comunidades trans.

En el pasado fui sobreviviente del acoso constante y arrestos de la policía por el trabajo sexual. No tengo duda de que los policías que me arrestaron y me hostigaron a mí, y muchas de mis hermanas trans eran de las unidades de vice. Ellos solían caminar cerca a nosotras como encubiertos, nos preguntaban el precio de nuestro servicio, y luego tres o cuatro cuadras después terminábamos arrestadas. Las veces que fui arrestada recuerdo que la policía nos traba mal, nos decía que no teníamos derechos, nos amontaban en la van de la policía, movían fuertemente la van, y nos quitaban el dinero que traíamos con nosotras.

Este tipo de comportamiento es abusivo, y, por lo tanto, estas unidades no de vice no deberían de existir. Estas redadas y arrestos no solo conllevan a barreras para poder obtener un trabajo digno, viviendas y poder arreglar nuestro estatus migratorio, sino también a revivir traumas. Así que es hora de que la ciudad de Nueva York transfiera el dinero que se ha usado históricamente para el escuadrón de Vice, y lo reinvierta en programas sociales para nuestra comunidad.

Muchas gracias.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY
Make the Road NY Testimony
05/25/2022

My name is Mateo Guerrero-Tabares, and I am the TGNCIQ Lead Organizer at Make the Road New York. Today, I'm testifying on the importance of reallocating the funds from the Vice units into community programs and services for impacted communities.

The vice squad is a unit that is tasked with policing offenses deemed "*immoral*", such as consensual sex work, street-level narcotics use, and gambling. However, over the past four years that I have working with undocumented and immigrant transgender women in Jackson Heights and different areas of Brooklyn, and we have been able to document a pattern of harassment, surveillance, sexual assault, and violent raids against communities who are perceived as sex workers or who are sex workers, particularly from the 110th and 115th precinct and the vice units.

Today we heard the stories of Make the Road members today – those are only a few testimonies of the dozens of community members who were arrested unjustly. There are many more testimonies of community members who have been told to perform "sexual favors" to not be arrested, or who were forced to tell on the names and locations of other sex workers in the neighborhood to prevent their arrest. Police also follows trans community members around the neighborhood with flashing lights to force them to go into their homes, and they usually increase the level of harassment around 4 am when the clubs are closing in the area.

This behavior from the vice units, and in general from the NYPD is terrorizing and only continues to instigate fear in our community. Nearly 93% of Vice's targets for purchasing sex are Black, brown, or Asian, while 90% of those targeted for selling sex are people of color. Almost all the people Vice officers prey upon are in low-income neighborhoods like Jackson Heights and 5th Avenue in Brooklyn. Under Mayor de Blasio, New York City has paid more than $1 million to settle false arrest claims by people targeted for patronizing.

As Make the Road New York, we demand that the funds Vice funds are redirected to community services and programs to prevent further harassment, assault, violence, and criminalization for trans, queer, nonbinary, and gender-expansive community members – particularly those who are sex workers and/or perceived as sex workers. Investing in community safety means investing in health, access to affordable and permanent housing, legal services, support for survivors of violence, and in general services that will nourish and protect Trans and queer communities across NY that have been victims of the NYPD.

Public Hearing
Make the Road NY | Testimony
5.25.22

Spanish below

Good afternoon, Thanks to the City Council for creating this public safety hearing. My name is Roselyn, I am a member of the Trans Immigrant Project at Make the Road NY. I identify as a transgender woman, and I am here today to share my testimony about my interactions with the police.

In 2009, I was arrested by the police, as they mistook me for another person they were looking for. When they saw the photo they had of the person and compared it to me, they realized that I was not the person they were looking for, but they still arrested me and took me to jail. The police were targeting me only based on my gender identity, and as a result charged with sex work.

I have no doubt that the police patrol that arrested me is one of Vice's squads. Vice is a police unit that has been responsible for harassing and raiding people who they believe are doing sex work. Vice hides under the guise of supposedly helping people who are surviving human trafficking, but in reality what they do is persecute and harass people who are sex workers, or who are perceived as such.

I know that in the recent city budget there was an adjustment that reduces the funding of the Vice units to 12 million dollars; however, it's time for New York City to transfer the full amount that has historically been allocated for the Vice squad of the police, and reinvest it in social programs for our community. Our communities don’t need more arrests or police raids, we need access to affordable housing, health, job training programs and legal services.

Thanks for your time! We demand more resources, not more raids!

Original version in Spanish

Buenas tardes, gracias al concejo de la ciudad por crear esta audiencia sobre la seguridad pública. Mi nombre es Roselyn, soy miembra del proyecto Trans Inmigrante de Sé hace Camino NY. Me identifico como una mujer transgénero y hoy estoy aquíi para compartir mi testimonio sobre mis interacciones con la policía.

En el 2009 fui arrestada por la policía, ya que me confundieron con otra persona que estaban buscando. Cuando ellos vieron la foto que cargaban de la persona y la compararon conmigo, se dieron cuenta de que yo no era la persona a la que estaban buscando, pero aun así me arrestaron y me llevaron a ala cárcel. La policía, basasda en mi identidad de género, asumieron que hago trabajo sexual, y me dieron un cargo de sexo servicio.

No tengo duda que la patrulla de la policía quien me arresto es una de las patrullas de Vice. Vice es una unidad policía que se ha encargado de hostigar y hacer redadas en contra de las personas que ellos creen que están haciendo sexo servicio. Vice se esconde bajo el disfraz de supuestamente ayudar a las personas que están sobreviviendo tráfico humano, pero en realidad lo que hacen es perseguir y hostigar a las personas que hacen sexo servicio, o que son percibidas como tal.

Sé que en el presupuesto reciente de la ciudad hubo un ajuste que reducen los fondos de las unidades de Vice a 12 millones de dólares; sin embargo, es hora de que la ciudad de Nueva York transfiera todo el dinero que se ha usado históricamente para el escuadrón de Vice de la policía, y lo reinvierta en programas sociales para nuestra comunidad. Nuestras comunidades no necesitan más arrestos ni redadas policiales, necesitamos acceso a viviendas dignas, salud, entrenamientos para empleos y servicios legales.

¡Gracias por su tiempo! ¡Demandamos más recursos, no más redadas!

OUR SCHOOLS, OUR FUTURES: A BUDGET FOR SAFE AND JUST NYC SCHOOLS

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS

DIGNITY IN SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN-NY (DSC-NY) IS A COALITION OF NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS, FAMILIES, EDUCATORS, AND ADVOCATES ORGANIZING TO ENSURE THAT EVERY YOUNG PERSON—REGARDLESS OF WHICH NEIGHBORHOOD THEY LIVE IN OR SCHOOL THEY ATTEND—HAS ACCESS TO SAFE AND THRIVING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES. WE CALL ON NYC'S ELECTED OFFICIALS TO TAKE AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD OUR VISION BY ADOPTING A FY 2023 BUDGET THAT SHIFTS FUNDING TOWARDS THE RESOURCES AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT EVERY YOUNG PERSON TO LEARN AND GROW, AND AWAY FROM THE POLICE PRESENCE AND CULTURE THAT DIRECTLY DISRUPTS LEARNING AND VIOLATES THE DIGNITY AND SAFETY OF BLACK, BROWN, DISABLED, AND LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE.

1. HIRE 2,000 NEW YORKERS TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOLS

WHEN STUDENTS ARRIVE AT SCHOOL, THEY SHOULD BE GREETED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND TEACHERS, NOT POLICE. BUT FOR YEARS, THE NYPD AND SCHOOL POLICE UNION HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PRESSURED LAWMAKERS TO INSTEAD DIRECT SCHOOL FUNDS INTO HIRING AND TRAINING SCHOOL POLICE WHO HARM BLACK, BROWN, DISABLED, LGBTQ+, AND OTHER MARGINALIZED YOUNG PEOPLE. WE WANT SCHOOL-BASED JOBS THAT SUPPORT STUDENTS, CONTRIBUTE TO THE SAFETY OF OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES, AND WHICH HIRE BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND PAY THEM WELL.

- **$75 MILLION DIRECTLY TO 500 HIGH SCHOOLS TO HIRE SCHOOL-BASED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COORDINATORS.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD INCREASE BY AN ADDITIONAL $55 MILLION EACH YEAR FOR THE NEXT 3 YEARS TO HAVE AN RJ COORDINATOR IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, ULTIMATELY A SUSTAINED ANNUAL EXPENSE OF $240 MILLION.
- **$75 MILLION TO HIRE 500 NEW SOCIAL WORKERS.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD INCREASE OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS TO ACHIEVE A RATIO OF 1:150 ACROSS SCHOOLS, WITH 1:50 FOR HIGH NEEDS SCHOOLS.
- **$75 MILLION TO HIRE 500 NEW SCHOOL COUNSELORS.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD INCREASE OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS TO ACHIEVE A RATIO OF 1:150 ACROSS SCHOOLS, WITH 1:50 FOR HIGH NEEDS SCHOOLS.
- **$75 MILLION DIRECTLY TO SCHOOLS TO HIRE 500 COMMUNITY MEMBERS INTO SUPPORTIVE POSITIONS BASED ON NEED.**
  - POSITIONS SHOULD INCLUDE PARAPROFESSIONALS, YOUTH ADVOCATES, PARENT COORDINATORS, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATORS; AND STAFF TO GREET STUDENTS AT THE DOOR AND CHECK-IN VISITORS.

ALL NEW POSITIONS MUST BUILD SAFETY FOR STUDENTS AND GOOD LIVES FOR WORKERS. PRIORITY FOR THESE POSITIONS MUST BE GIVEN TO BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND RECENT NYC PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES. THESE MUST BE WELL PAID UNION JOBS IN THE DOE WHICH ARE EXEMPT FROM THE TYPICAL BARRIERS TO ENTRY SUCH AS AN ADVANCED DEGREE. HOWEVER, THE ADVANCE DEGREE REQUIREMENT WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND COUNSELORS. ALL POSITIONS MUST REQUIRE TRAINING IN AND COMMITMENT TO DE-ESCALATION AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE; AND HIRING AND TRAINING MUST BE OVERSEEN BY SCHOOL COMMUNITIES (STUDENTS, TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, AND PARENTS). THESE MUST NOT BE NYPD OR POLICING POSITIONS.

2. FUND SCHOOL-BASED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD BE SAFE, WELCOMING PLACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO GROW AND LEARN IMPORTANT CONCEPTS, INCLUDING HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS AND NAVIGATE CHALLENGES. OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, THE CITY HAS INVESTED IN A TOP-DOWN IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, WHICH HAS BEEN INEFFECTIVE AT REACHING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TO MAKE ANY MEANINGFUL IMPACT. FULL COMMITMENT TO AND FUNDING FOR A SCHOOL-LED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MODEL WILL MAKE SCHOOLS SAFER FOR ALL STUDENTS AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO DEVELOP LIFELONG SKILLS TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS, PRACTICE EMPATHY, AND TAKE OWNERSHIP FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

- **$45 MILLION (ON TOP OF FUNDING FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COORDINATORS) DIRECTLY TO SCHOOLS TO:**
  - ACCESS ONGOING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TRAINING FOR ALL SCHOOL STAFF, AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO THE BROADER SCHOOL COMMUNITY (E.G., STUDENTS AND FAMILIES). REQUIRE THAT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TRAININGS INTEGRATE AN ANTI-RACIST APPROACH. NO MONEY SHALL BE USED FOR TRAINING SCHOOL COPS.
  - FUND SAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEAD RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES AND BUILD SKILLS THAT WILL SET THEM UP FOR THE FUTURE.
  - DEVELOP RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CURRICULUM WITH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.
  - OFFER RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CLASSES OR ADVISORIES, AND OTHER PRACTICES.

IMPLEMENTATION MUST BE OVERSEEN AND INCLUSIVE OF LONG-TIME RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS, STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY GROUPS. FUNDING MUST BE ALLOCATED DIRECTLY TO SCHOOL COMMUNITIES LEADING THE WAY TO ENSURE MONEY IS SPENT ACCORDING TO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS' NEEDS. IT SHOULD NOT GO TO PRIVATE CONTRACTS WITH NONPROFITS THAT HAVE NO RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.

3. SUPPORT STUDENTS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

ANY YOUNG PERSON EXPERIENCING CRISIS OR CHALLENGES IN THEIR LIFE SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES TO HELP THEM TO MANAGE THROUGH DIFFICULTIES, STAY IN SCHOOL, AND THRIVE. FOR TOO LONG, NYC'S ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE CHOSEN TO SEND POLICE INTO SCHOOLS TO RESPOND TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISES INSTEAD OF INVESTING IN SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES—DENYING SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND OFTEN COMPOUNDING HARM THROUGH PUNITIVE RESPONSES. IN FY 2022, THE CITY ALLOCATED $5 MILLION FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM—A PROMISING MODEL TO HELP STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ACCESS DIRECT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOL AND CONNECT STUDENTS TO OTHER SERVICES THROUGHOUT THE CITY. THE MODEL IS SET TO LAUNCH IN SPRING 2022. HOWEVER, FUNDING MUST BE EXTENDED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THIS INITIATIVE DOES NOT EXPIRE IN JUNE 2022, AND THAT STUDENTS AT EACH OF THE 50 PILOT SCHOOLS IN SOUTH BRONX AND CENTRAL BROOKLYN DO NOT LOSE ACCESS TO THESE CRITICAL SUPPORTS.

- **$5 MILLION BASELINE FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM.**
  - THIS FUNDING SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO $15 MILLION BY 2024.

4. MOVE MONEY AWAY FROM POLICING

SCHOOL IS A PLACE WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE FREE TO FEEL SAFE, TRY NEW THINGS, AND LEARN. BUT PUNITIVE DISCIPLINE AND POLICING CREATES BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND VIOLATES THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF STUDENTS—PARTICULARLY BLACK, BROWN, DISABLED, AND LGBTQ+ YOUNG PEOPLE, WHO ARE TARGETED MOST HARSHLY BY SCHOOL POLICE. THE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THE CITY CURRENTLY CHOOSES TO SPEND ON THE NYPD'S SCHOOL POLICING DIVISION SHOULD BE REDIRECTED TO FUND THE RESOURCES, STAFF, AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT EVERY YOUNG PERSON TO LEARN AND GROW.

- **REDIRECT $450 MILLION FROM SCHOOL POLICING TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:**
  - DISBAND THE NYPD'S SCHOOL POLICING DIVISION ($425 MILLION)
  - ELIMINATE THE YOUTH COORDINATION OFFICER POSITION ($25 MILLION), THE REBRANDED NAME FOR THE 300 UNIFORMED OFFICERS THAT SURVEIL YOUNG PEOPLE AND PATROL SCHOOL BUILDINGS
- **DO NOT HIRE 1,363 NEW SCHOOL COPS TO REPLACE CURRENT VACANCIES.**
  - THIS FUNDING MUST BE REDIRECTED TO FILL SUPPORTIVE STAFF POSITIONS DETAILED IN DEMAND #1.
- **NO FUNDING FOR NEW OR EXISTING STUDENT SURVEILLANCE AND SCANNING EQUIPMENT.**
  - THIS SHOULD BE A FIRST STEP TOWARD THE FULL ELIMINATION OF METAL DETECTORS AND STUDENT SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES BY 2025.

THE CITY MUST REJECT MAYOR ADAMS' DANGEROUS EXPLORATION OF STRATEGIES THAT INCREASINGLY SEEK TO HIDE POLICING INFRASTRUCTURE FROM SIGHT—SUCH AS HIS PROPOSAL TO REPLACE METAL DETECTORS WITH "HIGH-TECH" SCANNING TECHNOLOGY, AND POLICE UNIFORMS WITH PLAIN-CLOTHES. GIVING A MAKEOVER TO SCANNING AND SCHOOL COPS WON'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS HARMFUL TO THE BLACK AND BROWN STUDENTS THEY TARGET, BUT WILL ONLY MAKE THAT HARM MORE INSIDIOUS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US AT:

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Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Council Member Justin Brannan, Chair

Oversight - The Executive Budget for FY 2023

Submitted by Nora Moran
Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify. United Neighborhood Houses is a policy and social change organization representing 45 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

A progressive leader for more than 100 years, 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.

The FY23 Executive Budget Proposal

The last two years have proven extremely challenging for all New Yorkers and have taken a tremendous toll on the human services sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged our economy and safety net while underscoring the significant racial and economic disparities that have impacted New York City's neighborhoods for decades. Settlement houses have been on the frontlines of the City's pandemic response, just as they have done through other crises our City has faced throughout history. Settlement house workers have continued to deliver essential services to New Yorkers, providing emergency food, counseling, shelter, youth and family supports, and more–even while the majority of New Yorkers sheltered in place at home. Given their century of experience, settlement houses will be key partners as the City works to recover and build a more inclusive economy. With the FY 2023 budget, this historic Council has an opportunity to work with the new administration to ensure that the needs of New York's residents most impacted by the pandemic are prioritized in budget negotiations. Budgets are more than numbers, they are the surest indicator of the City's priorities. Settlement house workers and the Black and brown, low-income communities they work alongside must be prioritized in this budget

if we are to achieve Mayor Adams' commitment to "making decisions that invest in our city and benefit all New Yorkers."

Mayor Adams' Preliminary and Executive Budget Proposals already contain several important investments for New Yorkers. UNH celebrates the City's early commitment to fund 100,000 summer jobs for teens and young adults. As the coordinator for the Campaign for Universal Summer Jobs, UNH has fought for expanded access to the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) for the past three decades. This historic expansion, announced in the preliminary budget and funded with baselined dollars, will help providers and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) plan for and execute high-quality programming for a record number of young people.

UNH also supports the inclusion of additional funds for the Department for the Aging (DFTA) home delivered meals program, including both a rate increase in the Preliminary Budget and funds to begin to address the end of the Recovery Meals (formerly GetFood) program in the Executive Budget. These funds–which will help expand access while also ensuring that reimbursements to providers more closely reflect true costs–will help to ensure that older New Yorkers continue to receive the meals that so many have come to rely on during tumultuous times. UNH has advocated for increased rates for this program for the last several years as inflation, rising food costs, and staffing challenges have made these programs more and more difficult for nonprofit providers to run, all while the pandemic and stay-at-home orders made the service more and more essential.

As the membership organization for New York's settlement houses, we also support the Mayor's emphasis on programs to support low-income New York parents. Expansions to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will be helpful to working parents who are struggling to make ends meet. With the end of the federal Child Tax Credit, it is crucial that New York City take steps like these to promote financial security for very low income families.

Finally, UNH wants to recognize the Mayor's implicit acknowledgement of the importance of stable, baselined funding. For each of his major policy proposals announced upon the release of the preliminary budget, he included a commitment to stable funding not only in FY23, but in the outyears as well. This kind of leadership will help nonprofit partners and contractors plan for the long term, improving the quality of services they are able to provide.

Unfortunately, the Executive Budget Proposal also fails to include several key investments that will be essential to an equitable and just recovery, including funding for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for the human services workforce, additional investments in year-round youth workforce programming, and key mental health supports among others. UNH was grateful to see many of these priorities included in the Council's budget responses as well as Speaker Adams' State of the City address. Below are UNH's specific recommendations in the areas of early childhood education, youth services, adult literacy and service for immigrant New Yorkers, mental and behavioral health services, services for older New Yorkers, and much-needed contracting reforms and investments for the human services workforce.

Fund a Cost of Living Adjustment and Raises for Human Service Workers

UNH was disappointed to see that the Mayor's proposals failed to offer any meaningful investments in the human services workforce that has been on the frontlines of the pandemic. Last year, UNH and our partners had advocated for $48 million in the adopted budget to pay for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for human service workers. Instead, we received $24 million to pay for one-time bonuses. These essential workers deserve better, and UNH supports the #JustPay campaign's three-pronged ask for investments for the human services workforce that includes: 1) Automatic COLAs for all human services contracts to help wages keep pace with inflation; 2) a living wage floor for human services workers of no less than $21 per hour; and 3) the creation and funding of a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule that is compatible to similarly-qualified City and State government employees.

Human service workers were there for the City when we needed them most, and the City should be there for them now. Low wages for human service positions have contributed to a staffing crisis, and without increased budgets for City contracts to cover wage increases, nonprofits will be unable to recruit and train the next generation of human service workers, setting future New Yorkers up for significant barriers to accessing services. **We urge the Council to emphasize the needs of the human service workforce in budget negotiations**.

Additional Budget Priorities

UNH supports the following asks:

- **Summer Rising**: DYCD and DOE have announced plans to operate Summer Rising again for Summer 2022, but reimbursement rates are not adequate for CBOs to run high quality programming. Workforce shortages, often tied to low wages in contracts, have been a challenge this school year and will only continue this summer without intervention. Additionally, inflation has driven up summer program costs. UNH urges the City to increase the cost-per-participant rates to $1848 for elementary school programming and $1410 for middle school programming, and to make these rates available to *all* summer programming, not just ones in DOE school buildings.The City must also address the current Department of Health & Mental Hygiene clearance backlog affecting child care and youth service staff by adding targeted resources and staff to expedite the clearance process.
- **Adult Literacy**: Adult Literacy is an essential component of an equitable economic recovery for a City that celebrates diversity. The FY23 budget must baseline an additional $13.5 million for DYCD-contracted adult literacy programs — over and above the $8 million that was baselined in FY22 — to ensure 15,000 students can continue their literacy education uninterrupted, and to double the rates and serve additional students in the forthcoming contract procurement. Additionally, the City Council should (1) renew $4 million in discretionary funding for the Adult Literacy Initiative; and (2) expand the Adult Literacy Pilot Program to $5 million — up from $2.5 million in FY22 — to adequately resource high-quality adult literacy programs, including staff and personnel costs; student case management; digital technology; program space; and organizational management systems and support. This expansion would double the pilot to fund 40 programs across the city.
- **Youth Workforce Development**: UNH affirms the Council's commitment to expanding youth workforce development programming beyond the initial investment in the Summer Youth

Employment Program (SYEP). Year-round programming not only benefits young people, but it also stabilizes the system by maintaining key staff and ensuring year-round contact with employer partners. UNH supports the Council's call to expand Work Learn Grow (WLG), the school-year complement program to SYEP. At a bare minimum, WLG must be funded at pre-pandemic levels in the final budget, and those funds should be baselined so that providers can count on them year-after-year as both systems grow to accommodate the tremendous demand and need.

- **Early Childhood Education:** State investment gives New York City a unique chance to expand its current child care system to better meet the needs of children and families. The current system does not meet the demand for infant and toddler care. Any expansions must prioritize aging down the system to serve greater numbers of infants and toddlers in both family child care and center based programs. These services must provide full-day, year round care. Furthermore, Pre-K for All and 3-K for All only offer programming from 8 am - 3 pm from September through June. Working families need a full day and full year of child care. Expansion should also prioritize converting Pre-K and 3-K seats to be full-day, full-year seats so that these families have the additional hours of care. Additionally, it is particularly important to plan for stable streaming funds for 3-K for All programs that have been expanded and funded through FY24 thanks to Federal Stimulus dollars.
    - **Salary Parity:** The early childhood education workforce has long been underpaid for the crucial work that they do. In 2019, New York City took important steps to rectify glaring salary disparities between teachers working at community-based organizations and those working at DOE programs. However, we are reaching the end of that 2019 parity agreement, and there are still other staff in early childhood programs who have not seen any type of pay parity agreement. It is important for the City to address this to retain current staff and also hire new staff to cover a system expansion. Specifically, the City must: **Invest $21 million for program directors**' salary increases. Directors of child care programs are working under expired contracts, and raising these salaries to ones on par with their DOE administrative counterparts will help both compensate them fairly and prevent the further resignation of CBO staff; **Invest $30 million in pay parity for special education pre-k teachers**. Teachers working in 4410 programs were not included in the 2019 salary parity agreement, and earn much lower wages than their DOE counterparts and than center-based teachers in other classrooms; **Raise the minimum wage of support staff** - to at least $21 per hour, in line with the demands of the #JustPay campaign. Support staff in early childhood education programs - including aides, paraprofessionals, custodians, and cooks – help to keep centers running, but receive some of the lowest salaries in the system. Boosting their wages will help retain these workers, and also keep this workforce in the early childhood system so that they maintain continuity of care for the children and families they serve; and **fund longevity increases** for all teachers, staff and directors.

- **Mental Health:** The FY23 budget should continue to support the recently-expanded Geriatric Mental Health Initiative and other Council Mental Health initiatives including Children Under Five and Autism Awareness. These initiatives provide crucial funding to nonprofit providers to offer mental health services in non-clinical community settings, including community centers, senior centers, and early childhood programs. The City should also expand the DFTA Geriatric Mental Health program with an $8.7 million investment to add 20 new sites and increase clinician hours at existing sites. Finally, the

City should invest $28.5 million in school-based mental health clinics to add 100 new sites and bolster services at existing sites.

- **Home Delivered Meals:** As mentioned earlier, the FY23 Preliminary Budget includes a long-needed reimbursement rate increase for the home delivered meals program for older adults (HDM), bringing rates from $9.58 to $11.78 per meal, to meet true costs and match the 2015 national average cost of a home delivered meal. However, there are enormous strains on the system and steeply rising costs. An additional $12.7 million is needed to meet demand this year, which includes $3 million to support weekend and holiday meals. In addition, The City must plan for the end of the GetFood emergency feeding program (now DFTA Recovery Meals) at the end of June. The Executive Budget included $14.8 million to be split between HDM ($8.8 million) and the Case Management program ($6 million) that screens older adults for eligibility and is also facing capacity strains. Given the enormous need, we echo the Council's proposal of $30 million for the Recovery Meals transition, for a total HDM program ask of $42.7 million. Further, the City urgently must invest in capital needs for the system, especially vans..
- **NORCs:** As long-standing supporters of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), the Council plays a key role in supporting this system. This year, we call on the Council to restore its NORC Council Initiative at close to $6.4 million. For the portion of these funds that cover nursing services, about $2.1 million, the Council should reflect the rising hourly rate of nurses from the provider, VNS, from $85 to $95 per hour. This brings the nursing funding need to $2.265 million this year. The full Initiative should also be restored to support existing recipients, including State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs which do not have City contracts. While a few Council-funded NORCs received new DFTA contracts this year, we hope the Council will continue to support the ongoing development of new NORCs with this initiative.
- **Our City Our Vote Implementation**: Introduction 1867 enfranchised thousands of New Yorkers with legal permanent resident (LPR) status and work authorizations to vote in municipal elections. The City must make sure that this legislation, now Local Law 11 of 2022, is implemented quickly and carefully, with adequate outreach and education efforts targeted at newly enfranchised New Yorkers. This includes:
    - $25 million City Council Initiative to support CBO outreach efforts;
    - $25 million increase to the Board of Elections budget;
    - 10% increase to the budgets of the Civic Engagement Commision, the Campaign Finance Board, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs; and
    - 5% increase to implementing agencies including the Department of Youth and Community Development.

Carefully Evaluate Positions Targeted by Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)

Though the City is facing an uncertain financial future with mixed signals coming from the market and geo-political challenges, this is not the time to divest from the safety net programs that support neighborhoods. The Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) has sought to identify efficiencies without interrupting services while also avoiding layoffs of municipal employees. UNH and our members are grateful that the Administration has avoided significant cuts to human service programs and layoffs to municipal workers. Still, we encourage the administration and the Council to be extremely thoughtful when eliminating vacant positions, as there could be longer-term ramifications to programs should certain positions be eliminated.

Providers rely on their relationships with program/contract managers, and technical assistance/support from certain government positions, and just because a position is vacant today does not mean that the role is inconsequential. Now is the time for cautious, thoughtful planning, not broad-strokes that look impactful in budget documents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. UNH looks forward to joining future hearings to dive into more details on the wide variety of programs settlement houses run and our recommendations for those programs. In the meantime, I can be reached to provide more details on any of the above at nmoran@unhny.org.

Testimony Submitted by

Imtiaz Hossain, Senior Manager of Advocacy, United Way of New York City

Before the NYC Council Committee on Finance

FY23 Executive Budget Hearing

May 25th, 2022

About United Way of New York City

For 85 years, United Way of New York City (UWNYC) has worked to support low-income New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. We partner across the business, government, non-profit and philanthropic sectors to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in New York City. Our mandate is to stem the root causes of poverty and create systems-level change so that everyone can access quality education and the opportunity to lead healthy and financially secure lives. We are aligned through a shared vision of successful communities where individuals and families have access to quality education and the opportunity to lead healthy and financially secure lives.

Through provision of food and operational support to hundreds of food organizations across New York City, UWNYC serves approximately 1 million New York City men, women, and children struggling to make ends meet, and supports the human service agencies and institutions that serve them. UWNYC's Food & Benefits Access program strengthens 500+ food pantries and soup kitchens with healthy and nutritious food, operational capacity building supports, and funds for capital equipment. The Emergency Food and Shelter Program, a federally funded program administered by UWNYC, funds community-based organizations to meet a range of costs associated with emergency food, rental arrears, and utilities service. Food Support Connections enables caseworkers to outreach and screen thousands of New Yorkers every year. In 2021, through this program, more than 6,500 individuals enrolled in SNAP. Additionally, in partnership with City Harvest, Plentiful, a free, easy-to-use reservation system for food pantries and the people they serve, supports over 300 food pantries and millions of clients experiencing food insecurity in New York City. Through web-based and mobile applications, Plentiful enables users to find emergency food programs closest to them. About 40% of the City's food pantries are using Plentiful. Through the Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) UWNYC strengthens the capacity of our citywide network of emergency food providers, helps distribute culturally appropriate, healthy foods, and prepares and serves meals in underserved neighborhoods, ensuring that food is distributed where the greatest need lies. UWNYC also operates Local Produce Link, through which local small-scale farmers deliver fresh vegetables to food pantries across New York City. UWNYC's HPNAP program structure informed the design of the City-administered Pandemic Food Reserve Emergency Distribution Program (P-FRED).

UWNYC also works in collaboration with food system stakeholders across New York City. New York City emerged as the first American epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic and two years later our communities are still reeling from the twin economic and public health crises caused by the pandemic. In response, UWNYC joined the NYC Food Policy Alliance: a multi-sector alliance of 40+ food system stakeholders from across New York City, including frontline CBOs directly impacted by food insecurity. The Alliance's mission is to identify and advocate for public policies and funding that promote access to healthy and affordable

food to both respond to today's crisis as well as address the ongoing vulnerabilities and injustices of the food system.

The Problem: Income Insufficiency in New York City

Last year, UWNYC partnered with the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, The Fund for the City of New York, The New York Women's Foundation, City Harvest, Food Bank For New York City, and Hunger Free New York City to release "**Overlooked & Undercounted 2021: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for New York City**", a study that determines the required income to achieve economic independence for different family types in each of the boroughs. The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a nuanced measure of the income a household needs to afford necessities without turning to public or private assistance. Unlike the federal poverty level, it accounts for variability based on the number of people in the household, their ages, geographic location, and a specific point in time.

The 2021 report shows that **costs have increased by 113% in NYC since 2000, but median earnings have only increased by 58%. 35% of households lack sufficient income to meet basic needs without public, community, and private assistance**. While the official poverty measure notes only around 12% of City's households as poor, the standard shows a more **accurate picture at 36% of households living without sufficient income for basic needs**, as also shown by data on public benefits. **Eight out of ten households living below the standard have at least one working adult, and half of the households below standard have at least one child.** To illustrate with an example, a single mother with a school-age child, working as a home health aide in the Bronx and earning minimum wage ($15.00 per hour) needs $4,341 per month to cover get by, including $639 per month to cover the cost of childcare and $1,806 for a two-bedroom apartment. **With a monthly income of $2,600 based on her minimum wage, she earns only 60% of what she needs to cover her family's basic costs.**

It is no surprise then that hunger and poverty has continued to tick up as the lines around pantries have quadrupled over the year. Hunger and insecurity existed long before the beginning of the pandemic. **It is no surprise then, between February 2020 and now, that the number of SNAP beneficiaries rose by 15% to 1.7 million people, and number of public and cash assistance rose by 25% to 390,000**. Medicaid enrollment stands at an all-time high of nearly 4.05 million as of March 2022. These are widely supplemented by the national census pulse survey data, which has continued to indicate increases in hunger and lack of sufficient food among state and city residents. Since the pandemic started, the number of New Yorkers unable to afford sufficient food more than doubled, with U.S. Census pulse data showing that **30 percent (one in three) of state residents, equaling 4.5 million New Yorkers, faced food hardship**.[1] Inflation and the rising cost of food is impacting the budgets of New Yorkers as well as how far our emergency food providers can stretch their limited dollars. According to the USDA, food costs have risen 10% between March 2021 and March 2022.

Budget Requests to Stem Hunger

As the new administration finalizes its Executive Budget for FY 23, along with the 40+ organizations of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, UWNYC asks that the City ensure adequate level of funding for critical and diverse food related initiatives that stem acute hunger among low-income New Yorkers. These include

[1] Please see Preliminary Fiscal 2022 Mayor's Management Report for more information on the rise of public benefits and accessibility - https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2022/hra.pdf

emergency food initiatives, universal meal programs, public benefits programs, and standardization of multifaceted hunger related initiatives undertaken by the City of New York, at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic. **We are concerned that compared to the previous fiscal year, the current Executive Budget allocation is an overall reduction in critical lines of defense for our communities and will further proliferate poverty and hunger**. As long evidenced by empirical studies, such as those undertaken by the Self Sufficiency Standard, when families face increasing living costs, families constrain their food budgets first, forcing them to rely on emergency food. Furthermore, unemployment indicators remain high in the City, the impact of inflation, and the expiration of federal subsidy programs add to the woes faced by families across the City, many of whom are essential workers that kept the City of New York moving during its darkest hours during the pandemic.

The Mayoral Executive budget brings up EFAP to $52.3 million compared to the mere $24 million anticipated in the preliminary budget. **We commend the administration and the Council's desire to see continued investment for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which has been a first line of defense against hunger insecurity that persists in our City.** We are also pleased that EFAP will include fresh produce for the first time, a critical investment in the public health of our food insecure neighbors.

Alongside our 40+ partners convened by the NYC Food Policy Alliance, we urge the Council to consider the following additional investments.

1. We request that the administration and **Council invest total $90 million for Emergency Food programs**, including maintaining funding for expiring P-FRED that would deliver fresh produce to hard hit communities served by providers and community-based organizations.

2. We also request that the Council work with the administration to invest **$10 million for HRA benefits and streamlined applications**, which would support community-based organizations in their work to meet ongoing demand for resources, such as federal cash assistance and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in a streamlined manner. **According to the report, only 31% of New York City families below the Standard received SNAP.** SNAP eligibility in a high-cost place such as New York City is a challenge, as income eligibility standards use the federal poverty guidelines, which limit the number who can access this assistance in high-cost places. We continue to see that many families below the Self Sufficiency Standard are food insecure, and yet do not qualify for SNAP. **Therefore, it is vital that HRA and the City invest in adequate funding to keep the first line of defense against hunger intact. These include greater SNAP and public assistance outreach into communities where SNAP participation has been low, both due to stigma and intimidation of public charge, which keep families from receiving the benefits for which they are eligible.** The administrative hurdles faced by foreign born and communities of color can be combated by more credible messengers and leaders in grassroots community-based organizations whose mission is to not only connect disconnected population, but also to build long-term rapport and trust. That is why in a time of extraordinary economic dislocation caused by the pandemic, the City should invest $10 million in HRA's budget to adequately fund CBOs to perform public benefits outreach and enrollment. SNAP has brought in over $5 billion to the local economy in FY 21 driven by the high demand and needs. The City must do more to not only provide currently disconnected population with income support, but to also revitalize local economy that and multiply their output on SNAP and entitlement funding.

3. We commend and support the Administration for spearheading additional **$250 million in earned income tax credit expansion** in the State Fiscal Year budget 2023. Given the expiration of federal child

tax credits, the Administration should prioritize making this credit refundable in advance, similar to efforts undertaken by the Treasury Department in respect to the Child Tax Credit. This would alleviate household who increasingly face higher cost of living in housing, childcare, transportation, and food costs. As Mayor Adams mentioned in his recent testimony to the New York State Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committee members, it has been 20 years since the City and State of New York increased the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) benefits low-income families receive. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, EITC programs are a proven strategy for lifting families low to moderate income families out of poverty. **We support the mayor's call to the State to authorize the City to increase EITC benefits and match the City's investment of $250 million to expand EITC here in New York City.**

4. **We recommend an additional allocation of $50 million per year in the DOE's 5-Year Capital Plan towards a planned phase-in of 500 more cafeteria redesigns** to fully scale the highly successful Cafeteria Enhancement Experience (CEE) to all high schools and middle schools to support school food participation, student well-being and reduced lunch lines.

Structural Factors: Employment & Labor Market

Food insecurity and hunger are intimately tied to persistent un/der-employment, systemic poverty, and unaffordable living costs. Unemployment recovery in New York City lags the rosier picture national unemployment statistics show. New York City's unemployment rate lagged more than twice the national average most of last year at staggering **10% official rate as of December 2021**. As of March 2022, the picture improved to **6.5%,** while the national rate improved far greater to **3.6%**. As of as of March 2022, of noticeable concern for New York City, the unemployment rate among Black New Yorkers stands at 11% and 7.5% among Hispanic New Yorkers. The Center for New York City Affairs estimates that New York City's under-employment rate is at 12.1% in the first quarter of 2022: 16.3% for Black New Yorkers, 15% for Hispanic New Yorkers, and slightly above 9% for all others.[2] Additionally, nearly half of all unemployed New York City residents in the fourth quarter of 2021 were long-term unemployed. Long-term concentrated unemployment among communities of color has severe implications for New York City's recovery.

Nationwide, roughly 87% of jobs have been recovered since the beginning of the pandemic, while NYC lags at 74% of those recovered jobs as of March 2021. There were total estimated 933,000 jobs lost due to the pandemic. Compared to the pre-pandemic month of February 2020, NYC is still down 240,000 jobs as of March 2021[3]. Face to face and essential industries, where the hardest hit workers and communities of color are located, have yet to regain a steady income stream. This includes workers in construction, retail, hospitality, food services, entertainment who are still on the sideline since the start of the pandemic. Roughly, they represent 166,000 jobs still not recovered, 166,000 households still on the sidelines, still out on their luck, through no fault of their own in a market ravaged by the pandemic. Two out of three jobs that have not yet been regained impact essential workers hardest hit by the first shut down. These New Yorkers who have not yet recovered are using their dwindling savings, as pandemic era

[2] For a detailed breakdown of employment shortfall by race and age, please see – "*Considering Recent Economic Turmoil*", Monthly Economic Update, May 2022, Center for New York City Affairs; https://tinyurl.com/yck5e98d

[3] For detailed breakdown of employment shortfall, please see – "*Recovering Industries Continue To Account For Most Of The City's Job Gains*"; Monthly Economic Update, April 2022, Center for New York City Affairs; https://tinyurl.com/mv67fjn

unemployment protections, and refundable tax credits have expired, and as public benefits stay still. Furthermore, inflation caused by greater supply chain bottlenecks and disruption eats away at their savings and earnings.

We know well by now the disproportionate mortality and covid rate low-income communities of color faced during the pandemic. The labor and income recovery from this pandemic has also been playing out in an inequitable manner for these communities. People of color make up **75% of the City's front line**, essential workers – in health care, social services, transit, grocery stores, and janitorial— underscoring the weightier impact and the totality of the socio-emotional toll that the pandemic has ravaged on New York City children and their families. What the improving statistics around unemployment rate hides is the vast sectoral losses of jobs where communities are being left behind to face the realities in a world, where public support is drying up. These same workers rely on the public safety net system and various subsidy programs to get by.

Moreover, low unemployment figures do not tell the full story around financial stability, as wages have historically not kept pace. The share of workers that are people of color is over two-thirds across the 20 most common occupations. Overall, among the top 20 most common occupations of householders below the self-sufficiency standard, **58% are held by women of color and 30% by men of color. As labor market data shows, these workers labor in hard hit sectors including retail, hospitality, healthcare, and social services, where most of the job losses from the pandemic are still concentrated**. As households are forced to dole out ever more portion of their meager income to rising cost of housing, transportation, childcare, services, evidence shows that food is the most flexible budget item that gets axed first. Families will skip meals or select less nutritious items so they can pay for those fixed-cost necessities. This can result in a poorer quality diet, decreased health outcomes, additional stress, and burden. It can also impact adults' work performance and children's academic achievement and health levels.

Conclusion

UWNYC invested a combined total of nearly $25 million through its diverse food and benefits initiatives in 2021. Despite these efforts with the help of state and federal aid, we know that hunger and food insecurity is acute and high. Despite the historic investments made by the City in the previous fiscal years, we know that when the cost of living is high, employment in key sectors stagnate, income is inadequate, and jobs are scarce among low-income population - hunger and food will be an ongoing crisis. As we have outlined in our request, a continuation of robust investments by the current administration is a floor requirement for New York City's essential workers and households to weather the storm of uncertainty. For the hundreds of thousands of working households who cannot afford to meet their basic needs and those who must chronically rely on the emergency food system to eat, we must support the emergency food programs in our city as well as rigorously pursue a parallel track of policies and system changes that address the root causes of hunger. Let's work together to put more people on a pathway to economic security.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Good afternoon, my name is Mohamed Attia, I am the Director of the Street Vendor Project.
The Street Vendor Project (SVP) is a membership-based organization working to improve the working conditions of the approximately 20,000 people who sell food and merchandise on the streets of New York City. I would like to thank Chair Brannan and the entire committee for the opportunity to testify today.

As the only organization that serves street vendors in New York City, SVP is the centralized hub for this underserved population, providing regular services including legal consultations, small business development, outreach and education, and leadership capacity building. Additionally, SVP supports vendors across a myriad of issues including immigration, housing, childcare and food access needs.
SVP respectfully requests funding to sustain and expand two critical programs that serve street vendors, New York City's smallest businesses:

(1) Community Outreach and Education Program; and
(2) **Small Business Consultation Program**.

These programs will support an equitable economic recovery for New York City.
New York City's street vendors come from some of the most marginalized communities, specifically immigrant communities of color and low-income households. Approximately 95% of street vendors are immigrants (including many undocumented immigrants) who have limited access to other employment opportunities.

The street vending industry in New York City has grown exponentially within the last two years as many New Yorkers who found themselves unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic turned to street vending for an income, dramatically increasing the demand for SVP's critical services. In the last year alone, we supported 2,350 vendors with **emergency relief assistance, distributed 30,000+ culturally relevant meals made by street vendors** via our Vendor-Powered Food Distribution Program to food insecure New Yorkers. With a membership base of nearly 2,600 street vendors, our organization currently has a growing waitlist of over 300 individuals interested in accessing our services - the current ratio of staff to street vendors is 1:400.
In 2021, New York City made a historic investment in street vendors with the implementation of Local Law 80 to reform the street vending industry, creating the Office of Street Vendor Enforcement - However, the investment is primarily in the enforcement of street vendors. There remains a gap of critical direct services to street

vendors, specifically legal services, small business development training, educational programming on the regulations of vending or how to come into compliance with the laws, as well as the services needed by the community including immigration, housing, childcare, food access, and more.

Emerging from the COVID-19 crisis, SVP has an eye on sustainability and growth, equipping street vendors with the tools they need to grow their businesses, be financially empowered, and brought out of shadows to be engaged as part of the formalized economy. The Small Business Consultation Program came out of the desire to support the diverse community of vendors across the city in a tailored and unique way that ultimately contributes to their growth as small business owners and entrepreneurs.

The Outreach and Community Education Program educates vendors about their rights, improves their legal and digital literacy, and helps them integrate into the formal economy. By informing vendors about the City's rules and regulations regarding business compliance and environmental rules, we are promoting the City's vital goals for a safer and healthier New York City. When a vendor grows their business, they create jobs as well as financial stability for their family, and reinvest in the local economy. Furthermore, by providing tax filing assistance to vendors, we are helping to increase tax compliance, thereby growing revenues to the city and state.

By providing education and outreach to street vendors, SVP is supporting an equitable economic recovery for New York City, helping community to recover from the pandemic by connecting these primarily low-income immigrants with skills and education to thrive. With the help of the Council, we're hoping to ensure that street vendors not only survive in our city but also thrive and prosper as an essential part of the City's fabric. Thank you for your time and consideration

TESTIMONY OF THOMAS F GOGAN MAY 25, 2022
NY CITY COUNCIL HEARINGS on the MAYOR'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Good day, Chairman Brannan and Council Members. My name is Tom Gogan. I'm a proud Brooklyn resident long active in community and labor organizing and am an associate member of Chapter 34 / Veterans for Peace. I come from a military family. Veterans For Peace has over 100 chapters nationwide and represents men and women who have served in all branches of the U.S. military. Vets for Peace here in New York is active in the Move the Money-NYC Campaign challenging massive military budgets at the expense of our NYC communities.

New York's veterans live in every neighborhood. Our lives as veterans intersect with every aspect of New York City governance and we depend on NYC public and social services. We ride the subways and buses. Our children attend NYC public schools. Many of us live in rent-regulated or public housing; but far too many of us are homeless and on the street. We use city parks and beaches; depend on city infrastructure; and enjoy the libraries and public arts and culture here. Some of us are immigrants who served in the military. We are of all genders and orientations. We all deserve transparent and accountable City governance that affords full citizen participation. We need a City budget that truly reflects those needs.

We want our Federally-funded V.A. hospitals to stay open and properly funded, not privatized.

We believe the Mayor's proposed across-the-board social spending and public services cuts will harm us, our friends and neighbors and city workers, most critically in the Black, Brown, and immigrant communities so heavily impacted by every disaster we have faced in recent years We thank those Council Members who have said NO to the Mayor's cuts. But we also think the Council must go even further and think much bigger. Our 9 million-strong city has for decades suffered the disastrous consequences of allowing myriad crises to go unresolved.

The Mayor's Executive Budget does far too little to alleviate our massive housing crisis. We need billions more to create and subsidize deeply affordable housing; to restore NYCHA; and to help homeless people. We need major money infusions to deal with the mental health crisis which is stalking our City as the pandemic ebbs and flows. Our frontline / essential workers and youth need more supports, and we all need assistance at one level or another.

Just throwing the police at many of these problems will solve nothing. Of course we need much-improved public safety. A balance must be struck. Our unemployment is twice the national average: we need far more decent jobs; we need deep investments in housing; health, education, youth programs, mental health services and much more.

Yes, our $100 billion proposed budget is large. So too are the *seemingly* intractable problems of our great city. To do this, we will need major infusions of OUR Federal tax dollars returned to us in the years to come. We must demand an end to the endless destructive and deadly wars that rob our City and country of the resources we all need to turn things around and to create a decent and just life for one and all.

We need to move the money from war to our communities. Veterans for Peace urges the City Council to stand up and be counted challenging endless war and unchecked military spending . We need to put far more of those tax dollars to work to solve our problems here at home.

Thank you for listening and we look forward to working with the Council on all this.

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April 25, 2022

Testimony of Lonnie J. Portis, Environmental Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at WE ACT for Environmental Justice

To the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Regarding the Mayor's Executive Budget for 2023

Dear Committee Chair Justin Brannan and Committee on Finance:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is testifying on the need to invest in the City's future by funding environmental and climate policies and programs. WE ACT, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years.

We are in the midst of a worsening climate crisis and the City must do everything it can to reduce emissions, decarbonize our buildings, remediate environmental health hazards and more; all with environmental and climate justice as the foundation of this work. We strongly urge this committee to make this budget as climate forward as possible which means bold, necessary investments in the following policies and programs:

- $1 million to fund staffing and outreach at the Mayor's Office Of Climate And Environmental Justice;
- fund childhood lead poisoning prevention programs and lead service line replacements;
- restore the $47.8 million in Fiscal Year 2023 cuts to DSNY's budget;
- investment of $1.8 billion in our school infrastructure through HVAC upgrades, adding solar to roofs and accelerate the transition away from the use of fuel oil no. 4;
- commit a *minimum* of one percent of the budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation to expand the urban tree canopy and increase access to Parks and greenspace.
- add $6.5 million in the Executive Budget for the 81 positions removed from Department of Building's budget in the Preliminary Plan to ensure the DOB has adequate staffing for the equitable implementation Local Law 97 and;
- provide funding for the implementation of Local Law 120 which mandates school buses be electric by 2035.

We also want to see City agencies maximizing all state and federal resources; especially from the federal government, including the Infrastructure and Investment and Jobs Act that was signed into law in November 2021, if equitably distributed, can bring much needed investments that will begin to redress present and legacy social and environmental injustices and improve the lives of these communities in New York City.

$1 million to fund staffing and outreach at the Mayor's Office Of Climate And Environmental Justice

There are countless environmental justice issues that need to be identified and addressed in NYC. The Environmental Justice Program has the potential to have a significant, positive impact in improving the lives of New Yorkers who have been systematically denied power and visibility when shaping their communities and neighborhoods. The Environmental Justice Program does require funding in order to right the wrongs of the past and present and to prevent more injustice in the future.

Since the inception of Local Laws 60 & 64 there have been many challenges in achieving the City's environmental justice goals due to lack of financial support for the Environmental Justice Program. Challenges include:

- inability to do effective outreach to environmental justice communities in order to have meaningful conversations, develop relationships with community stakeholders and build an inclusive decision making processes;
- proactively engaging and collaborating with local and community based environmental justice groups and;
- completing the Environmental Justice for All Report mandated by Local Law 60

These challenges obstruct the goals of the Environmental Justice Program and lack of funding will further exacerbate the environmental injustices that impacted communities face. The Mayor's commitment to environmental justice must be supported by this committee.

WE ACT asks for funding of $1M to the Environmental Justice Program for fiscal year 2023. This will enable the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to properly execute their plans to

consult impacted communities and to do meaningful outreach as outlined by Section 3-1006-f of Local Law 64 (2017).

$47.8 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to restore cuts to DSNY's budget

WE ACT has used collaborative problem solving techniques to address the problems of inappropriate garbage disposal and rampant rodent and roach infestation in Northern Manhattan in order to reduce negative health impacts from garbage and pests in this community.

In 2017, food scraps accounted for 21 percent of the city's residential waste, a larger portion than any other type of waste. Much of this goes to landfills, where it releases methane, contributing to climate change. In 2020, then-Speaker Corey Johnson released a comprehensive City Council plan to combat climate change. That plan recognized that a "key strategy" for the city was to "mandate citywide curbside organics separation and collection."

WE ACT applauds The City for including $17.9 million in Fiscal 2023 and 21 positions for organics programs in the *The City of New York Executive Budget Fiscal Year 2023*.

However, it is imperative that the Mayor's office and City Council to recognize that sanitation and waste management is essential to fighting climate change and environmental health hazards in NYC by making sure the executive budget includes:

- restoration of the $47.8 million in Fiscal Year 2023 cuts to DSNY's budget;
- funding for mandatory curbside composting for all of NYC;
- $1 million for a new organics processing facility;
- $7.9 million for a waste characterization study;
- $4.8 million for rat mitigation programs;
- $22 million for litter basket service and;
- $3.4 million for illegal dumping enforcement.

$1.8 billion in our school infrastructure through HVAC upgrades, adding solar to roofs and accelerate the transition away from the use of fuel oil no. 4

WE ACT is a member of ALIGN's Climate Works for All (CW4A) coalition: A coalition of environmental justice advocates, community groups, and labor unions joined together to fight climate change and income inequality in NYC by demanding a Just Transition for workers and environmental justice communities. CW4A campaigns move us towards an equitable economy, a resilient, livable and healthy climate, and must prioritize justice for low income communities and communities of color across New York City.

New York City public schools are among the biggest public climate polluters and account for one-quarter of all city-owned buildings. Installing solar panels will reduce carbon emissions, and create opportunities for students to learn about the importance of sustainability and climate action. The City has an opportunity to lead in building decarbonization goals by ending the use of fuel oil and natural gas in public school buildings and upgrading to electric. This would have a serious impact on reducing city-owned building emissions. In addition, conducting deep retrofits will result in at least 50% reductions in energy consumption, enhance daily life and health in public schools, and support student performance, engagement, and classroom behavior.

Students of color and students from low income homes already take on a disproportionate burden of environmental health hazards due to cumulative impacts; their schools should not be one of these hazards. Evidence suggests that the installation of air control systems, like HVACs, along with reliable indoor air quality monitoring can minimize the airborne transmission of COVID-19. Green, Healthy Schools will allow the city to critically address long term public health disparities concentrated in environmental justice communities, which is even more critical as the city removes school mask mandates despite disparities in student vaccination rates.

For these reasons and more, **WE ACT strongly supports CW4A's Green, Healthy Schools campaign which calls on the City to invest $14.5 billion by 2030, or an annual investment of $1.8 billion for the next 8 years, to install solar panels and conduct deep retrofits in public schools.**

1% of the Executive Budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation to expand the urban tree canopy and increase access to Parks and greenspace

Parks and other green spaces are key environmental assets. The 2.6 million street and park trees that the Parks Department is responsible for remove 1,300 tons of pollutants from the atmosphere and store one million tons of carbon each year. Trees are vital for mitigating urban heat island effect and can lower temperatures by up to nine degrees, cut air conditioning use by 30%. Researchers at Portland State University found that formerly redlined places, including Harlem, are on average 5 degrees fahrenheit warmer than non-redlined neighborhoods. This inequity comes from decades of environmentally racist policies and programs. Addressing extreme heat as a major concern in Northern Manhattan and New York City (NYC) is a matter of racial and climate justice.

We need improved access to Parks and greenspaces, in particular in low income neighborhoods and communities of color that are disproportionately impacted by extreme heat and air pollution. Seventeen percent of New Yorkers still live further than walking distance from a park, meaning that we need more parks in communities that historically lack open spaces and the local environmental benefits of a nearby park.

WE ACT strongly supports the "Million More Trees" initiative because of the need to plant more trees along the East 125th Street corridor – one of the areas in NYC with a disproportionate extreme heat burden.

The City needs to commit a *minimum* of one percent of the budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation to expand the urban tree canopy and increase access to Parks and greenspace.

$6.5 million in the Executive Budget for the 81 positions removed from Department of Building's budget in the Preliminary Plan to ensure the DOB has adequate staffing for the equitable implementation Local Law 97

The passage of the landmark Climate Mobilization Act in 2019, was a significant step in the right direction to reduce NYC's greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings across New York city contribute to over 70% of the city's GreenHouse Gas emissions. Local Law 97 of 2019 (LL97) requires building owners to meet emission reduction targets by optimizing building

energy systems to make them more efficient. This year we are fighting for funding to ensure that we make significant progress in implementing LL97 equitably and create thousands of good green jobs here in New York City.

There needs to be adequate funding in the FY 2023 New York City budget for increased staff at DOB's Office of Building Energy and Emissions Performance (OBEEP) which is responsible for "Overseeing implementation of building energy and emissions performance laws and policies for existing buildings, new construction and major renovations" among other tasks. The first compliance deadline for building owners is coming up in 2024, which leaves the city less than two years to ensure that the numerous technical details required for the implementation of the law are worked out. Staffed at the current capacity of six, this will not be sufficient going forward as there is much to do in order to work with the Advisory Board on recommendations and finalize numerous technical details to ensure the effective compliance of thousands of buildings.

We do want to acknowledge that in the *The City of New York Executive Budget Fiscal Year 2023*, The mayor allocated $2.4 million for LL97 implementation. While this is great awareness of a clear need, there needs to be more positions dedicated to this work given the number of buildings that will need to comply and the importance of meeting the law's mandates.

In addition, the City should fund a major public education program through the NYC Accelerator to strengthen public knowledge and awareness of the City's climate policies, and the intersection of air pollution, health, and infrastructure.

The most effective watchdogs are often those who are on the ground and closest to the work. Tenants should know and understand the requirements set forth in LL97 and can act as on-the-ground enforcement to ensure that building owners are meeting their requirements. This can only happen if the public is aware of the responsibilities of their landlords and the methods of recourse available to them. Additionally, educating the public on the intersection of climate, health and infrastructure leads to more informed and conscious consumers, who in turn can be better stewards of the environment themselves.

Environmental justice communities have long held a deep skepticism of market-based solutions such as carbon trading to address the climate crisis. We reject these "false solutions" to addressing the deeply rooted injustices

that disproportionately harm low-income communities and communities of color. Existing trading schemes have yielded documented increases in pollution for environmental justice communities. We are concerned that any emissions trading scheme will allow large, polluting buildings to avoid making deep energy efficiency improvements by engaging in a complex trading system that will be difficult to enforce, leaving environmental justice communities vulnerable to continued localized pollution and further contributing to GHG emissions that fuel the climate crisis. We oppose the speculative "trading building emissions" proposal, which doesn't exist anywhere in the U.S., requires City and State legislative approval, and fails to account for how such an unproven trading scheme will lead to equity, rather than wholesale confusion among property owners.

Carbon pricing systems assign a monetary value to carbon emissions and assume that market forces will drive significant emissions reductions as highly-emitting polluters compete in the market. There are a variety of market-based pricing schemes, such as net zero emissions, carbon offsets, carbon pricing, carbon trading systems, and offset tax systems, that all expand fossil fuel reliance and sacrifice neighboring communities to high burdens of pollution. While carbon pricing, trading, and offset schemes often claim to distribute revenues to environmental justice communities, these funds never justly compensate for the destruction wrought by the extraction and pollution that is the source of that revenue.[1]

Attached is WE ACT's Environmental Justice Leadership Forum *False Clean Energy Solutions for Environmental Justice Communities Fact Sheet*; listing all of the "false solutions" including carbon trading.

Fund childhood lead poisoning prevention programs and lead service line replacements

An average of 2,233 children test positive for elevated blood lead levels each year in New York City, and we know from national studies that Black children living below the poverty line are twice as likely to suffer from lead poisoning as poor white or Latino children. Once poisoned with lead, a child's health is irreversibly harmed. The toxin causes harm to cognitive development, the nervous system leading to serious developmental delays. These serious harms are not treatable with simple medication, it has impacts that last through the lifespan.

[1] https://www.ienearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Carbon-Pricing-A-Critical-Perspective-for-Community-Resistance-Online-Version.pdf

WE ACT led advocacy to pass Local Law 1. Local Law 1 (LL1), passed in 2004, aimed to eradicate childhood lead poisoning by 2010. Also, alongside allies, we have passed several new lead bills into law to close loopholes left in LL1. However, there has been a lack of enforcement for this law for over a decade, as found by the Comptroller in a 2019 report.

There is a need for more legislation that improves or fills gaps in existing law, and a vital need to ensure adequate enforcement and implementation of the laws. Particularly, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) must work together to conduct inspections, remediate lead found in homes, and fine landlords for not following the law.

WE ACT is asking that more funding go toward the prevention of childhood lead poisoning by investing in the following:

1. Fund legislation that enhances proactive inspections and tenant notifications (LL39)

Local Law 39 was passed in 2018 and requires DOHMH to: (1) inspect and test any residence or other location where the lead-poisoned child spends 10 or more hours a week, (2) inspect all other units in the primary residence where a child under the age of 1 resides, (3) improve the education and notification given to the child's parents, including providing information about special education services for the child and posting notices in buildings and other facilities where lead paint hazards are found that alert other residents to the availability of free inspections by HPD, (4) conduct investigations for the sources of exposure in instances of elevated blood lead level (EBLL) in pregnant women, and provide additional information to new or expectant parents about blood lead testing, safe work practices, and lead inspections. The City must allocate appropriate funding to DOHMH to carry out this work.

2. Fund legislation that enhances tenant notifications of lead hazards (LL40)

Local Law 40 was passed in 2018. This legislation requires that where DHMH inspects and finds lead hazards in a common area, it must post notices alerting tenants in that building, which include an explanation of the hazards of lead, precautions for lead dust, and a phone number for getting free blood lead screenings. The City must allocate appropriate funding to DHMH to create and post notices.

3. Fund lead poisoning prevention programs to reach the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s lowered blood lead reference level from 5 to 3.5 ug/dL

The CDC recently announced a lowered blood lead reference level, which is the minimum level of blood lead that is considered "high" in children and triggers action. The DOHMH is now tasked with finding and treating children with a lower level of lead in their blood, meaning more children will require intervention. The city must fund the DOHMH for the expected increase in cases of childhood lead poisoning.

In 2019, NYC Local Law 65 was enacted to publicly share what the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) knows about the material that water service lines are made of and where they are located in an online interactive map. The data, as well as educational resources and tools for preventing lead contamination, was released in August 2021 and will be updated every six months based on the DEP's "best available records." From the city data, we learned that at least 137,000 (16%) of water service lines are potentially lead and at least 231,000 (27%) of water service lines are made of an "unknown" material. However, DEP announced after its first report that it would not be updating further.

While NYC has an inventory and a map, DEP must create a plan to replace lead service lines by:

1. Taking responsibility for the replacement of privately owned LSLs.
2. Accessing new federal funding coming to New York State that will reimburse the city to replace privately owned lead service lines.
3. Quickly identifying what material the nearly 27% or 230,000 "unknown" water service lines are to ensure that LSL replacement work is done efficiently.
4. Following series of best practices, developed by advocates, to fully protect public health and prioritize the communities most harmed by the lead poisoning crisis, including, but not limited to:
    a. Prohibiting partial LSL replacements.
    b. Prohibiting replacing LSLs with service lines made of plastic.
    c. Using ratepayer revenue to conduct LSL replacements.
    d. Replacing any LSLs uncovered when upgrading water mains or responding to service line leaks.
    e. Visually inspect all potential lead or unknown service lines on a block where it is conducting an LSL replacement and replace any LSLs discovered.

The need to invest in programs and interventions is imperative to ending childhood lead poisoning. Current funding is inadequate to protect the general public and particularly small children from the harmful effects of ingesting or inhaling lead dust, often resulting from lead paint, coming into contact with lead on exposed surfaces and exposure in drinking water through lead service lines.

Provide funding for the implementation of Local Law 120 which mandates school buses be electric by 2035

Buses are a primary source of air pollution, and developing children are especially vulnerable to the negative health impacts of poor air quality - such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, heart attacks, lung cancer, and premature death. New York City Council has passed Intro 455A (Local Law 120) which mandates that all school buses be electric by 2035. The City must keep the current commitment to electrifying the New York City school bus fleet, ensuring and advocating for the prioritization of environmental justice neighborhoods during implementation. It is imperative that we fund the equitable implementation of this law that this council worked hard to pass.

Alongside the NYC Clean School Bus Coalition, some of the plans we have for this year are to

- advocate for funding of EV chargers and other necessary infrastructure,
- convene important stakeholders, such as parents, bus companies and contractors, to
- discuss how we can transition smoothly,
- continue prioritizing communities and school districts in environmental justice neighborhoods and
- work with school bus worker unions and the city to ensure that bus drivers and technicians receive proper EV training

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Federal Infrastructure Funding

There are many issues in New York City that can be addressed with federal funding from the American Rescue Plan and Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act. We believe climate change and environmental justice must

be high on the list of priorities as these issues are present threats that hit low-income residents and communities of color first and worst. They also compound other existing hardships such as food and housing insecurity. Earlier this year, WE ACT, in partnership with GreenLatinos and Third way, released a poll that found that Black and Brown communities feel the impact of climate change and see improving the economy and job growth as top priorities. As we begin to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 and look towards transitioning to a clean energy economy supported through the use of federal investments, community-led entrepreneurship and creating good-paying, family-sustaining jobs should also be a priority, especially for people of color whose communities have experienced decades of disinvestment and unemployment, and are mostly underrepresented in the clean energy industry.

Funding from the the Infrastructure and Investment and Jobs Act, if equitably distributed, can bring much needed investments that will begin to redress present and legacy social and environmental injustices and improve the lives of these communities in New York City.

Attached is WE ACT's full written testimony for the April 19, 2022 joint oversight hearing with Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts on Assessing New York City's Infrastructure: Laying the Foundation for Federal Infrastructure Funding. Our testimony outlines recommended use of federal funding to advance environmental and climate justice in New York City.

WE ACT is looking forward to seeing New York City invest in climate and environmental justice.

Sincerely,

Lonnie J. Portis

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False Clean Energy Solutions for Environmental Justice Communities

The concept of "clean" energy is a vague phrase used to allow energy sources that are harmful to planetary and human health, but less harmful than typical fossil fuels as part of climate solutions. Energy sources should not be classified as "clean" energy if they increase pollution burden, expand fossil fuel reliance or infrastructure, or exacerbate health risks, such as technologies including but not limited to; geoengineering, bioenergy, incineration, cap and trade/ carbon markets, nuclear energy, landfill gas, climate smart agriculture, liquified natural gas, fossil fuel heat waste, clean coal, coal waste and industrial carbon capture and sequestration.

Net Zero Emissions/Carbon pricing/offset tax

Carbon pricing systems assign a monetary value to carbon emissions and assume that market forces will drive significant emissions reductions as highly-emitting polluters compete in the market. There are a variety of market-based pricing schemes, such as net zero emissions, carbon offsets, carbon pricing, carbon trading systems, and offset tax systems, that all expand fossil fuel reliance and sacrifice neighboring communities to high burdens of pollution. While carbon pricing, trading, and schemes often claim to distribute revenues to environmental justice communities, these funds never justly compensate for the destruction wrought by the extraction and pollution that is the source of that revenue.[1]

Geoengineering

Geoengineering refers to a set of technological "solutions" that are funded and driven by the fossil fuel industry to deliberately alter the Earth's systems on a global scale to counteract the worst impacts of the climate crisis.[2]Many of these solutions are untested, unstoppable once initiated, and since they have global impacts, disregard the sovereignty of First Nations, countries, and frontline communities and threaten democratic governance.[3]

offset

Carbon Capture and Storage

Carbon Capture and Underground Storage (CCUS) is a process that entails collecting carbon dioxide (CO2) from an industrial facility, compressing it to a liquid-like state for pipeline transport, and then pumping it underground. Scientific research shows CO2 loss can occur at every step of the CCUS process.[4] CO2 leakage underground poses serious environmental and health risks for nearby communities that include the contamination of underground sources of drinking water and breaking down rock formations to release benzene and other toxins.[5]

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[1] https://www.ienearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Carbon-Pricing-A-Critical-Perspective-for-Community-Resistance-Online-Version.pdf

[2] https://climatejusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Hacking-the-Planet-v41.pdf

[3] https://climatefalsesolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/HOODWINKED_ThirdEdition_On-Screen_version.pdf and https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-017-0431-0

[4] https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fenrg.2018.00040/full

[5] https://www3.nd.edu/~kshrader/pubs/final-pdf-ej-nuke-siting-wi-Alldred_08-0544.pdf

Incineration
Incineration for energy, often referred to as "Waste to Energy" (WTE) is when waste is burned at high temperatures for energy production. 79% of the 73 incinerators remaining in the U.S. are located in low-income communities and/or communities of color. Incineration is the most costly form of energy.[6] Therefore energy created from incineration could pose a significant financial barrier to community members, many of whom are already suffering from the health impacts associated with the facility.

Fossil Fuel Heat Waste
Fossil fuel heat waste solutions seek to increase the efficiency of fossil fuel power plants by capturing and using waste heat from the combustion of fossil fuels to provide heat to homes, offices, and other buildings. These marginal efficiency gains don't erase the fact that fossil fuel plants are the world's largest contributor to air pollution.Making these plants more efficient doesn't stop the health risks associated with air pollution exposure.

Landfill gas
Landfills naturally produce gases that contain a mix of methane, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, oxygen, water vapor, sulfur and hundreds of other contaminants of various degrees of toxicity. Burning landfill gas is dirtier than burning natural gas, since it emits more toxic pollution per kilowatt hour than natural gas does.[7] What's more, as landfills tend to be concentrated in low-income, disadvantaged communities and communities of color these communities are forced to bear even more pollution and health risks from burning landfill gas.[8]

CAFOs/Climate Smart Agriculture
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) are a type of large-scale agricultural facility that raises mostly dairy cows, hogs, and chickens at high density for the consumption of meat, eggs, and milk. CAFOs surround and are in close proximity to low-income, mostly nonwhite rural communities. Residents live with noxious odors and swarms of insects from the large amounts of manure. Due to the repelling conditions, health deteriorates and property values degrade. Additionally, rural communities are especially vulnerable to water contamination because many rely on private well water, which is not government regulated.[9]

Nuclear

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[6] https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/capitalcost/pdf/updated_capcost.pdf
[7] http://www.energyjustice.net/lfg
[8] https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/72837516.pdf
[9] https://theconversation.com/rural-americans-struggles-against-factory-farm-pollution-find-traction-in-court-98226

Nuclear energy is often lifted up as a “zero-emission” form of energy production, since it doesn’t create many of the harmful by-products that fossil fuel production creates.[10] However, Nuclear energy is not a clean form of energy since it creates risks along every part of the production chain.Uranium miners have an increased likelihood of lung cancer, pneumoconiosis, tuberculosis, injury, and blood diseases.[11] Toxic waste is hard to dispose of leading to an increase in the amount of waste and increasing the odds of exposure to radioactive material. Hazardous waste facilitates, including nuclear waste facilities, are disproportionately located in low- income communities and communities of color.[12]

Bioenergy

Bioenergy is an umbrella term that includes both biomass (the burning of organic materials for electricity and heating) and biofuel (converting organic materials to liquid to burn as transportation or heating fuel),.[13] These technologies are heralded as green and renewable, but it’s important to underscore that they produce more greenhouse gas and other toxic emissions than fossil fuels, destroy forests and crops to create fuel, exacerbate deep historical injustices and inequalities, and are very expensive to maintain.[14]

Power to Gas

Technologies exist to transport gas and surplus electrons from the electricity network that produce hydrogen or methane transported through cables at their source directly to destinations that want to use it as power. While this technology claims to be a tool to increase the efficiency of natural gas production and decrease transportation costs, installing high-power lines necessary to transport this gas directly to power other energy generation systems or buildings are almost as expensive as pipelines, so investing in gas-to-power systems defeats the purpose of an alternative cheaper solution for transporting gas.[15]

Fracking

Fracking is the process in which liquified natural gas is taken out of the environment, through drilling into shale rock.In the process of cracking the shale rock, the natural gas can leak into groundwater and drinking water supplies.[16] This disproportionately impacts rural families who are dependent on well water for drinking. Water is needed in order to frack, therefore the acquisition of water, especially in areas with low levels of water already available can further deplete the groundwater supply.[17] Fracking also impacts air pollution, by releasing nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, methane, carbon dioxide, and thus contributing to ground - level ozone (smog).[18]

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[10] https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/3-reasons-why-nuclear-clean-and-sustainable#:~:text=Nuclear%20is%20a%20zero%2Demission,byproducts%20emitted%20by%20fossil%20fuels.

[11] https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/pgms/worknotify/uranium.html#:~:text=Uranium%20Miners%20were%20exposed%20to,to%20the%20U.S.%20general%20public.

[12] https://news.umich.edu/targeting-minority-low-income-neighborhoods-for-hazardous-waste-sites/

[13] http://www.energyjustice.net/biomass

[14] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30581181/

[15] https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/engineering/gas-to-power and James G. Speight Ph.D., D.Sc., in Natural Gas, 2007

[16] https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/fracking-can-contaminate-drinking-water/

[17] https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/hfstudy/recordisplay.cfm?deid=332990

[18] https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/fracking-air-pollution-IB.pdf

Methane

Methane is the main component of liquified natural gas. Methane gas is found to leak at 2.3%, 60% higher than the EPA reported.[19] Methane is highly flammable, therefore Methane poses a significant risk for both factory fires, as well as fires in homes when leakages occur. Although methane is present in the environment for a shorter period of time, methane is 80 times more effective at trapping heat than CO^{2}.[20]

Clean Coal and Waste Coal

Clean coal is a greenwashed term pushed by the coal industry and their political allies that refers to a wide range of technologies to burn coal more efficiently by capturing CO2 emissions from coal-fired power plants.[21] Even the most efficient coal-fired power plants with clean coal technology only operate at around 44% efficiency, meaning that 56% of the energy content of the coal is lost.[22] Beyond the emissions produced during combustion, waste coal causes localized pollution to neighboring communities as waste coal is kept in piles that leach iron, manganese and aluminum pollution into waterways and cause acid drainage that kills neighboring streams.[23]

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The Environmental Justice Leadership Forum is a national coalition of more than 50 organizations in 20 states that work to ensure a diverse grassroots perspective is present in federal, state, and local policy decisions. Members are based in red, blue, and swing states including those in the Appalachia, Deep South, Extreme Northwest, Midwest, Northeast and Southwest regions and represent Black, Latinx, Indigenous and low-income White communities in large, midsize, and small cities.

For information about this fact sheet or the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum, contact Danielle Simms at danielle@weact.org or Naadiya Hutchinson at naadiya.hutchinson@weact.org.

[19] https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/methane-leaks-erase-some-of-the-climate-benefits-of-natural-gas/#:~:text=Methane%2C%20the%20primary%20component%20of,when%20leaked%20into%20the%20atmosphere.&text=That's%20about%2060%25%20more%20than,by%20EPA%2C%20at%201.4%25.

[20] https://www.nrdc.org/onearth/natural-gas-industry-has-methane-problem

[21] https://climatefalsesolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/HOODWINKED_ThirdEdition_On-Screen_version.pdf and https://naacp.org/sites/default/files/documents/Fossil-Fueled-Foolery-2.0-abridged-4_1_2021.pdf

[22] https://endcoal.org/coal-myths/myth-2-coal-is-clean/

[23] http://www.energyjustice.net/coal/wastecoal

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April 19, 2022

Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice

To the New York City Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure & Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts

Regarding Assessing New York City's Infrastructure: Laying the Foundation for Federal Infrastructure Funding

Founded in 1988, WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a community-based organization in Harlem, New York City. At the city, state and federal levels WE ACT has been fighting enviornmental racism -- racial discrimination in environmental policy-making, enforcement of regulations and laws, and targeting communities of color for toxic waste disposal and siting of polluting industries. We recognize and advocate for community-driven solutions that can remedy the institutionalized harms associated with unjust urban planning policies that have plagued communities of color for generations. Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, policies, and activities and the distribution of benefit and investments.

We have been entrenched in environmental health and justice advocacy work since our beginning, when we organized against a sewage treatment plant placed in West Harlem. Since then, we have led advocacy campaigns to Dump Dirty Diesel MTA buses, clean up polluting bus depots, prevent childhood lead poisoning and achieve asthma-free housing, establish a national Environmental Justice Leadership Forum, expand community solar and jobs, establish seminal City and State laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and get bisphenol A (BPA) and other toxic chemicals out of children's toys and beauty and personal care products. This list leaves out countless other wins we have achieved for communities across New York.

We believe this is our seminal moment for addressing inequality and systemic racism head on as Cities, States, and federal agencies are resourced to make historic investments in environmental justice communities. At the federal level the Justice 40 Initiative promises to deliver at least 40 percent of the overall benefits from Federal investments in climate and clean energy to disadvantaged communities. Similarly, New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)

sets a target for disadvantaged communities to receive 40 percent of the overall benefits from the state's climate programs. There is so much more to be done for environmental justice at the local level. Local Law 60 and Local Law 64 codify environmental justice in New York City and we need to ensure we uplift the City's commitment to undoing the legacy of environmental injustice; improving the lives of individuals who have been systemically left behind due to past and present racist policies; and guarantee an equitable future for marginalized communities.

There are many issues in New York City that can be addressed with federal funding from the American Rescue Plan and Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act. We believe climate change and environmental justice must be high on the list of priorities as these issues are present threats that hit low-income residents and communities of color first and worst. They also compound other existing hardships such as food and housing insecurity. Earlier this year, WE ACT, in partnership with GreenLatinos and Third way, released a poll that found that Black and Brown communities feel the impact of climate change and see improving the economy and job growth as top priorities. As we begin to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 and look towards transitioning to a clean energy economy supported through the use of federal investments, community-led entrepreneurship and creating good-paying, family-sustaining jobs should also be a priority, especially for people of color whose communities have experienced decades of disinvestment and unemployment, and are mostly underrepresented in the clean energy industry.

Funding from the the Infrastructure and Investment and Jobs Act, if equitably distributed, can bring much needed investments that will begin to redress present and legacy social and environmental injustices and improve the lives of these communities in New York City. Specifically, we recommend using federal funding to:

Invest in the MTA Bus electrification and the East Harlem Transit Hub

We urge the committees to consider our community-based recommendations for East Harlem, one of the city's most-disadvantaged communities. These recommendations include building a transit hub on East 125th Street that connects the new Second Avenue Subway extension with the existing Lexington Avenue Subway line and the MetroNorth commuter railway. Such a project could serve as a catalyst to economically and environmentally revitalize the community along with our other recommendations to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change that East Harlem experiences - such as extreme heat and flooding -

while helping to safeguard the affordability and cultural richness the community has long been known for. This could prove to be a model project for the Justive40 initiative and help solidify the City's reputation as a leader in equitably addressing the impacts of climate change in an urban environment.

The **$2.2 billion** of DOT investments through the American Rescue Plan as well as **$5.5 billion** and **$2.0 billion** over the next 5 years for its Low- and No-Emission Transit Vehicle Program and Buses and Bus Facilities Program[1], respectively, from the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act can provide the resources needed for the 125th Street Hub to come to fruition, and for the MTA to modernize their bus system facilities; speed up the transition of their fleets from fossil fuel powered vehicles to electric buses; and facilitate a just and equitable transition of their workforces to a green energy reality that includes the full cycle of zero emission vehicle operations and maintenance.

Encourage school bus electrification

Low-income communities and communities of color are unfairly and unequally impacted by the effects of both climate change and poor air quality. Most school buses run on diesel fuel, which emits harmful soot, nitrogen oxides, carbon dioxide, and other pollutants that significantly worsen air quality. Continued use of diesel buses puts our children and the workers who drive these buses in danger. Replacing diesel school buses with all-electric school buses would help to improve air quality in NYC and reduce children's exposure to asthma-causing pollutants.

The bipartisan infrastructure act allocated **$5 billion** over 5 years for EPA's Clean School Bus Program. This program is primed to assist NYC school districts replace existing diesel school buses with zero-emission buses. Through the Alliance for Electric School Buses (AESB) coalition, WE ACT has been pushing to ensure investments in all-electric models and for the equitable design and implementation of the Clean School Program, among others recommendations to bring clean air to children and surrounding underserved and overburdened communities. The program also can help achieve the goal of Local Law 120 of 2021, mandating that school buses serving NYC public schools be all-electric by 2035. As part of the NYC Clean School Bus Coalition, WE ACT was instrumental in passing this law in November, 2021.

Invest in an electric vehicle charging infrastructure network

[1] https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2021-11/Bipartisan_Infrastructure_Law_NewYork.pdf

Under the bipartisan infrastructure law, the federal government will be investing **$7.5 billion** in building out a first-ever national electric vehicle network of chargers across the U.S. with New York expected to receive **$175 million** to support this effort in the state. It will also have the opportunity to apply for **$2.5 billion** in grant funding for EV charging infrastructure. We believe the investments in vehicle electrification and infrastructure must be supported with complementary policies, including rigorous mandatory emission reduction standards that decrease our exposure to carbon (CO2), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – which contribute to climate change, poor air quality and adverse health effects in our communities.

It is critical that charging infrastructure is deployed, in the first instance, to serve medium- and heavy-duty vehicles especially electric transit and school buses and in environmental justice communities adversely impacted by diesel pollution from these trucks and buses. In addition, prioritizing zero-emission, all-electric vehicles over alternative fuels we consider "false solutions" such as propane and renewable natural gas that will compound environmental and health burdens on these communities and contribute to the climate crisis as well as building out a diverse workforce and promoting community-led entrepreneurship as we transition to transportation electrification.

WE ACT submitted further comments on the equitable deployment of EV charging infrastructure under the Department of Transportation's National EV Formula and Charging and Fueling Infrastructure programs established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in January 2022.[2] We are also pursuing, through our AESB coalition letter, funding from these programs as well as the Department of Energy's Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grants for Community Charging and Corridor Charging to further support charging infrastructure needs for electric school buses and other medium- and heavy-duty vehicles across the country, including New York.

Reduce flooding in East Harlem

It is well documented and known to many city agencies that East Harlem is vulnerable to flooding from extreme rain, sea level rise, and storm surge. Residents have been consistently vocal about flooded streets during strong rain. Large areas of the neighborhood sit directly in a high-risk flood zone, according to flood maps from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The most at-risk areas have residents that are majority Black and Latinx and represent some of the poorest in NYC. East Harlem is one of

[2] https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/nevi_formula_program.cfm

the most underserved communities in NYC. For more than a decade communities in East Harlem have been promised plans and funds to make the neighborhood more resistant to flooding.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act authorizes over **$2 billion** for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) projects including **$491 million** toward the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Project which helps protect the safety and well-being of coastal communities by buffering shorelines from erosion, reducing flooding and removing hazardous structures. The infrastructure law also apportions **$1 billion** for the Federal Emergency Management Agency Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, which provides states and local communities with funding to implement hazard mitigation activities to reduce risk and costs associated with natural disasters and increase the resilience of critical infrastructure.

Tackle legacy pollution

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will bring overdue resources to address legacy environmental pollution. In particular, **$5 billion** for Superfund cleanups and brownfield remediation and redevelopment. According to the EPA, more than one in four Black and Hispanic Americans live within 3 miles of a Superfund site. Historical factors such as housing discrimination, residential segregation and community disinvestment accounts for the disproportionate impact of these hazardous waste sites, including brownfield sites on areas of low-income and communities of color, especially in cities across the US. There are several Superfund sites in NYC including the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn and thousands of contaminated commercial and industrial properties. Infrastructure law package could be tapped to clean up and reuse these sites, eliminating exposure to harmful environmental toxins such as heavy metals and organic solvents and revitalizing disadvantaged communities in the city.

Boost Weatherization Assistance Program and clean energy

For decades, the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) has assisted millions of low-moderate families access energy efficiency retrofits and weatherization, which helps reduce energy bills, supports resilience to extreme temperatures and weather events, improves air quality, and promotes healthy homes. However, these programs have been severely underfunded and heavily means tested while unawareness and barriers to household eligibility make WAP unreachable to many more families.

We applaud DOE's efforts to increase funding and improve WAP by expanding eligibility, making homes weatherization and electrification-ready, and providing workforce development initiatives. The infrastructure law brings **$3.5 billion** in additional funding that would help lower energy burdens for New York City residents. As the City seeks to secure this funding to address home weatherization, steps must be taken to also address poor housing conditions and environmental health hazards like lead paint and mold. Additionally, the infrastructure law's **$550 million** Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant and **$500 million** State Energy Programs can provide New York City with funding to develop and implement clean energy programs and projects.

Replace Lead Service Lines

Water service lines are the pipes that carry water from the water main into homes and buildings. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that drinking water can make up 20 percent or more of a person's total exposure to lead. Infants who consume mostly mixed formula can receive 40 percent to 60 percent of their exposure to lead from drinking water. According to the DEP, homes built prior to 1961 may have a lead water service line. There are over 860,000 water service lines in New York City.

In 2019, NYC Local Law 65 was enacted to publicly share what the DEP knows about the material that water service lines are made of and where they are located in an online interactive map. The data, as well as educational resources and tools for preventing lead contamination, was released in August 2021 and will be updated every six months based on the DEP's "best available records." From the city data, we learned that at least 137,000 (16%) of water service lines are potentially lead and at least 231,000 (27%) of water service lines are made of an "unknown" material. However, DEP announced after its first report that it would not be updating further.

The infrastructure package allocated **$15 billion** for replacing lead service lines with New York receiving **$2.6 billion** over the next five years. This funding can be leveraged to address lead service lines and deliver clean, safe drinking water for the many New York City residents living in older building stock, including low-moderate income and people of color living in public housing.

Better School Infrastructure

Climate Works for All is a broad coalition of more than 50 labor, environmental justice organizations, faith groups and environmental

advocates united to ensure that efforts to address climate change in New York City also create good, career-track jobs and prioritize low-income, climate-vulnerable communities. Its Green, Healthy Schools campaign calls on the city to invest $14.5 billion by 2030, or an annual investment of $1.8 billion for the next 8 years, to install solar panels and conduct deep retrofits in public schools, prioritizing those located in environmental justice communities.

New York City public schools account for one-quarter of all city-owned buildings and are among the biggest polluters . Poor air quality in classrooms pose health risks to both teachers and students and can affect their performance and concentration. Installing solar panels and conducting deep retrofits in schools - starting with HVAC installation - will help the city enhance air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create green career jobs, and foster resilient communities.

The bipartisan infrastructure law and American Rescue Plan includes investments that the City can leverage to advance solutions that will improve school infrastructure. These investments include DOE's **$500 million** grant program for energy efficiency improvements at public schools, including clean energy installation, HVAC and lighting upgrades, and comprehensive energy efficiency audits, in addition to the **$350 billion** State and Fiscal Recovery Funds that can support pandemic and recovery efforts including upgrading ventilations and building energy systems. These key investments will not only reduce energy costs and reduce emissions from school infrastructure but also support healthy and safe classroom environments.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and we welcome the opportunity to further discuss these critical federal investments that can address climate change, create jobs, and improve the lives of children and disadvantaged communities in New York City.

Sincerely,

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Testimony Before
The New York City Council Finance Committee
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget
New York City's Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP)

Testimony of Doxene Roberts, WHEDco's Vice President
and Director of Clinical and Case Management Services
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation
May 25, 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Doxene Roberts, the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) Vice President and Director of Clinical and Case Management Services, respectfully submits this testimony on the Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget. WHEDco urges the City Council to increase funding for the NYC Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) from $1,014,114 to $2,314,114 in the FY23 budget.

WHEDco is a community development organization founded on the radically simple idea that all people deserve to live in healthy, vibrant communities. We build award-winning, sustainable, affordable homes – but our work is not over when our buildings are complete. WHEDco believes that to be successful, affordable housing must be anchored in strong communities of which residents can be proud. Since its founding in 1992, WHEDco's mission has been to create and bridge access in the South Bronx to resources that create thriving neighborhoods – from high-quality early education and after-school programs, to fresh, healthy food, cultural programming, and economic opportunity. Our services impact the lives of over 40,000 people annually.

WHEDco is the only MCCAP partner organization in the Bronx, where for much of the pandemic, COVID infection and death rates were the highest in New York State. For over 10 years, the Bronx has ranked lowest (#62) among New York State's 62 counties in terms of health outcomes —namely, rates of mortality (premature death) and morbidity (poor or fair health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birth-weight). We work in the poorest urban congressional district (CD-15) in the nation, where 48% of all children live in poverty, and there is a large population of immigrants, many of whom are isolated and uninsured. Through WHEDco's Family Support and Counseling Services, South Bronx residents gain access to critical public benefits and are linked to resources and care that support their families. MCCAP funding has enabled us to support an additional full-time Case Manager to deepen our work around health benefits access. As a result, complex cases that were previously referred to organizations that focus on resolving difficult health benefits access issues, are now being addressed in-house, thereby preventing cases from falling through the cracks.

Navigating our healthcare system has sadly become one of the hardest thing people experience in their lives. If they are lucky enough to have health insurance, they often get lost in the labyrinth of insurance terminology, tier networks, billing notices, and other puzzling issues; all while their premiums and out-of-pocket costs continue to increase, forcing many to put off preventive visits or filling their prescription drugs. A 2022 healthcare affordability survey confirms this troubling trend: half of New Yorkers (53 percent) say they are not very confident they can pay for usual healthcare services and 4 in 10 (38 percent) are sacrificing health care because of costs (e.g., delayed care, avoided care, cut pills, or didn't

fill a prescription).[1] For those less fortunate who are unable to access coverage because of their immigration status or affordability barriers, the ability to access care is even more daunting. In addition, our inequitable health delivery system fails to address cultural and linguistic barriers and thus exacerbate health disparities and poor health outcomes.

Fortunately, New York City residents have a resource available to make the system work for them when the odds are stacked against them. In 1998 the New York City Council launched MCCAP to help residents with their healthcare and health insurance needs through a network of 26 CBOs with $4 million in funding ($2 million in Council funds plus $2 million in federal Medicaid matching funds). The program was cut in the fiscal crisis after the Great Recession. In 2019, the Council restored funding and MCCAP has since grown to a network of 12 CBOs—less than half of its old levels of capacity. Nonetheless, today MCCAP helps our most vulnerable populations across the city navigate our Byzantine healthcare system.

The lead agency for MCCAP, Community Service Society (CSS), acts as the hub with its live, toll-free helpline while CBO advocates serve as the spokes that provide in-person services in 15 languages and at 15 different locations across all five boroughs. The advocates are trained and supported by CSS to help people understand their insurance, resolve health insurance problems, get medical services, access affordable care for those who are uninsured, and address social determinants of health.

Since the program relaunched in February 2020, the CSS helpline and CBOs have provided much-needed advocacy assistance to clients who have struggled to secure coverage and medically necessary care (including COVID-19 tests and vaccines) during the COVID-19 pandemic, proving to be a cost-effective program along the way. Some examples of MCCAP's success include:

- handling more than 7,000 cases;
- obtaining a favorable outcome for clients in 90% of the cases;
- serving clients (80%) who are people of color and/or speak a language other than English at home; and
- maintaining a helpline live-answer rate of over 90%.

In addition to helping people secure coverage and care, MCCAP CBOs have also been effective at addressing social determinants of health, such as food insecurity and unemployment, by helping clients apply for food stamps and unemployment insurance.

New York City residents need trusted and experienced MCCAP advocates on their side now more than ever to help them access the coverage and care they need. New York City deserves to have the MCCAP program restored to its old levels of $4 million in funding with a network of 26 CBOs.

We respectfully ask that the New York City Council help us get halfway restored by increasing MCCAP funding from $1,014,114 to $2,314,114 in the FY23 budget. With an additional $1.3 million, MCCAP will be able serve thousands of additional clients by increasing funding to the existing network of CBOs and procuring 14 additional CBOs that can provide in-person services in districts that are currently underserved.

[1] Source: https://smhttp-ssl-58547.nexcesscdn.net/nycss/Affordability_NY_D4.pdf

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at: 718-839-1133 or droberts@whedco.org.

Testimony of Ameer Alnasser, Brooklyn Arab Youth in Bay Ridge
In partnership with Youth Food Advocates and Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

My name is Ameer Alnasser. I am a junior at Stuyvesant High School and member of Brooklyn Arab Youth in Bay Ridge, and here in support of Youth Food Advocates. On behalf of all students in New York City, I'm asking for your support in securing $250 million in the budget for the cafeteria enhancement in New York City for all middle and high schools.

From a young age, school lunch has always been meant to be a time for eating healthy and good food as well as socializing with others. However, as I have gotten older, I've noticed that school lunches are no longer enjoyed by my peers and it has been very disappointing seeing so many students ditch school lunch to instead go for food outside. Our building has a fantastic cafeteria, but without appealing menu options and an overhaul of the service line, it does not get used to its fullest extent. From being outside during lunch hours, I witness so many students who shrug off cafeteria food, and I do the exact same thing. At times, if I forget my wallet at home, I'd rather go home hungry. If there was a modernization of the cafeteria system in schools, I believe that the cafeteria will be a better place for us to get healthy food quickly. Instead of being forced to eat the options provided for us, allowing for more choices would help the cafeteria continue to be a place for friends to socialize.

A healthier student is a healthier member of the community, and if we allow so many students to go outside to eat lunch, we are opening them up to foods that are significantly less nutritious than the possibilities in school. With your support for funding, school cafeterias across the city will become more modernized and the school food less stigmatized, as school food becomes more nutritious and more appealing to students.

Thank you for your time.

Ameer Alnasser, Brooklyn Arab Youth
The Arab American Association of New York

In partnership with
Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Anna Lilia Araiza, Director of Youth Leadership
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Anna Lilia Araiza, I am the Director of Youth Leadership at Community Food Advocates. I am here to ask for the council's full support to fund DOE's Office of Food and Nutrition Services Cafeteria Enhancement model for all middle and high school cafeterias.

Studies have demonstrated that an increase in school meals participation plays a critical role in boosting academic success. For example, after implementing Universal Free School meals in NYC, ELA and math scores increased an equivalent of up to 10 weeks of learning among our city's middle school students.

We know of the ongoing innovations in school food and applaud these efforts, and are encouraged to see the centering of student voices in this evolution. For many students, despite innovations in the menu and food they still step into an unwelcoming, outdated, institutional-looking cafeteria. When students don't step into their school cafeteria, they don't eat, and if they don't eat, they don't learn. OFNS has a solution with the Enhanced Cafeteria model -- and we want to see funds committed in the budget to bring these updates equitable across all middle and high schools.

The cafeteria should be a safe student-centered space. As a former middle school teacher in the Bronx, I learned pretty quickly that students would rather spend their lunch time in my classroom than in the cafeteria because they felt more welcomed in my room. I'm now discovering what was true for my one classroom continues to be the case for students across the city. I listen to young people from campuses across the city, and students just don't feel welcomed or comfortable in their school cafeterias.

Eating is a full sensory experience; the menu innovations and nutritional value of school meals is viewed with skepticism from students. The hard work happening behind the counter is not translating for them in the cafeteria space. This is why it is critical to invest in safe student-centered cafeterias where our young people can see the changes for themselves, feel welcomed, and are able to connect the importance of school meals to their academic success.

There is a real opportunity to transform each and every middle and high school cafeteria in a meaningful, tangible, and equitable way so that young people can see the elevated importance of healthy school meals with their own eyes.

Thank you for your time.

Anna Lilia Araiza
Director of Youth Leadership
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
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Testimony of Ashley Liu,
In support of Youth Food Advocates & Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hello honorable members of City Council

My name is Ashley Liu, I am a junior at Brooklyn Technical High School, and the president of Active Community Teamwork, an activism club at Tech. Our school cafeteria was redesigned in 2018, a year before my start at Tech. I remember my first day seeing the cafeteria and being in shock of how much cleaner and organized it was compared to my middle school. I was in shock that there were hot and cold lunch options and I was most of all shocked by the communal dining arrangement.

At Tech, I see students racing to the cafeteria to claim a booth or roundtable, before putting down their bags and getting school lunch. For students at Tech, lunch is the time to refuel, recharge, and catch up with friends. This is largely because we have an enhanced **lunch**room. Our **lunch**room helps create community and helps students see school lunch in a new light. School lunch is often stigmatized, but students at tech have a more positive association.

In preparation for this hearing, we asked students at our school about their experiences with the enhanced lunchroom. One student said "*I've been more willing to go to the cafeteria and **actually** eat. I'm happy with the variety of choices the cafeteria provides*." Another student said "*The seating arrangement is very flexible and provides for a good social space regardless of if you are alone or with friends."* Our enhanced lunchroom has helped increase lunch participation and this is reflected in the data.

Lunch at Tech is an integral part of student life and academic success. Good food is necessary when students are at Tech for 7 or more hours a day. Lunch is absolutely necessary to ensure that me and my peers can do our best. Students have the right to the resources needed to succeed, including a destigmatizated and enjoyable school lunch. Students at Tech have greatly benefited from and enjoyed our enhanced **lunch**room and I stand here in partnership with Youth Food Advocates to support ALL students **in** NYC who deserve to enjoy their lunch as well.

Thank you for your time!

Ashley Liu
President, ACT Club
Brooklyn Tech High School

In partnership with
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Ashley Yang, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hello. My name is Ashley Yang. I have been a member of Youth Food Advocates since 2020, and I am a current sophomore at Stuyvesant High School.

Today I'm here asking for your support in securing the funds for the cafeteria enhancement in New York City schools. This increase in budget will allow for all NYC public schools to have access to updated cafeterias which will increase lunch participation by reducing stigma as well as improve the lunch and cafeteria experience.

School food is an integral part of students' lives. Alongside the meals, the cafeteria plays an instrumental role in the school food experience and school food participation. At my school, and many others, the experience begins before food is ever served. From the start, the cafeteria environment can be very intimidating. Unknowns- such as, *where will I sit? With who?* often race through student's minds. This is in addition to the stigma attached to even eating in a school cafeteria. My school is lucky enough to have a wide number of options in its open campus, and those who decide to eat inside are often looked down upon and seen as those who can't afford to eat out. This hinders the participation of students in eating school lunch. Regardless of their need, it puts everyone at a disadvantage. Students miss out on their meal, which is essential to being successful at school, in addition to missing out on time to be social and meet new people.

The pandemic has impacted both student nutrition and comfort in social environments. It is necessary for the city to invest equitably in school food because of how much student life is centered around this. Lunch is both a time for socialization as it is a time of getting the proper essential nutrients for the rest of the school day. It is a time in which academics takes a pause and the human side of school is awakened. Investing equitably in school food will both support students' physical health and performance at school as well as their mental health- allowing relationships to be built over a hot meal. My own experiences have given me first-hand evidence in the ability and power the cafeteria setting holds and how it can foster growth in friendships. Thank you for your time.

Ashley Yang
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Elisha Verebes, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Good Afternoon, my name is Elisha Verebes and I'm a senior at West End Secondary School. I am here today to ask for your support in funding the $250 million initiative to implement enhanced cafeterias across all New York City public High Schools and Middle Schools.

The cafeteria should be a space for socializing and meeting new people – a relaxing break in the school day amid the stress of academic classes. However, I have seen how the stigmatization of eating school lunch or sitting in the cafeteria has prevented the type of lively socializing a school cafeteria should foster. At my school, the cafeteria is eerily quiet because most students prefer to leave the building during lunch and view the cafeteria as a last resort place to eat. Therefore, the students who need to stay in because they can't afford to buy food off campus are left isolated, stigmatized, and without the beneficial social aspect of lunchtime.

The pandemic has taken an unfortunate toll on the students' education, and I am asking Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks and the City Council to take action to address the loss of learning in the past 2 years of interrupted schooling. One way to support a student's education is to ensure they are eating tasty, nutritious food in a welcoming cafeteria environment. The enhanced cafeterias will not only add more menu options for students, but the redesigned cafeteria spaces will make the experience of eating school food more enjoyable and less-stigmatized. Students will be able to enjoy the social aspect of lunch because all students - regardless of if they eat school lunch, bring their own, or buy outside and bring it back to school - will want to eat together in the cafeteria.

I hope you will join Youth Food Advocates in the fight for a better school food system in New York City with universal enhanced cafeterias. Thank you for your time.

Elisha Verebes, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Elizabeth Porsella, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hello, I'm Eliza Porsella, a current eleventh grader at the international Baccalaureate school for Global Education, and a member of Youth Food Advocates. I'm here to advocate for $250 million in funding to be used for cafeteria enhancement in New York City public schools.

School food is imperative to a successful school day for the average student. The NYC public school system boasts 1.1 million students, many of which do rely on school food. Aside from just eating school lunch, cafeterias are also supposed to be a safe and comfortable environment where students can take a break from thinking about classroom assignments. Students deserve an environment where they are able to focus on eating their lunches and socializing.

As someone who often relied on school food when my single mother didn't have time to pack me a lunch, I've always wanted to see improvements that allow for the next generation of students who need school food to be happy and not hungry. There is a lot of stigma surrounding eating school lunch, and the quality has never been preferable, making it so that many students go hungry during lunch. I personally never have enough time to eat in the morning, and often find myself waiting for lunch. It's incredibly disappointing when I finally get to sit down to eat and the school lunch lacks options and does not look appealing. I'm distracted for the rest of the day and have trouble focusing on my assignments. Increasing food participation isn't just for the physical health of the students, it is for our mental health too. Students won't have to stress about their meals, and they'll actually be able to focus on furthering their education. With this, I want to advocate for the needed funds to transform all middle and high school cafeterias to enhanced cafeterias. Enhanced cafeterias will give hungry students the ability to choose what they get to eat and allow them to eat enough to sustain them through the rest of the school day. This could improve focus, health, and happiness for so many students.

Thank you for your time.

Eliza Porsella, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
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Testimony of Ethan Cyrus, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hello, my name is Ethan Cyrus, I am a member of the Youth Food Advocates. I am in 10th grade at George Westinghouse Career and Tech High School in Brooklyn. Today I am here to ask for your support to change the school food program and improve the presentation of school food by investing in the cafeteria redesign.

Currently, a big part of the issue is how the lunches look in schools. For example, in my school the school lunch is usually food that looks unappealing or looking undercooked. I usually see people just grab a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch and avoid the other food due to how it looks. If students don't like what they see, they are less likely to try the food.

School food is important because most kids cannot bring food from home due to varying reasons. This problem has been happening even before the pandemic. I care because on the days that I need to eat school lunch then I would hope that the food is appealing for me to eat.

This matters for me and for all the students in my school, and all students in New York City, because there could be the chance that one day we're depending on the school lunch to eat during the whole school day. The investment in the school cafeterias could change our lives by giving us better options for us to eat when we can't bring our own lunch and changing the way students see school lunch.

This is why I am here today to ask the city council to ensure that the budget includes an investment in our school food program, to invest in our future, by investing in the cafeteria redesign for all middle and high school cafeterias.

Thank you for your time.

Ethan Cyrus, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Faith Jones, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hi my name is Faith Jones and I'm a current 9th grader at Brooklyn Technical High School and a member of Youth Food Advocates. I'm here today in support of the enhanced cafeterias in middle schools and high schools across NYC.

All students deserve to have enhanced cafeterias as it allows for an important improvement when it comes to the current circumstances faced in most school cafeterias. I've seen many students' opinions that have been published online criticizing the environment of the cafeteria, with most of the criticisms being aimed at the cafeteria's design. Students have expressed the present stigma in the cafeteria as the lunch rooms are seen as outdated and therefore seen as insufficient for eating. As a result, students are belittled when being seen getting lunch at the cafeteria. Consequently, students may go hungry to prevent being ridiculed.

Fortunately, for me and the students at Brooklyn Tech we don't have to experience that stigma thanks to the enhanced cafeteria at our school. I've learned that in our cafeteria participation increased from the low 30-percents to an average of almost 50%. I've asked a friend of mine about their thoughts about the modern design of the cafeteria and they had told me that it led to an improvement in their mood compared to the feeling that they get in the older lunch rooms. They explained that they enjoyed the upbeat mood in contrast to the "draft" feeling that they get in the outdated cafeterias. Additionally, the enhanced cafeteria allowed them to be able to socialize with their peers and friends because of the improvement in mood caused by the visual aspects of their environment. My friend explained how it is important that students are able to socialize and make use of the cafeteria as a break in their academic school day. Overall, voicing the opinions of scholars that came before them about the benefits of an improved lunch room environment.

All in all, enhanced cafeterias are needed to ensure that the students attending school are able to experience a segment in their day where they can feel relaxed, take a break from academics, and socialize with their friends. Based on the data taken at schools already with the enhanced cafeterias it is proven that these benefits lead to an increase in school food participation, which in turn leads to a positive impact on the students' academic achievement and better mental health. I hope to see the city council members support in improving the lunch room experience for all students in NYC by allocating the $250 million funding needed to be able to update the cafeterias. Thank you for your time.

Faith Jones, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Katelin Wong,
In support of Youth Food Advocates & Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hello, honorable members of the city council,

My name is Katelin Wong, I am a junior at Brooklyn Tech, the event coordinator for the Active Community Teamwork club, and am also involved with advocacy on voting rights, education equity, and more outside of school.

I am here in partnership with Youth Food Advocates to support efforts to redesign school cafeterias and enhance the lunch-time experience for all high school and middle school students in New York City public schools.

In 2017, with the start of universal free school lunch citywide, the participation at Brooklyn Tech was about 36%. When the enhanced cafeteria layout was implemented in March 2018, participation increased and now averaged nearly 50% the first year.

Enhanced cafeterias bring a more welcoming environment for students, they add a wide variety of foods that allows students to have hot and cold options for lunch every day.

Personally, the cafeteria layout at Brooklyn tech has allowed me and my small group of friends to sit in booths and have small and intimate conversations during the lunch period while bigger groups are able to occupy the long tables. I have made long-lasting friendships in our cafeteria. During my freshman year, I knew no one in my lunch period. However, the cafeteria fostered a welcoming environment to socialize with other students which led me to make new friends to sit with during lunch every day. Friendships made during my freshman year of high school are friendships I still keep today.

All in all, I believe that having enhanced cafeterias for all high schools and middle schools in NYC will increase the school lunch participation in all school cafeterias by a significant percentage. Universal free school lunch was the first step to lunch equity, the redesigned cafeterias is the next big step to equity in NYC school food.

Thank you for your time!

Katelin Wong
Event Coordinator, ACT Club
Brooklyn Tech High School

In partnership with
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Leslie Gomez Rivera, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hello my name is Leslie Gomez Rivera, I'm a senior at Midwood High School and a member of Youth Food Advocates. I'm here to ask for your support to fund cafeteria enhancements in New York City schools.

I've been a part of the NYC education system for all my life and I've come to realize the importance of school food for growing children and for our education. When my father was sick and my mother would be at the hospital with him, I had to rely on school food. I would make sure to get to school early and get breakfast and then make sure during my last period class, to ask for permission to leave early to get lunch before they closed the kitchen. I didn't want to be another burden on my mother. This opened my eyes to the importance of school food because it was accessible to me at the time that I needed it the most.

My freshman year, our cafeteria was the standard normal one. It was the long white tables that were placed next to each other, and the experience with this cafeteria environment wasn't the most pleasant because it was usually crowded and unappealing. After the cafeteria redesign, we had booths where you could sit across from your friends and it was much more inviting to eat school lunch. There were seats for just two people or big tables within individual seats. The entire cafeteria was more colorful and appealing to just sit there. With the remodeled cafeteria, the number of people eating school lunch increased dramatically at Midwood. This year I have had several meetings with my school food manager because our booths and nice tables were not being used due to COVID restrictions, and now that we have our remodeled cafeteria back she noticed that more students are eating lunch once again.

Midwood is a school with over 4,000 students, the updated cafeteria has had a big impact and more students are getting the food they need, so just imagine the change that all of you could create for all middle schools and high schools by supporting the redesigned cafeterias. More and more children would feel better about school lunch and would overall improve mood, attention, and the quality of our education across the board.

Thank you for your time.

Leslie Gomez, Rivera, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

Testimony of Shivani Shah, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates

Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Hi! I'm Shivani Shah and I'm a junior at Stuyvesant High School. I'm a member of Youth Food Advocates.

Today, I'm here to advocate and secure the $250 million funding towards cafeteria enhancement in all New York City middle schools and high schools. Kids and teens eat with their eyes, so the appeal of the school food matters as much as the taste. The appeal of the cafeteria matters as much as the options.

Kids need fuel. But what type of fuel do they get? My school is an open campus, and many students go out to eat at the local fast food chains such as McDonalds, Shake Shack, Subway, and Chipotle. These lunch decisions might look like the choices of the students, but really based on the circumstances and opportunities, the decisions are dictated by the traditional service line, limited menu options, and lack of seating. Most students go out for lunch not because of the better taste, but because of the lack of options within the daily menu. The cafeteria does not have enough seating, forcing many students to sit on the vents that outline the cafeteria or wait until a seat opens up. Students cannot take lunch outside of the cafeteria, as eating in the hallways is prohibited. This leaves students who don't appreciate a crowded and overwhelming space with no place to go other than outside.

Many complaints from my peers, such as "I couldn't find a table" or "the food doesn't look appealing", would be resolved with cafeteria enhancement. Cafeteria enhancement is crucial for my school because it would add more daily hot and cold menu options to the menu that students want to see and make the food line more appealing, and it is even more crucial for schools with lower funding to ensure equity across all of our schools. Increasing lunch participation rates in middle schools and high schools helps nurture our young minds. We are the same minds that will be battling crises such as climate change, cancer, poverty, etc. in the future. Through funding the cafeteria enhancement, you are supporting our academic success, empowering the youth and investing in our future.

Thank you for your time.

Shivani Shah, Youth Food Advocates
Community Food Advocates
Lunch 4 Learning Coalition
110 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005

youthrepresent
JUSTICE FROM COURTROOM TO COMMUNITY

New York City Council
Committee on Criminal Justice
Executive Budget Hearing – Criminal Justice
Written Comments of Michael Pope, Executive Director at Youth Represent
May 25, 2022

Youth Represent is dedicated to improving the lives and futures of young people affected by the criminal legal system. When the justice system creates barriers to success for youth, **we use the law to help youth leave the stigma of a criminal record behind**. We provide criminal and civil reentry legal representation to young people age 16-26, assisting them with everything from rap sheet review to school suspensions to employment discrimination and any other legal needs they identify. We also engage in policy advocacy and youth leadership development through our City Dreamers Advocacy Camp. Our interdisciplinary approach allows us to understand our clients' legal and practical challenges so we can effectively represent them from courtroom to community.

Thank you to Chair Rivera, Committee members, and staff for the opportunity to provide testimony on the 2022 budget.

An Approach to Safety Rooted in Racial & Economic Justice, Public Health, & Youth Development

As elected leaders and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice, you know that our City is at a crossroads. The last fifteen years have been among the safest in our city's history, with record low levels of gun violence and other violent crime. However, in June of 2020 that trend reversed. According to NYPD data, there were 901 shootings from June – August in 2020, compared to 332 during the same period in 2019.

Opponents of recent but long overdue reforms to our criminal legal system, including New York's Raise the Age law and bail reforms, have tried to blame this surge on those reforms. But the data—and common sense—tell a different story. My focus in this testimony is on Raise the Age and youth justice. **For the first eighteen months after Raise the Age went into effect in New York, shootings in New York City remained the lowest they have been in decades, even as arrests and incarceration of 16- and 17-year-olds declined.**[1] Only after months of Covid-19 infections, deaths, and lockdowns, did gun violence increase in New York City, as it did in many cities around the country where criminal justice reforms had not been enacted.

For young people, the effects of Covid-19 go beyond the initial lockdowns, hospitalizations, and community loss of life. Since the onset of the pandemic, young adults (aged 18-24) are

[1] See the New York State Raise the Age Implementation Task Force Final Report, p. 9 (https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/FINAL%20Report-Raise%20the%20Age%20Task%20Force%2012-22-20.pdf) and NYPD Historic New York City Crime Data (https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page).

experiencing anxiety and depression at higher rates than any other age group.[2] One in four young adults was found to have seriously considered suicide – an increase from one in 10 young adults pre-pandemic. Emerging evidence shows that the pandemic has negatively affected academic growth, widening pre-existing disparities for students at every level, including post-secondary students.[3] A study published in *Pediatrics* found that nearly 1 in every 500 children in the U.S. has lost a caregiver, and children of color have been disproportionately affected, with the highest loss of primary caregivers in California, Texas and New York.[4] In the midst of all of this, many of the services that young people rely on for support have been disrupted.

The combined health, mental health, academic, economic, and emotional tolls of the pandemic have created deep uncertainty for many young New Yorkers, leading some to question whether they can rely on the very institutions responsible for their health, safety, and development. Young people are looking to elected leaders to lead us out of the pandemic and into a just recovery. They are looking for lasting, community-based solutions to gun violence—not policies that blame, criminalize, and incarcerate young people.

Youth Represent was one of the lead organizations in the campaign to Raise the Age of adult criminal prosecution in New York, helping to secure passage of legislation in 2017 that finally ended New York's shameful designation as one of the last two states in the country to automatically try *and incarcerate* all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. Because of the extreme violence experienced by teenagers at Rikers Island, a key provision of Raise the Age mandated the transfer of all 16- and 17- year-olds off of Rikers in October 2018, a year before the rest of the law was fully in effect for 17-year-olds.

Raise the Age was a critical step forward, but it did not extend any protections to youth and emerging adults past the age of 18. Each year, tens of thousands of young people 18-25 are arrested and prosecuted in adult court and exposed to lifelong criminal records. **As of this week, there were nearly 1,300 young people age 18-25 incarcerated in New York City jails, nearly all of them Black and Latinx. Of those, over 500 are age 21 and under.** The annualized cost to incarcerate one person in DOC custody is over $556,539[5] -- many times the cost of even the most expensive college. And despite this extreme and excessive spending, the Mayor's Executive Budget proposes increasing DOC's expense budget by $125m over the FY2022 adopted budget.

There are so many better ways to spend this money. The city must divest from systems that surveil, police, arrest, and incarcerate young people. Instead, we must make sustained

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[2] Kaiser Family Foundation Issue Brief (Feb. 2021). The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use. https://www.kff.org/report-section/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use-issue-brief/

[3] "Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students." US Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, June 2021.

[4] National Institutes of Health News Release (October 7, 2021): *More than 140,000 U.S. children lost a primary or secondary caregiver due to the COVID-19 pandemic*. https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/more-140000-us-children-lost-primary-or-secondary-caregiver-due-covid-19-pandemic

[5] For FY2021, from NYC Comptroller, December 2021. FY2022 and FY2023 data is not yet available

investments in the things that are the foundation of genuine safety: housing, education, green spaces, healthcare, and living wage employment opportunities.

We must **expand programs** that take a public health approach to gun violence, including violence intervention programs. While New York State has led the nation by investing in these programs, the resources they receive remain a tiny fraction of those received by traditional law enforcement. Violence intervention programs must be funded to expand catchment areas, hire more staff, and create robust intake systems to serve more participants city and statewide.

We must also invest in health, mental health, and well-being for youth and families and in education and economic mobility. These investments are detailed in the Raise the Age campaign's 2022 Youth Justice Platform for NY.[6] Within this ecosystem of services and supports, legal services play a key role – helping young people overcome barriers to employment and education and maintain stable housing and family connections.

Youth Represent: Critical Services for Youth

With support from the New York City Council through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, Youth Represent provides reentry legal services for young people in their own communities.

Our clients come from across New York City:

- **25%** are from the Bronx
- **22%** are from Brooklyn
- **22%** are from Manhattan
- **13%** are from Queens
- **8%** are from Staten Island, Westchester, and New Jersey

Nearly all the young people we serve are youth of color:

- **46%** are Black
- **25%** are Latiné
- **7%** identify as multiracial
- **6%** are of Asian & Pacific Islander descent
- **3%** are White
- **9%** are Other or Unknown

The average age of our clients is 23 years old. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, with your support, we were able to deliver **106 legal workshops to 1,322 participants** and provided full legal services to **428 young people** last year.

The young people we serve have been some of the **hardest hit by the pandemic**. Some are navigating pregnancy and parenting young children. Many have faced pressure to continue

[6] https://raisetheageny.org/22-youth-justice-ny-platform/

working in unsafe conditions. Others face employment and other forms of discrimination based on system-involvement. Throughout the pandemic, Youth Represent has continued to provide critical, client-centered support to young people facing legal issues.

- <u>Protecting Employment Opportunities</u>
    - More than 80% of employers run criminal background checks, but we've found that nearly half of the young people we work with don't know what will show up on their record. We obtain RAP sheets, review them with our clients, and counsel young people on how to speak to employers about their criminal history accurately and effectively. We also correct mistakes on RAP sheets and ensure that records that should be sealed are. Finally, we make sure that young jobseekers understand their rights when applying for jobs and represent them if they face unlawful discrimination or have their privacy wrongfully violated by companies conducting criminal background reports.
        - *Vanessa's Story: "Vanessa" had her vocational license suspended because she was facing a misdemeanor charge. By researching the collateral consequences of the prosecution's proposed plea and obtaining support letters for Vanessa, we were able to negotiate a better plea with a non-criminal disposition and obtain an immediate seal. Vanessa was able to obtain a certification of disposition from the court and get her job reinstated immediately.*
- <u>Supporting Young Jobseekers</u>
    - Being able to find and keep a job often requires addressing other legal issues. We fight for needed repairs in apartments and defend families at risk of eviction from public housing that can stem from arrests or convictions. We represent young people in criminal and summons matters, using both legal and youth development principles to get the best possible outcomes for our clients. We also represent young parents with custody, visitation and child support issues and assist LGBTQ youth with name and gender marker changes.
        - *Cee's Story: "Cee" is a non-binary young person who lives with their mother and two young siblings in a NYCHA apartment in the Bronx. Cee reached out because their home had become uninhabitable: the stove had not worked in more than a year, there was a mouse infestation, their kitchen pipes leaked, and paint was chipping off the walls. The family was forced to go to a friend's apartment just to bathe. We filed a petition demanding that NYCHA make needed repairs right away, providing extensive documentation of their failure to remedy the issues. The judge admonished NYCHA for their inexcusable delays and ordered them to remedy the conditions immediately.*
- <u>Covid Response</u>
    - With the onset of the pandemic, Youth Represent used technology to continue to provide robust services while working remotely. We launched a **chatbot** to allow young people to start the intake process seamlessly just by visiting our website; started a citywide **legal hotline** in collaboration with Community Service Society;

and have relied on word of mouth and social media to spread the word about our services to young people who are disconnected from traditional service providers. We also shifted resources to respond to immediate client needs and launched an emergency fund that has covered expenses ranging from groceries to cleaning supplies to cab rides so a pregnant client could travel safely to prenatal appointments.

Youth Represent: City Council Criminal Justice Programs Initiative Support

City Council funding, through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, has allowed us to provide critical legal services for youth. This year we have requested an additional $25,000 – for a total request of $100,000 – which would allow us to increase our support for young people under the funding by 25% and respond to the already overwhelming demand we are seeing for our legal services in neighborhoods with the highest rates of gun violence.

We hope that you will renew and expand funding for Youth Represent and that you will do so in the context of a just budget – investing in the full range of services and supports that young people and families rely on.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 crisis has amplified the injustices that Youth Represent fights every single day. It has also heightened and clarified the need to divest from incarceration and invest in critical services and access to safe and healthy conditions for living and working for all youth and families.

We **thank the Council** for your support and for championing young people across the city impacted by the legal system.

Dear Council member Chi Ossé, my name is Aasim Rozier-Williams and I am a Brooklyn native. Thank you so much for working to ensure that New York City is a true sanctuary city.

I realized while working in Brooklyn that there isn't a lot of job training for the transgender and gender nonconforming communities (TGNC). This in of itself creates continuous economic disparities for New York City residents and perpetuates housing instability. Working in Brooklyn, I've encountered many transgender and gender nonconforming community members wanting to work, but they don't have the tools or safe access to training that would assist them in working towards earning stable income. The TGNC community, like the rest of the LGBTQIA+ community are regularly kicked out their homes because they are not accepted by their loved ones. The impact of the lack of housing hurts the mental health of the community and the impending homelessness causes more harm.

Our City Council has done so much to support the TGNC community, and I look forward to your leadership in addressing social issues that affect New Yorkers across all our boroughs. Please support stronger pathways to safer work environments and training options for the TGNC community. I believe that your championing for resource equity will be significant in moving to end homelessness in the LGBTQ community and across all five boroughs of New York City. Thank you.

May 26, 2022

Dear Finance Committee: Thank you for letting me submit written testimony regarding your recent hearing. I am involved with The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, and I want to say: The intent of Local Law 53 is clear - to fund trusted tenant organizing groups who serve low-income communities to lead outreach and education efforts so that tenants are informed of Right To Counsel NYC (LL 54). Ultimately, tenants who qualify for RTC NYC will feel supported with professional-level expertise before an eviction proceeding is filed against them. But the majority of tenants won't be aware of their LL 54 rights unless there's outreach. Therefore,

Please Fund Local Law 53:

Local Law 53 is crucial for several reasons, one being its robust focus on clarity, which I'll expand on in the final paragraph below.

While we applauded the city for passing LL 53 in May of last year, with an effective date of November 2021, we are deeply disappointed that it has not yet been implemented. To date and since the RTC Coalition last testified at the General Welfare Committee Hearing on February 28, OCJ has failed to release the RFP or confirm funding for Local Law 53. We are aware that OCJ and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit have engaged in efforts to inform the public of LL 54/Right to Counsel NYC. *We want to be clear: such efforts should not be regarded as a band-aid on the failure to fund Local Law 53.*

With hundreds of thousands of households behind on rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more than 200,000 eviction cases filed across New York, tenants need this law now more than ever. We were told the city allocated $3.6 million towards LL 53, had drafted the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was going to release it in November 2021. To date, the RTC Coalition has not seen it. We know the mayoral and city council administrations take time to transition but with the expiration of the eviction protections almost four months ago and countless eviction cases moving forward without Right to Counsel NYC, the city is now out of compliance with its own law and it needs to get behind LL 53 now.

As mentioned above, with the full funding of LL 53, tenants who qualify for Local Law 54/RTC NYC would feel supported with **professional-level expertise** ahead of time ***before*** an eviction scenario. Today this mostly isn't happening, especially for tenants who tragically assume that Housing Courts abide by "Miranda Rights" which of course is **untrue.**

> One such tenant exists in my building; he's nearly 78 years old and assumes much: Sadly my neighbor conflates Miranda Rights with RTC NYC - something he should not do, but to be honest, he doesn't know any better. In other words, tenants like him who are unaware of RTC NYC (LL 54)'s nuances can act on life-altering assumptions and unwittingly create an eviction situation that's unfavorable to them. Should they ever set foot in housing court, they're in for a rude awakening, but the good news is:

funding LL 53 would mitigate this. Fully funding LL 53 would facilitate non-profits' ability to **clarify the numerous and important nuances within** LL 54 (such as the right to request an adjournment if there aren't RTC lawyers available to them) so tenants aren't **assuming untrue things**. Thanks again for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Alex Yong, Constituent of CD 3
Cell text: 385-381-0019

My name is Alex Zucker, I am a New York City (Sheepshead Bay) resident and a member of the New York City chapter of SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice).

I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams's executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents, and families are struggling to stay in their homes. Meanwhile the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10 billion budget intact.

I urge Council members to reject the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, I call on the Council to invest $4 billion in permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. I also call on the Council to reject Mayor Adams's cuts to the city's public education system by investing $122 million in CUNY and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, instead of filling school police vacancies. I also urge Council members to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, with all my heart, I call on the Council to reject the mayor's reactionary, fear-mongering return to law and order. For the sake of all New Yorkers, Council members must reject the mayor's proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice that the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

I thank you, City Council members and Finance Committee Chair Brannan, for taking the time to read my testimony.

Hello, my name is Alicia Singham Goodwin. I am a New York City (Harlem) resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. **I am also a public health researcher with a specialization in gun violence & gender-based violence.** I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. **I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.**

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.
[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
[4] CUNY: City University of New York
[5] DOE: Department of Education
[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.
[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.
[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.
[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

From: Alison Gardy <algardy@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 12:49 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony on behalf of funding the NYCDOE Family Healing Ambassador program

Thank you, Chair Justin Brannan and Committee on Finance members, including my wonderful councilwoman Gale Brewer.

I appreciate the amazing New Yorkers who have spoken so far. Your commitment to our City's well-being makes me proud to be your fellow New Yorker. All of us here today are ultimately asking for a culture shift that values our humanity and capacity to care for each other.

I am here as a Family Healing Ambassador, a parent/guardian volunteer position created during the pandemic by the NYCDOE. I request funds for the Family Healing Ambassador program to continue and grow after its first successful pilot year. **Like nothing I have ever seen before,** this program is positioned to create the culture shift we need to incubate a healthy, productive future for our City.

The Family Healing Ambassadors program launched last Spring in K-12 schools in zip codes hardest hit by Covid-19. Schools elected Family Healing Ambassadors and engaged Parent Coordinators so that, last summer, more than 800 of us received more than 10 hours of training to help us recognize trauma in children and address the well-being – mental, physical, emotional, social – of students, families, and our school cultures.

With three children in three different public schools – elementary, middle, and high – I was elected Family Healing Ambassador in both District 3 in Manhattan and District 10 in the Bronx.

This past year, we have zoomed regularly, with translation in many languages, to give each other emotional, creative and strategic support as we each devise programs to help heal our school communities. Skilled

facilitators ensure that our meetings lift voices that need to be heard and reflect the demographics of our public schools. Our meetings are free of judgment and full of caring. We hear each other's concerns, connect, and, finally, feel united citywide as a parent/guardian community.

In a time of division, strife, and fear, we need the Family Healing Ambassadors program to have a second year and a long future so that we can support the recovery, resilience, and progress of our children, families, schools, and our great City.

Sincerely,
Alison Gardy

FINANCE COMMITTEE TESTIMONY - May 25, 2022

RE: PROVIDING ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR DSNY ORGANICS PROGRAM

Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee:

Now is the time to finally commit to investing in and reformulating NYC's organics collection program. New Yorkers throw away a valuable resource and taxpayers are paying an estimated $193M in FY23 to do so, via DSNY export contracts whereby this valuable material is transported to be buried and burned in landfills and incinerators. This $193M is just the fiscal spend and does not include the additional environmental, health impacts, social, opportunity and other costs, estimated as follows:

- Environmental Costs - $28M/FY23 - the cost of carbon and methane emissions from burning and burying organic waste
- Opportunity Costs - an estimated additional $12-22M/FY23 of lost revenue forfeited for compost & clean energy sales
- Environmental Justice/Social Costs - polluted communities burdened with SIGNIFICANT health impacts
- Rat Mitigation - cost savings unknown

Added together we approach a quarter Billion dollars in annual waste export costs. Plus, with inflation, these export costs can now be expected to skyrocket. Waste export is not a sustainable, long term waste management policy. We should not continue to kick the can down the road and allow our organics program to falter while these export contract costs spiral upwards endlessly. This money could be much better spent building an organics program that works, like so many other cities have done. We need to pay now or we will pay much more later.

A better use of these funds would be to plan now to reduce this expense and earmark those savings for investment in the local infrastructure and operations needed for capturing organic material locally that will create green jobs and reduce harm to the environment and our communities.

Organic material makes up 41% of the black bag garbage that pile up on our streets, feeding an ever growing population of rats. NYC has a rat problem and a litter problem but we also have an organics problem and they are all inter-related and should all be addressed as a priority.

With all the recent interest and excitement about containerized waste pilots, I urge you to consider that we already have a waste containerization program available with the curbside collection of organics in rat proof brown containers. However, the brown bin program needs additional budget to promote and market the program more effectively, to convince and educate more New Yorkers (and especially building managers) of all the important reasons why they should participate and recycle their organic waste, as they do their paper, plastic, metal and glass.

We have 7 districts who currently receive organics collection on a voluntary/opt in basis. Organics must be made mandatory in these existing 7 districts which should be redefined as pilots to test and tweak what works before a city wide rollout. Voluntary programs will never achieve the participation levels required to fill trucks.

If you aren't convinced (and if you don't already divert your food waste in your own home), just start separating compostable food scraps from your garbage. What the majority of us find immediately is that when we start diverting organics, we have very little remaining household garbage. Multiply that by the almost 9M New Yorkers and you can imagine the drastic reduction in black garbage bags we would see clogging our sidewalks and streets, feeding the rats. Not to mention the smell of all this rotting food on the curb during the hot summer months.

We can and MUST fix and fund the organics program. We have no chance of achieving Zero Waste by 2030 without mandatory organics collection. We need the Council to insist that additional, adequate budget is provided to ensure the success of the program. For additional information, we encourage you to contact the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board (MSWAB).

Thank you.

Allison Allen
East 52nd St
New York, NY 10022

Hello, my name is Alyssa Freitas. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

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[4] CUNY: City University of New York

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[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

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[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

Testimony for May 25th Finance Committee Hearing

Amanda Porche

Hello, my name is Amanda and I'm a New York Resident. I'm here today to talk about the NYPD's Strategic Response Group. The Strategic Response Group is a violent unit of the NYPD that polices protest. Since 2020, the Strategic Response Group has been deployed to protests where they've abused protesters who are exercising their First Amendment Right.

Recently, the SRG has been deployed to make arrests at homeless encampment sweeps. On May 4th, 50 SRG officers were sent to arrest me and 7 other people who were standing on the sidewalk at an encampment sweep, trying to save the belongings of the unhoused people living there. After the SRG arrested us, they ripped an unhoused person out of his tent. 5 SRG officers were on top of him when they carried him away for arrest.

After my arrest, I was mistreated in the holding cells. I was aggressively patted down to the point where I felt like I was being assaulted.

The SRG has traumatized community members time and time again. When the SRG shows up, we know that our safety is at risk. The SRG has no place in our communities or at protests. I'm asking the Council to disband the unit and reinvest its funds back into our communities.

Dear Mayor Adams, Chair Brennan, and Committee on Finance,

My name is Andrew Suseno. I am a parent in District 4 for Central Park East 1. I am writing to you on behalf of 500+ other parent volunteers trained as Healing Ambassadors to share about the impact of our work and to request future funding. The goal of the program is to heal our communities through parent activation through education about the causes and effects of trauma on the body and development as well as how to address it as a community. I initially signed up for virtual testimony on May 25th at 10am EST, but was not called during the time I was available to attend the hearing. I posted a recorded testimony on my Instagram account @parcon.resilience where I tagged each of the committee members. If you have time to view this, please do, I shared an exercise with the committee to illustrate some of the mind and body approach that we utilize with our community.

I write this in the wake of the Uvalde, TX shootings. We must defund the police and invest more in our kids through programs like this, higher pay for ALL educational specialist, and other community centered programs. The answer to this is not more police and more guns, but rather healthy community activation and outreach so that children and adults do not get isolated without any means to move through increasing stress and trauma.

Thank you,

Andrew Suseno



Testimony to the City Council Committee on Criminal Justice

Submitted by Anna Pastoressa

May 25, 2022

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Anna Pastoressa. I'm a leader with Freedom Agenda and longtime leader in the movement to close Rikers.

I became involved with the Close Rikers campaign and in the City budget due to my son's long incarceration of 6 years on Rikers Island while waiting for trial. During that time, he was mentally and physically abused mainly by correction officers. I visited him each weekend for 6 years and I also witnessed and endured verbal and physical abuses by correction officers, either conducting illegal strip searches and/or threatening visitors not to let them in the visit if they did not abide by their demands.

I realized that six years had gone by and the correction officers were getting more abusive and threatening, while the overall conditions were only getting worse.

It is very clear to me and to many of us who had no choice but endure the many abuses, that New York City has been basically handing DOC a blank check, to the point that it is the most funded department in the whole country. It is so expensive to keep incarcerated people in New York City jails, that it costs over $556,000 per year per incarcerated person to New York City tax payers.

Despite the highest funding given to the department of correction, this department has systematically failed to provide basic services and safety for people in their custody. Incarcerated people who need medical attention have been ignored and neglected. Incarcerated people who need mental health attention have only received more mental abuse than they could endure. Failure to feed all daily meals, provide clean water and hygiene supplies to incarcerated people has only aggravated the conditions of the jails. To make things worse, physical and mental abuse have increased, while correction officers continue to abuse their sick leave as well. As of today, five people have died in 2022 under Department of Correction supervision, and the dysfunction is so bad that a federal court is consider installing a receiver.

It is unacceptable and borderline criminal that the Mayor's Executive Budget proposes increasing DOC's headcount by 578 officers and increasing DOC's expense budget by $125M over the Fiscal Year 2022 adopted budget. This Council cannot allow it.

Instead of funding DOC's already-bloated budget, NYC must invest those funds in education, after school programs, supportive housing, mental health, substance addiction, and other disabilities. Please direct the funds where they are really needed and please stop the wasteful abuse, and use this year's budget to advance the plan to reduce incarceration and close Rikers by 2027. We need to move forward with real work, not sending funds to the most corrupted agencies in New York City.

Buenos días,

Mi nombre es Araceli Espejel Mena soy madre de 4 hijos de 13/10/7/5 años.

Soy madre y líder de padres en el Distrito 9 en el Bronx y miembro del Comité de Padres en Acción del New Settlement, el Grupo de Trabajo de Escuelas Centradas en la Sanación y soy una Embajadora de Sanación en la escuela de mi hijo.

Yo pienso que el programa de embajador es muy importante ya que a mi en lo personal me ha ayudado mucho. En mi familia ha sido más fácil identificar los estados de ánimos de mis hijos y mi esposo, tenemos mejor mejor comunicación y nos es más fácil expresar nuestros sentimientos y estados de ánimos. En la escuela los talleres que hemos tenido nos han servido también para conocernos y al igual que yo, ellos también han expresado que les ayuda mucho en sus familias. Es más padres que llevamos muchos años en la escuela que ni siquiera nos hablábamos ya que hablamos diferentes idiomas, ahora ya nos saludamos con un buenos días, un bye cómo estás, cómo te sientes? Pienso que es una forma también de hacer hermandad con diferentes razas.

Ha sido una experiencia increíble ser parte del Programa Embajador Centrado en la Sanación este año y le pido a la Ciudad y al Departamento de Educación de la Ciudad de Nueva York que continúen invirtiendo y expandiendo el Programa Embajador para Padres, desarrollen un Programa Embajador Juvenil y financien programas en escuelas que apoyen y no castiguen a los estudiantes, incluidos los programas de justicia restaurativa, invirtiendo en servicios de salud mental y contratando trabajadores sociales y consejeros escolares adicionales.

Creamos escuelas centradas en la sanación y culturalmente sensibles para todos los niños de la ciudad de Nueva York.

Muchas gracias de antemano por oirnos y apoyarnos,
Araceli Espejel Mena

Protect The Streets & People From The Actual “Violent”. Demobilize, Divest from & Hold the Strategic Response Group Accountable.

Good day, my name is Aroa Garcia Laughlin. I am a Latinx New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD’s Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct “single-fold terror work.”

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year with very little transparency. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit’s goal of counter-terror, the NYPD’s public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit’s brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD’s abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD’s conduct “intentional, planned, and unjustified.”

The SRG’s violence isn’t a coincidence. The unit’s training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. Also, essentially, SRG is a back-up tactical force with the purpose of addressing large scale Terrorism and show of force situations In the SRG Bike Squad’s manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: “peaceful” and violent.” Examples of “violent” protesters are “BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators.” SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias and extreme violence and injury causing. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

As a Hispanic Woman who feels encouraged to protest for my civil rights, I often find it difficult to feel safe in the streets since the violence is disproportionate. Let me explain- On September 16, daily demonstrations began outside the Federal Building in Lower Manhattan in response to whistleblower's allegations that a Latin woman under ICE control had undergone an involuntary hysterectomy... Later that week, 134 people were arrested during ICE protests, and 86 as a result of

kettling in Times Square on September 19, by the SRG created in 2015 by ex Commissioner Bill Bratton in 2015New York Police Department.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Hello, my name is Asa Mendelsohn. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,
Asa Mendelsohn
asa.mendelsohn@gmail.com

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.
[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
[4] CUNY: City University of New York
[5] DOE: Department of Education
[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.
[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.
[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.
[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

Ava Thompson
May 25th
Testimony for NYC Budget Hearing
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

Hello my name is Ava Thompson, a proud member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and a Nanny for over 24 years. I am also a Leader Worker with NDWA. As a Caregiver we fought so hard to ensure Domestic Workers have human rights, so last year domestic workers like myself, fought to be included in NYC human rights law. I have seen what happens when workers go to work not understanding their rights. I talk to workers all the time who are too scared to speak up because they don't know where to go or who to talk to. Many don't know that the city has offices and agencies ready to help them. Worse, when they get there, they feel powerless to tell their story. We won these victories but we want to be certain that other workers and all employers know about domestic worker rights.

I want all domestic workers to be treated with dignity and respect. In my borough there are over 50,000 domestic workers. Many of them are care workers like myself. The Bronx is very big and our organizations need funding and support to reach out to all of them. Having access to support, having access to resources will enable us to become even more productive to the families we take care of so we are asking, The National Domestic Workers Alliance and the NYC Coalition, for Domestic Worker partners are asking for $300,000 to engage in education, outreach and referrals for domestic workers and employers.

From: HealingCentered Schools <bxhealingcenteredschools@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 7:51 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (Ayishah Irvin-Jones) Testimony for 5/25 Committee on Finance, NY City Council FY'23 Excutive Budget Hearing

Dear NY City Council Members,

I am a parent leader in District 5 (Central Harlem), a Family Healing Ambassador and a District 5 Healing Ambassador working alongside the Superintendent's office and other district staff. I'm testifying today just to let The City Council know about The Family Healing Ambassador program the FCWC (Family and Community Wellness Collective) through the DOE launched this program in Spring 2021. With advocacy and support from The Healing Centered Schools Working Group, we've been able to accomplish more than we'd ever thought we could. The Family Healing Ambassador Program is groundbreaking; there's no other program like this in the Nation. Where parents receive training, resources, support, education and information about trauma-informed care, mental health awareness, coping mechanisms, mindfulness techniques, public speaking and facilitating meeting experience and the opportunity to work alongside school administration and other school staff members to support and build community within the school community. Through this Family Healing Ambassador program, Parents are trained, educated, supported, encouraged, included and empowered… This program is the bridge between the school administration and parents that has far too long divided us to the detriment of our school communities. This program allows us to create space for parents and collectively heal through sharing, breathing, talking and listening to each other. Most importantly it helps us NORMALIZE mental health illness and provide resources and support we need to restore and heal as a school community…Students, Parents and School Administration together. We hope you continue this program and expand it. We need more counselors and social workers in our schools BUT we need to build community, build trust and support each other and our schools should be safe spaces,...safe socially, emotionally and physically safe. We can't accomplish that if we're not all working together. The Family Healing Ambassador program is a great model to show how we can all work together.

Thank you.
Ayishah Irvin-Jones

From: Barbara Azcona <bazcona24@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:58 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] In opposition of Mayor Eric Adams' austerity budget

Hello, my name is Barbara Azcona. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,
Barbara Azcona

Hello, my name is Ben Holda. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence isn't a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Committee of Finance Hearing May 25, 2022
T2022-0961

Good afternoon city Council committee of finance members.

My name is Beverly Pabon and I am an officer at the 2 E. 127th St. tenant Association. And we were contracted into the tenant interim lease program in 1997 at the behest of HPD with the goal and promise of becoming homeowners at the end of 3to 5 years.

I'm here seeking The council approval for fiscal year 2023 $200 million in city capital to be allotted to the tenant interim lease program also known as TIL For the total construction rehabilitation of TIL buildings.

Committee of finance members, some of you are senior members who know about the TIL program and its struggles and some of you are new and have already heard about the plight of the TIL buildings and our struggles with the lack of support, financially, under HPD. And you have also heard the opposition of the new program that HPD has implemented since 2012 called Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative Program, ANCP (For more insight I ask that the committee to please review the tenants testimonies at the April 27, 2017 Oversight Committee hearing chaired by the then Councilman Jumaane Williams.)

This testimony is to answer questions you may have, honestly and from experience and research, why funding the TIL program will be more beneficial to the City, its TIL tenants and the low income people and families who are suffering from being priced out of their neighborhoods, staying poor and not having the opportunity to be homeowners.

But here are some benefits of funding the TIL Program

1. The largest benefit to funding the TIL program would be No need to have private debt on the TIL buildings , their tenants and Prospective homeowners of low income as under ANCP
2. A large decrease s to the fee or profit from tax dollars to the developers (which was a set price per unit at the beginning of the ANCP program and now has been risen to 10% of what the construction cost)
3. No need for third-party management company because the TIL tenant have more than 25 years experience of maintaining and managing buildings under TIL
4. TIL tenants monitor the scope of work by the construction company or developer to avoid TIL tenant's or future homeowners from repairing shoddy work.
5. Using vacant apartments of other TIL buildings to house TIL residence until their building is rehabilitate. (This would ensure that the difference in rents is not added to the developer construction costs or rehabilitation of any building like under ANCP)
6. Provide pre-application process for home ownership to residence in Sheltered families to alleviate the population of working families in homeless shelters (Allowing AMI 30 - 60 families the opportunities for home ownerships)

7. Eliminate the cost for training tenants (attached to the construction cost under ANCP) for future homeowners, because that is already being paid for by HPD city contract. Example UHAB and NHS And other nonprofit organizations
8. Lower income base maintenance fee and affordable to lower AMI future owners (due to no private loan debt like under ANCP)

As it stands now the ANCP program cost the City and home owners millions of tax dollars in fees to developers (they are paid 10% of the construction cost). And this has and will continue to put a large amount of debt on the backs of those who have worked very long and hard for the opportunity of home ownership and self-sufficient determination within their community. But that's just the top of the problems of the ANCP program.

What HPD has simply omitted to tell the City Council is the other burden of the ANCP program to ownership. Let's examine some of the things that HPD has tol you about the program of ANCP through rose colored glasses such as:

1. 2% minimal annual increase per year.
2. Using the sale of vacant apartments to pay down the large assumable private and CIty loans for the construction cost, among other costs, debt to HPD and private lenders.
3. Allowing the sale of vacant apartments to AMI 81-165% to paydown the assumable mortgage debt (HDFC by legislation was to give the opportunity of home ownership to Low-income families up to 80% AMI)

What HPD fail to tell the Council is some of the following cost ANCP puts on the homeowners like:

1. Third party developer management company fee and the Monitor fee which is 6-8% monthly from the homeowners
2. Homeowners cost to repair shoddy work by the developer
3. The debt payment includes payment for home owner training (This is a double payment to the training companies because HPD pays companies like UHAB and NHS for homeowner training)
4. The annual payment into the reserves which can be at least $700 per unit
5. The cost of relocating the original TIL tenants into the developers properties. This cost is the difference between the TIL rent and the developers rents and is added to the construction/debt cost.

This is just some of the things that have not been discussed when HPD speaks to the City Council, other elected Officials, Community Boards, the TIL tenants or prospective homeowners.

Please contact the TIL tenants or look at the testimonies of the TIL tenants to see their dedication to the TIL program. And you will see that HPD has not been honest to the goals that were contracted and promised to the TIL tenants.

Below are some comparisons between the TIL and the other HPD program HPD wants to force TIL buildings into.

TIL	ANCP	MFLP
For low income tenants AMI upto 80%	For low & moderate incomes tenants AMI 80 - 130%	All incomes
Purchase price $250	Purchase price $2,500[1]	Rental
Construction funded by City & Federal Capital Funds	Construction funded by HPD loans to sponsors and private debt by developers pass to HDFC	Construction funded by HPD loans to sponsors
Property vested to the City by tax foreclosure	TIL Property sold to a HPD HDFC, Restoring Homes	Property sold to third party
HPD net lease property to TA	HPD sells property to a HPD HDFC (third party)	HPD sells property to third party
TA manages the building. (Now all rights to manage building systematically reduces by HPD to acquire vacant units)	HPD HDFC and Sponsors all rights to manage building, sell vacant units to over 80% AMI	Third party all rights manage building
HPD Sales Building to Tenants for $250 per unit	HPD sale building to HPD [2]HDFC to resale to tenants	Sales or rents apartments
No Permanent Debt	Permanent private and public debt and enforcement Mortgage	Permanent private and public debt
Up to 80% AMI[3]	Typically 80%-120% AMI[4]	Mix AMI
TA self monitor and	Paid Monitor & Manager	Self Monitor and

[1] For tenants in the building prior to rehab

[2] At the cost of the mortgage for the rehab, fees to sponsors (10% of Construction) and rental of sponsors apartments to relocate tenants

[3] Per nature of HDFC for low income families

[4] Per HPD presentation to CB 10 April 22, 2019

Manage		Manage

Below is an example of what the cost of the TIL and ANCP Program

EXAMPLE 60 UNITS	
TIL REHABILITATION 60 UNIT BUILDING	ANCP REHABILITATION 60 UNIT BUILDING
Tenants relocate to another TIL building or self –relocate	Original Tenants relocates to sponsor building at a cost over the original TIL rent
Tenant rents in relocated TIL building same as their building	Tenant pays their TIL rents during rehab and the balance of higher rent is added to the construction cost for repayment
HPD $200,000[5] per unit = $12,000,000 funded Federal money & grant money (up to $10,000,000 difference[6])	Loans to Sponsor/Developer that passes off to tenants $22,000,000 for repayment.
No Permanent Debt	Permanent private and public debt and enforcement Mortgage for 30 years
Lower monthly maintenance	Higher monthly maintenance
Construction Fee-$10,000 per unit=$600,000.	Sponsor fee: 2012 - 2016- $10,000 per unit=$600,000. 2019 to present- 10% of construction cost=$2,200,000.

[5] Per HPD ANCP Term Sheet pre 2022

[6] From sources used in the past and source normally not used

INTENTIONALL LEFT BLANK

Hello, my name is Bill Baskin. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hello, my name is Boris Vorobev. I am a New York City resident. I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to the so-called "law and order". I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

The recent tragic events in Texas once again show us that this city – this country – doesn't need more police. It needs to embrace sensible, progressive policies and foster communities instead of surveilling them.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

May 25, 2022

To New York City Council:

Hello, I am submitting my testimony on the fiscal executive budget as a concerned New Yorker who wants to see our tax dollars spent in a way that makes our city stronger and healthier. I am a proud resident of Washington Heights, a vibrant and wonderful neighborhood.

I am concerned that a recent uptick in crime is leading to the rash and thoughtless notion that we must shovel yet more money towards the NYPD. What is the proof that giving billions and billons to the NYPD makes our city safer?

It is proven that what makes communities more safe are vital resources like good housing, education, healthcare and well-paying jobs.

I want to see at least a billion dollars of the NYPD's bloated budget diverted to public health and safety programs. The solution to every problem is not a person with a badge and a gun – surely that must be obvious by now.

I would also like to see more money put into harm reduction with programs like the safe consumption site here in my neighborhood in Washington Heights. That is the way to help deal with drug addiction – treating people with care, NOT tossing them into jail.

Let's make New York an even better place by investing in our people and their health, and not with a reactionary, evidence-free, and extreme embrace of "tough guy" policies that ultimately target the poor and harm vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

Brooke Pierce
Washington Heights

My name is Caitlyn Passaretti I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

From: Cameron Williams <camerongeorgewilliams@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:08 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing Mayor Eric Adams' austerity budget

Hello,

My name is Cameron Williams. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers. Austerity is harmful, while the bold investments I highlight below are widely popular.

Over two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are still in crisis. COVID-19 variants are spreading in our communities without any real public safety measures left in place, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to so-called "law and order." I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,
Cameron Williams

From: Camilo Duran
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 4:49 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony re: Mayor's Proposed Budget

Hello, my name is Camilo. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence isn't a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and "violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Thank you for your time,

Camilo

City Council Hearing Testimony,

Testimony before the Council of the City of New York

Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
May 25, 2021

Good morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today about New York City's failure to properly serve its citizens with mental disabilities.

The City must ensure that individuals who experience a mental health crisis receive appropriate services which will de-escalate the crisis and ensure their wellbeing and the wellbeing of all other New Yorkers. Only those who are trained in de-escalation practices should respond to a mental health crisis, and the most appropriate individuals to respond are peers (those with lived mental health experience) and health care providers. Police are trained to uphold law and order and are not suited to deal with individuals experiencing mental health crises. In the last five years, the NYPD has killed 18 individuals who were experiencing mental health crises, 15 of whom were people of color.

The City Council must stop the killings and authorize the Mayor's allocation of $112 million for a non-police response to mental health crises. Lives are literally at stake.

I support the proposal of Correct Crisis Intervention Today – NYC (CCIT-NYC), which will make non-police responses available to those experiencing mental health crises. The proposal calls for:

• teams of trained peers and emergency medical technicians;
• teams run by culturally competent community organizations;
• response times comparable to those of other emergencies;
• 24/7 operating hours;
• calls routed to a number other than 911; and
• oversight by an advisory board of 51% or more peers.

Please approve the Mayor's request for $112 million and please make sure the $112 million funds a non-police crisis response system of the sort proposed by CCIT-NYC.

Thank you for your consideration.

candace bowen-louch
clouch@door.org
E 7th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11218

I am calling on the Council to reject the mayor's austerity budget and overspending on policing and incarceration. New Yorkers are struggling with housing affordability more than ever, and underfunding affordable housing resources will do nothing to help this. The Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies.

I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. The NYPD continually takes up an absurd amount of the City's budget and repeatedly exceeds its bloated budget by absurd amounts. For billions of dollars each year, the police take away desperately needed resources that could be used for actual social services. Recent shootings on our own subway system and elsewhere in the country demonstrate that law enforcement is unable or unwilling to prevent these events - the sums of money we are spending on their budgets do not stop shootings or keep us safer. Meanwhile, incarcerated persons suffer and die daily in inhumane conditions. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Cassie Hackel

Hello, my name is Charles Gelman. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget[1] intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city:

[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.

[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

[4] CUNY: City University of New York

[5] DOE: Department of Education

climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

From: Christopher Russell <crussell@churchillschoolnyc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 5:40 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budget

Hello,

I live in Flatbush, I am a teacher, and a graduate student at Hunter College. I am appalled by the Mayor's budget proposal. We need more investment in education, healthcare and housing, not the police. The Mayor did not earn my vote in the last election, and if these are his priorities he will not earn it in the next one. Please fight for what matters in this budget.

Thank you,

Chris

I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

Christina Beale

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.

[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

[4] CUNY: City University of New York

[5] DOE: Department of Education

[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

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[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

Councilmember Bottcher and Councilmembers of the Finance and Housing & Buildings Committees,

Hi, my name is Cleopatra, and I am a New Yorker! I was born and raised in NYC, primarily in Hell's Kitchen. When I was younger, even though we were in a 'rent-stabilized' home, the rent went up 2% each year, and slowly became unaffordable. First, my mom couldn't afford both rent and the electric bill, and eventually she couldn't afford electricity, cell phones, or wifi. I would spend as much of my time as I could at a Starbucks nearby so I could use the free WiFi and have light. I started working at 19 years old, trying to support my mother with the bills. I had one of the first 'Obama' phones released at the time; it looked like an early-2000s Nokia phone and it got me through my late teenage years. Having a phone helped employers have a way to reach me as I scrambled to apply to jobs. There were still many times after I was employed part-time that I would return after work to a dark home.

The rent is too high and discriminatory against low income people. Housing equity means informed access to low rent costs. Our neighbors shouldn't have to choose between paying their basic utilities or their rent. Please help TransJustice to uplift comprehensive resources for more of our people, because New Yorkers need housing justice NOW. Thank you!

From: corinna <corinna.kirsch@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 6:09 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Personal Testimony Script.

Hello, my name is Corinna Kirsch. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers. I am particularly concerned about the lack of access to composting in the city, among other issues related to climate change and environmental issues, given the rat problem which was made very explicit in a recent Gothamist article, and the lack of attention paid to it by the Adams administration and how the Department of Sanitation is no longer requiring large residential buildings to containerize their waste. Have you ever seen a rat in a tree about to jump on your head? Come to Park Slope!

The compost program needs to expand because currently, the onus is on the individual. This doesn't work. I signed up for a compost bin last summer, but my bin was stolen the very first week I used it (I did write my address on it in Sharpie marker, but why would that stop a thief?). When I reported the theft, I was told that there was nothing that could be done about this and that, instead of being sent a replacement, I was told that I needed to go across town to pick up a new compost bin to a location that would take me two hours round trip on public transportation. Given the huge numbers of rats in and around Barclays Center, where I live, enclosed compost bins would be welcome, except that the city is making composting very difficult for individuals.

Corinna Kirsch, PhD
https://corinnakirsch.com/

NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

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New York Restoration Project
Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Finance
5/25/2022

Good morning and thank you to Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan for convening this hearing to discuss the FY23 Executive Budget.

My name is Lynn Kelly and I am the Executive Director of New York Restoration Project (NYRP). NYRP is the only land conservancy operating in all five boroughs of New York City, specifically in under-resourced neighborhoods. For over 25 years, NYRP has planted trees, renovated gardens, restored parks, and transformed open space for communities throughout New York City.

NYRP brings private resources to spaces that are underserved by municipal support; these communities have been the victim of decades of disinvestment. Parks serving low-income communities of color are generally smaller, serve more people per acre, and do not receive private funding. Decreased private donations compounded with budget reductions from last year had a devastating effect on parks in low-income neighborhoods even as park visitation increased to unprecedented levels as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As one of the 400+ organizations in the Play Fair Coalition, NYRP implores the Committee on Finance to help fight to secure raising parks funding from the 0.6% currently proposed in the executive budget to 1% of the total operating budget.

1% for parks is necessary for adequate staffing, maintenance, and parks planning to ensure our public parks are equitable, safe, clean and accessible for all New Yorkers. The current budget as proposed translates to a net reduction in agency staff. By the end of the month, the Parks Department will lose roughly 1,800 members of the cleanup corps that helped beautify our parks during this unprecedented pandemic, by keeping them clean and safe. Parks' workers have been frontline workers during this pandemic and deserve the resources needed to support their work.

NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

This stark reality of disinvestment in low income communities was highlighted in a recent report on the *Economic Benefits of Parks in New York City* published by the Trust for Public Land (TPL). According to the report, many neighborhoods in Central Brooklyn, the East Bronx, and Queens suffered the most during the height of the pandemic, with many dependent on a single park facility. New Yorkers of color are significantly less likely to have access to parks and open spaces. This disparity must be rectified and if these investments are not made after this unprecedented pandemic, then when?

Parks that serve low-income communities would drastically benefit from the budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation to increase to 1% of the total city operating budget. NYC must commit to a higher standard of maintenance across the five boroughs.

It is time for us to end environmental injustice and reinvest in our green spaces. Urban green space is not a luxury, but a necessity; countless studies have shown that parks and gardens yield outsized financial returns in terms of improved public health, climate change resilience, reduced crime, and economic development.

We urge our partners in City government to prioritize 1% for Parks in this year's budget.

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Crystal
May 25, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and Finance Committee members. My name is Crystal and I'm a member of Freedom Agenda.

I believe that we all want to live in safe communities. Unfortunately, our city budget has not reflected that value for too many communities of color that have been historically under-resourced. The most resourced communities are the safest communities.

New York City's Department of Corrections is the most richly funded and richly staffed Department of Corrections in the country. Yet, it produces the worst results. Not having enough staff is not the problem. Managing and holding staff accountable to go to work and do their jobs is the problem. Those millions of more taxpayers dollars being proposed to hire even more jail guards would go further if it was invested into programs and services to help the most vulnerable people in the most vulnerable communities.

The Board of Correction is an oversight board that regulates, monitors, and inspects facilities run by the Department of Correction (DOC). The Board's budget is only 0.2% of the Department of Correction's budget, compared to the Civilian Complaint Review Board, whose budget is set at 1% of the NYPD's budget.

City council should baseline fund the Board of Correction at least by 1% and fund the recommendations of the Commission on Reinvestments in Communities Impacted by Rikers Island.

Thank you,
Crystal Gooding
Member of Freedom Agenda

Good morning/Afternoon Council Members and attendees,

My name is Crystal Rodriguez, I am a mother of 5 from The Bronx. I have been an active Parent Leader on SLTs, PTAs, PAs & Title I boards consecutively since 2016. In the summer of 2021, I was elected as Family Healing Ambassador of P.S 146x08. But I also work closely with NMBA & BCA X09. Although all the boards I have been a part of are amazing and do lots of unrecognized and uncompensated work, those positions are already solidified.

Today I approach you in hopes that you guys will find it in the budget to continue funding the support of our Family Healing work, Citywide. These last 9 months of doing the work of Family Healing Ambassador, I have recognized now more than ever that our work along with Restorative Justice practices can change the entire dynamic of our schools, communities, City, State and maybe even one day globally.

Yes, our schools are incorporating SEL into their curriculums, but honestly, how much of an impact has this truly made in our schools?

As Healing Ambassadors, we have already done so much work in this short amount of time. From workshops on testing anxieties, Parents and Teachers collaborating to recognize and help our students with trauma, while healing our own. To Zumba classes, group walks, relay rally days, meditation workshops, promoting self-care and those are just to name a few. We're getting parent engagement going again, bringing back hope and getting conversations started in our communities. We hope to continue and expand the work outside of our schools. I believe that with more time and funding, we can make a huge impact in our school systems, our neighborhoods and communities.

This work has been an inspiration for me. It has changed my perspective on life, it has helped me begin my healing, to become a better parent, friend, neighbor, human being overall and I'm sure my fellow Ambassadors would concur. I thank you all for the time to be able to speak today and truly hope that this movement will continue to be backed with your support, this is History in the making.

Hello, my name is Dahlia Forte. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hello, my name is Danny Katch I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Danny Katch

Jackson Heights

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance

Submitted by Darlene Jackson

May 25, 2022

- INTRODUCTION
    - Thank you Chair Brannan and Finance Committee members. My name is Darlene Jackson and I'm a member of Freedom Agenda and the Parent Legislative Action Network.
- VALUES
    - I am echoing every New Yorker who calls for the City Council to reject the Mayor's executive budget proposal that ignores the needs of his constituents and prioritizes a carceral system - a punitive system that continues to invest in jobs that perpetuates mass incarceration.
- PROBLEM
    - Overall, we want to continually make the point that NYC runs the most richly funded (and richly staffed) jail system in the country yet delivers the worst results. Those resources would be far better used outside of the jail system to meet people's needs and prevent interaction with the justice system, and correcting that misallocation of funds is urgent.

- SOLUTION(S)
    - There are other urgent opportunities in this year's budget to shift from criminalization to support and prevention. For example, NYC must stop funding nonprofits contracted through ACS, which essentially is a continuation of surveillance towards black and brown families and communities. We need to reallocate funding towards trauma-informed community-led solutions that address systemic racism and inequality for our communities to thrive.

- ACTION(S)
    - City Council cannot ignore the mismanagement of our taxpayer dollars and the disinvestment of our communities. I urge the City Council to shift funds out of both the Dept. of Corrections and the Administration of Children Services and invest in a just transition to expand and better compensate jobs outside of the carceral and punitive system.

    - In addition, expand funding to public defense organizations to adequately provide a client centered and holistic approach to effectively advocate through a reduced caseload and a deep investment in early defense to prevent ACS filing a petition in family court that separates and destroys families and communities.

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Darlene Jackson
May 25, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and Finance Committee members. My name is Darlene Jackson and I'm a member of Freedom Agenda and the Parent Legislative Action Network.

I am echoing every New Yorker who calls for the City Council to reject the Mayor's executive budget proposal that ignores the needs of his constituents and prioritizes a carceral system - a punitive system that continues to invest in jobs that perpetuates mass incarceration.

Overall, we want to continually make the point that NYC runs the most richly funded (and richly staffed) jail system in the country yet delivers the worst results. Those resources would be far better used outside of the jail system to meet people's needs and prevent interaction with the justice system, and correcting that misallocation of funds is urgent.

There are other urgent opportunities in this year's budget to shift from criminalization to support and prevention. For example, NYC must stop funding nonprofits contracted through ACS, which essentially is a continuation of surveillance towards black and brown families and communities. We need to reallocate funding towards trauma-informed community-led solutions that address systemic racism and inequality for our communities to thrive.

City Council cannot ignore the mismanagement of our taxpayer dollars and the disinvestment of our communities. I urge the City Council to shift funds out of both the Dept. of Corrections and the Administration of Children Services and invest in a just transition to expand and better compensate jobs outside of the carceral and punitive system.

In addition, expand funding to public defense organizations to adequately provide a client centered and holistic approach to effectively advocate through a reduced caseload and a deep investment in early defense to prevent ACS filing a petition in family court that separates and destroys families and communities.

Thank you!

Darlene Jackson
Member, Freedom Agenda
djackson8126@gmail.com

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Darren Mack
May 25, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and Finance Committee members. My name is Darren Mack. I'm a Co-Director at Freedom Agenda which is a member-led project, dedicated to organizing people and communities directly impacted by incarceration to achieve decarceration and system transformation. I'm also a member of the Commission of Reinvestment and the Closure of Rikers Island established by Local Law 193. This Commission is charged with ensuring significant reinvestment recommendations are made in vulnerable communities disparately and historically impacted by mass incarceration. That Commission has just released its first report.

Research and data have shown a significant percentage of individuals impacted by the criminal legal system reside in historically under-resourced neighborhoods in New York City.

As a co-chair of the Youth sub-committee in the Commission, our mission is to identify investments that will prevent or remove young people from the criminal justice pipeline. The question remains, where will the city get the funding from? New York City's Department of Corrections has the highest DOC budget in the country. The proposed Fiscal Year 2023 DOC budget is $2.679 billion dollars. We spend the most money in DOC in the country and get the worst results. To be clear, we want the programs and services that the people held in pretrial detention rely on to continue to be funded to meet their basic needs. Therefore, we want to be strategic in right-sizing DOC's bloated budget in key areas like reinstituting a

hiring freeze of more staff to DOC which already has the largest DOC staff in the country would save $92M this year and/or reducing overtime spending by consolidating operations and closing at least two jails on Rikers could generate up to $110M in savings.

We urge the City Council to reject increasing DOC's headcount which already has the largest DOC staff in the country and instead reinvest those resources to fund the Commission recommendations and all of the organizations providing programs and services in communities impacted by the criminal legal system. Furthermore, the Board of Corrections which serves as an independent oversight board that monitors New York City's jail system should be fully funded to serve its purpose more efficiently. The Board's budget is only 0.2% of the Department of Corrections' budget, compared to the Civilian Complaint Review Board, whose budget is set at 1% of the NYPD's budget. With the country looking at our city due to the human rights crisis at Rikers Island, this is the best time to increase the Board of Corrections budget.

Thank you!

Darren Mack
Co-Director, Freedom Agenda
dmack@urbanjustice.org

From: Dave Speranza <davesperanza@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:13 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing an austerity budget

Hello, my name is Dave Speranza. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Dave Speranza
503.232.5238
davesperanza@gmail.com
www.davesperanza.com

From: David Yap <davidlyap@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:18 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns with Austerity Budget

Dear Council Members,

My name is David Yap. I am a New York City resident and wanted to reach out to express my concerns regarding Mayor Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must resist the mayor's regressive return to a law and order that is punitive rather than uplifting. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for considering my concerns,

David Yap

Deborah Humes Jordan
5/25/22
NYC Budget Hearing
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

Hello my name is **Deborah Humes Jordan** I am a proud member leader of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and of We Dream in Black the Black domestic worker organizing program of NDWA. I have been a home caregiver for 15years. Last year domestic workers like myself fought to be included in NYC human rights law, and so many domestic workers in NYC still don't know about their basic rights. We won this right but we want to make sure that other workers and especially employers know about domestic worker rights.

In 2021 I was doing organizing work to teach domestic workers about their rights and helping them come forward with their cases of wage theft. I was learning that there are so many domestic workers that still don't know their rights and need someone who has experienced what they have experienced in order trust the next steps in exercising their rights. I would take the time to have long conversations to build that trust. I would have to help explain the process of sharing their story with a government agency. I would also be there to advocate when they did not know how to advocate for themselves. With city council funding the Domestic Worker Empowerment Initiative there could be more domestic worker leaders like me reaching out to other workers to teach about rights and resources. Please pass the Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative, we can do so much for the workers that care for New York City!

Hello, I am Deigo Brown. I live in Woodside Queens, and work in midtown Manhattan. I am a member of the LGBTQ community and I understand the constant battles our community has to face.

The battles we fight to have a place in society and amongst our loved ones, as well as the battle to simply have a place to call home. Like many members of this community I have faced homelessness in my youth - homelessness that was rooted in being in an abusive home, but having no tools to help me escape it swiftly and safely. As a result I have had to deal with high levels of depression and anxiety as a young adult. I knoq that is also the case for many other young members of the LGBTQ community and is a factor into why so many in this community have a higher risk of drug use, unsafe sexual practices, and higher rates for suicide.

Equitable housing isn’t just about giving the LGBTQ community a chance to thrive in our society, rather, its a necessity for a healthier society. Please support stronger pathways to safe and accessible long-term housing resources in all five boroughs of New York City. Thank you!

Denise Fredrick Testimony
5/25/22
NYC Budget Hearing
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

Hello my name is Denise Frederick I am a proud member of National Domestic Workers Alliance and I am a nanny. Last year domestic workers like myself fought to be included in NYC human rights law, and so many domestic workers in NYC still don't know about their basic rights. We won this right but we want to make I want to make sure that other workers and especially employers know about domestic worker rights.

During the middle of the pandemic when so many domestic workers lost their jobs all at once, I was part of a group of worker leaders who reached out to several thousand domestic workers to let them know about possible resources and financial aid available to them. So many needed the information and were so grateful to have the connection. We weren't able to reach out to everybody and eventually our reach as a group of worker leaders was limited. With the city's ongoing support, we can make sure there is funding to education and outreach. I was having conversations with hundreds of workers who just wanted to know what their rights were, who needed someone to talk to, and needed the support during such a critical time. The crisis is not over. We are going back to work but that doesn't always mean back to good work conditions or fair pay. The Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative can be a step in the right direction for connecting workers with support and resources. Please fund the domestic worker initiative for $300,000 and we can see even more domestic worker leadership grow.

From: Derek Weaving <weaving.derek@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 4:27 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Against Mayor Adams' Austerity Budget

Hello, my name is Derek Weaving. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Derek Weaving

Destiny Tucker
May 25, 2022

Testimony:

Hello, my name is Destiny Tucker. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets.

Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence isn't a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Hello, my name is Destiny Tucker. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public description of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror regarding the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

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Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Hello, my name is Devery Doleman. I have been a New York City resident for 25 years, and I am here to urge the City Council to eliminate funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. Originally announced as a "counter terror unit" that would also handle large-scale demonstrations, After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

As someone who has attended protests to express my 1st Amendment rights, both as a protest monitor for the NYCLU as well as a private citizen, I was shocked to see the SRG's tactics in action. The SRG in no way exists to protect the citizens of NYC. I have a clear memory of January 2021, standing on Central Park South, watching dozens of SRG fully armored bike cops roll up to the park, clearly there to intimidate the peaceful protestors who were gathered there at a march AGAINST Neo-Nazi activity. The SRG members were openly displaying zip ties on their bikes (a visible threat) and riding in a single file alongside the march. Their message is clear – they are there to intimidate protestors, not to protect anyone. This is the kind of police display one expects in a totalitarian state, not in the city of New York, a city of freedom, diversity and opportunity. This is CERTAINLY not where I want my tax dollars going.

In 2020, I saw constant online documentation of the SRG's militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional,

planned, and unjustified." And they are right to do so, as the violence the SRG metes out is nauseating and frightening.

It is clear that the SRG's violence is a feature, not a bug - they are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators." SRG presence is higher at these kinds of demonstrations, but demonstrations of groups actually advocating violence (Proud Boys, etc) do not get the same SRG presence.

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher, which would not surprise me in the least.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities. This is a gross misuse of taxpayer money, especially at a time when our city and communities are still recovering from the devastation of the pandemic.

Budget Justice: Investing in the Health of New York City's LGBTQ Students of Color in the Wake of COVID-19

Municipal budgets are public health interventions: city residents are only as healthy insofar as government chooses to invest in them. No time and place has demonstrated this more starkly than the last years of COVID-19 in New York City (NYC), where the virus has torn through communities in which municipal, state, and federal governments have historically disinvested.[1, 2] This has been devastatingly true for LGBTQ youth of color, who have been historically excluded in NYC municipal budgets. This commentary from a collaboration between NYC-area education and public health professionals, academics, and nonprofit service providers calls for centering LGBTQ services in the NYC municipal education budget, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

LGBTQ Youth Health Prior to COVID-19

Prior to the pandemic, NYC LGBTQ youth of color were already facing unprecedented health inequities: LGBTQ youth were 120% more likely to be homeless than other youth;[3] they had higher rates of substance use[4] and asthma,[5] which are linked to inequities in LGBTQ adult cardiovascular health[6] and cancer;[7] and 32% of LGBTQ youth bullied at NYC schools reported attempting suicide in the previous year, with 40% of transgender youth reporting they attempted suicide during the same time period.[8] Critically, these trends appear to have been even worse for LGBTQ youth of color who nationally reported higher levels of homelessness[9] and worse mental health outcomes, including suicidality,[10] than White LGBTQ youth.

LGBTQ Youth Health During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these already chasmic inequities. Research suggests that depression and anxiety have increased disproportionately among LGBTQ youth communities nationally since the beginning of the pandemic[11] as a result of spending increased time with unsupportive adults and being cut-off from sexual and gender identity supports.[12]

Additionally, LGBTQ youth nationally have likely experienced housing instability at higher rates than other youth, and emerging evidence suggests that suicidality may be increasing disproportionately among Black LGBTQ youth during COVID-19.[13] Considering this in the context of LGBTQ communities being diagnosed with, and dying from, COVID-19 at higher rates than other communities in cities across the United States (U.S.),[14] it is likely that LGBTQ youth of color are suffering in ways that other New Yorkers simply are not.

NYC Municipal Support Prior to COVID-19

Notwithstanding recent investments in LGBTQ health citywide (e.g., Unity Project),[15] NYC public schools, the largest social services provider for NYC youth, has lagged behind other U.S. public school systems in addressing health inequities for LGBTQ youth of color. Despite evidence that LGBTQ-affirmative policies in schools can be critical to protecting LGBTQ youth from bullying victimization, and can promote their psychological, behavioral, and social health, [12, 16, 17] the majority of NYC public schools have seen little to no change in enacting LGBTQ-affirmative policies in recent years.[18] For example, only 29% of NYC middle and high schools have a Gender Sexuality Alliance,[19] one of the most robust school-based interventions to promote LGBTQ youth health, compared to state and national rates over 50%.[20] Additionally, more than half of NYC schools currently do not provide comprehensive health education, and even fewer provide an LGBTQ-inclusive sexual health curriculum.[21] Moreover, 64% and 89% of schools reported that no teachers and no administrators, respectively, received gender and sexual diversity training in 2018.[19] The schools that lack the resources to update their curricula and LGBTQ-affirming training are disproportionately in communities of color. Taken together, there has been a clear need for investments in school-based LGBTQ-affirming supports for LGBTQ youth of color even prior to the onset of COVID-19.

Looking Toward the Future

In the past years, community organizations have led conversations on "budget justice" that define a fair distribution of NYC municipal funds.[22] We argue that any conversation of budget justice should center LGBTQ youth of color. The 2021 budget passed in NYC made some strides in doing this as it included unprecedented funding for LGBTQ youth job training and homelessness outreach. Nevertheless, New York City Municipal government adopted a budget that increased spending for the NYPD by $200 million dollars, despite data that suggest LGBTQ youth of color experience disproportionately high levels surveillance, harassment, and violence from police, which is linked to negative health outcomes and homelessness.[23, 24] Given the historic lack of investment in, and the disproportionate disease burden for, LGBTQ youth of color, future just budgets must continue to allot these long overdue investments in these young people. As a group of professionals in public health, education, research, and LGBTQ social services, we offer recommendations below for policy approaches to a just budget. Some represent changes that require minimal or no new investment, while others require more robust funding. In both cases, and consistent with the principles of health promotion,[25] these investments will likely save money in the long-term by preventing the need for medical and emergency services for LGBTQ youth and adults linked to accumulated stress and poor health across the lifespan (e.g., allostatic load).[26] While a robust review of the potential sources for this investment is beyond the scope of this commentary, fair distribution of educational funds to schools in historically excluded areas[27, 28] and the removal of police from schools,[29] could greatly increase funding for supports for LGBTQ youth of color.

I. Make comprehensive LGBTQ training mandatory. Currently, comprehensive sexual and gender diversity training is provided to NYC public school teachers and

administrators on an opt-in basis. As a result, there are trainings provided monthly, usually for a small repeat group of dedicated teachers and administrators sparsely distributed throughout some of NYC's better-resourced schools. This opt-in, untargeted approach is likely a primary reason for the current low numbers of sexual and gender diversity-trained teachers and administrators in NYC schools.[19] This training can mean the difference between life and death for some LGBTQ youth: evidence indicates that supportive adults in schools can effectively reduce rates of bullying victimization and suicidality among LGBTQ youth.[30, 31]

An alternative to the current approach may be to mandate the equitable distribution of the current training capacity to schools throughout NYC, while prioritizing schools that have had no or few trained staff. Additionally, if NYC schools were to focus on training principals and other administrators, for whom training is currently not required, this would represent an opportunity to employ a train-the-trainer approach. Finally, NYC policymakers may align sexual and gender diversity training with existing priority structures, such as including it as an aspect of performance reviews and Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) hours, alongside other life-saving trainings (e.g., CPR training).

II. Hire LGBTQ support staff. At the time of writing, there is one LGBTQ liaison in the DOE. For a school system of over 1 million students, that person is responsible for developing training materials and training staff, drafting LGBTQ-inclusive policies, coordinating student events, managing funding for GSAs, collaborating to develop LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, and responding to LGBTQ-related bullying reports. Fully staffing a DOE LGBTQ Support Office does not need to be a costly endeavor. In fact, hiring additional staff for a DOE LGBTQ Support office in recent years would have *saved* NYC money by enabling access to large grants that required office capacity to design and administer enrichment programs. The

NYC DOE lags behind other city agencies that currently have dedicated LGBTQ teams, including the NYPD's LGBTQ Outreach Unit, which has grown over the last decade to a staff of seven. Additional capacity for NYC DOE could be provided in collaboration with community-based organizations, such as the Hetrick-Martin Institute, and existing citywide mechanisms (e.g., Summer Youth Employment Program),[32] including new programming funded in the 2021 budget, that are educating and training LGBTQ youth of color for careers in NYC.

An increase in the number of LGBTQ-identified administrators and educators of color across the DOE would also be a boon to LGBTQ youth of color. Their shared experiences with LGBTQ students of color make them more likely to implement affirming education policy for these youth.[33, 34] Hiring staff is also an opportunity to directly invest in the training and career development of LGBTQ communities of color. As such, hiring for NYC public schools is an opportunity to empower LGBTQ communities of color both indirectly, through school-based services, and directly, through job opportunities.

III. Invest in LGBTQ-affirmative health curricula. Research indicates developmentally-appropriate, LGBTQ-affirmative K-12 sexual education is a protective factor against bullying and health risk behaviors for all youth, especially LGTBQ youth.[30] However, in 2017, the NYC Comptroller's office found 97% of NYC health educators were not licensed to teach health. Furthermore, the LGBTQ-appropriateness of current health education curricula is unknown.[21] To rectify this, the NYC DOE has sought to provide the aforementioned opt-in trainings to make their pedagogical practices more LGBTQ-affirming. However, centrally-accessible LGBTQ-affirmative health education resources do not currently exist for health educators. Thus, we recommend that NYC DOE invest in the training and licensing of all health educators and develop an affirming and culturally relevant K-12 sexuality education curriculum

that focuses on psychological and sexual health promotion and meets the extant Scope and Sequence DOE policies around gender and sexuality. Such resources should draw from foundational work on inclusive learning environments that confront interlocking systems of oppressions targeting race, class, gender, and sexual identity,[35] and create collaborative settings where all students feel safe and a sense of belonging.

IV. Support schools-based implementation. Currently the Office of School Wellness Programs, which is tasked with Health and Physical Education (HPE) class curricula, professional development for HPE instructors, and school program evaluation, is not well-positioned to provide support to schools attempting to implement LGBTQ-affirmative programming. While the office had nine staff in the 2019/2020 school year, there were three to four at any time in 2020/2021 due to staff being reassigned to cover COVID-19-related educator shortages. As a result, schools have had less support than ever in implementing LGBTQ-affirmative programming at a time when the need is highest for LGBTQ youth of color. What schools need is not simply the return of all staff members to focus on supporting LGBTQ-affirmative programming, but additional investment to ensure that schools that have historically received less resources in communities of color, are getting the support they need. This includes assistance in implementing trainings in a way that is consistent with the needs and context of individual schools.

V. Make data accessible and actionable. NYC schools collect a wealth of data from students, parents and staff. While these data assist with reporting out counts (e.g., number of staff who have completed a specific training), much of the information is not accessible nor actionable for program planners and policymakers. For example, at the time of writing, data collection on the establishment of gender-neutral bathrooms within NYC schools is being conducted without

the input of the DOE LGBTQ office and other offices charged with LGBTQ equity in NYC government. As a result, it is possible that these data will not be optimal for efforts to expand access to transgender and gender expansive youth of color. Additionally, though NYC schools are collecting data on bullying incidents, including their identity targets (e.g., sexual orientation, gender, race) and remediation efforts,[36] it is unclear what current trends really indicate and how the data can inform systemic approaches to reduce bullying and its adverse effects. For example, some schools report high levels of bullying targeting sexual and gender identity while others report extremely low levels of bullying.[36] It is possible that there are problems to be addressed in both cases. The high reports may reflect students who are seeking help from teachers and administrators, and the low reports may reflect schools where students do not feel empowered to report their experiences. Targeted evaluation of schools with high and low numbers of bullying reported may provide actionable insight into these conflicting patterns. Finally, it is critical that NYC schools collect data on the utility of current intervention efforts. For example, dozens of schools are currently utilizing aspects of the Out for Safe Schools® intervention, which aims to combat bullying and create safe spaces for LGBTQ youth by empowering adults in schools to be visible and affirmative allies. However, there is no robust empirical evidence that this program is effective and there are no comprehensive efforts to measure its impact on participating NYC schools.

VI. Facilitate collaboration. While the authors represent a collaboration across NYC government agencies, community organizations, and public academic institutions, there are few formal avenues to develop and co-create programming efforts, along with advocating for policy change. Consistent with this, we have found there are segmented and overlapping efforts being enacted in parallel across city agencies, at times in collaboration with outside paid consultants.

The competing demands of addressing students' needs during the unprecedented COVID-19 public health emergency has exacerbated this lack of coordination in addressing LGBTQ youths of color's most pressing needs. Disjointed and inconsistent funding of programs, including misaligned priorities, may represent missed opportunities in responding to these needs. As such, there is a clear imperative to formalize and strengthen existing collaborations, and develop partnerships across government, community organizations, and academia, rather than paid consultants, to support affordable and impactful programming.

Conclusion

Now is when NYC shows its values: municipal government has the opportunity to model a just budget that invests in LGBTQ youth of color. As public health professionals, educators, social service providers, and health equity advocates for LGBTQ youth of color, we believe that the priorities offered here are a starting point for a just budget that centers the humanity, worth, and resilience of these valuable members of our community.

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devin.english@rutgers.edu

From: Dion Nania <nanid359@newschool.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:26 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] No to Adams' executive budget

Hello,

My name is Dion Nania. I am a New York City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

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DION NANIA
PHD CANDIDATE & TEACHING FELLOW
THE NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH: POLITICS DEPT.

My testimony to the City Council:

My name is Dorothy Blitz. I am a Brooklyn and New York City resident and support the good work of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my strong opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in a deepening crisis. COVID-19 cases are *again* surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over every day New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation (including composting) and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact. This is outrageous!

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also **strongly** urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs. There is money to be raised, but not off the backs of the working poor, the working class, and the middle class. Adams needs to tax the wealthy and the developers in order to equitably serve all of the residents of NYC.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls. Health calls should be responded to by social workers, not armed police units.

Dyaami D'Orazio | May 26, 2022

My name is Dyaami and I am an herbalist and farmer / gardener in training. I grew up all over the Bronx and the disparities around food access - grocery stores, farmers markets, green space, growing space - became clearer and clearer the older I became.

This testimony is in support of the NYC Food Policy Alliance and their amazing advice with how to distribute funds and what areas of food justice to focus on. It is incredibly important to center black, indigenous and people of color farmers - we hold history in our hands and it will lead us to a sustainable and just future.

It's time for our politicians to trust the people who are doing the work - that's us! We are here to cultivate a beautiful and socially just food system that includes seed to compost and every part of the food supply chain. We can do this! Together!

Farm School NYC is a collaborative project created by individuals and organizations involved in New York City's food justice movement in response to the need for comprehensive farmer training made accessible to BIPOC communities underserved by traditional hierarchical educational institutions. Our mission is to train NYC residents in urban agriculture, in order to build self-reliant communities and inspire positive local action around food access and social, economic, and racial justice issues.

Farm School NYC offers a year-long certificate program and a wide range of individual courses grounded in popular education techniques as a gift to students, meaning they are welcome to attend Farm School NYC regardless of if they choose to contribute financially towards program costs. Through engaging, place-based education, Farm School classes cultivate future leaders in NYC's food justice movement.

Since 2010, FSNYC has trained more than 400 people who are now leading farms and gardens and growing and educating in NYC and beyond.

Dear Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan,

My name is Edgar Alfonseca. I'm a lifelong NYC resident of Queens. I also serve the City of New York as a central employee of the NYC Department of Education. I'm writing this letter in opposition to Mayor Eric Adam's latest executive budget.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education. At the same time, he's throwing more money into the NYPD with a $10 billion dollar budget. The NYPD perpetuates racism[1] and doesn't keep anyone but wealthy people safe.

I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[2] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[3] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[4] to all five boroughs.

A revised executive budget must also include real raises for city workers. Throughout the pandemic and now during the fragile NYC recovery, city workers have been at the front line of keeping NYC alive. Instead of getting pats on the back and empty accolades, city workers should be treated with dignity by getting pay raises that at least keep up with the increased costs of living brought about by drastic rent increases[5] and inflation[6].

Last, but not least, city workers need a permanent telework option. City worker attrition is at unprecedented levels, and thousands are citing a lack of telework option as the reason for leaving their careers in city government[7]. Without a telework option, a very popular idea amongst city workers[8], the city government will be unable to attract the talent it needs to stand up the city's recovery.

Thank you all for your time,
Edgar

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[1] https://www.ny1.com/nyc/manhattan/public-safety/2021/02/24/commissioner-shea-apologizes-for-systemic-racism-in-the-nypd

[2] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[3] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[4] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

[5] https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/real-estate/2022/03/23/nyc-rents-bidding-wars-low-inventory/7125858001/?gnt-cfr=1

[6] https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/inflation-new-york-city-metropolitan-area

[7] https://gothamist.com/news/this-isnt-just-normal-attrition-why-city-workers-say-theyre-quitting

[8] The most endorsed ideas in the City Staff Challenge for 2022 are related to telework- https://www.participate.nyc.gov/processes/staffideas/f/235/

Hello, my name is Elisabeth Marangoudakis. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

Testimony About the Strategic Response Group
New York City Council
Elizabeth Langer – NYC Resident

Hi, my name is Liz. I grew up in Queens, NY. I have had first-hand experience of the violent, abusive actions of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group, so I am urging the City Council to remove their funding from the police budget.

My understanding of The Strategic Response Group or SRG, was that they originally were founded as a counter terror unit. But I have watched the unit be deployed violently at peaceful protests.

I saw the SRG at a protest honoring the lives of those lost at the hands of police, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2021. The protest was peaceful, and the tone of the protestors was to celebrate the lives and work of black, queer, and marginalized individuals. Yet there were upwards of 15-20 police cars and vans following the protestors and more than 20 officers wearing riot gear waiting for them at the end of their route. I watched as the officers pushed them into the street to force arrests, dragging barricades to stop them from fleeing. The SRG officers grabbed young Black and Brown protestors and forcibly dragged them into police vans. I did not feel like the SRG were there to protect us, and I didn't feel safe with their presence. I felt that their actions were planned, measured, and targeted. This experience was really scary and I still think about it often. I was traumatized by the actions the SRG took against the protestors.

I don't believe they are doing the job they are intended to do, which is protect New Yorkers against terrorism. The shooting in Buffalo was terrorism. The protest I witnessed on Martin Luther king jr. day was not. The police use of force was unwarranted and unjust. And I believe the SRG should be disbanded, and their funding be dispersed to more important issues facing New York - like supporting Black and Brown New Yorkers.

May 23rd, 2022

Dear New York City Council,

I was an ardent participant in the sanitation department's discretionary curbside organics collection program and was disappointed by the suspension of service due to budget cuts brought on by Covid. I, like many New Yorkers, am invested in NYC reaching the goal of zero waste by 2030. Given that a full third of NYC's residential waste consists of material suitable for composting, mandatory city-wide organics collection is required if NYC is ever going to reach this ambitious goal. This testimony is in support of the bill introduced by Council Member Hanif that would require mandatory residential organics collection for NYC. I implore the city council to pass this bill into law and ensure adequate funding is provided for its infrastructure and educating the public on this important issue.

Organic waste exported to be buried in landfills and burned in incinerators emits large amounts of methane and CO2, harmful greenhouse gasses that contribute to global warming - a looming crisis that impacts all of us, but especially a coastal city like New York. Having mandatory organics collection will establish an infrastructure for New Yorkers to take impactful action on combating climate change.

In New York we lead the nation on so many important issues, yet we lag far behind many other cities (and countries) in requiring organics recycling. San Francisco has had universal residential composting since 1996 and Seattle since 2005. If other cities have invested in composting, creating systems that benefit the climate and the city's budget, we can too.

Along with combating climate change, having a universal mandatory organics recycling program makes fiscal sense. NYC taxpayers currently pay approximately $193M/year to export just its organic waste to landfills and incinerators. And now, with inflation, these costs are expected to skyrocket. In contrast, the IBO estimates that a citywide organics recycling program could save the city $33M/year. Now is the time to make the investment in our city’s present and future by providing universal organics recycling.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my testimony. I look forward to New York City’s more sustainable future!

Best,
Emily Coyne
Ridgewood, Queens resident

From: Eric Rosenfield <ericrosenfield@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:21 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] No Austerity

Hello, my name is Eric Rosenfield. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Yours,
Eric Rosenfield
Queens

Hola, mi nombre es Faviola Sierra y soy Embajadora Familiar de Sanación representando la escuela P.S. 340 en el Distrito Escolar 10 en el Bronx.

Covid-19 ha impactado a nuestras familias, escuelas, y comunidades. Ahora más que nunca, es necesario contar con espacios que estén informados sobre el trauma, culturalmente receptivos y centrados en la sanación. Debemos apoyar iniciativas en las que podamos construir una comunidad, donde nuestros estudiantes, padres, familias, personal escolar y defensores de la comunidad puedan unirse para crear espacios donde podamos sanar, sentirnos seguros, sentirnos escuchados.

Existe un gran estigma en torno a la salud mental y la falta de recursos, apoyo y concienciación. El Programa de Healing Ambassadors ha cambiado a mi familia y mi comunidad escolar para mejor. Es un honor ser embajadora de sanación y formar parte de esta transformación. Es más fácil sobre llevar una emoción de crisis por esta pandemia sabiendo cómo apoyar a nuestra familia, poniendo en práctica nuestros talleres de cómo manejar el estrés emocional y social mediante juegos de mesa y juegos de habilidades. Con los talleres de cómo poder manejar una situación de crisis con sus hijos, cómo manejar su ansiedad siendo parte de actividades que puedan participar toda la familia. El programa de Embajadores de Sanación nos ha ayudado a reconocer que si nuestros niños necesitan atención psicológica no hay nada de qué avergonzarse porque siempre se necesita tener ayuda fuera de la casa. Es muy importante que colectivamente nos ayudemos y usemos todas nuestras pericias y habilidades que tenemos en nuestras comunidades.

Estoy aquí para pedir que recibamos todo el apoyo económico y los recursos que son necesarios para continuar y expandir el trabajo que los Embajadores de Sanación y nuestras comunidades están haciendo actualmente. Mi visión es que podamos crear espacios de sanación en todas nuestras escuelas, familias y comunidades donde podamos unirnos para apoyarnos unos a otros y trabajar hacia un futuro seguro, amoroso y solidario.

Muchas gracias por oírnos y apoyarnos,
Faviola Sierra

Gail Haywood
May 25th 2022
NYC Budget Hearing Testimony
Domestic Worker Empowerment Initiative

Hello my name is Gail Haywood has worked as a Housecleaner for over 20 years working for over 5 families. In the last 12 years she focused solely on House Cleaning. I have extensive knowledge of the Nanny industry having worked as a Nanny for over 20 years. I am highly involved in the National Domestic Workers Alliance helping to lead meetings and reach out to workers. During the pandemic I saw house cleaners all across the city lose their jobs and have to worry about their health, putting food on the table, and paying rent all during a pandemic. I know that domestic workers have a hard time getting information and resources that they need because they work long hours and in people's homes. Sometimes the only time we can connect is in our monthly meetings to talk about our domestic work conditions and what we can do to support each other to fight for better treatment and fair pay. Many times I am meeting new workers who don't know they already have rights in the workplace. They don't know where to go when they need help. I think by funding the Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative the city can show how important domestic workers really are in this city and make sure they can access the information and resources we all need. I think everyone is becoming more aware how big the domestic work industry really is and many New Yorkers have domestic workers in their lives. It is time we also keep up with the laws and give the funding that is need for domestic workers to thrive in NYC. Thank you.

Hello, my name is Galib Kabir testifying for the NYCLU. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence isn't a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you my concerns regarding the inequities in funding to address the issue of HIV infection in Black gay men, and to offer a solution for leveling the playing field. I've heard, and I'm paraphrasing, that stating a problem without offering a solution is just complaining.

I'm Gary English, Founder and Executive Director of Get It Get It, Inc., a not-for-profit, community-based organization that focuses on HIV prevention for Black gay men in New York City. I have over twenty-five (25) years of experience providing prevention services for this population and, in collaboration with the University of Rochester, have developed two Curricula for addressing HIV prevention in Black gay men. Many Men, Many Voices was developed in ____2007__ and was certified as a Diffused Evidence Based Initiative (DEBI) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. Sexual Healing, a curriculum developed in 2019 focuses on Black gay men who are interested in learning about and using PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis).

I have provided to you in the letter that I sent, the data that supports the need for more targeted strategies for addressing HIV in this population. I've also attached a copy to my written testimony today. It's a proven fact that people accept information from those who look like them, talk like them and have similar values, customs and norms. The fact that the numbers continue to rise is an indication that current prevention strategies, while they may have some effect, are not significantly decreasing the incidence of HIV infection in Black gay men.

As a possible solution I am proposing that the City Council greenlight a special initiative to combat HIV/AIDS in Black gay men in New York City. A road map already exists for this kind of initiative with the highly successful Faith-based Initiative. Two and a half years ago, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene initiated a Black MSM Prevention Initiative that was discontinued, without explanation. However I think we can correctly surmise that it wasn't because the problem was solved.

In summary, as a small, Black Community-Based Organization, we have the unique skills that give us access and make us highly successful at reaching Black gay men who are at high risk for HIV infection. A multi-pronged model with different techniques and approaches. Get It Get It is uniquely positioned to do this work.

This can be a history-making moment in reducing the incidence of HIV infection in Black gay men in New York City. Let's make history and create health equity for this population.

Thank you for your time!

GMHC
END AIDS. LIVE LIFE.

NYC HIV Incidence (New Infection) Data from 2020 by Select Demographic Categories

Prepared for NYC Councilmember Crystal Hudson by: Jason Cianciotto, V.P. Communication & Policy
Jasonc@gmhc.org ; All Data from: https://etedashboardny.org

Area	*Metrics*
New York City	**1,394 New Diagnoses in 2020** (Data for 2020 should be interpreted with caution because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to HIV testing, care-related activities, and case surveillance activities) • **Gender** ○ Women: 302 (21.7%) ○ Men: 1,092 (78.3%) ○ Transgender: 49 (3.5%) • **Age** ○ 13-19: 58 (4.2%) ○ 20-29: 464 (33.3%) ○ 30-39: 429 (30.8%) ○ 40-49: 199 (14.3%) ○ 50-59: 172 (12.3%) ○ 60+: 72 (5.2%) • **Race** ○ Black: 659 (47.3%) ○ White: 187 (13.4%) ○ API: 64 (4.6%) ○ Other: 10 (0.7%) • **Ethnicity** ○ Latino/Hispanic: 474 (31.9%) • **Risk** ○ MSM: 643 (46.1%) ○ Heterosexual: 193 (13.8%) ○ IDU: 12 (0.9%) ○ MSM IDU: 10 (7.2%) ○ Transgender People with Sexual Contact (TG-SC): 47 (3.4%) ○ Unknown: 489 (35.1%) • **Continuum of Care Outcomes** ○ Linked to care within 30 days: 80% ○ Virally Suppressed within 3 months: 46% (data for viral suppression within 6 months and 12 months are not yet available)
Kings County	**410 new diagnoses in 2020** (Data for 2020 should be interpreted with caution because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to HIV testing, care-related activities, and case surveillance activities) • **Gender** ○ Women: 95 (6.8%) ○ Men: 315 (76.8%) ○ Transgender: Not Available

	• **Age**
	  ○ 13-19: 14 (3.4%)
	  ○ 20-29: 138 (33.7%)
	  ○ 30-39: 128 (31.2%)
	  ○ 40-49: 58 (14.1%)
	  ○ 50-59: 56 (13.7%)
	  ○ 60+: 16 (3.9%)
	• **Race**
	  ○ Black: 262 (63.9%)
	  ○ White: 53 (12.9%)
	  ○ API: 8 (2.0%)
	  ○ Other: 3 (0.7%)
	• **Ethnicity**
	  ○ Latino/Hispanic: 84 (20.5%)
	• **Risk**
	  ○ MSM: 185 (45.1%)
	  ○ Heterosexual: 65 (15.9%)
	  ○ IDU: 12 (2.9%)
	  ○ MSM IDU: 3 (0.7%)
	  ○ TG-SC: 6 (1.5%)
	  ○ Unknown: 151 (36.8%)
	• **Continuum of Care Outcomes**
	  ○ Linked to care within 30 days: 79%
	  ○ Virally Suppressed within 3 months: 49% (data for viral suppression within 6 months and 12 months are not yet available)

UHF Neighborhoods in District 35: Downtown-Heights-Park Slope AND Bedford Stuyvesant - Crown Heights	**129 new diagnoses in 2020** (31.5% of those in Kings County) *No demographic or continuum of care data publicly available* • Of all UHF neighborhoods in Kings County, Bedford Stuyvesant - Crown Heights reported the highest number of new HIV diagnoses in 2020 (100)

Based on data from the ETE Dashboard, NYC residents at highest risk for new HIV infection are Black or Latino/Hispanic gay or bisexual men (MSM) between the ages of 20-39.

Currently, there are three bills in the NY State legislature that focus on expanding PrEP and PEP access, which could be further supported by resolutions from the NYC Council:

- PASS S00688 (Hoylman)/A00807 (ODonnell): To require that any insurance policy that provides coverage for prescription drugs must include coverage for the cost of PrEP and PEP for the purposes of HIV prevention.
- PASS S00728 (Hoylman)/A02198 (Barrett): Authorize Pharmacists to Dispense PrEP and PEP.
- PASS S836 (Hoylman)/A1732 (O'Donnell): Prohibit Prior Authorization for PEP/PrEP; aims to remove utilization management techniques by insurance companies to prevent readily accessible PrEP.

From: Gavin James Knittle <gavin.knittle@nyu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:38 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budget

I am a New York City resident and a member of the New York City Democratic Socialists of America's Central Brooklyn chapter. I am voicing my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget and calling on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, **a practice the UN defines as torture**. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan.

-Gavin Knittle

From: Gloria Manzano <gloriaesthermanzano@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 1:56 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Family Healing Ambassadors of Staten Island

May 28th 2022

Gloria Manzano
Family Healing Ambassador

Good day my name is Gloria Manzano, I'm writing my testimony on why I think/feel that the Family Healing Ambassador program definitely needs proper funding and should stay in place.

Within my particular school in Staten Island New York, we absolutely need more proper social, emotional and mental care for our schools. I believe that the DOE nor
NYC or State truly see the magnitude of the importance and impact the emotion and mental needs of our kids and families require.
Covid-19 was and still continues to wreck havoc on families with emotional and financial hardships.

Therefore I feel it's very important we keep the Family Healing Ambassador program and find it with in the budget to keep proper funding, for the health of our families.

In Unity,

Gloria Manzano
William A Morris Family Healing Ambassador

From: Hal S <halschrieve@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 5:42 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Objection to proposed executive budget and proposal for a budget that prioritizes housing, climate action, and education

Hello, my name is Hal Schrieve. I am a New York City children's librarian and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hal Schrieve
Notes:

When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.

In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here. Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program. In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

Harriet Mugwiji
May 25th
Testimony for NYC Budget Hearing
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

Hello my name is Harriet Mugwiji. I am a proud member leader of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and I have been a home Nanny for 12 years. Last year domestic workers like myself fought to be included in NYC human rights law, and so many domestic workers in NYC still don't know about their basic rights. We won this right but we want to make sure that other workers and especially employers know about domestic worker rights. We want all domestic workers to be treated with dignity and respect. We can't do that in a city with 200,000 domestic workers if we don't have the funding and ongoing support. **Last year I was part of the NYC Coalition for domestic workers and I was given the opportunity to educate council members about care work. This year I would like to make sure that we are educating everyone about care workers. The pandemic has showed us how we as care workers are important to many families as some families decided to have their nannies live in with them as to have them go to their respectful homes. I would like the city council to approve the domestic worker and employer empowerment initiative. I live in Queens and there are over 50 000 domestic workers,Queens is very big so we would like funding to reach out to all of them. Thank you kindly.**

Dear Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan,

My name is **Hillary Hersh**. I'm a resident of NYC. I also serve the City of New York as a city worker. I'm writing this letter in opposition to Mayor Eric Adam's latest executive budget.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like healthcare, sanitation, and education. At the same time, he's throwing more money into the NYPD with a $10 billion dollar budget. The NYPD perpetuates racism[1] and doesn't keep anyone but wealthy people safe.

I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. The Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors, social workers, and community schools[2], rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[3] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[4] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[5] to all five boroughs.

A revised executive budget must also include real raises for city workers. Throughout the pandemic and now during the fragile NYC recovery, city workers have been at the front line of keeping NYC alive. Instead of getting pats on the back and empty accolades, city workers should be treated with dignity by getting pay raises that at least keep up with the increased costs of living brought about by drastic rent increases[6] and inflation[7].

Last, but not least, city workers need a permanent telework option. City worker attrition is at unprecedented levels, and thousands are citing a lack of telework option as the reason for leaving their careers in city government[8]. Without a telework option, a very popular idea amongst city workers[9], the city government will be unable to attract the talent it needs to stand up the city's recovery.

Thank you all for your time,
Hillary

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[1] https://www.ny1.com/nyc/manhattan/public-safety/2021/02/24/commissioner-shea-apologizes-for-systemic-racism-in-the-nypd

[2] https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/5/19/23131309/ny-community-schools-cuts-nonprofit-mental-health-attendance-monitoring

[3] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[4] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[5] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

[6] https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/real-estate/2022/03/23/nyc-rents-bidding-wars-low-inventory/7125858001/?gnt-cfr=1

[7] https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/inflation-new-york-city-metropolitan-area

[8] https://gothamist.com/news/this-isnt-just-normal-attrition-why-city-workers-say-theyre-quitting

[9] The most endorsed ideas in the City Staff Challenge for 2022 are related to telework- https://www.participate.nyc.gov/processes/staffideas/f/235/

From: Iben Falconer <Iben.Falconer@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 10:21 AM
To: Testimony
Cc: District35
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 1% for Parks / Budget

Dear Councilmembers,
I want to provide written testimony about the budget, where I am disappointed to see that Mayor Adams has gone back on his campaign pledge to set aside 1% of the budget for parks. Parks and open space are essential for the wellbeing of our residents--kids, adults, older New Yorkers--everyone. Parks are especially important in these days of the pandemic, where outdoor space is essential for people to gather together safely. It is also an issue of equity: many New Yorkers do not have good enough / near enough access to a well-maintained park. Please do better with this budget--we need our parks!!
Best,
Iben Falconer
(Clinton Hill)

May 25th Committee on Finance Testimony

Isabelle leyva

I'm writing today to urge the City Council to disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Group. My first experience with the SRG was on June 1st, 2020. I was attending a protest in Harlem in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. We had been marching for about 30 minutes when dozens of SRG officers charged the crowd.

The scene was mayhem. There were no orders being given. No one knew what to do or where to go. It was just violence. I asked an SRG officer "where do you want us to go?" He did not respond. Instead, he raised his baton above his head and swung it at me. I barely had time to turn around. The baton landed on my back. Luckily, I was wearing a backpack, which softened some of the blow. I was still left with bruises. To this day, I think about how lucky I was to have been able to turn around and avoid a blow to the head.

This became a daily occurrence throughout the summer of 2020. I had not heard of the SRG before I joined the 2020 protests. Now, the SRG lives in my nightmares.

In September of 2020, I was attending a protest in Times Square related to the forced hysterectomies being conducted on immigrants in ICE detention centers. The SRG attacked us before we even stepped off the sidewalk to march. They swung fists and batons. They ripped people off the sidewalk as they clung to traffic lights. They threw bicycles at us. In my footage from that day, you can hear me screaming "what are you doing?" repeatedly. That might seem innocuous, but it speaks to the arbitrary and brutal way that the SRG inflicts violence on us. There is no reason for it. It is a game of cat and mouse that leaves us traumatized.

After the SRG arrested dozens in Times Square, we went to One Police Plaza to provide jail support and await the release of those detained. The SRG approached us as we sat on the sidewalk and demanded that we leave. We were on a public sidewalk, sitting and eating lunch after an exhausting day of the SRG's violence. We started backing away, as dozens of officers formed a line and started pushing us. Suddenly, one of the SRG officers in the line grabbed a protester, pinning him against the fence. Behind me, I heard an SRG officer yell "encircle them." SRG officers on bikes surrounded us, using their bikes as barricades. I will never forget the screams of the young person next to me as an SRG officer picked her up by her hair and threw her onto the pavement.

I have been to over 100 protests in New York City over the last 2 years. Time and time again, the SRG shows up to protests ready for battle. The damage that the SRG has done to our communities cannot be measured by the number of misconduct complaints filed against them, or the number of lawsuits that they are named in. The SRG has inflicted irreparable physical and

emotional trauma on New Yorkers. That trauma is not isolated. It has a ripple effect. My family, friends, and loved ones have felt the impact of the trauma that I have endured at the hands of the SRG. I want to feel safe in my community. I have never felt less safe than I have while at protests with the SRG. I have feared for my life and for the lives of those around me.

Disbanding the SRG would not only protect the right to protest. It would protect protesters themselves. We are not safe as long as the SRG exists. Removing the SRG from protests is not enough. The SRG has a long track record of racial bias and violence, in an out of protests. They have no place in our communities or in our streets.

The NYPD is incapable of policing itself. Anything less than removal of the SRG's funds will result in the NYPD simply recreating the SRG under another name. I am calling on City Council to take action by disbanding the SRG and reinvesting its funds into our communities.

Jacqui Orie
5.25.22
NYC Budget Hearing
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

Jacqui Orie
I am grateful for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Jacqui Orie and I am the We Dream In Black NY Organizer for the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA). I am also a former domestic worker with over 20 years experience in the field of domestic work.

I am here to testify in support of the Domestic Workers and Employers Empowerment Initiative in this year's Schedule C budget proposal. The National Domestic Workers Alliance is the Nation's leading voice for domestic workers in building power, dignity and raising standards for the nannies, house cleaners and care workers across the country. In New York alone we have over 200,000 domestic workers. It is so important to invest in domestic workers, invest in our care economy, and to provide the resources for employers of domestic workers to be up to date with the latest standards and laws for domestic employment.

There are well over 200,000 domestic workers, they and their families total over 680,000 which is 8% of NYC population who provide essential care to an estimated one million employers in normal times, and in moments of crisis.

We are urging the NYC Council to support the passage of the Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative, introduced in the 2023 NYC discretionary Budget. Our Coalition is only asking for $300,000. It would provide much needed funding to support outreach, education and direct services to thousands of domestic workers and employers in our city. Last year we won historic changes in domestic worker rights such as the passage of Int. 339 Human Rights inclusion of domestic workers. Additionally, domestic workers were also able to get legislation to update the city's paid safe and sick leave to more fully bring domestic workers up to the city's standards. All this would be for nothing if we don't also ensure the resources to implement, educate and reach out to the thousands of workers and employers, Getting them connected to city agencies, and understanding the new standards of domestic work.

Again, we urge the city council to pass this initiative and to place value in the workers that care for all of us.

Jaennia Ding
Park Ave S
New York, NY 10016
jaenniajordan@gmail.com

I am part of the men and women on the land of New York. This written testimony is submitted in response to the public hearing re: Committee on Finance on Nay 25, 2022 scheduled for 10:00am EST.

According to the City's preliminary proposal[1], the mayor is allocating less than 1% of the total budget at $14.7M to the city's Human Rights Commission and cut the budget for FY 2023 compared to the previous year. In the same document, the city recognizes that in the first four months of FY2022, there was an increase of 45% complaints submitted, with a 24% increase in monetary damages ordered by the Commission for complaints. Evidently, there is a pandemic of human rights abuses related to Covid measures that resulted in segregation and human rights violations. I expect all Council Members to uphold their Oath of Office sworn to the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of New York and the Charter of New York as public servants. First and foremost, we must protect New Yorkers' human rights. I am calling on this Committee and all Council Members to ask for double the budget allocated to the Human Rights Commission and allow for double the headcount to take all complaints seriously, investigate and deliver Justice to The People of New York immediately. I am also calling on all Council Members to cease and desist on all actions repugnant to the Constitution of the United States, The Constitution of New York and The Charter of New York.

[1] https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2022/03/226-CCHR.pdf

From: jairo bonilla <jvwlex06@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 9:29 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Healing Ambassador

- Culpability, self-doubt, self-prejudice. these are qualities that make up us humans. I've queried these qualities and where they stemmed from for 30 years of my life. Since I've joined this healing ambassador program, as a healing ambassador it's been like a place of sanction, of warmth. I've put off my own quandaries for such a long time. However, because of my role with this program, I Vandana Bonilla, Healing ambassador for District 4,
BBMS, located in East Harlem, I was able to feel potentiated with women like me, who strive for prosperity. Haplessly, prosperity takes work, and this work caused burnout. This burnout was availed with this program, it sanctioned me to relax, it coerced myself to learn things about myself that even I didn't know. What I'm most proud of is that it sanctioned me to avail others. To avail others face their trepidations, mentally and physically. This Healing ambassador program transmuted my life, my family's life and my community's life, verbalizing at home, at school, outside. My perception has genuinely transmuted, my ocular perceivers flicker with an incipient mindset. I've never felt so alive, so juvenile spirited. I've learned to radiate confidence for myself and others.

I would like to thank The FCWC (Family and Community Wellness Collective) through the DOE who launched this Family Healing Ambassador program and with the SUPPORT of The Healing-Centered Schools Working Group this program came in right on time, we needed this and we ALL realize how much we needed it PRE-COVID but especially now as we are ALL still trying to process and adjust post pandemic. Our school staff realize we have to work together and we have to feel together so we can heal together. Please support sustaining this program and expanding it, b/c our communities need it. Thank you.

From: Jake Wilhelmsen <jakewilhelmsen@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:49 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing Mayor Eric Adams' austerity budget

Hello, my name is Jake Wilhelmsen. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony,

Jake Wilhelmsen
Brooklyn 11215

NYC Budget Hearings

May 25, 2022

Testimony of Jamal Westmore, RN

NY State Nurses Association

Good Morning.

My name is Jamal Westmoreland. I am a registered nurse employed at Woodhull Hospital in Brooklyn, I am also a NYSNA member & the membership committee chair person at Woodhull hospital. NYSNA represents 9,000 RNs who work for the public hospital system.
As a frontline staff Nurse, I'm more than familiar with the invaluable role Registered nurses play within the public healthcare system, and their recruitment and retention are essential/imperative to ensuring that New York City public hospitals are able to provide high-quality safe effective patient centered care.

The nursing profession continues to face shortages due to a lack of potential educators, high turnover, burnout and inequitable workforce distribution. As I can attest to Nursing shortages only lead to more medical errors, higher morbidity/mortality rates and ultimately more patient dissatisfaction. NYSNA supports initiatives directed for the recruitment and retention of nurses at NYC Health & Hospitals.

An environment that empowers and motivates nurses is necessary to rejuvenate and sustain the nursing workforce.

Thank you for your time today.

Hello, my name is Jamilah Elder. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' austerity budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's cuts to critical social services that keep New Yorkers safe and well. Instead of programs that criminalize and punish Black, brown, and working-class New Yorkers, we need: permanent, long-term affordable housing; mental health counselors in our schools; funding for K-12 schools and CUNY; safe consumption sites; and clean green transit, infrastructure, and jobs—programs that enable us all to lead safe lives with dignity and equality.

Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

The Council must also reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Austerity is harmful and the bold investments in people and community demanded by New Yorkers are widely popular. The City Council has a responsibility to demand more for working-class New Yorkers. I ask you to have the courage to reject Eric Adams' budget of austerity and punishment.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

From: Jason Clarke <thisisjason@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:27 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FY23 Executive Budget

Hi,
My name is Jason Clarke, a Brooklyn resident.
I'm writing to urge the City Council to oppose Mayor Adams' executive budget and pass one that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

I want to ask the Council to invest in permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HOD. I want to ask the Council to oppose Mr. Adams' cuts to our public education system by investing $122 million into CUNY and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers instead of filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on the looming climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $1.3 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs

Thanks
Jason Clarke

From: HealingCentered Schools <bxhealingcenteredschools@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 7:50 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (Jazzy Rivera) Testimony for 5/25 Committee on Finance, NY City Council FY'23 Excutive Budget Hearing

My name is Jazzy J Rivera I am the Family Healing ambassador of 32k123 and the district 32 Healing ambassador. I am the President of the President Council of District 32 … I serve as PA/PTA President of 32k123 and 32k3383. Our Council women for 32k123 AND THE DISTRICT OFFICE is Councilwoman Jennifer Gutierrez AND FOR 32K383 IS Ms. Sandy Nurse I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE DOE FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR IN LAUNCHING THE HEALING AMBASSADOR PROGRAM Working collectively with all Healing ambassadors in the 19 schools in my district as well as in my school community it is with great pleasure to work with the school administration too be able to provide the parents with different workshops and support groups to assist with their mental health and having a safe space to be able to talk and gain ideas from other on indifferent activities and events we may participate for our own wellbeing. During the pandemic I have learned from my community that most just need guidance assistance and a safe space to go to where they feel supported and assisted. Personally, I am a single mom and before the launch of this program I was trying to figure ways to keep myself together and when this program was launched, I took it as an opportunity to move forward and assist my family and my community with resources to maintain them with their mental health and wellness and so that they knew they were not alone. Extending this program with parent ambassadors and youth ambassadors will allow us as a community to be each other's support and everyone from ss tiff to students to parents too know that we often face the same issues and can share strategies that help us as it may help someone else.

thank you for your time

Jazzy J Rivera

Hello, my name is Jeanette Bocanegra. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public description of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror regarding the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence is not a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

From: Jeff Coots <jcoots@jjay.cuny.edu>
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 3:39 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] P2PH Testimony for Committee on Finance budget hearing

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for my testimony regarding the Executive Budget hearing held by the Committee on Finance earlier this week. Thank you for your consideration.

Good Afternoon. My name is Jeffrey Coots and I direct the From Punishment to Public Health initiative at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
As part of our work to improve cross-sector collaboration at the intersections of public health and public safety, we host regular working groups with members drawn from fields of healthcare delivery, care management, addiction and mental health services, managed care, housing and shelter, education, alternative to incarceration and reentry, as well as staff members from city, county and state public safety and public health agencies.

The common thread that runs through all of our conversations is the idea that focusing on social determinants of health, so things like housing, nutrition, healthcare access, education, social supports and living wage employment, not only improve community health, but also contribute significantly to community safety.

When we see members of our community, lashing out from a place of vulnerability, our initial response is often focused on their individual accountability, which we met out through police, court and incarceration resources. But if we are to turn the tide and reduce the crime and violence so consistently display in our local media, we must also focus on the accountability of our institutions, which have allowed these vulnerabilities to fester in small pockets of the city.

The vast majority of people impacted by the criminal legal system have substance use issues, about a third have mental health issues, and more than a quarter are homeless. The idea that we can arrest our way out of this problem is no longer a viable investment strategy. No one here today thinks exposing the most vulnerable among us to violence and trauma of Rikers Island will improve our community safety. And approving a budget that hires more Corrections Officers when a third of them are already not showing up for work, is simply throwing good money after bad.
Instead, let's fund public health priorities that we know impact public safety.

In addition to the affordable housing priorities outlined by speakers earlier today, we need further investments in transitional housing for individuals leaving incarceration so they can receive the supports and services not readily available in the city shelter system.

We need more Supporting housing that provides long-term stability to individuals with serious mental illness.
We need more harm reduction services like overdose prevention facilities and mobile outreach vans
We need more community-based mobile responses for those in mental health crisis and we need more safe spaces to bring people in the aftermath of this mobile response.
But I think what we need most of all is a sense of urgency from our public figures.

Almost ten years after approving funding for the first two Support and Connection centers, we only have one that is currently available in northern Manhattan. Where is the accountability of our institutions?

Jeffrey Coots, J.D., M.P.H. (he/him)
Director, From Punishment to Public Health (P2PH)
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
524 West 59th Street, Room 606.17-B
New York, NY 10019
Phone: 212-484-1157
Email: jcoots@jjay.cuny.edu
Website: www.jjay.cuny.edu/P2PH

To the members of the City Council Finance Committee,

Thank you for your time. I am writing today on behalf of renters all over the city.

Yes, New York – as the greatest city in the world – has always been expensive and has become more and more expensive as time goes on and as more and more people move here from all over the world. However, we have been living in unprecedented times for over two years. Over 630,000 New Yorkers – an unprecedented number – lost their jobs in the first year of the pandemic. Not everyone has recovered the lost time and wages and not everyone is working yet. Many are dealing with long term health problems caused by Covid-19 and are unable to return to work. Times have been very hard. Within the past 6 months, rent prices have risen dare I say astronomically from what they had been even a year ago – sometimes 30% or more. Everyday New Yorkers are still suffering and a rent increase of even 2-4% is too much right now.

I know small landlords may have been suffering too with rent and eviction freezes, but now is a time for us all to stick together and relieve each other's suffering as best we can. Please do not increase rents this year – our working people can't afford it.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dougherty
Brooklyn NY 11220

I'm a resident of New York City, and I'm calling on the City Council to reject the austerity and criminalization in Mayor Adams' proposed executive budget, and fight for a people's budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Two years into the pandemic, New Yorkers are still in crisis. As the city struggles with a fragile recovery, it's critical that the City Council pass a budget that actually meets our needs, as advocated by The People's Plan.

Instead of programs that criminalize and punish communities of color, we need permanent, long-term affordable housing, mental health counselors in our schools, funding for education, and clean green transit, infrastructure, and jobs --- budgets that will truly promote health, safety and wellbeing for all.

In particular, I urge the Council to:

1) Invest $4B annually in long-term permanently affordable housing.
Invest $1.5B for NYCHA, $2.5B for HPD for truly affordable housing that focuses on low-income and extremely low-income New Yorkers. Separately, ensure the $112M in the executive budget for safe havens are single-occupancy, and invest in supportive housing units.
2) Invest $400M in student well-being and counselors, not cops.
Instead of spending nearly $400M on school police, including filling 1,363 school police ("safety agent") vacancies (~$82.2M), fund $120118.5M to expand restorative practices, $150M to hire 500 new counselors and social workers, $75M for local hiring of 500 supportive need-based positions, and $5M for mental health continuum in schools.
3) Cancel plans to add 582 correctional officers.
Cut the increase of 582 Department of Corrections staff (from the preliminary budget) as this will not resolve the absenteeism of correctional officers or problems at Rikers Island or city jails. Decarcerate, end all forms of isolative torture, and use funds to support people exiting jails and prisons.
4) Cut failed NYPD criminalization programs and invest in anti-violence programs.
Cancel funding for new NYPD initiatives, namely the ineffective and violent anti-gun and plainclothes units, dashboard cameras for patrol cars, the "Subway Safety Plan", and the new Firearms Training Facility ($225M in the proposed FY23 capital budget.) Cut NYPD Vice ($18.2M in FY22), Strategic Response Group ($68.1M in FY23), and NYPD overtime (~$750M in FY22). Fund anti-hate-violence, violence interruption, and peer-led mental health and harm-reduction programs.

End all NYPD co-response to mental health crisis calls, and sweeps of homeless New Yorkers.
5) Invest in clean green transit, infrastructure, and jobs.
Fund $3.1B over 10 years for the Streets Master Plan. Fully fund Fair Fares at $250M, doubling the income cutoff so more New Yorkers can qualify. Invest $1.8B annually for deep retrofits and solar panel installation for Green, Healthy Schools as a first step in Local Law 97 compliance. Fund $22M to increase corner basket pick-ups, $4.9M for rat mitigation, and $18.2M for curbside organics. Restore sanitation budget (down $95M from FY22 modified budget.)

I also ask that the City immediately release a full transparent account of how federal funds are and will be used in the current and next fiscal year budgets, and ensure funds are utilized to meet New Yorkers' most dire needs, reflected by the priorities above, and the full list of demands by The People's Plan: https://tinyurl.com/PeoplesBudgetDemands

Jennifer Sugijanto

From: jennifer vasquez <jennavas22pr@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 12:25 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Healing Ambassador Program

Hi. My name is Jennifer Vasquez and I am a District 10 Healing Ambassador supporting PS008 Isaac Varian in the Bronx. I live in Council District 11 and my representative is Eric Dinowitz. As a former educator, I know he knows how important Healing Centered Schools are. I am absolutely honored to hold this title as District Healing Ambassador, as this program has truly changed my life for the better. It has forced me to deal with my own traumas, insecurities, and lack of self-care. It has also empowered me to be a better Parent leader, help other members in my school community deal with their own traumas, and educate them on a variety of topics, such as self-care, coping with financial stress, managing parental stress, etc. The Healing Ambassador Program is very much needed and supported whole-heartedly by my school leaders. It is also supported, not only by parents within my school community, but by family members outside my school community and staff members at other schools. I truly hope to see this program expand and continue to be funded. We really need the City Council to become our allies and support this program to create a greater impact for all of New York. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Vasquez,
District 10 Healing Ambassador

"Controversy can either destroy, define or develop you"

From: Jessica Marshall <marshallbelhumeur@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 5:42 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony from Jessica Marshall (given 5 25 2022)

Hello, my name is Jessica Marshall. I am proud to be one of the many many many who left their city of birth to realize their dream of coming to NYC to live, work and raise a family. My students too have come from all over the country, and they are ecstatic to be starting their adult lives in NYC. This is a city that is all about tolerance and intelligence. Today I am here, as a NYer, a teacher, and a parent, to urge the City Council to remove funding for the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the NYPD's budget. This group, tasked with fighting terror — has attacked NYers, including our most idealistic young people — young people who took to the streets calling for justice and change in the wake of George Floyd's murder. It's a source of shame for all of us who have seen the videos, and that's pretty much all of us. Thanks to a study by Human Rights Watch we know that the SRG is specifically training its members to attack people from groups calling for progressive change, and that the SRG's efforts have disproportionately affected people of color. In that report, NYC — the nyc we all love — seems like one of the throwback regimes so popular in other parts of the country, cities and states where bullies believe they can silence people calling for social equity. Cmon. That's not NY. We should be leading the country, not following its worst examples. City Council members, you have an opportunity to fix this, and to prove that NY, the city that people around the world dream of, is back — please, I urge you to remove the funding for the NYPD's SRG and instead invest in the communities that are critical to the future — the bright future I've promised my students and my own children — of our city.

Hello, my name is Jessica Semmel. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public description of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror regarding the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence is not a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

From: Jessye Herrell <jessyeherrell@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 7:11 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] NYC FY23 Budget

Council Members,

I am surprised and pleased to see a reduction in School Safety Agents in next year's proposed budget. I would urge you to cut that number even further and instead invest in more robust wrap-around supports for students, including mental health, college and career counseling, and academic support.

Best,
Jessye Herrell
Brooklyn

From: Joe Pfister <joe.s.pfister@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:46 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony For the Finance Committee Hearing on the FY23 Executive Budget

Hello:

I am a New York City resident and I want to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHAand $2.5 billion for HPD.

The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COS for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Joe Pfister

Hello,
My name is Joseph. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Regards,

Joseph Ensio Juntunen, CTS

Hello, my name is Joseph Sampson. I am a New York City resident and I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.
[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
[4] CUNY: City University of New York
[5] DOE: Department of Education
[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.
[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.
[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.
[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

From: Julie Chen <chen.julief@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:31 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budget hearing testimony

Hello, my name is Julie Chen. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hello, my name is Julie Kash. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

From: Katie Cunningham <kcunn402@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:12 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing Mayor Adams' "Austerity Budget"

Hello, my name is Katie Cunningham. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

--
Katherine Cunningham

From: Kayla Hanson <kaylareedhanson@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 1, 2022 9:03 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Budget Testimony

Hello, my name is Kayla Hanson. I am a Brooklyn resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

-Kayla Hanson

Hello, my name is Kelsa. I am a New York City resident, and I am submitting this testimony to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget. Over the past two years I have had ample opportunity to both witness and experience first-hand the brutality members of the SRG bring to New York City's communities and residents. The lack of oversight is particularly egregious — the SRG appears to act without impunity, utilizing dangerous tactics such as kettling in their violent arrests of protestors.

I was arrested on June 5th, 2021 while attempting to exit Washington Square Park. That evening was an exemplary display of the sort of brutality I have come to associate with the SRG.

The NYPD mobilized SRG against everyone in the park — not just protesters. I was particularly struck by their utter disregard for the humanity of anyone who was in the park after 10pm. SRG bikers pushed forward in militaristic formation, holding their bikes horizontally across their bodies and using them as weapons to strike and shove people. I remember in particular one SRG biker literally roaring, his mouth wide as he yelled red-faced for his fellows to push us back. I felt in that moment we were not human to him; we were obstacles, debris that needed to be cleared and removed.

I was struck by a bike used in the aforementioned method during this initial push, and began to look for a way to leave the park. This quickly became difficult, as SRG had begun to surround the area around the fountain with their bikes for a kettle, and the exits were rapidly being closed off. As I was moving toward an exit, I was confronted by Sergeant Rice from NYPD Legal, who instructed me to leave. As I continued to move away from him and toward the exit, he said "Okay," and lunged at me. He and at least two other officers grabbed me and forced me face-down onto the ground.

At this time an SRG biker ran up from my right and shouted, "Stop resisting! Stop resisting!" He then proceeded to strike me multiple times in the face and head with his bike — holding it as I have described SRG holding their bikes earlier in the evening, using it to bludgeon me. I am 5'6" and weigh 125 pounds. I was physically restrained in a prone position by three men. At the time when this member of the SRG was shouting for me to stop resisting while utilizing his bike against me as a weapon, I was unable to move — it would have been impossible for me to resist.

Beating someone in the head and face with a bicycle while they are fully restrained is an egregious misuse of power. Unfortunately, it is not an anomaly. The SRG routinely beat, kettle, harass, and arrest protestors with little regard for their safety or humanity. I implore the City Council to divest from the SRG by disbanding the unit and removing removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Selfridge St,
Forest Hills, NY 11375, USA
May 24, 2022

Councilmember Lynn Schulman
250 Broadway Suite 1866
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Schulman:

I am writing to submit a written testimony to the city budget hearing on May 25. In Forest Hills & Rego Park, we need additional 3K seats for families with young children. I have a 3 year old and 1 year old, both boys who I am hoping will be able to attend early childhood education in the neighborhood. While the citywide expansion took place this past year from 2021-2022, I am concerned about limited physical space and slots available to every working family interested in 3K.

Our family has attended some of the open houses in the community, and there are always only one classroom of 15 to 18 spots, per provider. We have visited the faith-based options. We are curious about the nonprofit providers. We also applied to our zone school. Ultimately, it will be a matter of logistics and proximity to our home. Wraparound hours that enable parents to drop off as early as 7AM and pickup as late as 6PM are important to parents working in Manhattan. A comprehensive enrichment curriculum, STEM education, sports & exercise, and speech therapy are critical to 3K & 4K.

Thank you for reading and acknowledging my testimony on NYC's future budget for District 29.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin Ly

Kevin Ly

Selfridge St,
Forest Hills, NY 11375, USA
May 24, 2022

Councilmember Lynn Schulman
250 Broadway Suite 1866
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Schulman:

I am writing to submit a written testimony to the city budget hearing on May 25. In the aftermath of the Ulvade school shooting, I urge the city to prioritize training and placing school safety agents and police officers at elementary schools in Forest Hills & Rego Park to protect our children and teachers.

Thank you for reading and acknowledging my testimony on NYC’s future budget for District 29.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin Ly

6820 Selfridge St, Apt 3P
Forest Hills, NY 11375, USA
May 26, 2022

Councilmember Lynn Schulman
250 Broadway Suite 1866
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Schulman:

I am writing to submit a written testimony to the city budget hearing on May 25. In the aftermath of the Ulvade school shooting, I urge the city to prioritize training and placing school safety agents and police officers at elementary schools in Forest Hills & Rego Park to protect our children and teachers.

Thank you for your recent update on the increased patrol at the local schools after the Uvelda tragedy. I urge your office to prioritize funding for the 112th precinct to maintain and continue heightened security measures for the rest of this academic school year, if not also for the summer and school year 2022-2023.

To stop hate and end gun violence, we need to ensure that schools have properly trained safety agents and police officers during this time that we live in. It is important to place school safety agents who are either armed or who can safely respond to a mass shooter.

We must also support the local 112th precinct in an expansion that will increase personnel to include school safety agents, school crossing guards, and police officers who are able to respond to acts of hate, violence, and domestic terrorism.

The most heartbreaking accounts that I have read came from the pediatric trauma hospital in Texas that took in the victims from the elementary school. It is true that the wounds would have been different if it were not a semi-automatic AR-15 weapon. Children are small and any gunshot wound inflicted is always life ending barring a miracle. That miracle is funding ambulances, NYPD, and rapid emergency response teams to save lives.

We must do more to stop hate and end gun violence. It will include mental health services and trauma centers, but it must mean additional police presence, high-resolution security cameras, panic alarms, locks, subway & bus metal detectors, and school metal detectors.

School safety agents must reserve the right to check bags, screen visitors, and be properly trained to respond to active shooter situation. We cannot afford to have police officers who are caught off guard as safe as Forest Hills may seem to be. There are many towns like Uvalde

across America, and I am most concerned that we will be unprepared and overconfident regarding the next gun violence tragedy.

Gun violence must be treated as the top public health issue in District 29. It affects everyone, and while every country has mental health issues, only America has this gun violence issue to this extreme of devastating the most vulnerable population as elementary school age kids. I write to you as a father of two boys who have 15+ years of schooling ahead of them.

Thank you for reading and acknowledging my testimony on NYC's future budget for District 29.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin Ly

Kevin Ly

Kieran Clarke
NYC 2022 Budget and Finance Hearing
May 25, 2022

Hello my name is **Kieran Michelle Clarke**I'm a member leader of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and member leader of We Dream in Black NY, NDWA's organizing program for Black identifying domestic workers. I have worked for the care sector for 21 years and I have MANY domestic worker colleagues throughout the city of New York. I have been actively involved in the domestic worker campaigns to ENSURE human rights protections for domestic workers. It is good to see the changes in NYC's legislation, it is a good step forward. I also saw that during the pandemic domestic workers across the were left without resources and knowledge of their rights as so many became unemployed all at once. In NYC 1 in 8 women of color are domestic workers. We want that laws that we passed to have real effect in the homes where we work. That means the city should pass the Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative. I want all domestic workers in NYC to know their rights and have the kind of access to information that I have had. I teach other workers about their rights, and we can teach so much more with the support from NYC city council and administration. I have experienced workplace conditions that do not respect my humanity as a domestic worker, and I know what it means to be connected with resources and to feel empowered. We care for all of you, and it is time for you to care for us too. Please pass the $300,000 proposal for domestic worker and employer empowerment initiative.
Thank you for your time.

From: kim kaiser <kimberlylisakaiser@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:37 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] No on Adams' Current Budget

Hello, my name is Kim Kaiser. I'm from Brooklyn, and am currently holding it down in Committee Chair Brannan's own district, in Bensonhurst. As a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter, I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to instead pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers, including those such as myself.
Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers, like me, are in crisis. My needs- our needs, won't be met by Adams' austerity budget.

COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating, dystopian cuts to vital city services we depend on, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget eerily intact.

Today, I strongly urge the Council to stand up against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting needed funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to so-called "law and order." I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I am emphatically urging the Council to demonstrate a meaningful commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the notoriously predatory, ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair [and good neighbor!] Brannan, for hearing my testimony.
--
Kim Kaiser
Actor & Creative Artist
AEA|she/her
www.KimKaiserOfficial.com

From: Kyle Carlson <kylebcarlson@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:09 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing the austerity budget

Hello, my name is Kyle Carlson and I am a New York City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Testimony About the Strategic Response Group
New York City Council
Elizabeth Langer – NYC Resident

Hi, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Liz. I grew up in Forest Hills, Queens and am a social work student. I have seen first-hand the violent, abusive actions taken by the NYPD's Strategic Response Group, and I am urging the City Council to remove their funding from the police budget.

My understanding of The Strategic Response Group or SRG, was that they originally were founded as a counter terror unit. But I have watched the unit be deployed violently at peaceful protests.

My strongest memory of the SRG was at a protest on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2021. The protest was peaceful, and the tone of the protestors was to celebrate the lives and work of black, queer, and marginalized individuals. Yet there were upwards of 15-20 police cars and vans following the protestors and more than 20 officers wearing riot gear waiting for them at the end of their route. I watched as the officers pushed them into the street to force arrests, dragging barricades to stop them from fleeing. The SRG officers grabbed young Black and Brown protestors and forcibly dragged them into police vans. I did not feel like the SRG were there to protect us, and I didn't feel safe with their presence. I felt that their actions were planned, measured, and targeted. This experience was really scary, and I still think about it often. I was traumatized by the actions the SRG took against the protestors.

I don't believe they are doing the job they are intended to do, which is protect New Yorkers against terrorism. The protest I witnessed on Martin Luther King Jr. Day was not an action that deserved counter-terrorist level police presence. The police use of force was unwarranted and unjust. And I believe the SRG should be disbanded, and their funding be dispersed to more important issues facing New York - like supporting Black and Brown New Yorkers.

From: Ludie Delva <ludiedelva736@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 2:31 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony!

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Hello my name is Ludie Delva, a proud member of National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and a Nanny for over 5 years. I am also a Leader Worker with the NDWA. Last year I campaigned with so many others workers to be included in NYC human rights Law. we won and we are so happy with this victory. But this victory doesn't mean anything if all Domestic workers in NY City don't know about their rights, or where to go if they have been treated unfairly in their workplace. I want to make sure other workers and especially employers know about domestic worker rights. We want all domestic workers like myself to be treated with dignity and respect. We can't do that in a city , with over 200,000 domestic workers if we don't have the funding and ongoing support. So we are asking the National Domestic workers Alliance, and the NYC coalition for Domestic worker partner, are asking for $300,000 for this initiative to angage in education, outreach and referrals for domestic workers include the $300,000 in the Budget for domestic workers.
Thank you!

Finance committee public hearing on 5/25/2022.

Written Testimony

Good morning.

Thanks to the Finance Committee for holding this public hearing and allowing us to express our needs.

I am Luisa Rodriguez, a tenant of a TIL building, 615 W 150th St. in Manhattan, member of the TIL Coalition organized by PA'LANTE.

Since your committee works to make sure that taxpayers' dollars are used wisely, effectively, and fairly, and to achieve positive, lasting change, the purpose of my testimony is to bring to your attention the need to include in this year's budget, funding for the long-awaited rehabilitation of buildings in the TIK program, instead of funding the ANCP/Third Party Program.

The TIL program was created in the '70s, at a time when the neighborhoods in which these buildings were located experienced impoverishment and depopulation; a time when no one wanted to get into those areas, a time when no developer was interested in investing a penny to restore dilapidated buildings and revive distressed neighborhoods. That's when the City through HPD, created the TIL program and presented it to the tenants of those abandoned, dilapidated buildings as an opportunity for them to own their apartments.

The agreement was that if tenants could manage their buildings for several years, the City would restore the buildings using government funds. After creating an HDFC Cooperative, it would sell to tenants the shares allocated to their units at a very low cost.

The tenants have done their part and have been patiently waiting for HPD to deliver on their part of the agreement. However, after **decades**, in which TIL tenants have taken care of TIL buildings and cleaned up their communities, HPD is transferring TIL buildings to Third-Party programs which will ultimately lead to evictions as tenants will not be able to sustain the maintenance/rent, which will be restructured after conversion to HDFCs. Please note that because of the mortgage the developers take to do the construction, the maintenance/rent will be higher, including the amortization of the mortgage.

I am including herein information about what happened to 615 W 150th St. TA, hoping to shed some light on the struggles our TA has gone through for decades. Our building entered the TIL Program in 1996. Since the year 2000, HPD has not allowed us to rent any vacancies. Vacant apartments are left to decay. Our operating budget is practically non-existing because of dwindling account balances due to not being able to rent vacancies and losing the rent of the families that were relocated out since 2008. The rent those families pay to our TA has to be included in the payment to the host building.

We urge you to fund the rehabilitation of TIL buildings and stop the transferring of TIL buildings to ANCP/Third-Party programs.

You can, you have the power to undo the years of neglect of TIL buildings. We count on your understanding of the situation and your sense of fairness and justice. Thanks for your attention.

Respectfully submitted by Luisa Rodriguez

615 W. 150th St. TENANTS ASSOCIATION (TA) - RELOCATION SUBSIDIES								
#	RELOCATION ADDRESS	TIL RENT (Tenant pays to TA) (US$)	RENT PAID TO HOST HDFC (US$)	MONTHLY SUBSIDY REIMBURSED TO TA BY HPD (US$)	RELOCATION DATE	# OF MONTHS (Up to June 2022)	SUBTOTALS (US$)	COMMENTS
1	484 Convent Avenue	$402.50	$1,231.00	$828.50	8/22/2008	164	$135,874.00	
2	484 Convent Avenue	$302.50	$1,522.00	$1,219.50	8/20/2008	164	$199,998.00	
3	484 Convent Avenue	$247.50	$1,231.00	$983.50	8/28/2008	164	$161,294.00	
4	484 Convent Avenue	$442.00	$1,522.00	$1,080.00	8/29/2008	164	$132,840.00	
5	484 Convent Avenue	$402.50	$1,231.00	$828.50	8/27/2008	164	$135,874.00	
6	484 Convent Avenue	$347.88	$1,522.00	$1,174.12	8/18/2008	164	$192,556.00	
7	484 Convent Avenue	$320.00	1,717.00	$1,397.00	8/21/2008	164	$229,108.00	
8	484 Convent Avenue	$247.50	$1,231.00	$983.50	8/19/2008	31	$30,489.00	Relocated on 5/10/2011 to 530 W 144th St. (TIL building)
9	156 E 97th St.	$192.50	$1,106.00	$913.50	10/14/2008	65	$59,378.00	Deceased on 4/27/2014
10	3810 Broadway	$192.50	$1,106.00	$913.50	10/6/2008	163	$148,901.00	
11	824 St. Nicholas Ave.	$247.50	$1,522.00	$1,274.50	12/5/2008	161	$205,195.00	
12	824 St. Nicholas Ave.	$302.50	$1,231.00	$928.50	12/4/2008	64	$59,424.00	Deceased on 4/26/2014
GRAND TOTAL (NOT including cost of moving and storage of tenants' belongings)							**$1,690,931.00**	

NOTE: IN 2008, HPD SAID THEY HAD THE FUNDS TO REHABILITATE THE BUILDING. TO START THE PROCESS, A TOTAL OF 15 FAMILIES WERE RELOCATED OUT. TWELVE OF THEM WERE RELOCATED TO HDFCs (SHOWN ABOVE); THREE OF THEM WERE RELOCATED TO TIL BUILDINGS (FOR THOSE THREE HPD DID NOT HAVE PAY ANY SUBSIDIES).

May 25, 2022 at 10:00am

Testimony for the NYC Council, Committee on Finance

Twelve months ago the NYC Department of Education "DOE" announced the creation of the **Family** and **Community Wellness Collective**, with seed money from private donors. This allowed the DOE to recruit one parent from each the public schools that were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. From July 2021 to September 2021, the Healing Ambassadors received five 2-hour training sessions lead by one Clinical Psychologist and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Our role was to schedule a parent meeting at our respective schools, to share the knowledge learned and mental health resources that were provided by the two Mental Health Professionals.

For the past month, the Family and Community Wellness Collective has been re-training all Healing Ambassadors to provide one workshop at their respective schools in June 2022. However, the program needs to be funded for the 2022 – 2023 school year. I am urging the NYC Council to fund this initiative that is intended to help public school parents that are still struggling with the after effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Although Parent Healing Ambassadors are not mental health counselors, we try to engage the parents of our schools and get them to seek available help with any emotional or financial hardships they are experiencing.

I talk with parents at my daughter's middle school all the times, and one of the complaints from a small percentage of the parents is that their child does not want to come to school. It is not because of bullying is non-existent at the school. We must find ways to help students to want to return to school every day, or we risk an increase of students affected by learning loss. Investing in the Family and Community Wellness Collective allows parents to help other parents that may need a little emotional support and guidance in recognizing and getting mental health support for themselves – for the sake of their children.

Luis Camilo
Parent Healing Ambassador of IS-223M
PTA President of IS-223M

From: HealingCentered Schools <bxhealingcenteredschools@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 7:51 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (Charaya Hardy) Testimony for 5/25 Committee on Finance, NY City Council FY'23 Excutive Budget Hearing

Good evening All,

My name is Madam C. Hardy I am the Recording Secretary for the CEC of D23, Acting VP of Presidents Council and PTA president of PSIS 155. In these roles I was introduced to a group catering to Healing Schools and families. This initiative was brought to us from The DOE FCWC (Family and Community Wellness Collective department) and with the Support of The Healing-Centered Schools Working Group, I became a Family Healing Ambassador in District 4 (East Harlem), I was able to take these training to District 23 in Brooklyn where I now reside and children attend school. Being an advocate has allowed me to inform families who have experienced trauma and teach them how to cope and deal with these issues. This program DOE created shed light on Mental health, social emotional learning and how it has been impacted by COVID-19.
Due to this forum parents were able to be vulnerable and honest to get the best needs and services for their families. I am honored to be part of a program that caters to helping and rebuilding the confidence and safety of our scholars. In this role I have also been able to help my own family. During the passing of my grandmother, My family and I were able to honestly speak on losing someone and how to deal. I was happy to teach my children their feelings and emotions were valid and real using the mirror method I learned in my training. Being a reflection for your children helps them just as much as it helps the parent. I am so blessed to continue the work. I'm asking for the City Council to please support this initiative in the budget to keep it going and growing for all our school community members city-wide. Thank you for allowing me to testify.

With love
Madam. C. Hardy

From: madeleine jackson <jacksonmadeleine1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 7:24 PM
To: NYC Council Hearings
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Finance Committee hearing NYCHA

Evening

Monday was a holiday automatic email won't let me send my hearing statement

I and my 2 siblings are college educated second generation public housing residents, living in separate households.

We support the full funding of section 9. While I support the funding section 9 I feel I need to speak to the why and how 2 generations are still living in public housing which is suppose to be temporary.

We have to talk about systemic racist practices that has kept black and brown communities within public housing.

I live in an area surrounded by subsidized housing, which is overwhelmingly of people of European descendants and first immigrant Europeans. How are the able to get this info and African Americans and Latinos are systemically locked out? This is not to pit one group against one another, this is to explain a historical fact.

Mitchell Lamas, which was started by life insurance companies which practiced openly discriminating practices, locking out black and brown communities

Limited Equity co-ops, started by unions and the federal government. The Unions also had practiced policies of discrimination. Locking out black and brown communities. Co-ops units are usually passed down from family member to another.

These two types of housing typically were meant to be
permeant and had better living conditions

According to our own governments research African Americans had historically been denied financial resources, competitive jobs and have been locked out of neighborhoods.

Section 9 is the answer to the push back to all forms of economic hostility of the black and brown community.

One way to fund NYCHA is to access the funding scheme devised by Battery Park City. There is money from their tax revenue since 1994 where is that money?

Raise the section 9 funding to the levels of section 8. Systemic Racism is still with us as edivant through Wellsfargo diabolical in their pretend hiring scheme for jobs that was already filled using their scheme to target black women.

While appalling this is one scheme that was publishized. These games play themselves out by producing studies that state we are not competitive enough when in fact they had no intention of giving them the job.

Where do you go as a black and brown person in this country of prosperity and opportunity for the chose few. As long as we have

Instead of using the Perseveration Trust which depends on building luxury development which will push surrounding community prices up. Which will ultimately push the lower to moderate income community out. This is not up for debate it has happened all over the city.

I advise you to look into the history of Battery Park City which started out with the same vision as the Perseveration Trust. Battery Park City is now one of the most expensive places to live. With very few black and brown people living in there low to moderate income housing.

Market rate apts on the lower east side where I live is 3,725 you would have to make 90,00-100,000. Way over the means of most city workers, whose average salary is 35,000 -45,000.

My fear is when funding is shifted from the federal government to the state, NYCHA will be at the mercy of changing policies and schemes from whatever political party or politician is elected. Federal government would be the safeguard.

I Support the citywide council of Presidents proposal for full funding for NYCHA through section9 and stop privatization through the Preseveration Trust

There are more working class people in NYC than the what is considered high income earners. You would have to recruit high income people to live in the luxury developments.

Now we have the fair wage campaign going on so employers can be paid more so they can pay the rent. It's far simpler to just fund Public housing and guarantee the people who care more about this city are able to live here, as well as the next generation.

Thank you

Madeleine Jackson

Dear Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan,

My name is **Maliha Fairooz.** I'm a resident of NYC. I also serve the City of New York as a city worker. I'm writing this letter in opposition to Mayor Eric Adam's latest executive budget.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education. At the same time, he's throwing more money into the NYPD with a $10 billion dollar budget. The NYPD perpetuates racism and doesn't keep anyone but wealthy people safe.

I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors, social workers, and community schools, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

A revised executive budget must also include real raises for city workers. Throughout the pandemic and now during the fragile NYC recovery, city workers have been at the front line of keeping NYC alive. Instead of getting pats on the back and empty accolades, city workers should be treated with dignity by getting pay raises that at least keep up with the increased costs of living brought about by drastic rent increases and inflation.

Last, but not least, city workers need a permanent telework option. City worker attrition is at unprecedented levels, and thousands are citing a lack of telework option as the reason for leaving their careers in city government. Without a telework option, a very popular idea amongst city workers, the city government will be unable to attract the talent it needs to stand up the city's recovery.

Thank you all for your time,
Maliha Fairooz

Hola me llamo María Bárbara López

Líder comunitaria de Distrito 38 Sunset Park.

Estoy aquí para pedir al concejo municipal que se apruebe un presupuesto que favorezca a los neoyorquinos.

La pandemia dejo en crisis a todos. Aumento la renta. Luchamos para no quedar en la calle.

El alcalde premia a ricos, y poderosos, haciendo recortes a todos los servicios de salud, limpieza, educación, vivienda.

Les pido que luchen contra este abuso. Es un crimen recortar el financiamiento de vivienda. Se debe invertir más fuerte para trabajadores. Tengamos vivienda permanente. Somos trabajadores esenciales. Hacemos el trabajo que los otros no quieren hacer. El trabajo necesario para mantener esta ciudad.

El concejo debe rechazar el abuso a los recortes a la educación publica se requiere mas consejeros de salud mental y trabajadores sociales.

Tambien necesario hablar de los dos crisis que enfrentan catástrofe del media ambiente y de sobredosis. Se requiere planes mejoren la calidad de vida de nosotros de primera línea merecemos escuelas verdes para salvar a los 5 condados.

Todo al doble ha aumentado. ¿Como puede disminuir el presupuesto de los Neoyorquinos?

-

Hello, my name is María Bárbara López

I am a 38 Sunset Park District Community Leader.

I'm here to ask the City Council to approve a budget that favors New Yorkers.

The pandemic has left us all in crisis. The rent keeps going up. We are struggling to stay in our homes, to not be pushed out on the street.

The mayor rewards the rich and powerful by making cuts to everything: health services, sanitation, education, housing.

I ask you to fight against this abuse. It's a crime to cut funding for housing. We need stronger investments for permanent housing for working class New Yorkers. We are essential workers. We do the work that others don't want to, work that keeps this city running.

The council must reject this abuse. We don't need cuts to public education, we need more mental health counselors and social workers.

It must also to talk about two crises we are facing: environmental catastrophe and the overdose crisis. We need plans to improve the quality of life of for us essential workers. We need green schools and infrastructure to save the five boroughs.

The cost of living has doubled overnight. How can you cut essential services for working class New Yorkers?

Maricela Sosa
5/25/22
NYC Budget Hearing
Domestic Worker and Employer Empowerment Initiative

Mi participación en la ANTH me ha enseñado mis derechos. Ahora enseño a otros trabajadores como entrenadora y durante la pandemia muchas trabajadoras se pusieron en contacto conmigo porque necesitaban mucha información y necesitaban estar conectadas con recursos y organizaciones como la ANTH. Aunque perdí mi trabajo durante la pandemia, seguí trabajando para ayudar a otras trabajadoras. El año pasado ayudé a enseñar a los miembros del ayuntamiento lo que significa apoyar a las trabajadoras del cuidado y sus derechos. Este año quiero que todas las trabajadoras domésticas y los empleadores conozcan sus derechos y responsabilidades en el lugar de trabajo. Mis compañeras trabajadoras del hogar empezaron a organizarse en nuestra comunidad y en nuestro distrito municipal en torno a los problemas de las trabajadoras del hogar. La ciudad es muy grande, Brooklyn es muy grande. En Brooklyn hay más de 68.000 trabajadores del hogar. Aunque saliera todos los días con mis amigas trabajadoras del hogar, nunca podríamos llegar a todas. Por eso es tan importante que el Ayuntamiento de Nueva York invierta en los trabajadores domésticos y financie a las organizaciones que salen a educar a los trabajadores domésticos todos los días. Sé que con esta iniciativa podemos capacitar a muchas mujeres inmigrantes de color para que mejoren sus lugares de trabajo doméstico. 300.000 dólares es un buen comienzo para asegurar que las trabajadoras domésticas puedan conectarse con los recursos y la información de la ciudad. Estoy con mis compañeras trabajadoras del hogar y la ciudad de Nueva York debería hacerlo también.

My involvement with NDWA has taught me about my rights. I now teach other workers as a trainer and during the pandemic so many workers reached out to me because they needed so much information and needed to be connected with resources and organizations like NDWA. Even though I lost my job in the pandemic, I kept working to help other workers. Last year I was helping to teach city council members what it means to support care workers and their rights. This year I want all domestic workers and employers to know about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. My fellow domestic workers started to organize in our community and in our city council district aboud domestic worker issues. The city is very big, Brooklyn is very big. In Brooklyn there are over 68,000 domestic workers. Even if I go out every day with my domestic worker friends, we would never be able to reach them all. That is why it is so important that New York City Council invests in domestic workers, and funds the organizations that are out educating domestic workers everyday. I know that with this initiative we can empower so many immigrant women of color to improve their domestic workplaces. $300,000 is a good beginning to make sure that domestic workers are able to connect with the city’s resources and information. I stand with my fellow domestic workers and NYC should too.

05/22/22

Dear Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan,

My name is Marika Brownlee and I am a New York City resident. I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for the New York City Housing Authority and $2.5 billion for the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding Department of Education mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new corrections officers for solitary confinement, a practice the United Nations defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

Marika Brownlee

From: Matt Strickland <matthew.lee.strickland@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:09 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing an austerity budget

Hello,

My name is Matt Strickland. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

--
Matthew Strickland
matthewlstrickland.com

Dear Council Members:

I am beyond frustrated with the overreach and incompetence of the NYPD, yet the portion of the budget allocated to them keeps going up. There's been a lot of talk about pilot programs that train mental health workers and social workers familiar with communities to respond to 911 calls, but they are too small to prove their worth.

If I walk around my neighborhood right now, I'll find multiple NYPD cruisers with cops napping or staring at their phones. They don't know anyone in our community because they don't get out of their cars. And those same cops will be the first to say they can't do policework because we've "taken away their tools" like the ability to stop and frisk because their only actual crime prevention was accidentally catching people when they violated their rights. They talk about how dangerous it is to be them, when the majority of their deaths in the last 2 years have been from COVID because they refused to make the minimum effort to protect their city by getting vaccinated until they were forced. Most violent crime in this city goes unsolved because they can't be bothered to do paperwork.

For nonviolent crime, you have to push them to get them to take a report.

Their control of any oversight over them is appalling. Any officer who evades tickets should be fired. Any cop who is being investigated for domestic violence should be fired. Cops who use excessive force should be fired.

Cut their budgets.
Get them out of our schools.
Make them learn the languages of the communities they're working in or cut their salaries. "We can't attract bilingual officers" is not an excuse. Languages are not secret codes and it is shameful that cops have zero incentive to learn languages.

I am afraid of the police because they don't protect us. They protect themselves and their budget should be slashed. Their overtime should be capped unless it is approved by a civilian review board with no ties to the NYPD. Their equipment should be demilitarized. They should not attend protests.

Please stop increasing their budgets.

Thank you,

Maureen Flaherty
Brooklyn

From: Max Doyne <max.doyne@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:30 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Austerity is suicide

Hello, my name is Max Doyne. I live in NYC and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am writing to voice my opposition and extreme concern over Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you for your time,
Max

From: Max Yeston <max.yeston@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:53 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing an austerity budget

Hello, my name is Max Yeston and I am a New York City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hello, my name is Melanie Kruvelis. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.
[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
[4] CUNY: City University of New York
[5] DOE: Department of Education
[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.
[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.
[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.
[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

From: Melinda Greene <melinda.marie8@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:09 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing Mayor Eric Adams' austerity budget

Hello, my name is Melinda. I am a New York City resident.

I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

The mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies.

I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you.

-Melinda Greene

Hello, my name is Michael, I am a composer, and music teacher. I have witnessed the NYPD's grossly over-funded Strategic Response Group, or SRG, escalate nonviolent protest more times than I can count.

At the height of this police unit's brutality in 2020, Carmen Simmons said "Doctors were in TRASH BAGS and police were outfitted for World War Three, and I will absolutely never forget that."

Angela Davis says "when trans women of color begin to rise, the whole world will rise with them," and when I hear the SRG call a Black trans organizer a "faggot" under their breath, and the SRG receives $90 million a year from you to escalate protest, it shows us the world you're giving us, versus the world we need.

We have cops who we're paying to scroll through twitter on subway platforms, signing up to beat nonviolent teenagers in the streets with the SRG. I saw them fracture protestors' bones on September 12th 2020, and documented them hogtying a trans woman at the Barclays Center last April, needlessly sending her to the hospital. The SRG has given white women who've run their vehicles through protests, police escort from actions. They traumatize people, they walk away, and get paid.

In 2021, I created a Soundwalk- seven sound pieces, tied to locations in some of your districts where the SRG brutalized protestors. You can hear the Soundwalk at bit.ly/disband-srg.
It weaves music, testimony, and protest footage to teach the public about the SRG, and demand the same thing I'm demanding today: invest the SRG's $90 million dollars into community programs and care services.

As elected officials, without control of economic and military institutions, you can only go so far to keep New Yorker's safe. Yet, you have the rare ability here to immediately reduce the scope of militarized policing, if you admit to yourselves the financial, mental, and physical toll the SRG has taken on New Yorkers, by removing their budget entirely.

From: Michaelangelo Tenorio <mtenoreo02@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2022 7:16 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] SRG Testimony

Hello, my name is Michaelangelo Tenorio. I am a New York City resident, and I am here to urge the City Council to remove funding of the NYPD's Strategic Response Group from the police budget.

The Strategic Response Group was founded in 2015 as a 350-officer unit with a budget of $13 million. The unit was announced as a counter terror unit that would also handle large-scale demonstrations. After pushback from advocates, the NYPD amended their statement, announcing that the unit would not be deployed at protests - it would conduct "single-fold terror work."

Despite that promise, the unit was deployed to violently police racial justice protests months later, and its budget ballooned to $90 million in its first year. The unit has been a consistent presence at protests across New York City ever since - known for escalating and bringing violence to protesters in our streets. Despite initial claims from the department about the unit's goal of counter-terror, the NYPD's public desctiption of the unit does not include counter-terror work. At the May 11th Budget Hearing, the NYPD made no mention of counterterror in regards to the SRG. In fact, the department claimed to be unaware of any promise made for the SRG not to be deployed at protests.

In 2020, the unit's brutality was in public view as members of the unit deployed militarized tactics against protesters. The SRG has been central to many lawsuits and investigations related to the NYPD's abuse of protesters throughout 2020. Human Rights Watch released a report on a protest at Mott Haven, where the SRG trapped, beat, and arrested 263 protesters, medics, and legal observers. Human Rights Watch declared the NYPD's conduct "intentional, planned, and unjustified."

The SRG's violence isn't a coincidence. The unit's training overwhelmingly focuses on use of force, and members of the unit are trained to treat racial justice protesters as enemy combatants. In the SRG Bike Squad's manual, protest groups are divided into two categories: "peaceful" and violent." Examples of "violent" protesters are "BLM movement, Occupy Wall Street, and Anti-Trump Demonstrators."

SRG officers receive disproportionately high levels of misconduct complaints, and have a history of racial bias. In misconduct complaints against SRG officers that included race between 2015-2020, 91% of complainants were people of color.

Due to the NYPD's lack of transparency, we don't even know the full size, function, and funding of the SRG. While the NYPD recently claimed that the SRG has less than 400 officers, that number is reported to be significantly higher.

The SRG has inflicted emotional and physical trauma on New Yorkers with impunity. The City Council must put an end to the SRG's abuse by disbanding the unit and removing its funds from the hands of the NYPD, and reinvesting those funds into our communities.

Good afternoon, Councilmembers,

My name is Mimi Shelton, and I am a Black woman of trans experience and a New York resident, living in Greenpoint, Brooklyn and working in the South Bronx. I moved to the city in August of 2017, and I was born and raised in Virginia. As a transplant to this city, I have witnessed an already-overly-expensive, exclusionary, and problematic housing system become even more so in the aftermath of mandated quarantine and an evolving, global pandemic. In my occupation as Director of Transgender Initiatives and Services at Destination Tomorrow, the LGBTQ+ center of the Bronx, I am exhausted, daily, by the economic, educational, social, and medical disadvantages our clients wrestle with in a city and state that begrudgingly, and often performatively, provides inadequate housing, protection, and institutional support to its LGBTQ+ populations. We are living in a context of global suffering and an epidemic of violence against trans and gender expansive Black and Brown communities. Watching Black and Brown individuals, many of whom identity as LGBTQ+, navigating substance use on the streets; sleeping on trains with poor hygiene due to lack of systemic care and adequate housing; begging for change and food on subways; and my client trying to utilize our services for a better opportunity, even as they suffer in their personal lives is a devastating reality that I will never unsee or not remember. I call on you, council members, to offer housing equity for all New York citizens, and especially Black and Brown LGBTQ+ communities, because the foundation of any flourishing life begins with a reliable space to call home.

Hello, my name is Mitch Jones. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Buenos días a Todos,

Me gustaría presentarme formalmente. Mi nombre es Monica Molestina, soy una mujer latina inmigrante, tengo 3 hijos que se han educado en las Escuelas del Bronx, mi segundo hijo tiene un diagnóstico de ADHD y mi tercer hijo con Autismo y otras condiciones médicas, está en el programa de Horizon en la Escuela PS 25 en el distrito 7 en el Bronx.

Yo participo del grupo de Liderazgo Escolar y soy la Embajadora de Sanación en mi escuela. Tuve COVID y mi padre murió por COVID, pasamos momentos muy difíciles y eso me impulsó a ser la Embajadora de mi escuela, para ayudar a mi Comunidad Escolar en la sanación de los diferentes traumas. Por ejemplo, traumas por COVID, diferencias raciales, diferencias de estatus migratorio, y diferencias lingüísticas.

Empecé en la acera de mi escuela, haciendo conexión con los padres uno a uno. Por la dificultad de seguridad escolar por COVID, no podíamos entrar a la escuela, eso no impidió mi trabajo, eso me impulsó a trabajar con fortaleza y responsabilidad. Día a día iba y me identificaba con los padres, los ayudaba en sus inquietudes, los ayudaba a navegar en sus teléfonos para obtener ayuda, me puse en los zapatos de las situaciones que estaban viviendo, y les demostré que yo soy un padre de apoyo cuyo objetivo es ayudar a sanar sus dificultades y traumas.

Desde que se pudo ingresar a la escuela no he parado, hemos hecho diferentes actividades encaminadas a la sanación, me basé en cómo sanaban nuestros abuelos, cuándo no había la tecnología de este momento. Hemos hecho reuniones para hacer piñatas, aretes, collares, y nos inspiramos haciendo pinturas, nos reunimos padres, estudiantes y maestros, todos haciéndonos fuertes en la sanación.

He tenido el apoyo de todo el grupo de liderazgo y de la Principal de nuestra escuela, Ms. Pevey, y estamos buscando más… Mi comunidad quiere más de este programa… seguimos creciendo y necesitamos apoyo, mi comunidad lo necesita, esperamos ser escuchados…

Gracias,
Monica Molestina

Hello everyone,

I would like to formally introduce myself. My name is Monica Molestina, I am a Latino immigrant woman, I have 3 children who have been educated in the Bronx Schools, my second child has a diagnosis of ADHD and my third child with Autism and other medical conditions, is in the Horizon program at PS 25 School in District 7 in the Bronx.

I participate in the School Leadership group and am the Healing Ambassador at my school. I had COVID and my father died from COVID, we went through very difficult times and that prompted me to be the Ambassador of my School, to help my School Community in healing the different traumas. For example, COVID trauma, racial differences, immigration status differences, and linguistic differences.

I started on the sidewalk outside my school, connecting with parents one on one. Due to the difficulty of school security due to COVID, we could not enter the school, that did not prevent my work, that prompted me to work with strength and responsibility. Day by day I went and identified with the parents, helped them with their concerns, helped them navigate their phones to get help, put myself in the shoes of the situations they were experiencing, and showed them that I am a supportive parent. whose goal is to help heal their difficulties and traumas.

Since the school was able to enter I have not stopped, we have done different activities aimed at healing, I was based on how our grandparents healed, when there was no technology at this time. We have held meetings to make piñatas, earrings, necklaces, and we are inspired by making paintings, parents, students and teachers meet, all becoming strong in healing.

I have had the support of the entire leadership group and the Principal of our school, Ms. Pevey, and we are looking for more… My community wants more from this program… We continue to grow and we need support, my community needs it, we hope to be heard…

Thank you,
Monica Molestina

Hello, my name is Moyna Ghosh. I am a New York City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents, and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor's budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

From: Nancy Bruning <npbruning@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 10:39 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written testimony for Oversight: Executive Budget Hearing

Dear City Council members:

As a life-long New Yorker, I have spent decades in New York City Parks. From age 7 to 70, parks have been my recreation and refuge. Covid has shed a bright light on the key role that public parks play in our lives, especially during times of great physical and psychological stress--of which we are certain to experience even more in the future. As a citizen and public health professional, I therefore demand that you honor the 1% of the city budget for NYC Parks that Mayor Adams repeatedly has committed to.

Specifically, the Council must renew/provide funding for the following: all Play Fair positions (100 city park workers, 50 gardeners, 80 parks enforcement patrol officers, 50 park rangers, 15 GreenThumb, and 40 forestry professionals), $6.5 million for the Parks Equity Initiative, and $4.5 million to protect and conserve our natural areas.

As I'm sure you are aware, NYC's parks system has been underfunded and inequitably funded for 40 years, operating with just .5% of the city budget. The lack is even more dramatic in lower-income communities. Commissioner Mitchell Silver's Community Parks Initiative has helped redress these inequities in parks funding; this must continue and expand. As former president of the Friends of Fort Tryon Park, I have seen the difference that more equitable funding has made in the lives of people living in my neighborhood in northern Manhattan.

At all times, New Yorkers deserve a parks system that is safe, clean, and equitable. With Covid cases rising, and more pandemics predicted for the future, this funding will again prove vital during the coming busy summer and beyond.

We need to recognize that public parks are critical infrastructure, both for mental and physical health and as a defense against climate change. Don't let us down.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bruning, MPH

Urban Health Writer/Editor/Advocate
Physical Activity in Public Health Specialist (PAPHS)
www.nancybruning.net

SYEP Older and Younger Youth

We live in a world where many kids are often told who to become as a person but often we are not told how to be an individual. Often we aren't told how to stand on our own feet. How are kids supposed to be unique and different if there isn't something setting an example for them or something that puts them in a position to be different. Being a former SYEP student myself I had this problem. I wasn't sure which direction to go in but when I was placed into a position through SYEP to make intelligent decisions. I learned a lot about myself. SYEP is a program that helps an individual to express themselves but also find the path they were meant to be on. If we could only give our community more opportunities such as more internships, longer jobs, more jobs, and internships in more demand fields. So kids can see what they like and what they don't like and, more kids would know what to do next. It's not fair that we have to wait until we are older, in our 30s or 20s, to figure out what we really want in life. We should know what we want when we are going so when we become older we work towards that dream we had when we were young because that builds growth. Often kids are lost on who they are because there aren't enough opportunities that are allowing kids to be themselves. One opportunity can change one's life and we could give more chances to kids if we could change them to understand their purpose in life. Many kids have big dreams but don't know where to start but with the help of SYEP, we could help them figure out where to start because the kids are the future.

porternaomi02@gmail.com

From: HealingCentered Schools <bxhealingcenteredschools@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 7:50 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (Naomy Baptiste) Testimony for 5/25 Committee on Finance, NY City Council FY'23 Excutive Budget Hearing

My name is Naomy Baptiste, and I am a Mother and also a Healing Ambassador for P140k in a District 75 school in Brooklyn, NY. I would like to thank the Department of Education, the FCWC (Family and Community Wellness Collective department) and The Healing Centered Schools Working Group for the opportunity and support in launching this Family Healing Ambassador program.
I would also ask/ plead/ beg that this opportunity be continued for our parents and guardians.
Due to this program, I have noticed that my school district where I reside has a few schools with no Family Healing Ambassadors. And it is needed. Our D75 schools need these programs, we need the support and resources to build these collective healing projects and community building initiatives that the Family Healing Ambassador program provides.
Can we please have more support for more schools to have more of our Parents and caregivers to advocate and heal at the same time? This is the best method for real change. A budget is a moral document and we can not say we want to help the most marganizled if we're not supporting them with real resources .

Thank You for your time.

Naomy Baptiste
Healing Ambassador
P140k

Hello, my name is Nat Buchbinder. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.

[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

[4] CUNY: City University of New York

[5] DOE: Department of Education

[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

Hello, my name is Natalie Hamingson. I am a resident of New York City and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Working-class New Yorkers have been at the center of co-occurring crises over the past two years, from the pandemic to a lack of affordable housing. As COVID-19 cases continue to surge and landlords raise already high rents, families are struggling to stay in their homes. The mayor's proposed budget does not reflect the needs of New York's working families but rather, the wealthy and powerful. While making cuts to vital services like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, all of which greatly effect collective public safety, the NYPD's $10 billion budget remains intact.

I am submitting this testimony to urge the Council to fight against the mayor's proposed budget program of austerity and punishment. The Council must reject cuts to housing and our public education system. I urge the Council to invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD, as well as $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also request the Council invest in public safety solutions that divest from policing and meet our communities with care, such as investing $10 million in expanding life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs and $250 million for Fair Fares. And as a city that has already begun to experience the effects of climate change, we need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan and $1.8 billion for green public schools to prevent catastrophe.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also strongly urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reviewing my testimony.

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Nathaniel Evans
May 25, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and Finance Committee members. My name is Nathaniel Evans and I'm a member of Freedom Agenda.

There is a great value in closing Rikers Island, and that is the protection of life. When life is not the ultimate value to look forward to then life takes on little meaning. Today, the Department of Corrections is responsible for so much suffering and the loss of too many lives instead of care and control, as it claims to be its purpose. It is time to stop the devaluing of life that is being perpetuated within a system designed for pretrial detention, and not death. New York City does not have the death penalty so there is no reason for anyone to lose their life within this system. Value life above the system of dehumanization and death that is taking place on Rikers Island.

The Mayor is proposing to hire over 500 new C.O.s. The Department of Corrections already has the largest budget and staff than any Department of Corrections in the country. DOC does not need more guards as the Federal Monitor has made clear. DOC needs transparency and accountability to manage the dysfunction and reduce the harm people in their custody are experiencing every single day.

The $63 million dollars of taxpayers money proposed for more jail guards should actually go into the most vulnerable communities in our city. This action will validate the true purpose of a city budget which would also contribute to public

safety. We need to make urgent investments into the most vulnerable communities in our city. Investments need to be made in developing people that have a social input into the community. For instance, creating one on one mentorship programs for individuals released from Rikers Island will assist with lowering the recidivism rates thereby improving public safety as a whole. I encourage this Committee to also fully fund the Board of Corrections which serves as an independent oversight board that monitors New York City's jail system.

Do not increase DOC's already bloated budget. Instead we should be deflating DOC's budget and redistributing those resources into the communities that the jail system is extracting its population from.

Thank you
Nathaniel Evans
Member of Freedom Agenda

From: Omega Dale <omegadale@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 7:49 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to Eric Adam's Budget

Hello, my name is Omega Dale. I am a New York City resident and I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Best,
Omega Dale

From: Orion Martin <r.orion.martin@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:08 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony Re: City Budget

Hello, my name is Orion Martin. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,
Orion

Hello, my name is Pablo Sanches. I live in New York City and am a member of the DSA's NYC chapter. I'm here to articulate my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget and to urge the City Council to pass a budget that addresses the concerns of all New Yorkers.

Working-class New Yorkers are in crisis two years after the pandemic began. COVID-19 cases are still on the rise, landlords are escalating rates, and families are struggling to remain put. Nonetheless, the mayor continues to give preference to the wealthy and influential over ordinary New Yorkers. His budget slashes key municipal services including housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education while preserving the $10 billion budget for the NYPD.

Today, I implore the Council to reject the mayor's austerity and punishment policy. Rather than slashing housing funds, the Council should reinvest $4 billion in long-term, affordable housing, namely $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. Instead of filling school police positions, the Council should reject Adams' cutbacks to our public education system by financing $122 million in CUNY and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers. I also urge the Council to take action to address two grave crises that our city is facing: climate change and the drug epidemic. The Streets Plan requires $3.1 billion, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to promote life-saving safe consumption places to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Mayor's regressive return to law and order must be rejected by the Council. I encourage the Council to veto the plan to add hundreds of extra COs for solitary confinement, which is considered torture by the UN. I further ask the Council to show its commitment to racial justice by eliminating inefficient and confrontational plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you for listening to my testimony, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan.
Hello, My name is Pablo Sanches. I live in New York City and am a member of the DSA's NYC chapter. I'm here to articulate my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget and to urge the City Council to pass a budget that addresses the concerns of all New Yorkers.

Working-class New Yorkers are in crisis two years after the pandemic began. COVID-19 cases are still on the rise, landlords are escalating rates, and families are struggling to remain put. Nonetheless, the mayor continues to give preference to the wealthy and influential over ordinary New Yorkers. His budget slashes key municipal services including housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education while preserving the $10 billion budget for the NYPD.

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million in CUNY and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers. I also urge the Council to take action to address two grave crises that our city is facing: climate change and the drug epidemic. The Streets Plan requires $3.1 billion, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to promote life-saving safe consumption places to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Mayor's regressive return to law and order must be rejected by the Council. I encourage the Council to veto the plan to add hundreds of extra COs for solitary confinement, which is considered torture by the UN. I further ask the Council to show its commitment to racial justice by eliminating inefficient and confrontational plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you for listening to my testimony, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan.

From: Pareena Lim <pareenal@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 4:06 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing an austerity budget

Hello, my name is Pareena Lim. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams's executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Pareena Lim

Hello, my name is Patrick Boettcher. I am a veteran of the Army Airborne Corps and a New York City resident. I am here today to urge the City Council to cease funding the NYPD's Stategic Response Group. I have personally witnessed several incidents of misconduct by the SRG. On one occasion, walking past Trump Tower, I saw an officer armed and kitted out as though he were a soldier going into battle. As I passed him, I heard the distinctive "*click, click"* of his rifle's safety, and looked over to see the officer playing with it, the safety on a deadly weapon, in a crowded street. If he were a soldier, and he were caught by his sergeant, he would suffer severe consequences. However, this officer was not a soldier. These officers do not have the training, discipline, or responsibility to be entrusted with the equipment and the funding that they have been given. I was recently at a climate protest, where the SRG demonstrated this to me by inappropriately using a reciprocating saw to cut protestors down from wooden structures that they had erected. As they were doing this, most of the officers, who vastly outnumbered the protestors, were simply standing around idly, some chatting casually. I asked one officer if they truly had no other, more pressing matters to attend to, and he said "no." I then asked why, in that case, where all of these officers on duty, and he simply said, "I don't know." However, when I was recently attacked on the subway, the police were nowhere to be found. Given the clear misuse of funds by the SRG, and the self-professed lack of need for their services, I urge the City Council to shift their funding to areas that will meaningfully improve the lives of New Yorkers. I am currently attending City College on the GI Bill, and I can tell you from firsthand experience that many of the buildings are badly run-down, with ceilings that leak in the rain, and bathrooms regularly shut down due to plumbing malfunctions, I once even had a ceiling tile fall on me at BMCC. As many of my classmates come from around the country and around the world, I ask you, is this the image of our city you want to leave them with? Do we want to be a city that takes pride in our dedication to educating the next leaders of the world, or one that takes pride in cracking down on its citizens as they practice their first amendment rights? The proposed New Deal for CUNY would be a much better use of funds and would bring us much closer to embodying the ideals that we claim to hold than the SRG ever could. Thank you.

Hello, my name is Patrick Boettcher. I am a veteran of the Army Airborne Corps and a New York City resident. I am here today to urge the City Council to cease funding the NYPD's Stategic Response Group. I have personally witnessed several incidents of misconduct by the SRG. On one occasion, walking past Trump Tower, I saw an officer armed and kitted out as though he were a soldier going into battle. As I passed him, I heard the distinctive "*click, click"* of his rifle's safety, and looked over to see the officer playing with it, the safety on a deadly weapon, in a crowded street. If he were a soldier, and he were caught by his sergeant, he would suffer severe consequences. However, this officer was not a soldier. These officers do not have the training, discipline, or responsibility to be entrusted with the equipment and the funding that they have been given. I was recently at a climate protest, where the SRG demonstrated this to me by inappropriately using a reciprocating saw to cut protestors down from wooden structures that they had erected. As they were doing this, most of the officers, who vastly outnumbered the protestors, were simply standing around idly, some chatting casually. I asked one officer if they truly had no other, more pressing matters to attend to, and he said "no." I then asked why, in that case, where all of these officers on duty, and he simply said, "I don't know." However, when I was recently attacked on the subway, the police were nowhere to be found. Given the clear misuse of funds by the SRG, and the self-professed lack of need for their services, I urge the City Council to shift their funding to areas that will meaningfully improve the lives of New Yorkers. I am currently attending City College on the GI Bill, and I can tell you from firsthand experience that many of the buildings are badly run-down, with ceilings that leak in the rain, and bathrooms regularly shut down due to plumbing malfunctions, I once even had a ceiling tile fall on me at BMCC. As many of my classmates come from around the country and around the world, I ask you, is this the image of our city you want to leave them with? Do we want to be a city that takes pride in our dedication to educating the next leaders of the world, or one that takes pride in cracking down on its citizens as they practice their first amendment rights? The proposed New Deal for CUNY would be a much better use of funds and would bring us much closer to embodying the ideals that we claim to hold than the SRG ever could. Thank you.

From: Paul <mountainmanduke@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 4:40 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] General testimony on the Executive Budget

Hello, my name is Paul Duke. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Buenas tardes a todos,

Mi nombre es Petra Morales, soy madre y líder de padres en el Distrito 9 en el Bronx y miembro del Comité de Padres en Acción del New Settlement, el Grupo de Trabajo de Escuelas Centradas en la Sanación y soy una Embajadora de Sanación en la escuela de mi hijo.

Me ha ayudado mucho mental y espiritualmente. Antes de ser miembro de embajadores yo no sabía que había ayuda para el estrés o acceso a conversar con alguien de las cosas que pasan en tu vida. Por ejemplo a veces como mamá nos agobiamos en las rutinas diarias en escuela y casa, pero yo también necesito que alguien me escuche, como debe ser un estudiante con el maestro, donde puedes residir palabras sabias, donde te dicen que no eres la única persona que pasa por cosas y que no lo tenemos que hacer solos. Eso me ha fortalecido, he crecido en mentalidad, mi estrés se ha ido, siento una libertad en mis hombros. Sobre todo con mi familia y en la escuela dónde puedo expresar mi experiencia con los otros padres interesados a ser igual a mi. Padres que queremos aprender como nuestra voz se puede escuchar lejos. El grupo de embajadores de sanación es el mejor equipo y son las mejores personas que he conocido.

Ha sido una experiencia transformadora ser parte del Programa Embajador Centrado en la Sanación este año y le pido a la Ciudad y al Departamento de Educación de la Ciudad de Nueva York que continúen invirtiendo y expandiendo el Programa Embajador para Padres, desarrollen un Programa Embajador Juvenil.

Mi visión es seguir apoyando y creando escuelas centradas en la sanación y que sean culturalmente responsivas para todos los niños de la ciudad de Nueva York.

Mil gracias por esta oportunidad,
Petra Morales

Hi, my name is Pongsathorn Muangchan. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am opposed to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

I demand that the Council fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.

[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

[4] CUNY: City University of New York

[5] DOE: Department of Education

[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

Finally, the Council MUST REJECT the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Fund our schools with resources, no more cops. Fund the things we need to survive, not more cops. Disband the SRG.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

From: Rachel Barkley <rachebarkley@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 5:57 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony 5/25 Budget Hearing

Hello,

Thank you so much for allowing everyone the space to speak on behalf of numerous organizations and movements throughout NYC. Please see my testimony below:

Good afternoon — my name is Rachel Barkley and I'm a law student at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. I am also the partner of a member of the Stewardship Team at NYC Parks. I am testifying today to ask that the council push Mayor Adams to commit to providing 1% of the city's budget to Parks. Personally, the city's parks have provided a refuge to me through the strenuous work that was my first year of law school. I have taken time to visit the parks to relieve stress and get involved in my community. At these volunteer events I've seen New Yorkers from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds coming together and forming community by cultivating the land, planting trees, and doing their part to keep our city green and clean. Additionally, as a partner of a Parkie, I have a close connection to the parks team and I've had the immense pleasure of getting to know the wonderful people who keep our city's green spaces safe and beautiful for all. Without this funding, so many Parkies will lose their jobs — which is a terrifying prospect knowing that these people have dedicated time and effort to the parks; these Parkies' have jeopardized their safety through the pandemic for the sake of maintaining our parks. They've put their livelihoods on the line and now it's up to you all — and the Mayor — to repay these Parkies for their service by fulfilling your promise to dedicate 1% of the budget to Parks. Thanks for the opportunity to testify.

5/23/2022

NYC FY 2023 Budget: Finance Hearing Testimony of Rene Arlain

From: R. Arlain – 187 Arlington Ave. B'klyn, NY 11207
Re: May 25th Committee on Finance Hearing
To: City Council Speaker, Hon. Adrianne Adams
N.Y City Council Finance Committee Chairperson, Hon. Justin Brannan

My name is Rene Arlain, given the Mayor's FY '23 proposed hair-raising budget, I write to urge that the Finance committee and the Speaker exercise all the necessary influence to ensure that the City's budget is equitable, sustainable, and fiscally responsible in providing vital services to N.Y.C's diverse agencies and communities.

As the Dir. of Housing Counseling with the Cypress Hills L.D.C. and a long-time Brooklyn/NYC resident many budgetary gaps concern me. After quickly reviewing the data and graphics provided by CM-Executive Budget FY 23, my priorities and concerns are the following:

Affordable Housing/Police

The pie chart/graph of the executive budget (p. 1) reflects a significant disparity between the proposed police/punishment and affordable housing funding, i.e. affordable housing is a measly 9% of the police budget. In light of the pandemic's impact on many New Yorker's already unstable housing, the untold many who've been forced out of homes without documented court actions, and in spite of the moratoria on evictions and foreclosures, the gap in funding is glaring, and clearly signals that increasing a larger (15- 20%) slice of the pie is warranted for housing. Many New Yorkers are housing costs-burdened, i.e. using more than 55% of gross income to pay for housing, which is largely unsustainable.

There is somewhat of a contradiction in the Mayor's public statements, i.e. NYC crime stats are lower than other big U.S cities, and far less than the nineties overall, notwithstanding the general perception of growing violent crime. To paraphrase, the City will bring the few "bad" people to justice who are making the city unsafe for the majority.

Publicly available crime rate analyses indicate that the City's major crimes ratio is approximately 13.3 per 1000 residents. Further, the combined rate of violent crimes (e.g. murders, rapes, felony assaults, etc.) projects out to 2.8 per 1000 residents, annually. According to N.Y.C's transit system (bus and subways) complete near 4.5 million trips each weekday. NYPD reported 617 transit crimes to date – less than one for every 100,000 rides. It is true that gun play or gun battles seem to happen more than ever, causing unjustifiable and senseless casualties, however, the CDC reports N.Y.C has one of the lowest firearm death rates in the U.S -- about 80% lower than Wyoming, Louisiana, or Mississippi. Previously stated data is not an attempt to minimize the actual crime rate, but rather to underscore the unfairly and inexplicably ballooning Police/punishment budget in comparison to cuts, diminishing financing for Affordable Housing. Homelessness prevention, Higher Education, Social services.

In addition, Human/social services workers of the Nonprofit sector call or demand for COLA cannot be overstated. The former Mayor proposed COLA targeted to nonprofit organizations/employees in the City budget during his first term. To date, no COLA has appeared in a City budget. Understanding trending inflation, Mayor Adams should rightfully slice funding from the projected Police and/or Miscellaneous budgets to support the long overdue COLA for nonprofit workers' organizations.

Another alarming and stressful number is the reduction in the Health budget. The services to reduce the perils facing youth, adults and the public at large due to mental health issues are and have been underfunded, and desperately require renewed strategic programming and the requisite budgeting. I worry about education and counseling services for elementary and secondary school students. The ratio of counselors and medical staff in public schools weakens the well-being and growth of those children, who need more support than ever during and post-pandemic.

In conclusion, balancing a budget means, dividing the funding equitably and in accordance with the overwhelming needs of the people of the City. I look forward to the Mayor's and the City council's favorable response to meet and surmount the challenges raised in my testimony.

From: Roy Pingel <pingelroy@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2022 7:18 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] City Council Committee on Finance

Testimony to Committee on Finance / May 25 Public Hearing on the Mayor's Executive Budget

Chair Brannam and Committee Members:

Violence in the subways and streets and pernicious homelessness demand that more resources go to effectively treating mental illness among the increasing number of mentally ill individuals in our city's population. The other face of homelessness are everyday New Yorkers, individuals and families, who just aren't earning enough as inflation skyrockets to pay their rents or mortgages.

The Mayor's budget requires more funding of supportive housing and services for persons struggling to stabilize their lives and need help to achieve independent living. For others, for families and single people struggling to meet monthly housing costs, more funding for the repair and production of public housing and publicly assisted housing is needed in the budget.

Funding should be introduced for pilot housing projects that utilize innovative ways to develop new housing and to use public land trusts to site such housing. East New York, for example, has plenty of potential sites, vacant publicly owned land that HPD is just sitting on while there's the ENY Community Land Trust that's ready to help develop and market innovative low cost housing.

The City, the Council and the Mayor, have to maximize the resources and tax base that it has with innovative pilot projects as well as cutting through bureaucratic red tape or inertia to grab the opportunities that exist now and not squander the chance to repair and produce housing at this critical moment.

In addition, all of us have to urge the Federal government to move the money from war to our communities that are in desperate need of human services and housing.

I urge the Council to pass a Move the Money resolution calling on the Federal government, the Congress, the President to redirect our tax dollars from going to the Pentagon and weapons makers back to our homefront, right here to our communities in need. Pass something like Resolution 747 that was introduced in the last Council. Bring it up again and pass it this time!

Thank you,
Roy Pingel
Loubet St.
Forest Hills, NY 11375

Testimony for better Representation for individuals with disabilities and Mental Health

Good Afternoon Everyone, my name is Saaif Alam attending John Jay College and a resident of Jamaica Hills. I am the University Student Senate Vice Chair of Disability Affairs. In addition to my role, I serve as the University Student Senate Co Chair of the Disability and Mental Health Committee. As an individual growing up with an invisible disability understand the challenges because I went through it myself. We currently have over 930, 110 New York City residents with disabilities and representation for individuals with disabilities including Mental Health is crucial for these communities of individuals so they can thrive in our 21st century economy. I am here today to testify because our New Yorkers including new Yorkers with disabilities to have better access to mental health services.

Mental Health accessibility is also important of individuals with disabilities. Covid impacted Mental Health of our disability community. Many of our New Yorkers with disabilities have trouble accessing a Mental Health Counselor in person during the Pandemic. New Yorkers including our CUNY students with disabilities struggled to receive mental Health Counseling services when the pandemic took place. The ratio of accessing Mental Health Counseling for our New Yorkers including CUNY students with disabilities was low. Many of my peers were not able to access an in person counseling services and were placed in the waiting list. Based on the statistics, 1 in 10 New Yorkers experience mental challenges that affect their life at work and school. Also one in 6 CUNY students experience distress anxiety and depression. The Pandemic has negatively affected of our New Yorkers including CUNY students since they faced Food, Housing and Job Insecurity. Also a great number of New Yorkers and CUNY students lost a loved one. According to conversations from constituents, they expressed that they did have adequate access to Counseling Services. This includes individuals with disabilities

Health Care accessibility is also another challenge. Our individuals with disabilities are still in need for assistive devices for effective communication, polices for interesting services building more staff faculties, auxiliary aids to our health care center,. Health care is a priority and there is a need to invest in health care so individuals with disabilities receive the health care they need to thrive in our society.

I want the City Council to acknowledge that this Month is Mental Health Awareness Month. This means I am asking City Council to better invest on Counseling Services where New Yorkers and our CUNY students can receive immediate and better access to counseling Services in person so they can receive the services they deserve to thrive at home work and /or school. Mental Health should be the number one priority than anything else so our New Yonkers can succeed with their daily life routine. I also ask you to please prioritize the $393 million funding for Mental Health and $145 million from the Mayor Adams Health care funding initiates so our New Yorkers including New Yorkers with disabilities have better access to Health Care and Mental Health Services.

From: Sabrina Kissack <sabrinakissack3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:44 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Eric Adams budget

Hello, my name is Sabrina Kissack. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

Hello, my name is Samantha Pinsky. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for reading my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.

[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

[4] CUNY: City University of New York

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[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

My name is Samantha Rick and I'm a life-long resident of NYC.

I have attended about 50 protests, marches, and demonstrations since becoming a volunteer protest monitor with the New York Civil Liberties Union in November 2020 and have witnessed, firsthand, the violence of the NYPD, specifically the Strategic Response Group (SRG), towards protestors.

Over the past 18 months, I have monitored small protests with as few as 15 people attending to very large demonstrations of several thousand people. At many of the smaller protests, the NYPD outnumber the protesters. If the protest is led by a member of the Black community, numerous NYPD units will be present including Patrol, TARU, Legal, and in many cases, SRG. In addition, there will be 1-2 white shirts and undercovers following the march. These are peaceful protests so the only reason for such over policing is to intimidate.

Protests where the SRG is present have tended to escalate into violence. The SRG has used their bicycles to push the protestors and their batons to beat them. They've engaged in kettling, an activity the NYPD has denied.

The SRG's behavior towards groups such as BLM is in direct contrast to the treatment received by far-right protests. I've attended right-wing protests to document the differences and have seen instances of the SRG providing protection to the far-right protestors, escorting a member of the Proud Boys to their car, and penning counter-protestors.

I have attended a homeless sweep where the SRG have been present and responsible for removing the houseless population from the area. When asked why the SRG, an NYPD unit that is supposed to be a counter terror unit, was present, Assistant Chief Hughes replied that it was his job to protect the citizens of the surrounding area, implying that the houseless community are not citizens in need of protection.

The SRG's activities are not limited to counterterrorism, nor does it protect the community. Instead, the unit instills fear and inflicts violence. I strongly urge the City Council to disband the unit and not leave the budget with the NYPD. Rather, the funding should be redeployed for community services.

From: Sarah Reibstein <sjreibstein@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:03 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposing Mayor Eric Adams' austerity budget

Hello, my name is Sarah Reibstein. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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From: sarah safford <safford713@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 4:31 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] My testimony on Austerity Budget

Hello, my name is Sarah Safford. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls. Instead they should increase funds for the Crisis Response Teams that include trained social workers.

Sincerely,
Sarah Safford

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"...the means to achieve the necessary transformation already exist."
Project Drawdown

Hi, I'm Stephanie Glass. I'm personally very familiar with the SRG, and I can tell you firsthand that as a unit, they are violent, cruel, unthinking, merciless. They must be disbanded.

I was at a protest in honor of Adam Toledo in April of 2021. Adam Toledo was the 13 year old killed by Chicago PD. The SRG had a particular interest in us that night.

I had a friend who would always walk in the back of the march, to make sure everybody was safe. I remember very clearly - my friend is walking backwards, away from the line of SRG, with his hands up. Captain Julio Delgado, who is the captain of Strategic Response Group 2, points at him, and he says "Get him." And four officers immediately move in and grab my friend.

They're manhandling him, but he's upright, so it's not as bad as it could be. But, I'm not tough, I'm freaked out, and I'm screaming and screaming, "Let him go, let him go, he didn't do anything," and the SRG officers are shoving me back with their bikes.

I look over to my left, and a different friend of mine is on the ground, and she has four or five SRG officers on top of her. She's this short, very short Black woman, and multiple adult men have their knees on her back and her limbs and they're holding her down, and she's screaming in pain. These men are in full body armor, covered in weapons, there is no way my friend in her miniskirt was posing a threat, much less a terroristic threat, to any of them.

In that moment, I thought she was going to die.

The SRG cannot respond in time to threats of actual terror. When Frank James opened fire, the SRG were a few blocks away throwing out the possessions of homeless people and arresting their supporters. That is a fact. They only exist to intimidate, beat, and traumatize people who are trying to do the right thing. Their only purpose is to hurt people. I am a tax-payer, I am a good neighbor, I try very hard every day to do the right thing. And the SRG live in my nightmares. They must be disbanded. Thank you.

Hi, I'm Stephanie Glass. I'm personally very familiar with the Strategic Response Group, and I can tell you firsthand that as a unit, they are violent, cruel, and functionally useless at anti-terrorism. They must be disbanded by eliminating their immense budget.

In April of 2021 I was at a march in honor of a 13 year old who had been killed by Chicago PD, Adam Toledo. For some reason the SRG had a particular interest in us that night.

That night I was with a friend who tended to walk in the back of the arch, to make sure everyone was safe. I remember very clearly - my friend is walking backwards, away from the lines of SRG following us, with his hands up. Captain Julio Delgado, who is the captain of Strategic Response Group 2, for no reason he points at him, and he says "Get him." And four officers push in and grab my friend. They're manhandling him into the cuffs, but he's upright, so it could be worse, right? But I'm not tough, I'm freaked out, and I'm screaming and screaming, "Let him go, let him go, he didn't do anything," and the SRG officers are shoving me back with their bikes. Which is, by the way, what they use their bikes for, as blunt force weapons. Once I had a spoke imprint on my knee for weeks after an SRG officer tried to knock me down with his bike.

Suddenly I turn to my left and I see a different a different friend of mine knocked to the ground. She has four or five SRG officers on top of her. She's this very short Black woman, and multiple men have their knees on her back and her limbs and they're holding her down, and she's screaming in pain. These men are in full body armor, covered in weapons, there is no way my friend in her miniskirt was posing a threat, much less a terroristic threat, to any of them.

In that moment, I thought she was going to die.

The SRG does not respond to threats of actual terror. At the moment Frank James opened fire, the SRG were throwing out the possessions of homeless people and arresting their supporters. That is a fact. They only exist to intimidate, beat, and traumatize people who are trying to do the right thing. Their only purpose is to hurt people. I am not a terrorist. I am a tax-payer, I am a good neighbor, I try very hard every day to do the right thing. And the SRG live in my nightmares. If a budget is a moral document, the SRG cannot be funded. Thank you.

May 25, 2022

RE: TIL – TENANT INTERIM LEASE PROGRAM

Dear Committee of Finance,

I'm writing this letter asking the Committee of Finance Hearing members to financially fund the remaining buildings in the TIL Program – TENANT INTERIM LEASE PROGRAM. There are a little over 100 buildings remaining in the program waiting for renovation. These building have been repeatedly told by HPD that they do not have money to fund and renovate the completion of their buildings.

Some of the remaining TIL Program buildings have been waiting for over 20+ plus years for the renovation of their buildings. The buildings Tenants Associations have managed their buildings upkeep and repairs, taken care of the Financial Accounting for their Tenant Associations, and are taking the HPD required classes in order to remain in compliance with the TIL Program regulation guidelines.

These TIL Program Tenants/Tenant Associations are made up of mostly low-income black and brown individuals who over the years have put their blood, sweat and tears into their neighborhoods improvement when their neighborhoods were drug infested and crime infested and deemed undesirable to live in by most people.

Now that our neighborhoods have gentrified, HPD does not want to for fill their Til Program obligations, and are offending us the **ANCP program** which we never signed up for. The ANCP Program would leave us with Multi- Million Dollar Mortgages that absolutely none of TIL Programs/Tenants can afford. Besides being low-income, many of the tenants are retired Senior citizens on a fixed social security income that cannot afford a mortgage.

The city needs to defund the **ANCP Program** that HPD is offering the remaining building in the TIL Program. None of the tenants can afford it, and the **ANCP Program** is set-up for failure. With Multi -Million Dollar mortgages, this program is in no way **not compatible** with the Til Program that we signed up for, and it will only result in the TIL Program tenants becoming homeless.

Please provide financial funding for the TIL Program. **Please defund the ANCP program!**

Thank you for your time,
Tammy Smith
South 4th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211
Treasurer

From: Tiffany Vazquez <tmvazquez@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 3:15 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL]

Hello, my name is Tiffany Vazquez. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hello, my name is Trent Morrison and I am a New York City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority

[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

[4] CUNY: City University of New York

[5] DOE: Department of Education

[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.

[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.

[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.

[9] COs: corrections officers

[10] UN: United Nations

From: HealingCentered Schools <bxhealingcenteredschools@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 7:48 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (Vandanna Bonilla) Testimony for 5/25 Committee on Finance, NY City Council FY'23 Excutive Budget Hearing

Culpability, self-doubt, self-prejudice...these are qualities that make up us humans. I've queried these qualities and where they stemmed from for 30 years of my life. Since I've joined this healing ambassador program, as a healing ambassador it's been like a place of sanction, of warmth. I've put off my own quandaries for such a long time. However, because of my role with this program, I Vandana Bonilla, Healing ambassador for District 4,
BBMS, located in East Harlem, I was able to feel potentiated with women like me, who strive for prosperity. Haplessly, prosperity takes work, and this work causes burnout. This burnout was availed with this program, it sanctioned me to relax, it coerced myself to learn things about myself that even I didn't know. What I'm most proud of is that it sanctioned me to avail others. To avail others face their trepidations, mentally and physically. This Healing ambassador program transmuted my life, my family's life and my community's life, verbalizing at home, at school, outside. My perception has genuinely transmuted, my ocular perceivers flicker with an incipient mindset. I've never felt so alive, so juvenile spirited. I've learned to radiate confidence for myself and others.

I would like to thank The FCWC (Family and Community Wellness Collective) through the DOE who launched this Family Healing Ambassador program and with the SUPPORT of The Healing-Centered Schools Working Group this program came in right on time, we needed this and we ALL realize how much we needed it PRE-COVID but especially now as we are ALL still trying to process and adjust post pandemic. Our school staff realize we have to work together and we have to feel together so we can heal together. Please support sustaining this program and expanding it, b/c our communities need it.

Thank you
Vandanna Bonilla

From: Veronica Jackson <veronicaindiekitty@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 7:51 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to Eric Adam's Budget

Hello, my name is Veronica Jackson. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

From: Victoire Scherer
Sent: Friday, May 27, 2022 4:47 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Group | Testimony

Good evening,

My name is Victoire and I am a New York resident. I am urging the City Council to completely remove funding from one of the NYPD's most violent units — the Strategic Response Group, or SRG.

On June 5th, 2021, I was violently arrested by the SRG while protesting the illegitimate curfew imposed on Washington Square Park. That night, dozens of SRG officers rushed into the park, and before I knew it, one of them had slammed me to the ground. Had I not been carrying a backpack that cushioned my fall, I could have fractured my skull. Despite being compliant and yelling that I wasn't resisting, four officers insisted on carrying me by each of my limbs. I cannot express how distressing it was to have been carried with my legs spread apart in the air by two male officers. I wish I could say I'm the only person this has happened to, but I'm not.

In fact, this is just one of the many, many instances of SRG brutality I've witnessed over the past two years. I have personally seen SRG officers beat, shove, drag, pepper spray, taze, kettle, strip, and humiliate civilians, press, medics, and legal observers at protests. I have witnessed the SRG thrust heavy bikes into people's chests and use the LRAD, a military weapon that can cause ear damage and migraines even when not used at its full power.

Removing the SRG from policing protests isn't enough, because the unit also harms communities, specifically Black and Brown communities, outside of protests. In 2018, SRG officers were involved in the murder of Saheed Vassell in Crown Heights. More recently, they have been assisting in the city's violent encampment sweeps, destroying the property of houseless folks. The SRG needs to be stopped.

I urge you to disband the Strategic Response Group, and prevent it from ever being recreated in any form, under any different name.

Thank you for your time,
Victoire

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Victor Herrera
May 25, 2022

Thank you Chair Brannan and Finance Committee members. My name is Victor M Herrera and today I testify representing my impacted community, the returning citizens, the mentally traumatized and the economically challenged that are being left to the Mayor's proposed Law and Order approach to increase the deliberate criminalization of the poor minority community. Budget proposal to fund Criminal Justice approaches doesn't assist in decreasing the public safety concerns raised in the Mayor's Budget request, rather would support adding more arrests for quality of life offenses that only target the most vulnerable community.

The proposal to add hundreds of Correction Officers and more funding to the DOC and street crime unit now known as the Public Safety Unit is unrealistic to the City's focus on improving the access to health, mental health and safety for the at-risk constituents that the Mayor's proposal would leave open to targeting opportunities that is intended for the job securities of the NYPD and NYC Department of Corrections under Mayor' Eric Adams budget request.

The Mayor’s proposed $63 million more dollars of taxpayers money towards DOC’s already bloated budget should be rejected and redirected by the Committee to supportive housing for justice impacted people and mental health services.

As a directly impacted in housing and mental health i have been the subject of the budget fails and have been a voice of support of the Be Heard Program for which I had stayed during one of my Mental Health needs thru the Organization Center for

Urban Community Services Intense Mobile Treatment, both of which have a significant purpose in real human services and public safety concerns related to the many affected communities that suffer from trauma and mental health concerns. The most vulnerable communities will continue to suffer if the Mayor's Budget proposal is granted.

Thank you,

Victor Herrera
Member, Freedom Agenda
gapslegalservice@gmail.com

Hello, my name is Victoria Sampson. I am a New York City resident and I am writing to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

From: WILL MCDONALD <WILL.MCDONALD@lc.cuny.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 2:22 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] #carenotcuts

Hello,

My name is Will McDonald. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I want to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for giving attention to my testimony.

Regards,

Will

Greetings to all of you, my distinguished guests. My name is Willie Dean and I'm professionally known as WILLIE the GENIUS. I think we can all agree that adequate access to affordable housing is one of those essential inalienable rights afforded to each of us by the US constitution. For 7 years, I suffered from an addiction to crystal methamphetamine that threatened to take my life as well as my housing security. Crystal meth is currently a rising epidemic among the Black Queer and Trans community. In 2016, the US Center for Disease Control reported that in their lifetime, 1 out of every 2 Black gay men will become HIV positive.

Thanks to programs like HASA which provides low to no-cost housing for people living with the HIV virus here in the city of New York I was able remain housed while in the addiction and climb from under the unbearable weight of oppression and marginalization long enough to achieve being 2 years and 11 months sober. Openly HIV-Positive playwright Donja R. Love wrote his 2019 stage play "1 in 2" to raise awareness while living with me in our Bed-Stuy apartment located within the 36th district. I am crystal clear that my former drug addiction was directly linked to my contracting the HIV virus.

I am asking that you, Chi Ossé, vote to allocate funds to affordable housing for more LGBTQ2IA folx so that others who may be suffering in any capacity can have their lives saved as well. This is not hyperbole. Thank you.

Regarding Small Business

I am with a small minority/woman owned business doing capitol projects with the city on New York. Our company has been having EXTREME difficulties receiving payments from the prime contractor and we've reached out to every city agency that we could for assistance. All we're told by the city agencies is that they can't help. On reason given to us is that, because we're a subcontractor that has been hired by the prime contractor, the City doesn't have a contractual agreement with us. The City should have policies in place that protect small vulnerable business from predatory practices regardless of contractual agreements. And publicly funded agencies should not be leaving small businesses out in the cold.

Yaaqob Yatzilel

Testimony of Yun Chen for New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget

May 25, 2022

My name is Yun Chen and I live in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. I am the parent of L. Chen, a 4 year old student with a disability. I am here today to support calls for higher salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at community-based organizations (CBOs). This is not just important to teachers; it's also very important for children with disabilities and their families who need good teachers and staff in their classrooms.

Since L. started preschool education at GEC, a 4410 program, he has lost two teachers, two TAs and one speech therapists for the past two years. His providers move on for better paying jobs with better salaries and benefits like DOE. My child's school has not been replaced the teacher, speech therapists and some TAs they lost. Due to lack of staff, the school closed the classroom and moved my child to another classroom which he would receive education with a different teaching team. It is fortunate that his new teacher and TAs stay at GEC so he does not need to adjust to new teaching staff. However, the speech therapist left in April 2022 and his speech therapy has been uncovered. My school let me know that they have not been able to hire any therapists despite having great candidates since Feb. My child deserves great teachers, teacher assistants and therapists to support him for him to progress continuously. Staff shortage creates an unstable environment for my child to progress. My child and other students in preschools for special education students need the support from NYC and NYS to provide salary parity so attract and secure qualified staff to continue the education for these needed children.

Two years ago, the City agreed to increase the salaries of 3-K and Pre-K general education teachers at CBOs, but left out preschool special education teachers. Today, there is a shortage of preschool special education classes, and the City will not be able to open the classes we need if preschool special education teachers at CBOs are paid less than other teachers. I want to thank the City Council for including in your budget response the need for $30 million to increase salaries for preschool special education teachers and staff at CBOs. Please ensure this funding is in the final budget this year.

Thank you.

Yun Chen

- Hello, my name is Yuri. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.
-
- Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.
-
- Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.
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- Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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Im writing today to urge the mayor and the city council to allocate more money to the affordable housing crisis that is destroying the city. I frankly think it’s ridiculous that the mayor and his executive budget has to audacity to propose more funding for the nypd to terrorize the homeless rather than allocate more money to prevent people from becoming homeless.

Even in my own family I’ve watched the decay of affordable housing in less than a generation. When my grandparents were first able to buy a house in New York city in the 80’s they did so on the salary of a bus driver and secretary with not a college degree in site. They bought the house that my mother was raised in and I was born in. And now flash forward to 2022 my mother who was Brooklyn born and raised, who has never lived outside New York, who now has a whopping 4 degrees with 2 different masters and 2 lucrative careers. She makes more money than both of her parents combined. More than they ever could have dreamed of single handedly not even including her spouse's income and yet if she were to try to move back to the neighborhood she grew up in it would be impossible. We are at a point in the housing crisis where people are not only getting priced out of their own neighborhoods but they're getting priced out of our city and priced out of having a home. And yet the mayor's answer to all this is a higher police budget? Instead of addressing homelessness in any meaningful way, the Cop that is serving as NYCs mayor is resorting to violence. This is unacceptable and it’s an embarrassment to this city and everyone who calls it home. So I urge you to use the proposed budget increase to the NYPD and instead allocate those funds to affordable housing.

I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Hello, my name is Grace. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Happy mid-Spring to you all.
Thank you for accepting my testimony — I write about the City's new budget, proposed by the mayor, which is wasting money but can be rectified.

In his proposal, the mayor balances the books of the City by cutting some essential services to the public. Social needs, food aid, mental health — these are essentials for every New Yorker, but they're on the chopping block for the current mayoral budget.

Yet he doesn't think there are savings to be had from the line for "New York Police Department." That's odd, given how millions upon tens of millions of dollars are primed to be saved if some cuts are put to the N.Y.P.D.

Many essentials can be saved with a divestment in policing. The city can reduce patrols in stubborn communities, like many neighborhoods in the South Bronx, and then reinvest the savings into community resources for those same people.
I think that crime reduction in Harlem or Throgg's Neck will be better achieved by guaranteeing good public transit, a reliable food supply, and quality education. Certainly, I think it's worth a try better than the tried-and-failed cop patrols that are presently tasked with the job.

Can the hours of patrols in the South Bronx be reduced, and the difference saved refunded into community transit, food, and education?

I hope so — the vulnerable people of the Bronx will live better, and safer, if you do.

The People’s Response to the FY2023 Executive Budget

In April 2022, Mayor Adams released his executive fiscal year 2023 budget for New York City. The mayor’s proposal continues to represent a regressive and punitive orientation to city policy and budget at a time when New Yorkers need care and resources the most. The mayor’s anti-care austerity budget continues to starve education, health and hospitals, and other vitally necessary services that New Yorkers need, all while maintaining or increasing funds for institutions that criminalize and destabilize communities of color. The People’s Plan releases the following “People’s Response” to the mayor’s executive budget, supported by the undersigned organizations and Council Members.

Housing

At a time of record evictions and record deaths of people experiencing homelessness due to housing insecurity, the mayor’s budget thus far fails to make real investments in housing for working class New Yorkers. This combined with the mayor’s violent sweeps of homeless encampments proves the City is wasting resources on criminalization and inadequately addressing homelessness instead of investing in housing. We urge the mayor and city council to correct course and support meaningful and needed investment in housing, including:

- Invest $4 billion per year for NYCHA repairs and HPD’s preservation and creation of affordable housing, specifically $1.5 billion for NYCHA for capital repairs to begin to address the widespread unacceptable and unsafe conditions that exist in New York City’s largest source of affordable housing, and $2.5 billion for affordable housing rental and home ownership, as recommended by United for Housing. The $5 billion increase to housing capital budgets over ten years in the executive budget falls

woefully short of Mayor Adams' campaign promise to meet this goal of $4 billion year in housing capital.

- Maintain FY22 levels for Departments of Housing, Preservation, and Development (HPD), Social Services (DSS), and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) budgets, which are experiencing nearly $1.3 billion in reduction from FY22 levels[1], to right-size the budget to house New Yorkers permanently:
    - Restore city funding for DHS Rental Assistance and Housing Placement programs, which has been cut by 82.31 percent[2]
    - Restore $109M in adult shelter operations and ensure funds go to safe havens
    - Restore the $12 million cut from HPD including $8 million for Emergency Housing Programs[3]
    - Restore the $46 million cut for Legal Services Programs under DSS[4]
    - Restore the $45 million for Public Assistance Administration Funding under DSS[5]
    - Allocate more funding to cover the expiration of federal money, at a time where an unprecedented number of New Yorkers face eviction and/or housing insecurity. Homeless Prevention programs see an increase in city funding of $52 million but given the $176.7 million loss in federal COVID relief funding, this represents an overall program funding cut of $124.7 million.[6]
- Ensure that the additional $171 million allotted in the executive budget to fund safe havens are for single-occupancy units, created by 2022 instead of mid-2023.

- Increase spending on New York City Human Rights Commission's (CCHR) Source of Income (SOI) Unit, which currently has zero employees, by at least $1 million and hire more staff members to tackle voucher discrimination as recommended by Neighbors Together, UnlockNYC, and Housing Rights Initiative. The City should include the HASA program in source of income discrimination and create pathways to transitioning tenants into independent housing.
- Fund urgent increases for caseworkers to meet the needs of the City's expanded voucher program, including funding for fair pay
- Expand City FHEPS Eligibility to households at risk of eviction
- Implement and fully fund Local Law 53 at $5 million per year. Local Law 53 was legislation advocated by the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition passed in Spring 2021 that mandates the City provide funding to tenant organizing to ensure New Yorkers know about Right to Counsel and can stay in their homes, as recommended by the Right to Counsel coalition
- Increase and protect resources for the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program
- Increase funding to allow for the immediate expansion of supportive housing units
- Utilize city workers not in the destruction of homeless encampments, but to fill critical roles to actually house New Yorkers in emergency and permanent housing
- Restructure street homeless outreach to meet needs in a harm reductionist approach, meet their immediate needs, end

discriminatory screening for supportive housing placement, and end policing of street homeless New Yorkers

- Fund more pathways to deeply and permanently-affordable housing and shared equity homeownership for low- and moderate-income families, including through community land trusts (CLTs); new construction of affordable condos and coop buildings; and multi-family and enhanced down payment assistance, including $3 million for an initiative that funds organizing and technical assistance for CLTs.

Education

New York City needs a fully funded, tuition-free CUNY for all people regardless of income or background. Yet Mayor Adams' budget fails to provide resources to support the most vulnerable students, at a time when students need an overwhelming amount of academic and emotional support, and the City needs to spend its remaining federal COVID and student recovery funds. Increased funding for Summer Rising, summer youth employment, literacy and dyslexia, bilingual education, and career pathways programs are a good start. But the City must make the following investments in education and higher education for New York City students:

- Fund the Department of Education budget at FY22 levels[7], which has a total budget reduction of $1.2 billion compared to current FY22 levels, and redirect funding for vacant positions to critical roles across the system

- Fully divest from and completely dismantle school policing infrastructure, culture, and practices in NYC schools and reinvest those funds into support for youth, as aligned with Urban Youth Collaborative and Dignity in Schools Campaign NY budget demands.[8] The over $400M spent on the NYPD's School Policing division should be redirected to fund the resources, staff and

restorative practices that support every young person to learn and grow.

- Redirect $400M from school policing to opportunities for young people
- Do not hire 1,363 new school cops to replace current vacancies
- No funding for new or existing student surveillance and scanning equipment
- Adopt a DOE budget that reallocates these resources and reflects the best policies and practices for building safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.
    - The City must include $118.5M to expand restorative practices citywide.
    - Additionally, the City must chart a path toward the recommended ratios of one social worker and one guidance counselor for every 150 students in most schools, and one for every 50 students in high need schools, in the next five years. To reach the recommended ratios, the City must invest $150M to hire 500 new counselors and social workers this year.
    - Additionally $75M must be invested to hire 500 community members into supportive positions based on need.
    - Lastly, to meet the serious need for mental health support for young people as we recover from the pandemic, the City needs to baseline $5M in funding for the mental health continuum in schools.
- Immediately transition SYEP provider contracts to 12 month contracts

- Increase headcount at DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment (MOYE), and fund an expansion of Work Learn Grow (WLG)
- Increase funding for The City University of New York (CUNY), including for the following:
    - $20 million for ASAP for All: Serving as a model for community colleges across the country, ASAP's three-year graduation rate is more than double that of non-ASAP associate degree students at CUNY's community colleges. ASAP provides comprehensive student support and advising, professional development, tuition assistance, free Metrocards and textbooks.
    - $10 million for Mental Health Counselors: CUNY now averages one mental health counselor for every 2,400 students. We can help bring this ratio closer to 1:1,000 as recommended by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services.
    - $14.6 million to replace Lost Full-Time Faculty: CUNY lost faculty during the pandemic but it can't bring back 128 of them unless they are baselined in the budget.
    - $4 million for more childcare slots: Students cannot come back to campus without viable childcare options. Nationally, one in four college students are parents with dependent children, and over 40 percent of those are single mothers.
- Fund an additional $12 million for coordinators dedicated to assisting homeless children, as requested by the New York City Council

- Invest $23 million in the CUNY Reconnect Initiative to get New Yorkers who have earned some college credits back into the classroom and working towards degrees, as recommended by the City Council
- Restore the nearly $2 million in city funding cut from New York City Libraries[9]
- Restore 70.1M cuts to COMPASS planned for 2022 to 2026 through a reduction in slots and expand outreach funding to fill any open slots[10]
- Reverse DYCD City funding cuts of $48.9M in Youth Programs, $77.6 million in Community Development programs, 107.8 million in Beacon Community Centers[11]

Safety for All New Yorkers

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and lack of government support has been destabilizing to New Yorkers and has caused upticks in certain forms of violence. A true public safety budget would invest in the resources and services required to end root causes of violence, and not further inflict violence on New Yorkers through criminalization. Instead, the mayor is choosing to make cuts in city's departments that perform crucial public health and safety roles while continuing to spend more on the NYPD and jails than many of these agencies combined. Under Mayor Adams, NYPD arrests have increased 10.8 percent from 2020, 54 percent of which were on misdemeanor charges. These kinds of criminalization efforts do not make anyone safer; only housing, services, and resources that materially improve New Yorkers' lives can do that. The City must make the following investments in real non-policing, non-criminalization care-based safety models:

- Cancel plans to increase city funding for the NYPD budget by $690.2 million in the next fiscal year[12], as well as the

new criminalization initiatives they fund, including resources for the mayor's notoriously ineffective and violent anti-gun and plainclothes units, and dashboard cameras for patrol cars.

- Truly cut NYPD overtime. The NYPD is budgeted for $452.6 million in overtime for FY23. However, the NYPD is currently operating at around $668 million for overtime for FY22 and will probably reach $750 million for this fiscal year. So the costs for NYPD overtime are likely to be much much higher than on paper, a waste of resources that could go towards life-affirming safety net programming.
- Cancel plans to fund $265 million for criminalization programs such as the mayor's Subway Safety Plan, and a new gun crime unit within the Office of the Medical Examiner that will inevitably criminalize and harm hundreds of New Yorkers of color
- Cancel plans to add 570 correctional officers, as this will not resolve the absenteeism of correctional officers or problems at Rikers Island or city jails, and does not move the City towards ending all forms of solitary confinement and isolative torture, including punitive segregation
- Invest in methods of decarceration, and reduce the amount of funds spent on policing and incarceration. At a bare minimum, the City should enact a hiring freeze for correctional officers, police officers, and school safety officers. The City should use these funds to meet community needs like supportive housing, healthcare, schools, and programs for young people, reducing people's interactions with policing and jail systems in the first place.
- Cancel new NYPD Training Academy at $221.2M[13]
- Reduce the amount of funds spent on district attorneys (DAs). The proposed executive budget calls for combined funding

of $479 million on DA offices.[14]. Even a 5 percent reduction would be a cut of $23.9 million spread across the five DA offices, and could go towards programs to support formerly incarcerated New Yorkers with housing and health services

- Invest in peer-led mental health and harm-reduction services that do not involve police, and do not result in police being sent instead of mental health and peer support professionals
- Increase funds to non-policing approaches to hate violence by funding the Office of the Prevention of Hate Crimes (OPHC) Partners Against The Hate (P.A.T.H.) initiative from $3 million to $10 million, and renew the program with the same grantee cohort. Fully staff the OPHC to support community-based organizations doing hate violence work.
- Fully fund Hope Against Hate at $10 million, which is partially funded at the moment
- Increase funds for the Hate Crimes Prevention Initiative from $1 million to $5 million, as recommended by NYC Against Hate coalition
- Increase funding for Clubhouses that provide peer support, access to services, employment and educational opportunities, and socialization and recreation in a safe, restorative and structured setting for people with severe mental illness, reducing hospitalization and justice involvement and improving health and wellness
- Increase funding for Bronx Fountain House to $1.5 Million to support public health approaches to serious mental illness
- Expand the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $6 million to support more than 50 AAPI CBOs in NYC providing

community-informed social services and programming to address the severe rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Enhance the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (NSF) to $7 million
- Invest an additional $3 million in funds for community-based solutions for violence interruption, across the city, supplementing the Crisis Management System in targeted Council Districts that experience the highest rates of violence, as recommended by the New York City Council
- $11.5 million to increase mental health support and outreach services for unhoused individuals, as recommended by the New York City Council
- Divest from NYPD Vice and invest those funds into services and resources for sex workers

Economic Justice

The pandemic has inflicted devastating economic losses on New Yorkers, and while some important investments have been made to economically support some New Yorkers, the Mayor's budget does not address the full extent of people's needs. The expansion of the earned income tax credit, a new program for full-time subsidized child care, $10 million for immigrant community support, and $51 million to fight food insecurity is a good start. But much more is needed to ensure not only a just recovery, but true economic justice and dignity for all. This requires an equitable distribution of resources, and budgets that empower those who have been historically and violently excluded from our City's economy. The City must make the following investments in economic justice:

- Provide funds for $30 million to fund free meals for seniors, as recommended by the City Council
- Utilize federal stimulus funding for job recovery for targeted efforts in Black and Latinx communities, who are experiencing unemployment higher than twice the national average, as well as immigrant New Yorkers left out of COVID aid and stimulus payments.
- Restore $1 million in City funding for DSS Employment Services Administration,[15] and cuts to Small Business Services (reduced by 36 percent), and Department of Consumer Affairs (reduced by 33 percent) to combat protect consumers and workers on wage theft
- Fund a Cost of Living Adjustment, an increase of their wage floor to the #JustPay recommended $22/hr, and renew the one-time bonus from the FY22 budget for human service workers
- Restore the Recovery Meals program, as pandemic food support is still a high need

Health

The mayor's proposed budget only touches the surface of the care and recovery needed by communities of color and low-income New Yorkers most harmed by COVID-19. The City must make the following investments in health justice:

- Fund $45 million to create a hospital fund to support hospitals in underserved neighborhoods, as recommended by the City Council. It is important to define a safety net hospital using the state's definition of essential hospital, with an equity lens of where funds should go, with robust community consultation and input.

- Fund a new health care facility with a trauma center in Far Rockaway, Queens, as recommended by the City Council
- Fund community-based organizations that use effective practices to address chronic diseases that worsened pandemic outcomes
- Restore funding for and increase subsidies for Health+Hospitals (H+H) and public hospitals, which is facing a reduction of $1.6 billion from FY22[16]
- Augment the $4 million for Access Health NYC, a city-wide initiative that funds community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide education, outreach, & assistance to all New Yorkers about how to access health care and coverage
- Invest $50 million to fund wellness programs to continue the work of community-based organizations to help neighborhoods recover from COVID-driven health and economic disasters, and investing in community infrastructure that exists to battle chronic diseases that have skyrocketed during the pandemic
- Establish baseline funding for mental health services for children under five, and programs addressing communicable and chronic diseases, and substance use
- Allocate more funding to support adequate prenatal and postpartum health care support for immigrants and communities of color
- Invest in community-led and community-based language accessible and culturally responsive mental health resources.
- Increase funding for better coordination between hospital and community-based services for pregnant people.

Services should include perinatal case management services, comprehensive doula support programs, and pregnancy programs

- Cover the cuts imposed by possible reductions to the Article VI match, which fund community-based health and engagement programs
- Restore $4.2M for fiscal years 2022-2026 to DSS substance abuse programs[17] and expand funding to combat surge of overdose deaths which have nearly doubled from pre pandemic years
- Reverse City funding cuts of $43 million to DFTA[18], $36 million of which is in Senior Services[19]
- Reverse City funding cuts of $10.2 million to DSS HIV/AIDS services[20]

Transit

As pandemic restrictions lift, more New Yorkers are heading to work or using public transit systems to get to where they need to go. The executive budget promises important investments like $904 million in bike and bus lanes and street design, $75 million expansion in Fair Fares, 1,000 intersection improvement projects. The City must make the following additional investments to ensure better, safer, more efficient, and quicker transit for all New Yorkers:

- Fund an extra $1.7 billion over the baseline across 10 years to fund the Streets Master Plan, as requested by the City Council
- Fully fund Fair Fares and allow more New Yorkers to qualify, doubling the income cutoff, as recommended by the Community Service Society

Climate

All New Yorkers should be able to live in a city that is safe and sustainable, not threatened by drastic environmental disasters that affect our collective health and safety. The mayor's executive budget makes important investments in waste containerization pilots, parks and open spaces, tree planting, and organics, but overall does not include enough funding to address the city's dire climate and health crises. The City must make the following investments in climate infrastructure and programming to meet critical climate mandates and ensure our safe collective future in this city:

- Increase the parks budget to one percent of the city budget, as recommended by the Play Fair coalition
- Restore DSNY to FY22 levels (FY23 currently proposed at $94.3 million less than FY22 levels[21]) to ensure sanitation services are able to operate at pre-pandemic levels and ensure the City reaches its zero waste goals, improving public health and safety. Sanitation services should not be used to conduct homeless encampment raids or rid homeless New Yorkers of their belongings
- Invest $14.5 billion by 2030 to create Green, Healthy Schools as a first step toward LL 97 compliance, as recommended by the Climate Works for All coalition. An annual investment of $1.8 billion will pay for deep retrofits and the installation of solar panels
- Re-prioritize sanitation programs like Commercial Waste Zones (CWZ), basket service, and community composting.
- Implement CWZ as soon as possible, as recommended by the NY Transform Don't Trash Coalition

Support Immigrant New Yorkers

There are over 3.1 Million immigrants in NYC, many of whom have been the essential workers keeping our city alive during this pandemic. At a time when we should be bolstering the support we give to immigrant communities, the NYC budget reflects a tacit dismissal of their demands. We call on the City to allocate the following funds in the budget:

- Renew $58.2 million in funding for immigration legal services to ensure continuity of services and to help defend immigrants during this pandemic and despite the change in presidential administration.
- Allocate $4 million to expand the successful Linking Immigrant Children to Early Childhood Education (LIFE) project citywide to help underserved immigrant families with 3- and 4-year olds apply to and enroll in 3k and pre-k programs.
- Invest in a $2.1 million transfer school pilot program that improves recently arrived immigrant students age 16-21 access to supportive transfer schools outside of Manhattan in order to address the devastating English Language Learner drop-out rate.
- Restore and renew $4 million for Adult Literacy Funding to address the immense, inequitable gap in digital literacy, systems navigation skills and access to information. There has been a $5.9M reduction in city funds for Adult Literacy Programs from FY22, compared to the proposed FY23 executive budget[22].
- Increase baselined Adult Literacy Funding by $13.5 million to account for the increased rates needed to address the upcoming adult literacy DYCD RFP process.
- Renew and expand the Adult Literacy Pilot Program from $2.5M to $5M to address growing needs for additional

services, adequate teacher salaries, and increased program sustainability.

- Ensure successful implementation of Introduction 1867-2020 to strengthen our democracy by allowing nearly one million New Yorkers who are green card holders or have valid work authorizations to vote in New York City local elections. This includes:
    - The creation of a $25 million fund to be distributed to CBO's, particularly the Our City, Our Vote Coalition, to conduct truly expansive city-wide voter registration, voter education, and GOTV
    - An increase in the budgets of every City agency, department and office that will be involved in the implementation of municipal voting, including $25 million for the Board of elections, a 10 percent increase from the FY22 budget of the Civic Engagement Commision, the Campaign Finance Board, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and 5 percent increase from the FY22 the budget of the Department of Youth & Community Development and any other relevant City agency, department and office
- Allocate $2.25 million to support a Community Interpreter Bank (CIB), to expand language access and increase the supply of trained, vetted interpreters to be provided to community-based nonprofit organizations.

In conclusion, as it is, the mayor's budget will harm New Yorkers. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified issues that communities of color, immigrants, and low-wage workers have faced for decades before the crisis. This is precisely why New York City needs more than just a recovery. It needs a reorganization of the way that the City approaches

the needs of its residents. The City must provide communities with resources to ensure that not only do we recover from this crisis, but that we all thrive and share in all that this city has to offer. This FY23 budget could be the City's moral document, a plan to build back New York City better than before – or it could signal the continued abandonment of the city's residents to devastation and divestment, further exacerbated by the pandemic. In the first City budget of the new term, we urge the mayor and city council to pass a budget that provides dignity, care, and justice for all New Yorkers.

Hello, my name is Santia. I am a New York City resident. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA and $2.5 billion for HPD. The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY, and funding DOE mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan, $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares, and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Everyone is entitled to Basic necessities. This is food, water and shelter. Unfortunately these basic needs are not all guaranteed. I am asking that the finance committee places thousands of dollars into UBI pilot programs throughout the city of New York. Currently majors for a guarantee income is already being implemented in Mount Vernon and Hudson, NY. These pilot programs ranges from $500 to $1000 to be given to members of the community at random. I am calling for Eric Adams to be involve in this program along with other mayors throughout the country, so he can ensure that New Yorkers are receiving their basic needs. You can find more information about this program at mayorsforagi.org.

Universal Basic Income Organization

Hello, my name is Brandon Rumaker. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.
[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
[4] CUNY: City University of New York
[5] DOE: Department of Education
[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.
[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.
[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.
[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

Hello, my name is Celeste Cass. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs for solitary confinement, a practice the UN defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Hello, my name is Isabella Vitti. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion budget intact.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

Information Classification: General

My name is Jennifer Cabán and I'm a resident of New York City, and I'm calling on you to reject the austerity and criminalization in Mayor Adams' proposed executive budget, and fight for a people's budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Two years into the pandemic, New Yorkers are still in crisis. As the city struggles with a fragile recovery, it's critical that the City Council pass a budget that actually meets our needs, as advocated by The People's Plan.

I'm calling on the Council to fund programs that actually keep New Yorkers safe and well, reject cuts to critical social services, and refuse to increase funding for institutions and programs that criminalize and punish communities of color.

In particular, I urge the Council to:

1) Invest $4B annually in long-term permanently affordable housing.
Invest $1.5B for NYCHA, $2.5B for HPD for truly affordable housing that focuses on low-income and extremely low-income New Yorkers. Separately, ensure the $112M in the executive budget for safe havens are single-occupancy, and invest in supportive housing units.
2) Invest $400M in student well-being and counselors, not cops.
Instead of spending nearly $400M on school police, including filling 1,363 school police ("safety agent") vacancies (~$82.2M), fund $120118.5M to expand restorative practices, $150M to hire 500 new counselors and social workers, $75M for local hiring of 500 supportive need-based positions, and $5M for mental health continuum in schools.
3) Cancel plans to add 582 correctional officers.
Cut the increase of 582 Department of Corrections staff (from the preliminary budget) as this will not resolve the absenteeism of correctional officers or problems at Rikers Island or city jails. Decarcerate, end all forms of isolative torture, and use funds to support people exiting jails and prisons.
4) Cut failed NYPD criminalization programs and invest in anti-violence programs.
Cancel funding for new NYPD initiatives, namely the ineffective and violent anti-gun and plainclothes units, dashboard cameras for patrol cars, the "Subway Safety Plan", and the new Firearms Training Facility ($225M in the proposed FY23 capital budget.) Cut NYPD Vice ($18.2M in FY22), Strategic Response Group ($68.1M in FY23), and NYPD overtime (~$750M in FY22). Fund anti-hate-violence, violence interruption, and peer-led mental health and harm-reduction programs. End all NYPD co-response to mental health crisis calls, and sweeps of homeless New Yorkers.
5) Invest in clean green transit, infrastructure, and jobs.
Fund $3.1B over 10 years for the Streets Master Plan. Fully fund Fair Fares at $250M, doubling the income cutoff so more New Yorkers can qualify. Invest $1.8B

annually for deep retrofits and solar panel installation for Green, Healthy Schools as a first step in Local Law 97 compliance. Fund $22M to increase corner basket pick-ups, $4.9M for rat mitigation, and $18.2M for curbside organics. Restore sanitation budget (down $95M from FY22 modified budget.)

I also ask that the City immediately release a full transparent account of how federal funds are and will be used in the current and next fiscal year budgets, and ensure funds are utilized to meet New Yorkers' most dire needs, reflected by the priorities above, and the full list of demands by The People's Plan: https://tinyurl.com/PeoplesBudgetDemands

Hello, my name is Sabrina Kissack. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over everyday New Yorkers. His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

Today, I urge the Council to fight against the mayor's program of austerity and punishment. Instead of cutting funding for housing, the Council must invest $4 billion into permanent, affordable housing, including $1.5 billion for NYCHA[2] and $2.5 billion for HPD.[3] The Council must also reject Adams' cuts to our public education system, by investing $122 million into CUNY,[4] and funding DOE[5] mental health counselors and social workers, rather than filling school police vacancies. I also urge the Council to act on two deadly crises facing our city: climate catastrophe and the overdose epidemic. We need $3.1 billion for the Streets Plan,[6] $1.8 billion for green public schools, $250 million for Fair Fares,[7] and $10 million to expand life-saving safe consumption sites[8] to all five boroughs.

Finally, the Council must reject the mayor's regressive return to law and order. I urge the Council to reject the proposal to add hundreds of new COs[9] for solitary confinement, a practice the UN[10] defines as torture. I also urge the Council to demonstrate their commitment to racial justice by cutting failed NYPD criminalization programs like the ineffective and violent plainclothes units, the so-called Subway Safety Plan, and ending all NYPD response to mental health calls.

Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.

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[1] When accounting for additional costs the NYPD accrues during a fiscal year such as pension and overtime, their expense budget totals around $10 billion.
[2] NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority
[3] HPD: New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
[4] CUNY: City University of New York
[5] DOE: Department of Education
[6] In 2019, the Council passed the Streets Plan (also known as the Transportation Master Plan), which creates 500 miles of protected bike lanes, 500 miles of bus lanes, and vastly expands open pedestrian space. Read more about the Streets Plan here.
[7] Fair Fares is a city-run program that provides half-price MetroCards for low-income New Yorkers. Increasing funding for Fair Fares to $250 million would double the income cutoff for eligibility, so more New Yorkers can qualify for the program.
[8] In December 2021, NYC opened its first safe consumption sites in East Harlem and Washington Heights. As of March 2022, these two sites saved 200 lives by reversing overdoses.
[9] COs: corrections officers
[10] UN: United Nations

Hello, my name is tessa travis.I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

Two years into the pandemic, working-class New Yorkers are in crisis. COVID-19 cases are surging, landlords are raising rents and families struggle to stay in their homes. But the mayor continues to favor the wealthy and powerful over "everyday New Yorkers". His budget makes devastating cuts to vital city services, like housing, healthcare, sanitation, and education, while leaving the NYPD's $10-billion[1] budget intact.

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I have seen the city disintegrate and collapse quickly since the police budget was ramped in the last budget. I see people who are flailing and have not trusted the police in many years. Fluffing

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the police budget and taking away some do the city's vital sources has made the city sterile, commercial and cruel. It's made me rethink the position of being a lifelong New Yorker.

Consider my testimony and appeal coming from the viewpoint of a producer, someone who manages and balances budgets to meet the needs of large groups constantly. Consider the needs of many besides me before placing the police force and unions needs first.

Hello, my name is Xavier Webber. I am a New York City resident and a member of DSA's NYC chapter. I am here to voice my opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' executive budget, and to call on the City Council to pass a budget that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

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Thank you, Council Members and Committee Chair Brannan, for hearing my testimony.