JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE
JUNE 4, 2026

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I want to thank Chair Hudson and the members of the Committee on General Welfare for holding this hearing today.

The Department of Homeless Services' (DHS) FY27 Executive Budget allocates approximately $284 million less in funding, with cuts largely affecting shelters. This includes $89.1 million in federal funds and an estimated $199 million in state funds. $275 million of cuts to shelter costs were attributed to shelter intake and programming 'other than personnel services' (OTPS) while an additional $9.8 million were cut from contracted street programs, including homeless outreach. These cuts are concerning to me, especially after a tough winter where dozens of New Yorkers, many unhoused, lost their lives due to extreme cold. Yet funding does not always equal solutions.

A report by the New York State Comptroller found that despite funding having tripled from $102 million in 2019 to $368 million last year, NYC's homeless population continues to grow.[1] Over 4,500 New Yorkers were unsheltered last year despite thousands of supportive housing units sitting vacant.[2] This shortage can be attributed to a number of factors including cumbersome regulations requiring lengthy stays in shelters prior to placement and other administrative challenges like finding affordable units in scattered site programs.[3] The federal government's proposed changes to Continuum of Care programs could further impact funding for permanent supportive housing.

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[1] Russo-Lennon, Barbara. "NYC tripled its spending on helping homeless. So why are more New Yorkers are living on the streets?" *AM-NY.*
[2] Brand, David. "Thousands of supportive apartments sit empty in NYC as homeless die on the streets." *Gothamist.* February 2026.
[3] Ibid.

In this same vein, I want to talk about the Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) for a moment, a pandemic-era federal housing program that is currently in the process of winding down. Housing over 5,200 households, our partners at New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) began notifying tenants under this program that subsidies would soon end in March. As part of this notice, NYCHA instructed tenants to apply for a range of subsidized housing options, yet placement is not guaranteed and given NYCHA's long fiscal challenges and yearslong waitlist, additional resources and alternative options for families with EHV remain unclear. While funding is expected to last until the end of the year, this news leaves many families at risk of losing their housing as families struggle to pay rent.

In the absence of federal support, the city and state must come together to address the needs of New Yorkers. Furthermore, it is not enough to simply react to these issues as they arise, we must be proactive. We know what the issues are, we know what solutions are out there, yet far too often, we are shifting the burden of having the political will to act on them to the distant future. I look forward to hearing from the agencies how this executive budget responds to their needs and impacts their ability to do the work that needs to be done. Thank you.

New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
Patricia Nicholson, Free Admission Campaign
July 10, 2026

Dear NYC Council Speaker Julie Menin, Deputy Speaker and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Relations Chair Nantasha Williams, Finance Chair Linda Lee, and all honorable Council Members,

My name is Patricia Nicholson and I am the founder of the Free Admission Campaign. For almost 15 years, the Free Admission Campaign has been dedicated to ensuring New Yorkers can clearly understand and use free, suggested, or reduced admission at publicly supported cultural institutions. Our core mission is centered around New Yorkers' rights to free admission to the park-located institutions that are supported by public dollars, public land, and New York City taxpayer dollars.

In the late nineteenth century, as Central Park was being planned, Andrew Green recognized a challenge. The creation of the park demanded an immense financial investment; simultaneously, New York City was experiencing a population influx. Green championed a historic public-private partnership, an agreement where the city's wealthiest families were permitted to house their treasured art collections in publicly owned buildings, provided those doors remained open to all, free of charge. These institutions would become known as some of New York's most famous museums such as the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. For decades, this promise of universal access was firmly protected by state law. However, this foundational mission was compromised in 1970, when the City's Park Commissioner approved a new 'pay-what-you-wish' policy for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. By bypassing State authority, this decision quietly severed the historic free admission policy, beginning a steady erosion of the museum's original promise of true accessibility for the public. Our mission is to make public-access rights visible, understandable, and usable.

The Free Admission Campaign is grateful to see the $239.6 million allocation towards the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) expense budget including the $30M total additional allocation for the Cultural Institution Group (CIGs) and Cultural Development Fund (CDF) organizations. The Free Admission Campaign will continue to support increasing and baselining cultural funding; however, with public funding must come public accountability. As New Yorkers continue to fund these institutions through dedicated budget items, free use and monetization of government owned properties, and voluntary admissions fees, the City must enforce the public's reciprocal right to free admission to 17 of the city's most historic cultural park institutions (American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn Children's Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Museum of the City of New York, New York Botanical Garden, New York Hall of Science, Staten Island Museum, Staten Island Zoo, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Wave Hill, Bronx Zoo, Central Park Zoo, New York Aquarium, Prospect Park Zoo and Queens Zoo).

New York's cultural institutions are public treasures, and when the public supports them, the public should be clearly and consistently welcomed in. This issue is not solely a budgetary issue, instead it is a social justice issue. Efforts should be focused on increasing access for all New Yorkers, especially those who have been systemically marginalized and under invested in. The Mayor, the Council, DCLA, and all stakeholders should come together to make sure that these existing State laws and agreements are enforced, so that all of the 17 institutions are 100% free for 100% of New York City residents, thus executing on the public-private partnership that founded these cultural institutions over a century ago.

Thank you for your continued public service, time, and consideration.

Patricia Nicholson
Founder, Free Admission Campaign
www.nyersfreeadmission.org

ABOLISH THE NYC TAX LIEN SALE COALITION

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

June 10, 2026

My name is Paula Segal. I am Senior Staff Attorney in TakeRoot Justice' Equitable Neighborhoods Unit and am here today representing the Abolish the NYC Tax Lien Sale Coalition, which has organized and advocated since 2020 to abolish the current lien sale system and replace it with a just and equitable system of City debt collection. TakeRoot is a founding member of the Coalition.

The Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget includes revenue from a tax lien sale while providing no funding for outreach to owners and residents of lien sale-eligible buildings. This is unacceptable.

The City Council must pass a budget that includes $3 million in outreach funding for residents of lien sale-eligible properties, even if the sale is suspended in 2027.
Struggling homeowners will only see their City debt increase if they don't have the support they need to evaluate their options and find a pathway to staying in their homes. Tenants in buildings with outstanding debt need to be informed of their rights and connected with groups that can help them improve their living conditions; tax lien sale-eligible buildings are in greater physical distress than comparable buildings without debt.

The City Council must use all tools at its disposal to ensure that outreach funding is distributed in a timely manner.
The Fiscal Year 2026 budget allocated $2 million for outreach, but those funds were reduced by half and only released in May. This means that fewer at-risk households will get the support they need, increasing the risk of displacement and the loss of the home equity they've built.

In addition to funding timely outreach to support property owners who fall behind on their municipal charges, we are calling on the Council to urge the Administration to suspend the lien sale in FY27 and to end sales to privately-managed Tax Lien Trusts entirely.
The harms of the lien sale—including displacement and predatory real estate speculation—are disproportionately placed on the backs of residents in BIPOC communities across the City. The small amount of revenue the lien sale generates is far outweighed by the costs it imposes on struggling homeowners and tenants living in buildings owned by delinquent homeowners. Even with significant reforms put in place in 2024, the lien sale continues to harm vulnerable New Yorkers. Last year, the Coalition

documented the impact of the 2025 lien sale, the only one that was conducted incorporating these reforms. Our resulting report, "Beyond Reform: Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale," was release last month and can be found online: https://www.eastnewyorkclt.org/publications. A report brief is attached to our testimony today as well.

Mayor Mamdani has rightly pointed out that the lien sale is "predatory," and during his campaign committed to "stop the Lien Sale on Day One" and create a new system of debt collection. The City Council passed legislation last year, and overrode the former Mayor's veto of the legislation, for a new system with a land bank at its core.

The Council must work with the Administration to implement this new system as quickly as possible.

A new system can be designed to mitigate the harms of the current system while increasing compliance. Establishing the new system promptly, combined with suspending the 2027 lien sale and providing sufficient outreach funding in a timely manner, will limit the negative impacts the current system has on at-risk homeowners and tenants. The Coalition is looking forward to the timely appointment of individuals to the working group that will form and become the initial board of the New York City Land Bank, per Local Law 56 of 2026,[1] and stands by to support the work of that group in any way it can. We urge the Council and administration to submit the required State application for the formation of the land bank as soon as practical after appointments are made, and not to wait until the 2029 deadline is upon us.

Thank you so much for making time for my testimony today.

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[1] The working group appointments are due to be completed by July 29, 2026. The appointments are to be made as follows:
(a) The mayor or their designee;
(b) The commissioner of finance or their designee;
(c) The commissioner of housing preservation and development or their designee;
(d) Three persons appointed by the speaker of the council; and
(e) One person appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the council after a public hearing.

REPORT BRIEF

Beyond Reform
Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale

May 2026

New York City's method of handling municipal debt since 1996—a Tax Lien Sale to investor-backed Trusts—has been racially unjust and inequitable. This Sale harms homeowners and tenants alike. Homeowners, many of whom have owned their homes for decades, risk losing their homes to unscrupulous, predatory real estate investors and through tax foreclosure. Tenants are exploited by landlords who collect rent but fail to pay their City charges and don't properly maintain their buildings. *These harms are not experienced equally: Black and Brown communities bear the brunt of the harms perpetrated by this misguided policy.*

Despite changes implemented for the 2025 Sale—including more frequent notifications, increased outreach to at-risk households, and programs to help people get their properties out of the Sale—the outcomes were no different than in years past.

The Trust-based Lien Sale is beyond reform. The Administration and City Council must halt all lien sales and fund extensive community-based outreach until a new system is in place.

Key Findings
from our report *Beyond Reform: Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale*

The Tax Lien Sale encourages real estate speculation

Publicly posting lists of lien sale properties serves as a 'roadmap' for speculators. Residents, both homeowners and tenants, were frequently skeptical of canvassers, often thinking they were scammers or speculators. Numerous canvassers noted that when they arrived at properties they would often see flyers that said "Sell Your House for Cash" or "We Buy Homes for Cash."

Any new system must not include an annual directory of the City's most vulnerable owners

Long-time homeowners in Black and Latine neighborhoods were disproportionately impacted

In majority Black community districts, 1 - 3 family Tax Class 1 **properties owned for more than 10 years were 10 times as likely to have a lien sold** than in majority white districts and **3 times as likely in majority Latine districts** compared to majority white districts.

The Lien Sale disproportionately affects Black and Latine neighborhoods

1 - 3 family Tax Class 1 properties in **majority Black neighborhoods were 6 times more likely to have a lien sold on them** than properties in majority white neighborhoods, while majority **Latine neighborhoods were 1.6 times more likely to have liens sold.**

Uncertainty and confusion about the Lien Sale

Despite efforts to increase outreach to at-risk households, tenants and homeowners living in at-risk properties revealed a deeply concerning pattern of confusion, administrative delays, and financial hardship. Homeowners reported being unaware of outstanding charges, did not know that side lots and driveways may have separate tax bills, or were overwhelmed by the amount owed and their ability to pay. Tenants often had no idea that they could potentially be displaced by the lien sale and that their landlords were not paying their taxes, water, and other City charges.

Outreach efforts by agencies and community-based organizations to owners with City debt must be bolstered and sustained year-round.

Most properties were rental and in poor condition

Most of the properties Coalition members visited were rental properties and tenants reported unresponsive landlords, persistent problems with their homes, and concerns about losing their homes due to landlord harassment or being on month-to-month leases. Landlords across the City use nonpayment of City charges as a way to increase their income and when the bill comes due tenants pay in deteriorating living conditions.

Tax Class 2 rental properties, excluding condominiums and cooperatives, eligible for the lien sale averaged 1.3 open Class B & C Housing Maintenance Code violations per unit and those that had a lien sold averaged 2.1 open violations. **The average violation rate is 7.5 times higher for properties with liens sold** on them than buildings unaffected by the lien sale, which had 0.27 violations per unit.

Tenants must be supported in holding their landlords accountable and taking steps towards ownership if they are interested.

Challenges with exemptions

Many homeowners, especially aging adults, were unaware that they may have been eligible for exemptions or other programs that would have prevented their homes from being at-risk of the lien sale. Others had previously been granted exemptions but were unaware that they needed to be renewed. Retroactively applying for an exemption is not possible — with no exemption, once the charges are levied they are legally obligated to pay. If they can't pay, they risk losing their homes.

The City must work with the State to make retroactive exemptions possible.

DOF created barriers & offered poor guidance

DOF staff counseled homeowners to enter into standard payment plans and discouraged use of the "Easy Exit" program, regardless of an owner's ability to make payments.

Heirs need particular support to protect their homes. In 2025, heirs with title issues were eligible to apply to be removed with a Probate Removal application if they were pursuing a case in Surrogate's Court but starting such a proceeding is often a difficult barrier for families to overcome.

ABOLISH THE NYC TAX LIEN SALE COALITION

Contact: jakobs@eastnewyorkclt.org

The Honorable Linda Lee
Chair, NY Council Committee on Finance
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

June 9, 2026
RE: Request for Arts Funding

Dear Chair Linda Lee,

On behalf of Actors' Equity Association, the national union of more than 51,000 professional actors and stage managers in the live theatre, I am writing in support of a coalition of cultural organizations urging increased investment in New York City's arts sector.

Actors' Equity Association urges the council to restore and baseline an additional $20 million in cultural funding in the FY27 Adopted Budget. While the mayor's proposed increase of $10 million was a welcome recognition about the importance of the arts, we respectfully urge the council to build on his request and baseline an additional $20 million.

We also want to highlight the importance of Increased funding for the Coalition of Theaters of Color, CASA, SU-CASA and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, programs that make the New York arts scene a vibrant one unlike any other city in the country.

Arts audiences sustain restaurants, bars, retail corridors, transit ridership, and tourism in neighborhoods across all five boroughs. According to a study from Americans for the Arts, the average nonprofit live arts patron generates an additional $38 per person per show beyond the cost of admission, spending that often occurs at local businesses.

The live arts have a huge economic impact on New York. A recent study from the Comptroller found that New York City has one of the highest concentrations of jobs in the arts of any major American city. New York cannot remain the cultural capital of the world if the nonprofit arts ecosystem that develops artists and productions declines. With inflation surging, nonprofit cultural organizations continue to face rising operating costs that threaten their ability to produce new work and retain workers.

We respectfully urge the council to include these restorations and baselined investments in the final adopted budget.

Thank you for all that you do on behalf of the New York City arts community.

For Equity,

Brandon Lorenz
National Director of Public Policy

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

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

Re: FY 2027 Executive Budget - Education

June 10, 2026

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Deputy Director
Matthew Lenaghan

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the education budget. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 50 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of families navigate the New York City school system.

We appreciate that the Executive Budget provides much-needed increased funding for preschool special education and extends funding for important programs such as Learning to Work. However, funding for other essential education programs is still set to expire in June. Unless funding is restored, students will lose access to the Mental Health Continuum, Sensory Exploration, Education, & Discovery (SEED) programs, restorative justice, immigrant family outreach, and Student Success Centers. We appreciate that the City Council's Preliminary Budget Response calls for continued funding for these programs and urge you to ensure the adopted budget restores and baselines this funding.

The City also has more work to do to ensure students with disabilities receive the programs and services they need in our public schools and to address the urgent needs we see daily in our work with families. We urge the City to add:

- $100M to address the shortage of service providers for students with disabilities across grade levels; mandated services are not optional.
- $20M to expand effective reading intervention for middle and high school students; families should not have to sue for private tutoring so their children can learn to read.
- $8M to hire behavioral specialists; schools should be able to call upon professionals with the expertise to support students' behavioral and mental health needs.

- $8M to hire English Language Learner (ELL) instructional specialists; schools with high numbers of ELLs should have a dedicated professional ensuring these students receive appropriate academic instruction and support.
- $3M for interim transportation for students in foster care awaiting school bus service; students placed in the City's custody should be able to get to school.
- $2M to expand travel training; students with disabilities should get the training needed to navigate public transportation independently, increasing access to jobs and internships while reducing reliance on yellow bus service.
- $450M in capital funding over five years to make more schools accessible; no one should be turned away from a school because they cannot enter the building.

Additional information is in our written testimony.

We look forward to working with you to sustain critical education programs and secure additional needed investments. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK

City Education Budget Priorities for FY 2027

Sustain impactful programs.

We appreciate that Mayor Mamdani's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget restores and baselines funding for impactful education programs that had dollars set to expire in June 2026, including preschool special education services, Summer Rising, Learning to Work, and early childhood education outreach. However, the Executive Budget leaves out funding for the following essential programs, putting them at risk of cuts or elimination:

- Immigrant Family Communication and Outreach ($4M)
- Restorative Justice ($6M)
- Mental Health Continuum ($5M)
- Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED) programs ($8.5M)
- Student Success Centers ($3.75M)

The City must extend and baseline funding for these programs so that they will continue beyond this year.

Make additional investments to address pressing needs.

We appreciate that the Mayor's Executive Budget adds $67.5M for preschool special education—funding that is much-needed at a time when only 63% of preschoolers with IEPs are receiving their full mandated related services. At the same time, the City has a legal obligation to provide students with disabilities across all grade levels with the programs and services they need. It is essential for the City to keep moving forward by increasing investments to serve students with disabilities in the public schools and address the pressing needs we see on the ground in our work with families every day. We urge the City to:

- Address the shortage of service providers and fulfill the City's legal obligation to students with disabilities across grade levels ($100M).
- Expand access to one-on-one or small group support for middle and high school students who need more help learning to read ($20M).
- Hire behavioral specialists to support schools in meeting the behavioral and mental health needs of students ($8M).
- Establish the position of English Language Learner (ELL) instructional specialist to ensure ELLs receive appropriate academic instruction and support ($8M).
- Provide interim transportation for students in foster care awaiting school bus service ($3M).
- Expand travel training to help students with disabilities learn to travel independently ($2M).
- Make more schools accessible to students, parents, educators, and community members with physical disabilities ($450M in capital funding over five years).

Sustain impactful programs funded with dollars scheduled to expire in June 2026.

The following education programs are funded, in whole or in part, with one-year funding set to expire in June unless extended in the FY 2027 budget. The funding amounts listed are the dollar amounts needed merely to sustain these existing programs at their current funding levels; unless funding is extended, students will lose access to these programs and services. The City should restore and baseline funding for these programs. We appreciate that the City Council's Response to the Preliminary Budget calls for continued funding for these essential programs.

MULTI-FACETED IMMIGRANT FAMILY COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH ($4M)

This initiative strengthens New York City Public Schools' (NYCPS') communication with immigrant families—many of whom would otherwise be left without important information—by using local ethnic media to share information about their language access rights, sending paper notices to families' homes, reaching families via phone calls and text messages, helping schools bolster their translation and interpretation systems, and collaborating with immigrant-facing community-based organizations to create and launch information campaigns. This work is fully aligned with the new Administration's focus on increasing parent engagement but is currently funded solely with $4M in one-year city funding set to expire this June. It is critical for this initiative to continue, particularly at a time when changes in federal policies could lead families to keep their children out of school or avoid accessing educational services for which they are eligible.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ($6M)

All students deserve schools where they feel safe and supported. However, without sufficient resources and appropriate alternatives for addressing behavior and helping students navigate conflict, schools will continue to resort to suspensions—which do not repair relationships or make schools safer; disproportionately impact students of color, students with disabilities, and youth who are homeless or in the foster system; and have been linked with lower educational attainment and higher odds of future contact with the juvenile or criminal legal system. Restorative justice practices enable schools to keep students in the classroom while helping them resolve conflicts and build and repair relationships. We appreciate that the FY 2026 budget included $12M in increased city funding to replace expired federal stimulus dollars. However, while $6M of this funding was baselined in the FY 2026 budget, the remaining $6M was funded for one year only and is set to expire in June.

MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM ($5M)

The Mental Health Continuum is a cross-agency partnership (NYCPS, Health + Hospitals, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene) to help students with significant mental health needs access expedited mental healthcare. This innovative model, which was highlighted in the City Council's Mental Health Roadmap, supports students at 50 high-needs schools through school partnerships with H+H mental health clinics, dedicated staff to provide students with timely access to mental health services, a NYC Well hotline to advise school staff, mobile response teams to

respond to students in crisis, and training for school staff in Collaborative Problem Solving to build their capacity to address student behavior. This program is serving thousands of students. However, the full $5M for this initiative (NYCPS: $787K, H+H: $3.74M, DOHMH: $472K) is set to expire in June.

SENSORY EXPLORATION, EDUCATION, AND DISCOVERY (SEED) PROGRAM ($8.5M)

The SEED program provides students with intensive sensory needs with small group support from occupational and physical therapists so they are better able to function in the classroom. This popular program, which was originally funded with temporary federal COVID-19 stimulus dollars, has been funded through a grant from the New York State Education Department since the stimulus funds expired two years ago, but the state grant expires this year.

STUDENT SUCCESS CENTERS ($3.75M)

Student Success Centers allow trained youth leaders to build a culture of college-going and help their peers with the college admissions process.

Make additional investments to address pressing needs.

Ensuring that key programs remain funded at their current levels is important, but not sufficient to meet student needs. In our work on the ground with families, we see a significant need for additional supports. Furthermore, the best way to decrease spending on special education due process cases is to ensure that families of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) never need to exert their due process rights in the first place. Instead of forcing families to fight for the support their children need, the City should work to eliminate the shortage of service providers, expand access to intensive reading intervention, and hire behavioral specialists so that our public schools can better serve students with disabilities from the outset. While we are very pleased that the Executive Budget includes additional funding for preschool special education, increased investment is also necessary to ensure school-aged students with disabilities get the programs and services they need within our public schools.

Address the shortage of service providers and fulfill the City's legal obligation to students with disabilities ($100M).

More than 7,500 school-aged students with disabilities ended the 2024–25 school year still waiting for their legally mandated speech therapy to begin, while more than 6,600 students were waiting for occupational therapy, more than 5,400 students were waiting for counseling, and more than 650 students were waiting for physical therapy. Many more students waited months before their services began—services that NYCPS had determined were necessary for them to receive an appropriate education.

While the City has many choices when it comes to the budget, providing mandated services to students with disabilities is not optional. Federal and state law require the City to deliver all services specified in students' IEPs and to allocate sufficient funding to do so. Persistent service gaps and delays represent a failure to meet these legal obligations and undermine students' educational outcomes.

The City should add sufficient funding to ensure that all students receive their mandated services. This includes prioritizing the hiring of additional NYCPS service providers and adding per-session service slots for speech therapy and ninth session service slots for occupational and physical therapy so in-house providers can serve more students during the school day. When NYCPS is unable to assign a provider, it must issue a Related Service Authorization (RSA) voucher for families to obtain services privately. However, families often struggle to find providers willing to accept RSAs due to grossly inadequate reimbursement rates. To make RSAs a viable option, the City should increase RSA rates; establish a streamlined process for families to obtain higher rates without having to pursue due process hearings, similar to the existing process currently available to families of children attending private schools; and designate and train NYCPS staff to proactively assist parents in identifying providers who can serve their children through RSAs.

The City should add at least $100M—and whatever additional funding is necessary—to eliminate service backlogs, address the provider shortage, and ensure that every student with a disability receives the services mandated by their IEPs.

Expand access to one-on-one or small group support for middle and high school students who need more help learning to read ($20M).

One of the most fundamental responsibilities of our public schools is to teach children how to read. Strong literacy skills are essential for future employment, post-secondary education, and full participation in civic life. Yet far too many NYC students struggle to become skilled readers: only 56% of City students in grades 3–8, including just 27% of students with disabilities, are reading proficiently, according to the 2025 New York State tests. At AFC, we continue to hear from low-income families whose children have been struggling with reading for years, who have been unable to get help within NYCPS, and for whom paying for private tutoring—as families with greater resources routinely do—is simply not an option.

The City has taken important steps forward with NYC Reads, and it is critical to both sustain the progress made so far as well as to go further to ensure *all* students get the literacy support they need. Even when core instruction is strong, there will always be some students who need extra help and individualized attention to become strong readers, and thousands of middle and high school students missed out on the chance to receive effective reading instruction in elementary school. Many older youth, in particular, who have disabilities like dyslexia or are struggling with reading are unable to access the one-on-one or small group support they need, and their ongoing difficulty with reading takes a toll on their academic progress and social-emotional well-being.

The City should invest $20M to scale up promising initiatives and provide intensive intervention to more adolescents who need support to become proficient readers.

Hire behavioral specialists to support schools in meeting the behavioral and mental health needs of students ($8M).

Students with behavioral challenges are too often punished rather than supported, leading to suspensions and unnecessary involvement of emergency services or law enforcement—responses that disproportionately harm students of color and students with disabilities. While the City has invested in social-emotional learning and mental health supports, many schools still lack consistent, on-site access to trained professionals who can help staff respond effectively to challenging behaviors and prevent crises before they occur.

Schools need access to behavioral specialists who can work directly with educators and school staff to model, coach, and support the implementation of effective, individualized behavior supports for students, including students with autism and other disabilities, and provide concrete recommendations for helping students remain in the classroom. These specialists could also provide professional development in culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and evidence-based practices and help develop school-wide strategies that promote positive behavior. We urge the City to invest $8 million to hire at least one behavior specialist per school district, along with necessary supervisors and support from the Division of Inclusive and Accessible Learning, to support students directly and equip school staff with the tools needed to reduce crisis responses and improve academic and social-emotional outcomes.

The City should invest $8M to hire at least one behavioral specialist per district.

Establish the position of English Language Learner (ELL) instructional specialist to ensure ELLs receive appropriate academic instruction and support ($8M).

Around 152,000 NYCPS students—more than 1 in 6—are ELLs, and more than 150 schools each have 200 or more ELLs enrolled. Data show that multilingual students have the potential to outperform their peers when provided with appropriate support. Yet, too many ELLs do not receive the targeted language and academic instruction they need to succeed. The City's ELLs continue to perform well below grade-level standards, with only 12% of ELLs in grades 3–8 proficient in reading and just 30% proficient in math in 2025. Particularly in schools with large numbers of underperforming ELLs, it's critical to have a dedicated educator focused on ensuring these students receive the support necessary to make academic progress.

We urge the City to invest $8M to pilot a program for 50 schools with high numbers of ELLs to hire an ELL instructional specialist. This educator would be responsible for ensuring that ELLs at their respective schools receive grade-level instruction in core subjects; receive bilingual or English as a New Language (ENL) instruction as required by law; have access to additional academic supports and intervention when needed; and remain on track to pass their classes and be promoted to the next grade. The ELL instructional specialist would also make sure that families of ELLs feel welcomed and engaged, understand their children's progress, and are informed of their rights and options for language support. Through this investment, specialists would receive ongoing professional development and tools from the Division of Multilingual Learners and the Office of Curriculum and Instruction to support effective implementation.

The City should invest $8 million to hire ELL instructional specialists and strengthen academic outcomes for ELLs.

Provide interim transportation for students in foster care awaiting school bus service ($3M).

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 continuity, federal and state law require school districts to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can remain in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer to a new school. Despite these requirements, it often takes weeks or even months for NYCPS to begin school bus service for these students.

While students await bus service, NYCPS offers a prepaid rideshare service, but it does not become available until a student has been waiting for a bus for more than ten school days and requires an adult chaperone to accompany the student—an expectation that is often impossible for working foster parents who may be caring for children who attend multiple schools. While the City also offers transportation reimbursement, it will not reimburse for the cost of a chaperone, and the daily reimbursement cap is often insufficient to cover rideshare services that include a vetted chaperone or longer cross-borough trips.

As a result, many students miss school or are forced to transfer schools even though it is not in their best interest to do so. During the 2024–25 school year, 55% of students in foster care were chronically absent—missing at least one out of every ten school days—and one in five transferred schools at least once.

There are feasible solutions. For example, the City could contract with transportation providers that use vetted drivers and do not require additional chaperones (such as Kid Car and Kidault, which operate in NYC, or HopSkipDrive, used by districts including Los Angeles); use ACS or other city-owned vehicles that include escorts, as is done for students placed at the Children's Center; or launch a dedicated interim transportation service for students awaiting bus routes, potentially using mini-vans available from current school bus companies.

The City should invest $3 million to provide interim transportation for students in foster care awaiting bus service, ensuring uninterrupted access to school at a critical moment in their lives.

Expand travel training to help students with disabilities learn to travel independently ($2M).

Travel training equips students with disabilities with the skills needed to navigate public transportation independently—expanding access to internships, work-based learning, and post-secondary opportunities and reducing reliance on yellow bus service. However, many students with disabilities who could benefit from travel training are unable to access it.

NYCPS' District 75 travel training program has demonstrated positive outcomes, helping students gain independence, confidence, and essential life skills through intensive one-to-one instruction. However, limited capacity and persistent waitlists significantly constrain the program's reach, leaving many eligible students without this service. Opportunities for travel training are even more limited for students with disabilities who attend District 1–32 schools. Furthermore, the current program focuses on travel between home and school, yet it's also important for students to develop the ability to navigate and travel independently to a range of locations.

The City should invest $2M to expand travel training and help address these gaps. This funding would expand access to travel training for students with disabilities in District 1–32 schools, while also increasing capacity within District 75 schools. Funding would also support contracts with experienced community-based organizations that already provide high-quality travel training. These partners could train students directly while also building the capacity of school staff to scale the program. This expansion would help students develop the comprehensive travel skills needed for full participation in their communities, including access to internships, work-based learning, post-secondary opportunities, and employment.

The City should invest $2 million to expand travel training to help students with disabilities use public transportation independently, building critical skills for school, work, and life after high school.

Make more schools accessible to students, parents, educators, and community members with physical disabilities ($450M in capital funding over five years).

More than 30 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability, physical barriers to full inclusion remain widespread in New York City's schools—and as a result, New Yorkers with disabilities continue to be excluded from buildings that are central to public life. In fact, only about a third of schools are fully accessible to students, teachers, parents, and community members with disabilities.

Five years ago, the situation was much worse—fewer than one in five schools was fully accessible as of the start of the 2018–19 school year—and New York City invested a historic $750 million in the 2020–2024 Capital Plan to improve school accessibility. While this funding has enabled significant progress, there is much work left to do: NYCPS itself estimated that it would take $1 billion in each of the next four five-year plans to reach "maximum practical accessibility" by 2045.

At a minimum, the City must make the investments necessary to keep pace with the work done over the past five years. The 2025–2029 Capital Plan currently includes $800 million for school accessibility projects, an amount that represents a *decreased* commitment to improving school accessibility once inflation is taken into account.

The City should allocate an additional $450 million—for a total investment of $1.25 billion—for school accessibility projects in the 2025–2029 Capital Plan, with the goal of making at least 45% of buildings that serve as the primary location for a school fully accessible by 2030.

Testimony of the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust

Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Lee, members of the Committee on Finance, and members of the City Council who are present. I am Dr. Erik Forman, Director of Housing Policy for the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony here today on the important topic of municipal funding to address the housing affordability crisis in New York City. The AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust wishes to express strong support for a holistic solution to the housing affordability crisis– construction of affordable housing with union labor– toward which we see a pathway in the Executive Budget and recently-released *Block by Block* housing plan.[1]

The role of union labor in affordable housing development is a topic on which we can speak with deep expertise rooted in practice. Founded in 1984, the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust (HIT) is a national $7.4 billion fixed-income investment fund that invests union pension dollars in union-built affordable housing development and preservation. Since 1984, HIT and its Building America CDE subsidiary have invested $11.7 billion in 632 such projects with 132,001 units of housing, all built with 100% union labor.[2]

HIT has a long history of investing in New York City in particular. In the wake of 9/11, HIT created an investment initiative to support the recovery of New York City's economy. Since 2002, HIT and its subsidiary have invested $2.2 billion in 78 projects in New York with 44,555 units, 92% of which are affordable and all 100% union-built. By adhering to union labor standards, these investments have generated an estimated $6.0 billion in total economic impact and $983.2 million in local, state and federal tax revenues.[3]

HIT's track record is testament to a simple truth: union labor is not a barrier to affordable housing production. In fact– project labor agreements (the primary mechanism through which projects are carried out under a union contract) are a catalyst for fast, safe, and high-quality affordable housing development, and the creation of good, union jobs is a key policy tool to generate economic growth, expand the tax base, and address a root cause of the housing crisis: poverty-wage employment.

The housing cost side of the housing affordability crisis facing our city is well-known. A majority of New York City residents are rent-burdened, spending more than 30% of their paycheck on rent;

[1] https://www.nyc.gov/content/dam/nycgov/nyc-main/pdf/2026/block-by-block-report.pdf
[2] https://www.aflcio-hit.com/impact-investing/#overview. Job and economic data are calculated using IMPLAN, an input-output model, based on HIT and HIT subsidiary Building America CDE, Inc. project data.
[3] https://www.aflcio-hit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1Q26-HIT-Factsheet.pdf

a record-breaking 131,940 New Yorkers sleep in homeless shelters, with thousands more living unsheltered and doubled-up in the homes of others; everyone from teachers to tech workers are struggling to continue to afford to a place to live; and with median home prices at $785,000, the American Dream of homeownership is slipping farther out of, further exacerbating the racial wealth gap.[4]

The cost side of the housing affordability crisis however is only half the story. Housing affordability is always a relative measure of earnings and the cost of living. The important role of household earnings in the affordability crisis is highlighted in the Mayor's recent release of the NYC True Cost of Living Measure, which found that 62% of New York households do not have the income needed to meet of the cost of living in New York City, estimated at $159,000 per year for a family with children.[5]

The housing affordability crisis is a result not only of the fact that the *rent is too high*, but also that *wages are too low*. Any true solution to the housing affordability crisis must address both sides of the problem– housing costs and wages.

Investment in housing development presents a very specific opportunity to address the housing affordability crisis from both sides. Approximately 253,000 workers are employed in the construction industry in New York City out of a total employed workforce of 4.8 million.[6] That is approximately 5% of the workforce of this city, one in 20 workers. The wages and benefits– or lack thereof– paid to one in 20 workers in New York City is not only a matter of economic justice, conditions in the construction industry create macroeconomic consequences for the finances of the City of New York.

In a supreme irony, too often, construction workers themselves cannot afford to live in the city that they build every day. It is a public secret that wage theft, worker misclassification, and dangerous conditions on the job are endemic to the non-union residential construction industry. As a result, an estimated 41% of families of households in the construction industry in New York are enrolled in one or more safety net programs at an estimated cost to the government of $2 billion per year, compared to 33% of all New York households. [7] 24% of New York construction workers lack health insurance, more than three times the rate for all workers in New York.[8] On top of this, misclassification of construction workers as independent contractors costs New York taxpayers and workers an additional estimated $1.6 billion per year in unpaid workers' compensation

[4] https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-rental-housing-market/; https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/basic-facts-about-homelessness-new-york-city/; https://www.zillowstatic.com/bedrock/app/uploads/sites/26/2024/05/Affording-an-Apartment-in-NYC-Is-a-Challenge–Even-for-Tech-Workers.pdf; https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-homeowner-housing-market/; https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/nyregion/black-residents-nyc.html

[5] https://www.nyc.gov/assets/equity/downloads/pdf/2026%20NYC%20TCOL%20Measure_4%206%2026.pdf

[6] https://buildingcongress.com/report/2026-construction-outlook-update-workforce-snapshot/#report-summary; https://www.bls.gov/regions/northeast/data/xg-tables/ro2xgcesnyc.htm

[7] https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/the-public-cost-of-low-wage-jobs-in-the-new-york-construction-industry/

[8] Ibid.

insurance, unemployment insurance, payroll taxes, and overtime.[9] Externalization of these costs onto government and workers functions as a massive invisible subsidy to non-union residential construction, deepening the housing crisis for construction workers themselves.

The data is clear: non-union employment in the residential construction industry exacerbates the housing affordability crisis. **Any real solution to the housing affordability crisis must address both sides of the problem– housing cost and wages.** We must ensure that the workers who are building housing can themselves afford to live in New York City. We can do this by creating high-quality union jobs for the workers who are building the affordable housing our city needs.

The City of New York has a wide array of tools available to address both facets of this crisis: housing costs and wages, many of which are mentioned in the recently-released *Block by Block* housing plan.

Tools available to catalyze affordable housing production include city-owned land that can be made available for development, public housing development, property tax abatement, substantial discretion over allocation over federal resources such as Section 8 vouchers and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, capital subsidy generated through issuance of general obligation bonds, and the ability to creatively combine these and other resources to create new programs, as the *Block by Block* plan proposes.

The City of New York also has the tools to create high-quality union jobs in residential construction, which must be a core component of a holistic solution to the housing crisis. These include enforcement of existing labor standards and closing loopholes such as disallowing developers from disguising large projects as multiple 99-unit buildings to evade the wage provisions of the 485-x program, requiring project labor agreements, and providing fast-track approval of projects that meet labor standards, among other tools. We were encouraged to see economic justice as a recurring theme in the *Block by Block* plan, which for the first time in many decades considers not just what we build- but how we build it.

Several aspects of the plan stand out as particularly impactful, and merit additional focus.

First, we were pleased to see explicit reference to economic justice through use of Project Labor Agreements. PLAs set a floor for wages, benefits, and working conditions for workers across the construction industry. This allows contractors and developers to compete not on how much they can squeeze workers, but instead on what matters– efficiency, quality, timeliness, and even beauty of our built environment. Use of a PLA ensures that we will avoid the unintended consequence of exacerbating the affordability crisis and wasting city funds by subsidizing exploitation in the residential construction industry. Use of a PLA also ensures that the AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust can provide financing for projects, bringing responsible investment to projects in New York City.

[9] https://tcf.org/content/report/up-to-2-1-million-u-s-construction-workers-are-illegally-misclassified-or-paid-off-the-books/

Second, the Block by Block plan mentions the need to invest in Mitchell-Lama buildings across New York City, which will require capital budget funding. As many are aware, the Mitchell-Lama program was inspired by New York City labor movement's creation of the limited-equity cooperative model, which made homeownership affordable for working people for the first time, and allowed working families to escape overcrowded tenements and slums. Labor-affiliated nonprofit developers sponsored the creation of 21 projects with approximately 40,000 units of limited equity cooperative housing all across the city, most of which continue to provide affordable homeownership for working families today. The AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust has refinanced many of these cooperatives over the past decades and is familiar with their needs.

Many of New York City's affordable cooperatives are at risk due to circumstances beyond their control. The first of these developments, the Amalgamated Houses in the Bronx, is 100 years old as of this year. It needs support for substantial rehabilitation so that it can continue to remain affordable for another 100 years. Other limited equity cooperatives, such as Penn South, Amalgamated Warbasse, Co-op City, Big Six Towers, and Rochdale Village have less substantial rehabilitation needs, but they have on-site power plants, owned by the cooperatives, and now need support to decarbonize in compliance with Local Law 97. This need is an opportunity for a pilot project to create green, union jobs and carry out large-scale multifamily building decarbonization. Funding for such a pilot should be included in the capital budget. In addition, the ongoing popularity of Mitchell-Lama housing should encourage us to not only preserve the existing affordable cooperative housing stock, but also develop new housing on this model.

Third, public housing is a cornerstone of housing security for working families in New York City. We applaud commitments to capital funding for public housing in the Executive Budget, particularly for preservation of Section 9 housing and the Public Housing Preservation Trust. In both models, rehabilitation is carried out under a Project Labor Agreement, which combined with the Section 3 hiring program, provides NYCHA residents with the life-changing opportunity of a career in the union building trades. This is not the case for projects carried out under the PACT program, which does not currently require developers to enter into a PLA– a missed opportunity for creating economic mobility for NYCHA residents that should be reexamined.

Fourth, the plan includes many new innovative tools for catalyzing new development, including a pre-development loan fund, a subordinate debt fund, using NYCHA as a public developer, a mechanism for city acquisition and rehabilitation of distressed properties and conversion to tenant ownership, and other ideas. We support such innovative thinking, and are willing to engage at the program- and project-level to invest in the success of these new initiatives when carried out with union labor.

As budget negotiations progress, we hope to see constructive engagement between the City Council and the Mayor to ensure that the vision of union-built affordable housing laid out in the Block by Block plan has the resources needed to be turned into reality.

HIT's project track record demonstrates the positive collateral benefits to New York City when we build union. As mentioned, since 2002, HIT and its subsidiary have invested $2.2 billion in

78 projects in New York with 44,555 units, 92% of which are affordable and all 100% union-built. These investments have generated an estimated $6.0 billion in total economic impact and $983.2 million in local, state and federal tax revenues.[10] The evidence is clear, when you build the union way, it lifts up entire communities and makes New York City a better place to live through equitable economic growth.

Together with our partners in the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, we look forward to working with the City of New York to put the building blocks together to do much more. Together, we can create the good, union jobs and affordable housing that the people of this city need and deserve.

Contact:
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[10] https://www.aflcio-hit.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1Q26-HIT-Factsheet.pdf

Testimony of the Alliance for Quality Education
at the NYC Council Hearing on the City Budget
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Zakiyah Shaakir-Ansari, and I am the Co-Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE). AQE organizes parents statewide who are pushing for quality public education for all children, regardless of zip code.

ADVOCATE TO BUILD ON STATE AID WINS FOR NYCPS

Although state education funding is determined in Albany, the state budget has many direct consequences for NYCPS and the students, families, educators, and communities this Council represents. This year's state budget included meaningful Foundation Aid investments and formula updates, including a $1.027 billion increase in Foundation Aid, a 2% minimum year-to-year increase for school districts, an increased weight for English Language Learners, and a new weight for students experiencing homelessness or are in foster care. These changes begin to recognize student need more accurately and reflect years of organizing by families, educators, advocates, and community groups across the state.

At the same time, the enacted budget did not finish the work of making the Foundation Aid formula reflect the true cost of educating students today. Earlier this year, the IBO released a report showing how much funding would come to NYCPS if the Foundation Aid formula were updated by revising the Regional Cost Index, adding weights for students experiencing homelessness and students in foster care, and increasing the weight for English Language Learners. The final state budget moved important pieces of the formula forward, but the Regional Cost Index piece remained unresolved.

As the City adopts its own education budget, City Council should protect the services students rely on now and continue making clear that NYCPS needs a Foundation Aid formula that fully reflects the cost of educating students in New York City.

BASELINE CRITICAL SERVICES

We also stand with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling on the City to extend and baseline funding for essential education programs that are currently funded for this year only and are, therefore, at risk of significant funding cuts in July. We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget extends and baselines funding for several essential initiatives, including preschool special education services, summer programming, Learning to Work programs, and early childhood education outreach. However, the Executive Budget still leaves out funding for other critical programs that currently serve thousands of New York City students and families.

These programs include Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED) programs for students with intensive sensory needs ($8.5M), restorative justice to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended ($6M), the Mental Health Continuum to provide mental health care to students at 50 schools ($5M), immigrant family communications and outreach to help families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access ($4M), and Student Success Centers to allow trained youth leaders to build a culture of college-going and help their peers with the college admissions process ($3.75M).

We appreciate that the City Council called for funding for these programs in its response to the Preliminary Budget, and now urge the Mayor and City Council to restore and baseline funding for these programs in the final FY 2027 budget so students and families can continue to benefit from them next year and beyond. The City must also make significant additional investments to support students, with a focus on those with the greatest needs.

We appreciate that the City Council called for funding for these programs in its response to the Preliminary Budget. We urge the Mayor and City Council to restore and baseline funding for these programs in the final FY 2027 budget so students and families can continue to benefit from them next year and beyond. The City must also make significant additional investments to support students, with a focus on those with the greatest needs.

ENSURE STABLE TRANSPORTATION FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

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 continuity,

federal and state law require school districts to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can remain in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer to a new school. Despite these requirements, it often takes weeks or even months for NYCPS to begin school bus service for these students.

While students await bus service, NYCPS offers a prepaid rideshare service, but it does not become available until a student has been waiting for a bus for more than ten school days and requires an adult chaperone to accompany the student. That expectation is often impossible for working foster parents, especially when they are caring for children who attend multiple schools. While the City also offers transportation reimbursement, it will not reimburse for the cost of a chaperone, and the daily reimbursement cap is often insufficient to cover rideshare services that include a vetted chaperone or longer cross-borough trips.

As a result, many students miss school or are forced to transfer schools even when it is not in their best interest to do so. During the 2024-25 school year, 55% of students in foster care were chronically absent, meaning they missed at least one out of every ten school days, and one in five transferred schools at least once.

There are feasible solutions. For example, the City could contract with transportation providers that use vetted drivers and do not require additional chaperones, such as Kid Car, which operates in NYC, or HopSkipDrive, which is used by districts including Los Angeles. The City could also use ACS or other city-owned vehicles that include escorts, as is done for students placed at the Children's Center, launch a dedicated interim transportation service for students awaiting bus routes, hire aides to accompany students using rideshare services, or, at a minimum, reimburse chaperone costs and increase the daily reimbursement cap to cover longer trips and services such as Kid Car.

The City should invest $3 million to provide interim transportation for students in foster care awaiting bus service, ensuring uninterrupted access to school at a critical moment in their lives.

FUND EFFORTS FOR SCHOOL INTEGRATION

We are also part of the Integration Coalition, a group of advocates and organizations committed to addressing school segregation through a Real Integration framework and a model of solidarity, not scarcity, across NYCPS. The coalition has identified a critical gap in the proposed education

budget: the lack of dedicated investments to advance school integration and inclusion across NYCPS, despite renewed commitments by both the Chancellor and the Mayor to address segregation in NYC's school system.

We are calling for $2 million annually, beginning in Fiscal Year 2027 and continuing for three years, to support implementation of laws passed by the Council in 2019 and bolster integration planning and initiatives.

With the Mayor and Chancellor expressing willingness to support remedies for historic school segregation, the City Council has a continued role in funding forgotten mandates with the urgency needed to make them real. A $2 million annual investment is a modest but essential step to operationalize these laws, turning existing mandates and data into real, community-driven integration outcomes across the system.

EXPAND SCHOOL-BASED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS

When it comes to school safety, the education budget must include school-based restorative justice and mental health access. That means investing $80 million to hire School Climate Coordinators in 500 schools. These new School Climate Coordinator roles would be responsible for training staff and implementing restorative justice and healing-centered programming in priority middle and high schools.

We can fund this expansion simply by not hiring new School Safety Agents through attrition or new classes, and by cutting all vacancies. This would allow the City to shift resources away from school policing, including ceasing all NYPD recruitment, hiring, and training of school police, and stopping funding for surveillance technology. By not hiring additional school police, NYC could save up to $90 million in one fiscal year.

REFORM SCHOOL GOVERNANCE OF NYCPS

Lastly, while we are witnessing rising levels of authoritarianism from the federal government, parents in NYC are pushing for more democracy in the largest public school system in the nation. The enacted budget included a two-year extension of the mayoral control system in NYC. This shorter extension gives New York State time to design a more democratic process that gives students, parents, educators, and communities a meaningful role in shaping the future of NYC school governance. That work should begin now.

Parents across NYC want the ability to engage in their children's education in ways that carry real weight in the decisions that shape their schools. Too often, parent leaders are asked to participate in processes where their ability to influence policy is limited, with CECs currently lacking clear authority over most decisions outside of school zoning.

Council can help strengthen this system by calling for clearer authority for CECs, stronger support for parent leaders, and a more reliable election process. Citywide elections involving hundreds of thousands of voters require dedicated capacity and clear accountability. After recent CEC election cycles raised serious concerns among parent leaders, including calls for a full audit in 2023 and recommendations from the NYC Comptroller to improve the process, NYC has an opportunity to build a stronger foundation for meaningful parent participation.

We urge the Council to support parent leaders calling on the DOE to:

- Create an advisory committee of parent leaders and representatives of community organizations, who will survey rightsholders and develop recommendations on:
    - The functions and roles of FACE
    - The structure of FACE
    - Immediate implementable improvements to provide support to parent leaders
- Audit the 2025 CCEC Elections; begin preparing for 2027 cycle with dedicated staff and engagement with CCEC and CPAC members.
- Increase the number of students whose families have at least one NYCSA account by 20%, focusing on families of multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students in temporary housing.
- Ensure FACE is in a collaborative and supportive relationship with the Division of School Leadership, the Division of Inclusive and Accessible Learning (DIAL), and other central offices, in order to inform and work in partnership with CCECs on directives to meet district goals and priorities.
- Allow Community Education Councils to approve school co-locations and closures.

In order to build towards a better system, AQE echoes the Coalition for a New Democratic School Governance System's demands to:

- Convene and fund an independent and community-led, School Governance Commission that includes students, parents/caregivers, educators, and other education stakeholders to articulate a transition plan for a fully elected school board for NYCPS by 2027.
    - This Commission should be tasked with ensuring parents, particularly parents of color, whose children make up the majority in NYC public schools, are educated and informed about how to run for local positions and receive training in how to manage school operations.
    - The commission should ensure the new system centers the needs of historically marginalized groups, Black, Brown, low-income, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, foster care students, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, and English Language Learners.
        - This includes keeping certain types of decisions intentionally centralized and system-wide.
    - The commission should ensure the new democratic school governance system secures real decision-making power for students, parents, and educators. They must also have access to independent support, mentorship, and training to participate fully in governance.
    - The new democratic school governance system must establish an effective relationship between local and centralized decision-making. Even citywide decisions should have a local mechanism for feedback and implementation planning.

We also echo the ECC's reforms, sent to the Mayor and Chancellor, that would strengthen district leadership teams, community and citywide education councils, and school leadership teams without requiring action from the state.

Testimony of Vidal Guzman

Executive Director & Founder, America On Trial, Inc. (AOT)

Public Hearing on City Council Executive Budget Hearing – June 10, 2026

AMERICA ON TRIAL

Good morning Chairperson and members of the Council,

My name is Vidal Guzman, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of America On Trial Inc. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on an issue that is deeply personal to me and critical to the future of New York City.

I come before you not only as an advocate and community leader, but as someone who has experienced firsthand the harms of incarceration at Rikers Island. I was incarcerated there twice—first at 16 and again at 19. Those experiences showed me how deeply the system fails to address the root causes of poverty, trauma, mental illness, and instability. They also shaped my lifelong commitment to preventing young people from ever entering that system in the first place.

In my work and in my community, I see every day the consequences of disinvestment. I've had to step in during conflicts in my neighborhood, and I stay connected to people coming home from incarceration by texting them resources to help them rebuild their lives. These experiences make it clear that people need support, not abandonment.

As New York City moves toward closing Rikers Island, we must ensure that community reinvestment is not an afterthought—it must be the foundation. Closing Rikers alone will not make our city safer. Public safety is created through housing, education, mental health care, employment opportunities, and strong community-based services.

Right now, New York City continues to spend enormous amounts on incarceration, including hundreds of thousands of dollars per person and hundreds of millions in jail-related overtime costs each year. Yet the outcomes remain poor. If incarceration alone created safety, we would already be the safest city in the country.

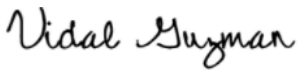
Many people on Rikers are dealing with mental health conditions or homelessness—issues that jails are not designed to solve.

We cannot jail our way to safety. We must invest in prevention, not punishment.

I urge the Council to reduce excessive correctional spending and reinvest those resources into the communities most impacted by incarceration. That is how we break cycles of harm and build real safety.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jacob Zychick. On behalf of the American Heart Association, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of funding for initiatives that address heart disease, stroke, and out-of-hospital cardiac arrests.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for adults in New York City. Individuals may have a higher risk for heart disease if they have high blood pressure, eat an unhealthy diet, or because of other manageable contributing factors.

The Association is supportive of the following 4 programs to maintain and increase their current funding in the FY'27 Budget:

- $3.1 million in funding maintained for Get the Good Stuff.
- $1.0 million in baseline funding for Health Bucks.
- Increase the current funding of Groceries to Go from $10 to $14 million
- Multi-year plan to expand the current Bronx-based produce prescription pilot, More Veggies.

These investments make fresh fruits, vegetables, and other nutritious foods more accessible and affordable. Individuals who utilize SNAP incentive programs consume more fruits and vegetables compared to the average New Yorker. [i]

High blood pressure is the easiest modifiable risk factor for better heart health—and you have the power to control it. Understanding Blood Pressure gives you the knowledge and tools to take charge of your numbers, protect your heart, and live a longer, healthier life.

In July 2023, NYC passed legislation which requires, subject to appropriation, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) support making at-home blood pressure machines available at no cost to the public at federally qualified health centers in 5 high-need areas.[ii]

Unfortunately, without funding this law has not been fully implemented. The American Heart Association urges City Council to appropriate $1 million in funding to NYC DOHMH to implement this law that will empower New Yorkers to address high blood pressure and live a longer healthier life.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Heart Association. We look forward to our continued collaboration with NYC City Council, DOHMH, and the entire administration.

Sincerely,

Jacob Zychick

Senior Regional Lead Government Relations, Community

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[i] GusNIP NTAE. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) year 3 impact findings: September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2022. Prepared for U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture. 2023.

[ii] N.Y.C. Admin. Code 17-188.2 Blood pressure machines in public places.

Amplify.

Date: June 1, 2026

To: Honorable Eric Dinowitz, Chair, Committee on Education

From: Larry Berger, Chief Executive Officer, Amplify

Subject: Written Testimony: 2026 NYC Council Education Committee Executive Budget Hearing

Thank you, Chairman Dinowitz, and distinguished members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding the critical literacy needs of our city's bilingual students. We urge the New York City to invest in proven biliteracy tools that support diverse classrooms across the five boroughs.

Amplify respectfully requests that the Council advocates for the restoration of **$234,099.45** in citywide initiative funding to provide continued, vital support to twenty-five mCLASS® pilot schools for the 2026-27 school year.

Over the last four years, Amplify and the NYCPS Office of Multilingual Learners (OML) have piloted mCLASS DIBELS® 8th Edition and mCLASS Lectura in 25 schools, in which teachers enthusiastically received K–6 literacy screeners for both bilingual and non-bilingual classrooms. OML previously funded this work. The NYC Office of Core Curriculum recently approved Amplify's Spanish Language Arts skills program, Amplify Caminos Lectoescritura, and Spanish literacy assessment, mCLASS Lectura, for K–2 bilingual classrooms. However, the current Materials Management and Distribution Plan excludes mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition for any schools. That exclusion would halt K–6 English literacy assessments in the pilot schools, interrupting a four-year stretch of data insights provided to teachers who rely on them. Because the new approval only applies to K–2, students in grades 3–6 would lose access to both English and Spanish literacy screeners.

These disruptions threaten the core tools educators need to support biliteracy. Spanish literacy develops alongside English, so teachers need connected English and Spanish data to guide instruction accurately. Without mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition and mCLASS Lectura together, educators lose the unified data dashboard they have used to understand student progress across both languages.

The impact is especially serious in grades 3–6. Excluding those classrooms cuts off the longitudinal data teachers need to support bilingual students over time.

Our data underscores the remarkable power of **the complete mCLASS biliteracy system** to understanding student growth in literacy across a school year**:**

- **2024-25 School Year (Full Year Growth): 27%** of students measured with mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition moved from *Well Below/Below Benchmark* to *At/Above Benchmark* in reading performance. **32%** of students measured with mCLASS Lectura achieved the same growth.
- **2025-26 School Year (Mid-Year Growth):** In just half a year, **16%** of students measured with mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition progressed to *At/Above Benchmark* in reading performance. **21%** of students measured with mCLASS Lectura progressed to *At/Above Benchmark* as well.

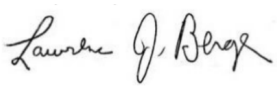
These 25 pilot schools span across communities represented by many of your council colleagues—including Council Members Carmen De La Rosa, Pierina Ana Sanchez, Althea Stevens, Shanel Thomas-Henry, Shekar Krishnan, Julie Won, Phil Wong, Jennifer Gutiérrez, and Sandy Nurse.

Amplify.

Pulling the plug on the English assessment component now would compromise the very data-driven instruction that has unlocked students' strengths and fueled this academic growth. We respectfully urge the City Council to advocate for this funding in the FY27 City Budget and ensure these 25 schools retain the comprehensive tools necessary for student success.

Thank you for considering this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Larry Berger
Chief Executive Officer, Amplify

Cc: Mary Gardner, Senior Director Government Relations, Amplify



Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearings - Finance

June 10, 2026

Ayah

Speakers Bureau Member

Anthos | Home

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212-606-0785

Good morning, Chairwoman Lee and the other members of the Committee on Finance, and everyone present today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today at the Executive Budget Hearings.

My name is Ayah. I am a constituent of Chairwoman Lee, a survivor of domestic abuse, a single mother raising my son who has autism and supportive needs. I am also a member of the Anthos|Home Speakers Bureau—a group of people with lived experience of homelessness dedicated to sharing their stories to create change in New York City.

I am here because I believe the people closest to a problem are often closest to the solution. I have built my own policy expertise by spending years living the consequences of housing, disability, and social service policies, and know firsthand where the systems succeed, where they fail, and how they can be improved.

Like so many women, I left an unhealthy situation with very little except the determination to build a better future for my child. What I quickly learned was that surviving hardship and achieving stability are two very different things. Stability requires navigating housing systems, public assistance programs, disability services, schools, healthcare providers, and countless applications, appointments, deadlines, and requirements. Each system has its own rules, timelines, and expectations, and too often families are left to coordinate all of them on their own.

As the mother of an autistic child, I have experienced how fragile stability can be. My son depends on consistent routine and access to the right supports. For children like my son, housing instability affects every aspect of life. It affects access to therapies, educational supports, transportation, medical providers, routines, and relationships that have taken years to build. A delayed application is not just paperwork. A shelter transfer is not simply a move. A lost document is not merely an administrative error. Each setback can have real and rippling consequences for a child's development and a family's ability to move forward. Housing stability is much more than an address, a lease, a set of keys. It is the foundation for all of my son’s routine and support.

Over the years, I have spent countless hours on hold with agencies, repeatedly submitting the same documents, following up on applications, and trying to determine where a process stands. I have been told paperwork was received only to later learn it was not. I have had to explain my family's circumstances over and over again because systems that serve the same families often do not

communicate with one another. At times, it has felt as though navigating the system itself had become a full-time job.

What has been most frustrating is that many of these barriers are not caused by a lack of resources. They are caused by a lack of coordination, communication, and support. I was expected to become my own housing navigator, case manager, advocate, and administrative coordinator while simultaneously raising my child, maintaining employment, attending appointments, and recovering from trauma. And my story is not unique—over 10,000 families sought refuge in the NYC domestic violence shelter system in 2023. The system is asking families in crisis to perform extraordinary amounts of unpaid labor simply to access the services designed to help them.

FUNDING FOR HOUSING NAVIGATION AND STABILITY SUPPORT

Receiving a voucher should not mark the end of assistance; it should mark the beginning of a supported pathway toward permanent housing. When I received my voucher, I began to look for a home without a housing navigator. I reached out to dozens of landlords, only to be ghosted at the mention of a voucher. Over that time, my voucher expired over 10 times. It took over 2 years to find the apartment I now live in.

The City should expand proven models, like Anthos|Home, that provide housing navigators, landlord outreach, aftercare services, and ongoing support. Every voucher holder should have access to a dedicated housing navigator who can assist throughout the process. Landlord engagement efforts should be expanded, incentives should be strengthened, and enforcement against source-of-income discrimination should be increased.

Most importantly, support should not end when a lease is signed. Families should continue receiving assistance during the critical first year of housing placement to help ensure long-term stability.

LOW COST PROCESS CHANGES

In addition to larger policy reforms, there are also practical, lower-cost improvements that could significantly improve families' experiences.

1. **Agencies must communicate with each other, and with the families they serve.** A centralized portal that allows families to track applications and documents across agencies would reduce confusion and uncertainty. Confirmation receipts for submitted documents, clearer timelines for agency responses, and improved communication between agencies would save families like mine countless hours while increasing accountability. These may seem like small changes, but for families rebuilding after abuse and already balancing multiple responsibilities and challenges, they could make an enormous difference.
2. **Simplify the voucher process.** A complete CityFHEPS voucher package is often over 100 pages when it is submitted, and the DHS review checklist includes more than 100 criteria for approval. By streamlining the voucher package compilation and review process to eliminate duplicative and unnecessary checks, the City can significantly speed moves out of shelter and into homes.
3. **Disability should be factored into housing decisions.** Housing policy must better reflect the realities faced by families raising children with disabilities. Unnessary disruptions, and ensure that housing stability truly leads to better outcomes. Housing decisions should account for continuity of care, educational stability, and access to essential services. Families should not be forced to choose between safe housing and maintaining the supports their children depend upon. Greater coordination between housing providers, schools, healthcare systems, and disability service agencies would help protect children from

As I reflect on my own experiences, I often think about how different the journey could have been if systems were designed around the realities families face rather than the convenience of institutions. Families do not experience challenges in isolation. Housing, childcare, employment, disability services, education, healthcare, and mental health are all interconnected. When one system fails, families often feel the impact across every area of their lives.

That is why my vision extends beyond housing alone. I believe New York City has the opportunity to become a national model for holistic family support. I envision communities where

families can access housing assistance, childcare, career development, disability services, wellness programs, legal resources, and community support in one coordinated ecosystem. I envision a city where mothers are not left to navigate every challenge alone, where children with disabilities receive continuity and stability, and where support systems are designed to help families thrive rather than simply survive.

At the heart of every policy discussion, every budget decision, and every program evaluation are real families. Behind every application is a parent trying to create stability. Behind every case file is a child whose future is being shaped by the decisions we make today. My son deserves a future built on stability, opportunity, and support. So do the thousands of other children and families across this city who are working every day to build better lives.

I am not asking for sympathy. I am asking for systems that work. I am asking for policies that recognize the dignity of the families they serve and the realities they face. I am asking for investments that prioritize long-term stability over short-term solutions and that recognize that helping families succeed is not only compassionate policy, but smart policy.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to improving the lives of New York City's families.



Testimony before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Laura Lazarus

CEO

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Chair Lee, Deputy Speaker Williams, and Members of the Committee on Finance – thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY27 Executive Budget and its impact on New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. My name is Laura Lazarus, and I am the CEO of Anthos|Home, a nonprofit that helps New Yorkers move out of shelter and into permanent homes faster.

Tonight, more than 100,000 people in New York City will be sleeping in shelter, including over 32,000 children. We are in the midst of an interconnected housing and homelessness crisis, and both must be addressed. As the city creates more affordable housing, it must also ensure that those who need it can access it—that people can move out of shelter and into homes.

Fortunately, the City has the tools to do so. We have a City Council and Mayoral administration that have demonstrated their commitment to increasing both affordable housing and its accessibility, and we have the largest municipal voucher program in the country, CityFHEPS, which is one of our most powerful tools for reducing homelessness.

Now, we must ensure that families and individuals can use their vouchers and that they can find and move into permanent homes—and stay housed long-term when they do. By doing so, the City will reduce the billions of dollars per year that it spends on temporary shelter and, crucially, improve the lives of tens of thousands of New Yorkers.

As Win reported this year, when accounting for the high rates of shelter return, shelter costs 35% more than moving families into housing using CityFHEPS That number does not include the long-term savings that reducing homelessness represents, such as reduced justice involvement, improved health outcomes, higher employment, and child well-being. And, of course, it does not capture the enormous impact of stable housing on each person's life.

The administration's new SPEED initiative is a welcome step toward reducing shelter stays, speeding housing placements, and improving voucher utilization. We recognize that this is just the first step by the administration toward addressing these issues and that DSS is also evaluating and adjusting its processes this year. Still, more can be done to move more families into homes faster, and I share these recommendations to inform the City's efforts to do so.

Invest in helping families find homes. Finding an apartment in NYC is hard. For voucher holders, who must navigate a mountain of paperwork, frequent discrimination, and intense competition with few supports, it is practically impossible. According to the New York State Comptroller, nearly 80% of eligible households are unable to use their vouchers.[1] The city should contract with experienced housing navigation organizations to help CityFHEPS voucher holders navigate the rental market, rather than relying on already overburdened shelter staff.

Speed up inspections. Minor repairs routinely delay move-ins by weeks. Trained nonprofit staff should be authorized to sign off on all CityFHEPS unit inspections (currently city inspectors

[1] https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sga-2025-23n1.pdf

cover some of these). We applaud the City's recommendation that virtual inspection sign-offs be permitted for small fixes that do not affect tenant safety. We also urge the City to allocate modest flexible funding for repairs and moving costs to resolve barriers that would otherwise derail housing placements.

Flag all the problems at once. A voucher application can often run more than 100 pages and is evaluated against over 100 criteria. Yet when a package is rejected, the City often flags only the first error, forcing families to resubmit repeatedly for problems that could be fixed in one round. By flagging all errors in a CityFHEPS package in a review, agency staff can eliminate unnecessary resubmissions and rejections and shorten the time from submission to approval.

Publish more CityFHEPS data. The City does not publish data on the average time from voucher issuance (initial shopping letter award) to move-in. You cannot manage what you do not measure. By committing to publishing that number, and to cutting it in half, the City would signal its commitment to reducing the timeline and allow nonprofits and other organizations to reduce shelter stays more effectively.

In addition, we recommend the City publish the rate of return to shelter over a five-year period, rather than only a one-year period. Win estimated a 50% rate of return for families over five years[2], compared to the 12% one-year rate reported in the Mayor's Management Report.[3] A clearer picture of the reality of long-term stability is essential to reducing that rate.

Allow qualified nonprofits to refer tenants to set-asides. The Making Accelerated Transitions to Coordinating Housing (MATCH) pilot included in SPEED will test a much-needed process change for homeless set-aside lease-ups. As the New York Housing Conference reported, in FY25, less than half of lottery projects were able to approve applicants for 95% of their units within 6 months of receiving a certificate of occupancy.[4] By allowing shelter providers to work directly with landlords and marketing agents to lease up these units, MATCH will shorten this timeline and help families move into permanent homes faster.

At the same time, by expanding the pilot to allow qualified housing navigators, as well as shelters, to refer households to set-aside units, MATCH would broaden its impact and avoid placing all the burden on shelter staff.

Support housing stability. To truly solve this homelessness crisis, we must not only help people move into permanent homes but also help them stay housed for the long term. Along with the tremendous human cost of this cycle, there are significant financial consequences. Early intervention, before arrears accumulate or before a lengthy eviction court proceeding drives up costs, can save the City millions each year. The New York Housing Conference found that the

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[2] https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/More-Than-a-Moral-Choice-How-CityFHEPS-Could-Save-NYC-635-Million-2.pdf

[3] https://donbuqm3ub5fw.cloudfront.net/files/PMMR_2025_Cover_817ffc435e.pdf

[4] https://thenyhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/NYHC-Housing-Connect-Case-Study-2.27.26.pdf

city issued $484 million in one-shot deal assistance in FY24, but much of that cost was due to accumulating debts; the average cost per tenant was $10,000, or double the median arrears for affordable housing tenants sued for nonpayment.[5]

Moreover, the benefits of targeted stability services are clear. In New Destiny Housing's evaluation of its Emergency Housing Voucher ("EHV") Aftercare Program, which launched in January 2022, the organization provided "light touch" case management services for domestic violence survivors with an EHV. New Destiny found significant improvements in tenants' housing stability and ability to meet basic needs.[6] By providing at least one year of "light touch" aftercare for families and individuals moving out of shelter and into homes, the City can give them the tools they need to create lasting stability, while reducing the cost of shelter and evictions.

Address the student homelessness crisis. In the 2024-25 school year, more than 150,000 New York City public school students experienced homelessness—nearly one in seven. It was the tenth consecutive year the number was over 100,000.[7]

The effect of housing instability on children and their families is devastating. Students living in shelter drop out of high school at three times the rate of their permanently housed peers and when they do, they are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness as adults.[8]

We have the tools to address this crisis now, and we have the responsibility to act before more children are caught in the cycle of housing instability. We ask the Council to allocate funding for Anthos|Home's Pilot to Address Homelessness in NYC Public Schools, which will combine trusted school communication pathways, existing City housing resources, and targeted housing support to move 100 students and their families in District 9 into permanent homes.

The pilot represents a scalable, streamlined new path to housing for New York City families and a model for reducing student homelessness district- and city-wide.

New York City's housing landscape is at an inflection point. The City Council's commitment to creating and maintaining affordable housing and its accessibility for New Yorkers is critical as we work to build a City that better serves its residents. Thank you for your efforts to create that future with us. We urge you to consider these recommendations and help more families and individuals move out of shelter and into permanent homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

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[5] https://thenyhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/AH-Stability-Final-2.24.2026.pdf
[6] https://newdestinyhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Destiny-Housing-EHV-Aftercare-Evaluation.pdf
[7] https://advocatesforchildren.org/policy-resource/student-homelessness-data-2025/
[8] Ibid.

About Anthos|Home

Anthos|Home is a New York City nonprofit that helps families and individuals with housing vouchers move out of shelter and into permanent homes faster. We partner with government, housing providers, and community nonprofits to fill the gaps in the voucher process and deliver long-term support.

Anthos|Home is the first program in New York to implement the innovative flex pool model, which blends public and private funding to facilitate a “whatever it takes” approach to housing placement. We work directly with housing providers to identify and hold affordable apartments for voucher holders, shortening the time to move-in and reducing competition for units. We then provide at least one year of housing stability services to both tenants and housing providers to ensure lasting success.

Since becoming operational in 2023, Anthos|Home has moved more than 700 households (1,300+ people) into permanent housing and maintained 100% housing stability in the year following move-in.

Anthos|Home is a member of the Family Homelessness Coalition.

ARISE
coalition

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Re: FY 2027 Executive Budget

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jindu Obiofuma. I am the Special Education Policy Manager at Advocates for Children of New York, and I am speaking today on behalf of the ARISE Coalition, which I coordinate. ARISE comprises parents, teachers, academics, advocates and allies who have worked since 2008 to advocate for systemic solutions to the challenges faced by New York City public school students with disabilities and their families.

At a time when thousands of students with disabilities are going without their legally mandated services and as the City is grappling with rising due process special education costs stemming from the gaps in public school special education, the City must make robust investments to better support students with disabilities in our public schools. We urge you to address the various challenges faced by NYC students with disabilities by making the investments needed to provide every student with the special education evaluations, services, and programs they have a legal right to receive.

While we are pleased with the recent increased investments in preschool special education, District 75 classes, and contracted related services, those investments represent only a portion of what is needed to ensure NYCPS can adequately support the special education needs of all students with disabilities. Significant, ongoing investments are still needed to hire additional evaluators to provide timely assessments for referred students, to hire additional providers to reliably meet the needs of students with IEP-mandated services and to raise the reimbursement rates for Related Services Authorizations, so that students whose schools are unable to provide IEP-mandated services can access independent providers.

Furthermore, we need to invest in more of what works. This means expanding access to literacy interventions and travel training while restoring and baselining funding for critical programming at risk of cuts next month like Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED), Restorative Justice, and the Mental Health Continuum.

Finally, we urge you to commit at least an additional $450 million dollars in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan to make more schools accessible for students, staff, educators and community members with physical disabilities; currently, only one-third of our school buildings are fully accessible.

We hope that you will rise to the challenge and invest in a future where all NYC students with disabilities get the education and support to which they are legally entitled and which they have long deserved. Thank you.

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Testimony of Christine Serdjenian Yearwood, NY Field Organizer
Armenian-American Advancement Network

Good afternoon, my name is Christine Serdjenian Yearwood and I am the New York Field Organizer for Armenian-American Advancement Network (formerly Armenian-American Action Network), a coalition member of CACF. Thank you very much for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to testify.

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families unites over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members. We advocate as a collective in solidarity to hold New York City accountable in providing the necessary resources to serve and empower the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other communities of color. AAAN has been a part of this coalition and testified on behalf of our community here in New York for years.

Our AAPI communities across New York City are historically underserved and undersupported. Though AAPI New Yorkers represent almost 18% of the population, the community struggles to receive equitable city resources. AAPI communities need access to health insurance, language access across institutions and agencies, child care, legal services, housing, educational support, and domestic violence support, yet CBOs and nonprofits are forced to try to fill these gaps created by city government. This is an equity issue in the budget and consistently means AAPI communities are undersupported.

Every year, Armenians immigrate to New York City, often by way of traumatic events. Armenians have come here as a result of the Armenian Genocide, Baku pogroms, 1988 Armenian Earthquake, Syrian War, Beirut Blast, Artsakh Wars in 2016 and 2020, and ethnic cleansing in 2023. Instability in the region is ongoing as of 2026. Receiving funding for our population would mean increasing access to much-needed mental health care services and culturally responsive programming. It would give Armenian-American Advancement Network and other organizations the ability to build a baseline understanding of the cultural particulars of how mental illness and other health concerns are understood, described, experienced, and healed for Armenian-Americans, and subsequent investments in community-led and community-based, language-accessible and culturally responsive mental health resources in our schools and neighborhoods. In addition, funding to research and map our communities in New York City will

be important following new MENA data disaggregation laws, as will our ability to train youth and community leaders in civil rights and community organizing.

Armenian-American Advancement Network urges the New York City Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign which include expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million, Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million, and the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million, to take further steps in not envisioning, but truly creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for our diverse diaspora.

Additionally, while we are pleased that the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget extends and baselines funding for several education initiatives, there are other critical education programs excluded that are currently benefiting thousands of NYC students and their families.

The following programs are funded for this year only and are, therefore, at risk of being rolled back or eliminated as soon as this July. This would negatively impact the 18.7% of NYCPS students who identify as Asian. We support the asks of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding which include:

- **$6M for Restorative justice efforts to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended**
    - Pacific Islander students are suspended at disproportional rates - data shows 4.5 percent of Pacific Islander students, including 6.2 percent of Pacific Islander boys.
- **$5M for the mental health continuum which provides mental healthcare to students at 50 schools.**
    - 80% of Asian Americans have experienced bullying, in-person, or online. According to CDC data, suicide was the leading cause of death among Asian Americans aged 15–24, and the second leading cause of death among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. A study conducted by the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign found that 1 in 4 young Asian Americans have personally experienced anti-Asian hate.
    - We particularly need additional funding to support the expansion of the mental health continuum to schools with large AAPI populations. Currently, no school in the network serves majority AAPI students.
- **$4M for Immigrant family communications and outreach to help families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access.**
    - This is the avenue through which many families can stay involved in their students' education and access relevant opportunities. 18% of NYCPS students identified as English Language Learners while approximately 44% of students

ARMENIAN-AMERICAN ACTION NETWORK

enrolled with a primary language other than English. Many of the ELL/MLL students speak languages prevalent in AANHPI communities.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate funding for these programs in the final FY 2027 budget so that all of our students and families will continue to be able to benefit from necessar programs next year and beyond.

Thank you very much for your time.

June 9, 2026

New York City Council
City Hall,
New York, NY 10007

RE: In support of the Far Rockaway Trauma Center, Far Rockaway, NY

Dear Speaker Menin,

The development team behind Arverne By The Sea, a master-planned mixed-use community of over 1,600 households located in Arverne, Queens strongly supports the opening of a Trauma Center in the Rockaways, to serve the growing population residing within our community and surrounding neighborhoods on the Rockaway Peninsula.

We urge the current Mayoral Administration and City Budget Committee to fully fund and advance this much needed Trauma center, as the nearest emergency trauma facility is currently located almost an hour away at Jamaica Hospital. This is unacceptable for a growing community nearing 150,000 residents. Too often we hear of residents of this community and the surrounding neighborhoods not getting critical emergency care in time and falling victim to this unjust reality. Through the excellent work completed thus far by the Far Rockaway Trauma Healthcare Access Task Force, Councilmember Selvena Brooks-Powers, Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson and Senator James Sanders Jr., the surmounting evidence that a Trauma Center is needed in the Rockaways is undeniable.

We implore you to prioritize and allocate the necessary funding to build this life-saving facility, which the Rockaway community desperately needs.

Sincerely,

Gerard Romski
General Counsel

ASIAN AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH ROUNDTABLE

Collective Care for Our Communities

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Mental Health & Substance Use
June 5, 2026

Thank you to members of the Committees on Finance, Health, Mental Health and Substance Use, & Hospitals for providing us with the opportunity to testify. My name is Daphne Thammasila at the Asian American Federation (AAF), where we proudly represent a collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. We are testifying as part of our Asian American Mental Health Roundtable, a coalition of 15 Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations that collaborate to address challenges, create solutions, and share resources to increase access to culturally competent mental healthcare.

Asian New Yorkers are living through a mental health crisis that is both urgent and largely invisible. Asian Americans are now the fastest-growing major racial group in New York City, numbering roughly 1.5 million people. Yet one in three Asian New Yorkers is low-income, Asian seniors endure the second-highest poverty rate of any racial group in the city, and nearly half (44%) of Asian New Yorkers have limited English proficiency. Additionally, over 70% of Asian New Yorkers are foreign-born, meaning immigration-related policies directly shape the daily realities of the majority of the community.

For many families, day-to-day life is shaped by low-wage work, unstable housing, and complex caregiving responsibilities across generations. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, these pressures have been amplified by a surge in anti-Asian violence and harassment, economic shocks, social isolation, and a relentless output of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. AAF's Hope Against Hate findings show that a majority of reported anti-Asian incidents involve verbal harassment in public spaces, contributing to chronic stress, fear, and a sense of vulnerability in everyday life.

More recently, public charge rules and aggressive immigration enforcement have deepened fear and uncertainty across Asian immigrant communities. Even when policies shift, the long-term chilling effect remains: many families continue to avoid accessing public benefits, healthcare services, and mental health support out of concern that it could negatively impact their immigration status or that their information could be shared with federal authorities. Roundtable partners report that community members are increasingly hesitant to engage with any government-linked systems, including crisis services or emergency response systems like 911 and 988, due to fears of surveillance, detention, or deportation. This fear extends beyond undocumented individuals to mixed-status families, where seeking help for one family member may feel like a risk to the entire household. As a result, many people delay or avoid seeking care altogether, even as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidality rise. Notably, suicide is the second-leading cause of death among Asian Americans ages 15–24, underscoring the urgency of this crisis.

In this hostile environment, the need for mental health support is immense, but the willingness and ability to seek help is deeply constrained. New York City continues to face a severe shortage of in-language, culturally competent mental health providers who understand the cultural stigma, migration histories, and lived experiences shaping Asian communities. AAF's Asian American Mental Health Roundtable partners consistently report that language access remains one of the most significant barriers to care, particularly for older adults and recent immigrants. Too often, individuals are asked to navigate care in English or rely on inconsistent interpretation services, forcing them to share deeply personal experiences through a language they do not fully command. At the same time, many providers lack the cultural context to understand how racism, immigration stress, and intergenerational dynamics impact mental health. These gaps not only reduce the quality of care, but also erode trust in the system, reinforcing cycles of underutilization, delayed intervention, and worsening mental health outcomes across Asian communities.

These factors make the work of the organizations in our Asian American Mental Health Roundtable even more critical to ensuring that the pan-Asian community can access mental health services. We respectfully request that the City Council fund the following initiatives to sustain our mental health work and allocate more of this funding to Asian-serving organizations, like the organizations in our Roundtable:

- **Hate Crime Prevention funding to support programs that use community-based solutions to decrease hate crimes.**
- **The Immigrant Health Initiative funding to reduce mental health stigma within our local Asian community.**
- **The AAPI Community Support funds to provide culturally relevant services to the Asian community.**
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative funding to support the development of culturally and linguistically relevant mental health and related services.**

We also request that any City mental health initiatives keep the following in mind:

- **Support not just bilingual mental health staff recruitment, but also retention** to ensure culturally competent care. Nonprofit staff retention is imperative to ensure that current staff, with existing cultural and linguistic competencies and institutional knowledge, will continue with the organization, instead of leaving for the private sector.
- **Strengthen case management services** to meet the increasing demand for mental health support. While direct mental health services are important, many clients also need support meeting their basic needs, such as housing and food. Case managers help to meet these social determinants of health, so that the Asian community can live safe and healthy lives.
- **Invest in both clinical and non-clinical mental health initiatives** to reduce stigma and increase access to culturally appropriate mental health care. Non-clinical services can be used as both a community-building tactic and as an entry point to accessing mental health care, which can then

allow CBOs and other providers to connect individuals to culturally competent clinical services if needed.

It is critical for the City to invest in organizations that provide in-language services to the Asian community in NYC and to increase funding for mental health initiatives tailored to the specific cultural and linguistic needs of Asian Americans.

CONCLUSION

We must do more to protect the emotional well-being and stability of immigrant Asian New Yorkers, particularly as our communities continue to navigate fear, stigma, and barriers to accessing crisis support. CBOs have proven expertise in providing culturally and linguistically competent care, yet only with adequate funding, representation, and investment can these systems truly serve our communities. The Asian American Federation, in partnership with our Asian American Mental Health Roundtable, remains committed to advancing culturally responsive mental health care and advocating for the needs of Asian New Yorkers. Thank you for your continued leadership and for the opportunity to testify today.

Asian American Federation

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Public Safety + Committee on Finance
June 1, 2026

Thank you, Chair Feliz and members of the Committee, for providing us the opportunity to testify. My name is Daphne Thammasila, the Associate Director of Programs, at the Asian American Federation (AAF), representing the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

Hate violence and bias incidents continue to be a top concern for the Asian community. Since 2020, Asian New Yorkers have grappled with the threat of violence due to anti-Asian sentiment as they navigate their daily lives. In 2026, this fear continues and is amplified by the anti-immigrant climate perpetuated by the federal administration. Asian New Yorkers are increasingly hesitant to report crimes, seek services, or interact with public systems because they fear detention, deportation, or unintended law enforcement consequences.

Our community dreams of a New York where they can travel on public transit without fear of getting hurt, where they can walk down the street without fear of getting stopped by law enforcement, and where they can easily access housing, healthcare, and education to live safe and healthy lives. This dream cannot happen without community-centered safety solutions, which includes alternatives to policing.

Community-based organizations that are Asian-led and Asian-serving are already doing the work to make this possible. Across New York City, Asian-serving nonprofits are providing victim support, safety escorts, language access services, community education, and crisis response. These trusted organizations help individuals report harm, connect to resources, and recover from violence, often serving as the first and safest point of contact for community members.

Asian American communities continue to face overlapping public safety challenges, including persistent anti-Asian hate, rising Islamophobia, and the ongoing impact of anti-immigrant policies. Over the past year, heightened immigration enforcement, increased surveillance, and growing uncertainty around federal policies have deepened fear across immigrant communities. Many Asian New Yorkers are increasingly hesitant to report crimes, seek services, or move freely through their neighborhoods due to concerns about safety and potential interactions with law enforcement. These conditions have compounded existing challenges, such as language barriers, economic instability, and isolation, making sustained investment in community-based anti-violence programming more critical than ever.

As a response to community safety concerns, in 2021, AAF launched the **Hope Against Hate Campaign (HAH)** to address the persistent threats of anti-Asian violence. Since its inception,

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HAH has proven to be a crucial program for our community partners, providing essential safety programs in multiple languages, including safety training, youth programs, and victim support services. Currently, the HAH Campaign consists of 30 Asian-led organizations across New York State, serving 22 ethnic communities in 30 Asian languages. AAF became an anchor organization for the Partners Against the Hate Forward Initiative (PATH) following the launch of HAH. As part of the Campaign, we have worked with 6 sub-anchor organizations to build a community-centered safety infrastructure in Asian-majority neighborhoods across the City in direct response to the persistent threat of anti-Asian hate.

During the last four years, AAF has achieved the following through our Hope Against Hate Campaign to address anti-Asian violence:

- Built a network of over 30 community-based Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations to implement our landmark safety campaign, Hope Against Hate.
- Recruited and trained over 790 Community Companion Volunteers to provide language assistance, outreach, and safety escorts;
- Provided 1,549 protective accompaniment and presence services in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens to keep community members safe;
- Distributed over 29,000 safety resources to vulnerable community members, including AAF's safety booklet on conflict de-escalation and situational awareness, available in English and the most commonly spoken Asian languages in New York City: Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu, and Vietnamese;
- Outreached and provided safety resources to over 1,450 small businesses, faith centers, and community centers to increase awareness of safety resources and enlist their help to distribute safety resources to community members;
- Trained over 2,858 community members in physical self defense, conflict de-escalation, and situational awareness, and upstander intervention techniques to keep themselves and their communities safe; AND
- Hosted eight community conversations in Asian-majority neighborhoods to explore community perceptions of safety and collectively identify solutions for preventing anti-Asian violence.

In 2023, we surveyed 99 volunteers from our citywide Community Companions Program to assess the program's impact as part of our brief, More than Just Strategies: The Lasting Impact of the Hope Against Hate Campaign. Nearly half (47%) reported fearing anti-Asian bias incidents at least some of the time, with 40% altering their daily routines due to safety concerns. Hate crimes ranked among their top community worries, and volunteers consistently cited our protective accompaniment and presence services as promoting immediate feelings of safety.

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Through our safety work, we found that community-centered solutions made people feel safer because they were equipped with the tools to keep themselves and their community safe. Specifically, nearly 90% of respondents said conflict de-escalation, situational awareness, and self-defense trainings helped them fulfill their roles as Community Companions, with many asking for even more frequent and in-depth sessions. Approximately one-third of volunteers reported personally experiencing an anti-Asian bias incident, and over half expressed doubts about police responsiveness — a gap our HAH Campaign helps to fill. Our partners routinely heard from residents who felt safer turning to our trained volunteers than navigating language barriers and mistrust in law enforcement. As the program has gained visibility, residents have increasingly sought out volunteers for resources and support, underscoring the program's effectiveness and trust within the community.

HAH and the PATH Forward Initiative remain vital to both our partners and the communities they serve. FY26 proved to be difficult with the $15,000 funding cut to the PATH program. We are being asked to do more with less resources at a time when immigrant communities are facing heightened fear due to increased immigration enforcement, surveillance, and uncertainty around federal policies. This fear is compounding as our community is still wrestling with the impact of the 2021 surge in anti-Asian violence, and the need for trusted, community-based safety programs has only grown since then. While our partners continue to deliver critical services, including in-language safety trainings, victim support, and community outreach, the reduction in funding has strained their capacity.

Community-based organizations remain deeply committed to this work and continue to support community members every day, often serving as the safest point of contact for individuals who are hesitant to engage with formal systems. However, limited funding has made it more difficult to sustain staffing, retain Community Companions, and meet reporting and administrative requirements, all while responding to increased demand driven by fear, underreporting, and barriers to accessing services. PATH provides essential funding for culturally and linguistically competent safety programming that many Asian New Yorkers, particularly immigrant families, rely on as their first and often only point of access to support. Without restored and increased investment, organizations will continue to face challenges in maintaining and expanding these services when they are needed most.

AAF remains committed to supporting our network of 30 community-based organizations through coordination, outreach, and shared resources. However, restoring and increasing funding for PATH would significantly strengthen partners' ability to meet community needs, sustain their workforce, and continue delivering trusted, community-based safety programming across New York City. Increasing funding for PATH, in particular, would help the program expand in geographic coverage and Asian languages and give community members more opportunities to



keep their communities safe through community connection, resulting in reaching more vulnerable communities, like Asian seniors, and preventing hate incidents from happening.

We call on the City Council to invest in community-centered safety solutions and in our nonprofits and ensure they have sufficient resources to implement and expand essential services that support our diverse community's public safety and mental health needs.

To strengthen public safety for Asian New Yorkers, we urge the Council to:

1. Expand prevention and de-escalation programs:
    a. Increase funding for the Partners Against the Hate Forward Initiative. Our PATH sub-anchor organizations continually deliver culturally and linguistically competent safety programming that communities trust and rely on. In FY 26, PATH anchor orgs received a 3% decrease in funding while being asked to do more with less resources. This same reduced amount was greenlit for FY27, despite an increase in the budget of OPHC.
    b. Conduct longitudinal studies with community members to understand the prevalence and impact of hate incidents across the city.
2. Strengthen rapid response and victim support:
    a. Allocate funding to non-police reporting systems for hate incidents and bias-motivated harassment to capture events not reported to law enforcement. Build on existing systems that are in-language and have the trust of community members.
    b. Increase support for the protective services programs, especially in Asian-majority neighborhoods.
    c. Increase coordination among city agencies and community organizations when hate and bias incidents occur, so victim support services are more easily accessible.
3. Invest directly in community-based organizations serving Asian and immigrant communities. These groups are already on the ground providing victim services, community education, and violence prevention.
4. Expand recovery services in Asian languages to help victims heal from trauma and improve access to culturally competent mental health services.

Public safety must include the communities most affected by violence and fear. Sustained investment in trusted community-based organizations ensures that safety efforts are accessible, effective, and equitable for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.

Asian American Federation

Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance, Jointly with the Committee on Immigration

June 10, 2026

Written Testimony

Thank you, Chair Linda Lee and the Committee on Finance and Chair Elsie Encarnacion and the Committee on Immigration for holding this hearing and for giving us the opportunity to testify. I am Nat Moghe at the Asian American Federation, where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofit organizations serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers. I'm honored to testify alongside our partners of the Rapid Immigration Support and Empowerment (RISE) Network – a network of nearly 20 Asian-led and Asian-serving organizations providing immigration case management and legal services support to New Yorkers.

Current Immigration Legal Landscape for Asian New Yorkers

The current presidential administration has brought drastic policy changes at the federal, state, and local levels. Policy changes impacting our Asian communities in New York City include H.R. 1. This piece of legislation delivers tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans while boosting the detention budget of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by 308%, raising the risk of sudden arrests, workplace raids, and family separations – even for long-time residents. Over $75 billion will be allocated to ICE through 2029, which will have severe consequences for Asian American New Yorkers' safety, stability, and dignity.

In New York State, 24% of unauthorized immigrants are from Asia, and one in seven undocumented immigrants nationwide is Asian. Arrests of immigrants from Asian countries, including China, Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, have increased significantly compared to last year. According to a new analysis by THE CITY, which examined federal records from the Deportation Data Project, there has been a 1,044% rise in arrests of Chinese immigrants and a 1,000% increase in arrests of Bangladeshi immigrants from 2024 to 2025.[1] ICE's brute and indiscriminate tactics have shattered families, instilled fear, and prevented New Yorkers from accessing essential services, such as law enforcement, public benefits, healthcare, and education. From long-term residents who have not adjusted their status, refugees, asylum seekers, individuals with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), special visas, and immigrant families, regardless of when they arrived in the U.S., our communities are on high alert.

New York City's sanctuary laws specifically prohibit cooperation on civil immigration enforcement, except for limited exceptions. However, in our current political climate, we've seen

[1] Chu, H., & Hogan, G. (2025, July 14). NYC Immigration Arrests Just Shot Through the Roof, New Data Shows. THE CITY - NYC News. https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/07/14/ice-migrant-arrests-trump-administration-deportations-data/



instances where those protections are completely ignored. For instance, in September of 2025, a NYC corrections officer shared real-time information with federal immigration officers about the release of a man detained at Rikers Island in violation of New York City's sanctuary law, leading to the person's arrest by ICE officers.[2] The Department of Investigation found that jail employees received no training on the rules against prohibiting them from providing federal authorities with information about immigrants.

While New York City law prohibits local government cooperation with immigration enforcement, federal agents have broad authority to make arrests, and local officials are struggling to determine how to stop them.On November 29th, the NYPD helped ICE agents push citizens out of the way while arresting more than a dozen protestors.[3] Raids are expected to escalate throughout this year, creating fear within our communities and the city. With the threat of militarized violence in our city and the lack of protection and training from NYPD officers, immigrant New Yorkers' rights continue to be violated, and individuals with lawful immigration status continue to be detained without due process.

We applaud the Mamdani administration's signing and implementation of Executive Order 13, which expands the Department of Investigation's oversight of sanctuary law compliance and strengthens collaboration with the City Council to enhance protections and accountability. This includes the prohibition on ICE agents entering city property without a judicial warrant, ordering agencies to audit their interactions with federal immigration authorities, and establishing a new interagency response committee for major enforcement actions. As immigrant New Yorkers face heightened threats, we must work together to ensure that local and state agencies do not divert resources to advance the federal deportation agenda or share sensitive information with federal immigration authorities, including by developing solutions such as the creation of multilingual signage that clearly outlines immigrants' constitutional rights. At the same time, our city must invest further in community-based organizations (CBOs) on the front lines that are protecting, informing, and providing critical services to those who are targeted or wrongfully detained.

<u>Increase Immigration Services for Pan-Asian New Yorkers</u>

With the lack of historic investment, access to critical immigration legal services for Asian New Yorkers has been near impossible, putting those who have limited English proficiency, with limited financial means, and who may have uncertain immigration status, at risk of being stuck in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Despite the fact that Chinese and Indian communities were disproportionately impacted by anti-immigrant policies during and after the Trump administration in

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[2] Hogan, G. (2025, September 25). Rikers Officer Shared Info With ICE in Sanctuary Violation, Probe Finds. THE CITY - NYC News. https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/09/25/correction-investigation-sanctuary-city-violation/

[3] Hogan, G., Krales, A., & Honan, K. (2025, November 29). NYPD Arrest More Than a Dozen Protesting Homeland Security Agents in Tense Confrontation. THE CITY - NYC News. https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/11/29/nypd-ice-homeland-security-canal/



comparison to their share of the population, there still exists no Asian-serving community-based organization that provides legal services to those communities.

To address this gap, AAF built a rapid response network between 2017-2019 with 10 Asian-led, Asian-serving nonprofits to increase access to immigration legal services for low-income, vulnerable Asian New Yorkers. In FY 27, our Rapid Immigrant Support and Empowerment initiative (RISE) will leverage our track record to implement a multi-pronged rapid response program to increase Asian immigrants' access to critical immigration-related services and support the nonprofits that serve them. This involves convening an Immigration Referral Network, strengthening internal capacity of our member nonprofits to provide immigration-related services, connecting organizations to legal service groups, creating stronger networks with experts, and supporting community education and outreach projects. This network enhances case management support for limited-English-proficient individuals and families. The RISE initiative has created Know Your Rights and best practices compliance trainings for Asian-serving groups, equipping them with the knowledge and resources needed to protect their clients and organizations. Lastly, this initiative has also launched an in-language media strategy to combat rampant misinformation and disinformation within Asian communities regarding immigration policies and their impact—or lack thereof—on public benefits and public systems. To date we have served more than 2,000 New Yorkers, with hundreds more expected to participate by the end of the year. By bolstering these efforts, we will guarantee critically needed services for Asian immigrants and the organizations that serve them at a time where it is needed the most.

Language Access and Language Justice

AAF is a proud member of the Language Justice Collaborative (LJC) along with African Communities Together, MASA, the New York Immigration Coalition, and more recently Haitian Americans United for Progress and I-ARC. Together, we advocate for increased language access through the enforcement of existing laws and by creating innovative programs to address gaps in language interpretation services. In FY 26, City Council allocated $3.8 million towards language access programming, including for the development of language access worker cooperatives and a community interpreter bank. AAF's role is to establish a language interpreter worker cooperative for five Asian languages, alongside the Collaborative's worker cooperatives for African, Haitian, and Indigenous Latin American languages. We applaud City Council's support and the Council to again support this initiative in the FY 27 budget to ensure continuity and sustainability for developing these programs that are in progress.

Within FY 25, AAF worked with our nonprofit member organizations to recruit community members to serve as prospective translators in the Asian language worker cooperative. Thus far, we received over 160 applications, and through rounds of screening, we are now working with a group of 16 immigrants, who are fluent in the top Asian languages in NYC - Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, both Cantonese and Mandarin, Korean, and Urdu - who are training as community interpreters and will go on to build a worker-owned cooperative. These interpreters, alongside translators from other immigrant communities served by LJC, will be poised to fill the critical need for high-quality



interpretation for NYC area government, nonprofits, schools, hospitals, and the private sector, while also providing opportunities for income and business ownership for the same immigrant communities that need them. The funding we are requesting from the City Council would allow us to continue building the cooperative with our trainees, who began providing services within FY26 and launch fully by the start of FY27. We applaud the Council's support this year and urge you to again support funding for this initiative in the Fiscal Year 27 budget to ensure continuity for these programs that are already in progress.

Citywide funding requests to support our work across our Asian Community

In addition to the funding requested for language access work, here are our other Citywide funding requests to support our work across our Asian community:

Support AAFs work and priorities through:

- **Speaker's Initiative:** ($500,000)
- **Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund:** Provide technical assistance and leadership development to help Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations thrive ($150,000)
- **CUNY Citizenship NOW! Program:** Increase Asian American participation in the civic life of our city ($300,000)
- **Hate Crimes Prevention:** Support programs that aim to prevent hate crimes through community-based safety solutions ($100,000)
- **Immigrant Health Initiative:** Support programming to reduce mental health stigma in pan-Asian communities ($100,000)
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations:** Support the development of culturally relevant mental health and related services for pan-Asian communities ($150,000)
- **Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants:** Strengthen the infrastructure for a rapid response network that swiftly connects Asian immigrants with critical immigration legal support. Empower Asian-serving nonprofits with the knowledge and training needed to navigate and respond to fast-changing immigration policies, ensuring greater protection for New York's most vulnerable communities ($700,000)
- **Worker Cooperative for Translators:** Support the development of a worker cooperative to help community members become trained and credentialed as interpreters and translators in the most commonly spoken Asian languages ($700,000)
- **AAPI Community Support:** Support programming to address the urgent service needs of Asian immigrants, including anti-Asian violence prevention and response through our Hope Against Hate Campaign; community education to support parents, families, and seniors in navigating and accessing resources in response to fast-changing immigration policies; and trainings and resources to support small business owners and workers impacted by anti-Asian hate and changing immigration programs ($400,000)
- **Neighborhood Development Grant Initiative:** This integrated approach ensures that immigrant small business owners gain access to essential resources while being empowered to thrive in an increasingly digital and regulated business environment ($20,000)

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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. If you have any questions, I can be contacted by email at nat.moghe@aafederation.org.

Asian Americans for Equality

New York City Council - FY 27 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Testimony of Emily Rios, Asian Americans for Equality

Good afternoon. I am Emily Rios, Managing Director of Community Services at Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE). Thank you, Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented housing and affordability crisis. The vulnerable communities AAFE serve are desperate. When families face housing instability, food insecurity, or medical emergencies, we are often their last hope. AAFE provides critical support to 35,000 New Yorkers annually.

I urge the Council to preserve and expand these vital programs:

Housing Stability: Our programs prevent displacement and empower low-income tenants to defend their rights. Their main goal is to keep working class tenants in their homes, free from landlord harassment and remaining in safe and affordable housing. Our staff offer services in English, several Chinese dialects, and Spanish, with native speakers who are leading the work. Additionally, we are fighting landlords with seemingly unlimited financial resources who are cutting building maintenance corners, ignoring egregious safety violations, slowing vital repairs, and illegally raising rents. The demand for our services, from tenant groups to elected officials, is increasing every year, and it cannot be met without more funding to support additional staff. We are asking the Council to support enhanced funding through Stabilizing NYC and Housing Preservation Strategies.

Food Security: We distribute 80,000 pounds of food annually to more than 5,600 households in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, East Harlem, and Jackson Heights. As is the case with all food pantries throughout New York, the growing demand cannot be met without more funding. Households line up hours before food distributions begin, and long before the pantry closing times. Now, we are fielding questions and concerns over the new federal SNAP work requirements. Until there's clarity on how to navigate the new federal requirements, we are anticipating an increased demand for food, especially from vulnerable families facing rising

costs, immigration enforcement fears and numerous other insecurities. We request additional funding to sustain our food pantries through additional funding.

Youth Education: Our underfunded after-school programs, supported by COMPASS and Council discretionary programs, enable hundreds of immigrant students to reach college or access vocational training. Recently, our COMPASS funding was cut by 50%. The youth we serve come from diverse backgrounds, and often are the first in their families with college aspirations. Our youth also create community service projects that give back to our neighbors. Because many are bilingual, they offer in-language naturalization question reviews, plan civic engagement projects, and many other services that enhance the neighborhood. We request funding to continue to serve our immigrant youth.

Immigration Services: It is undeniable that immigration enforcement fears are gripping our city. Our legal service partners are overwhelmed by the current case load, which prevents us from facilitating more referrals. The range of immigration-related questions we receive illustrates the panic and fear our neighbors are experiencing. Our programs need to have regular community workshops to calm fears, ensure that immigrants understand their rights, all in-language. One of the biggest demands is for citizenship navigation. We ask this council for enhanced funding for RISE and other immigration services to sustain all of our immigration-related programs.

AAFE values our partnership with the City Council. We are eager to deepen our collective impact for immigrant and low-income communities in the coming year to maximize our efforts to protect our city's most vulnerable.

Thank you.

Keeping People and Pets Together: Funding Pet Food Assistance and Pet-Inclusive Sheltering for New York City Families

Submitted by:
David Louridas
Manager, Education and Training – Community Engagement
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
New York City Council FY27 Executive Budget Hearing

My name is David Louridas, and I am a member of the ASPCA's Community Engagement team. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The ASPCA's Community Engagement team works with community members directly in neighborhoods across New York City to connect pet owners with resources that help them keep their pets healthy, safe, and at home. We partner with community-based organizations, social service providers, domestic violence programs, senior centers, and local leaders to provide pet food, supplies, information, and support to families facing hardship.

Every day, we see firsthand that supporting pets means supporting the families that care for them. When pet owners have access to pet food and other support services, they are more likely to keep their pets and avoid the heartbreaking decision to surrender a beloved companion animal.

I am here today to urge the Council to support two critical investments: funding for community-based pet food distribution and funding for pet-inclusive sheltering and co-sheltering programs.

Through my work, I regularly meet New Yorkers who are struggling to make ends meet. Many are facing difficult choices between paying rent, buying groceries, or caring for their pets. There have been too many instances where this has resulted in a pet owner going hungry themselves instead of allowing their pets to do so. We have noticed that this decision is especially prevalent among our elderly population that is living alone. This is simply not a decision they should be forced to make.

Pet food assistance is one of the simplest and most effective ways to keep families together. That is why investing in pet food distribution programs is so important. It would help community organizations reach more families before a temporary hardship becomes a permanent separation. As highlighted, it would also prevent malnutrition for the pet AND their owner.

We also urge the Council to support funding for pet-inclusive sheltering and co-sheltering programs. For survivors of domestic violence and individuals experiencing homelessness, the inability to find a safe place for a beloved pet can be a significant barrier to seeking help. During what might be the most difficult period in their lives, a pet owner should never have to choose between living on the street or in their cars instead of a safe bed indoors because they have no other way of staying together with their pet. This sad reality is all too common in our city.

Thank you for your time and consideration and thank you for helping us all take a step towards the primary goal of our Community Engagement Program: safely keeping pets and their owners together.

FY27 Budget Priorities for New York City's People and Pets

Submitted by:

Testimony of Michelle Villagomez
Senior Director of Municipal Affairs
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
New York City Council FY27 Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning, Chair Schulman, Finance Chair Linda Lee, and members of the City Council.

My name is Michelle Villagomez, and I am the Senior Director of Municipal Affairs for the ASPCA. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

For nearly 160 years, the ASPCA has worked to improve the lives of animals and the people who care for them. Every day, we see firsthand that supporting pets means supporting families. When pet owners have access to affordable veterinary care, pet food, and services that help them navigate temporary hardship, they are far more likely to keep their pets and avoid the heartbreaking decision to surrender a beloved companion animal.

We appreciate the Council's continued commitment to animal welfare and particularly want to thank Speaker Julie Menin, Finance Chair Linda Lee, Health Chair Lynn Schulman, and the members of the newly formed Animal Welfare Caucus for recognizing the important role pets play in the lives of New Yorkers.

Today, we urge the Council to prioritize investments that keep people and pets together while strengthening New York City's animal welfare infrastructure.

Affordable Veterinary Care and Spay/Neuter Services

We urge the Council to fund **$1.5 million** for affordable spay/neuter and veterinary wellness services delivered through nonprofit veterinary providers.

Cost is one of the leading reasons pets are surrendered to shelters. We regularly encounter pet owners who delay or forgo veterinary care because they simply cannot afford it. Without access

to preventive care, vaccinations, and spay/neuter services, manageable medical conditions become crises, pets suffer unnecessarily, and families face difficult decisions.

The ASPCA has made substantial investments to help address this need – delivering more than 60,000 veterinary services via our community medicine program in 2025 alone – but demand far exceeds capacity. Last year's $500,000 city investment in spay/neuter was a strong step forward, but more is needed.

The reality is simple: nonprofits cannot meet this need alone.

The proposed $1.5 million investment would provide essential veterinary services for more than 10,000 cats and dogs annually, helping families keep their pets, reducing shelter intake, preventing unwanted litters, and relieving pressure on ACC.

Pet Food Pantries and Pet Food Assistance

We also strongly support the Animal Welfare Caucus and Speaker's Initiative recommendation of **$2 million for pet food** distribution through nonprofit community-based organizations.

Pet food insecurity is one of the most common and preventable reasons families consider surrendering a pet. Across New York City, families are struggling with the rising costs of housing, groceries, and healthcare. Too many pet owners are forced to make impossible choices between feeding themselves and feeding their pets.

Through our Community Engagement program, we provide pet food assistance to families in crisis throughout all five boroughs. Our Community Engagement team works directly with social service agencies, domestic violence providers, senior service organizations, and community groups to connect pet owners with critical resources.

But the need far exceeds available resources.

Our team frequently hears from pet owners who have run out of pet food entirely, are sharing their own meals with their pets, or are considering surrender because they cannot afford food. Due to limited resources, our assistance is often temporary—typically enough food for only a few weeks. With an estimated 200,000 pet-owning households living in poverty in New York City, existing resources cannot meet the level of need we see every day.

A $2 million investment would provide pet food through community-based organizations across the city, helping families weather temporary hardship and preventing unnecessary shelter surrenders. These programs also create opportunities to connect families with affordable veterinary care, housing support, and other services that help keep people and pets together.

Animal Care Centers of NYC

Additionally, we urge continued and increased support for Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC).

ACC serves as the backbone of New York City's animal welfare system, caring for tens of thousands of animals each year while providing critical services to pet owners across the five boroughs. As the city prepares for the opening of additional full-service shelters in the Bronx and Brooklyn, ACC will require the resources necessary to successfully operate these facilities and meet growing community needs.

We also encourage continued investment in ACC's Community Pets Program, which provides pet retention services, case management, behavior support, pet food, and other resources that help families overcome temporary challenges and avoid unnecessary surrender of their pets.

Investing in ACC is an investment in public health, public safety, and family preservation.

Pet-Inclusive Sheltering

Finally, we urge the Council to expand funding for pet-inclusive sheltering and co-sheltering programs.

For survivors of domestic violence, individuals experiencing homelessness, and families facing crisis, the inability to find safe accommodations for pets can create significant barriers to seeking help. Many individuals remain in dangerous situations because they fear what will happen to their animals if they leave.

New York City has become a national leader in this work through the efforts of organizations like Urban Resource Institute (URI), which has demonstrated how pet-inclusive sheltering can help keep families safe and together. URI's recently opened Magnolia Gardens residence is an outstanding example of what is possible when we recognize that pets are family members and design services that support the entire household. By allowing survivors and vulnerable families

to remain with their pets during times of crisis, programs like Magnolia Gardens remove a significant barrier to seeking safety and stability.

We should build on URI's success and work to create more pet-inclusive housing and sheltering opportunities across New York City. Expanding these programs will help ensure that no one is forced to choose between their own safety and the wellbeing of a beloved pet.

These programs protect both human and animal victims while preserving the critical bond between people and their pets.

The ASPCA is proud to partner with the City, but the need for affordable veterinary care, pet food assistance, and pet retention services has grown beyond what nonprofit organizations can meet alone. We look forward to working with the Council to ensure that all New Yorkers—regardless of income can access the resources they need to care for the pets they love.

These investments will help keep families together, reduce shelter intake, improve public health outcomes, and strengthen communities across New York City.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued leadership on behalf of New York City's people and animals.

June 3, 2026

Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the City Council Finance Committee.

My name is Heather Page. I am submitting this written testimony as the proud principal of the Baccalaureate School for Global Education (BSGE) in Queens, and as a resident of the Astoria neighborhood. As both a local school leader and a member of this community, I am deeply invested in the educational future of our district, and I appreciate the opportunity to submit my thoughts on the FY2027 budget.

First, I want to express my gratitude to the City Council and Council Member Julie Won for championing our community. Through the OneLIC Neighborhood Plan, BSGE was successfully funded for a new school site. This capital allocation is vital; it ensures our students will transition into a safe, modern, and purpose-built learning space. I urge the City Council to protect this funding and ensure that BSGE's relocation remains completely secure throughout the final budget adoption.

However, a thriving school cannot exist in isolation. I am submitting this testimony to stand in firm solidarity with our broader District 30 community. While BSGE's funding has been secured, the other three critical neighborhood schools promised under the OneLIC Plan (one 600-seat middle school and two 650-seat elementary schools) are currently facing an estimated $519 million funding gap in the Executive Budget.

Our local Queens North community is growing at a rapid pace. Without the allocation of this $519 million to the School Construction Authority (SCA), our local neighborhood families will face severe school overcrowding, and a critical infrastructure promise made to our community will be broken.

As a neighbor and an educator, I know firsthand that a truly robust educational ecosystem requires fully funded elementary and middle schools so that students can thrive before they ever reach high school. The families and young children of Long Island City and Astoria deserve the exact same safe, modern, and uncrowded school spaces that have been promised to them.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the City Council:

1. Protect BSGE's capital funding to ensure our school relocation proceeds without delay.
2. Allocate the missing $519 million to fully fund the construction of the three promised Long Island City schools.
3. Restore funding to vital educational initiatives—including fair class sizes ($500M), mental health continuums ($5M), and restorative justice ($6M)—that keep our public schools whole.

Thank you for your time, your continued support of public education, and your commitment to the families of District 30.

Respectfully,

Heather Page

Principal, The Baccalaureate School for Global Education (BSGE)

May 21, 2026

Re: Opposition of Local Law 75

To: NYC Council Committee on Small Business

Small businesses remain the backbone of New York City's neighborhoods and local economy. They create jobs, activate commercial corridors, and provide essential services to residents. Yet despite their resilience, many small businesses continue to operate under extraordinary financial pressure following years of economic disruption, including the lasting impacts of COVID-19, inflation, rising utility costs, increasing insurance premiums, escalating commercial rents, higher property taxes, and broader economic uncertainty. Local Law 75 imposes an additional and significant financial burden by requiring storefront roll-down gates to be at least 70% transparent by July 1, 2026.

We understand and appreciate the original intent of this legislation: to improve storefront visibility, reduce the visual impact of closed businesses, and discourage graffiti along commercial corridors. These are goals that Business Improvement Districts actively support and invest in every day. However, the implementation of this requirement raises serious concerns regarding affordability, practicality, and unintended consequences for small business owners.

First, the cost of compliance is substantial. Replacing a storefront gate can cost thousands, or in some cases tens of thousands, of dollars depending on frontage size and installation requirements. For many independent businesses already operating on thin margins, this becomes yet another unfunded mandate at a time when City policy has appropriately focused on reducing barriers and fines for small businesses.

Second, the law creates an evidentiary challenge through its current grandfathering provision.

Local Law 75 exempts gates installed prior to July 1, 2011. In practice, however, many businesses have no documentation establishing installation dates because gates were already in place when they assumed tenancy, or, in many cases, have existed with the building for decades.

How does a business owner prove exemption when no records exist?

Many storefronts in Bay Ridge have operated with solid security gates for generations. In some cases, gates have existed continuously since the early twentieth century. DOB routinely recognizes grandfathered conditions in other contexts where long-standing existing conditions predate current code requirements. We respectfully request similar treatment here and urge consideration of a broader grandfather provision that protects existing storefront gates absent evidence of recent installation.

Third, the law may unintentionally undermine successful neighborhood beautification efforts.

Across our district, significant public and private resources have been invested into activating closed storefronts through murals and public art installations painted directly onto solid roll gates. In practice, we have observed that fully painted gates often become self-protecting: artists have advised that murals covering an entire gate are substantially less likely to be tagged due to informal norms within the graffiti and mural community.

By requiring replacement of existing solid gates, Local Law 75 may inadvertently eliminate an effective anti-graffiti strategy and remove existing investments in corridor beautification.

Fourth, there appears to be a broader policy contradiction with the City's environmental goals.

Local Law 97 seeks to reduce building emissions and improve energy efficiency citywide. Transparent storefront gates inherently leave larger areas of exposed glass vulnerable to heat transfer during colder months. Businesses may experience increased heating demands and utility costs because more heat can escape through exposed storefront windows. While the emissions impact of any individual storefront may be modest, the cumulative effect across thousands of commercial properties should be evaluated to ensure alignment between Local Law 75 and the City's broader sustainability objectives.

Finally, we are concerned about unintended market incentives and uneven accountability.

Non-compliant roll gates continue to be installed despite upcoming enforcement requirements, leaving small businesses exposed to violations even when relying in good faith on industry professionals. Small business owners should not bear the burden of vendor error. We urge the Council to strengthen accountability measures for roll gate manufacturers and installers and ensure enforcement extends beyond merchants alone.

If repeal or delay of Local Law 75 is not feasible, we respectfully request consideration of the following alternatives:

- Grandfather all existing roll gates currently in operation, regardless of installation date, and require compliance only when an existing gate must be replaced due to damage, failure, or voluntary renovation.
- Hold roll gate manufacturers and installers accountable for compliance.
- Preserve exemptions for gates that incorporate approved public art or anti-graffiti beautification treatments.

Business districts share the City's goals of vibrant, attractive, and welcoming commercial corridors. However, policy solutions must also reflect operational realities and avoid imposing unnecessary costs on the small businesses that keep our neighborhoods thriving.

We welcome the opportunity to continue this dialogue and work collaboratively toward a solution that supports both public realm improvements and small business sustainability.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Lovejoy

Elizabeth Lovejoy
Executive Director, Bay Ridge Fifth Avenue Business Improvement District

Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC
40 Rector Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10006

Written Testimony Submitted to the Committees On Education, Higher Education, and Children and Youth

June 10, 2026

Margarita Christmas
Program Manager, Community-Based Mentoring Program
Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC

Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC
40 Rector Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10006

Thank you, Committee Chairs Dinowitz, Joseph, and Stevens for this opportunity to submit testimony, on behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City (BBBS of NYC), in response to the Education, Higher Education, and Children and Youth Committee public hearings. My name is Margarita Christmas, and I am a Program Manager at BBBS of NYC, in the Community-Based Mentoring Program. I am writing this testimony to advocate on behalf of the thousands of young people we serve across all 5 boroughs and to request that the City Council support our organization's enhanced request of $1,330,000 in discretionary funding for FY27.

BBBS of NYC is submitting this enhanced request for our designated initiative, to offset the $130,000 that our organization will be losing in federal funding over the course of FY26 and FY27. The loss of federal funding directly impacts BBBS of NYC's Community-Based program, our cornerstone, evidence-based one-to-one (1:1) mentoring program.

We are additionally submitting a $90,000 Speaker's Initiative request to support volunteer recruitment and community partnership development across Queens, in response to the significant increases we have seen in the number of youth and families seeking our mentoring services, specifically in Western Queens (including Districts 21, 25, and 26) and Southeastern Queens (including District 28).

Recent research from Harvard University and the U.S. Department of the Treasury revealed that BBBS's mentoring model closes the socioeconomic gap by two-thirds—among the most powerful interventions documented for breaking cycles of poverty. BBBS mentees are 20% more likely to enroll in college and experience a 15% increase in their lifetime earnings when compared to their non-mentored peers (Bell and Petkova, 2024).

As a program manager, I have seen the impact of mentorship firsthand, allowing mentors to form genuine relationships with youth, making them feel valued and understood. Watching mentors foster these connections is powerful. This type of growth takes time, effort, and dedication. Despite the

Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC
40 Rector Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10006

challenges, mentors remain committed, helping young people recognize their potential and feel supported.

The new generation of youth has experienced more in their short lifetimes—more change and more challenges in the U.S.—than past generations. This reality affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, but not all young people have the same opportunities to overcome these challenges. Systemic social and structural barriers in our society shape how youth in underserved communities develop and navigate these challenges. As a society, we need to take an active role in supporting and creating possibilities that do not currently exist for them.

Growing up, I consistently noticed that possibilities do not exist unless you create them for yourself, and it was not an easy path to take. BBBS of NYC's mission is to make that path more accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or life experiences. We often hear the narrative that nothing is possible without a village, and we are building that sense of community for families in NYC. We show them that they do not have to navigate everything on their own.

With the help of the mentors in the program who become part of these families, we aim to provide access to a future that is possible for all youth in NYC, opening a world of opportunities, removing barriers, building hope in society, and proving that success is possible for everyone. But we need your support to make it happen.

We would like to thank the Council for your ongoing support of our organization. We ask that you fully fund BBBS of NYC and all programs that provide essential services to our youth. Thank you.

BIOBUS

1361 Amsterdam Ave Ste 340
New York, NY 10027
www.biobus.org

June 11, 2026
New York City Council

Re: BioBus Testimony for New York City Budget Hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education

Dear Finance Chair, Linda Lee and Education Chair, Eric Dinowitz, Education Committee,

It's my pleasure to submit testimony on behalf of BioBus. BioBus began in 2008 with a mission to help K-12 and college students discover, explore, and pursue science. We focus on students excluded from the scientific community due to factors such as race, gender, economic status, and physical access. Through this work, we envision a world where all people have the opportunity to reach their full scientific potential.

BioBus just launched a new all-electric Mobile Lab and is reaching 20-25% more students this year. We expect to reach over 40,000 students by the end of the 2025-26 school year. Yet, we need to continue growing to meet the overwhelming demand of schools in your district for laboratory science education and for science career pathways for young people. I hope you will join the many private funders who have recently increased their support for BioBus. **I respectfully request $250,000 in operating support for BioBus in the FY27 New York City Budget** to help 55,000 students engage in hands-on science and critical thinking next year**.**

BioBus was grateful to receive a total of $289,400 in operating support from New York City Council Members, including a **$100,000 allocation from the Speaker's initiative** last year. Along with annual support from the State, this award supported growing our annual operating budget from $3.3M to $5.3M. We are proud to have raised additional private support that means **every dollar you allocate is matched four times** by private funding sources.

Increased funding will also leverage previous NYC and State capital investments in our new mobile labs, increase private investment, and help to meet the increasing need for high-level, experience-based science education for K-12 and college students. This level of support in the City budget and through discretionary funding will help to **enable another 20%-25% increase in Mobile Lab Programs across New York City next year.** $250,000 in operating support will help us to fully utilize City, State, and private capital investments in our LES, Harlem, and Bronx brick and mortar neighborhood labs.

Fueled by their natural curiosity, BioBus students work with professional scientists to use science to explore questions about their world. Young scientists, inspired aboard the mobile lab, sign-up for after school and summer programs in BioBus neighborhood science lab, and move into BioBus paid research internships. After BioBus, students are ready to join and diversify the rapidly growing STEM workforce in New York. BioBus alumni are currently working at Pfizer, in

research labs at Columbia, NYU, and Mount Sinai, training to become science teachers, and pursuing Ph.D.'s at top universities.

BioBus brings our students into the scientific community, a community they have often been excluded from, and prepares them for life-changing academic and career opportunities. Over 450,000 students have done science on a BioBus mobile lab, and 99% of teachers want a return visit! A seventh grade student at a public school recently told us:

> *"Your visit made science feel more fun and comfortable. Because of BioBus I feel more excited to learn more about science and its magic.This experience helped me think about being more of a astronomer one day. And I appreciate how you took the time to teach us about cells and show us the little water creatures."*

This year, with an operating budget of $5.3M, we will work with more than 40,000 students! BioBus brings exciting, hands-on science programs to students throughout the New York City area. We reach students in every corner of Harlem and the Lower East Side, where our proven pathway empowers young scientists from their initial excitement to paid internships. In 2024, launched BioBus Bronx, hiring a dedicated Director of Community Science to expand our work in the borough. Now, just one year into our strategic plan, we have developed the infrastructure to reach over 400,000 students in five years and establish new neighborhood science teams. New York is ready for more science, and we are ready to deliver. Our students will become the next generation of great thinkers and leaders - they are already using science to develop alternative energy sources derived from bacteria, find ways to mitigate the effects of rising sea levels on coastlines, investigate the safety of drinking water in their DOE schools, study how heatwaves impact air quality in their own NYC neighborhoods, and explore how rain gardens can help fight increased flooding.

The need for proven science programs like BioBus is dramatic. NYC's biotech and life sciences industries continue to grow, offer high-paying jobs, and look towards our young people to fill those jobs. We have to turn away hundreds of schools and high school internship applicants every year due to lack of capacity. NYC EDC recognizes the importance of BioBus programs and invested $1.1M to build BioBus Bronx. **At a time when Federal support for science education is dwindling rapidly, we need your help to ensure young people have the skills to address pressing local and global challenges, innovate, and think critically about the world around them.**

BioBus's research-grade laboratory experiences led by masters- and Ph.D.-level scientists give students of all races, ethnicities, and genders, including those underrepresented in STEM careers, the opportunity to start their scientific path and excel. BioBus community scientists empower students to investigate problems close to home, such as testing the toxicity levels in neighborhood community gardens and researching the impact of microplastics on the ecosystems of the Hudson River. Our students bring their family, their friends, and their neighbors along and create a constant, constructive dialogue with their community as it merges with the scientific community.

BioBus was founded in NYC in 2008, when our Executive Director, Ben Dubin-Thaler, bought a 1974 public transit bus on Craigslist and converted it into a research-grade science lab on wheels. Now with two mobile labs and two more launching this year, BioBus visits one or two different schools every day. School's request a visit through our website or a BioBus community scientist reaches out to offer a visit. Most schools pay only a nominal fee - as little as 6% of the cost to run the program - based on a sliding scale. Two community scientists with research experience invite an entire class and their teacher onboard the bus during a normal 45 minute school period. Community scientists lead classes in ecology, anatomy, adaptation, evolution, and cell biology, all using science relevant to students and their immediate surroundings. Using microscopes, students gain an immediate sense of how science relates to their lives. BioBus offers curriculum for all ages and students, working with schools to pick the best curriculum for their students and regularly teaching ESL classes with a large number of BioBus staff fluent or proficient in Spanish.

At brick-and-mortar BioBase neighborhood labs, onsite at schools, and in community centers, BioBus offers in-depth after school, weekend, and summer programs for students in upper elementary school and above. BioBus scientists lead students in project-based scientific exploration, exploring air and water quality in their neighborhoods, learning about the impact of plants on temperature and food insecurity, learning from nature through biomimicry, studying technology from solar cars to block coding, among other topics. High school and college students can be paid Junior Scientist interns, mentoring younger students and gaining in-depth research science experience, an uncommon experience that research shows is a primary factor in supercharging a young person’s career in science.

The requested funding will help us to purchase lab supplies, and re-fuel and re-charge our mobile labs, and hire new BioBus community scientists and program coordinators. The heart of BioBus is a team of highly committed, innovative, and experienced scientists who work tirelessly with NYS students as they prepare to lead a more diverse scientific community that will deliver for all New Yorkers.

New York is ready for more, and we are ready to deliver. **With your help, BioBus will grow towards reaching every student in New York City.** Those students will become the next generation of great thinkers and leaders - they are already using science to fight climate change and food insecurity, identify disease before it spreads to humans, and study degenerative eye diseases and addiction. **I respectfully request that you support BioBus’ $250,000 request to fund city-wide programs.** These students will join BioBus’ Science Pathway, become tomorrow’s scientists, leaders, and critical thinkers, and fill the high-quality jobs in the city’s growing biotech and life sciences industries.

Thank you for your continued support of BioBus and for considering this request. I look forward to discussing how we can inspire the next generation of scientists from your district and across New York City.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Curran
Government and Communications Lead
(929) 274-3297 | jocelyn@biobus.org





Students aboard one of the new BioBus Mobile Labs, which will soon visit a different school every day

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Bronx Children's Museum
Denise Rosario Adusei
Denise@bxcm.org
Member, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)
Uploaded via City Council site and Emailed to: testimony@council.nyc.gov
June 11, 2026

Bronx Children's Museum FY27 Advocacy for Arts and Culture

Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Denise Rosario Adusei, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Bronx Children's Museum, a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group.

I am writing today to urge your continued leadership and support to fully restore and fully baseline $30 million for Arts and Culture in this year's budget. This means including an additional $20 million in the FY27 Adopted Budget, building on the $10 million baseline increase included in the Executive Budget. **This critical $20 million investment provides the long-term stability our sector and the communities we serve** depend on..

These funds are not abstract line items; they represent real jobs. **$30 million translates directly into between 325 and 350 positions across our institutions.** Beyond employment, the programs made possible by these funds last year are equally vulnerable. At stake are:

- Expanded days of service at cultural organizations across all five boroughs, making our institutions accessible to more New Yorkers, more often;
- Free and low-cost admissions initiatives that remove financial barriers and ensure that arts and culture remain a public good, not a luxury;
- Partnerships with public schools and senior centers, connecting some of the City's most underserved populations with the cultural life of their own city.

New York City's cultural institutions are essential infrastructure. They serve as anchors for tourism, economic activity, civic identity, and community wellbeing. The Bronx Children's Museum takes this role to heart. The Bronx is home to a vibrant ecosystem of organizations dedicated to nurturing our youth. We are honored to fill that role, serving a community where over 90 percent of residents are people of color—a population rich in culture, language, and creativity. Our mission is to inspire lifelong learning by providing accessible, transformative experiences in science, art, nature, and community.

For many children in the Bronx, stepping into our museum represents a series of profound milestones. It is often their first opportunity to own a book, to see their community celebrated within a cultural institution, and to experience science, art, and nature as deeply personal and accessible. In 2025 we reached more than 130,000 children, caregivers, educators, and community members through museum visits, field trips, school partnerships, and neighborhood programming. Each interaction represents a child discovering new possibilities, a family strengthening connections, and a community seeing itself reflected in a cultural institution built for them. The Museum is a vital cultural anchor that continues to expand access to learning, culture, and opportunity for Bronx families.

The Museum has respectfully submitted FY27 requests for $336,000 from the New York City Council to expand access across the Bronx:

- Field trips for students in every Bronx Council District
- In-school programming and CASA-supported afterschool learning experiences
- Free Family Days at the Museum, including a targeted, CII-sponsored celebration
- Expansion of our 3D Lab: Design, Develop, Display, bringing digital literacy and technology access to middle and high school students

This investment will bring thousands of students into the Museum, place arts and literacy programs directly into classrooms, expand free access for families, and open pathways for middle and high school students to engage in digital learning and career exploration. **Our ability to meet demand is constrained by limited and unstable funding.**

Without sustained investment, these gaps widen:

- With one of the lowest preschool enrollment rates in New York City, Bronx children face significant long-term academic risks without early intervention.
- A staggering 86% of Bronx elementary schools lack full-time arts programming, depriving students of essential creative development.
- While demand for sensory-inclusive spaces is surging, current funding fails to meet the urgent needs of our neurodiverse children and their families.

Families are already turning to us. We are ready to serve them at scale. Cultural institutions are ready to deliver. What we need now is stable, predictable funding that allows us to plan, retain staff, and meet growing community demand. For Bronx families, cultural institutions are an essential part of the educational and social infrastructure that helps children learn, grow, and thrive.

We are profoundly grateful for your leadership and your recognition of the vital role the arts and culture play in the life of our city. We respectfully urge the Council to restore and baseline the full $30 million investment in arts and culture in the FY27 Adopted Budget. This investment will provide stability for cultural organizations across New York City and ensure that children, families, educators, and communities continue to benefit from the transformative power of culture.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.

New York City Council Committee on Parks - Preliminary Budget Hearing

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Testimony By: Daniel Ranells, Bronx River Alliance, Deputy Director

Dear Council Members,

Our city's parks are our lifelines, supporting public health, climate resilience, and quality of life in every neighborhood. We know the City Council values parks, and this year's budget presents a critical opportunity to match that support with meaningful investment.

We appreciate Mayor Mamdani's inclusion of $15 million in the FY27 Executive Budget to baseline 161 critical positions.

However, the Executive Budget fails to protect 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers and 15 GreenThumb workers from losing their jobs at the end of the fiscal year. These workers are on one-year contracts and continue to face uncertainty year after year despite performing essential services for New Yorkers.

Over the past three years, NYC Parks has lost more than 600 staffing lines due to budget cuts. This year, the Mayor and City Council must make a good-faith effort to rebuild an agency that has endured years of disinvestment and staffing losses, and put NYC on the path to 1% for Parks.

As the Bronx River Alliance, a community-based partner of NYC Parks, we see the urgent need for more PEP officers, forestry staff, and park workers in the Bronx. Our staff and volunteers witness daily the impact of understaffing along the Bronx River corridor: accumulated trash, closed bathrooms, delayed trail maintenance, and unsafe conditions.

We stand with the Play Fair for Parks Coalition in urging the following actions:

- Baseline the remaining 115 Parks workers: The Mamdani Administration must secure the positions currently funded through temporary one-shot contracts.
- Fund an additional 276 one-shot positions, including:
  - 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers
  - 100 City Park Workers, Associate Park Service Workers, and Gardeners
  - 50 Forestry Staff
  - 26 Playground Associates

New Yorkers are eager for greater investment in parks. A recent New York Times poll identified increased parks funding as the public's top policy priority, garnering more than 35,000 votes.

NYC's 30,000 acres of parkland remain one of the city's most valuable and accessible public resources, providing free spaces for recreation, community gathering, and connection to

nature. Yet these spaces cannot thrive without the staff who maintain them, protect them, and deliver vital services to the public.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to restore staffing, strengthen park maintenance, and continue making measurable progress toward the long-overdue goal of dedicating 1% of the city budget to NYC Parks.

Sincerely,

The Bronx River Alliance

Re: FY2027 Executive Budget – In Support of Affinity Organizations

Submitted by: Dr. Jessica Goring, Principal, the Bronx School of Law and Finance

Date: June 5th, 2026

I am reaching out to you as the principal of the Bronx School of Law and Finance, a small school serving 300+ students on the John F. Kennedy High School Campus in the Bronx. We have been with New Visions for Public Schools, our Affinity organization, since our inception in 2003, and this longstanding relationship is key to our success and longevity as a school.

Affinity schools often service a more diverse population of students than our peers, including catering to a higher population of students in need. Comparing all Affinity schools to non-Affinity schools, students have higher rates of economic need (81.3% vs. 78.5%), students in temporary housing (18.6% vs. 16.5%), and English Learners (19.2% vs. 15.6%).

Despite serving students who face greater obstacles to success, Affinity schools consistently produce stronger results.The 4-year graduation rate across all Affinity schools, including ours, is 90%, compared to 88.4% for non-Affinity schools. On average, Affinity students enroll in college or career programs at rates ~3 points higher at both 6 and 18 months post-graduation, and are more likely to persist into year two (6-month college enrollment rate: 66.6% for Affinity, compared to 63.6% for non-Affinity; 18-month college enrollment rate: 72.2% for Affinity, compared to 69% for non-Affinity; and college persistence: 55.9% for Affinity, compared to 53.1% for non-Affinity).

Our work with New Visions has targeted our students falling off track, or whose attendance has waivered, setting up identification of said students, plans for said students, and monitoring of data for said students, which, in addition to their post-high school work, has been instrumental in changing our students' educational experiences for the better. With our Affinity partnership, our students and their families have made tremendous gains where the data has pinpointed the potential for falling. Navigating these data points, attending to solution based action plans, and working together led our students in need to successfully graduate on time, and to enroll in college on time.

For example, our coach once flagged a student who had transferred into our school at the end of her junior year. She was disengaged, unhappy, and wholly unfamiliar with

this new City, new school system, and new school. Our coach noted, however, that she was close to being on track for graduation - with some pushing and additional coursework, she could graduate on time. That identification and questioning led to her successful reengagement with her academics, and she worked hard to complete the remaining credits for her degree. At graduation she posed happily with her family and with members of the school, and spoke of her enrollment in college, to begin that Fall. Since then, she continues to visit our school and to reach out yearly to thank us.

As poverty levels and instability continue to rise across New York City, which hit our students hard in particular, we need the support of our Affinity organization more than ever. The total cost the city of the Affinity partner contracts equals $140 per student, but the cost of not having our coach, our partnership co planning, our data, and our structures can and will cost our most at risk students tremendously. We need the Affinity partnership intact in order to continue to provide the best support for our students.

I respectfully urge the Council to preserve the City's investment in the Affinity partnership structure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jessica Goring
Principal, the Bronx School of Law and Finance

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Before the New York City Council

Re: FY2027 Executive Budget – In Support of the New Visions Portal

Submitted by: Dr. Jessica Goring, Principal, the Bronx School of Law and Finance

Date: June 10th, 2026

I am reaching out to you as the principal of the Bronx School of Law and Finance, a small school serving 300+ students on the John F. Kennedy High School Campus in the Bronx. I'm writing to ask the committee to reject the proposed elimination of the roughly $8.9 million for the New Visions Portal.

Using the Portal, from one screen I can see who's on track to graduate, who's short on credits, who's missing Regents, and who's slipping through the cracks — across my whole building. It's the backbone of how I plan for graduation, credit recovery, and college readiness. "If the Portal goes away, that work doesn't disappear — it shifts onto staff who are already stretched thin. There's no replacement ready to go. The City's other tool, Insight, only **reports** data; you can't plan in it, build a Regents plan, document an intervention, or coordinate across agencies. We'd be back to rebuilding by hand what the Portal assembles automatically.

Additionally, students with special challenges, particularly those experiencing poverty, are more likely to be off in credits, or face education instability in some way. They are more at risk for slipping through the cracks. The Portal helps to ensure that those in most need have equitable accessibility to on time graduation.

This isn't something the City can buy off the shelf or quickly build internally. Rebuilding it would cost multiples of the contract and take years — the "savings" reappear as new costs. Please restore the full funding for the New Visions Portal. As a former Chancellor put it, a school system cannot improve outcomes it cannot see. Don't take away the one tool that lets us see them.

I respectfully urge the Council to preserve the City's investment in the New Visions portal. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jessica Goring
Principal, the Bronx School of Law and Finance

Written Testimony on the NYCBenefits Program for the New York City Record

Submitted by BronxWorks
Ms. Eileen Torres, Chief Executive Officer

June 2026

Contact Persons:
Ms. Eileen Torres, Chief Executive Officer, [redacted]
Ms. J. Tyler McCormick, Chief of Staff and Strategy, [redacted]

BronxWorks is a Bronx-based settlement house and community-based organization that was founded in this borough in 1972 as the Citizens Advice Bureau. BronxWorks rebranded in 2009 to better reflect our organization's focus on Bronx residents and the Bronx neighborhoods they call home. Our mission is to help individuals and families improve their economic and social wellbeing. From toddlers to seniors, we feed, shelter, teach, and support our neighbors to build a stronger community.

From our inception, BronxWorks has been an organization that has endeavored to connect Bronx residents to a variety of public resources that boost residents' purchasing power. In our early days, we maintained a walk-in office in the southwest tier of our borough whose purpose was to connect low-income seniors to the myriad of public benefits for which they were eligible. Over time, we broadened the scope of our access to benefits efforts to include working age adults in addition to seniors.

Today, BronxWorks maintains a network of walk-in offices throughout the Bronx. The frontline staff members who support these offices are trained in systems navigation and individual or household advocacy techniques. They stay apprised of regulatory changes, application revisions, and documentation requirements through ongoing training related to a host of public benefits, including SNAP, SSI, and SCRIE or DRIE.

The principles of case management drive the work of our walk-in office staff. We treat those we serve with the utmost dignity and respect, taking time to carefully analyze and assess each community member who comes to use for public benefits services. We use available technology tools to help with intake, assessment, goal setting, case review, update, reevaluation, and case closure efforts.

While these efforts are undertaken with the utmost courtesy and professionalism, they are also undertaken with the understanding that every individual or household served is unique and warrants assistance without prejudgment or presumption. As such, the staff of BronxWorks' walk-in offices pay close attention to what community members have to say and how they perceive the need or needs the wish to address.

As BronxWorks has historically provided access to benefits, system navigation, and client advocacy services, the introduction of NYCBenefits in 2023 was a natural fit. The primary audiences for NYCBenefits are low-income seniors and working aged adults, two population groups who have been aided by our walk-in offices and other programs for several decades. We hope to continue to serve both groups and by extension the households to which they belong.

BronxWorks has long recognized the importance of having neighborhood based walk-in resources to assist low-income Bronx residents with access public benefits. Community members view our walk-in offices and our access to benefits service model as vital connections to income supports that are essential to individual or household wellbeing and to overall community wellbeing.

At a time when there are many changes regarding regulations that affect public benefits, as well as changes with regards to eligibility and documentation requirements, the contents of application forms, and the means by which those forms are accessed and submitted, BronxWorks finds that many community members are overwhelmed and confused when it comes to securing and maintaining public benefits. Efforts like NYCBenefits enable BronxWorks to retain sufficient capacity to effectively assist community members who are most in need of assistance.

NYCBenefits, though modest in its scope, has already yielded substantial benefits in communities where poverty levels are high and accessing public benefits are essential. In the first nine months of the current fiscal year, the program has already served 28,000 low-income New Yorkers across the five boroughs. The $9,750,000 in funds for community-based organizations and technical assistance providers has resulted in some of our city's most vulnerable securing over $20,000,000 in public benefits at a time when food, shelter, and other essential costs continue to rise sharply.

Rising food prices, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the New York-Northeaster New Jersey area, serve as another measure of food vulnerability for Bronx residents. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the US Department of Labor suggests that increases in food prices persist.

The CPI data underscores the importance of a citywide initiative like NYCBenefits, where in FY 2025 assistance with first-time or renewal SNAP applications accounted for 31% of public benefits facilitated by the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program. Through the first nine months of FY 2026, SNAP application assistance has accounted for 29% of the public benefits secured by our NYCBenefits program.

A 2025 BronxWorks analysis reveals that the overall CPI for the New York metro area rose 19.6% between May 2019 and May 2024. In the five-year period, prices for the Food at Home component of the CPI rose 17.1%. However, several items in the Food at Home component of the CPI market basket rose at a rate higher than the overall CPI. Many of these food items are essential for households and the members who comprise them. Without SNAP benefits, many low-income households would be unable to purchase these items.

The Cereals & Bakery Products portion of the Food at Home component saw prices increase 22.7% in the five-year period. Prices for the Meats, Poultry, Fish, and Eggs portion rose 27.4%. The price of dairy products rose at a lower rate (20.7%) but were still about six percent above the overall CPI. Non-alcoholic beverages like juice, soda, and bottled water saw their prices increase by 26.1% in the five-year period.

Prices have continued to rise overall and for the Food at Home component of the New York metro area CPI. Between April 2024 and April 2026, overall prices rose 8.6%, an average of 4.3% a year or 2.15 times higher than the 2.0% rate considered to be acceptable by the Federal Reserve Bank (the Fed). This is slightly higher than the average of 3.9% in the May 2019 to May 2024 five-year period, with that figure 1.95 times higher than the acceptable Fed rate.

While prices for the Food at Home component of the consumer basket rose at a slightly lower 7.1% rate in the two-year period, the annual rate of 3.6% is still 1.78 times higher than the Fed's

acceptable inflation rate. Only one item in the Food at Home component of the CPI had an increase that was within the Fed's acceptable range.

The 3.6% annual rate of increase in the Food at Home component of the CPI between April 2024 and April 2026 is slightly higher than the 3.4% average annual rate of increase of the component for the May 2019 through May 2024 period. Items within the component generally experienced higher increases.

The Meat, Poultry, Fish, and Eggs portion of the Food at Home component saw prices rise 9.3% between April 2024 and April 2026, an average of 4.7% in the two-year period and 2.32 times the Fed's acceptable rate. Fruits and vegetables in the Bronx and other parts of the New York metro area saw their prices rise 8.9% in the two-year period, an average of 4.5% annually and 2.23 times the Fed's acceptable rate.

Non-alcoholic beverages, which include bottled water and juices, saw their prices increase by 11.7% between April 2024 and April 2026, an average annual increase of 5.9% or 2.93 times the Fed's acceptable rate. This was the highest increase of any item in the Food at Home component of the CPI for the metro New York area.

Two items in the Food at Home component of the index had modest price increases that were more in line with the Fed's acceptable rate. Cereal and bakery products saw their prices rise 4.2% between April 2024 and April 2026, an average of 2.1% annually and just about on par with the Fed's acceptable rate. Other food at home, a category that includes home-based food items not listed separately, saw prices rise 5.0% in the two-year period, an average of 2.5% annually and slightly above the Fed's acceptable rate.

Housing prices for the region rose by 19.5% in the past five years, practically the same level as the increase in the overall CPI (19.6%). While Bronx housing prices are generally lower than other parts of the region, the concentration of poverty in the Bronx puts a greater strain on many Bronx households.

Census Bureau American Community Survey data from the New York City Department of City Planning reveals that the Bronx has a poverty rate of 27%, the highest of any of the five boroughs and well above the citywide rate of 17%. With the higher concentration of poverty in the Bronx comes a higher concentration of rent burdened households.

Six in ten Bronx households are rent burdened, compared to the citywide rate of 52%. More than one-third (35%) of Bronx households are severely rent burdened, i.e., more than half their disposable income is spent on housing. Across the city, 29% of households are severely rent burdened.

Sharp rises in food prices and severely rent burdened households underscore the value of the NYCBenefits initiative. In FY 2025, the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program helped 403 households obtain or maintain SNAP benefits, a nearly five-fold increase from 85 in FY 2024. In the first nine months of FY 2026, 405 households have already received help regarding obtaining or maintaining SNAP benefits, placing our NYCBenefits program on course to assist 540 households for the full fiscal year.

On the housing front, 513 households received some form of housing assistance from the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program in FY 2025. This includes 258 one-shot deals, 128 Section 8 recertifications, and 58 SCRIE or DRIE renewals. All told, housing assistance accounted for 39% of all forms of benefits access help facilitated by our program. Combined with help related to

obtaining or maintaining SNAP benefits, housing assistance accounted for 70% of all forms of assistance facilitated by the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program.

During the first nine months of FY 2026, housing assistance facilitated by the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program continues to account for a significant portion of the forms of help facilitated. In that time, 516 households have received some form of housing assistance, including 185 who got help with Section 8 recertifications, 166 who secured one-shot deals, and 68 who got help with obtaining or maintaining SCRIE.

Housing assistance thus far has accounted for 37% of all forms of help provided by the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program. Along with help regarding obtaining or maintaining SNAP benefits, housing help accounts for 67% of all forms of assistance facilitated by our program.

In FY 2025, the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program served 846 households with about 1,469 people. Of the 846 households assisted, 457 or 54% lived in the City Council district served by Councilmember Althea Stevens. Another 135 or 16% lived in the district served by Councilmember Pierina Sanchez, while 88 or 10% resided in the district served by Councilmember Oswald Feliz.

Through the first nine months of FY 2026, the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program has served 739 households with about 1,285 people. The program is on track to serve 985 households with 1,713 people by the end of this fiscal year.

Of the 739 households served thus far, 371 or 50% are in Councilmember Althea Stevens's district, while 128 or 17% are in Councilmember Pierina Sanchez's district. A total of 86 or 12% reside in Councilmember Oswald Feliz's district.

While the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program has served people of all ages, our program has proven to be especially helpful for community members who are 55 years of age or older. In FY 2025, 547 or 65% of those served by our program were 55 or older. Thus far in FY 2026, 69% of those served by our program are 55 or older.

The BronxWorks NYCBenefits program is clearly making a difference in low-income Bronx communities where the need is greatest. HRA's modest investment of $250,000 a year since FY 2024 has enabled BronxWorks to engage 1,947 households with over 3,500 people. The program has enabled these households and their members to remain stably housed, reduce food insecurity, obtain public transportation discounts, and pay utilities bills, among other things.

From FY 2024 through the first nine months of FY 2026 (July 2023 through March 2026), the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program has enabled 980 households with about 1,745 people to secure benefits that have a cash value of about $1,536,000. This includes $1.1 million that 158 households received in one-shot deals to remain in permanent housing, another $39,300 in other rent arrears assistance, SNAP benefits valued at $228,552 for 594 households that faced food insecurity, and $19,424 in utilities payments for 21 households.

Keeping families in permanent housing translates into significant annual savings in temporary shelter costs. According to the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), on an annual basis it costs $84,776 to house a family in a homeless shelter. Keeping the 161 households who received one-shot deals or other rent arrears assistance kept the New York City government from spending about $13.6 million. The $1.1 million spent to keep community members permanently housed resulted in net savings of about $12.5 million.

As noted previously, the Bronx is the New York City borough with the highest rate of food insecurity. The $228,552 in SNAP benefits secured for community members by the BronxWorks NYCBenefits program translates into about 76,184 meals based on the US Department of Agriculture's Thrifty Food Plan benchmark.

The meals prepared as a result of SNAP benefits put a small dent in the meal gap in our borough, which accounts for 17% of the city's population but 22% of the city's meal gap. (According to Feeding America, the meal gap is the shortfall between the cost of food [meals] and the money available to buy it [from income, SNAP benefits, or other resources]).

Baselining NYCBenefits will enable BronxWorks and other partner providers to continue to assist low-income New Yorkers at a time when eligibility requirements, proper documentation, and other variables related to public benefits have undergone significant changes. Those who now receive many public benefits are increasingly vulnerable to losing them, while many who may be eligible for certain benefits will find the application and acquisition processes increasingly confusing. The end result may be that those on the economic margin may fall further into poverty, rather than being lifted from it.

Baselining NYCBenefits and adding resources to help ACS-involved youth and families promises to strengthen the city's safety net at a time necessities like food, housing, clothing, and public transportation continue to rise. New Yorkers' ability to access a range of public benefits through reliable information sources like BronxWorks and other CBOs helps ensure a firm safety net in these increasingly uncertain times.

Testimony of
Kathryn Glass

Interim Co-Director and Chief of Marketing and Business Development
Brooklyn Botanic Garden

New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Good afternoon, my name is Kathryn Glass, and I am the Interim Co-Director and Chief of Marketing and Business Development for Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Our institution is a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) - a coalition of 39 cultural institutions located in all five boroughs, including zoos, gardens, museums, and performing arts organizations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Fiscal Year 2027 executive budget.

ABOUT BBG

Founded in 1910, Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG) is an urban botanic garden that connects people to the world of plants to create a greener, more beautiful, and more sustainable city. Situated on 52 acres in the heart of Brooklyn and open year-round, the Garden is home to more than 12,000 kinds of plants and over 30 specialty gardens. Each year, we welcome nearly 900,000 visitors.

FISCAL YEAR 2027 OUTLOOK

I want to thank the Council for prioritizing culture with its advocacy to baseline $30 million in Fiscal 2027 and the Mamdami administration's baselining of $10 million.

We are deeply grateful for the Council's role in baselining $45 million in Fiscal Year 2026 and adding an additional $30 million for the 39 CIG members. However, if the $20 million difference between what the Mayor has proposed in the Executive budget remains, the 39 CIGs will be forced to take massive cuts to our FY27 budgets. This will directly impact nearly 16,000 full- and part-time workers, 5,800 union members, and more than 6,000 artists and educators. In a city with $110 billion in revenue, a $20 million investment in

culture will keep these dedicated New Yorkers working and the revenue flowing from the cultural sector into the City's coffers.

SUPPORT IS CRITICAL TO SUSTAIN NEW YORK'S CULTURAL SECTOR

As an 115 year old institution, Brooklyn Botanic Garden has weathered many turbulent times and, with support from the city and private funders, has remained open serving New Yorkers and visitors from around the world. That history leads us to propose three ways the City and Council can better support cultural institutions:

First, end the budget insecurity that makes it so difficult to make long-term staffing and programming commitments by baselining the additional $30 million for CIGs.

Second, establish annual cost adjustments to keep pace with inflation and rising labor costs in arts and cultural organizations. Overall costs continue to climb, and we need a sustainable system that allows us to retain staff, grow responsibly, and provide fair pay for the cultural workforce.

Third, pursue much-needed capital project process reform with these three approaches:

- Create transparency by updating the open data portal for cultural capital projects, which has not been updated since 2021, and by holding a hearing so Council Members fully understand the issues.

- Plan responsibly by developing a cultural capital infrastructure plan that helps organizations build and maintain facilities more efficiently.

- Identify key process improvements so that cultural capital projects—which now often take 6–10 years or more—can move forward more quickly, allowing CIGs and other institutions to leverage City capital funding, preserve their buildings, and effectively serve their communities.

BBG'S WORK ALIGNS WITH THE CITY'S AFFORDABILITY AGENDA

Brooklyn Botanic Garden's work aligns closely with Mayor Mamdani's and the Council's affordability agenda by providing free and low-cost entry to beautiful landscapes, ecological education, and cultural experiences. Free and low-cost cultural opportunities, like museums and gardens, help make New York a world-class city by ensuring broad access to nature and culture. Botanic gardens in particular are leading the way on green solutions to the climate crisis inspiring visitors with beauty, and centering plants in ecological solutions to the most pressing issue of our time.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden is always free for all children under 12. Since the pandemic, we have expanded free access through our community ticket program, which now welcomes nearly 300,000 guests a year—available to anyone who requests a ticket; no questions asked. BBG's educational workshops, seasonal festivals, and environmental learning opportunities for children and adults express our core identity as a community-based cultural institution deeply embedded in the lives of our visitors. Through youth education, workforce development, and neighborhood environmental initiatives—such as street tree care, community garden mentoring, and urban gardening—we are fostering community cohesion and literally planting the seeds of a stronger city: more connected and more resilient in the face of climate change and social instability. Together, these efforts make the Garden an affordable, welcoming public resource that supports community well-being while advancing the City's broader goal of equitable access to essential cultural and environmental assets across the five boroughs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

Brooklyn Defenders

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TESTIMONY OF:

Brooklyn Defender Services

Submitted to
The New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Introduction

Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS) respectfully submits this testimony in support of critical discretionary funding requests for Fiscal Year 2027.

BDS is a multidisciplinary public defense office providing high-quality legal representation and advocacy to approximately 40,000 people annually across Brooklyn and Queens who face loss of freedom, family separation, deportation, housing instability, and other serious legal harms. Through our interdisciplinary model, BDS combines legal representation with social work, advocacy, and reentry support to address both the immediate legal crises faced by the people we represent and the broader barriers that threaten their long-term stability.

For FY27, BDS respectfully asks the Council to support a broad set of discretionary funding requests that address the interconnected needs of the communities we serve. These investments would sustain and expand programs that defend immigrant New Yorkers facing detention and deportation, help families navigate ACS investigations and avoid unnecessary separation, support people before and after incarceration, expand access to civil legal services, assist survivors of domestic violence involved in multiple legal systems, and protect the rights of people facing collateral harms related to criminal legal system involvement.

Within this broader set of requests, increased funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) is particularly urgent in FY27 due to the sharp escalation in federal immigration enforcement and detention. As more New Yorkers are arrested, detained, and transferred far from their families and communities, the need for robust immigration defense capacity has become especially acute. At the same time, Council support for BDS' other initiatives remain essential to meeting the full range of needs experienced by low-income New Yorkers across Brooklyn and Queens. Together, these programs help preserve due process, prevent family separation, support successful reentry, promote stability, and strengthen communities across New York City.

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FY27 Funding Requests Summary

Initiative / Priority	FY27 Funding Request	Purpose / Key FY27 Change
New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)	$13,299,000	Significant increase needed to respond to intensified immigration enforcement, expanded detention, due process barriers, and the urgent need for additional attorney and paralegal capacity to ensure detained New Yorkers facing deportation have counsel.
Right to Family Advocacy Project (Early Defense Initiative)	$850,000	Increase needed to address rising operational costs and expand community outreach after years of stagnant funding.
Jail Services & Pre-Entry to Re-Entry (Alternatives to Incarceration)	$200,000	Support for advocacy and reentry services before, during, and after incarceration.
Immigrant Community Action Project (Immigrant Opportunity Initiative)	$200,000	Full funding for legal services for low-income immigrants and families across all five boroughs.
Domestic Violence Empowerment (DOVE Initiative)	$200,000	Expansion of services for survivors impacted by domestic violence and overlapping involvement in criminal, family, and immigration legal systems.
Civil Justice & Legal Services (Speaker's Initiative)	$350,000	Expansion of civil legal services for low-income families through community partnerships and neighborhood-based access points.
Property Seizure Defense Project (Innovative Criminal Justice Programs)	$200,000	New funding request to protect the due process rights of people whose property has been seized and retained by the NYPD.
Discharge Planning	$500,000	Increased funding to expand mentorship, peer support, and vocational and educational advocacy for people returning home from incarceration.

Total FY27 Request: $15,799,000

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Detailed Funding Requests

1. New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)

FY27 Request: $13,299,000

The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) is the national model for universal representation for immigrants facing deportation. Since 2013, the NYIFUP providers—Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, and The Legal Aid Society—have provided robust legal representation and wraparound support for people in detained deportation proceedings. Over the last 13 years, this model has ensured that thousands of detained New Yorkers have not had to face the life-altering consequences of deportation alone.

For FY27, BDS is seeking a significant increase in funding for NYIFUP because immigration enforcement has intensified dramatically, detention has expanded, and the legal barriers facing detained immigrants have become more severe. New Yorkers are increasingly being arrested by ICE and swiftly transferred to detention facilities far from their families, lawyers, and communities. At the same time, immigrants are confronting rapidly shifting enforcement tactics, and those that are detained are facing accelerated case timelines and growing threats to due process, including barriers to bond hearings, diminished opportunities to appeal, and other practices that make it harder for people to secure release and defend themselves against removal.

These developments have created an urgent need to expand legal capacity among providers. Detained immigration cases are extraordinarily complex and fast-moving, often requiring legal teams to prepare for hearings and trial within weeks while also tracking client transfers, maintaining family communication, and pursuing emergency relief in federal court. Increased FY27 funding would allow BDS to hire additional attorneys and paralegals, expand its ability to respond to ICE enforcement in courts and communities, assist families trying to locate detained loved ones, continue representation when clients are transferred to distant facilities, and litigate federal habeas petitions to secure release from detention as quickly as possible.

This investment would also support technical assistance to community-based organizations and strengthen public education and Know Your Rights outreach for immigrant New Yorkers. BDS has worked with longstanding partners to build and share resources that help communities understand their rights during ICE encounters and respond when a loved one is detained. NYIFUP is an interdisciplinary model that pairs legal defense with broader support for clients and families, recognizing that detention and deportation destabilize entire households and communities. Increased Council support is necessary to ensure that detained New Yorkers facing deportation have access to counsel and that BDS can meet the urgency and scale of the current moment.

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2. Right to Family Advocacy Project (Early Defense Initiative)

FY27 Request: $850,000

The Right to Family Advocacy Project provides critical legal representation to families under investigation by the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Early intervention can be decisive in helping parents understand their rights, navigate ACS investigations, avoid unnecessary family separation, and address allegations before they escalate into deeper and longer-lasting harm.

This work also includes helping parents clear records of maltreatment findings, which can significantly affect employment opportunities, financial stability, and long-term family well-being. By providing representation at the earliest possible stage, BDS helps reduce the trauma and destabilization that ACS involvement can cause for parents and children alike.

For FY27, BDS is requesting increased support for this initiative. Funding has remained flat for seven years, even as the costs of staffing and operating these services—including salaries, rent, and healthcare—have risen substantially. The requested increase is necessary to sustain the project's capacity, preserve the quality of representation provided to families, and expand community outreach so that more parents can access support before family court involvement or unnecessary separation occurs.

3. Jail Services & Pre-Entry to Re-Entry (Alternatives to Incarceration)

FY27 Request: $200,000

BDS's Jail Services and Pre-Entry to Re-Entry advocacy teams provide a continuum of care for clients before, during, and after incarceration. These services are designed to reduce the harm caused by incarceration and support a successful return to the community.

Advocates work with clients to provide pre-entry mentoring, secure access to medical and mental health care while in custody, and support people upon release by helping them obtain housing, employment, therapeutic services, and other stabilizing resources. This work recognizes that the effects of incarceration extend well beyond confinement itself and that meaningful reentry support is essential to reducing disruption, strengthening family stability, and preventing future system involvement.

FY27 funding would support the continuation of this work and help BDS maintain a coordinated, client-centered model of care at every stage of incarceration and reentry.

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4. Immigrant Community Action Project (Immigrant Opportunity Initiative)

FY27 Request: $200,000

Through the Immigrant Community Action Project (ICAP), BDS provides a broad range of legal services to low-income immigrants and families across all five boroughs. Our interdisciplinary team of attorneys, BIA-accredited representatives, and social workers assist clients in non-detained removal proceedings and in applying for immigration relief and work authorization, including U visas, T visas, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), and related benefits.

These services are critical to helping immigrant New Yorkers preserve family unity, secure lawful status, maintain employment, and access safety and stability. ICAP serves individuals and families whose legal needs are often urgent and deeply intertwined with other challenges, including poverty, trauma, and contact with multiple systems.

For FY27, BDS is requesting $200,000 from the New York City Council to fully fund this program through the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative.

5. Domestic Violence Empowerment (DOVE Initiative)

FY27 Request: $200,000

BDS' Domestic Violence Empowerment (DOVE) Initiative supports people impacted by domestic violence who are also involved with the criminal, family court, and immigration legal systems and who may not be eligible for, or may not feel safe in, traditional domestic violence programs.

BDS' specialized social workers provide safety planning, counseling, crisis management, and referrals for housing and legal services. This model is especially important for survivors whose legal-system involvement creates additional barriers to support, including fear of arrest, concerns about child removal, or immigration-related consequences.

For FY27, BDS is seeking funding to expand this critical support network, including in Queens County and for individuals facing overlapping harms such as arrest, removal of their children, and/or deportation. Expanded support would allow BDS to reach more impacted people whose needs are often not fully addressed by conventional service models.

6. Civil Justice & Legal Services (Speaker's Initiative)

FY27 Request: $350,000

BDS serves more than 40,000 people annually across Brooklyn and Queens who face severe hardship caused by the criminal, family, and immigration legal systems. Our Civil

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Justice Practice provides specialized, wraparound legal services to address collateral consequences and interconnected civil legal needs, including housing instability, denial of public benefits, employment-related barriers, and other urgent challenges arising from legal system involvement.

Traditional civil legal services providers are often not equipped to address the complexity of these overlapping issues for system-involved individuals and families. BDS' interdisciplinary approach allows us to meet clients where they are and provide support tailored to the realities they face.

For FY27, BDS is requesting $350,000 through the Speaker's Initiative to expand our capacity to serve pre-screened, low-income families. This funding would strengthen community-based partnerships and support service delivery through our neighborhood offices in East New York, and Jamaica, Queens, helping ensure that clients can access support close to home and in the communities where they live.

7. Property Seizure Defense Project (Innovative Criminal Justice Programs)

FY27 Request: $200,000

BDS' Property Seizure Defense Project promotes and protects the due process rights of people whose property is seized and retained by the NYPD—a practice that disproportionately harms low-income New Yorkers of color.

Project staff work closely with criminal defense teams across Brooklyn and Queens to provide direct representation and advocacy for clients whose phones, identification, cash, vehicles, and other essential personal property have been confiscated. The loss of personal property can have immediate and destabilizing consequences for employment, housing, caregiving responsibilities, and a person's ability to navigate ongoing legal matters.

For FY27, BDS is requesting new funding for this initiative through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative. This investment would help ensure that New Yorkers are not subjected to prolonged deprivation of essential property without meaningful access to legal recourse.

8. Discharge Planning

FY27 Request: $500,000

BDS' discharge planning work begins before a person leaves custody and continues through their transition back into the community. While working to secure release, BDS partners with the people we represent, their families, and service providers to create individualized discharge plans that promote stability and reduce the risk of further system involvement.

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This work includes helping people secure housing, access therapeutic programs, identify appropriate alternative-to-incarceration placements, and restore public benefits, health insurance, school enrollment, and other essentials. Effective discharge planning is critical to helping people successfully return home and avoid the destabilizing consequences that often follow incarceration.

For FY27, BDS is requesting increased funding to expand one-on-one mentorship, peer support groups, and intensive vocational and educational advocacy for people recently released from jail or prison. This increased investment would allow BDS to deepen pre-entry services for people entering custody and strengthen post-release support so that more people can secure stable employment, reconnect with their communities, and build long-term stability after incarceration.

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Conclusion

BDS urges the Council to invest in the legal and social service programs that protect immigrant New Yorkers, keep families together, reduce the harms of incarceration, and promote dignity and stability in the communities we serve.

At a time when detained immigrants face escalating due process barriers, parents are at risk of unnecessary family separation, survivors of domestic violence face compounded legal-system involvement, and people returning home from incarceration continue to encounter significant obstacles to housing, employment, and support, these investments are essential. They preserve due process, strengthen communities, reduce the long-term human and fiscal costs of system involvement, and ensure that low-income New Yorkers can access the advocacy and services they need in moments of profound vulnerability.

BDS respectfully asks the Council to include these requests in the FY27 adopted budget and to continue its leadership in funding programs that advance fairness, safety, family unity, and community well-being across New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Contact Information

For any questions regarding these funding requests, please contact:

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LEGAL SERVICES NYC

TESTIMONY OF LEGAL SERVICES NYC

New York City Council
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings
June 10, 2026

My name is Nicole Salk. I have been a Senior Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services (BLS) for more than 29 years and have spent the last 20 years in the Workers' Rights and Benefits Unit. I am also a proud member of UAW local 2320. As part of my job, I provide advice and representation to low-wage workers who have experienced employment discrimination. I am testifying today regarding the importance of the New York City Human Rights Commission (CCHR) in enforcing the New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL).

BLS is part of Legal Services NYC, which is the largest civil legal services provider in the country and is dedicated to fighting poverty and seeking justice for more than 100,000 low-income New Yorkers annually. Legal Services NYC is part of the New York City Human Rights Law Working Group, a coalition of legal services organizations, civil rights advocates, and others which formed in 2014 to address the failure, at that time, of the CCHR to enforce the NYCHRL) effectively.

Thanks to the City Council, New York City has the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the country. The CCHR is tasked with enforcing the NYCHRL and for most working and poor residents of NYC, who may not be able to afford private attorneys to represent them in court, the Commission is one of the few places that they can turn to when they are the victims of discrimination.

The Executive Budget for the CCHR cuts the budget for the Commission by over 1.5 million dollars. This would be the first budget decrease in five years for the CCHR. To provide historical perspective, the CCHR has 112 staff members, which is approximately half the number of staff that the CCHR had under the Dinkins administration in 1992 - a time when the CCHR served fewer people and enforced less expansive laws. Under both the Giuliani and Bloomberg administrations, funding for the CCHR was decimated (in 2013 the CCHR had fewer than 60 employees) and the CCHR gained the reputation of a place to avoid if you wanted justice. Funding increased during the DeBlasio administration and the CCHR was able to begin to work toward fulfilling its mandates. From the beginning of 2022 through the end of 2025, the budget for the CCHR actually increased slightly each year.

In my experience representing low income people facing discrimination, the CCHR is the one place that working class and poor New Yorkers turn to when they are facing discrimination on the job, by a landlord, or when they need a reasonable accommodation for a disability. Folks who cannot afford to hire an attorney, immigrants, trans folks who can no longer file complaints with the Federal EEOC, and housing insecure tenants who are routinely denied apartments because of their source of income turn to the CCHR at some of the most difficult times of their lives.

The CCHR is a critical resource for low-income New Yorkers. The Commission's pre-complaint intervention helps hundreds of New Yorkers a year get immediate relief from continuing harm. In Fiscal Year 2025, the pre-complaint intervention team resolved 327 matters including 254 that involved source of income discrimination where tenants are unable to place their housing vouchers due to unlawful discrimination by landlords. (Source: https://www.nyc.gov/assets/cchr/downloads/pdf/publications/AnnualReport2025.pdf p. 34-35).

The Commission also gets significant damages for complainants and penalties for the City of New York. In FY25, through conciliations, mediated settlements, and withdrawals with benefits, the Commission obtained $15,689,122 in compensatory damages for complainants and $1,770,500 in civil penalties. *Id.* at p. 45.

Over the years, I have represented several clients at the Commission who experienced discrimination and retaliation on the job including discrimination based on race, religion, disability, and criminal records. Currently, I am representing a client who experienced severe sexual harassment at a job where she is still employed. CCHR staff who have handled these cases have shown themselves to be dedicated experts who are sensitive to complainants' trauma while at the same time developing the facts to build strong cases against very bad employers.

It is crucial for all New Yorkers that the Commission be fully staffed so that it can properly investigate and adjudicate violations of the Human Rights Law, particularly now when the Commission may be one of the few places that low-income New Yorkers can seek justice.

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BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

Grounded in community.
Advocating for all.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, GENERAL WELFARE COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING BY BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

June 4, 2026

Dear Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on General Welfare,

My name is Jessica Rose and I am testifying on behalf of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, doing business as Build Up Justice NYC (BUJNYC). BUJNYC has submitted several applications for renewed discretionary funding in Fiscal Year 2027 for our Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program, which provides legal representation and legal education and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent eviction, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and helps tenant organizations marshal the power of strength in numbers to protect the right to safe and sanitary housing. We have also submitted an application to support our Foreclosure Prevention work, which offers direct legal representation, advice, and appropriate referrals to protect home equity.

Our applications include $150,000 from Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers (2166139); $350,000 from the Speaker's Initiative (2214160); $40,000 from DoVE (2214334); $50,000 from Community Housing Preservation Strategies (2214362); $50,000 from Information and Referral Services (2214373); $50,000 from Stabilizing NYC (2214395); and $130,000 from the Foreclosure Prevention/Support Our Older Adults/Estate Planning initiatives (2214439).

BUJNYC's Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program operates in Brooklyn and Queens, using legal representation, brief advice/services, and legal education and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent eviction, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and helps tenant organizations marshal the power of strength in numbers to protect the right to safe and habitable housing. Last City fiscal year, the program handled more than 3,600 cases helping New Yorkers maintain housing stability and supported 20 tenant associations to fight for habitable living conditions. BUJNYC's presence in Queens has grown significantly since 2024 when we opened our PAH team for the borough. Last year, we handled 595 cases in the borough—185 of those were eviction prevention and tenant advocacy cases.

BUJNYC provides essential legal services to tenant groups, employing aggressive legal tactics to challenge the management authority of landlords that neglect affordable housing properties with the goal for the building and individual apartments to be repaired and rehabilitated so the tenants can live safely in their homes. Most of our housing work is funded by the Anti-Eviction: Full

Legal Representation (formerly the Homelessness Prevention Law Project), also known as the Right to Counsel program (RTC), and Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection (AHTP). AHTP provides tenants with access to justice and legal resources for affirmative and preventive services, diverting eviction cases from being brought to court and preserving and improving affordable housing. The crucial, full array of services offered by AHTP providers are distinct from, and complimentary to, the representation provided through the Anti-Eviction/Right to Counsel program.

BUJNYC has been on the front lines of preventing displacement for decades, responding to immediate needs and reinforcing and implementing the social safety net to protect vulnerable New Yorkers. BUJNYC not only addressed the needs of New Yorkers through the COVID-19 pandemic, but, as a Right to Counsel provider, we were also critically important once the pandemic eviction moratorium was lifted. Since then, the city's housing crisis has worsened significantly: a New York City Comptroller's report from last year found the total number of evictions rose 440% between 2020 and 2024, while representation in housing court dropped from 71% to 41% in roughly the same time period as demand grew.[1]

Another report from the NYC Independent Budget Office found that between 2019 and 2024, the number of housing cases that were eligible for RTC counsel "more than tripled," adding that "trends toward longer case lengths, increased eligibility, and stagnant funding have resulted in a reduced capacity for full legal representation."[2] The report also noted that RTC attorneys often make less than their government or private sector counterparts, and vacancy rates of 20% or more contribute to the strain. RTC needs to be fully funded so we can hire and retain skilled advocates, improve outcomes for NYC tenants, and deliver on the promise of Right to Counsel.

AHTP funding supports our work serving tenants looking to take action against their landlords. Our clients repeatedly suffer injustice and indignity of being forced to live in uninhabitable conditions. One notable example is our work with a group of tenants in Brooklyn (who will remain anonymous). The residents were told years ago by their landlord that their units would be demolished and rebuilt. Meanwhile, our clients and many of their neighbors across the multi-location complex have had to repeatedly demand their landlord address issues like mold, leaks, broken front doors, roaches, rats, holes in the floor and ceiling, no useable mailbox, and more. Some residents have even lost their Section 8 housing vouchers as a result of their units being deemed unfit to qualify for the subsidy. Without substantive updates on the rebuilding project and slow response times for repair issues, our clients find themselves trapped in unacceptably poor conditions.

These kinds of injustices are all too common among our clients and across the city. The city needs more robust enforcement of building violations to ensure that current issues are resolved and to pressure landlords moving forward into maintaining habitable units.

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[1] "Evictions Up, Representation Down: How New York City is Undermining the Right to Counsel." Office of NYC Comptroller. May 2, 2025. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/evictions-up-representation-down/

[2] "The Expansion of New York City's Right to Counsel Program." New York City Independent Budget Office. September 11, 2025. https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/content/publications/2025-september-the-expansion-of-nyc-right-to-counsel-program

There are procedural and structural bottlenecks in NYC Housing Court that materially undermine due process and case resolution, and they have been well-documented for years in formal court-system and bar reports, including:

- The NYS Unified Courts' Special Commission on the Future of the New York City Housing Court (2018), and follow up "Reforming New York City Housing Court: A One-Year Update" (2019)
- The NYS Unified Courts' Report and Recommendations of the Working Group on Regulatory Innovation (2020)
- The NYS Courts Annual Reports
- NYS Unified Courts' Access to Justice Program white paper on the Housing Court GAL model (2016)
- The NYC Bar Association's report on the Article 12 Guardian ad Litem Program (2025)

While the reports cited above address a wide range of Housing Court issues, we focus here on two structural issues that consistently emerge from both the literature and our daily practice: (1) a consistent intake process that connects litigants to the appropriate supports early, and (2) a sustainable Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program for tenants who cannot advocate for themselves. As a legal services provider working on the ground, we regularly witness the operational impact of these deficiencies and urge the Legislature to advance the long-overdue recommendations identified in the reports referenced above.

On intake, despite the RTC program, a core problem is the design of the process. When intake functions as "day-of-court triage," litigants arrive without meaningful screening, documentation, or connection to assistance, and cases that could have been stabilized early instead cycle through adjournments and missed opportunities. Our clients, already under severe housing stress, are forced to navigate a byzantine system before reaching legal services. In Queens housing court, this manifest through very short adjournment dates between the time a tenant files an answer in nonpayment proceedings, appears for their virtual intake part appearance, and has their in-person appearance. Although improved staffing levels have helped this issue somewhat, tenants are still given only two weeks between each step, leaving civil legal service providers with a short window to conduct intake, file the answer, and prepare the client to either litigate or settle.

The GAL program is likewise indispensable and under strain. The Article 12 Guardian ad Litem program serves as a court-appointed safeguard for Housing Court litigants who lack the capacity to adequately protect their rights. In other words, guardians can support some of the most vulnerable tenants by liaising with the court and attorneys and connecting the tenants to critical resources. Yet significant structural barriers limit its effectiveness, including inadequate funding and insufficient access to technology and confidential court space. Compensation often hinges on APS involvement and is paid as a flat fee that, given the demands of these cases, frequently amounts to de facto pro bono work, while some appointments remain entirely uncompensated despite being mandatory. As a legal services provider that relies heavily on non-lawyer professionals in the Housing Court ecosystem, we see these GAL constraints as a persistent, well-documented bottleneck. Addressing them would materially improve case flow, client stability, and the court's ability to reach durable resolutions for the most vulnerable tenants.

Fixing these longstanding, well-documented structural issues would immediately improve our effectiveness, reduce avoidable adjournments and defaults, and strengthen Housing Court's ability to reach legally sound outcomes for the litigants most at risk of being left behind.

Finally, BUJNYC and our fellow RTC providers continue to face unnecessary challenges created by delayed City contracts. A comptroller report from last year found that more than half of the City's roughly 7,000 unpaid invoices were owed to nonprofit organizations—totaling $861 million in promised but unpaid funds.[3] Our peers at Legal Services NYC are due nearly $30 million in unpaid contracts—more than 20 percent of the organization's annual budget—and have paid more than $600,000 in interest on bridge loans that were used to fill the gaps left by the City.[4] These delays force organizations to take on bridge loans to maintain cash flow for salaries and operations. Service providers that have maxed out their credit limit face the prospect of cutting jobs, which translates to fewer cases handled. We join our fellow civil legal service providers in calling on the City to take some clear, meaningful steps toward solutions, including increasing the staff for contract processing, issuing larger advances at the start of contract years, and reimbursing the interest nonprofits are forced to pay on bridge loans.

As New Yorkers continue to face the ongoing housing affordability crisis, we need fully funded civil legal service organizations to provide justice so no one is neglected simply because they cannot afford a private attorney. We urge this committee and the entire City Council to advocate for the improvements outlined above and champion civil legal services funding in the coming budget.

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Build Up Justice NYC offers a foreclosure prevention program which provides vulnerable homeowners throughout NYC with free direct legal representation, advice, and appropriate referrals to protect home equity. BUJNYC is one of the only legal services organizations in NYC whose foreclosure prevention practice includes complex bankruptcy cases as means to resolve the foreclosure, a strategy that is extremely effective at preventing foreclosure and allowing families to regain long-term financial stability. Last City fiscal year, we defended 370 individuals and families from foreclosure and/or discriminatory practices by predatory lenders, financial institutions, and home rescue scam artists. Of these homes, more than 80% were owned by people of color.

This year, we are applying for $130,000 the from Foreclosure Prevention/Support Our Older Adults/Estate Planning initiatives (reference number 2214439).

A November report from the Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN) found that foreclosures "surged" in the first half of 2025, nearly doubling the total from January to July of

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[3] "Comptroller Lander Spotlights Nonprofit Payment Delays in Follow-Up Report & Launches Audits of 3 Agencies with Worst Delays." Office of the New York City Comptroller. April 29, 2025. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-lander-spotlights-nonprofit-payment-delays-in-follow-up-report-launches-audits-of-3-agencies-with-worst-delays/

[4] "Opinion: Payment Delays to City's Legal Nonprofits Put Thousands at Risk." Keriann Pauls and Shevron Small. March 9, 2026. City Limits. https://citylimits.org/opinion-payment-delays-to-citys-legal-nonprofits-put-thousands-at-risk/

2024.[5] The threat of deed theft remains a concern for many homeowners as well—another report from CNYCN noted the NYC Sheriff's Office data shows 3,500 deed theft complaints between 2014 and 2020 primarily in historically Black neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens. Additionally, homeowners continue to feel significant pressure from rising insurance rates and higher-than-average property taxes, along with other housing costs, keeping housing cost burden rates high even among homeowners.

Historic racial disparities in foreclosure rates across New York City continue to this day. The CNYCN research found the same communities of color—largely Black but increasingly Hispanic and Latine—that were hardest hit by the 2008 financial crisis are again seeing some of the highest foreclosure rates. Many foreclosures are the result of predatory lending and lending scams, which target people with lower credit scores and less cash on hand. In New York City, these borrowers are often people of color. The elderly, whose wealth is more likely to lie in assets, such as their homes, are also more likely to be targeted.

We urge the City to continue pursuing enforcement and new policies that will protect homeowners from deed theft and other threats. Last year, BUJNYC was delighted to see the passing of Int 1086-2024, which we collaborated on with Council Member Nantasha Williams (now Deputy Speaker of the City Council). The bill aimed at preventing title clouding, a practice where bad actors file deed or mortgage documents on a property in an effort to distort who actually owns a property. The bill required the Department of Finance to notify the owner in a timely manner and via multiple channels whenever a document is filed for their property. We are eager to explore additional protections for New York City homeowners through legislation and policy.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jessica A. Rose, Esq.

Executive Director

Build Up Justice NYC

Jrose@buj.org

[5] "Home foreclosures are rising in NYC. Here's our map." David Brand. December 30, 2025. Gothamist. https://gothamist.com/news/home-foreclosures-are-rising-in-nyc-heres-our-map

BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

Grounded in community.
Advocating for all.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, HOUSING AND BUILDINGS COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING BY BUILD UP JUSTICE NYC

June 2, 2026

Dear Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings,

My name is Jessica Rose and I am testifying on behalf of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, doing business as Build Up Justice NYC (BUJNYC). BUJNYC has submitted several applications for renewed discretionary funding in Fiscal Year 2027 for our Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program, which provides legal representation and legal education and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent eviction, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and helps tenant organizations marshal the power of strength in numbers to protect the right to safe and sanitary housing.

Our applications include $150,000 from Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers (2166139); $350,000 from the Speaker's Initiative (2214160); $40,000 from DoVE (2214334); $50,000 from Community Housing Preservation Strategies (2214362); $50,000 from Information and Referral Services (2214373); and $50,000 from Stabilizing NYC (2214395).

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BUJNYC provides essential legal services to tenant groups, employing aggressive legal tactics to challenge the management authority of landlords that neglect affordable housing properties with the goal for the building and individual apartments to be repaired and rehabilitated so the tenants can live safely in their homes. Most of our housing work is funded by the Anti-Eviction: Full Legal Representation (formerly the Homelessness Prevention Law Project), also known as the Right to Counsel program (RTC), and Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection (AHTP). AHTP provides tenants with access to justice and legal resources for affirmative and preventive

services, diverting eviction cases from being brought to court and preserving and improving affordable housing. The crucial, full array of services offered by AHTP providers are distinct from, and complimentary to, the representation provided through the Anti-Eviction/Right to Counsel program.

BUJNYC has been on the front lines of preventing displacement for decades, responding to immediate needs and reinforcing and implementing the social safety net to protect vulnerable New Yorkers. BUJNYC not only addressed the needs of New Yorkers through the COVID-19 pandemic, but, as a Right to Counsel provider, we were also critically important once the pandemic eviction moratorium was lifted. Since then, the city's housing crisis has worsened significantly: a New York City Comptroller's report from last year found the total number of evictions rose 440% between 2020 and 2024, while representation in housing court dropped from 71% to 41% in roughly the same time period as demand grew.[1]

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These kinds of injustices are all too common among our clients and across the city. The city needs more robust enforcement of building violations to ensure that current issues are resolved and to pressure landlords moving forward into maintaining habitable units.

There are procedural and structural bottlenecks in NYC Housing Court that materially undermine due process and case resolution, and they have been well-documented for years in formal court-system and bar reports, including:

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Fixing these longstanding, well-documented structural issues would immediately improve our effectiveness, reduce avoidable adjournments and defaults, and strengthen Housing Court's ability to reach legally sound outcomes for the litigants most at risk of being left behind.

Finally, BUJNYC and our fellow RTC providers continue to face unnecessary challenges created by delayed City contracts. A comptroller report from last year found that more than half of the City's roughly 7,000 unpaid invoices were owed to nonprofit organizations—totaling $861 million in promised but unpaid funds.[3] Our peers at Legal Services NYC are due nearly $30 million in unpaid contracts—more than 20 percent of the organization's annual budget—and

have paid more than $600,000 in interest on bridge loans that were used to fill the gaps left by the City.[4] These delays force organizations to take on bridge loans to maintain cash flow for salaries and operations. Service providers that have maxed out their credit limit face the prospect of cutting jobs, which translates to fewer cases handled. We join our fellow civil legal service providers in calling on the City to take some clear, meaningful steps toward solutions, including increasing the staff for contract processing, issuing larger advances at the start of contract years, and reimbursing the interest nonprofits are forced to pay on bridge loans.

As New Yorkers continue to face the ongoing housing affordability crisis, we need fully funded civil legal service organizations to provide justice so no one is neglected simply because they cannot afford a private attorney. We urge this committee and the entire City Council to advocate for the improvements outlined above and champion civil legal services funding in the coming budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Jessica A. Rose, Esq.

Executive Director

Build Up Justice NYC

Jrose@buj.org

CAMBA Inc.

Testimony Before the New York City Council

Executive Budget Hearing

Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Council Member Linda Lee, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Valerie Barton-Richardson, and I serve as President and CEO of CAMBA, Inc. and CAMBA Housing Ventures, Inc.

CAMBA proudly serves individuals and families across all five boroughs of New York City. Our work is rooted in a comprehensive, client-centered approach that helps New Yorkers achieve stability and self-sufficiency through housing, education, workforce development, economic empowerment, family support, and community services.

CAMBA sees firsthand how public policy decisions affect the lives of New Yorkers and the organizations entrusted with delivering essential services. We appreciate the Council's continued commitment to strengthening the human services sector and urge you to prioritize the following investments and policy changes in the FY2027 budget.

SNAP Skimming and EBT Security

SNAP benefit theft continues to devastate low-income New Yorkers. Across CAMBA's programs and provider networks, we have seen a significant increase in clients reporting stolen benefits due to card skimming.

We are encouraged that the Enacted State Budget included approximately $25 million to transition New York to chip-enabled EBT cards, a long-overdue investment that will significantly reduce skimming fraud. However, we remain deeply concerned that the State did not establish a compensation fund for victims whose benefits have already been stolen.

According to testimony from HRA, rollout of chip-enabled cards is not expected to begin until January 2027. This leaves a lengthy period during which vulnerable New Yorkers will continue to lose critical food assistance with little or no recourse.

CAMBA urges HRA to work with the State to accelerate implementation of chip-enabled cards and continue providing education and technical assistance to both community-based

organizations and SNAP recipients on available fraud prevention measures, including card-freezing tools. While helpful, these interim solutions remain difficult for many older adults and individuals who are less comfortable using smartphone technology.

Learning to Work Programs

CAMBA strongly supports continued investment in the Learning to Work (LTW) program, which helps students in Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) earn their high school diplomas and develop meaningful postsecondary plans.

We appreciate the Mayor's inclusion of $31 million in baselined funding for LTW in the Executive Budget. However, NYC Public Schools' December 2025 Request for Proposals (R1231) outlined a program budget of $57.4 million. While current funding ensures continuity through June 2027, the City must identify an additional $14.4 million for FY2028 to fully implement the future LTW model.

CAMBA is equally concerned about substantial programmatic changes proposed in the RFP. For years, providers worked collaboratively with NYC Public Schools' Office of Student Pathways and contributed recommendations informed by program evaluations and research. Unfortunately, many of those recommendations were not reflected in the final RFP.

Several proposed changes threaten the effectiveness of a model that has successfully served some of the City's most vulnerable young people:

- Increasing Advocate Counselor caseloads from approximately 1:50 to 1:75 students.
- Maintaining manageable Advocate Counselor caseloads is essential to ensuring students receive both the intensive social-emotional support they need and the workforce and post-secondary planning services that help them succeed. These functions are mutually reinforcing, not competing priorities, and reductions in staffing capacity risk undermining students' ability to stay on track toward their long-term educational and career goals.
- Failing to adequately address the growing mental health and basic needs challenges facing students, which directly impact their engagement, persistence, and readiness for postsecondary and workforce opportunities.

The success of LTW has always been rooted in trusted relationships between students and community-based organizations. We urge NYC Public Schools to revisit these changes and preserve the elements that have made the program successful.

COMPASS

CAMBA submitted 11 proposals in response to the recent COMPASS solicitation, yet 10 were not selected for funding. Eight of those proposals were for schools where CAMBA is currently the provider and has delivered successful, high-quality afterschool programming for many years. As a COMPASS provider since 2005, CAMBA has built deep and lasting relationships with students, families, schools, and communities across New York City. The loss of these contracts is particularly concerning because it disregards the strong support CAMBA has received from

parents, principals, and school communities. At schools such as PS 170, where CAMBA has been a trusted partner for more than twenty years, families view the organization as far more than an afterschool provider. For some parents, CAMBA served them as children, and now their own children participate in programs led by the same dedicated staff. These multi-generational relationships have created a foundation of trust, stability, and community connection that cannot be easily replicated.

While we recognize the City's goal of expanding COMPASS programming and increasing provider reimbursement rates, the implementation of this procurement has created significant disruption for schools and families. The lack of transparency surrounding the selection process and the rollout of the new contracts has made it extremely challenging to plan for the summer and prepare for the upcoming school year. Given the critical role COMPASS programs play in supporting working families and providing safe, enriching environments for young people, greater transparency and a more thoughtful transition process are essential to ensure that communities do not lose the trusted partnerships they have relied upon for years.

Adult Literacy Services

Adult literacy remains one of the most effective pathways to economic mobility. An estimated two million New York City adults either have limited English proficiency or lack a high school diploma. CAMBA's adult literacy programs provide English language instruction, adult basic education, and high school equivalency preparation that help New Yorkers secure better jobs, support their families, and fully participate in civic life.

The 2024 Department of Youth and Community Development Adult Literacy RFP introduced restrictive geographic eligibility requirements that prevented many experienced providers from competing for funding, despite strong outcomes and significant community demand.

As a result, thanks to the City Council's historic $16.5 million investment in FY25 and FY26 has become essential to maintaining adult literacy services throughout the city. CAMBA's adult literacy programs rely on Council discretionary funding as their primary source of support and have served, or expect to serve, more than 3,100 students over the last and coming fiscal years.

Without renewed funding, many organizations excluded from the current DYCD portfolio will be forced to eliminate classes after June 30. We therefore urge the Council to increase its investment to $18 million and continue supporting these critical services until a more equitable and sustainable citywide funding structure is established.

Resettlement Services for Immigrants (NYC-IRI)

Immigrant Resettlement Services and Workforce Development at CAMBA is requesting a $1 million investment in its resettlement work as part of the $5 million New York City Immigrant Resettlement Initiative (NYC-IRI). Council support will strengthen a coordinated citywide partnership among New York City’s five resettlement agencies—CAMBA, Catholic Charities,

Church World Service (CWS), Commonpoint, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC)—to assist approximately 4,000 newly arrived immigrants in establishing stable, self-sufficient lives in New York City. Through coordinated, evidence-based service delivery, this initiative will promote community stability and economic opportunity across all five boroughs.

With more than five decades of resettlement experience, CAMBA's Immigrant Resettlement Services team provides holistic support to over 1,000 newly arrived individuals each year. The newcomers we serve arrive with resilience, valuable skills, and a strong desire to contribute to their communities and workforce. However, they often face significant barriers, including limited English proficiency, unfamiliar labor markets, and the challenge of rebuilding their careers while meeting immediate housing, health, and family needs. CAMBA's integrated services help immigrants overcome these obstacles, secure employment, and build pathways toward long-term self-sufficiency. Immigration enforcement, rapidly shifting federal policies, changing eligibility rules, and significant funding losses have intensified this need.

Legal Services

In FY 27, the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition is respectfully asking the City Council to enhance the allocation of each of the 5 Coalition partners (CAMBA, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Mobilization for Justice, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and Take Root Justice) from $455,000 to $600,000. The Legal Services for the Working Poor initiative, which is a part of Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers, 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. It is *vitally* important that the City Council not only continue to support this flexible funding stream but increase its funding 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 invest in civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers allocation in particular.

CAMBA also strongly supports continued investment in immigration legal services. As immigrants navigate increasingly complex legal systems, access to free and affordable legal representation is essential. Without these critical services, families face heightened risks of family separation, economic instability, and barriers to accessing vital public resources. Sustained funding for community-based organizations ensures that immigrants receive trusted legal support, strengthens families and communities, and enables newcomers to fully participate in and contribute to the social and economic vitality of New York City.

Human Services Workforce and Contracting Reform

CAMBA supports Intro 0452, sponsored by Council Member Althea Stevens, which would establish wage requirements for City-contracted human service workers and require agencies to fund those wages through contracts and monitor implementation.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing wage equity for the nonprofit workforce. With nonprofit human services workers earning approximately 30% less than their counterparts in government to close this longstanding pay gap by passing Int 0452, the Wage Equity Legislation. By creating a new wage requirement system that aligns nonprofit and City job titles and salaries, this bill would move beyond short-term fixes and establish a systematic approach to ensuring nonprofit worker wages do not stagnate or suffer from wage compression over time. This legislation represents a critical step toward achieving real, lasting wage equity for the dedicated workforce that delivers essential services to New Yorkers every day thus ensuring a more sustainable sector overall.

At the same time, providers continue to face serious challenges related to delayed contract payments and unresolved contract closeouts. CAMBA is currently owed significant reimbursements dating back to FY22 across multiple city contracts. Agencies often prioritize closing out the most recent fiscal years while older years remain unresolved, creating growing financial and audit concerns. In the past 12 months alone, CAMBA submitted 268 invoices totaling approximately $40 million for prior fiscal years.

Monthly payment processes are similarly inconsistent. Invoices are frequently returned after only partial review, resulting in multiple rounds of revisions and lengthy delays. Budget modifications often encounter similar inefficiencies. More collaborative review processes and comprehensive feedback would significantly reduce administrative burdens for both providers and agencies while accelerating payments.

Restore Prevention Services Funding

Finally, CAMBA urges the Administration and the Council to immediately restore the proposed $2.7 million reduction to ACS prevention services. Prevention services are among the City's most effective investments. They strengthen families, keep children safely at home, and reduce the need for far more costly interventions later. If these cuts move forward, four provider agencies—including CAMBA—will be affected, along with 49 staff positions and approximately 360 families in Bushwick and Brownsville, Brooklyn.

The uncertainty created by these proposed reductions is already having serious consequences. Providers have paused hiring, withdrawn employment offers, delayed program expansions, begun preparing for potential layoffs, and halted the enrollment of new high need families. Families and frontline staff deserve certainty now, not after June 30. We urge the Administration to restore these funds immediately and provide written assurances to affected providers so they can continue delivering services without interruption.

Conclusion

CAMBA is committed to partnering with the City to address the complex challenges facing New Yorkers. Whether through housing stability, education, workforce development, immigrant support, food security, or family services, we see every day how strategic public investments transform lives.

We thank the Council for its leadership and urge you to protect and strengthen the programs and services that thousands of New Yorkers depend upon every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Valerie Barton- Richardson
President & CEO
CAMBA Inc./ CAMBA Housing Venture

New York City Council
Committees on Finance and Immigration
Council Chambers - City Hall
FY 2027 Budget Request for an LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal Services Fund

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

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair and members of the Committee on Finance and Immigration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Mohamed Q. Amin. I am the Founder and Executive Director of the Caribbean Equality Project—New York City's only Caribbean LGBTQ+ immigrant rights organization. We are also a proud steering committee member of the New York City Trans and Queer Coalition, representing more than 70 LGBTQ+-led and -serving organizations.

Today, I come before you to request the creation of New York City's first LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal Services Fund: a $15 million FY27 budget demand that will save lives.

This is not just policy. It is a lifeline for thousands of Black, AAPI, Indo-Caribbean, and Latinx LGBTQ+ immigrants who have lived in the shadows, fearful of ICE and denied the legal protections they deserve.

The $15 million LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal Services Fund will:

- Provide direct legal services, "Know Your Rights" trainings, and immigration support;
- Fund community-based organizations already serving LGBTQ+ immigrant communities;
- Expand access to safe housing, healthcare, and social services;
- Ensure that care is culturally competent, language-accessible, and explicitly affirming of LGBTQ+ identities.

The proposal recommends:

- **$7.5 million to create a new Speaker Citywide Initiative**, allocated to non-profit organizations that have applied for City Council discretionary funding; and
- **$7.5 million to expand the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs'** existing services by adding additional LGBTQ+-specialized attorneys and social workers.

LGBTQ+ immigrants live at the intersection of invisibility and terror. We fled countries where our existence is criminalized. We crossed oceans and borders, risking everything to reach New York—a city that promised safety and dignity.

But what did we find?

A legal system never designed for us. Immigration courts, where 60–70 percent of LGBTQ+ immigrants cannot access legal representation. Language barriers that silence us. Cost barriers that exclude us. ICE raids at the very clinics where we are meant to be protected.

New York City has a long history of funding immigrant legal services. Yet not a single dollar in the current budget is dedicated specifically to LGBTQ+ immigrants.

That must end. We call on the New York City Council to create our city's first LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal Services Fund.

This Fund means that transgender asylum seekers from Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, and Guyana will have attorneys who understand their story and fight for their safety—like Tiffany Jade Munroe and Bianey Garcia.

This Fund means that young queer people from Nigeria, Bangladesh, Colombia, and Malaysia—detained, traumatized, and terrified—will have someone who sees their humanity and defends their dignity.

This Fund means that our communities will finally have the resources and the respect we deserve.

Let me be clear: without legal representation, LGBTQ+ asylum seekers have approval rates as low as 10–20 percent. With representation, those rates jump to 50–70 percent.

That is the difference between life and death. Between safety and deportation. Between justice and abandonment.

We are demanding that you invest in access to the legal protections that our labor, our tax dollars, and our lives make possible. We are asking to be seen. To be valued. To belong.

For over a decade, the Caribbean Equality Project has hosted healing spaces, facilitated legal services, and organized communities. Right now, we are serving over 650 LGBTQ+ asylum seekers—and 90 percent of our undocumented community members do not have access to legal services.

Let that sink in: 90 percent are navigating life-or-death cases alone.

Our budget proposal is a transformative investment in legal services specifically designed for LGBTQ+ immigrants in New York City.

The proposal calls for the creation of a dedicated LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal and Justice Fund, allocating $15 million annually to address critical gaps in immigration legal services, cultural competency, accessibility, and community-centered legal advocacy for this uniquely vulnerable population.

We estimate that there are 150,000 to 200,000 LGBTQ+ immigrants in our city, with approximately 60–70 percent unable to access the legal services they need. There is roughly one immigration attorney per 1,000 undocumented immigrants nationwide, and New York City faces a severe shortage of LGBTQ+-affirming providers.

LGBTQ+ asylum seekers face significantly slower processing times and lower approval rates than their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts. Language barriers prevent about 60 percent of undocumented immigrants from accessing legal help, and the cost of immigration representation—ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 or more—places it out of reach for most LGBTQ+ immigrants.

Fear of immigration enforcement prevents many from seeking help at all, even when they face acute legal needs. Current funding streams do not prioritize LGBTQ+-affirming capacity or cultural competency.

LGBTQ+ youth are already overrepresented in homelessness. For queer youth seeking asylum, rapid rule changes, limited access to legal services, and the loss of housing vouchers further endanger a deeply vulnerable population.

Youth come to New York with complex trauma. Many have fled their home countries due to systemic persecution, abuse, neglect, or violence from families and communities that rejected their gender identity or sexual orientation. This is especially true for transgender refugees and asylum seekers, who are visibly gender nonconforming and therefore particularly vulnerable to violence and persecution.

But the trauma does not stop when they board a plane or cross a border. LGBTQ+ asylum seekers face disproportionate rates of violence in transit zones and often arrive in the United States with little or no financial resources.

Without proper mental health, immigration, and housing support, LGBTQ+ youth are at heightened risk of mental health crises. Many immigrants are currently ineligible for forms of shelter or housing assistance available to citizens or those with lawful status, such as Section 8 or CityFHEPS. Without access to these benefits, they are forced into homelessness, compounding pre-existing trauma and creating additional life-threatening stressors.

The financial difficulty of navigating an increasingly expensive immigration system plays a central role in shaping our clients' experiences with housing, employment, and mental health. Recent changes to federal filing fee waivers, Employment Authorization Document (EAD) rules, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) have created confusion, instability, and new financial barriers.

To best serve youth, we need lawyers who understand the legal landscape for unaccompanied youth and are funded to cover the rising legal fees that nonprofits are currently absorbing without additional support.

LGBTQ+ immigrants in New York City face compounded barriers—from legal insecurity to housing instability and lack of access to affirming services—yet there is currently no dedicated funding stream tailored to their unique needs. No one should be left behind, regardless of immigration status or identity.

By increasing the capacity of individual non-profits to hire in-house legal staff—while also reinforcing existing city programs—LGBTQ+ immigrants will have far greater access to affirming legal services that understand their specific legal and personal needs.

This Fund is not a luxury. It is a moral and practical necessity. It is how we honor the lives of those who have already been lost, and how we protect the ones who are still searching for safety.

On behalf of the Caribbean Equality Project, a steering committee member of the New York City Trans and Queer coalition, and on behalf of the 650 LGBTQ+ asylum seekers we serve today, and on behalf of the tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ immigrants across our city, we ask this Council:

- Create New York City's first LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal Services Fund.
- Invest $15 million in the lives, the dignity, and the futures of LGBTQ+ immigrants.
- Create a New York that is truly safe, just, and affirming for all.

Don't hesitate to contact me at Mohamed@CaribbeanEqualityProject.org or by phone at 347.709.3179 if you have any questions. To learn more about the Caribbean Equality Project, visit https://www.caribbeanequalityproject.org.

In Solidarity & Respect,



Mohamed Q. Amin
Founder & Executive Director
Caribbean Equality Project

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

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

Good afternoon, my name is Mohamed Q. Amin, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Caribbean Equality Project —New York City's only Caribbean LGBTQ+ immigrant rights organization. Thank you very much to the Committee on Finance and City Council Members for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to testify.

The Caribbean Equality Project is a proud member of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, which unites over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members. We advocate as a collective, in solidarity, to hold New York City accountable for providing the necessary resources to serve and empower the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other communities of color, as "We Are Building A Community Too Powerful To Ignore."

AAPI communities across New York City are historically underserved and under-supported, directly due to the marginalization of the community. Though AAPI New Yorkers represent almost 18% of the population, the community struggles to be seen as worthy of city resources. AAPI communities need access to health insurance, linguistic accessibility across institutions and agencies, childcare, legal services, housing, educational support, domestic violence support, and so much more. The need for resources often falls on the shoulders of CBOs and nonprofits to fill the gap created by the city government. This is an equity issue in the budget and consistently gets in the way of AAPI communities truly feeling supported.

Funding from the City Council AAPI Community Support Initiative supports CEP's 6-year operating Food Justice Initiative and 11-year-running Unchained program.

The Food Justice program addresses food insecurity and economic hardship among low-income Indo-Caribbean and AAPI households, immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, older adults, and families experiencing financial instability. Through community food distributions, culturally

relevant food access programs, nutrition education, resource navigation, and referrals to supportive services, the initiative helps reduce hunger, improve food access, and connect community members to broader health and social service resources.

Unchained is CEP's culturally responsive support and empowerment program for Afro and Indo-Caribbean LGBTQ+ Caribbean New Yorkers, with a particular focus on immigrants, asylum seekers, transgender and gender-expansive people, and those facing social isolation or discrimination. The program provides peer support groups, mental health and healing justice programming, leadership development opportunities, community-building activities, educational workshops, resource navigation, and referrals to affirming health, legal, housing, and social services. Unchained creates safe spaces for participants to build community, strengthen resilience, access critical resources, and develop the skills and support networks necessary to thrive.

Together, these programs improve health, well-being, social connectedness, and access to essential resources while advancing CEP's mission of creating safer, healthier, and more equitable communities throughout New York City.

Caribbean Equality Project urges the New York City Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign which include expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million, Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million, and the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million, to take further steps in not envisioning, but truly creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for our diverse diaspora.

Additionally, while we are pleased that the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget extends and baselines funding for several education initiatives, other critical education programs are excluded and currently benefit thousands of NYC students and their families.

The following programs are funded for this year only and are, therefore, at risk of being rolled back or eliminated as soon as this July. This would negatively impact the 18.7% of NYCPS students who identify as Asian. We support the asks of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, which include:

- **$6M for Restorative justice efforts to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended**
    - Pacific Islander students are suspended at disproportional rates - data shows 4.5 percent of Pacific Islander students, including 6.2 percent of Pacific Islander boys.
- **$5M for the mental health continuum, which provides mental healthcare to students at 50 schools.**
    - 80% of Asian Americans have experienced bullying, in-person or online. According to CDC data, suicide was the leading cause of death among Asian

Americans aged 15–24, and the second leading cause of death among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. A study conducted by the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign found that 1 in 4 young Asian Americans has personally experienced anti-Asian hate.
    - We particularly need additional funding to support the expansion of the mental health continuum to schools with large AAPI populations. Currently, no school in the network serves the majority of AAPI students.
- **$4M for Immigrant family communications and outreach to help families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access.**
    - This is the avenue through which many families can stay involved in their students' education and access relevant opportunities. 18% of NYCPS students identified as English Language Learners, while approximately 44% of students enrolled with a primary language other than English. Many of the ELL/MLL students speak languages prevalent in AANHPI communities.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to restore and baseline funding for these programs in the final FY 2027 budget so that students and families can continue to benefit from these programs next year and beyond.

Thank you very much for your time.

Don't hesitate to contact me at Mohamed@CaribbeanEqualityProject.org or by phone at 347.709.3179 if you have any questions. To learn more about the Caribbean Equality Project, visit https://www.caribbeanequalityproject.org.

In Solidarity & Respect,



Mohamed Q. Amin
Founder & Executive Director
Caribbean Equality Project

Hello, Chair Lee and members of the City Council. I'm Nadia Chait, the Senior Director of Policy & Advocacy at CASES, which serves over 12,000 people annually. We know that NYC's most deeply rooted problems are solved by supporting, not jailing, people. Our programs do what jails and punitive programming cannot: restore hope by giving people opportunities to heal, grow, and succeed in their communities. This year's budget must increase investments in essential programs to support safety and mental wellbeing in our communities.

Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) & Reentry Funding

We applaud the restoration of funding for ATI programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, including increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments represent an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

At the same time, additional investment is needed to bring these programs to scale. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the Coalition's services generated more than $60 million in savings for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an **additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding** through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable our 12 coalition organizations to serve more New Yorkers and further expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

Double Funding for the Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative - $6.89 million

The Council's Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative funds critical mental health services for our young people. After years of stagnant funding at 3.425 million, the Council must double funding in FY27 to $6.89m to expand access to care and invest in true public safety. The initiative currently supports mental health services for 3,000 young people served annually by 21 providers across New York City. By funding training and technical assistance, the Council ensures youth receive evidence-based, high-quality screenings, assessment and care.

Over 65% of young people in the juvenile justice system have a mental health challenge, and the number of young people in juvenile detention in NYC increased by an alarming 26% just from 2024 to 2025. Instead of incarcerating our young people, we must fund programs that allow them to thrive at home while receiving treatment and services tailored to their unique needs. Expanded funding is essential to serve more young people at more programs throughout the City, as many programs currently face waitlists and an inability to meet the need in the community.

CASES requests **$300,000** to maintain the current support for our Adolescent Portable Therapy (APT) program while expanding mental health support across our portfolio of youth programs. APT served 44 young people and families last year, providing clinical assessment, cognitive behavioral therapy and caregiver support. City Council funding allows CASES to provide services voluntarily, helping families address challenges at home and reduce risky behaviors.

Eliminate the Waitlists for ACT & IMT - $28.5 million
CASES is one of the City's largest providers of intensive, mobile mental health treatment, with 9 Assertive Community Treatment Teams and 7 Intensive Mobile Treatment teams. We know that when individuals have access to the holistic, intensive support these teams provide, they live successfully in their communities and avoid hospitalization, incarceration and homelessness.

Unfortunately, too many individuals spend months waiting to receive this level of care, as there are not enough of these teams currently. Individuals who need intensive mental health services and are not receiving it will continue to experience mental health crises. Lack of adequate treatment puts individuals at risk for suicide and self-harm, criminal legal system involvement, and homelessness. This year's budget should include $22m more for intensive mobile treatment (IMT) teams than the Executive Budget proposes, along with $4.5m more for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and $2m more for Forensic Assertive Community Treatment. These investments are critical to meet the mental health needs of individuals who might otherwise be incarcerated on Rikers Island, and for the City to have the community services available to be able to successfully close Rikers.

Establish an Outpatient Competency Restoration Pilot Program - $1.7 million
New York State law allows for individuals in need of competency restoration to be restored in an outpatient setting. This rarely occurs, however, as there are no community-based restoration programs. Instead, individuals spend months on Rikers waiting for a bed in a state-operated forensic psychiatric center, while their mental health decompensates. These individuals often have the slowest case processing times, and many individuals end up needing to be restored more than once as they do not receive adequate ongoing care while incarcerated.

The City should move to fund an outpatient competency restoration pilot, to restore appropriate individuals in the community. This would free up state hospital beds for those who truly need inpatient restoration, speed up case processing times by removing the wait for a bed, and provide individuals with continuity of care in the community, to ensure long-term engagement with mental health services, including after the conclusion of the criminal case. A pilot could serve 50-75 individuals annually, and would be added to the services of an existing OMH-licensed mental health clinic.

A pilot program would require a Psychologist to serve as the program director, an administrative assistant, a psychiatrist, two licensed clinicians, two court/OMH liaisons, and two forensic peer specialists. The pilot should also include funding for technical assistance from one of the existing outpatient restoration programs in the many jurisdictions that provide for this, and for an external evaluation of the pilot to evaluate

success and ensure that, if effective, the pilot is scaled appropriately and does not languish as a limited pilot forever.

To fund these investments, the Council should further shrink the inflated budget of the Department of Correction. While we are pleased to see a headcount reduction in the executive budget, eliminating the remaining vacancies would save an additional $95.6m annually. Significant savings could also be achieved by reducing overtime spending, including the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where over 100 officers are still assigned. We also oppose the Executive Budget proposal to add 580 more police officers, amid a surge of low-level arrests that do not contribute to public safety and put community members with mental health challenges at significant risk of incarceration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Nadia Chait

nchait@cases.org

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

191 Joralemon Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director
Catholic Community Relations Council
New York City Council Finance Committee and Committee on General Welfare
Food Insecurity

June 4, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Lee, Chair Hudson and members of the Finance Committee and Committee on General Welfare. I am Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council representing Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens.

Catholic Charities of both the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens have been providing shelter, food, and other essential services to New Yorkers for over one century. We construct and own thousands of affordable housing units for the elderly, formerly homeless and working families. Our developmental, health and vocational programs assist New Yorkers from infancy to homebound seniors, and we aid immigrants and refugees with "Know Your Rights" seminars, legal assistance, and telephone hotline referral services.

Both Charities combined operate over 80 food pantries throughout the five boroughs serving more than 18 million meals annually. We have faced many challenges over the years, but the current food insecurity crisis is particularly daunting. It can be attributed to many factors such as the increase in food costs, the rising poverty rate of New Yorkers, the large number of households who are rent burdened and paying over 50% of their income on rent, and even more significantly, the unprecedented federal governmental attacks on programs that feed hungry Americans.

We thank the City Council for recognizing and working to stem this growing crisis by creating the $15 million Feeding Our Communities program in FY '26 and allocating our four coalition partners $1 million each. This is an indispensable initiative, and we request that it be part of the FY'27 budget with the funding increased to $25 million with each of our coalition nonprofit providers - Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese, Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens, the Met Council on Jewish Poverty and the Hispanic Federation receiving $2 million.

Another crucial program is the Community Food Connection which assists hundreds of individual food pantries City wide, and we urge it to be baselined in the FY'27 budget in the amount of $100 million.

As we have seen the number of people at our food pantries increase significantly, we are not just feeding more families, seniors, and children. Recent clients include college students, college graduates who are unemployed or underemployed, youth aging out of foster care and new immigrants and refugees. A 2025 report by State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli estimates that 1 of 9 households in New York City are affected by food insecurity. That adds up to over one million New Yorkers.

The federal government's assault on our nation's food programs has been relentless. Both Catholic Charities relied on the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program, and each received over $900,000 from this initiative annually. This program was at first placed on "hold" and then terminated in 2025.

An even more daunting challenge are the changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") that were enacted through last years "One Big Beautiful Bill Act." SNAP provides a lifeline for hungry Americans and the elimination of $186 billion from the program is particularly troubling. This funding cut will not only increase the number of Americans facing hunger on a daily basis but will lead to broader economic and health challenges such as an increase in medical issues and hospitalizations. The new work requirements for SNAP recipients that went into effect on June 1st will only increase the burden on hungry New Yorkers.

Our City has always pulled together to protect our fellow New Yorkers. We cannot allow our neighbors to go hungry. We therefore urge that the FY'27 City budget include $25 million for Feeding Our Communities, and $100 million for the Community Food Connection, two absolutely critical programs that provide emergency food pantry funding to help us and our nonprofit partners feed New Yorkers.

Thank you.

Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Magdalena Barbosa, Director of Legal Services
Catholic Migration Services
June 10, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Magdalena Barbosa, and I am the Legal Director at Catholic Migration Services (CMS), a direct legal services organization affiliated with Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens. With offices in Downtown Brooklyn and Sunnyside, Queens, CMS provides free legal services and community education to immigrants and low-income New Yorkers in the areas of immigration, housing, and employment law.

Through comprehensive legal representation, advocacy, and community outreach, CMS helps individuals and families secure stable housing, protect their rights in the workplace, and navigate the complexities of the immigration system. We also believe deeply in the power of collaboration and work closely with our partners, community-based organizations and other legal services organizations, to expand access to justice and maximize our collective impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding CMS's FY27 budget priorities and the critical investments needed to support New York City's immigrant and low-income communities.

I. The Urgent Need for Increased Funding for Immigration Legal Services

It is imperative that New York City increase funding for immigration legal services. For decades, the demand for free immigration legal assistance has far exceeded the capacity of nonprofit providers. Today, that need is more urgent than ever—not only because so many immigrant New Yorkers remain unrepresented, but also because they are navigating an increasingly complex, rapidly changing, and often hostile immigration system.

Investing in immigration legal services promotes access to justice and due process, helps keep families together, strengthens economic stability, and fosters safer, more resilient communities. As demand for immigration assistance continues to grow, increased funding is essential to ensure that low-income immigrants, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable New Yorkers can obtain the legal support they need to navigate complex proceedings, secure lawful status, and continue contributing to the social and economic vitality of our city.

City Council funding has been critical to CMS' ability to maintain and adapt its immigration legal services during a period of unprecedented demand. CMS relies on Council-supported initiatives, including Legal Services for the Working Poor and the Speaker's Initiative, to sustain key components of our immigration practice. CMS respectfully request $100,000 for each initiative.

II. Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN)

The City Council must renew and expand funding for the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN), a vital initiative that supports CMS's Pro Se Plus Program (PSPP). Established in late 2022 in response to the unprecedented arrival of thousands of migrants to New York City following the pandemic, PSPP was specifically designed to meet the urgent legal needs of individuals placed in removal proceedings.

Through PSPP, CMS provides unrepresented immigrants with ongoing legal support as they navigate the complex immigration system. Services include legal orientations, screenings, individualized legal advice, assistance with asylum and employment authorization applications, and support with immigration court motions, all under the supervision of experienced legal professionals.

PSPP's scalable and flexible model enables CMS and its partner organizations to maximize resources, coordinate expertise, and respond rapidly to emerging needs. This adaptability is especially important given the constantly evolving and increasingly hostile immigration legal landscape. **Continued and expanded investment in ASLAN to $4.841 million will ensure that vulnerable New Yorkers can access the critical legal assistance they need to pursue protection, stability, and due process**.

III. Low Wage Worker Support Initiative

CMS strongly supports the renewal and expansion of the Low-Wage Worker Support Initiative, the City's only dedicated funding stream for employment-related legal services serving low-wage and immigrant workers. This funding plays a critical role in promoting economic stability for some of New York City's most vulnerable residents. Wage theft, workplace exploitation, unlawful retaliation, and other labor violations remain pervasive, making continued investment in legal services for low-wage workers as urgent as ever. The Low-Wage Worker Support Initiative has proven to be an effective and essential response to these challenges.

While we appreciate the longstanding commitment to this critical program, **the City Council must increase Low-Wage Worker Support funding to $3 million in FY27**. CMS and many of our partner organizations have operated under essentially the same funding levels for nearly a decade. Over that period, the costs of delivering these services—including personnel, rent, technology, and other operational expenses—have increased substantially. Additional funding is necessary to ensure that providers can sustain and expand services to meet growing demand while maintaining high-quality representation and advocacy. Moreover, every dollar invested in this initiative generates a significant return by helping workers recover unpaid wages and secure the protections to which they are legally entitled.

Workers who have the courage to come forward and report violations deserve access to legal counsel that can help them vindicate their rights, recover stolen wages, and protect them from unlawful retaliation. The Low-Wage Worker Support Initiative is indispensable to ensuring that these workers are not forced to choose between their livelihoods and their rights. Continued and expanded funding is essential to preserving access to justice and promoting fair workplaces across New York City.

IV. Stabilizing NYC and Community Housing Preservation Strategies

New York City should renew and expand both the Stabilizing NYC initiative and the Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) program, which provide critical funding for CMS's Housing Unit, comprised of both legal and tenant organizing staff. For years, these programs have served as essential lifelines for New York City's most vulnerable communities, protecting low-income, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and immigrant tenants from displacement and the loss of affordable housing caused by predatory equity practices and speculative investment.

Stabilizing NYC combines legal services, advocacy, and community organizing to build tenant associations and coalitions that fight for safe and habitable housing through grassroots direct action, outreach, tenant rights education, leadership development, and legal representation. Over the past 12 years, tenants supported by Stabilizing NYC have achieved significant victories both in court and through collective action, while also partnering with the City Council to advance stronger tenant protections and housing policies.

CHPS supports more than 45 community-based organizations, including CMS, that work across New York City to prevent evictions and displacement and preserve affordable housing. Through legal assistance, code enforcement advocacy, housing court support, tenant education, apartment repossession assistance, and interventions on critical health and safety issues such as heat and fire protection, CHPS-funded organizations provide indispensable services to low-income, BIPOC, and immigrant tenants and homeowners.

Despite their proven impact, both programs face growing challenges. Funding levels have remained largely stagnant for more than a decade. At the same time, community needs have intensified, while persistent delays in city contracting and reimbursement processes continue to place significant financial strain on service providers.

CMS strongly supports increasing funding for Stabilizing NYC to $5.7 million and CHPS to $5.37 million. These investments are necessary to sustain and expand programs that have demonstrated success in stabilizing tenants, preserving affordable housing, and strengthening communities. Increased funding will allow organizations like CMS to reach more buildings, support more tenant leaders, expand legal and organizing services, and strengthen the infrastructure needed to help tenants remain in their homes and resist displacement.

V. Cost of Living Adjustments on City Contract with Non-Profit Organizations

Finally, we urge the City Council to ensure that funded non-profit organizations that provide vital legal services to the City's most vulnerable communities receive Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) on its contracts with the City. In 2024, Mayor Adams announced a COLA of 3% annual increase for human services workers. However, this increase has not been extended to subcontractors participating in coalitions that contract directly with the City. As a result, agencies like CMS have been excluded from access to the 3% COLA, making it increasingly difficult to absorb rising personnel costs, which have grown significantly in recent years.

For smaller nonprofits such as CMS, subcontracting and collaborative partnerships are often the only viable pathways to securing City contracts and managing the administrative and reporting requirements associated with large grants. It is essential that all nonprofit organizations contracted by the City — particularly those providing critical legal services to low-income communities — receive a COLA so they can better support and retain their dedicated staff during an ongoing

affordability crisis.

Thank you for this opportunity to address our concerns and budget priorities for FY 27.

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Center for
COMMUNITY
ALTERNATIVES

Wednesday, June 10th, 2026
David Condliffe, Executive Director
FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing Testimony Before the NYCC Committee on Finance

Thank you Council Members for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is David Condliffe, and I am the Executive Director of the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA).

I am testifying to ask the Council to support our citywide funding requests for youth services, our Trauma Recovery Center (TRC), and our Alternatives-To-Incarceration (ATI) program, which includes:

- **$1,200,000** for the CCA Trauma Recovery Center;
- **$250,000** for the Citywide Youth Program Initiative funding;
- **$250,000** for Opioid Prevention and Treatment
- **$250,000** for Innovative Criminal Justice Programs
- **$250,000** for Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations
- **$978,977** for CCA's Alternatives to Incarceration program.

The Center for Community Alternatives supports and builds power with people across New York State who have been impacted by mass incarceration, criminalization, and community disinvestment. We work to build a world where everyone has what they need to thrive.

Since opening our doors in 1981, CCA has provided direct services to communities in New York City, Syracuse, and Rochester. We were one of the first community-based alternatives-to-incarceration programs in New York State. Recognizing the devastating impact of incarceration on low-income communities and communities of color, CCA was founded on the belief that the solution to crime lies in strengthening communities, not expanding imprisonment.

Over the years, CCA has expanded its services to provide a comprehensive continuum of support, including alternatives to incarceration, reentry services, substance use treatment, sentence mitigation, court advocacy, workforce development, civic restoration, emergency and transitional housing, violence prevention, youth mentoring, after-school programming, career exploration, and, most recently, trauma recovery services.

Trauma Recovery Center and Mental Health

CCA's Healing & Wellness Center is in compliance with the National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers' (NATRC) guidelines, becoming the nation's first Trauma Recovery Center dedicated to serving individuals who have experienced incarceration.

In FY26, we were deeply grateful to the Speaker and the entire City Council for providing $1.2 million in funding to support survivors of trauma through our Trauma Recovery Center (TRC). The individuals we serve have experienced a wide range of traumatic events, including interpersonal violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, community violence, and homicide loss.

Since receiving this investment and launching the TRC in December 2025, CCA has conducted **more than fifty** eligibility screenings for individuals across all five boroughs seeking trauma-informed care, reflecting both the high level of need and the importance of ensuring they remain accessible to communities that have historically faced barriers to care.

As part of our commitment to implementing the nationally recognized Trauma Recovery Center model, we have collaborated closely with NATRC and visited member organizations throughout New York City and across the country to exchange best practices, strengthen service delivery, and build a learning community dedicated to supporting survivors on their path to healing.

The individuals we serve often face complex and intersecting challenges, including housing instability, criminal legal system involvement, substance use disorders, and the long-term effects of systemic inequities. Some participants are currently detained at Rikers Island, while others are community-based survivors seeking safety, healing, and stability. Through comprehensive, trauma-informed services, the TRC helps individuals address the impacts of trauma while strengthening their ability to thrive in their communities.

This year, we respectfully request the restoration of **$1.2 million** in citywide initiative funding to sustain and expand **Trauma Recovery Center** services, build upon the progress already achieved, and ensure that more New Yorkers have access to the specialized care and support they need to heal, recover, and rebuild their lives.

The Healing & Wellness Center also provides a comprehensive continuum of mental health services designed to support individuals impacted by trauma, incarceration, and other significant life challenges. Services include individual and group counseling, trauma-informed and evidence-based therapeutic interventions, psychiatric evaluations and medication management, as well as peer mentoring and recovery support. Additionally, all Community Solutions participants, CCA's ATI program, meet with a CCA Mental Health Specialist who assesses their mental health needs and provides culturally competent support throughout their time in the program. Through this holistic approach, the CCA helps participants address behavioral health needs, strengthen coping skills, and build pathways toward long-term healing and stability.

To sustain and expand these critical services, CCA is requesting **$250,000** in FY27 through the **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations** initiative. This investment will help ensure that individuals facing significant barriers to care have access to high-quality, culturally responsive mental health services that promote recovery, wellness, and community reintegration.

Opioid Prevention and Treatment

Crossroads to Recovery, CCA's OASAS-licensed outpatient substance use treatment program, provides trauma-informed care to individuals affected by the criminal legal system. Crossroads also provides education on addiction and coping strategies, individualized counseling and treatment planning, and referrals to resources such as housing, child welfare services, mental health continuing treatment, and more. By challenging the stigma and criminalization of substance use, CCA's program honors the dignity of each participant, offering:

Crossroads Recovery is the recipient of a three-year international accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF Accreditation), distinguishing CCA's opioid treatment service delivery from other service providers and demonstrating our commitment to continuously improve services and manage risk. To support ongoing services, CCA is requesting **$250,000** through the citywide **Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative**.

Youth Services

CCA's youth services supports more than **1,300 young people** annually across New York City who are involved in, or at risk of involvement with, the criminal legal system. Through educational programming in juvenile detention facilities and community-based services, CCA connects young people with mentoring, paid internships, employment opportunities, college preparation, leadership development, and other critical supports that help them build successful futures.

CCA's NextGen Neighborhood Network serves more than 700 youth each year as they transition back into their communities, providing mentoring, job readiness training, therapeutic services, and family support. In addition, our Community Carpenters program offers justice-involved youth paid leadership and workforce development opportunities focused on health and racial equity, including initiatives that increase access to nutritious food through community gardening and hydroponic farming.

To help reduce gun violence and expand opportunities for young people in Central Brooklyn, CCA opened its flagship Seeds to Roots Youth Action Center in Brownsville in 2023. Designed by and for youth, the center was created to serve more than 300 young people annually while engaging over 500 community members. It provides a safe, welcoming, and empowering environment where young people can explore educational, vocational, creative, and civic opportunities while building meaningful connections with their peers and community.

One of the center's signature initiatives, Justice Community, engages participants in efforts to improve the health, safety, beauty, and sustainability of East New York through a combination of educational, vocational, team-building, and civic engagement experiences. Additional programming provides mentoring, career readiness training, educational support, and leadership development opportunities for children and young adults across all five boroughs.

With a discretionary grant of **$250,000** through the **Citywide Youth Services** initiative funding, CCA will continue providing transformative opportunities and intensive support to hundreds of young people. This investment will strengthen connections between youth and their communities, expand access to restorative justice programming and positive youth development opportunities, and create pathways to education, employment, and leadership. The impact of this funding extends far beyond individual participants, contributing to safer, healthier, and more resilient communities across New York City.

Alternatives to Incarceration

CCA's Community Solutions Alternatives to Incarceration program provides individualized, community-based services that enable participants to remain in their communities while addressing the underlying issues that led to their involvement with the criminal legal system.

The program is designed to respond to each participant's unique needs and strengths. CCA staff closely monitor progress and provide written updates to the courts prior to scheduled appearances, documenting milestones and achievements. Through group workshops and one-on-one sessions, participants receive individualized service plans tailored to their circumstances.

Depending on court mandates and individual circumstances, participants engage in services ranging from two to nine months, including mental health counseling, substance use treatment, educational support and advocacy, mentoring, housing assistance, and employment and vocational services..

We applaud the restoration of funding for alternatives-to-incarceration and reentry programs in the Executive Budget, including increases of **$3.03 million** and **$5.9 million**, respectively. These investments reflect a meaningful commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration while helping New Yorkers build stable and productive lives.

At the same time, additional investment is necessary to meet growing demand and expand these proven programs. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that services provided by the coalition generated more than **$60 million in savings** for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island. This demonstrates that community-based alternatives produce measurable fiscal benefits while enhancing public safety.

We urge the City Council to build upon the Administration's commitment by restoring the **$19.962 million** and providing an additional **$2.4 million** in discretionary funding through the **Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs Initiative**. This investment would enable our coalition's 12 organizations to serve more New Yorkers and expand access to effective alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

In addition to ATI Initiative funding, CCA is requesting **$250,000** in FY27 to support these services through the **Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative.**

CCA's approach is grounded in trauma-informed care and evidence-based practices. Our multidisciplinary teams coordinate services across multiple systems to address participants' needs comprehensively and help them overcome systemic barriers. Through assertive outreach and community engagement, we meet participants where they are—in their neighborhoods and in their daily lives—to ensure they receive the support necessary to succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City Council to provide services that not only keep our communities safe, but help them thrive.

David Condliffe
Executive Director,
Center for Community Alternatives

Center for Employment Opportunities

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Isabel Greenberg, and I am a Policy and Business Development Associate with the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). I want to thank the Committee for holding this hearing. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of CEO to highlight the critical need for increased ATI and reentry resources.

CEO's mission is to provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services to individuals recently returning home from incarceration. As the largest provider of reentry employment services in New York, we serve individuals on probation and parole supervision with the highest risk of recidivism and have served over 47,000 New Yorkers since 1996. Independent evaluations show that for every $1 of public investment into our program, $3.30 is returned, and our program reduces recidivism by 22% and increases employment rates by 52%.

Justice-involved individuals are at highest risk immediately following release. By providing immediate transitional employment, CEO stabilizes individuals during this critical time. CEO partners with 10 City Council Members to provide clean-up and beautification services to their districts. Individuals returning to the five boroughs have the opportunity to find immediate employment and reinvest in the communities they call home.

CEO applied for FY27 City Council Discretionary and Supplemental Funding to support our reentry employment model and transitional work crew program, and expand our barrier removal and supportive services.

We applaud the restoration of funding for Alternatives to Incarceration programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, including increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments represent an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

At the same time, additional investment is needed to bring these programs to scale. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the Coalition's services generated more than $60 million in savings for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.

Reentry services are also proven to yield cost savings. The Council of State Governments finds that, by connecting people with stabilizing behavioral health care, housing, employment and

education, reentry programs reduce recidivism as well as the reliance on emergency systems like shelter housing and emergency room visits, thus producing cost savings all around.

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable our 12 coalition organizations to serve more New Yorkers and further expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

With additional financial backing, we can scale our community-based program, provide essential support to New Yorkers returning home from incarceration, and achieve a safer New York City.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

Isabel Greenberg
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Center for Family Life in Sunset Park

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance Regarding the FY2027 Adopted Budget

Good afternoon Chair Lee and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance.

My name is Julia Jean-Francois, and I am the Executive Director at the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (CFLSP). Founded in 1978, CFLSP is a settlement house serving low-income children, adults, and families throughout Brooklyn through workforce development, adult education, youth development, benefits access, immigration legal services, financial empowerment, and family support programs.

We are grateful for the City Council's longstanding partnership and investment in community-based organizations that strengthen economic opportunity and financial stability for New Yorkers. We would also like to express our appreciation to Council Member Alexa Avilés for her continued leadership and commitment to the residents of Sunset Park and Southwest Brooklyn.

As the Council finalizes the FY27 budget, we respectfully urge continued and expanded investment in programs that promote economic mobility, workforce participation, and financial security for low-income New Yorkers. Specifically, we ask the Council to:

- Restore and baseline funding at NYC DSS for NYCBenefits;
- Baseline funding at SBS for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative;
- Maintain and expand support for NYC Free Tax Prep services at DCWP;
- Increase investment in adult literacy and ESOL programs at DYCD; and
- Expand workforce development funding for individuals with limited English proficiency and limited literacy skills seeking to enter or advance in the labor market.

These investments are particularly important in neighborhoods such as Sunset Park, where immigrant families, working-class households, and small businesses continue to face significant economic pressures resulting from rising housing, food, childcare, and transportation costs.

Community-Based Organizations as Effective Public Partners

Many of New York City's most successful human services initiatives rely on strong partnerships between government agencies and trusted community-based organizations. Programs such as NYC Free Tax Prep, NYCBenefits, child welfare prevention services, and

workforce development initiatives demonstrate how public investment can be amplified through community-based delivery systems. Community organizations play a unique role in helping residents access public services and opportunities by providing localized, culturally responsive, and multilingual support that helps residents successfully navigate complex systems.

This distinction is particularly important when considering programs such as NYCBenefits. While public benefits are administered through government agencies, many eligible New Yorkers face barriers related to language access, literacy, digital access, work schedules, documentation requirements, and unfamiliarity with public systems. Community-based organizations help bridge these gaps by providing individualized assistance throughout the application, recertification, and case resolution processes.

As documented by United Neighborhood Houses, NYCBenefits providers collectively serve clients in more than 200 New York City ZIP codes and provide assistance in over 50 languages. This highly successful program has become a critical component of the City's benefits access infrastructure and should be restored and baselined to ensure continuity of services for vulnerable New Yorkers with the explicit goal of supporting the Mayor’s affordability for all agenda. We believe that the affordability agenda will be compromised if this critical program is not baselined for funding beyond FY27.

Worker Cooperative Development

We also urge the Council to continue and baseline funding for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative within NYC Small Business Services or another city agency, for example the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection.

For more than a decade, CFLSP has partnered with the City Council to support worker-owned businesses that create sustainable employment opportunities for low-income New Yorkers. Through this initiative, CFLSP has helped incubate over 20 worker cooperatives that expand entrepreneurship opportunities among immigrant workers and populations that have historically faced barriers to traditional business ownership. Continued support for this initiative will enable the creation of new jobs, strengthen existing cooperative businesses, and promote equitable economic development throughout New York City. To date, NYC Small Business Services has not taken steps to baseline this funding, and we urge the city to move to a consistent, multiyear funding plan with baselined funding that can be issued at a city agency through a traditional RFP process.

Adult Literacy, ESOL, and Workforce Development

Adult literacy, ESOL, and workforce development services are essential components of New York City's economic infrastructure.

For many immigrant New Yorkers, participation in adult literacy and English language programs is the first step toward employment, career advancement, increased earnings, and long-term economic self-sufficiency. These programs help individuals develop the skills necessary to participate fully in the workforce while also supporting broader family and community stability.

At CFLSP, adult education programs frequently serve as entry points to additional workforce development services, including job readiness training, vocational skills development, financial counseling, and employment placement assistance, serving 800+ persons annually. Continued investment in these services either through the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development or another auspice, as this funding is critical to ensuring that New Yorkers with limited English proficiency and limited literacy skills are not excluded from economic opportunity.

NYC Free Tax Preparation Services

We respectfully request continued investment in NYC Free Tax Prep services through the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection.

Free tax preparation programs provide substantial financial benefits to low-income working families while also serving as an important point of entry to broader financial empowerment services.

During the most recent tax season, CFLSP assisted 6,376 New Yorkers in filing tax returns. Through this work, community members secured more than $12 million in tax refunds and avoided hundreds of thousands of dollars in commercial tax preparation fees.

These refunds represent a significant source of household income for many families and contribute directly to local economic activity. Beyond tax filing, these programs help residents access tax credits, establish relationships with mainstream financial institutions, improve financial literacy, and strengthen long-term financial stability.

Conclusion

The programs discussed above share a common objective: helping New Yorkers achieve greater economic security and mobility and all support the Mayor's affordability agenda.

Whether through access to public benefits, workforce development, adult education, cooperative business ownership, or free tax preparation services, these investments provide practical pathways for residents to increase earnings, stabilize household finances, and contribute to the economic vitality of their communities.

We respectfully urge the Council to demand the restoration, expansion, and baselining of funding for these critical initiatives in the FY27 Adopted Budget within the city agencies where these programs are managed.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to New York City's families and communities.

Testimony for the NYC Council Finance Committee Hearing

June 10, 2026

My name is Anna Humphrey, and I am the Transportation and Voting Community Organizer at the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York, (CIDNY). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

As an Independent Living Center, CIDNY has provided critical services to people with disabilities in NYC since its founding in 1978. In the twelve-month period between October 2024 and October 2025, CIDNY served roughly 75,000 consumers- out of the nearly 2 million adults with disabilities who, according to the NYS Department of Health, live in NYC.

Despite making up over a quarter of NYC's population, the City office designed to serve this community- the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)- currently receives less than $1 million in City funding. This is not sufficient funding to adequately address the numerous barriers people with disabilities face. office is adequately equipped to do so. To this end, CIDNY requests that MOPD be funded at $10 million.

CIDNY is a strong advocate for accessible, equitable transportation for people with disabilities. New Yorkers with disabilities continue to face significant barriers that limit individual mobility and also contribute to broader systemic inequities. The inaccessibility of public transit disproportionately impacts Black and low-income communities (according to a study by the Pew Research Center, Black workers are more likely than white workers to rely on public transit, with 34% of Black commuters in major U.S. cities using buses or trains compared to 14% of white commuters. Additionally, transit deserts—areas with limited or no access to reliable public transportation—are more prevalent in low-income neighborhoods). We urge the Council to prioritize funding to improve public transit accessibility, ensuring that people with disabilities can fully participate in economic and civic life. Additionally, we strongly support the expansion of the Fair Fares program to cover individuals up to 200% of the federal poverty level. Many low-income New Yorkers with disabilities struggle to afford transit costs. Expanding Fair Fares would be a crucial step toward addressing these disparities and ensuring equitable access to public transportation.

Voting access remains another critical civil rights issue. CIDNY conducts poll site accessibility surveys and works directly with voters with disabilities to ensure they can cast their ballots independently and privately. New Yorkers with disabilities face higher rates of inaccessible polling places, inadequate voter education, and other systemic barriers that suppress their political voices, due to longstanding racial and disability-related disparities

in election accessibility. We call on the City to increase investment in accessible voting technology, expand language access for disabled voters, and enforce existing protections under the ADA and Help America Vote Act. New York City must take proactive steps to remove these obstacles and uphold the fundamental right to vote for all residents.

We thank the Council for its continued commitment to equity and urge you to make these investments in New Yorkers with disabilities.

Thank you.

Testimony on Reproductive Healthcare

June 18, 2026

Dear Council Members,

My name is Mbacke Thiam. I am the Housing and Health Community organizer for the **Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY),** which is a nonprofit organization founded in 1978. CIDNY is part of the Independent Living Centers movement, which is a national network of grassroots and community-based organizations working to remove the systemic and attitudinal barriers for the Disabled Community to live an independent life in the United States. We advocate for people with disabilities to direct their own lives throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Over the last 12 months, we have served over 75,000 consumers with disabilities. Our consumers need fare and reliable services regarding reproductive healthcare to build and protect their families.

Despite the efforts that the City is making to improve, and make available Maternal Health, Family Planning and Birthing Equity to more and more people, many New Yorkers with disabilities, continue to find access to reproductive health care uneven, inaccessible, and, too often, their needs are overlooked.

People with disabilities continue to encounter barriers at every stage of the reproductive healthcare system. These barriers are encountered when seeking contraception, abortion care, fertility services, prenatal care, routine gynecological care, sexual health services, or parenting support. Some barriers include inaccessible medical equipment and exam tables, lack of ASL interpretation and communication access, inaccessible appointment systems, transportation challenges, inaccessible clinic spaces, provider bias, and assumptions that disabled people are not safely engaging in sexual activities and should not become parents.

These barriers do not exist because disability prevents reproductive autonomy. They exist because some aspects of the healthcare system are too often designed without disabled people in mind.

New York City's Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill of Rights affirms the rights of all people to mutual and informed consent, privacy, respectful treatment, and access to care regardless of circumstances. The challenge before us is ensuring those rights are fully realized for disabled New Yorkers.

CIDNY urges the Council to take the following actions:

1. Require stronger accessibility standards across reproductive and sexual health providers receiving city funding
2. Expand training for providers on disability competency and reproductive justice, including addressing bias and ensuring informed consent practices that respect disabled patients' autonomy.
3. Increase investment in transportation and care coordination supports so people with disabilities can reliably reach reproductive health appointments and follow-up care.
4. Improve data collection on disability and reproductive health outcomes to better understand gaps in access, educate professional caregivers, and identify solutions.
5. Ensure that public education and outreach materials about reproductive rights are available in accessible formats and designed to reach disabled communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter. We look forward to working with the city in addressing reproductive justice for people with disabilities.

Thank you,

Mbacke Thiam, He/Him/His

Housing, Health & CAN Community Organizer
Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)

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Testimony for the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget

June 10, 2026

To the Committee on Finance:

My name is Molly Senack, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) as their Education and Employment Community Organizer. This testimony is supported by Sharon McLennon Wier, Ph.D., MSEd., CRC, LMHC, Executive Director of CIDNY.

As an Independent Living Center, CIDNY has provided critical services to people with disabilities in NYC since its founding in 1978. By providing services that address the social determinants of physical health, mental health, education, employment, housing, and transportation, as well as providing support for the development of independent living skills, CIDNY helps people with disabilities navigate the ever-changing service system, and enables them to live independent, fully integrated lives in the community. In the twelve-month period between October 2024 and October 2025, CIDNY served roughly 75,000 consumers- out of the nearly 2 million adults with disabilities who, according to the NYS Department of Health, live in NYC.

To address the numerous interconnected barriers this population faces, **CIDNY urges the NYC Council to include the following recommendations regarding each issue area in the final FY27 budget:**

Employment:

In 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), only 37.4% of disabled people between the ages of 16 and 64 were employed in the United States. According to the same report, employees with a disability were almost twice as likely to only work part-time as people without a disability (31% vs 17%), and less likely to work in traditionally higher paid managerial or professional positions than people without disabilities (37.9% compared to 44.1% respectively). Meanwhile, the American Community Survey (ACS) reported that even when people with disabilities did work fulltime, their median salary was more than $9,000 lower than the median salary for people without disabilities ($48,937 vs $58,113); and among working-age people between the ages of 16 and 64, poverty was more than twice as prevalent in the disabled community as in the non-disabled community (24.2% vs 9.9%). For people with disabilities seeking gainful employment, there exists a gap in hiring, a gap in advancement, and a gap in wage parity.

Over the course of the last few years, significant efforts have been made in NYC to address these gaps, and to increase the hiring and workplace retention rates of people with disabilities.

In 2023, then Mayor Adams announced the expansion of NYC: ATWORK, a program supporting career advancement for the 29% of New Yorkers who, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have at least one disability. However, this critical program remains understaffed and underfunded, severely limiting the scope of what it can achieve. NYC: ATWORK works with both employers and employees developing partnerships, conducting trainings, guiding applicants through the job seeking process, addressing accommodation issues, providing benefits counseling, doing outreach to expand program participation, and offering other employment resources and support. This is all work done by the program's current staff of only 6 people.

Despite running a successful program (NYC: ATWORK estimates that since 2023, 80% of program participants were connected with full-time employment), limited capacity means that long waitlists are common, and that only so many people can be helped. Nearly 2 million people in NYC have a disability. Since 2023, NYC: ATWORK has been able approximately 120 of them. If this program is going to reach its potential to significantly narrow employment gaps in NYC for people with disabilities, greater investments are needed. Increased funding means this program would be able to: have a physical presence in every borough, making it easier for NYers to utilize these services; hire more staff, increasing the number of people who can participate in the program; expand outreach efforts to reach not only more potential consumers, but potential employers to develop partnerships with; update the NYC: ATWORK website to make it more navigable for users curious about the program; and be prepared to address the emerging barriers to employment that people with disability are beginning to face, including AI-based hiring discrimination, rapidly changing benefits policies, and funding cuts that could impact the overall availability of open job positions.

Therefore, CIDNY requests that the FY27 budget include an increased financial investment in NYC: ATWORK in order for the program to double its staff from 6 people to 12 people, and asks that this funding be baselined, so that this program can continue to expand.

Education:

There are several interconnected barriers that contribute to NYC public school students with disabilities being twice as likely to drop out of high school as their nondisabled peers (10.7% vs 4.7%, according to a 2021 National Center for Education Statistics report): lack of accessible curricula and physical school buildings, critical staffing and resource shortages, lack of available seats, significant backlogs in receiving mandated services, and lack of long-term, baselined funding for critical education programs.

We appreciate that Mayor Mamdani's FY27 Executive Budget includes several investments in special education, with a particular focus on preschool special education services as a way to set students with disabilities up early for greater educational success later, and to potentially reduce the City's spending on due process cases, which occur when the needs of students with disabilities are not met. However, education, as we know, is cumulative, and no matter how

well students are set up for success early on, that progress is lost if those students do not receive consistent and ongoing support.

CIDNY therefore ask that the City make additional investments in K-12 special education supports and services, including: **a minimum of a $100 million investment to address the shortage of service providers** and eliminate the backlog of mandated services impacting thousands of NYC students with disabilities, a **$2 million dollar investment to expand the Travel Training Program** and ensure students with disabilities have more options to travel independently without having to rely on school buses, and **expanded investments in school-based mental health clinics** and other mental health resources and supports.

We are also pleased to see that Mayor Mamdani's FY 27 Executive Budget continues and baselines funding for several important education programs, including preschool special education services, summer programming, Learning to Work, and early childhood education outreach.

We stand with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling on the City to extend and baseline funding for essential education programs that are currently funded for this year only and are, therefore, at risk of significant funding cuts in July – Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED) ($8.5M); restorative justice ($6M); the Mental Health Continuum ($5M); immigrant family outreach ($4M); and Student Success Centers ($3.75M).

These programs, while critical in isolation, have a compounding impact when utilized together, and were implemented to provide support for the students with the greatest needs. While the loss will be felt by all students in NYC if long-term funding for these programs is not included in the final budget, students with disabilities will be disproportionately impacted. These students are going to be forced to navigate a school system that is actively reducing outreach capacity despite families consistently reporting being unaware of available resources; a school system that is reducing access to occupational and physical therapies despite families reporting noticeable results in their students when those therapies are available (of families whose students participated in the SEED program during the 2024–25 school year, 69% say that since participating in the program, there has been a decrease in disciplinary referrals for their child at school), and a school system that is actively removing stable support for restorative justice and mental healthcare at a time when, according to a 2024 comprehensive report by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 48% of NYC teenagers reported experiencing depressive symptoms, 24% reported wanting or needing mental healthcare within the last 12 months and not getting it, and 9% reported attempting suicide.

Additionally, we would like to see a greater investment made in improving the physical accessibility of NYC schools. According to the 2023 Advocates for Children (AFC) Report, *Access (Still) Denied*, less than one third of public schools in NYC are considered fully accessible. That means that roughly 69% of NYC public schools are exclusionary to students with certain

disabilities, who are then severely limited in their school choice and can be denied access to programs that are not offered in the schools they are able to attend. And for the approximately 43% of NYC yellow school bus riders who have a disability, the lack of accessible schools can mean enduring bus rides that exceed the legal time limit of 115 minutes, since there is no guarantee there will be an accessible school close to their homes. However, the impact of this shortage of accessible schools is not limited to students: it also affects the manner in which parents and family members with disabilities can participate in the education process, and it prevents people with certain disabilities from being hired at two-thirds of the public schools in the city, at a time when NYCPS is reporting significant staffing shortages.

Though the Mayor's Executive Budget included an increase in capital funding, there was not a specific allocation for improving school accessibility. The 2025-2029 Capital Plan currently allocates $800 million to address school accessibility. However, when inflation is taken into account, this amount represents a decreased investment from the $750 million allocated in the 2020-2024 Capital Plan. **We therefore ask that the City allocate at least an additional $450 million (a total investment of $1.25 billion) in school accessibility projects to achieve the goal of making 45% of schools fully accessible by 2030.**

Higher Education:

According to 2022 data from the ACS, people without disabilities are almost twice as likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher than people with disabilities (38% vs 21%), indicating there is a significant gap between meeting the needs of disabled students and meeting the needs of nondisabled students in higher education settings.

Students are cognizant of this disparity, and it promotes an unfortunate cycle: students with disabilities who do not see available and accessible resources on their college campuses often opt not to request them in the first place. According to the 2022 ACS, 21% of undergraduate students and 11% of graduate students privately reported having a disability during the 2019-2020 school year. Yet only 8% of students, or about a quarter of students who privately reported having a disability, registered as having a disability with their institutions. This discrepancy- consistent with the same NCES 2022 report mentioned above, which found that only 37% of students who acknowledged having a disability registered as such with their institution- is driven by a fear of stigmatization compounded by the belief that requesting an accommodation will not necessarily result in receiving one. And this belief is too often proven accurate: of the 37% of students with disabilities who reported their disability to their school, almost 40% did not receive accommodations when they asked for them.

If students are discouraged from seeking accommodations, and are not guaranteed those accommodations if they do seek them, then those students are not receiving the supports and resources that they need to graduate and receive the degrees that will aid them in finding gainful employment. And beyond that, they are learning to not advocate for themselves even when they are legally entitled to accommodations, which will make maintaining employment that much more difficult.

Ensuring the accessibility of higher education helps enable students with disabilities to graduate with the necessary degrees while also setting a critical precedent regarding self-advocacy that will carry through future job opportunities. **CIDNY therefore asks that the following be included in the FY27 budget:**

- **Allocated funding for in-depth training on disability and accommodations for campus staff and faculty** that uses more comprehensive definitions of both "accessibility" and "disability" with a focus on mental health and chronic medical disabilities.
- **Increased funding to ensure campuses' assistive technology is up to date,** especially when it comes to software compatibility.
- **Increased funding allocated specifically for staffing and operations**, since accessibility on college campuses will only improve if there is funding to ensure the offices responsible for administering support and services are sufficiently staffed.

Climate:

As NYC continues to see an increase in days that break records- record heat, record cold, record flooding, record smoke, record snow- it is critical to consider the broad impact that climate change has on the disability community. People with disabilities are more likely to live below the poverty line, meaning they are less likely to be able to afford higher utility bills, putting many people with disabilities in the difficult (and often deadly) position of choosing between physical and financial safety. Jobs in climate-impacted industries (e.g., warehousing, waste management, manufacturing, and food services) are more prevalent among people with disabilities than among people without disabilities. People with disabilities, particularly those who are immunocompromised, can face health risks that are exacerbated by poor air quality. Street closures, elevator outages, public transit reroutes, etc. that occur due to weather-related damage are more than service disruptions when there aren't accessible alternatives, creating additional barriers for people with disabilities to get to work, to attend school, to make doctors' appointments, grocery shop, or- during more urgent emergencies- to evacuate an area that has become dangerous. **CIDNY recommends that the final FY27 budget include an increased investment in expanding access to climate assistance programs and services for the disability community.**

There are approximately 2 million people with disabilities in NYC. It is critical to have an office whose primary purpose is to address the multitude of interconnected issues specifically impacting the disability community, and to ensure that office is adequately equipped to do so. Yet despite making up over a quarter of NYC's population, the City office designed to serve this community- the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)- currently receives less than $1 million in City funding. This is not sufficient funding to adequately address the numerous interconnected barriers people with disabilities face in their daily lives.

To this end, in addition to the above recommendations, CIDNY asks for a baselined investment of at least $10 million for MOPD in the final FY27 budget. An investment of this size only sounds large when it is compared to current inadequate funding levels, not when

compared to the size of the population MOPD is supposed to serve. The Department of Veterans' Services for instance, serves 140,000 people with an overall budget of $5 million. MOPD is expected to serve 2 million people for under $1 million. Comparing MOPD to comparable agencies in other major urban areas, the Center for an Urban Future conducted a study in 2022 entitled "Access Opportunity," which found that on a per capita basis New York City's MOPD was, by a huge percentage, the lowest-funded. The study found that in 2021 the City's MOPD was funded at 88 cents per disabled individual. By contrast, Washington D.C.'s agency was funded at almost 29 dollars per person, more than 32 times NYC. The figure for Los Angeles was $12 per person—13.6 times the City figure. NYC's MOPD needs sufficient funding for staffing, for outreach, and for implementing critical initiatives across the City. As it stands, MOPD currently refers much of its work out to nonprofit service providers. It is also vital that MOPD have RFP capabilities, in order to help nonprofits fund that work.

We thank the Council for their time and effort, for their continued investment in equitable opportunity for the disability community, and ask that they please take these recommendations into serious consideration for the FY 2027 budget.

Sincerely,

Molly Senack (She/Her)
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The **Center for Justice Innovation** is a non-profit organization that seeks to transform the policies and practices of the justice system to make it fair, effective, and humane. The Center operates the following sites throughout New York City.

Family | Criminal | Community Development | Civil/Housing

Click on the name of any program to learn more.

STATEN ISLAND

1. Staten Island Justice Center

MANHATTAN

2. Harlem Community Justice Center
3. Headquarters
4. Manhattan Justice Opportunities
5. Midtown Community Court

MULTI-BOROUGH

6. Legal Hand (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens)

BRONX

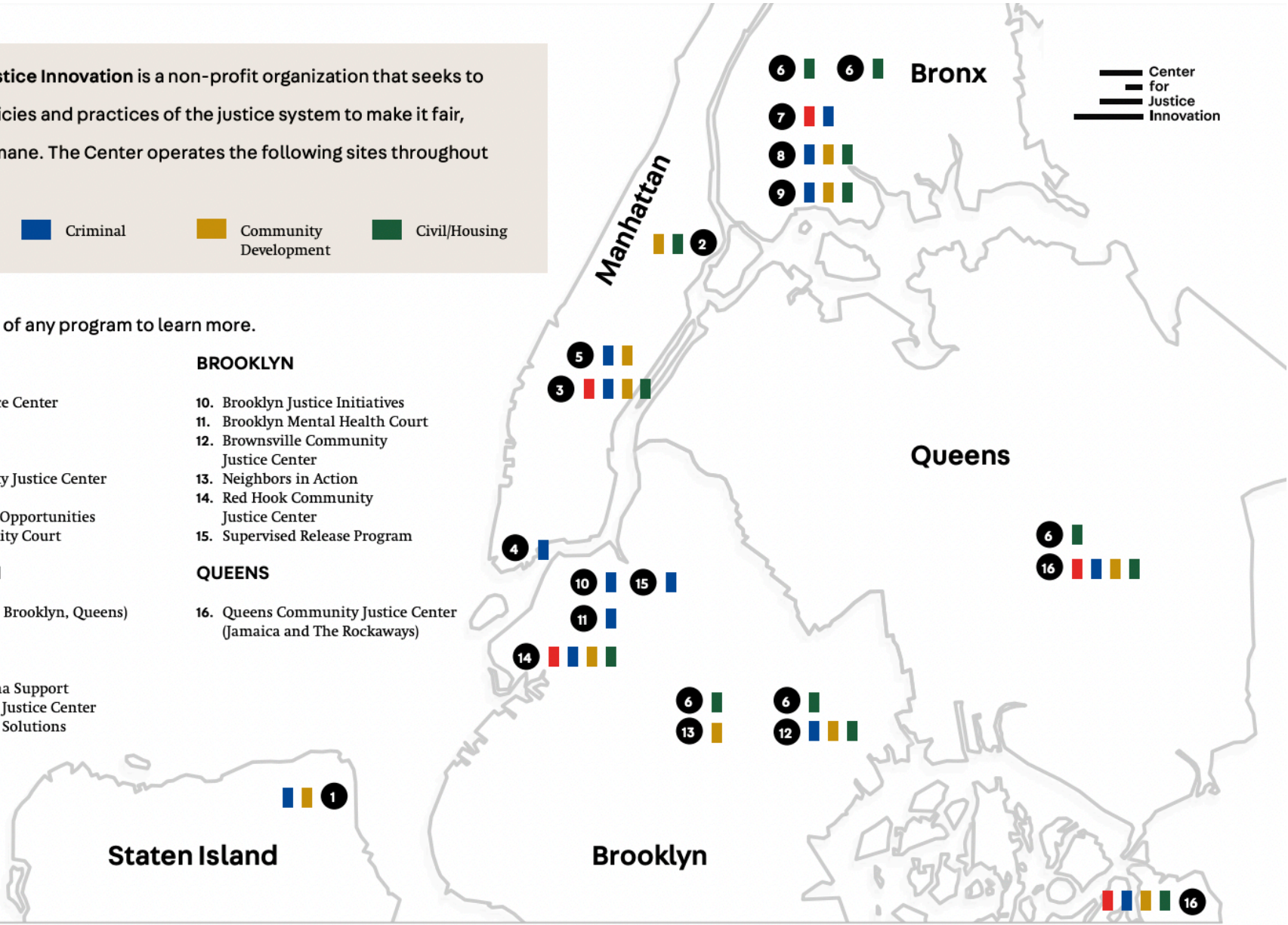
7. Bronx Child Trauma Support
8. Bronx Community Justice Center
9. Bronx Community Solutions

BROOKLYN

10. Brooklyn Justice Initiatives
11. Brooklyn Mental Health Court
12. Brownsville Community Justice Center
13. Neighbors in Action
14. Red Hook Community Justice Center
15. Supervised Release Program

QUEENS

16. Queens Community Justice Center (Jamaica and The Rockaways)



Citywide

- Access to Justice
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Driver Accountability Program
- Gender and Family Justice
- Neighborhood Safety Initiatives
- Parent Support Program
- Project Reset
- Restorative Justice Practices
- RISE Project
- Strong Starts Court Initiative
- Youth Action Institute
- Youth Impact

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Center for Justice Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Good morning Chair Lee and esteemed members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Deymis Baquero, and I serve as the Project Director of the Bronx Community Justice Center, an initiative of the Center for Justice Innovation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Center appreciates the many restorations included in the Executive Budget. These improvements over the Preliminary Budget reflect the impact of sustained advocacy by providers, impacted communities, and members of the Council who understand that community-based services are essential infrastructure for public safety and community well-being. At the same time, many of these restorations remain temporary, or not baselined, which can still create instability within the very systems the City says it seeks to strengthen. Providers cannot effectively plan, hire, retain staff, or scale services under constant funding uncertainty. Essential programs should not be subjected to annual cycles of cuts and restorations, nor should communities be forced to rely on one-shot funding and discretionary add-backs to maintain critical services. If these programs are restored year after year because they are consistently recognized as essential, they should be funded accordingly through permanent baseline investments.

In light of the City's remaining budget gaps, we respectfully urge the Council to continue prioritizing smarter and more strategic investments in prevention rather than overreliance on enforcement and crisis response systems. Investments in community-based programming, diversion, housing stability, mental health supports, workforce development, and youth engagement save public dollars over time by reducing reliance on more costly downstream systems such as shelters, emergency rooms, and incarceration.

The Center humbly requests an increase in core funding from $500,000 to $750,000 to support the continued growth and responsiveness of our community-based programming. Unlike restricted funding streams, this flexible support allows us to remain nimble and responsive to the evolving needs of the individuals and communities we serve, directing resources where they are most urgently needed. This increased investment is particularly critical as we continue to expand the housing component of our work, recognizing that safe, stable, and affordable housing is foundational to individual and community well-being. Across New York City, housing instability is increasingly intertwined with justice involvement, economic insecurity, mental health challenges, and family instability. At the same time, this core funding supports the broader infrastructure of our programs, allowing us to respond holistically to emerging community needs and sustain the cross-sector, people-centered approach that is central to our work.

Below are several of the programs operated by the Center for Justice Innovation that are supported through both individual funding applications and our core funding award.

Alternatives to Incarceration

Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration

The Center for Justice Innovation's Brooklyn Felony Alternative-to-Incarceration (FATI) programs provide community-based sentencing options for individuals facing felony charges, offering an alternative to incarceration while promoting public safety and rehabilitation. These programs—including Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) and non-specialized felony ATI services—address underlying issues such as mental illness, substance use, housing instability, and unemployment through individualized treatment, supervision, and case management.

Brooklyn Mental Health Court

Launched in 2002 as the first mental health court in New York, Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) seeks to craft meaningful responses specifically for defendants with serious mental illness (such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder), who are facing felony charges and would otherwise be jail- or prison-bound. In the years since, BMHC has served as a model for jurisdictions across the city, state, and country in its successful approach to addressing both treatment needs and the public safety concerns of the community. Program success has been well documented, producing results such as: a 73 percent compliance rate, along with a statistically significant reduction in re-arrests for active participants; and a 17 percent reduction in likelihood of reconviction versus a comparison group.[1] Through 2025, over 1,500 participants have received treatment, satisfied program requirements, and graduated, all while avoiding the harms of incarceration.[2] Additionally, referrals have doubled over the past 10 years. This growing demand reflects the broader realities of mental health needs in Brooklyn's communities and jails.

The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of BMHC provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and who represent a growing percentage of cases the program serves. Since 2017, nearly 200 youth in this age range have been served by Brooklyn Mental Health Court.[3] Thanks to City Council support, Brooklyn Mental Health Court hired a dedicated Youth Engagement Social Worker to lead youth programming and foster close relationships with participants. Renewed funding will enable Brooklyn Mental Health Court to continue and strengthen youth-focused programs, provide participants with meaningful activities, supply healthy meals and snacks to participants, continue essential training for staff, and maintain the position of Youth Engagement Social Worker.

Non-Specialized Felony ATI

In addition to the services provided by Brooklyn Mental Health Court, which are specialized for individuals with serious mental illness, the Center's Brooklyn Felony ATI programming also offers community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring for

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[1] Rossman, S.B., J. Buck Willison, K. Mallik Kane, K. Kim, S. Debus-Sherrill & P.M. Downey (2012, July). Criminal Justice Interventions for Offenders with Mental Illness: Evaluation of Mental Health Courts in Bronx and Brooklyn, New York. New York, NY: Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/25576/412603-Criminal-Justice-Interventions-for-Offenders-With-Mental-Illness-Evaluation-of-Mental-Health-Courts-in-Bronx-and-Brooklyn-New-York.PDF

[2] Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Brooklyn Mental Health Court Database. [Data file].

[3] Ibid.

felony cases that are ineligible for drug, mental health, and domestic violence courts. This initiative builds upon the long-standing success of BMHC, using a similar model but targeting participants who do not require the specific services of mental health court or other specialized courts. The program is based in various court parts within Brooklyn Supreme Court, working with different judges and supervising prosecutors who can ensure coordination in policies and practices. The goal of the program is to significantly increase the use of ATIs, supports, and supervision offered to individuals charged with felonies.

Due to growing demand and increasingly complex participant needs, the Center is seeking renewed and enhanced City Council funding. Additional funding would support program operations, data evaluation, and two new positions:

- A Housing Case Manager to address housing instability—a key barrier to treatment engagement and successful reentry.
- A Peer Mental Health Specialist to provide mentorship and hands-on support, improving engagement and compliance.

Driver Accountability Program

The Center for Justice Innovation's Driver Accountability Program (DAP) improves street safety by changing driver behavior through restorative justice rather than relying on punitive responses such as fines, prosecution, or short-term incarceration. Operating at seven sites across all five boroughs, the program serves individuals charged with vehicular offenses by helping them reflect on harmful driving behaviors, understand the impact of traffic violence, and commit to safer practices. In 2025, more than 1,200 participants completed the program citywide.[4]

DAP uses facilitated group sessions that encourage self-reflection, education on traffic safety, and accountability, including exposure to victims' perspectives. Evaluations show strong outcomes, including a 50 percent reduction in recidivism in Brooklyn and improved case outcomes compared to traditional legal responses.[5] The Center also operates Circles for Safe Streets, an intensive restorative justice initiative for crashes involving serious injury or death. This program brings together drivers and victims or surviving family members in facilitated dialogues focused on accountability, healing, and repair, filling a critical gap in the justice system's response to serious traffic harm.

City Council funding will sustain existing operations by support staffing, restorative justice facilitation, victim services, translation services, research, and program evaluation. Enhanced funding would also allow expansion in response to emerging needs, including:

- operations at the Midtown Community Justice Center,
- a new curriculum addressing documentation-related driving offenses,
- pre-arraignment diversion programming in Staten Island, and
- increased capacity and language access for Circles for Safe Streets.

[4] Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].
[5] Strong, H., Reynolds, D., & Sharlein, J. (2024, November 3). Steering Towards Safety: An Impact Evaluation of the Driver Accountability Program. https://www.innovatingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/DAP-eval_11072024.pdf

Bronx Community Solutions Driving While Intoxicated Treatment Initiative

Since 2010, Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) has assisted all individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the Driver Accountability Program. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services. While BCS never charges any cost to participants for services, private providers of DWI treatment regularly charge $300 to $400 to complete a screening and assessment. BCS has negotiated with several providers who have been willing to accept a reduced fee of $150 in order to serve the volume of court mandated cases that come from Bronx Criminal Court, but that still remains a significant financial hurdle for participants and a barrier to entering the treatment process as soon as possible.

Bronx Community Solutions is seeking funding from City Council to cover the costs of DWI treatment and assessments for BCS participants, and to fund the staffing of a DWI treatment coordinator so that BCS may continue to be relied on by the courts to do the necessary work of rapidly connecting mandated participants to treatment, resulting in safer streets for all New Yorkers. Over the last three years, BCS has assisted an annual average of 176 participants in the completion of their mandated DWI treatment. Since 2020, among the participants referred and followed by BCS through their treatment process, over 94% successfully completed treatment.[6] Currently, as an unfunded initiative, BCS utilizes the time of several members of the organization's intake and compliance departments to complete this work. The DWI Treatment Initiative will allow for the dedicated, full-time work of one treatment coordinator. If funded, this DWI treatment coordinator will be a bilingual Spanish and English speaker to best serve the community's demonstrated needs.

EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice

EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice is a gender-responsive program for female ATI participants. The goal of the ATI programs is to offer a single point of access to a wide array of community-based services as alternative sentencing options in criminal cases, thereby reducing incarceration and improving public safety by addressing the underlying issues that lead to justice system involvement. At the Center's Staten Island Justice Center and the Queens Community Justice Center, there has been an increase in the number of female participants (including female-identifying participants) referred to ATI programming, a trend that is reflected nationwide. Research shows that women who come into contact with the justice system often have unique needs and experiences that differ significantly from those of men, meanwhile there are few organizations in New York City that offer gender-specific ATI programs for women.[7] Some of the unique needs of justice system-involved women include:

1. **Higher Rates of Abuse and Trauma**: Women involved in the justice system are more likely to have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse compared to their male counterparts[8]

[6] Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].
[7] U.S. Department of Justice. (2020, August 13). *Women and Girls in the Justice System: Overview*. Office of Justice Programs. https://www.ojp.gov/feature/women-and-girls-justice-system/overview
[8] Ibid.

2. **Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders**: Women involved in the justice system tend to report higher rates of mental health issues and substance abuse[9]
3. **Economic Challenges**: Women involved in the justice system may face greater challenges securing stable, well-paying jobs upon release, impacting their ability to provide for themselves and their families[10]
4. **Parental Responsibilities:** A large portion of women involved in the justice system are mothers and often the primary caretakers for their children[11]

Internal data collected from female participants at the Staten Island Justice Center and the Queens Community Justice Center support these findings. With support from City Council funding, both Justice Centers will launch EmpowerHer: Pathways to Justice, which will provide both group and individual programming to address the needs of female participants. Funding will be used to hire a case manager for each site, who will deliver trauma-informed and gender-specific programming that address the intersections of trauma, race, gender, and sexuality for women involved in the justice system. Psychoeducational groups will aim to address the most pressing needs of women in the justice system, in tandem with individual case management services. The program's primary focus will be on addressing economic development, health, mental health, and parental support needs.

Queens Community Justice Center UPLIFT

While men and boys of color are too often viewed as perpetrators in our society, many are victimized by violence. Despite being at high risk of violent victimization from multiple kinds of violence (community, interpersonal, family), young men of color who have been involved in the justice system are rarely recognized as crime victims, rarely self-represent as crime victims, and are rarely treated as survivors of crime by their communities or by the agencies that provide coordinated services.[12] Yet the overlap between victimization and justice system involvement should not come as a surprise. Among adult offenders, experience with childhood violence and trauma is high; in a study conducted with inmates in a medium security prison in New York State, more than two-thirds reported that they had experienced some form of childhood victimization. Nationally, approximately half of all young people involved in juvenile justice systems have a history of significant trauma.[13]

To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Queens Community Justice Center piloted UPLIFT in FY2022, a program that provides trauma and healing services to justice-involved young men of color. By

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[9] *Women's Justice: A Preliminary Assessment of Women in the Criminal Justice System*. Council on Criminal Justice. (2024, July). https://counciloncj.org/womens-justice-a-preliminary-assessment-of-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system

[10] U.S. Department of Justice. (2020, August 13). *Women and Girls in the Justice System: Overview*. Office of Justice Programs. https://www.ojp.gov/feature/women-and-girls-justice-system/overview

[11] *Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform*. Vera Institute of Justice. (2016, August). https://www.vera.org/publications/overlooked-women-and-jails-report

[12] Sered, D. (2014, December). Young Men of Color and the Other Side of Harm. https://www.vera.org/publications/young-men-of-color-and-the-other-side-of-harm-addressing-disparities-in-our-responses-to-violence

[13] Weeks, R., & Widom, C. S. (1998). Self-reports of early childhood victimization among incarcerated adult male felons. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 13*(3), 346–361. https://doi.org/10.1177/088626098013003003

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. Given the program's initial success, the Justice Center was able to fully implement and sustain the program, thanks to the ongoing support of City Council.

Few programs help address the trauma histories of young men that often perpetuate their justice involvement and halt their development into healthy adulthood. UPLIFT serves young men between the ages of 16-25 that live in Queens neighborhoods that face substantial environmental challenges, including high levels of violence, poverty, and unemployment. In particular, UPLIFT provides trauma and healing services to community members who have been touched by gun violence, in a manner designed to meet participants "where they are," in terms of type, intensity, and location of services. The Center is requesting continued funding to support this invaluable program.

Court-Based Diversion Programming

Bronx Project Reset

The Center for Justice Innovation's Bronx Project Reset is a restorative, voluntary, pre-arraignment diversion program that provides individuals arrested for eligible misdemeanors the opportunity to resolve their case through community-based programming rather than appearing in court. Individuals who successfully complete Reset programming do not receive a criminal record, have the record of their arrest erased, and avoid the significant collateral consequences of court involvement. The Center is requesting renewed City Council funding to continue expanding diversion services for adults in the Bronx through the Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) site.

The program is guided by restorative justice—a justice paradigm which prioritizes the goals of connection and healing in place of punishment and isolation. Project Reset Bronx circles are staffed by program facilitators, attended by multiple participants who have experienced a low-level arrest, and joined by trained volunteers from the Bronx community. During a circle, participants have an opportunity to discuss their arrest experience among peers, examine the underlying issues that may have contributed to the arrest, and develop a sense of connection and responsibility to their community with the support of trained community volunteers.

By diverting participants out of the criminal legal system for these low-level charges, Project Reset helps participants avoid future justice system involvement and the cascading impact of a criminal record. Since its launch, Project Reset Bronx has helped over 2,100 individuals avoid the collateral consequences of a criminal record, saving time and resources that would otherwise be spent in the traditional court process.[14]

The Center also operates same-day Reset, known as Rapid Reset the Bronx. The goal of this initiative is to serve individuals who would have already been eligible for Project Reset, but for a variety of reasons were not able to be contacted prior to their arraignment date. This may be due to inaccurate or missing contact information on their arrest paperwork. Participants might also have inconsistent access to phones or email, and may have no reliable method of receiving mail, making it difficult or impossible for Reset program staff to reach them and engage them in

[14] Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Reset database. [Data file].

services. For years, these individuals missed out on the benefits of Project Reset. Now, with the availability of Rapid Reset, these individuals have the opportunity to engage in Project Reset programming at arraignment. Upon successful completion of the session, participants' cases are dismissed the same day and they are not required to return to court.

Strong Starts Court Initiative

The Strong Starts Court Initiative is a Family Court-based program that provides specialized, two-generational support to infants, toddlers, and their families involved in child protection proceedings. Serving children from birth to age three—the most critical period of early development—the initiative works with families whose cases are before the New York City Family Court following allegations of abuse or neglect filed by the Administration for Children's Services.

Strong Starts addresses a significant gap within the child welfare system by integrating expertise in infant development and infant mental health directly into court processes. Through comprehensive clinical assessments, ongoing consultation, and coordinated service planning, the program helps judges, attorneys, and caseworkers make developmentally informed decisions that promote safe parenting, strengthen caregiver-child relationships, and reduce harmful disruptions such as placement instability or prolonged separation.

First piloted in the Bronx in 2015 and now operating across all five boroughs and additional counties, Strong Starts connects families to high-quality, targeted services while fostering collaboration among courts, child welfare agencies, and providers. Evaluations of the program have demonstrated an increased rate of family preservation, greater efficiency in case resolution, enhanced family well-being, and a reduced likelihood of future abuse or neglect petitions.[15] In addition, Strong Starts strengthens systemwide practice by training legal professionals in early childhood development, extending its impact beyond participating families. City Council funding will allow the Strong Starts Court Initiative to reach more families, strengthen early intervention, and improve outcomes for some of the City's most vulnerable children during a critical period of development.

Community-Based Diversion Programming

Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement (RISE) Project

The Center for Justice Innovation's RISE Project transforms community responses to intimate partner violence (IPV) by addressing its critical intersection with gun violence. While often treated as separate issues, communities most impacted by gun violence also experience high rates of domestic violence, and access to a firearm makes an abused partner five times more likely to be killed.[16] RISE works in partnership with New York City's Cure Violence programs to deliver community-based IPV prevention services in neighborhoods most impacted by violence, with a focus on individuals at highest risk of harm.

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[15] Sharlein, J. (2021, August). Helping the Youngest Start Life Strong: A Mixed Methods Evaluation of the Strong Starts Court Initiative. https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2021/SSCI_eval_full_report_FINAL4.pdf

[16] Center for Justice Innovation. *Rise Project*. New York, NY. https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/rise-project

RISE reduces violence by promoting healthy relationship norms, building community capacity, and intentionally engaging individuals who have caused harm through voluntary, non-mandated interventions grounded in accountability, healing, and transformative justice. The program provides group and one-on-one support, connects participants to services such as employment, housing, and behavioral health resources, and offers crisis intervention and technical assistance when IPV-related incidents occur.

A core component of RISE is community engagement and norms change. The program trains community-based organizations, faith institutions, and local partners on IPV prevention, healthy relationships, trauma, and bystander response, while coordinating resources and strengthening neighborhood networks to respond to violence. Through public education campaigns, community workshops, healing events, and visible neighborhood outreach, RISE works to shift community norms and increase access to support.

RISE also invests in prevention through youth programming in neighborhoods most affected by gun and intimate partner violence. Young people participate in structured programs focused on healthy relationships, mental health, and peer education, culminating in community-based projects, arts initiatives, and public discussions that promote safety and accountability. Survivor leadership is central to the model, with a citywide Survivor Advisory Board guiding program development and elevating survivor voices.

In addition, RISE engages men and boys through the Men Rising Initiative, a cross-sector partnership advancing culturally responsive strategies to prevent gender-based violence and promote community leadership in violence prevention.

Each year, RISE reaches tens of thousands of New Yorkers through public campaigns, trainings, and direct engagement. In FY25 alone, the program connected with about 10,000 individuals through workshops, crisis support, youth programming, community-based prevention initiatives, community events and outreach .[17] Funding supports these services, including community workshops, healing events, youth programming, and public education efforts that strengthen safety and prevent violence at the neighborhood level.

Brownsville Girls Collaborative

The Brownsville Girls Collaborative (BGC) is a cornerstone leadership development program at the Brownsville Community Justice Center, designed to support the holistic empowerment of young women ages 15–18 who are at high risk of violence or justice system involvement. The program creates a safe, supportive space where participants engage with peers, mentors, and facilitators to address the root causes of trauma, violence, and risk behaviors while building leadership skills and positive community connections. Grounded in a trauma-informed, youth-led, and peer-based approach, BGC helps participants heal from personal and community trauma while strengthening their ability to become positive leaders within the Brownsville community.

Using a rites-of-passage framework, BGC recognizes the intersection of interpersonal, community, and structural violence experienced by young women—particularly women of color—and works to divert participants from justice involvement while promoting personal growth and long-term opportunity. The program provides academic support, leadership development, and pathways to employment, internships, and careers in fields where women of

[17] Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

color are historically underrepresented, including science, technology, design, and engineering. Participants also engage with gender-focused movements and professional networks across New York City, helping them navigate barriers within education and the workforce.

City Council funding would allow the Brownsville Community Justice Center to expand programming to serve more than 75 young women, including alumni, through aftercare services, new short-term projects, and expanded workshops and trainings led by female-identifying professionals and community organizers. Funding would also provide participant stipends to support engagement and economic mobility, while strengthening opportunities for leadership development, community engagement, and professional advancement. Through these efforts, BGC advances public safety by investing in young women's healing, leadership, and long-term success.

Staten Island Justice Center

The Staten Island Justice Center, an operating program of the Center for Justice Innovation, has served Staten Island residents since 2009 through court-based services, youth prevention programming, and community partnerships aimed at improving public safety and reducing justice system involvement. Each year, the Justice Center serves over 2,000 individuals through supervised release, counseling, case management, employment support, leadership development, and wellness programming for both adults and youth.

In response to growing community needs, the Justice Center is working in partnership with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office to establish a Staten Island Community Justice Center modeled on successful sites in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. With City Council support, a 2023 public safety assessment identified local strengths, service gaps, and priority needs, informing the development and launch of new pilot initiatives.

The Justice Center seeks continued funding to sustain and expand these initiatives, including strengthening the Youth Impact restorative justice program through the addition of a Case Manager and expanding youth cohorts focused on music production, technology, and creative skill-building. These efforts aim to divert young people from the legal system, promote positive youth development, and advance community-based approaches to safety and prevention.

The Justice Center is also seeking support for their Youth Wellness Initiative (YWI), which provides wraparound support to court-involved and at-risk youth experiencing unmet mental health and social needs. YWI offers individualized services including wellness assessments, short-term counseling, restorative justice circles, peer mentorship, trauma-informed workshops, and family support. Referrals come from courts, schools, and community partners, allowing youth to access tailored interventions that promote healing, accountability, and community reintegration. With City Council support, YWI will serve 15 young people in Staten Island, funding key staff and resources necessary to deliver these critical services and reduce long-term justice system involvement.

Conclusion

The Center remains deeply grateful for the Council's continued partnership and leadership in protecting critical community-based services. The investments outlined in this testimony are investments in prevention, stability, and long-term public safety. They support New Yorkers before crises escalate and strengthen the neighborhoods most impacted by systemic inequities and disinvestment. We urge the Council to continue fighting for permanent, baselined

funding for these essential programs and to support our request for increased core funding so that we can continue meeting the evolving needs of the communities we serve. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and we look forward to continued partnership with the Council.

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Center for Justice Innovation FY27 Proposals

- **#2156900 - Center for Justice Innovation General Funds - $750,000**

Innovative Criminal Justice Programs (Renewal);
Speaker's Initiative

Description: This is an application to support the continuation of the Center for Justice Innovation's innovative criminal justice responses, community-based public safety initiatives, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs in New York City. City 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, 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. With expanded funding, the Center will be able to make deeper investments in housing justice: a key priority area that underpins our efforts at large to build community justice.

Alternatives to Incarceration

- **#2247165 - Driving While Impaired - $100,000**

Member Item; Bronx Delegation (New)

Description: Since 2010, Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) has assisted all individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the Driver Accountability Program. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services. While BCS never charges any cost to participants for services, private providers of DWI treatment regularly charge $300 to $400 to complete a screening and assessment. BCS has negotiated with several providers who have been willing to accept a reduced fee of $150 in order to serve the volume of court mandated cases that come from Bronx

Criminal Court, but that still remains a significant financial hurdle for participants and a barrier to entering the treatment process as soon as possible, thus making Bronx streets safer. To eliminate this financial burden on participants and also expedite the treatment process, this application seeks funding to cover the costs of DWI treatment and assessments for BCS participants, and to fund the staffing of a DWI treatment coordinator so that BCS may continue to be relied on by the courts to do the necessary work of rapidly connecting mandated participants to treatment, resulting in safer streets for all New Yorkers.

- **#2246286 - Queens Community Justice Center UPLIFT - $100,000**

Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations (Renewal);
Court-Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal);
Speaker's Initiative (Renewal);
Community Safety and Victims Services

Description: To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Queens Community Justice Center piloted UPLIFT in FY22 with City Council support. Through the pilot, staff provided trauma and healing services to justice-involved young men of color, ages 16-25. Given the program's initial success, the Justice Center was able to fully implement and sustain the program, thanks to the ongoing support of the City Council. By offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops, case management and victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring, UPLIFT participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. This year, the Justice Center requests funding to continue UPLIFT's critical work through the following initiatives: Court-Involved Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations, Community Safety and Victim Services, and Speaker's Initiative.

- **#2243598 - BMHC Court Involved Youth Mental Health - $150,000**

Court Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal)

Description: The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of 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 cases the program serves. Since 2017, more than 240 youth in this age range have been served by Brooklyn Mental Health Court. City Council support ensures that Brooklyn Mental Health Court can retain a dedicated Youth Engagement Social Worker to lead youth programming and foster close relationships with participants. Renewed funding will enable Brooklyn Mental

Health Court to continue and strengthen youth-focused programs, provide participants with meaningful activities, supply healthy meals and snacks to participants, continue essential training for staff, and maintain the position of Youth Engagement Social Worker.

- **#2243510 - Brooklyn Mental Health Court - $250,000**

Speaker's Initiative (Renewal)

Description: Launched in 2002 as the first mental health court in New York City, Brooklyn Mental Health Court (BMHC) is a specialized court that seeks to craft meaningful responses to the problems posed by defendants with mental illness in the criminal justice system. Addressing both the treatment needs of defendants with mental illness and the public safety concerns of the community, BMHC links defendants with serious and persistent mental illnesses (such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder) or neurodevelopmental disorders, who would ordinarily be jail- or prison-bound, with long-term treatment as an alternative to incarceration. BMHC performs psychosocial assessments and psychiatric evaluations, comes up with treatment plans, monitors clients' adherence to treatment plans, and refers clients to community-based services. For FY27, BMHC is seeking renewal funding from the Speaker's Initiative to enhance its support of some the City's most vulnerable residents.

- **#2246478 - EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice, a gender-responsive program for female ATI participants - $300,000**

Speaker's Initiative (Renewal);
Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs

Description: This is an application to expand the Center for Justice Innovation's Misdemeanor Alternative-to-Incarceration (ATI) programming in Queens and Staten Island across two operating programs: Queens Community Justice Center and Staten Island Justice Center by adding EmpowerHER: Pathways to Justice, a gender-responsive program for female ATI participants. The goal of the ATI programs is to offer a single point of access to a wide array of community-based services as alternative sentencing options in criminal cases, thereby reducing incarceration and improving public safety by addressing the underlying issues that lead to justice system involvement. Funding will support staffing and program delivery to meet the unique needs of female ATI participants at the Queens Community Justice Center and Staten Island Justice Center.

- **#2247172 - Driver Accountability Program - $1,185,000**

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs (Renewal)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation's Driver Accountability Program has been proven to improve street safety by changing driver behavior, while minimizing harms perpetuated by the criminal justice system's historically punitive responses. It does so by offering a proportionate and meaningful alternative to fines, fees, traditional prosecution, or short-term incarceration for vehicular charges; and by utilizing principles of restorative justice to address the dangerous behaviors that are the primary cause of pedestrian fatalities. The program currently operates at seven sites in all five boroughs, with six of those sites receiving support from City Council. This application seeks funding to sustain those operations, as well as the operations of its more intensive version, Circles for Safe Streets, which brings together drivers and their victims for a process of accountability and healing in cases where traffic crashes have caused critical injury or death.

- **#2247280 - Felony Alternatives to Incarceration - $1,385,000**

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs (Renewal)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation (Center) seeks continued and expanded funding to support its Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programming for individuals arrested on violent and non-violent felony charges in Kings County. This programming offers holistic and individualized community-based interventions and rigorous judicial monitoring of participants on felony cases, thereby reducing the use of jail and prison sentences and leading to reduced criminal dispositions. Expanded funding would target two areas of particular need: housing support and peer support. Specifically, the additional funds requested would support the hiring of two additional staff members: a Housing Case Manager, and a Peer Mental Health Specialist. These two staff members would significantly enhance the capacity of the Felony ATI Programs to better meet the increasingly complex needs of our growing population, ultimately improving outcomes for participants and society.

Court-Based Diversion Programming

- **#2246404 - Strong Starts Court Initiative - $100,000**

Children Under Five (New)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation seeks funding to build the capacity of the successful Strong Starts Court Initiative to meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families throughout New York City and help build a sustainable program not entirely dependent on private foundation support. 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.

- **#2247221 - Bronx Project Reset - $710,000**

Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs (Renewal)

Description: The Center for Justice Innovation seeks renewal funding to continue expanding diversion services for adults in the Bronx through its Bronx Community Solutions site. These diversion services build on Bronx Community Solutions' success running the City Council-funded Project Reset restorative model for six years, the Center for Justice Innovation's deep experience providing community- and court-based restorative justice programming since 2013, and the robust support and collaboration of Bronx court system stakeholders. With ongoing City Council support, Bronx Community Solutions will continue offering same-day at-arraignment Project Reset programming that gives eligible individuals the opportunity to participate in programming at their first court appearance and receive an immediate dismissal the same day. This programming, first piloted in 2024 with City Council funding, addresses the large gap in services caused by the inability to contact many Bronx Reset and Bronx HOPE (Bronx Heroin Overdose and Prevention Education) pre-arraignment diversion participants before their initial court date. Ultimately, these expanded diversion services reduce the collateral consequences of justice system involvement while instilling accountability; address underlying reasons for justice system involvement; and alleviate the massive backlog in the court system, an issue that disproportionately impacts the Bronx.

Community-Based Diversion Programming

- **#2246334 - SIJC Youth Wellness Initiative - $130,000**

Court Involved Youth Mental Health (Renewal)

Description: This is a renewal proposal for the Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative (YWI), a program providing comprehensive wrap-around services to court-involved and justice-impacted youth in Staten Island, ages 12 to 18. The initiative

aims to decrease the likelihood of long-term justice involvement while supporting those who may have unmet mental health needs. We specifically seek to engage youth who have either participated in community harm—such as assault, robbery, or gang violence—or who have experienced trauma through community or domestic violence. The primary objective of YWI is to foster restoration through transformative education, youth-led community engagement, peer support, individual counseling, and advocacy. The program also aims to help parents and guardians better support their children and help them navigate the justice system. Ultimately, participants are empowered to translate their therapeutic encounters into opportunities to reintegrate and restore themselves within their communities.

- **#2243733 - Brownsville Girls Collaborative - $150,000**

Young Women's Leadership Development (Renewal)

Description: The Brownsville Girls Collaborative (BGC), a cornerstone of programming at the Brownsville Community Justice Center, is a leadership development program focused on the holistic empowerment of young women in the community. The program creates a safe space for young women from Brownsville, who are at high risk of violence or justice involvement, to engage with Justice Center staff, facilitators, and one another. Throughout the year, the Justice Center will work with BGC participants to address the root causes of trauma, violence, and risk behaviors to reduce justice system contact and develop participants into positive actors within the Brownsville community.

- **#2247007 - Staten Island Justice Center/Community Justice Center - $200,000**

Speaker's Initiative (Renewal)

Description: In response to growing community need, the Staten Island Justice Center has worked in close collaboration with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office to plan and begin operationalizing programming for a Staten Island Community Justice Center. When fully implemented, this Community Justice Center will offer a robust array of programming, including replications of community-based interventions piloted and established at the Center for Justice Innovation's existing Community Justice Centers in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. In FY23, with City Council support, the Staten Island Justice Center conducted a public safety assessment, which sought to pinpoint community strengths, needs, and gaps in service for Staten Island residents. Continued City Council support has enabled the Staten Island Justice Center to use the results of the survey to inform the Community Justice Center planning process, as well as develop, pilot, and implement several new initiatives responsive to identified community needs.

The Staten Island Justice Center respectfully seeks continued funding for FY27 to support this ongoing work, and, particularly, to sustain implementation of the piloted initiatives, and bolster programming by hiring a Youth Impact Case Manager.

- **#2246699 - IPV Community Intervention - $219,000**

Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative (Renewal)

Description: This is an application for continued support of the 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 to individuals at risk of being impacted by gun violence in communities most impacted. RISE works to reduce IPV by engaging individuals who are causing abuse in voluntary programming to stop violence and change behavior, change community norms to reduce tolerance for IPV, train credible messengers to identify risk factors for IPV, build skills to talk about IPV, and connect community members in need of services to RISE. RISE incorporates components of the Cure Violence and restorative justice models in its work.

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BRONX COUNTY

DARCEL D. CLARK

March 9, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Menin and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Bronx District Attorney s Office, I am pleased to write this letter in support of key Center for Justice Innovation (formerly, Center for Court Innovation) FY27 City Council Applications. Funding will expand:

- pre-arraignment early diversion options;
- mental health supports;
- restorative justice programming;
- human trafficking survivor leadership initiatives at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence; 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 legal system wherever possible and allow us to build public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions.

For the past several years, the City Council has supported the Bronx with **$710,000** to invest in early system diversion, which includes **Project Reset,** the Center's citywide pre-arraignment diversion model and same day at arraignments programming that re-directs New Yorkers with misdemeanor arrests from the court system. Project Reset Bronx includes borough-wide restorative justice circles to aid in diversion. This has offered relief from the collateral consequence's participants might otherwise experience if arraigned for low-level crimes. We support the Center in continuing to partner with the Council to implement the next generation of early system diversions for the Bronx to continue to lead the City in scaled restorative justice-based interventions. In 2025, Bronx Assist was launched, a promising pre-arraignment diversion program for certain Desk Appearance Ticket (DAT) arrests which is being piloted in the 44th Precinct with support from a two-year federal grant. CJI has demonstrated a willingness to partner on this project and has shown a willingness to see it succeed.

Thanks to meaningful changes in the treatment of trafficking victims in the justice system, the Center's **Bronx Human Trafficking Intervention Court** (HTIC) referrals continue to decline. **Project Healing and Empowerment through Advocacy and Leadership** (Project

HEAL) is a survivor leadership and peer support initiative for human trafficking survivors. Additionally, we support the Center's RISE Project which is used in Family Court and provides community-based intimate partner violence prevention services in communities most impacted by gun violence.

Since 2010, **Bronx Community Solutions (BCS)** has assisted all individuals ordered by court mandate to complete a screening and assessment, DWI treatment, and enrollment in the **Driver Accountability Program**. This initiative began at the request of the judiciary, who noted that participants were having difficulty navigating the complicated network of private providers of these statutorily mandated services.

Finally, we support continuation of the Center's **Innovative Core Funding** which addresses the immediate needs of all borough residents by piloting novel and effective approaches to anti-gun violence, victim services, and mental health services with diversion.

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 as well as by building substantial and meaningful community-based support. I 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 Clark

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
RICHMOND COUNTY
MICHAEL E. MCMAHON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 3, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Re: Support for Center for Justice Innovation Fiscal Year 2027 Initiatives

Dear Speaker Menin and Members of the New York City Council:

I am pleased to offer my strong support for the Center for Justice Innovation's Fiscal Year 2027 funding request to expand alternatives to incarceration, provide enhanced mental health supports, develop early diversion programming at the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence, strengthen restorative reentry options for individuals and their families, expand pre-court eviction prevention initiatives, and pilot innovative programs that address pressing community needs across New York City. These initiatives represent thoughtful, evidence-based approaches that reduce unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system while advancing public safety through sustainable, community-driven solutions.

The Center for Justice Innovation has a long and well-documented history of conducting original research and implementing direct service programs that promote equality, dignity, and respect in communities across New York City, including Staten Island. These values closely align with the vision of the Richmond County District Attorney's Office. My office has proudly partnered with the Center in the development of the Staten Island Community Justice Center, an initiative designed to reduce crime and incarceration, strengthen community trust in the justice system, and promote safer, more equitable neighborhoods through community-driven public safety strategies, youth opportunity, and economic mobility initiatives.

To maintain existing operations while expanding programming, Justice Center staff will dedicate time and expertise to developing new initiatives, including designing data collection and evaluation strategies to measure program effectiveness and ensure accountability. Through this partnership, we continue to reimagine a more holistic and equitable approach to justice—one that emphasizes prevention, diversion, and meaningful community-based support alongside traditional court responses. Investment in the initiatives outlined above will allow this work to continue and expand its impact in Staten Island and throughout the city.

I also urge the Council to support **Youth Impact Staten Island**. Formerly known as Youth Court, Youth Impact is a dynamic youth leadership development program focused on peer mentorship, violence prevention, and restorative practices. The program works to keep young people engaged in school and out of the criminal legal system while fostering a youth-centered approach to community safety and healing. Through structured in-school partnerships and civic engagement opportunities, participants gain valuable skills in oral and written communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, and research. They also learn about the structure and impact of the justice system and receive training in community planning and organizing, empowering them to become leaders and advocates within their communities.

Continued investment is also critical to addressing the mental health needs of court-involved and at-risk youth. Individuals experiencing persistent and untreated mental illness must have access to culturally competent, trauma-informed mental health care. To address existing gaps in services for Staten Island youth, I urge the Council to continue and expand support for the Staten Island Justice Center's **Youth Wellness Initiative**. This program provides vital mental health services that promote healing and stability for young people involved in, or at risk of entering, the justice system. Importantly, the initiative also provides holistic support to families by offering resources and guidance to parents and caregivers of participating youth.

Finally, I support the continuation and expansion of the Center's **Driver Accountability Program**, which offers a constructive and restorative response to dangerous driving offenses. This program seeks to meaningfully change risky driving behavior among individuals charged with driving-related offenses in criminal court while promoting greater accountability and safer streets for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration of this request as the Council makes important funding decisions on behalf of the City of New York. If you have any questions, please contact Agency Chief Contracting Officer and Grants Coordinator Dr. Lisa Sloan at (718) 556-7089 or by email at Lisa.Sloan@rcda.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

Michael E. McMahon
District Attorney

·130 Stuyvesant Place · Staten Island, New York 10301 · Telephone (718) 876-6300·

DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF NEW YORK
ONE HOGAN PLACE
New York, N. Y. 10013
(212) 335-9000

ALVIN L. BRAGG, JR.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 20, 2026

Speaker Julie Menin
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Speaker Menin and Members of City Council,

I am writing to express my support for the important services The Center for Justice Innovation (formerly, the Center for Court Innovation) provides to help advance our public safety goals.

My office works closely with Manhattan Justice Opportunities (MJO) which offers case management services in Manhattan's Felony Alternatives-to-Incarceration Court. Pathways prosecutors also staff and work closely with providers in the Midtown Community Justice Center Misdemeanor Mental Health Court ("Midtown"). The case managers, resource coordinators, and social workers at Manhattan Justice Opportunities and Midtown's Misdemeanor Mental Health Court provide important connections to community-based resources, critical mental health and substance abuse interventions, case management, and monitoring for people charged with crimes. As a result of their work, we can address the underlying issues that may have driven participants' behavior and decrease the use of jail and prison in instances when we believe doing so may have a detrimental effect on public safety. MJO and Midtown are key partners in our public safety work.

Many of Midtown's Mental Health Court participants work with the peer navigators who staff Midtown's Community First Program. The navigators work to ensure that participants are connected to community-based services most critical to their continuing care during their mandate, and after graduating. Finally, our prosecutors regularly rely on the Center's Driver Accountability Program (DAP) 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. DAP 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. Our office has referred appropriate cases to Circles for Safe Streets to give families who have lost loved ones in vehicular accidents or victims who have been seriously injured in accidents another option in their healing process.

Finally, the Center supports staff working at Midtown on the Community First team, neighborhood forums focused on community safety, and Midtown's Youth Advisory Board whose members work with the Midtown team to understand issues facing young people in their community so that the Midtown team may work to address them through their community-based work. These are efforts my office support.

Please feel free to contact my office with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Bragg, Jr.
Manhattan District Attorney

CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Ayuda Legal Para Refugiados Centroamericanos

240 Hooper Street Brooklyn New York 11211 Tel: (718) 486-6800 Fax: (718) 486-5287

Michelle Martínez, Legal Director
City Council Committee on Immigration
City Council Committee on Finance
Joint Hearing
June 10, 2026

Thank you for taking the time to hear from Legal Service Providers regarding the unprecedented assaults taking place against our clients' and community members' human and due process rights. Before returning to legal services, I served as an Immigration Judge at the 290 Broadway Immigration Court, a position I held until the administration terminated me in September 2025. In my capacity as an Immigration Judge and more recently as Legal Director of CALA I have witnessed an unparalleled level of fear and uncertainty within the immigrant community.

CALA provides advice and counsel to non-citizens on a daily basis. These are individuals who have arrived in New York City over the past several years and are attempting to navigate the increasingly complex immigration system. We take on as many cases as we can for full representation, on top of our already full docket of removal defense cases. The past year demanded adaptability as we navigated shifting policies, adverse legal developments, newly promulgated fees and regulations, and significant changes in the immigration courts. The administration has fired dozens of judges who were known to fairly apply the law and replaced them with appointees with little to no immigration experience. The number of recent arrivals we interacted with continued to drop off, while cases that had been administratively closed for years were suddenly being re-calendared by the courts. As anticipated, the number of cases granted relief fell sharply this past year, driven by systemic substantive and procedural hurdles.

Our team of 11 attorneys and 4 DOJ Accredited Representatives has needed to adapt and respond to increasingly unpredictable and hostile court practices that aim to deprive our clients of any due process. Master calendar hearings, once straightforward hearings for taking pleadings and scheduling the matter to an individual hearing years in the future, have become significantly more adversarial and require additional preparation and labor by our clients and staff. These hearings now often serve as a platform for DHS to move for pretermission- denial of an asylum application without even holding an evidentiary hearing- of our clients' applications. These DHS motions have led to a marked increase in the Court ordering our clients removed without even giving them the

opportunity to meaningfully present their claims for relief, at times even ordering their removal to a third country they have no ties to. With the passage of the Big Beautiful Bill, our clients now must pay an exorbitant $1,030 fee to seek review at the Board of Immigration Appeals. While fee waiver requests are purportedly available, the BIA routinely denies even the most well-documented of these requests, effectively foreclosing indigent non-citizens from any meaningful review of these decisions. Even when judges deny motions to pretermit and allow our clients to present their claims, the nearly hundred recent decisions by the Board of Immigration Appeals and the Attorney General have drastically altered the legal landscape, making it increasingly difficult for the judges to grant any relief.

We receive funding from City Council each year as members of the ICare coalition representing asylum-seeking families facing removal; through IOI, which supports not only our removal defense work, but the very important family reunification and adjustment services that we do for our clients after they win asylum; the discretionary funding we get from our local Council Member and the Brooklyn Delegation, which helps support our 5-day a week intake line, which immigrants in removal proceedings can call to speak to an actual person about their situation. These funds give us the security to know that we can hire and keep our incredible legal, paralegal and support staff doing this difficult work day in and day out.

The impact litigation and high-level federal court cases challenging the policies and practices of this administration have been and will continue to be absolutely essential, and we are truly grateful to fellow organizations for doing this critical work. But while these cases pend, immigrants are being put through this aggressive deportation system today. Investing in and continuing to fund the lawyers who provide direct representation to immigrants going through this complex process is more important than ever.

To best support this vital work, the city must provide continued funding, particularly continued funding flexibility, to immigration legal service providers. Flexible funding allows us to seamlessly deliver services without financial uncertainty. Funding that is structured to support both pro se service and full representation work is essential so that we can determine on a case-by-case basis (considering both the needs of the case and our organizational capacity) how to best serve a community member. Funding that allows organizations to report “units of service” as deliverables as opposed to cases, allows organizations to take on the more complex matters such as asylum, removal defense cases, appeals and habeas petitions, without the majority of that work going unfunded. For instance, in a labor-intensive full representation removal defense case we are now doing written pleadings, applications for relief, motions to vacate hearings, responses to DHS’ motions to pretermit, evidentiary support, testimony preparation, trials, briefing, appeals and potentially stay of removal applications, bond hearings or habeas petitions depending on the procedural posture of the case, and increasingly accompaniment to what previously were routine ICE check-ins. That one case with these multiple, complex components of work should not be one “deliverable” for purposes of our city funding. We need to make sure that our funding is structured

in a way that does not disincentivize labor intensive cases at a time when so many cases are becoming increasingly labor intensive.

We look forward to answering your questions and meeting with you and your staff to further discuss funding and our work.

Michelle Martínez
Legal Director
Central American Legal Assistance
mmartinez@centrallegal.org
718-486-6800

Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Testimony at the New York City Council Finance Committee
Council Member Linda Lee, Chair
June 10th, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the City Council, for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote the 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 era and the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Since our founding, our services have expanded to include three core program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

Today, CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the United States, providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people each year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose services are linguistically accessible, culturally responsive, 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.

We are grateful for the opportunity to testify about the issues that deeply affect our communities and to share the investments needed to ensure that New Yorkers are able to live with dignity, stability, and opportunity.

Investing in Older Adult Communities

CPC serves over 11,000 older adults annually through our culturally appropriate, linguistically accessible, community-based Senior Centers, where participants engage in classes and social activities, access nutrition, health and mental health services, and connect to critical resources and support. We also house 300 seniors through our affordable housing units, and we serve over 3,000 older adults and people with disabilities through our Home Attendant Program.

One particular story reflects the growing needs of our aging community. Xinxing Zheng and Biran Chen, both 80 years old, have been part of the CPC Brooklyn Senior Center for a decade. During the federal government shutdown, the halt in food stamp benefits caused real anxiety among older residents. As Zheng shared, “Many seniors are convinced the assistance won’t come back. My wife and I have been going to our children’s homes for dinner, and it’s created an extra burden for them too.” Chen expressed the same concern, noting that many seniors in the community are in their seventies and eighties, with no income and no pensions, and that food stamps are often the only thing keeping them fed. When benefits stopped, many had to rely entirely on the senior center’s lunches and free produce just to get by.

This story illustrates a broader reality: older adults are depending on community-based services more than ever, and our City must do more to ensure that the social safety net can sustain these essential programs. Older adults should be able to age with dignity, not fear hunger, isolation, or instability.

Continuing to Expand Meal Delivery

According to a 2024 report by Citymeals on Wheels in partnership with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, nearly half of older New Yorkers experienced food insecurity in the past year, and among those receiving home-delivered meals, that number climbed to 60%. Many older adults are unable to shop for groceries or cook for themselves, with over 40% reporting difficulty accessing groceries and 15% saying they are never able to cook at all. These statistics reflect the isolation, hunger, and unmet needs experienced by older New Yorkers in every borough.

The same report found that 65% of older adults live on less than $15,000 a year, and nearly a third do not receive Social Security. For many, there is simply no one to turn to: 45% do not have friends or family who can help them with even one meal a day, and nearly 40% report that loneliness or depression is a regular part of their lives.

Home-delivered meals were crucial during the pandemic and remain vital today as many seniors face limited mobility and the rising cost of groceries. **We urge the City to allocate $27 million to cover the HDM Weekend Meals program and ensure that meals meet nutrition standards, and $60 million for a congregate meals rate increase.** This funding has not increased since 2019. In reality, this investment would only account for inflation and would not fully address additional challenges such as SNAP uncertainty, the affordability crisis, and the need for culturally competent meals.

Investing in Senior Centers and Older Adult Mental Health

Older Adult Services face substantial capital needs due to deteriorating spaces, appliances, and vehicles that have gone without necessary upgrades for the past decade. At the same time, case management organizations are serving individuals with increasingly complex mental health needs with less city funding. **The City Council's Older Adult Mental Health Initiative is therefore critical to addressing the growing mental health crisis in the AAPI community**, which experiences the highest rate of senior suicides.

Through this initiative, we are able to reduce stigma, normalize mental health support, and connect older adults to appropriate services. Continued investment in senior centers, infrastructure, and mental health supports is essential to ensuring that older adults can remain connected, healthy, and safe in their communities.

Healthy Aging and Home Care

The Chinese-American Planning Council Home Attendant Program, Inc. (CPCHAP) is one of the largest not-for-profit home care service agencies in New York City. Licensed in 1998 by the NYS Department of Health as a Home Care Service Agency, CPCHAP has contracted with the New York City Human Resources Administration from the outset and also works with managed care organizations to provide Personal Care Services and the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program to Medicaid-eligible individuals. CPCHAP serves about 3,000 home care recipients daily and employs over 4,000 employees.

CPCHAP is respected for its ability to provide culturally and linguistically competent home care services for individuals across the five boroughs who are medically disabled, elderly, and/or physically disabled and who might otherwise require institutionalization. CPCHAP works with clients, their families, nurses, social workers, and physicians to tailor each care plan, and provides services in Chinese, Spanish, English, Russian, Korean, and other languages. CPCHAP also works with patients and their families to provide care ranging from a few hours a week to 24-hour support.

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 live below the poverty line, and over 2 in 3 are Limited English Proficient. As the need for direct care continues to grow, our state and city must ensure that home care remains accessible, culturally competent, and adequately staffed.

Broadly speaking, New York State has the fourth oldest population in the nation, with 3.7 million people aged 60 and over. By 2030, 5.2 million people in the state will be 60 and older, with 1.81 million New Yorkers age 75 or older. An estimated seven out of 10 people over the age of 65 will need some kind of long-term care. In addition, there are over a million New Yorkers with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or other functional limitations that require direct care support to live and age in dignity.

Direct care in homes and communities is often provided by unpaid family caregivers, paid family caregivers, or home health workers through an agency. This type of care is frequently higher quality, preferred by consumers, and less costly overall than institutionalized care. Many immigrant seniors and families prefer home health care because they can receive language-accessible and culturally competent care that they would not find in institutional settings.

Because of the growing needs of people with disabilities and an increasingly aging population, the home care sector is the largest employer in the nation, yet it continues to face shortages. In New York City alone, there are 187,000 home health workers, and in New York State there are over 330,600 home health workers. While automation and technology improve hospital and institutional care, home care remains highly dependent on human labor, which makes workforce investment even more urgent.

We urge the Council to join us in advocating for New York State to build a robust home care sector that meets the needs of all New Yorkers.

In summary, we urge the Council to include the following in the FY27 adopted budget to meet the needs of our growing aging population:

- **A $1 billion investment in the development of more affordable and accessible housing** for older New Yorkers through the SARA program, preserving existing housing stock in HUD 202 buildings, expanding rental support through SCRIE to meet skyrocketing rents, and creating a new service program to provide in-home and group support within senior housing buildings.
- **$800 million for community services and spaces that are vital to combating social isolation,** which is one of the most serious health threats facing older adults. Older adult centers are struggling with broken HVAC systems, deteriorating buildings, and insufficient capacity to meet social and mental health needs.
- **$60 million for congregate meals** at Older Adult Centers to address inflation over the last seven years.
- **$27 million to expand home-delivered meals** to seven days a week, in line with Intro. 280.
- Continued council discretionary funding, including **$8.26 million for the Food Pantry Initiative, $2.134 million for the Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education Initiative, and $1.5 million for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative**.

Investing in the Human Services Workforce

Back in 2024, the City established prevailing wage requirements for city-contracted human services workers with an investment of $741 million as part of a COLA for an estimated 80,000 human service workers over three years. This was the result of years of tireless advocacy through the Just Pay campaign, led by the Human Services Council, of which CPC is a proud member. We urge the City to continue funding a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for city-contracted human services workers from 2026 to 2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA commitment.

The human services sector has been filling the gaps left by decades of failed governmental policies and inaction. Our sector has long been undervalued, despite the demanding and often exhausting work our staff do to protect and uplift our communities. As the cost of living rises, immigration threats intensify, and federal budget cuts take hold, the need for our services has grown significantly. For example, recent budget cuts and eligibility changes to SNAP will affect more than 10,000 community members served by CPC. As a result, organizations like ours are being pushed to expand emergency food distributions, and demand for benefits enrollment assistance has surged dramatically.

Every year, the Council hears from providers struggling due to the compounding underfunding of the human services sector, while city budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women and people of color. According to a report from HSC, nonprofit human services workers have historically been underpaid, earning about 71% of what government employees make and 82% of what private sector workers make for the same role.

This is why we also call on the Council to **pass Wage Equity Legislation (Intro. 0452-2026), which would align nonprofit and government human services job titles and raise salaries for nonprofit human services workers.**

AAPI Community-Led and Serving Organizational Investments

CPC is also a proud member of the 18% and Growing Campaign. Led by CACF, 18% and Growing is a citywide campaign uniting over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members. We advocate collectively in solidarity to hold New York City accountable for providing the resources needed to serve and empower the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other communities of color.

AAPI communities across New York City are historically underserved and under-resourced. Though AAPI New Yorkers represent almost 18% of the population, the community continues to struggle to be seen as worthy of city resources. AAPI communities need access to health insurance, linguistic accessibility across institutions and agencies, child care, legal services, housing, educational support, domestic violence support, and so much more. Much of that need falls on community-based organizations and nonprofits to fill the gap created by city government, which is an equity issue that continues to stand in the way of AAPI communities feeling truly supported.

We urge the Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign, including:

- **Expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million.**
- **Increasing the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million.**

- **Expanding the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million.**

These investments would take important steps toward creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable city for our diverse communities.

Investing in Working Families and Child Care

CPC serves 7,800 children and their families through our six day care centers, Child Care Resources and Referrals programs, Family Child Care Network and Child Care Assistance Program. 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. We were grateful to hear Governor Hochul's historic promise to fund 2-Care for two years, and we urge the City to ensure that this commitment is not only fulfilled, but strengthened into a lasting investment.

A short-term pilot is not enough. New York families need stability, and that means securing long-term, reliable funding that guarantees 2-Care becomes a permanent part of our early childhood education system. 2-Care would allow New York City families to access free child care as soon as their child turns two, seamlessly extending the model that has already transformed lives through Pre-K and 3-K. Like those programs, 2-Care would offer full-day, full-year care, giving parents the support they need to work, pursue education, and build stable futures for their families.

This program would reach tens of thousands of children, ensuring they benefit from early learning opportunities at a critical stage of development while also helping families remain in New York City and contribute to its communities and economy. Importantly, this is not an untested idea; we already have the blueprint. The success of Pre-K and 3-K shows that when New York invests in universal early childhood education, families respond, children thrive, and the city grows stronger.

At CPC, we have been providing child care through the Child Care Assistance Program, formerly known as Promise NYC, and legal services to asylum seekers, as well as adult literacy classes, emergency food services, and benefits navigation. One mother enrolled in our Promise NYC program shared that she and her children came to the United States to escape life-threatening shortages of medications they faced in Venezuela. Her oldest child would have died without access to treatment. There was no time to wait given the long immigration process, and she is now seeking asylum. She relies on Promise NYC so she can access child care and work to support her family.

CPC enrolled our full allocation of Promise NYC slots well ahead of the deadline, and there are still hundreds of families waiting. We must live up to our values as a sanctuary city and provide the resources for our newest neighbors to find permanent housing and work. We urge the City to ensure that the adopted budget is restored and baselined at $50 million. To achieve true universal child care, we need to invest in proven programs like Promise NYC in the meantime.

Right now, New York families are at a breaking point. The cost and scarcity of child care are pushing parents out of the workforce and forcing impossible choices between earning a living and caring for their children. Many families are leaving the city or deciding not to build their futures here at all because they cannot afford to stay. This is not only a personal crisis for families; it is an economic crisis for New York. In 2022 alone, New York City's economy lost an

estimated $23 billion due to child care challenges that kept parents from working or drove them out of state entirely.

We cannot afford to delay action, nor can we rely on uncertain future support from the state or federal government. **Investing in 2-Care** is not just a moral imperative; it is an economic necessity. By making child care accessible and universal starting at age two, we can keep families in New York, strengthen our workforce, and build a more equitable and prosperous future for everyone.

Investing in Transit, Food Security, and Benefits

Expanding Fair Fares would be a critical step toward addressing transportation affordability. According to a recent analysis released by Community Service Society, PCAC, and the Riders Alliance, expanding eligibility to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level would make more than 2 million New Yorkers, or approximately 30 percent of the city's population, eligible for half-price or fully free transit fares. Raising the threshold from the current 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level would make more than one million additional New Yorkers eligible for reduced transit costs.

The impact of this expansion would be felt across the city. Twenty-four of the city's 51 Council districts would have more than 50,000 residents eligible for Fair Fares, and 37 districts would see more than 25 percent of their residents qualify. Council districts in the South and Central Bronx would have the highest share of residents eligible. In addition, 19 Council districts would see more than 15,000 residents newly eligible if the threshold were raised to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For many of the community members we serve, affordable transit is essential to getting to work, accessing health care, attending school, and maintaining connections to essential services.

For these reasons, we believe it is time to unlock the full potential of the Fair Fares program through the following five changes:

- **Expand Fair Fares to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level**.
- **Make transit fully free for households under 150% of the Federal Poverty Level**.
- Expand Fair Fares to include **half-priced fares on MTA Express Buses and CityTickets on the LIRR and Metro-North railroads** within New York City.
- **Automatically enroll qualified households** to improve participation.
- **Close program loopholes**, including for qualifying seniors on Access-A-Ride.

Food security is another critical pillar of affordability. Every New Yorker deserves access to healthy and affordable food. However, we are increasingly seeing the consequences when federal nutrition programs fall short. Delays or reductions in SNAP benefits have immediate and devastating impacts on families.

Recent federal cuts and changes to SNAP eligibility will affect more than 10,000 community members served by CPC. As a result, we are already seeing rising demand for food assistance and are preparing to expand emergency food distributions to meet the needs of our community.

In fact, CPC provided benefits enrollment support to 10,300 community members in 2025, provided 87,000 meals to seniors, and served 400 families at each of our biweekly food pantries. Community-based organizations like ours are often the first line of response when

these gaps occur, but we cannot meet this growing need without stronger city investment in food security and nutrition programs.

We urge the City to include the following in the FY27 adopted budget:

- **$100 million for the Community Food Connection program.**
- **$13 million in the NYC Services Civic Impact Fund.**
- **$60 million for congregate meals at Older Adult Centers.**
- **$27 million to expand home-delivered meals to seven days a week**, in line with Intro. 280 of 2026.
- Continued Council discretionary funding for key food access programs.

Housing and Benefits Access

Stable and affordable housing must remain a central focus of the City's affordability strategy. Programs like CityFHEPS are essential tools that help formerly homeless New Yorkers access and maintain permanent housing. However, our experience administering housing services shows that the program must be strengthened to better support vulnerable populations, particularly seniors.

One community member we have worked closely with, whom we will refer to as KJ, illustrates the challenges many residents face. KJ was incarcerated in 1973 and released in 2001. Since then, he has struggled with unstable housing and has relied on a loose support network of friends and family, often cycling in and out of shelters. He currently lives in supportive housing at 64 Norfolk but has faced several health setbacks, including hospitalizations related to high blood pressure and diabetes.

During a CityFHEPS recertification, KJ's housing subsidy expired because his state identification had lapsed. At the same time, he was unaware that more than $800 in late fees and legal charges had been sent to collections, and he had also fallen behind on a Con Edison bill. With assistance from his case manager at our organization, his housing subsidy was renewed, a payment plan for the utility bill was established, and his arrears are now being addressed through an HRA One-Shot Deal. While this intervention helped stabilize his housing, it also highlights how fragile housing stability can be when residents must navigate complex administrative systems.

Our program currently serves 28 units specifically set aside for seniors who have experienced long-term homelessness. Many of these residents are considered "long-term stayers," meaning they have spent years in the shelter system and often cycle in and out of shelters with persistent needs. The CityFHEPS program is structured around a five-year housing voucher, based on the assumption that recipients will eventually transition to independently managing their housing costs. However, this assumption does not reflect the realities faced by seniors who rely primarily on fixed incomes such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, or State Supplemental Payments.

In our experience, the five-year voucher period does not provide a sustainable pathway to long-term stability for these residents. Managing CityFHEPS cases often involves navigating missed payments, complex recertification processes, and difficulty ensuring clients can consistently contribute their share of rent. Without stronger support and more flexible policies, these administrative barriers can undermine housing stability for some of the City's most vulnerable residents.

All of these programs are critical, but without the support systems that help people access them, they simply cannot work.

Supporting Immigrant Communities

According to the Asian American Federation Data Center, AAPI communities are the fastest growing population in New York and make up 18% of the City's population, with 65.7% of Asian Americans being foreign born.

The largest AAPI ethnic groups in New York include Chinese, Indian, Korean, Filipino, and Bangladeshi communities, but there are more than 25 distinct ethnic groups and languages spoken by AAPI New Yorkers. AAPI communities also experience some of the highest rates of Limited English Proficiency. As we face an era of heightened challenges, particularly under federal policies that are increasingly hostile to immigrants, it is more important than ever to invest in our local safety net.

CPC community members have already felt the effects of these federal policies. Coupled with rising costs of living and housing, they are creating significant strain. Community members are asking whether it is safe to seek help in shelters, public housing, schools, hospitals, and benefit offices because of fear about immigration consequences. These fears weaken trust and can push families away from the very services designed to protect them.

We are urging the City to prioritize the wellbeing of immigrants in our community by investing in community-based support systems that help immigrants navigate these difficult times. This includes legal aid services, mental health resources, and direct access to housing, health care, and education. These resources are essential to ensuring that immigrants are not left to face these challenges alone and are able to remain in New York with stability and dignity.

Adult Literacy

More than ever, adult literacy and education services need to be recognized and strengthened. The federal administration is seeking to exclude students based on immigration status through its $24 million funding of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. This would have a profoundly devastating impact on immigrant communities in New York City.

Currently, there are over 2.2 million adults in New York City who have limited language proficiency and/or do not have a high school diploma. Yet current funding means only 3% of these New Yorkers can access adult basic education, including GED and ESOL classes.

In response, CPC joins our NYCCAL partners in calling on the City to **invest $20 million in a new city adult education funding stream, Education for Integration and Equity,** that would provide new seats and unfettered access to English language, basic education, digital literacy, high school equivalency, and civics education classes for immigrant New Yorkers regardless of immigration status.

CPC and NYCCAL are also calling on the City Council to **increase Council discretionary funding for adult literacy education from $14.5 million to $18 million** and to consolidate the two current Council discretionary initiatives for adult literacy under Adult Literacy Forward.

The importance of adult literacy classes to the immigrant community cannot be overstated. In our program, students come because they want to learn about their rights, how to start a small business, become U.S. citizens, register to vote, and access important city services. Student testimonials have credited adult literacy classes with helping them "take the train, go shopping, and see a doctor," understand what their children are saying in English, and respond to dangerous situations.

Federal restrictions on access to adult literacy classes will mean that students' lives are put on hold while they wait to achieve a high school equivalency, enter the workforce, assist their children with homework, or become U.S. citizens. It will mean more people are left behind while they wait for adequate funding for these essential services.

English literacy means equipping our community to be empowered and better informed to face today's and tomorrow's challenges. It means learning how to speak and speak up, and ensuring our voices are heard. Supporting adult literacy classes is critical to continuing this effort.

Immigrant Legal Services

Cultural barriers and the current political climate are making it increasingly difficult to access legal services. Many CPC community members have a deep sense of fear around immigration, housing, and employment issues, but struggle to find a lawyer who speaks their language or can provide culturally competent services. We consistently have community members seeking help, yet there are very few Asian American legal services available.

We urge the New York City Council to prioritize linguistically and culturally appropriate legal services for immigrant New Yorkers and to ensure that CBOs trusted by these communities are funded to carry out this work.

Arrests of immigrants from Asian countries, including China, Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, have increased significantly compared to last year. According to a new report released by Stop AAPI Hate, Asian immigrants in New York have faced a sevenfold increase in arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) since Donald Trump took office last January. In New York State, 24% of unauthorized immigrants are from Asia. These immigrants will now face a mandatory $5,000 fee for failure to appear at court hearings. Asians are also the largest group of new green card holders in the last decade and now face high fees of $1,500 to adjust their green card status and $1,050 waivers of inadmissibility fees.

The demand for legal services has increased tremendously, and we have seen firsthand the confusion and fear that changes in immigration protocol and policy have created in our community. In addition, we are hearing overwhelming fears over losing essential public benefits under H.R.1.

At CPC, we have worked tirelessly with the goal of keeping our immigrant communities and families safe and together. In the last year, we have been able to support nearly 2,000 community members with our KYR training, legal clinics, and other legal resource events. We have been able to facilitate "train-the-trainer" sessions on family safety planning as part of our legal clinic. We have been able to assist community members in drafting letters to USCIS, and supported families in preparing important legal documents like powers of attorney and standby guardianship. We have been able to offer deportation defense and limited scope representation. Lastly, we have been able to support over 1,000 families with our immigration navigation programs and helped 800 adults build skills and confidence to participate in public institutions

through adult literacy classes, all in just this past year. We have maintained a robust legal referral network with partners such as NYLAG, LAS, NYLPI, AABANY, and others. We collaborate with national organizations like the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) through its Client Resources Committee to help develop educational materials for immigrants across the country.

As part of the RISE Coalition, led by the Asian American Federation and comprised of nearly 20 Asian-led and serving organizations providing immigration case management and legal services, we urge the City to **continue investing $3.5 million in FY27 for immigrant legal services**, wraparound support, language access, and resource navigation, with specific support for the organizations that have been doing this work on the ground.

Additionally, CPC supports the NYC Trans and Queer Coalitions budget and legislative asks, which includes **$15 million for a NEW LGBTQIA+ Immigrant Fund**. LGBTQIA+ immigrants in New York face compounded barriers—from legal insecurity to housing instability and lack of access to affirming services—yet there is currently no dedicated funding stream to support their unique needs. No one should be left behind—regardless of immigration status or identity.

The $15M fund will: provide legal services, Know Your Rights trainings, and immigration support; fund community-based organizations serving LGBTQIA+ immigrant communities; expand access to safe housing, healthcare, and social services; ensure culturally competent, language-accessible, and affirming care.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify and to amplify the needs of our communities. CPC believes that New York City must invest in the systems that allow people to age with dignity, raise children with stability, access food and transit, remain stably housed, and live without fear. These are not separate issues; they are interconnected parts of a citywide affordability and equity agenda.

We thank the Council for its attention to these urgent priorities and for its commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers can live with dignity, safety, and opportunity. If there are any questions or concerns, please reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy & Research Manager, at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.

June 10th, 2026

New York City Council Finance Committee Hearing

Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Chia-Chia Wang, and I am the New York Site Director for Church World Service (CWS). I am also a proud resident of Queens for the past 24 years.

CWS is a global humanitarian organization dedicated to transforming communities around the world through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. Since 1946, our work has reflected our vision of a world where everyone has food, a voice, and a safe place to call home.

Church World Service New York was formally established in 2023 to meet the growing needs arising from human migration and family reunification. In our first full year, we served over 1,200 unaccompanied children, Ukrainian and Afghan refugees, and Haitian entrants through legal services and case management.

As we have both witnessed—and been directly impacted by—the drastic changes in federal funding and policies, our work serving refugees and migrants who have fled violence and poverty in pursuit of a better future for themselves and their children has been significantly affected. We ask the City Council to support our work and to better understand the refugee resettlement model.

Refugee resettlement is a proven and successful model with over 40 years of impact. It is built on advance planning, thorough assessment, and a time-bound yet extremely efficient system that ensures new arrivals have access to everything they need. The model is culturally competent, trauma-informed, and highly accountable. It identifies key stakeholders and actively encourages strong community partnerships.

Our five resettlement agencies have come together and submitted a joint proposal to the City Council—the NYC Immigrant Refugee Initiative (NYC-IRI). We do so because we are deeply proud of this model, our dedicated staff, and our resilient clients, and we look forward to the City's partnership in sustaining this work so that we may continue serving refugees and immigrants who have made New York their new home.

Chia-Chia Wang

Church World Service, New York Site Director

[redacted]

CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony before the City Council Committee on Finance
City Hall – June 10, 2026

Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

Good morning, Council Members.

My name is Ben Weinberg, and I am the Director of Public Policy at Citizens Union, a nonpartisan good-government group working for fair and open elections, honest and accountable government, and a civically engaged public in New York.

I am here to support increasing the funding of two of the city's ethics watchdog agencies, the Department of Investigation and the Conflicts of Interest Board, beyond the levels proposed in the Mayor's Executive Budget for FY 2027.

Investing in oversight agencies is an investment in a more efficient and effective city government. Their work saves city resources by preventing fraud, waste, and abuse.

Yet these agencies have been chronically underfunded. The Adams administration weakened these anti-corruption watchdogs through budget cuts, attrition, and hiring freezes. Rather than reversing course, the Mayor's Executive Budget deepens that damage.

For the Department of Investigation, repeated cuts have already harmed performance—investigations and background checks take substantially longer, according to the Mayor's Management Report. As the DOI Commissioner testified before the Council, the proposed budget and personnel reductions will lead the agency to eliminate lines in critical areas such as legal oversight and investigative squads and will have a tangible impact on its ability to fulfill its anti-corruption mandate. We support the agency's budget request—which is, in fact, much more modest than what it requested at the preliminary hearing—for $6 million to stabilize the agency's PS and OTPS needs and $4 million to complete the 9/11 toxins investigation mandated by the Council.

The Conflicts of Interest Board has also suffered from reductions in personnel and resources under the past administration. The small agency provides education to tens of thousands of public employees every year and same-day legal advice to anyone who contacts it, helping prevent violations before they occur and reducing the risk of costly misconduct. Yet it now has almost the same headcount it had when it was founded in 1990. The Executive Budget adds two new paralegal positions, bringing COIB's headcount to 24, but that is still two positions short of the level it had in 2022. In a specialized agency such as this one, each position plays a critical role, and retention is key. COIB requests one additional staff attorney, $300,000 for pay equity within the agency to maintain personnel, and funding for critical IT improvements. We support these requests. They constitute a small blip in the budget but will do much to improve public integrity across the municipal workforce.

This is the first budget the Council will pass following the Adams administration. At a time when public trust in government has been tested, we urge you to invest in the agencies that safeguard integrity and accountability and demonstrate to New Yorkers that corruption and ethical misconduct will not be tolerated.

TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS

Before the New York City Council Finance Committee

Honorable Linda Lee, Chair

FY27 Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Submitted by:

Jeanette Estima

Director, Policy and Advocacy

Citymeals on Wheels

Citymeals on Wheels addresses food insecurity among New York City's homebound older adults in three ways: by funding weekend meals not provided through the City's home-delivered meals program, serving as an emergency food responder for this population, and providing additional food to those who need more than the one meal a day they receive. In FY25, Citymeals provided 2.3 million meals to 22,000 older New Yorkers in all five boroughs across all our programs.

Older New Yorkers are a fast-growing demographic, with 1.3 million older adults over the age of 65 making up over 16% of the city's overall population. Furthermore, an increasing number of these older adults are immigrants (51%) and overall, over 18% of older New Yorkers live below

the poverty line.[1] For older adults who are unable to shop for groceries or prepare their own meals, existing nutrition assistance programs like SNAP and food pantries are largely inaccessible. This makes the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs critical resources for older adults experiencing hunger. In FY25, 115,508 older New Yorkers received meals at an older adult center and 23,935 received home-delivered meals.[2] Yet our 2024 research report found that, while impactful and essential, these programs do not go far enough, providing only 1 meal a day, 5 days a week. Citymeals steps in to privately fund weekend meals for home-delivered meal recipients, but 60% still experience food insecurity.[3]

The problem is clear: far too many older adults are left out of the City's response to food insecurity. But the solution is clear too: we must improve our home-delivered and congregate meal programs while investing in innovative new programs to ensure that more food is available to people in their homes. For over four decades, Citymeals has done both.

Through our weekend meals program, we have had the privilege of working in partnership with NYC Aging and the City's contracted HDM providers to ensure that homebound older New Yorkers receive at least one daily meal. In FY25, we infused the program with over 1.4 million weekend meals at a cost of over $14 million in private dollars. Over the years we have also created smaller, innovative programs to bring additional food to the City's homebound older adults.

However, our public-private model for weekend meals has begun to bow under the pressure of dramatic increases in both the number of older adults needing meals, inflation-driven program costs, and the constraints of private fundraising to support a public program. Over the years, this has led to a larger discrepancy between what we are able to pay providers for weekend

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[1] Bowles, J., Dvorkin, E., Neches, R. *The Emerging Financial Security Crisis Facing NYC's Older Adults.* Center for an Urban Future. https://nycfuture.org/research/the-emerging-financial-security-crisis-facing-nycs-older-adults

[2] Mayor's Management Report. September 2025. Accessed at: https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2025/2025_mmr.pdf

[3] Citymeals on Wheels. *Aging without Hunger: Ending Food Insecurity for Older New Yorkers by 2040*. https://www.citymeals.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Citymeals%20on%20Wheels_AGING%20WITHOUT%20HUNGER_2024.pdf

meals ($10/meal) and what the City pays for their contracted weekday meals ($14.78). We know the widening gap between the true cost of this program and what we can offer is becoming untenable for providers. Without additional investment from the City, the day may soon come when providers can no longer afford to partner with us for weekend meals.

In addition to our weekend meals program, Citymeals runs several programs that aim to close the meal gap for older New Yorkers. Every year we pre-supply HDM program participants with shelf-stable emergency meals to keep on hand in case an emergency disrupts the delivery or safety of their regular meal and deliver food to their homes during active emergencies. And today, in response to learnings from our research, we offer two robust programs providing home-delivered groceries to 2,600 people, and have piloted a small shopping assistance program that provides recipients in East Flatbush, Brooklyn with vouchers for groceries and pairs them with volunteers who help with shopping and getting their groceries home.

These innovative programs go beyond the current one-size-fits-all model for addressing hunger among older adults and are showing significant impact. Early evaluation findings show that they improve food security, support independence and health, and reach some of the most food-insecure older adults in NYC. In a survey of our Breakfast Box recipients, 90% said it helps them to have more money to pay bills or necessities and estimated saving $60/month. For one of our Breakfast Box recipients, the program means that she doesn't have to push a heavy cart with groceries up the hills near Crotona Park. After almost passing out on walks home from the grocery store, she now receives a monthly Breakfast Box that provides "everything I need" including "things I used to have as a kid," like hot and cold cereals. The need for additional food in her building is so high that she occasionally shares the contents of her box with neighbors. Similarly, severe food insecurity among Shopping Assistance Pilot program participants dropped sharply from 40% at the start of the program to 9% at the end of the program. And 82% of our Mobile Groceries recipients reported eating healthier foods. These are just a few indicators of the potential of programs like these to significantly reduce or eliminate hunger among older New Yorkers.

Our city needs a comprehensive approach to hunger that addresses the needs of older adults; they must no longer be an afterthought when developing anti-hunger strategies. An expansion of the home-delivered and congregate meals programs is deeply needed to ensure the City's most vulnerable older residents have the food they need to age in place in their homes, while new programs like ours that bring food directly to their homes can help fill the remaining meal gap. We were happy to see that the Mayor included an increased baseline for the Community Food Connection in his Executive Budget, yet more is needed to make sure that aging services and emergency food providers can continue to fight hunger among older New Yorkers. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Council support the following requests:

1. **Shore up the congregate and home-delivered meals programs,** both of which continue to face steep increases in program costs due to high inflation rates and years of underfunding.
    a. **Pass Intro 280,** to require the City's home-delivered meals program to provide a meal 365 days a year, with $30 million in the budget**.**
    b. **Increase per meal reimbursement rates for HDM from $14.78 to $16.17/meal.**
    c. **Increase funding for congregate meals by $60 million.**
2. **Renew $500,000 for Citymeals' Emergency Food Programs through the Older Adult Centers, Programs, and Services Initiative**.
3. **Renew $600,000 for Citymeals' food programs through the Feeding Our Communities Initiative, and make this initiative a permanent source of funding.**
4. **Renew $50,000 for Citymeals' food programs through the Food Pantries Initiative.**
5. **Increase Community Food Connection funding to a baseline of $100 million.**

City's First Readers
An initiative of the New York City Council

Thank you for the opportunity to share observations on the proposed FY27 Executive Budget. I testify on behalf of City's First Readers, a 17 partner organization effort and the only early literacy initiative of the New York City Council. Our collaboration around this critical issue of early literacy relates not only to the Education Budget, but to budgets supporting healthcare, Administrative Services for Children, Youth and Community Development and other city departments. In fact nearly two dozen city government entities have services for children from prenatal through five years of age in their portfolio.

Early literacy is a broad term; it references the multiple pre-reading experiences that all children deserve to explore before they ever begin receiving formal, classroom reading instruction. Yet we know that children living in poverty are far less likely to enjoy such experiences and consequently arrive at school already behind their more economically secure peers. Early literacy can be all around you in New York City - from the numbers and letters identifying buses and subway cars, to the colorful displays of fruits and vegetables at the grocery store. The city is a teaching tool that our work empowers parents to use. Our work builds confidence in parents and family members who provide care for our youngest residents. We emphasize the importance of conversing with young children from infancy in what educators call "serve and return" dialogue - engaging in a way that solicits a response. We stress reading to your children in whatever language you are most comfortable. Picture books are ideal for this age group and can be used regardless of the adult's own level of literacy to tell a story. We show parents how to do this at events ranging from library story hours to individual family interventions. Workshops explain the concepts behind the science of reading and prepare families for what their children will encounter in the classroom.

While each partner's expertise varies, we move collectively toward the goal of school readiness in every sense of the word:

- Children who have built a trusting relationship with adults are better prepared to adjust to classroom routines;
- Children who have a positive association with books, like a habit of reading with their family, are more likely to be eager to learn to read themselves;
- Children who have access to books at home and community resources like libraries, museums, zoos, gardens and aquariums absorb a rich content of knowledge that builds over time;
- Children whose parents model reading emulate what the adults around them do.

Programming supporting early literacy is critical because 90% of a child's brain develops by age five. Early literacy stimulation needs to be provided at the same time a child's neural network is growing.

City's First Readers
An initiative of the New York City Council

As critical as our work is - and the attached independent analysis speaks to City's FIrst Readers effectiveness - we would be the last to claim that early literacy programming alone can generate the kind of reading results we hope to see in New York City. There are many factors which determine reading proficiency and they are supported by resources and funding far beyond the education budget. They include the obvious: prenatal health, ongoing nutrition and physical well-being, household stability, food security. And extend well beyond individual circumstances to systemic influences, historic limitations placed on communities of color, and the stress that emanates from these constraints. We would do well to reflect on the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic - how isolation in children's earliest years has been an obstacle to socialization and academic progress; how the impact and death rate were far higher in high poverty neighborhoods than middle class communities. The FY27 modifications to New York State Foundation Aid recognize the significance of housing stability with new weights for students living in temporary housing and foster care. The challenge for non-English dominant students to succeed has been confirmed by increased funding for ELL students.

The multiplicity of factors which determine a child's ability to acquire reading skills at a pace which allows them to move from learning to read to reading to learn means that we have many ways to support a child's path to proficient reading. We have extensive opportunities to infuse early literacy into a wide array of early childhood programs but seriously underutilize cross sector engagement.

We are delighted by the progress New York City has made in expanding opportunities for early literacy, starting with the FY15 budget's initial support for City's First Readers. Each year has marked progress not only for City's First Readers but also for the NYCPS programming reaching this early childhood age group.

We are excited about the expansion of childcare and the efforts to increase access, affordability and pay parity for providers. This is a game changer for so many New York City families. We are encouraged that the name for this expansion has evolved and as "2K" now begins to suggest that early childcare is also an educational effort. In other words, blending two missions - daycare and education.

City's First Reader is doing this kind of work already, fusing the goals of early childhood healthcare providers and CFR's early literacy partners. We are leveraging the relative strength of public pediatric healthcare systems and the credibility of healthcare providers to incorporate elements of early literacy into the healthcare system. City's First Readers partners like Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and Read, Play VIP have been offering early literacy services in healthcare settings for years. This year, City's First Readers launched our hospital campaign, reaching expectant families and caregivers with infants up to six months old during a critical period of early development. Through LINC 0–1 workshops, families learned strategies to strengthen the bond between babies and caregivers through responsive interactions, language-rich engagement, and early literacy practices. In partnership with community organizations beyond City's First Readers, families also received essential supports including

diapers, wipes, lotions, and opportunities to win larger items such as car seats and strollers. Every participating family left with resources, practical tips, and connections to City's First Readers partners, encouraging continued engagement in programs that support healthy child development and school readiness.

But we would love to hear, loud and clear, from our policy makers the message that this city, indeed this nation, needs a coordinated comprehensive approach to early childhood development. The excitement and buzz around 2K is too great an opportunity to limit this drive to strictly an economic development or workforce initiative. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve multiple goals that benefit children, their families and our city as a whole. Creating a sub-committee on early childhood education is an excellent start. But that body will be much more effective if its oversight extends to all aspects of early childhood development and acts as a platform for creating early childhood development policies that recognize benefits of the coordinated cross sector support that is needed for children to become fluent readers. **This is within reach.**

Fully funding City's First Readers budget request will allow this work to expand and complement the 2K initiative. I urge both the Mayor's Office and the Council to seize the day - make early literacy an integral part of childcare. Let's start there.

Emmanuel Novy

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Asian American Pacific Islanders for a Fair Budget

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

The 18% and Growing Campaign:
Fight For An Equitable Budget for AAPI New Yorkers

I am Nikita Boyce and I am the Budget Policy Coordinator at CACF, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families. Thank you to the Committee on Finance and City Council members for your time.

Since 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization that **leads the fight for transformative movements and policy, progressive systems change, and racial equity within government institutions to increasingly invest and equitably fund** community based organizations and city initiatives that directly impact and far reach the Asian American and Pacific Islander Diaspora, which include: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, Southwest Asia, Central Asia, Pacific Island regions, and the Indo-Caribbean diaspora.

CACF leads the 18% and Growing Campaign, a critical and diverse city-wide campaign **uniting over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members**. We advocate as a collective in solidarity to hold New York City accountable in providing the necessary resources to serve and empower the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other communities of color.

The 18% and Growing Campaign is advocating for a more equitable budget for AAPI New Yorkers and that includes expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million, the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million, and the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million, among other key city-wide initiatives and investments.

The AAPI Diaspora is the fastest growing ethnic diaspora in New York City, yet, it faces the highest rates of poverty, linguistic isolation, rising inequities, and widening gaps between social services. We represent about 18% of the population of NYC after rapid growth over the last decade, but despite this growth, in the past few fiscal years, we have not seen many enhancements in critical city-wide initiatives though the needs on the ground have exponentially grown. AAPI organizations only receive a 6.25% share of discretionary funding (based on initial Schedule C data). As the needs of impacted communities become more diverse and require increased capacity, providers who are willing to do the work must have the



Asian American Pacific Islanders for a Fair Budget

resources needed to allow them to be able to best serve New Yorkers. That means AAPI-led and AAPI-serving organizations must be prioritized for funding opportunities.

AAPI Community Based Organizations provide trusted, culturally responsive, accessible resources and support services across the city. We employ thousands and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. We not only deserve a more equitable fiscal investment because of the direct services provided, but because these services are provided in a manner that is culturally competent and linguistically accessible - far reaching our diverse communities when the widening gaps between social services and our most vulnerable are at its most apparent.

We urge the City Council to consider expanding equitable allocations of discretionary funding of large initiatives to smaller AAPI organizations. These small organizations are often not in consideration for larger initiatives, despite providing care to the very constituents that need those services funded by larger initiatives.

Equity in budgeting is essential to receive the funding that our communities so desperately need in order to fill the gaps left by city government. Currently, 1 in 5 AAPIs live in poverty. We want to build a community that provides culturally competent and linguistically accessible social services to the 78% of AAPIs who are foreign born. A community where the number of Anti-Asian Hate Crimes that are reported, underreported, and unreported decline drastically. A community that emphasizes safety as the presence of wellness in our society and empowers social safety nets and opportunities for communities of color to achieve their full potential in life.

That's why CACF urges the New York City Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign which include expanding the funding provided to AAPI CBOs that provide culturally competent and linguistically accessible care to AAPI New Yorkers with expanding needs.

In order to take further steps in not envisioning, but truly creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for our diverse diaspora, we need an equitable budget that leads to a more value driven, culturally representative, and human centered New York City.

Thank you.

Coalition for Equitable Education Funding

Testimony for New York City Council Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 27 Executive Budget - Education

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the Executive Budget. My name is Gray Burce, and I am a senior at School of the Future High School. Today, I am testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, a group of more than 120 organizations advocating for the resources needed to ensure every student receives a high-quality education, with a focus on those who have the greatest needs.

We are pleased that Mayor Mamdani's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget continues funding for several important education programs that previously had funding set to expire this year. However, the Executive Budget leaves out funding for other critical education programs that are currently benefiting thousands of NYC students and their families and are funded only through this June. Unless funding is restored in the final budget this year, thousands of students will lose access to these programs.

- **Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED)**, which supports students with intensive sensory needs. ($8.5M)
- **Restorative justice**, which helps students stay in school, repair relationships, and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended. ($6M)
- **Mental Health Continuum**, which provides expedited mental healthcare to students at 50 high needs schools. ($5M)
- **Immigrant family communications and outreach**, which helps families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access. ($4M)
- **Student Success Centers**, which allow trained youth leaders to build a culture of college-going and help their peers with the college admissions process. ($3.75M)

We appreciate that the City Council called for continued funding for these programs in your response to the Preliminary Budget.

We urge you to ensure that the final budget restores and baselines funding for these programs, so that students and families can continue relying on them next year and beyond. We also call on the City to make additional investments that are needed to support students, especially those who have the greatest needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

coalition for the homeless

Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless

before the New York City Council

on the

Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

submitted by

Alison Wilkey
Director of Government Affairs and Strategic Campaigns
Coalition for the Homeless

June 10, 2026

The Coalition for the Homeless ("Coalition") welcomes this opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council. As the court- and City-appointed independent monitor of the Department of Homeless Services ("DHS") shelter system and party in the historic *Callahan*, *Eldredge*, and *Boston* cases that created the right to shelter in New York City ("NYC"), we are uniquely situated to provide insight into the impact of proposed funding for affordable housing and related programs serving all unhoused New Yorkers.

Housing is the Solution

Shelter census data over time reflects a distressing trend: a consistent increase in the need for, and use of, the emergency shelter system over the past 44 years.[1] In the past year, the crisis has been exacerbated by the continued depletion of housing that is affordable to those at the lowest income levels and policies that make it more difficult for homeless individuals and families to exit shelter into permanent housing. These factors have resulted in long shelter stays and fewer housing options for low-income families. As a result, in the month of April 2026, there were an average of 97,493 people sleeping each night in all shelter systems in NYC, including 31,396 children.[2]

Underlying this significant increase in the shelter census is a shortage of housing affordable to those at the lowest income levels. New York City's vacancy rate for apartments renting for under $1,100 per month is less than 0.4 percent, and the overall vacancy rate is 1.4 percent – the lowest it has been since 1968.[3] Rapidly increasing rent levels, wages that are not keeping pace with inflation and housing costs, and increasing population,[4] are all contributing to a worsening shortage in affordable housing especially for those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

This housing crisis has been fueled by decades of underinvestment in permanent affordable housing for low-income communities and the failure of all levels of government to enact policies to meaningfully reverse this trend. The affordable housing shortage in New York, particularly for extremely low-income ("ELI") households, is underscored by stark data revealing the depth of the crisis. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2026 report, "The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes," there is a glaring disparity in the availability of affordable housing: for every 100 ELI households in the New York City metropolitan area, there are merely 35 affordable and available rental units.[5] In a state where the cost of living far exceeds national averages, and ELI households are defined as those earning at or below the poverty line or 30 percent of the area median income ("AMI"), this gap leaves a vast number of residents in precarious housing situations.

The worsening housing precarity in New York State is evidenced by the growing rent burdens borne by its residents. In the New York City metro area, seventy-three percent of ELI households are severely rent-burdened.[6]

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[1] Coalition for the Homeless, "State of the Homeless 2026 - Coalition for the Homeless," June 9, 2026, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2026/.

[2] Coalition for the Homeless, "Facts About Homelessness," accessed June 5, 2026, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/.

[3] New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, "New York City's Vacancy Rate Reaches Historic Low of 1.4 Percent, Demanding Urgent Action," press release, February 8, 2024, accessed June 5, 2026, https://www.nyc.gov/site/hpd/news/007-24/new-york-city-s-vacancy-rate-reaches-historic-low-1-4-percentdemanding-urgent-action-new#/0.

[4] U.S. Census Bureau, "Growth in Metro Areas Outpaced Nation," Census.gov, March 13, 2025, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2025/population-estimates-counties-metro-micro.html.

[5] Dan Emmanuel, et al. "The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes," National Low Income Housing Coalition, March 2026, https://nlihc.org/gap.

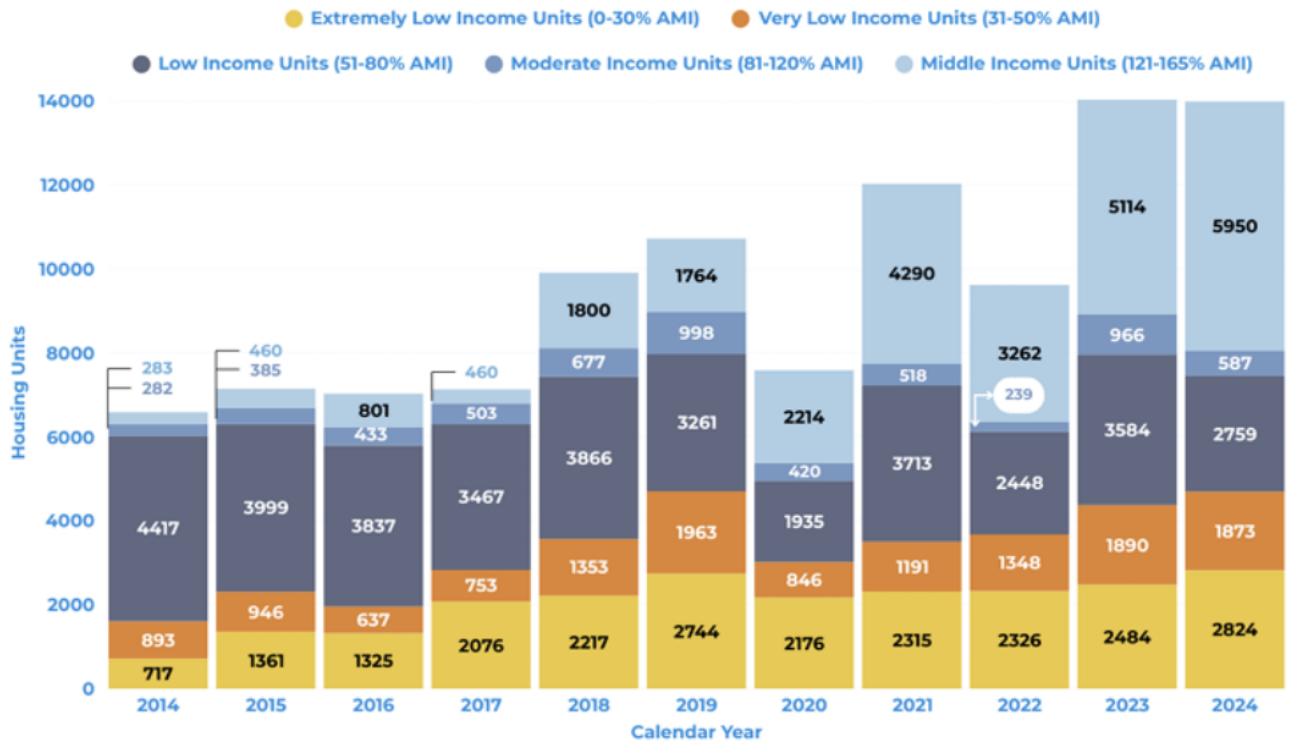
[6] Emmanual, "The Gap," 35.

This financial strain limits the capacity of ELI households to afford other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and childcare. It forces many of them to live in overcrowded conditions – defined as having more than two people per bedroom or more than one person living in a studio apartment. In fact, nearly a quarter (23 percent) of New York City households with at least one child are overcrowded.[7] Given that living in overcrowded conditions is frequently a precursor to entering the shelter system, such statistics portend greater levels of mass homelessness if this affordable housing crisis continues.

In response, the City has built record levels of "affordable" housing in recent years. However, the vast majority of City-subsidized units are categorically unavailable to homeless and ELI households, not because they earn too much, but because they earn too little. As described in Coalition's recent report, *Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers,* from 2014 to 2024, only 21 percent of new affordable rental units financed by the City were available to ELI households, amounting to just 22,565 units over an entire decade.[8] Meanwhile, 69,572 new units were financed for households earning between 51 and 165 percent of AMI.[9] In 2024, the largest share of City-funded "affordable" units was restricted to households earning between 121 and 165 percent of AMI,[10] meaning a single mother with two children in 2024 would have needed to earn at least $118,096 annually to qualify. This creates a cruel irony: those who are homeless or most severely rent-burdened are systematically excluded from the very housing programs the City funds in their name.

[7] U.S. Census Bureau, "2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings," 2023, pg. 53, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf.
[8] Coalition for the Homeless, *Build From the Bottom Up: Affordable Housing for Homeless New Yorkers* (New York, New York, 2026), 5, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/build-from-the-bottom-up/.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid, 7.

Figure 1. Number of New Affordable Rental Units Financed by Income Band and Calendar Year (2014 - 2024)



Source: Calculations based on data from NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, "Affordable Housing Production by Building," accessed via NYC Open Data.

Note: These figures do not include affordable housing preservations or supportive housing production.

The crisis extends beyond those in shelters to include those who are unsheltered, which presents its own significant challenges. According to the last HOPE estimate published in 2025, an estimated 4,504 individuals experienced unsheltered homelessness in one night.[11] However, there is no reliable estimate of the total number of those sleeping unsheltered. The City's annual HOPE survey, mandated by the Federal government, underestimates the true size of this population due to flawed methodology, and as a point-in-time survey, it fails to capture the dynamic nature of unsheltered homelessness. Whatever figure is reported by the City, we can safely assume the true number of homeless people sleeping unsheltered is far higher.

Budget Recommendations for the Committee on General Welfare

Ensuring that every household has access to housing they can afford is the only solution to the decades-long homelessness crisis that shames our city. While the Coalition will continue to vigorously defend the Right to Shelter, our ultimate goal is to make shelters unnecessary.

[11] New York City Department of Homeless Services, "Homeless Outreach Population Estimate 2025 Results," https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/hope/hope-2025-results.pdf.

Expand CityFHEPS to New Yorkers in All Shelters and Households At-Risk of Eviction

CityFHEPS remains the primary pathway enabling people to exit shelter to stable, permanent housing. According to City data, subsidized exits to permanent housing increased in Fiscal Year 2025 for the third year in a row, serving 13,436 homeless households, representing the vast majority of subsidized shelter moveouts[12][13] These improvements were largely driven by coordinated efforts between DHS and contracted shelter providers to expedite housing placements.

However, nearly 100,000 people still reside in shelters, not counting those who are unsheltered or doubled or tripled up in others' homes.[14] Mayor Mamdani made a campaign promise to expand CityFHEPS and drop the litigation with City Council and the Legal Aid Society initiated by his predecessor. Since taking office, he has reneged on that commitment, citing budget concerns.

The City Council must remain firm on expanding CityFHEPS to everyone in shelters, including those in runaway and homeless youth shelters and transitional housing contracted through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. It is also critical to expand CityFHEPS as an eviction prevention tool. The number of people sleeping in shelters will not decrease unless the City is deploying resources to prevent evictions. Many households in rent-regulated or other low-rent apartments are still struggling to pay the rent because of growing income equality.[15] Investment in the housing sector targeted to low-income households, using vouchers and other tools, is necessary to reduce the shelter census.

Successful expansion of the CityFHEPS program depends also on fixing the unnecessary delays and hurdles that plague every step of the process. Clients of the Coalition experience extended delays in processing their applications for CityFHEPS, approvals of apartments, and payments to landlords. Such extreme delays and processing issues are commonly experienced by people who are trying either to leave shelter and find permanent homes or to avoid eviction. More staff are needed at several critical points in the process: processing applications and issuing shopping letters, reviewing CityFHEPS packets and apartment clearances, staffing the rental assistance line, and processing of, and assisting with, renewals.

Low-Barrier Safe Haven Shelters

The City must invest in more low-barrier shelter beds, such as Safe Havens and Stabilization beds. The extreme winter weather that killed several homeless New Yorkers highlighted the gaps and shortcomings of the City's approach to outreach to unsheltered people as well as the lack of resources critical to helping them move inside.

Safe Haven and Stabilization shelter beds offer fewer restrictions, more privacy and security, and better staffing and social services to meet the needs of our unsheltered neighbors. The City recently claimed that

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[12] New York City Department of Homeless Services, *Mayor's Management Report* (New York: City of New York, 2026), accessed March 13, 2026, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2026/dhs.pdf.
[13] Coalition for the Homeless, "State of the Homeless 2026 - Coalition for the Homeless," June 9, 2026, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2026/.
[14] Coalition for the Homeless, "Facts About Homelessness," accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/.
[15] Maximilian Buchholz et al., "Inequality, Not Regulation, Drives America's Housing Affordability Crisis" (working paper, 2026) International Inequalities Study, London School of Economics and Political Science. https://researchonline.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/131070/.

there are 4,200 low-barrier shelter beds.[16] However, shelter census data from June 2, 2026 on file with the Coalition for the Homeless, reported a total capacity for Safe Haven and Stabilization beds of 3,889. Taking into account beds that were offline, actual capacity was only 3,624 and only 64 of those beds were vacant at that time. Rather than ensuring that we have a sufficient number of these critical beds, the City has reinstated encampment sweeps and outreach methods that do not meet unsheltered people's needs. As a result, relative to the number of individuals impacted by such removals, we will continue to see few people entering shelter, let alone permanent housing.[17] Thus, the City must allocate $98 million to add 2,000 new single-occupancy Safe Haven beds for unsheltered New Yorkers which while not sufficient to provide beds for all unsheltered individuals, will be a meaningful step in addressing a critical need.

Budget Recommendations for the Committee on Housing and Buildings

Decades of city housing policy has left ELI and homeless New Yorkers with nowhere to turn but the shelter system. Rectifying the failed policies of past administrations requires investing in deeply subsidized affordable housing specifically for those who are currently homeless and ELI households at imminent risk of homelessness. The underlying cause of mass homelessness in NYC is a shortage of rental housing for the lowest income residents. This crisis will continue to grow unless the City corrects the misalignment between the greatest need for affordable housing and the priorities for affordable housing production. Such investments are even more necessary now, given catastrophic federal funding cuts and changes in federal housing and homeless policies that will undermine housing stability for many who are housed, further increasing the demand for housing that is affordable.

We are pleased to see increased capital investments in the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's FY27 proposed budget and the City's recent housing plan, *Block by Block: The Housing Plan for a New Era*.[18] Importantly, the plan commits to increasing the number of set-aside units for homeless New Yorkers by 40 percent from the average FY24 and FY25 production. We estimate that this will result in approximately 830 new units for homeless households. While that is a significant step in the right direction, and only one part of the City's overall plan, that level of production is still insufficient to meet the need. We reiterate our call to create 12,000 units of truly affordable housing per year for the next five years—for a total of 60,000 units available only to homeless and ELI households on the brink of homelessness. We also urge the City Council to ensure that the funding for units affordable to ELI households is directed to households that are currently in shelter.

Concentrating capital investment to create housing for the lowest-income New Yorkers is not only morally correct but will significantly alleviate mass homelessness and the affordable housing crisis. While we applaud Mayor Mamdani's ambitious housing production goal, we must ensure that the City's resources are directed toward building housing for homeless and ELI households. A common argument is that building more housing for renters at all income levels in NYC will result in more apartments becoming available to the lowest-income renters through the process of "filtering down."[19] But research shows that rising rates of homelessness cannot be solved only by increasing overall housing supply.[20] Trickle down housing policies will not work in NYC because the

[16] Barbara Russo-Lemon, "NYC tripled its spending on helping homeless. So why are more New Yorkers are living on the streets?" *amNY*, accessed June 9, 2026, https://www.amny.com/news/nyc-homeless-increase-spending-dinapoli/.
[17] City of New York, Department of Homeless Services, "Local Law 34 of 2024 Quarterly Interagency Reporting on Encampment Cleanups and Aided Removals, CY25Q2," https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page.
[18] The Office of the Mayor of New York City, "Block by Block: The Housing Plan for a New Era," May 2026, https://www.nyc.gov/content/dam/nycgov/nyc-main/pdf/2026/block-by-block-report.pdf.
[19] Ratcliff, Richard U. "Filtering down and the Elimination of Substandard Housing." *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 21, no. 4 (1945): 322–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/3159005.
[20] Chris Schildt, "To Solve the Housing Affordability Crisis, Communities Must Confront Inequality," *Shelterforce*, March 4, 2026, https://shelterforce.org/2026/03/04/to-solve-the-housing-affordability-crisis-communities-must-confront-inequality/.

theory relies on flawed assumptions about property depreciation and the pressures pushing housing prices upward, including speculative real estate investment,[21] and the amount of time this approach would need to take effect. But even where filtering is observed in other cities with fundamentally different housing markets, it is an extremely slow process. The most optimistic analyses suggest that it can take more than 20 years for a market-rate unit to become affordable to a household at 60 percent AMI—still well out of reach for ELI households.[22]

In addition to increasing the investment in deeply subsidized affordable units, the City must continue to invest in preserving the existing affordable housing stock, repairing and utilizing all vacant housing units, and ensuring that affordable housing projects remain stable over the long-term in order that fewer households require shelter. We support Mayor Mamdani's proposal to invest $256 million in capital funds and $118 million in expense funds through FY30 in rehabilitating vacant NYCHA units.[23] We urge the Administration and the Council to ensure that these vacant units are made available to homeless households and households who are imminently facing eviction due to the federal government's funding cut for Emergency Housing Vouchers.

NYC's crisis of mass homelessness will continue to worsen without significant investments in housing for the people who need it most. Targeting housing investments to the tightest segment of the market is both logical and necessary. Creating units for the lowest-income households produces the largest and most immediate rent-burden relief for those renters and the renters most proximate to them and reduces the burden on the City's shelter system.

About Coalition for the Homeless

Founded in 1981, Coalition is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless and at-risk New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to address the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fifth decade. The Coalition also protects the rights of homeless people through litigation involving the right to emergency shelter, the right to vote, the right to reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, and life-saving housing and services for homeless people living with mental illnesses and HIV/AIDS.

The Coalition operates 12 direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers. These programs also demonstrate effective, long-term, scalable solutions and include: permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS; job-training for homeless and low-income women; and permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen distributed nearly 400,000 hot, nutritious meals to homeless and hungry people on the streets of the city this past year – up from our usual 320,000. Finally, our Crisis Services Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention, individual advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits as well as basic necessities such as diapers, formula, work uniforms, and money for medications and groceries. Since the pandemic, we have been operating a

[21] Greenberg, David M., Julia Duranti-Martínez, Francisca Winston, Spenser Anderson, Jacob Udell, Caroline Kirk, and Richard D. Hendra. "Housing Speculation, Affordable Investments, and Tenant Outcomes in New York City." *Cityscape* 26, no. 1 (2024): 153–78. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48766076.

[22] Ward, Jason M., George Zuo, and Yael Katz. *Supporting Housing Affordability in New York City Through Increased Housing Production: A Policy Brief*. 2023. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA2775-1.html.

[23] New York City Mayor, "Block by Block," 47.

special Crisis Hotline (1-888-358-2384) for homeless individuals who need immediate help finding shelter or meeting other critical needs.

The Coalition was founded in concert with landmark right-to-shelter litigation filed on behalf of homeless men and women (*Callahan v. Carey* and *Eldredge v. Koch*) and remains a plaintiff in these now consolidated cases. In 1981, the City and State entered into a consent decree in *Callahan* through which they agreed: "The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter." The *Eldredge* case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The *Callahan* consent decree and the *Eldredge* case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women.

Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as the independent court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless single adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor the municipal shelter system serving homeless families. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by Legal Aid and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws. During the pandemic, the Coalition worked with Legal Aid to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure Wi-Fi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York,* a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

NYC Council Committee on Finance
FY 27 Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, June 10th, 2026

Testimony Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you, Chair Lee and the Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to present testimony on the NYC executive budget for fiscal year 27. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, works in partnership with the city and state to deliver wrap-around services within schools, early care and learning programs, and the wider communities that we serve across NYC, through and beyond our contracted programs and services. Our continued mission is to combine education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age. Our testimony today will focus primarily on the budgets for New York City Public Schools, the Administration for Children Services, and the Department of Youth and Community Development.

Overview of Our Services

CHCF's Early Care and Education team supports childcare and early learning programs, and family access to childcare (birth through school-age) in our work as a Child Care Resource Center,[1] as a Family Child Care Network under New York City Public Schools Division of Early Childhood Education[2], and as an Early Head Start Provider. CHCF additionally engages providers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), supporting the nutrition of children in the communities through their child care program, with an emphasis on healthy eating through cultural foods.

Our Youth Development team delivers after-school programming in partnership with three schools in the Bronx; as well as Summer Rising programming for elementary and middle school students at one of our partner schools. In addition, CHCF offers career and college readiness programming to high school juniors and seniors at four schools in Manhattan and the Bronx. Above and beyond the academic supports we offer in our school-based programs, we support mental health and social emotional development, student interest and career exploration, and connection to additional resources and opportunities beyond the school walls.

Our Social Services team oversees direct supports and services at one of the hotel-based shelters for un-housed families and asylum-seeking families in Long Island City, ensuring culturally and linguistically responsive and trauma informed support to newly arrived families navigating complex city systems.

Finally, our Community Empowerment Department enhances our general delivery of comprehensive supports in direct program spaces, expanding the reach of our agency services and supports beyond these physical spaces into the surrounding communities, addressing several issues, reflective of the needs of the families and communities (i.e. housing, immigration, food access, healthcare access, etc.).

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[1] NYC CCRR Consortium: https://nyccrr.org/
[2] CHCF Family Child Care Network: https://www.chcfinc.org/family-child-care-network/

Growing Investments in Out-of-School-Time-Programming

During a school year, CHCF has historically provided after school programming at three different schools in the Bronx, with a typically funded capacity to reach over 500 students, and by extension delivering resources and services to their families. During the 2024-2025 school year, CHCF served 207 students through their afterschool programs at P.S. 59, P.S. 226, and P.S. 279. The over 50% loss in capacity was as a result of New York State creating the LEAPS program – a merging together of the former Advantage Afterschool and Empire Afterschool programs – as a means of eliminating inequities that had existed between the two after school contracts. While the intention of LEAPS was appreciated by contracted partners, the state did not adequately fund the program to maintain capacity in existing, high-quality programs while also expanding capacity in other regions of the state. CHCF, along with roughly 200 organizational partner programs, was approved as a contractor to deliver LEAPS services, but received no funding to do so. You can see the overall impact on New York City afterschool capacity through an analysis provided by United Neighborhood Houses, linked in the footnotes.[3]

Above and beyond culturally and linguistically responsive academic instruction, CHCF programs provide comprehensive support that promotes students' mental health and social emotional development, and foster student interest and career exploration. Our academic enrichment curriculum expands upon day-school and school-year learning, allowing students to engage in STEM and the arts through clubs such as robotics, esports, photography, and health and fitness – ensuring that students are inspired and equipped with 21st century skills.

CHCF demonstrates the value-add of connecting community-based partners with schools to comprehensively meet the unique needs of students and their families. CBO partners, like CHCF, strategically coordinate funding and resources outside of school budgets to serve the holistic needs of the students, their families, the school, and the surrounding community. We continue to attest to the critical importance of sustaining programs that strengthen and grow such partnerships between schools and CBOs that demonstrate positive impact on students, families, and communities.

While we continue to advocate with state leaders to fully fund LEAPS, we also urge city leaders to support the need for restoring lost state-funded capacities across city districts. As our state and city leaders are advancing a universal child care system, we must recognize child care as birth through school-age (13), and year-round. NYC leaders must steadily build out-of-school-time programming capacity through existing programming, toward universal access, along with efforts to grow early care and education.

Equitable Education Funding

The city has been making significant efforts to baseline demonstrably impactful programs for children and youth; the FY26 enacted budget adopted $112M in baselined funds for Early Childhood Education, $55M in baselined funds for Preschool special education classes, $25M in baselined Early Childhood Extended Day Seats, $41M in base-lined funds for Arts Programming, $14M in based-lined funds for Community Schools, $10M in base-lined funds for Teacher Recruitment, and $4M in base-lined funds for High-Impact Tutoring. While CHCF, along with its partners in the Coalition for Equitable Education

[3] Connolly, K. (Jan 2026). Change in state-funded afterschool slots (2026). United Neighborhood Houses. Retrieved from: Change in state-funded afterschool slots (2026)

Funding (CEEF), celebrated these huge wins in stabilizing the delivery of these programs, the budget still left several programs vulnerable by extending and not base lining their funds.

The FY27 Executive Budget did extend and baseline funding for several more essential programs, including preschool special education services, summer programming, Learning to Work programs, and early childhood education outreach. While we are truly grateful to see the long-term commitment to these programs, the following programs that reach thousands of NYC students and their families were left out of the FY27 executive budget and are set to end June 30th if Council does not intervene:

- **Immigrant Family Communications and Outreach** ($4M), helping information about a child's school and education reach their families in their primary language. This not only ensures key information and resources equitably reach families, but underscores safe and supportive school communities for immigrant families, which is particularly important during a very threatening time in this country.
- **Mental Health Continuum** ($5M), which enhances reach of mental health services to students in 50 NYCPS schools.
- **Restorative Justice** ($6M), which fosters safe and supportive school environments and interventions that help students stay in school and resolve conflicts, rather than being subjected to school pushout through exclusionary discipline, which both causes harm to our students and does nothing to improve behavior.
- **Student Success Centers** ($3.75M) that train youth leaders to build a college-going culture and help their peers through the college admissions process, which is particularly essential in a city with a significant number of first-generation college students. The NYC Comptroller's Office found in its 2024 report that CUNY's student population is 60% first generation. Any programs that support leadership development and students to navigate the expansive barriers in access to affordable, supportive higher education must be safeguarded.
- **Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED)** ($8.5M), which offers programming for students with intensive sensory needs.

CHCF joins our partners in CEEF in calling on City Council to restore and baseline the funding for these programs. When we know the tremendous impact of these programs on the students reached. City leaders cannot continue to hold the students and the community organizations delivering these supports in a state of uncertainty about their future year after year.

Early Care and Learning Programming

CHCF holds a Family Child Care Network under the NYCPS DECE, which has grown to support 40 affiliated providers/programs – most of whom speak Spanish as their primary language – to deliver high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive programming to 203 children in FY25 alone. ECE programming supports the healthy development of NYC's children, particularly those who are from communities that have been historically under-resourced; and offers stability to parents who are trying to navigate work and family needs.

We continue to pay close attention to NYC's efforts at expanding universal programming. As the city prepares to launch 2-K for the 26-27 school year, NYC leaders must take rapid steps to address longstanding inequities in in their systems design to stem the collapse that is happening across the

sector. It cannot not be overstated that, if New York City and State want to grow access to care and realize universal child care, *they need a thriving child care workforce* and to build back the care capacity necessary to meet the need. Inequitable contracting, insufficient rates, and heavily delayed payments have been compounded by stagnation in family enrollment with the high cost of full-day, full-year care and a CCAP voucher waitlist that has grown to over 25,000.

Stakeholders are eager to work with city leaders to assess the current system, center the realities and needs of families, children, and providers, and identify solutions to a broken system that will ensure families are affirmed in their care needs, supported in finding the best option to meet their needs, and that those programs, and the providers and staff who run them, are robustly supported in delivering high-quality, responsive care. A few, pointed items that we would like to call on the Council's attention to are:

- **The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) waitlist**, which has now grown to over 25,000. While New York State has made historic investments in CCAP, it simply has not been enough to move the waitlist in any substantial way. In the FY26 state budget, there was $350M allocated that NYC could draw down with a Maintenance of Effort match, specifically to start moving the waitlist. According to OCFS, nearly $250M of those state dollars remain unused by the city. It is critical that the city leaders optimize any and all resources being made available to them to move families off of the waitlist and into care. Access to consistent, safe care for children is a backbone to establishing family financial stability and a thriving economy; in addition to the valuable impact on the healthy development of New York's children.
- **The inadequacy of 3-K School Day/School Year.** When this program was rolled out, the focus was simply not on ensuring that the "free" option that was being made available to families with small children really met the need. 3-year-olds may benefit from 3-K programming, but they require care all day, all year, and 3-K School Day/Year programming has left families in difficult positions. Either they need to be available to pick their child up at 2:20 each day and they are left to pay the remaining high costs of after school and summer care; or they bypass the option and get on the long waitlist for a voucher as the more flexible option to meet their need. For a time, prior to the new administration and the 2-K announcement, the concept of 3-K SDY+ was floating around from the administration, which would have covered after-school care during the school year, although still leaving families to their own devices for summer care. With the exciting announcement of 2-K, and the subsequent commitment to making 2-K full day/full year, the discussion of meeting that need for 3-year-olds has fallen off the table. 3K as it currently exists is not meeting the true need of families and their children.
- **Rate inequities** continue to exist across the different NYCPS contracts and affiliations. Family Child Care providers are disproportionately feeling the weight of this, as the rates set for DECE Network slots barely reflect the state market rate, which does not cover the enhanced requirements of serving NYCPS seats. With the forthcoming 2-K seats being allocated to networks, DECE is offering higher rates for those slots, which will add an additional inequity between the 2-K and 3-K extended day/year seats. It is imperative that NYC make efforts to better align their rates to the true cost of delivering care and early learning in affiliated/contracts programs. Of critical importance is the inclusion of appropriate compensation for the workforce, with benefits, in the calculation of the rates. The field remains overwhelmingly made up of women of color and we cannot continue to build systems off of a workforce that is held at near-poverty wages.

- **Incorporation of independent providers in the evolving system.** With the rollout of 4-K and then 3-K under the Department of Education, it did not appear that the stability of the overall child care sector was centered in planning. The city has always been unable to engage all FCC providers in networks, because of the cost and because some independent providers simply do not want to formally affiliate with a network. As the DOE opened 4-K and 3-K, these age groups, which typically require full day/year programs, started to shift into affiliated programs offering the reduced/no cost programming, which subsequently impacted the enrollment dynamics in programs outside of the DOE system. As a result of these shifts in enrollment, roughly 1,300 FCC programs closed between 2014 and 2019 (even before the pandemic), across New York City[4]. In the next phases of expanding the ECE system towards universal childcare, it is imperative that the city work with stakeholders to ensure families are supported in accessing care in the quality program of their choosing, regardless of affiliation. We must ensure that the overall childcare sector is stable and thriving as the system expands.
- **Underinvestment in provider supports and resources.** At the center of our advocacy on early care and education are the children and families cared for in these programs. We want to ensure that families maintain freedom to place their children in the modality of care that reflects their needs, culture, and community; and that those programs receive equitable resourcing. With the network design, there is an inherently tiered system of supports made available to programs and providers based on their affiliation. For programs in network, it is important that the network organizations are funded and supported appropriately. The current network contracts, which began in 2020 and were 5-year contracts, have now been extended through 2028. This means that funding levels are being held flat, while the cost of everything has risen since 2020. Additionally, the networks are tasked with bringing on specialists to support the network provider programs, but are not funded to offer competitive wages, which has led to high turnover of support staff. While the Council did pass a COLA for human service contracted partners, the networks have still not received the funding increase to give the adjustments in wage.

  In addition, ongoing delays in payments to Networks, has created consistent cash flow challenges for the organizations and providers. Where some organizations have had other funds available to stave off the impact on providers, this ultimately means shifting resources away from serving additional needs of the communities and families while we wait for significant amounts of funds (in the millions) to be reimbursed.

  For independent providers outside of the network system, they are largely held out from accessing equitable resources for their programs. As spoken to above, the independent FCC sector will continue to exist and city leaders must make efforts to engage programs, even if not in formal affiliation, that are caring for children and families. Families' choice in program must be honored, and their children have a right to equitably resourced programs. The entire child care sector, both within and outside of the NYCPS system, must be stable and thriving for NYC to actualize a universal childcare system.

[4] Melodia, L. and Madge Paredes, A. (Nov 2025). Dignified Pay for Quality Care: What New York's Family Child Care Providers Need to Thrive. The New School Center for New York City Affairs. Retrieved from: https://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/dignified-pay-for-quality-care-what-new-yorks-family-child-care-providers-need-to-thrive

Until universal, non-means tested child care is established, it remains essential that NYC continue to support *all* NYC children in accessing early care and learning, regardless of their eligibility for federal funding-backed subsidies. We continue to celebrate Promise NYC and its success in supporting the care of over 600 children who are deemed ineligible for federally funded childcare solely due to their immigration status. We join many in celebrating the baselining of Promise NYC and vociferously call on city leaders to continue to grow this program to meet the need for care, particularly for those families with children who are not yet being enveloped in universal programming. At a time when the nation climate continuously instills fear and isolation in immigrant communities, NYC must continue to step up and demonstrate its commitment to supporting immigrant New Yorkers.

Additional Early Literacy Work

Finally, CHCF continues to partner with 16 other community-based organizations under the City's First Readers Initiative. We have enthusiastically participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, **CFR** is its ***only*** investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its 17 member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement that will allow us to continue expanding our reach —so we can impact even more families and children in FY27.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony; and if there are any questions about our work or what is presented in our testimony, please reach out to Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy, at: ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

My name is Aastha Mehta, and I am testifying on behalf of Common Justice, a New York City organization that operates one of the nation's first alternatives to incarceration programs for serious violent felonies. We urge the Committee on Finance to invest in community-led responses to violence.

Common Justice works in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan with young people facing significant prison sentences for violent crimes, as well as the survivors of those crimes. With the consent of the person harmed, these cases are diverted into a restorative justice process that centers survivor needs while requiring the responsible party to take meaningful accountability. Participants complete an intensive 12 to 15 month program that includes violence intervention, restorative justice dialogue, education and employment support, and ongoing supervision. Our outcomes remain strong: only 8% of responsible parties engaged in the program have been terminated for new crimes. A 2022 study by DCJS found that since solidifying our model in 2012, only one graduate had been convicted of a new violent felony.

In FY27 Common Justice is requesting funding to both sustain our direct service restorative justice and victim services programming (2225839) as well as support the launch of our new civic engagement strategy (2226696). Common Justice's direct service work benefits all New York residents by reducing cycles of violence and providing effective, non-prison-based responses to serious harm. By centering dignity, responsibility, and meaningful accountability, the program supports youth who have committed harm in changing behavior while offering harmed parties an empowering role in shaping the response to what they experienced. The program improves the mental health and wellbeing of crime survivors, provides more equitable access to services for young men of color and other underserved survivors, and averts the damaging individual and community-level impacts of incarceration. For our civic engagement strategy, Common Justice aims to equip young people in our communities most impacted by violence with the tools needed to understand local power, share their stories, grow as civic leaders, and change narratives on violence and safety.

Not only does Common Justices produce stronger outcomes for both survivors and responsible parties than incarceration, but strategies like ours cost significantly less than incarceration does. According to a report from the New York City Comptroller, it costs more than $500,000 to incarcerate just one person on Rikers Island for a year. For the cost of detaining just one single person on Rikers for a year, Common Justice could fully fund our entire civic engagement strategy for an entire year, which would provide a tangible pathway for hundreds of New Yorkers most impacted by violence to get involved in civic leadership, become more engaged with our city's community board system, and learn more about the effective and cost-saving community-led solutions to violence.

Instead of relying on an expensive system that too often fails to address the root causes of violence, our city should be investing in community-based responses that help people access housing, employment, and support in the neighborhoods where they live. Funding and strengthening community-based services is a long-term investment in our city's well-being. Those who have caused harm but can avoid incarceration through alternative programs like Common Justice, are New Yorkers who will be able to work, support families, pay taxes, and contribute to their communities, all while continuing to face accountability and make amends to those who they harmed.

For these reasons, we urge the Council to continue and expand investments in alternatives to incarceration and other community-based responses to violence. These programs hold people accountable, support survivors, and strengthen public safety while reducing the city's reliance on incarceration — which is an expensive, outdated, and ineffective response to violence and harm in our communities.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to New York City.

Aastha Mehta
Chief Development Officer
Common Justice, Inc.

COMMONPOINT
Community happens here

Testimony

New York City Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Finance Committee

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Submitted by

Alla Shagalova, Assistant Vice President, Resettlement and Integration Services
Commonpoint NY

This testimony is submitted in support of the **New York City Immigrant Resettlement Initiative (NYC-IRI).**

In a city where 38% percent of residents are foreign-born, hundreds of thousands of immigrants require comprehensive, culturally and linguistically competent, trauma-informed social, workforce, and educational services. In an increasingly challenging environment of cascading changes in federal policies, increased immigration enforcement, and ongoing federal funding cuts, immigrants need the support of experienced, reputable organizations like Commonpoint and its NYC-IRI partners more than ever. Effective wraparound services, delivered through a successful refugee resettlement model refined over decades, will provide New York City immigrants - regardless of their immigration status - with a foundation from which to pursue legal and economic stability.

Commonpoint NY is a trusted, community-based organization. Headquartered in Queens, New York—one of the most diverse places in the world—Commonpoint is deeply rooted in the communities we serve. Each year, we support over 100,000 individuals through a wide range of programs that address critical social determinants of health, such as poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and mental health challenges.

With ten flagship centers in Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx and almost 80 co-located community sites across the city, Commonpoint provides services that span all life stages, including early childhood education, senior centers, ESOL and vocational training, college access, summer camps, and an online client-choice food pantry. Our programs are designed to foster both economic security and social-emotional resilience, empowering New Yorkers of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to overcome challenges and thrive.

Commonpoint has emerged as a steadfast leader in resettlement and integration of refugees and other humanitarian migrants across New York City. In 2022, Commonpoint became the New York City-area resettlement affiliate of HIAS, the world's oldest refugee resettlement agency. This partnership builds on our decades-long experience providing comprehensive social, educational, and employment services to struggling New Yorkers as well as an experienced staff of case managers and employment counselors fluent in Spanish, French, Dari, Pashto, Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic, Burmese, Swahili, Kinyamulenge, Kinyarwanda, and Kirundi. We leverage

staff's expertise and lived immigrant experience to address the urgent needs of immigrants in a holistic and impactful way. Since 2022, Commonpoint has provided resettlement services to approximately 3,500 humanitarian migrants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and others.

At Commonpoint, we believe every individual deserves the opportunity to thrive. Guided by this principle, we address both immediate needs and crises—such as securing housing and essential resources—and long-term challenges like workforce development and legal support. Our holistic approach empowers these new New Yorkers, regardless of their race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, immigration status or gender identity, to achieve stability, self-sufficiency, and the chance for a brighter future.

The New York City Immigrant Resettlement Initiative (NYC-IRI)

Commonpoint is seeking **$1M** as a member of the New York City's Immigrant Resettlement Initiative (NYC-IRI) coalition, a coordinated, citywide immigrant resettlement effort, collectively seeking **$5M** in FY27 ($**1M** for each of the five coalition members), to respond to the urgent and evolving needs of at least 4,000 immigrant New Yorkers. Commonpoint will serve at least 800 clients under NYC-IRI.

The coalition consists of five established immigrant-serving and refugee resettlement organizations: Catholic Charities Community Services, Church World Service, CAMBA, Commonpoint, and the International Rescue Committee, and has a long history of

successful collaboration. Implementing NYC-IRI as a joint, coordinated effort will allow the partners to maximize the funding and reach the maximum number of immigrant New Yorkers in need of services across all boroughs and regardless of immigration status. Designed to bring resettlement-informed case management and other services to refugees, asylum seekers, other humanitarian migrants, undocumented immigrants, and mixed-status families, NYC-IRI includes populations that are often unable to access traditional resettlement programs and public benefits. It focuses on meeting urgent stabilization needs while also supporting integration and self-sufficiency for all clients through cultural orientation, family strengthening, individualized economic mobility planning, and formal employment services for those authorized to work.

Commonpoint and its NYC-IRI partners will provide:

- Culturally and linguistically responsive case management
- Health and medical referrals
- Benefits navigation
- Food security assistance
- Housing supports
- Emergency assistance and crisis intervention
- Mental health and wellness supports
- Family stabilization supports
- Cultural Orientation
- Longer-term self-sufficiency planning



- Employment services (for those with work authorization)
- Legal assistance referrals

NYC-IRI Impact:

- Access to comprehensive, expert, culturally and linguistically competent and trauma-informed resettlement services for all immigrant New Yorkers
- Stabilization of local New York communities and NYC at large by supporting its most vulnerable community members struggling with housing and food insecurity, healthcare and mental health needs, public benefits access, aggressive immigration enforcement, and other crises
- Reduction of strain on NYC emergency shelters, hospitals, and crisis-response systems and other resources

Extending equitable support to the whole NYC immigrant community through NYC-IRI will help overcome chronic status-based disconnection from high quality services for many New Yorkers in need of stabilization and inclusion.

Testimony of Community Education Council 26

Before the New York City Council Joint Hearing of the Committee on Education and the Committee on Finance

Presented by: Al Suhu, President, Community Education Council 26 Date: June 10, 2026

For the record (full written testimony)

Good [morning/afternoon], Chair Dinowitz, Chair Lee, and members of the Committees on Education and Finance.

My name is Al Suhu, and I serve on Community Education Council 26, which represents the families and schools of School District 26 in eastern Queens — Bayside, Douglaston, Little Neck, Bellerose, Glen Oaks, Fresh Meadows, Oakland Gardens, Hollis Hills, and Queens Village. Chair Lee, these are your neighborhoods too, and several of the schools I am about to describe sit inside Council District 23.

I am here to ask the Council to end a funding practice that has quietly trapped half of our elementary schools in a permanent budget deficit for more than a decade — and to fix it in the budget you are negotiating right now.

The problem in one sentence

In Fiscal Year 2025, **twelve of our twenty-four elementary schools — fifty percent — could not afford the staff and services their own approved education plans require**, and had to fight for "budget appeals" funding just to make payroll and avoid laying off teachers. These are not failing schools or mismanaged schools. They are small schools for which the funding formula does not provide adequate funding.

This is not "temporary." The DOE's own data and its own words prove it.

The Department calls this money a "Temporary Line Shortfall." But the same District 26 schools have been in "temporary" shortfall **continuously for ten to fifteen years.** The aggregate shortfall has not shrunk — it has more than doubled, from **$3.4 million in FY2023 to a projected $6.9 million in FY2026.** A condition that has recurred every single year for fifteen years and keeps growing is not temporarily caused by fluctuations due to enrollment as the DOE has claimed. It is structural flaw in the funding mechanism that affects not only School district 26 but all districts in Queens and scattered districts throughout the city.

On May 8, CEC 26 held a meeting with NYCPS senior executives that included the CFO and Acting Deputy Chancellor of the Division of Finance, Administration, & Human Resources. The discussion was about a request to use permanent methods to fund schools that are continually

appealing for funds to pay for mandated services, such as using School Allocation Memoranda. The NYCPS team acknowledged the problem but refused to permanently fund the shortfall of such schools instead of treating the perennial shortfalls as temporary shortfalls. Their rationale was that these schools must continue to be scrutinized on their spending practices. We disagree because each of these schools have been appealing for funds for nearly 15 years, and over this time there is no evidence of mismanagement or misuse of funds. It is accepted practice in the auditing field that large accounts such as the schools that receive the largest funding should be scrutinized on their spending patterns, not the schools with the smallest budgets. We suspect that large schools receive much more funding than they actually need, while small schools do not receive sufficient funding. It appears that NYCPS lacks the conviction to resolve this known problem and instead continues with existing processes even though they do not address the underlying cause.

The DOE has now responded to our resolution twice. In writing, the Department told us that this funding is used only for **mandated costs — classroom teachers and special-education staff** — and that it reflects "a validated need to meet mandated requirements that *cannot be supported through initial allocations.*"

I want the Council to sit with that sentence, because it is an admission. The DOE is telling you, in writing, that for twelve of our schools, the regular budget is not enough to cover the costs the law *requires* — not enrichment, not extras, but the legally mandated minimum. Every year. For fifteen years. If a school's opening budget cannot pay for what the law mandates, the problem is not the school. The problem is the funding mechanism.

The question the DOE has refused to answer

Here is the heart of the matter, and the question I ask this Council to put to the DOE on the record today:

When a school receives appeals funding in one year, does the DOE reduce that school's operating budget by the same amount the following year?

We allege that it does. We call it the Cycle of Fiscal Entrapment: the appeals money is treated as an advance — effectively a loan — and clawed back from next year's allocation, which guarantees the school is short again, which forces another appeal, which is clawed back again. The DOE has now had two opportunities to deny this in writing, and in both letters it said nothing about it.

If the answer is yes, then the City is not funding these schools. It is lending them their own future budgets and calling it support. That single answer should decide this hearing.

Why this happens: the small-school penalty

This is a structural problem, not a local failure:

- **Small schools cannot spread fixed costs.** Our appeals schools enroll an average of **386 students, compared with 600 in our non-appeals schools.** Nearly the entire per-student allocation is eaten by teacher salaries, leaving almost nothing for guidance counselors, school aides, arts and music, instructional materials, or basic operations. The $225,000 base allocation does not even fully cover a principal and a secretary.
- **District 26 has the highest average teacher salaries of any of the city's 32 districts** — a direct result of low turnover and an experienced, stable staff. The funding formula punishes that stability: experienced teachers cost more, so each dollar buys less.
- **Almost none of our schools qualify for Title I,** many missing the threshold by a hair, so they have no federal cushion.
- **Recent additions to the Fair Student Funding formula** — new weights for poverty, homelessness, and disability concentration — diluted the value of the general-education weight that our schools depend on. Help that goes elsewhere is not help for us.

These schools were *built* small. Eastern Queens is a low-density, residentially zoned community; the buildings were designed for fewer students. The formula was simply never built for them.

Why this is urgent: the class-size mandate

The State's class-size law requires the city to bring every K–3 class down to 20 students by the 2027–28 school year. Smaller classes mean **more teachers** — the exact cost that already consumes these schools' entire budget. The law directs the city to fund its highest-poverty schools first, which means District 26 receives the least class-size support while being held to the same legal cap.

So picture the position the City has put these schools in: a State mandate to hire more teachers, no funding to do it, an FSF formula that won't stretch to cover it, and an appeals "loan" being clawed back at the same time. That is fiscally incoherent, and it puts at risk the "sound basic education" every New York child is constitutionally owed.

This was knowable, and known

District 26's appeals run through the Queens North Borough Citywide Office, which also serves Districts 24, 25, and 30. **Since 2012 that office has approved more than twice as much appeals funding for District 26 as for any other district it serves.** This pattern has been sitting in the DOE's own Galaxy allocation data for fifteen years. No one was surprised by it. It was managed, not solved.

What the DOE offered — and why it isn't enough

To its credit, the DOE says it is "exploring" delivering appeals funding earlier in the year so schools can plan. We welcome that. But a loan delivered earlier is still a loan. Earlier timing does nothing about the deficit and nothing about the clawback. We need the Council to turn that "exploration" into a requirement, and to fix the underlying structure.

What we ask of this Council

1. **Baseline the recurring shortfall.** In the FY2027 budget, direct the DOE to convert chronic appeals funding into permanent, baselined allocations for any school that has been in appeals for three or more consecutive years — and to stop clawing it back. The mechanism is the DOE's to choose (For example, through a School Allocation Memorandum); the outcome is the Council's to require.
2. **Get the clawback on the record.** Require the DOE to state, in writing and under oath, whether prior-year appeals funding is deducted from the following year's opening allocation. If it is, direct that the practice end.
3. **Fund the budgets on time.** Require that chronic-appeals schools have their budgets finalized on the same timeline as every other school — before the summer recess — so principals can hire and plan.
4. **Mandate transparency.** Require an annual public report listing every school in appeals for three or more years, the amounts involved, and the size of the small-school funding gap, with a DOE plan and a deadline to fix the structural cause.
5. **Fix the formula for small schools.** Reconvene the FSF and class-size working groups to add a small-school fixed-cost adjustment, so the class-size mandate is actually fundable in schools like ours.
6. **Protect classroom spending.** End the freezing of discretionary OTPS funds for appeals schools, which has cut curriculum purchases, enrichment, and vendor contracts that directly serve students.

What is actually at stake

This is not abstract. In FY2025, our appeals schools went unfunded for things like this: replacing **broken air-conditioning units** in classrooms; expanding a guidance counselor from **two days a week to full-time**; a **breakfast-program aide**; basic literacy and math **workbooks**; an after-school program. One school's entire list of "unmet needs" was a broken A/C unit and classroom technology. These are not luxuries. They are the floor of a decent education, and twelve of our schools are below it.

Chair Lee, Chair Dinowitz — you have the budget in front of you right now. You have the data. And you have a Finance Chair who knows these schools personally and an Education Chair who spent thirteen years teaching the special-education students this funding is supposed to protect. We are not asking for more than other schools get. We are asking that our schools stop being handed their own money as a loan.

Thank you. I welcome your questions, and CEC 26 stands ready to provide the underlying Galaxy data and exhibits for the record.

Community District Education Council 26
New York City Department of Education

Address: 61-15 Oceania Street, Bayside, NY 11364 *Phone:* (718) 631-6927 *Fax:* (718) 631-1347 *E-mail:* CEC26@schools.nyc.gov

Albert Suhu	Ribhi Alam	Sae-Jung Lee	David Rosenfeld	Qian Kang
President of the Council	*First Vice- President*	*Second Vice President*	*Recording Secretary*	*Treasurer*
Council Members:	(Louis) Hsuante Tsai	*Student Members:*	*District 26 Community Superintendent:*	
Dennis Chan	Zhao Shao (Liz Tsen)	Arleen Chodha	Anthony Inzerillo	
Sulinda Hong		Isaiah Tandjung		
Monica Huang				

Resolution Demanding the NYC Department of Education to Abolish the "Cycle of Fiscal Entrapment" Imposed on Budget Appeals Schools

WHEREAS, there does not appear to be a publicly accessible webpage on the New York City Department of Education (DOE) website explaining or defining "Appeals Schools"; however, a press release from the Mayor's Office states that, "Every year the DOE sets aside funds to address budget appeals and adjustments. This funding ensures the DOE can meet schools' needs as they arise over the summer and into the fall. Appeals funding is distributed based on the financial condition of each school compared to schools of similar size and considers additional criteria such as unique conditions at each school,"[i] and a subsequent press release states that, "New York City public schools will also be enhancing the budget appeals process to ensure it is responsive to schools' special education staffing needs."[ii]; and

WHEREAS, the "needs of schools" are defined in each school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), pursuant to New York State Education Law[iii] and applicable Chancellor's Regulations, and the CEP serves as the school's official planning document identifying student needs, school-wide goals, and the instructional, programmatic, and support strategies—both mandated and discretionary—required to meet those needs, thereby presuming that the school's approved budget allocation is sufficient to implement the CEP as submitted and approved; and

WHEREAS, in Fiscal Year 2025, twelve of the twenty-four elementary schools (K–5 and K–8), representing fifty percent (50%) of elementary schools in Community School District 26, are unable to fund the services outlined in their CEPs and therefore must rely on the DOE budget appeals process to meet payroll obligations and avoid the excessing of pedagogical staff; and

WHEREAS, approved budget appeals are funded primarily through allocation categories labeled "TL Temporary Shortfall," with more than eighty percent (80%) allocated as "TL Temporary Shortfall Teachers," and analysis of Galaxy Allocations data demonstrates that these same District 26 schools have remained in appeals status continuously for the past ten to fifteen years (see Exhibits 1 and 2), thereby disproving any assertion that appeals funding reflects isolated or temporary fiscal circumstances and conclusively demonstrating that the funding mechanism for these schools is structurally flawed; and

WHEREAS, aggregate funding shortfalls for District 26 appeals schools have more than doubled from $3.4 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to $6.9 million projected for Fiscal Year 2026 (see Exhibit 1), yet the DOE has taken no substantive or corrective action to address the accelerating magnitude of these persistent deficits; and

WHEREAS, the extraordinary and recurring budget shortfalls experienced by District 26 appeals schools are not attributable to fiscal mismanagement nor to conditions that "arise over the summer and into the fall," but instead result from the same "unique conditions" recurring annually, which compel schools to pursue appeals funding as a matter of necessity, rendering the appeals process a harmful and temporary remedy rather than a solution, including but not limited to:

- The treatment of approved appeals funding as advances or "loans" against future allocations;
- The interaction between small school capacities and the Fair Student Funding (FSF) formula;
- Higher-than-average citywide teacher salaries;
- All-or-nothing funding streams;
- Limited eligibility for additional FSF weights; and

WHEREAS, funds distributed through the appeals process are not baselined as permanent budget adjustments, but instead are treated as advances subject to repayment through subsequent allocation reductions or Deficit Reduction Plans,

thereby creating a "Cycle of Fiscal Entrapment" in which a school receiving appeals funding in one fiscal year has an equivalent amount deducted from its opening allocation in the following year, perpetuating annual deficits, destabilizing school leadership, preventing long-term planning, and demoralizing school communities; and

WHEREAS, neighborhoods in the outer boroughs—particularly Staten Island and eastern Queens—contain the highest concentrations[iv] of low-density residential zoning (R1–R4)[v], resulting in schools that were intentionally designed with smaller capacities, and accordingly the average enrollment of the twelve District 26 appeals schools is 386 students, compared to an average enrollment of 600 students in non-appeals schools within the district, demonstrating that small-capacity schools are structurally underfunded and therefore unable to provide equitable services to their students; and

WHEREAS, small-capacity schools experience a "small school penalty" whereby nearly the entirety of their per-student FSF allocation is consumed by classroom teacher salaries, leaving insufficient funds to support fixed operational expenses—exclusive of the principal and school secretary positions partially offset by the $225,000 FSF base allocation—including administrative support staff, guidance counselors, before- and after-school programming, and Other Than Personal Services (OTPS) expenditures such as instructional materials[vi]; and

WHEREAS, schools with larger capacities benefit from economies of scale whereby per-student FSF allocations adequately cover classroom teacher salaries and fixed expenses, thereby avoiding the structural deficits routinely imposed on small schools; and

WHEREAS, District 26 has the highest average teacher salaries among New York City's thirty-two school districts, reflecting historically low teacher turnover, yet higher salary costs significantly reduce the purchasing power of FSF allocations, requiring a greater proportion of funds to be devoted to payroll and diminishing schools' ability to staff adequately or fund essential non-personnel expenses[vii]; and

WHEREAS, few District 26 schools receive Title I funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), despite many schools narrowly missing eligibility thresholds, thereby depriving appeals schools of a critical fiscal buffer to support student services, enrichment programs, and staffing needs that cannot be met under the structurally insufficient FSF allocation; and

WHEREAS, recent additions to the FSF formula[viii]—including weights for students in temporary housing and schools with high concentrations of poverty, housing instability, or disabilities—have had the unintended consequence of diluting the relative purchasing power of general education weights, which District 26 schools disproportionately rely upon due to comparatively lower concentrations of high-need students; and

WHEREAS, schools in appeals status are subject to severe budgetary restrictions, including the freezing of discretionary OTPS funds, thereby jeopardizing or eliminating curriculum purchases, enrichment programming, and vendor contracts essential to student learning; and

WHEREAS, the DOE conditions appeals funding on strict austerity measures that compel schools to eliminate or forgo essential services, including school aides, guidance counselors, and cluster teachers in arts, music, and technology, potentially violating the State's constitutional obligation to provide a "sound basic education" as articulated in *Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York*[ix], and causing demonstrable harm to students and families in District 26 (see Exhibit 3); and

WHEREAS, the Class Size Reduction law imposes mandatory staffing requirements on District 26 schools that are fiscally unattainable when schools are simultaneously required to repay appeals funding through future budget reductions; and

WHEREAS, District 26 schools submit budget appeals to the Queens North Borough Citywide Office (QNBCO), which serves Districts 24, 25, 26, and 30, and which has therefore possessed full knowledge of the magnitude, duration, and recurring nature of appeals requests across these districts for more than fifteen years, raising serious concerns regarding the adequacy and integrity of the Borough Citywide Office budget resolution process; and

WHEREAS, since 2012 the QNBCO budget office has approved more than twice the amount of appeals funding for District 26 as for any other district (see Exhibit 4), demonstrating that both QNBCO and the DOE Central's financial

operations are fully aware of the persistent structural shortfalls, yet have continued to issue temporary funding rather than pursue a permanent and equitable remedy to address the deficiencies of the existing funding framework; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Community Education Council (CEC) 26 demands that the DOE Division of Finance immediately cease treating recurring appeals funding as advances or "loans," and desist from classifying predictable and repeated budget shortfalls experienced by small schools in District 26 as "temporary," and instead permanently defray these shortfalls by issuing baselined allocations through new or existing School Allocation Memoranda (SAMs), including but not limited to:

SAM #6 Collective Bargaining for School Based Staff (to offset higher teacher salary costs)
SAM #16 Individualized Education Program (IEP)/Intervention Teacher Allocation
SAM #21 School Based IEP Team Staff
SAM #29 School Allocations, Amendments and Adjustments (to mitigate the "small school penalty")

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that to prevent disruption to school operations, staffing, and instructional planning, the DOE Division of Finance finalize the budgets of schools in perpetual appeals status on the same timeline as all other schools, prior to the start of the summer recess; and

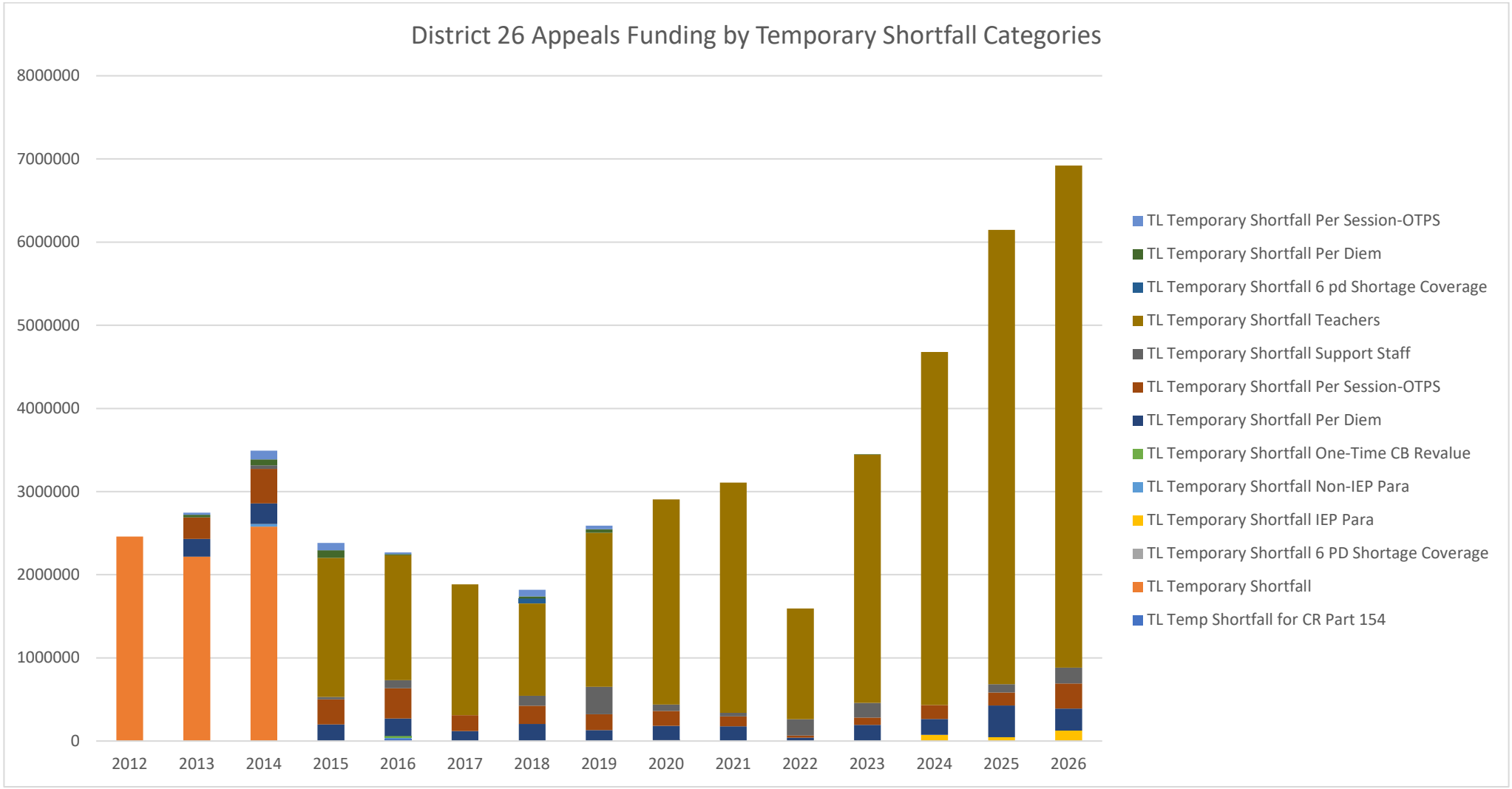
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, CEC 26 demands that the DOE Chief Financial Officer meet regularly with the Council until this systemic inequity is resolved to the satisfaction of the District 26 school community.

During the CEC 26 meeting held on February 12, 2026, the resolution was reviewed and unanimously approved by all members in attendance.

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[i] https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2022/08/mayor-adams-chancellor-banks-additional-funding-flexibility-schools
[ii] https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2023/01/mayor-adams-chancellor-banks-push-increase-equity-fair-student-funding-formula
[iii] https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/2590-F
[iv] https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans-studies/city-of-yes/housing-opportunity/housing-opportunity-guide-illustrated.pdf
[v] https://zola.planninglabs.nyc/
[vi] https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/funding/funding-our-schools/fair-student-funding-fsf
[vii] https://seethroughny.net/teacher_pay/363724584
[viii] https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/content/publications/2025-may-whats-in-a-weight-budgetary-impacts-of-fy24-fsf-formula-changes
[ix] https://www.nycourts.gov/reporter//3dseries/2006/2006_02284.htm

EXHIBIT 1 – Growth in Temporary Shortfall Funding in District 26 Schools / FY 2012 – FY 2026



Source: DOE Galaxy Allocations, https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/DBOR/galaxy/galaxyallocation/default.aspx

EXHIBIT 2 - Temporary Shortfall Funding for Select District 26 Schools / FY 2012 – FY 2026

School by Year	Q018	Q031	Q094	Q098	Q115	Q158	Q162	Q178	Q188	Q191	Q203	Q205	Q213	Q221	Q266	Q390	Grand Total
2012	$170,358	$202,677	$213,695			$278,292	$100,149		$151,112	$110,504	$45,000	$132,345		$13,200	$168,674		**$1,586,006**
2013	$457,683	$151,466	$239,526	$176,358	$27,748	$231,198	$129,631	$50,218	$253,453		$143,634	$89,198			$233,713		**$2,183,826**
2014	$209,748	$301,512	$204,696	$399,980	$31,187	$329,994	$218,028	$100,759	$247,805	$149,391	$213,534	$90,070	$101,131		$414,353		**$3,012,188**
2015	$198,793	$195,709	$246,882	$390,959	$39,735	$333,281	$48,556			$260,189	$68,064	$85,005			$362,008		**$2,229,181**
2016	$92,787	$107,528	$319,885	$351,005	$30,772	$367,756	$33,354		$46,657	$160,568	$28,845	$194,000	$123,690		$411,066		**$2,267,913**
2017	$53,521	$70,505	$213,773	$349,451		$238,713				$113,462		$273,943	$176,146		$393,679		**$1,883,193**
2018	$38,000	$67,000	$138,529	$170,380		$300,862	$24,284			$139,995	$21,537	$110,960			$667,695		**$1,679,242**
2019		$306,635	$292,287	$186,532		$154,010	$28,252			$144,251	$151,894	$215,013	$63,844	$61,622	$563,306		**$2,167,646**
2020	$168,775	$298,307	$329,333	$156,289		$209,697			$180,519	$250,915	$210,641	$244,700	$245,142	$14,040	$597,052		**$2,905,410**
2021	$452,380	$357,365	$321,501	$102,106				$145,043	$435,016	$31,789	$269,824	$260,647	$146,408		$587,224		**$3,109,303**
2022	$92,822		$289,824	$45,447				$186,464				$319,708	$122,169		$505,351	$31,625	**$1,593,410**
2023	$191,892	$445,085	$207,481	$300,579	$3,281	$117,032		$219,766	$86,196	$160,788	$275,175	$338,964	$114,401		$906,784	$68,729	**$3,436,153**
2024	$273,181	$471,627	$214,826	$499,368	$184,673		$85,536	$392,625	$616,576	$349,192	$11,326	$110,651	$376,949		$689,958	$401,360	**$4,677,848**
2025	$134,934	$627,809	$220,746	$472,395	$336,359			$453,066	$856,406	$387,656		$180,092	$597,206	$328,932	$1,188,725	$363,825	**$6,148,151**
2026		$567,430	$322,205	$588,905				$445,905	$814,179	$645,010		$905,075	$502,327	$483,683	$1,421,316	$225,935	**$6,921,970**
Grand Total	**$2,534,874**	**$4,170,655**	**$3,775,189**	**$4,189,754**	**$653,755**	**$2,560,835**	**$667,790**	**$1,993,846**	**$3,687,919**	**$2,903,710**	**$1,439,474**	**$3,550,371**	**$2,569,413**	**$901,477**	**$9,110,904**	**$1,091,474**	**$45,801,440**

Source: DOE Galaxy Allocations, https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/DBOR/galaxy/galaxyallocation/default.aspx

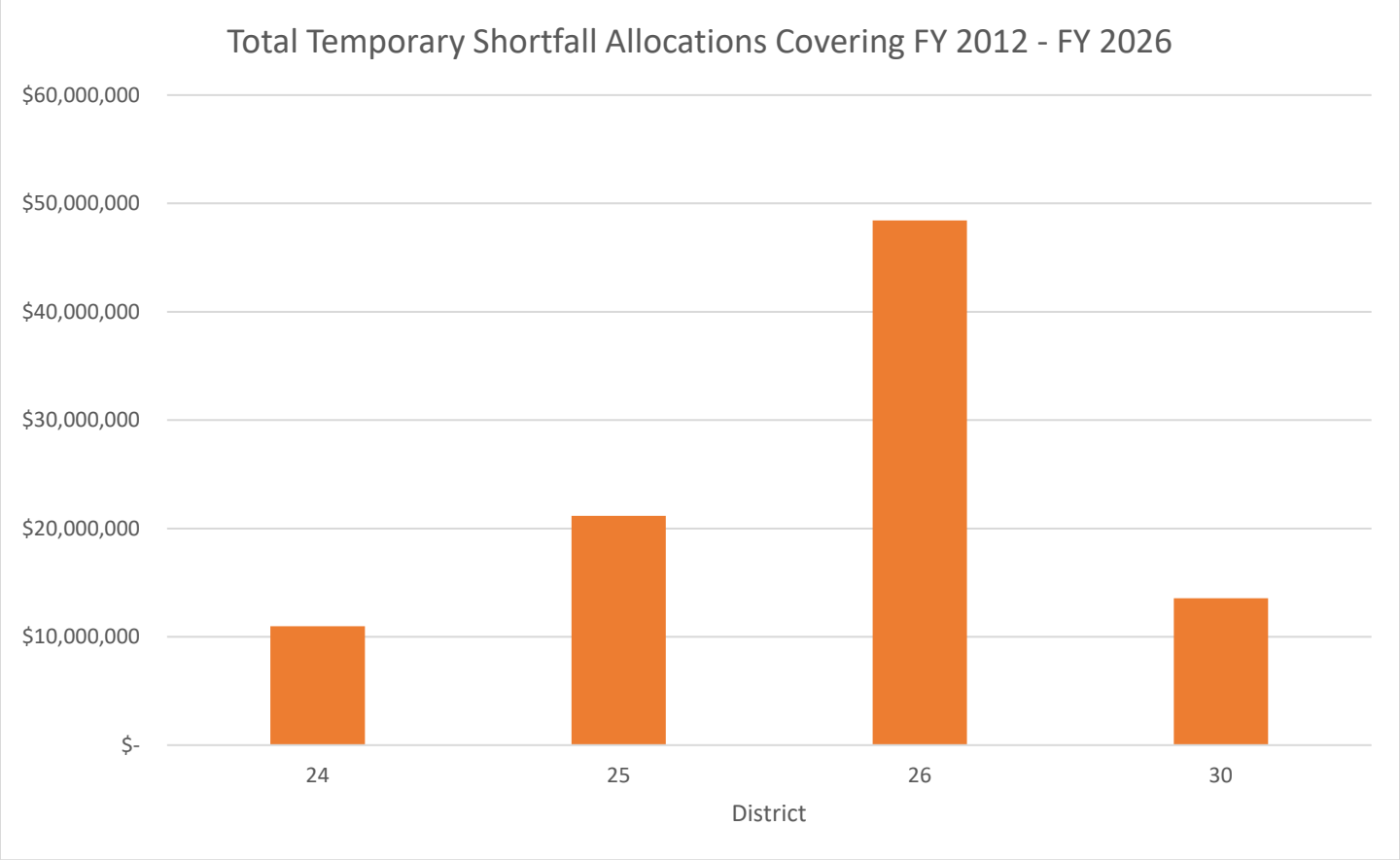
EXHIBIT 3 Unfunded Needs of District 26 Appeals Schools FY 25

School	Description of Unfunded Needs
PS 94	Outlined a comprehensive set of instructional, staffing, and enrichment needs. Requests include:
	Literacy and math instructional materials ($78,100),
	i-Ready ($8,500),
	Intervention staffing ($41,940),
	Replacement of a broken A/C unit ($3,500),
	General classroom supplies ($30,000),
	Teacher per-session for enrichment and academic programs ($25,000),
	Assemblies ($10,000),
	A musical theater residency ($20,000).
	Estimated total: ~$217,000
PS 98	identified needs such as:
	Additional AIS teacher - ($114,000)
	Per-session funding for family engagement events ($8,000),
	Supplemental instructional materials ($8,000),
	An additional 2 days for the guidance counselor to support student full-time ($52,000)
	Estimated total: ~$182,000
PS 162	identified needs related to facilities, staffing, instructional supports, and enrollment sustainability.
	A/C replacement ($15,000),
	Cluster teacher support (F-Status 2 Day a Week) ($50,000),
	Pupil accounting secretary + 2 days a week (40,000)
	School aide ($10,000),
	Supplemental Workbooks $30,000
	IReady supplemental materials: $10,000
	Saturday and afternoon programs - $25,000
	Monthly parent workshops- $10,000
	Estimated total: ~$190,000
PS/IS 178	identified instructional needs, including:
	Literacy and math supplemental materials ($80,900),
	Science/literacy/math instructional support staffing ($41,940),
	Instructional coaching ($12,500),
	SEL professional learning ($15,000),
	Family engagement ($4,000)
	Enrichment programming ($45,000),
	A/C replacement ($10,500),
	General supplies ($7,000),
	School branding ($10,000).
	Estimated total: ~$227,000
PS 188	identified needs including:
	A/C replacement ($10,500),
	i-Ready ($6,000), AMIRA ($3,500),
	Instructional supplemental workbooks ($24,000),
	Per-session to support family engagement ($1,200),
	Arts residency ($10,000),
	Per-diem to support professional learning ($91,744),
	General supplies ($5,000).
	Estimated total: ~$152,000
PS 191	needs focus on instructional staffing, academic materials, and student supports.
	The school identified the need for an F-status AIS intervention teacher ($42,000),
	From 2 day to 5 day (full-time) guidance counselor ($77,000),
	Classroom supplies ($25,000),
	Teacher per-session for enrichment ($10,000),
	Assistant principal per-session support ($5,000),
	iPads ($10,000),
	Rigby Readers ($30,000),
	Into Reading decodables ($15,000),
	Into Reading student workbooks ($20,000),
	Math intervention resources ($4,000),
	Assemblies ($10,000),
	A morning breakfast program school aide ($5,400),
	Furniture replacement ($30,000),
	A copier ($4,000).
	Estimated total: ~$287,400

EXHIBIT 3 Unfunded Needs of District 26 Appeals Schools FY 25 (continued)

School	Description of Unfunded Needs
PS 205	identified facilities and enrichment needs, including:
	Replacement of five broken A/C units ($20,000),
	General instructional supplies and student technology ($30,000),
	Per-session funding for after-school arts enrichment programs ($10,000–$15,000).
	Estimated total: ~$65,000
PS 213	Unfunded needs related to student support, technology access, and facilities. Requests include:
	After-school programming ($20,000),
	Replacement of five broken A/C units ($30,000),
	A school aide position ($18,300),
	MTSS and supplemental academic supports for at-risk students ($35,000),
	After-school MTSS and equity team work ($16,000 combined).
	Classroom instructional technology and devices (40,000)
	Additional needs include i-Ready instructional support ($6,000),
	A copier replacement ($3,000),
	General instructional supplies ($9,000).
	Estimated total: ~$177,300
PS 221	identified instructional, technology, and student support needs including:
	Literacy and math supplemental materials ($53,000),
	Classroom instructional technology and devices ($48,100),
	Intervention staffing ($41,940),
	A/C replacement ($10,500),
	General supplies ($40,000),
	Per-session enrichment ($12,000),
	Furniture ($3,575),
	Classroom library enhancements ($8,000).
	Estimated total: ~$217,000
PS/IS 266	Identified needs across intervention staffing, student supports, enrichment, technology, and facilities.
	AIS - instructional intervention staffing ($120,897)
	Professional learning and instructional materials ($10,000),
	A school counselor ($121,397),
	Arts residencies ($15,000),
	Enrichment and athletics ($25,000),
	Assemblies ($10,000),
	Family engagement activities ($10,000),
	Classroom instructional technology and devices ($40,000),
	Classroom libraries and supplemental materials ($40,000),
	An additional recess school aide ($11,000)
	2 school aides for an additional ½ hour for a breakfast program ($3,000),
	A/C replacement ($10,500),
	School branding ($10,000).
	Estimated total: ~ 427,000
PS 390	identified needs focused on SEL, enrichment, and instructional resources. Requests include:
	A guidance counselor ($40,000),
	Classroom libraries ($15,000),
	Literacy and math resources ($22,370),
	Per diem for professional learning coverage ($9,500),
	After-school programming ($8,800),
	Assemblies ($3,000),
	Parent engagement events ($2,500),
	Copier replacement ($3,700).
	Estimated total: ~$105,000
PS 31	identified needs including:
	Replace four broken A/C units ($14,000)
	Classroom instructional technology and devices (approximately $87,000).
	Estimated total: ~$101,000

EXHIBIT 4 - Temporary Shortfall Allocations for Queens North Borough Citywide Office / Total of FY 2012 – FY 2026



Source: DOE Galaxy Allocations, https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/DBOR/galaxy/galaxyallocation/default.aspx

Community Service Society

Powering a more equitable New York

President and Chief Executive Officer
David R. Jones, Esq.

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Community Service Society of New York

Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

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 healthcare, affordable housing, employment, opportunities for individuals with conviction histories, debt assistance, and more, we make a tangible difference in the lives of millions. Our Health Initiatives programs help over 130,000 individuals enroll in and use health coverage annually.

In this testimony, CSS urges the NYC Council to mitigate the devastating effects of the federal H.R.1, passed by Congress last year, on access to health coverage and care for low-income New Yorkers. The law threatens the stability of coverage programs that many New Yorkers rely on, including Medicaid and the Essential Plan. These programs are lifelines for millions of residents who otherwise could not afford care.

As federal policy changes ripple through the health system, New York City must support community-based initiatives that help residents navigate coverage and take proactive steps to protect residents who depend on these programs.

Programs such as the Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP) and Access Health NYC play a critical role in helping residents navigate complex health insurance systems and understand their rights as healthcare consumers. These initiatives provide funding to grassroots organizations who provide culturally competent, multilingual assistance that is particularly vital for immigrant communities who often face additional linguistic, legal, and cultural barriers when seeking care.

At a time when federal changes may create a climate of fear, confusion, coverage losses, or new administrative hurdles, these programs will be more important than ever. Sustained and expanded support for community-based assistance ensures that New Yorkers, especially those in historically underserved communities, have safe

and trusted places to turn for help enrolling and renewing their coverage, resolving insurance problems, and understanding their health care rights.

Since 2020, MCCAP has handled more than 21,000 consumer cases, secured over $1 million in healthcare related savings for consumers, and achieved a 90 percent favorable outcome rate. Importantly, MCCAP's culturally and linguistically competent services ensure that consumers are not left to navigate these barriers alone: seven in ten MCCAP clients are people of color, and 66 percent speak a foreign language at home, underscoring the program's role in reducing racial, linguistic, and economic disparities in access to health coverage and care.

The recent expansion of MCCAP's network from 12 to 20 agencies, made possible by the Council's additional $1 million investment in FY26, has strengthened our ability to reach even more New Yorkers in need of healthcare advocacy and navigation services in response to the first waves of HR1 cuts. In just the first six months of the current fiscal year, the majority of newly funded expansion agencies have successfully recruited staff, and CSS has trained this expanded workforce to deliver MCCAP services directly in communities. As a result of this rapid ramp-up, MCCAP is already seeing nearly a 40 percent increase in cases from December 2025 through February 2026 compared to same period in prior years—demonstrating both the urgency of need and the effectiveness of this investment.

Maintaining and expanding MCCAP's $2 million allocation in FY2027 is essential to ensure that New York City residents continue to receive trusted assistance during a period of unprecedented change in health coverage policy. Without continued support, the progress made in expanding capacity and reaching more New Yorkers at risk of losing coverage would be jeopardized.

We also urge the City Council to support a $4.5 million allocation for Access Health NYC to support community-based organizations as they engage in efforts of outreach and public health education.

The federal policy landscape has shifted in ways that threaten access to health coverage for many New Yorkers. But New York City is not powerless. By investing in community-based consumer assistance programs, the City can take meaningful steps to protect the health of its residents.

CSS looks forward to working with the Council to ensure that every New Yorker, regardless of income, immigration status, or language, can access the care they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today.

Juan C. Pinzon
Director of Government Relations
Community Service Society of New York (CSS)

Community Service Society

Benefits Plus Learning Center
Solving the Public Benefit Puzzle

Good afternoon Chairwoman Lee and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. I am Michelle Berney, the Director of the Benefits Plus Learning Center at the Community Service Society. For 30 years, BPLC has trained social service providers on public benefits and housing programs through workshops, publications and case consultations.

BPLC is one of three Technical Assistance Providers in NYCBenefits, a program designed to expand access to public benefits across New York City. In partnership with DSS, the TA Providers train and support staff from 35 CBOs to help low-income New Yorkers obtain benefits and achieve greater stability. Since the start of the program in 2022, we have collectively offered 70 trainings.

NYCBenefits delivers measurable results:

- For instance, SNAP applications submitted with program support are **45% more likely to be approved.**
- With an annual program cost of $9.75 million, NYCBenefits **more than pays for itself**. In just the first nine months of this fiscal year, NYCBenefits secured **over $20 million in annual SNAP benefits for clients.** These are federal dollars that directly support families and strengthen New York City's economy.
- The program helps keep vulnerable people connected to benefits and **reduces administrative costs for the City**.

While NYCBenefits' value is crystal clear, it was not included in the Executive Budget. I urge you to restore NYCBenefits funding, baseline the program, and expand it.

This work is especially essential in the face of rapidly-changing benefits policies. We are currently helping caseworkers respond to SNAP ABAWD work requirements, the end of Emergency Housing Vouchers, upcoming Medicaid work rules, and the elimination of Essential Plan 200–250.

Also, the approach we take meets the moment. At last week's hearing, Council Members Lee and Hudson spoke with DSS Commissioner Dalton about the need for an **"all of government" and "all of community" approach to support New Yorkers**. NYCBenefits fosters collaborations between City and nonprofit staff, reaches residents in over **200 zip codes,** and provides compassionate services in **54 languages**.

Without NYCBenefits, tens of thousands of New Yorkers will lose trusted, local support from community-based providers who help them secure and maintain life-sustaining benefits—from SNAP and Medicaid to Cash Assistance and One-Shot Deals.

At a time of major federal changes, the need for this program has never been greater. I urge you: restore NYCBenefits funding in FY27, baseline it, and invest in its expansion to help more children and families. **Alongside over 400 nonprofit staff in the NYCBenefits program, I thank you for considering this urgent request.**

Community Service Society

Powering a more equitable New York

Testimony of the
Community Service Society of New York
at the **New York City Council**
June 10, 2026 Executive Budget Hearing

My name is Paul Keefe, and I am Vice President of Legal Services at the Community Service Society of New York ("CSS"), which, for over 180 years, has powered a more equitable New York with a unique combination of research, policy advocacy, and direct services. I testify today to urge the City to fully and consistently fund the Commission on Human Rights at $25 million. Only the Commission has the power to create the systemic change New Yorkers expect of its government.

My testimony is based on my experience with the Commission as both an employee and an advocate. In 2015, as an attorney at CSS, I was the lead legal advocate behind the Fair Chance Act, which amended the City Human Rights Law ("CHRL") to prohibit employers from inquiring into an applicant's criminal history until after a conditional offer of employment and mandated a "Fair Chance Process" before someone could be denied employment based on their conviction history. I then left CSS for the Commission to enforce the Fair Chance Act, develop its legal guidance, and supervise and train attorneys enforcing that law and other protections against employment discrimination. After seven years, I returned to CSS, where I oversee our Next Door Project, which helps people overcome barriers based on criminal and family legal history, and lead our litigation and policy advocacy on behalf of people with criminal records. As someone who has worked both inside and outside the Commission, I am very familiar with its power and unfulfilled potential.

The Commission is an essential resource to prevent the exploitation of the working poor, along with immigrants, trans people, and others under active persecution by the federal government. Federal agencies that used to protect workers are now hostile to them. The State Division of Human Rights suffers from similar funding problems as the Commission and enforces a narrower civil rights law. But New York City, through the Commission, can protect the most vulnerable among us by prosecuting violations of the CHRL and acting a buffer for citizens seeking redress against a bigoted employer or an exploitative landlord. It is the only resource for New Yorkers who experience the type of discrimination the Council has stated, through the numerous protections of the CHRL, should not happen here.

As another example, many businesses force anyone who wishes to work for them to arbitrate any legal claims against the company instead of pursuing them in court.[1] While private arbitration is cheaper for employers than litigation, it facilitates wage theft, results in lower damages in discrimination cases, and prevents systemic change through class action litigation.[2]

In contrast, the Commission is not bound by arbitration clauses and may prosecute a case until it is satisfied with the outcome, and that outcome can include civil penalties with training and policy changes to prevent future discrimination. When I was at the Commission, these policy modifications were mandatory, and we achieved settlements in Fair Chance Act investigations that went beyond what a judge would ever order in an individual or class case, like:

- Following the Fair Chance Act throughout New York State or nationwide;
- Exempting certain positions from background checks;
- Ignoring certain types of convictions or convictions more than a set amount of years old;
- Not asking for self-disclosure when an employer is going to run a background check anyway; and
- Targeted hiring through partnerships with reentry organizations.

In housing, the Commission has required landlords that have refused to rent to voucher-holders set aside apartments for them and to make physical modifications for tenants with disabilities. Moreover, civil penalties have earned the City an average of over one million dollars each year for the past six years. Not measured are the fiscal gains of moving people out of shelters and into housing—or preventing their entry into a shelter in the first place—through strong source-of-income enforcement.

Unfortunately, the Commission remains severely under-resourced. Since the Comptroller's 2022 *Title Vacant* report,[3] it continues to be among the top five agencies with the highest percentage of vacancies: Over 25% of its funded positions remain unfilled.[4] Additionally, Mayor Mamdani's preliminary budget is the first *decrease* in agency funding in the past five years,[5] though Mayor Adams's incremental increases were nothing to celebrate.

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[1] Hugh Baran & Elisabeth Campbell, *Forced Arbitration Helped Employers Who Committed Wage Theft Pocket $9.2 Billion in 2019 from Workers in Low-Paid Jobs*, at 2 (June 2021), *available at* www.nelp.org/app/uploads/2021/06/Data-Brief-Forced-Arbitration-Wage-Theft-Losses-June-2021.pdf.
[2] *Id.* at 3-6.
[3] N.Y.C. Comptroller, Title Vacant at 4, *available at* comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/title-vacant/.
[4] N.Y.C. Comptroller, N.Y.C. Agency Staffing Dashboard, *available at* comptroller.nyc.gov/services/for-the-public/nyc-agency-staffing-dashboard/dashboard/ (last visited Mar. 13, 2026).
[5] N.Y.C. Mayor's Office of Management & Budget, Preliminary Budget Fiscal Years 2026 - 2030, at 1904 (Feb. 17, 20206), *available at* www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/feb26/de2-26.pdf.

Longstanding and continued underfunding sets the Commission up to fail, causing important benchmarks to head in the wrong direction: Between 2025 and 2026, the average age of its caseload has increased to 692 days, up 15% from 592 days, and there were 1,591 open matters, up 26% from 1,262.[6] When "inquiry volumes remain historically high,"[7] the City can expect these numbers to rise absent a funding increase that is both significant and sustained year-over-year. With a consistent $25 million budget, the Commission can address its case backlog and become a responsive and credible force to fight discrimination and promote cultural understanding in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



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[6] JULIA KERSON & DANIEL STEINBERG, PRELIMINARY MAYOR'S MGMT. REPORT MARCH 2026 at 77, *available at* www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2026/2026_pmmr.pdf.
[7] *Id.*

Submitted Testimony of Con Edison to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on the Proposed New York City FY'26-27 Executive Budget
June 10, 2026

Con Edison appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on Mayor Mamdani's proposed FY 2027 Executive Budget for New York City.

Con Edison provides essential electric, gas, and steam services to approximately 10 million people across New York City and Westchester, delivering safe and reliable electric, gas, and steam service to households, small businesses, hospitals, the county's largest transit system, and critical public infrastructure. Our system underpins nearly every aspect of daily life in New York City, from public health and emergency response to housing, transportation, and economic activity.

We welcome this opportunity to reaffirm our *Clean Energy Commitment* as New York advances its transition toward a sustainable energy future. This strategic framework drives our investments in the development and operation of resilient, innovative, and reliable energy infrastructure. At the heart of our mission is a dedication to large-scale electrification for heating and transport and our overall commitment to providing customers with access to 100% clean energy.

Con Edison's Local Economic Impact and Investment

Over half of Con Edison of New York's 10,800 employees live in our service territory, and 57% of those employees are union members—a rate nearly three times higher than the industry average. Our commitment to representation is reflected at every level: 59% of our total workforce are people of color, while women and people of color hold 45% and 30% of our leadership positions, respectively.

Con Edison's commitment to helping New Yorkers achieve economic security reaches well beyond its employees, as evidenced by the company's investment in clean energy workforce development programs and partnerships. In 2025 alone, Con Edison awarded grants to organizations that are projected to train 1,800 individuals in clean energy careers. In addition, in August of 2025, Con Edison played a leading role in the foundation of the New York City Energy Efficiency Employer-Led Workforce Coalition, an ambitious initiative aimed at creating long-term career pathways in clean energy.

NYC Property Taxes, Business Taxes, and Its Direct Impact on Customer Bills

Under New York City's 4-Class property tax system, utility infrastructure is categorized as Class 3 property and subject to a standalone utility rate. These property taxes are a cost of service and are passed directly to customers through the delivery portion of their utility bills.

As the single largest taxpayer in New York City, Con Edison has seen the property tax burden on our customers rise at an unsustainable rate. Between 2019 and 2024, these taxes surged by approximately 45%, reaching a total of more than $2.6 billion in 2025 alone. These sharply escalating costs exacerbate the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers.

INTERNAL

Con Edison carries a tax burden significantly higher than that of comparable utilities nationwide. Excluding income taxes, industry data shows that Con Edison's tax obligations reached approximately 21% in 2023, nearly double the industry peer average of 12%. While other major utilities in similar jurisdictions operate with tax loads between 5% and 17%, New Yorkers are uniquely burdened by these elevated, tax-driven charges. These charges are fixed components of delivery rates, and customers have no ability to avoid or reduce them. Every additional tax assessment on Class 3 utility property is reflected in the bills paid by households, small businesses, and essential service providers.

Con Edison welcomes the renewed interest by the New York City Council and the Mamdani Administration in reforming NYC's property tax system. We look forward to participating in these vital discussions. In the short term, we strongly support the city's decision to avoid the initial 9% property tax increase on all property tax classes, including Class 3 in the FY 2027 budget. NYC Property taxes were one of the largest single increases in our recent investment plan, and we support efforts to reduce this outsized impact on customers' bills growing further.

Energy Affordability

Con Edison remains deeply committed to energy affordability, providing $243 million in total bill discounts to 530,000 eligible customers through our Energy Affordability Program (EAP) in 2025. Building on this success, Con Edison launched the Enhanced EAP (EEAP) in January 2026. EEAP expands access to monthly bill discounts for the first time to moderate- and additional low-income customers not enrolled in the government benefit programs which have traditionally been required to qualify for this assistance.

We welcome the opportunity to partner with elected officials to host customer support days in their respective districts. During these events, we offer in-person assistance with Con Edison accounts, educate and guide customers through enrollment in various programs such as EAP, EEAP and payment plans, and share information about energy efficiency rebate programs. Members of the NYC Council interested in hosting an event can reach out to our Government or Regional Community Affairs teams.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Mayor Mamdani's proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget for the City of New York.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please reach out to Sheelah Feinberg, City Government Relations, at feinbergs@coned.com.

INTERNAL





June 10, 2026

My name is Candice Anderson, Executive Director of Cool Culture, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the community of 50,000 families that access NYC's rich cultural resources through our arts and cultural programs.

Under BIPOC leadership for more than 25 years, Cool Culture has worked to ensure that families of color and other historically marginalized families facing poverty in New York City have access to the cultural resources necessary to thrive. Through joyful cultural experiences, artistic expression, and collective advocacy, Cool Culture partners with schools, early childhood centers, and cultural institutions to open doors to marginalized communities, encourage families to preserve their cultural heritage, and influence the systems shaping their lives and communities.

Communities' Need for Arts and Culture Investment:

In historically marginalized communities, families and children face the stark reality of underinvestment in arts and culture, while more privileged communities benefit from systemic inequities. Legislation requiring New York City to produce its first-ever comprehensive cultural plan was sponsored by the City Council and signed into legislation in 2015, and the CreateNYC Plan was published **in 2017. In the process of creating the first-ever CreateNYC Cultural Plan, tens of thousands of New Yorkers named cultural equity and inclusion as their top priorities and expressed a desire to access culture within their own neighborhoods.**[1]

However, **the city's antiquated model of funding the arts has a foundation that was established in the 1800s. This perpetuates and reinforces racial inequities,** dictating who has access to cultural resources and who does not. Today, thousands of New Yorkers still don't have the means to access the rich arts and cultural resources of the city, while the community-based arts and cultural spaces they rely on go hugely underfunded. Far more bold action is needed to address the extreme disparities that underinvestment reinforces.

Small BIPOC-led organizations such as Cool Culture, are closely connected to marginalized communities, and dedicated to providing arts access to New Yorkers who cannot afford costly entry fees, and providing flexible programming that accommodates the schedules of the working poor. Further, research demonstrates that **initiatives led by *small* arts organizations connected to local social networks significantly impact the wellbeing of communities.** [2] **However, we face dire financial challenges** because they receive far less cultural investment compared to larger institutions.

- As reported in *Not Just Money, Equity Issues in Cultural Philanthropy*, nationally, **just 2 percent of all cultural institutions receive nearly 60 percent of all contributed revenue**, up approximately

[1] *Create NYC a Cultural Plan for All New Yorkers, 2017.*
[2] A Chicago-based study commissioned by The MacArthur Foundation examined the relationship between the arts and neighborhood capacity and community life, and found that *small* arts organizations connected to local social networks provide: access to new and existing resources to be shared by residents, opportunities to learn new skills, a gathering space for residents of differing socioeconomic status, and for cross cultural dialogue and a structure for meaningful social interaction, and to build positive social relationships. *Leveraging Assets: How Small Budget Arts Activities Benefit Neighborhoods*,, 2003.

5 percentage points over a decade. The 2 percent cohort is made up of 925 cultural groups that have annual budgets of more than $5 million. these organizations are symphonies, opera companies, regional theaters, art museums, ballet companies and other large institutions – the majority of which focus primarily on Western European fine arts traditions. With increasingly fierce competition over foundation grants (due to the elimination of federal funds for the arts), **for small BIPOC organizations**, without the infrastructure needed to run large-scale donor campaigns, **state and local government funding is an essential lifeline for small arts and cultural organizations;, allowing them to serve the communities, families and children that benefit the most from increases in art resources.**

- At the request of Cool Culture, IBO conducted an analysis of a decade's worth of NYC DCLA funding. The IBO report, *Painting the Town's Budget: An Overview of Department of Cultural Affairs Expense Funding 2017 - 2026* found during that time period, while NYC DCLA funding has increased overall, CIG payments consisting of 39 cultural organizations made up 60% of spending on average (ranging from 58%-64%)—inclusive of funding provided by City Council, while CDF grants which support more than 1,000 cultural organizations, made up 20% on average (ranging from 18%-22%)

- **Further compounding these issues, the majority of CDF funding is allocated for use in school settings, leaving a woefully inadequate funds available for the communities in greatest need.**

- Most recently, Parent Power for Cultural Equity (PP4CE) a collaboration between parents in BedStuy, Cool Culture and the CUNY Public Science Project published *Creative Pathways in BedStuy: A Participatory Study on Access, Intergenerational Creativity, and Cultural Equity* identified four key findings: **(1)** Art is everywhere in Bedford Stuyvesant, but access isn't equitable **(2)** Art is intergenerational connection and cultural memory, **(3)** Gentrification has shaped where art lives and who it's for **(4)** Bedford Stuyvesant families hold bold freedom dreams for the future. Concluding with a set of five recommendations, **the residents prioritized imagined free intergenerational art centers, community healing hubs, performing arts spaces, playgrounds, youth-owned creative spaces, and public art that celebrates everyday families.** PP4CE was envisioned as a community-driven model that prioritizes caregiver leadership and the lived experiences of those most affected by systemic inequities.

2027 Budget Requests

On behalf of the 50,000 families we work with annually, I join with other small BIPOC cultural organizations and ask that the city restore **its $10 million** investment and baseline an additional **$20 million** in the Adopted Budget to ensure sustained investment, particularly for small non-profits partnering with marginalized communities, artists, and other community-based organizations.

I also call on the city to establish **consistent year-over-year funding adjustments to cover rising operating expenses and increasing labor costs.** This will help to boost the economic vitality of our city. **Finally,** I urge you to develop and implement a comprehensive cultural capital infrastructure plan to streamline project delivery, reduce procurement delays, and enable institutions to maintain and modernize our facilities efficiently.

About Cool Culture: 25 Years of Strengthening Health &Wellbeing – Mind, Body, Spirit and Civic Engagement

Through our flagship **CityWide program**, **50,000 families** with children from birth to age 9, enrolled in the NYC's system of early childhood programs and Title I Public schools, receive free admission to over **90 museums**, zoos, botanical gardens, and science centers across the city. Working in partnership with **450+ educators**, each year, caregivers and children visit these sites more than 180,000 times, supported by multilingual resources we create to help extend learning from classrooms into homes and communities. An integral part of our work is our signature Family Festivals, which we co-create with museums and are free to the wider public. These festivals offer fun, exploration, various arts forms, and creativity for everyone to enjoy.

Complementing CityWide are wraparound programs that are rooted in the neighborhoods where families reside or attend school. Key initiatives such as **Cool Culture Clubs: Culture & Connection, Listening Tours** launched this year, to bring cohorts of families together to speak to their specific interests and desires for artful neighborhoods and communities where they and their children can thrive. This initiative focuses on families' exploration of arts and cultural spaces in their neighborhood and across NYC to strengthen bonds among family members and neighbors

Parent Power for Cultural Equity equips parents, grandparents, and caregivers to advocate for equitable policies and arts funding, build stronger bridges between educators, families, and cultural institutions, share stories that deepen community understanding, and lead local organizing efforts across NYC. Taken together, Cool Culture programs offer families the opportunity to delve into creativity and leadership in collaboration with educators, artists, cultural centers, and institutions.

I would like to thank the Committee on Cultural Affairs Libraries and International Intergroup Relations for the opportunity to provide you with some insight into Cool Culture's work to address the needs of children and families throughout the five boroughs; to share our best practices and successes; and to speak to how equitable access to arts and cultural resources are essential to families and communities as we bear witness to the intersecting impacts of systemic racism and the current political climate.

I strongly urge you to ensure the necessary support for arts and culture and to include the priorities of cultural organizations, particularly BIPOC-led institutions that have deep relationships with historically marginalized communities in New York City. This support will enable Cool Culture and other arts and culture community members to continue providing critical programs.

I know you are facing incredibly difficult choices as you try to address the great and pressing needs of communities. As members of the Cultural Affairs Committee, Libraries and International Relations, we are incredibly grateful to your advocacy on behalf of the NYC Arts and Cultural sector, which plays a central role in addressing these needs.

Additionally, **we welcome the chance to meet with you or your staff to share more details and discuss how our work aligns with your priorities for families, arts engagement, and community well-being.** Thank you for your time and leadership.

Thank you
Candice Anderson
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Leadership, voice and vision for child welfare in New York State

Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies

Written Testimony Submitted by:
Dr. Sophine Charles
Associate Executive Director, Downstate

Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
New York City Council Finance Committee

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

The Council of Family Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) is a membership association comprising more than 100 nonprofit organizations that provide the majority of child welfare and juvenile justice services in New York State. More than 50 of our member agencies collaborate with various city agencies to support children and their families, including contracting with the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to deliver services across all five boroughs of New York City. COFCCA has maintained a long-standing and close partnership with ACS. Together, COFCCA member agencies and ACS have thoughtfully invested in child welfare initiatives focused on prevention services.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Finance Committee on the FY27 Executive Budget released on May 12th. We applaud the Administration's focus on making this city welcoming to families and children. The investment in early childhood education and childcare is both welcome and commendable. We urge the City to continue investing in families.

Today, we express our deep concern regarding the proposed cuts to funding for Prevention Services and the omission of funding for the NYCBenefits Initiative in the FY2027 Executive Budget. In this testimony, we highlight the following:

- The Value of Prevention Services to Children, Families, and the City;
- Impact of Cuts to Prevention Funding;
- Total Fiscal Loss to the City and;
- Importance of Including the NYCBenefits Initiative in the FY 2027 Executive Budget.

Value of Prevention Services

For decades, New York City has invested in supporting families through prevention services. This commitment has resulted in an extensive service network, establishing New York City as a national leader in family support and in keeping families safely together. By prioritizing prevention services, the city has successfully reduced the number of children in foster care from over 13,000 a decade ago to a historic low of 6,300 today. These programs provide essential support and guidance to New York City families, creating pathways to food, clothing, housing, education, and access to medical and mental health services. Families receive the necessary oversight and assistance to ensure children can remain safely at home, as prevention program staff work collaboratively with families to address the challenges that brought them to the attention of the child welfare system.

Impact of Cut to Prevention Funding

Due to cuts included in the FY2027 Executive Budget, the continued support of prevention services is now at risk. Prevention services act as a safety net for children and families and represent significant cost savings for the city. These proposed cuts mark a departure from the City's long-standing commitment to investing in family support. If implemented, four agencies—Good Shepherd Services, Forestdale, CAMBA, and the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services—along with 49 staff members and 360 families in Brooklyn and Queens, will be directly affected. As of this writing, the provider agencies have not received written notification from ACS regarding the prevention cuts or a timeline for program closures. To prepare for and manage the challenge of closing programs safely and deliberately, providers have already withdrawn job offers to candidates currently in the hiring process and are moving toward staff layoffs. Moreover, agencies are struggling to halt program expansions, pause ongoing restoration projects, and manage long-term lease contracts. Unfortunately, due to the significant fiscal impact on agency programs not slated for cuts, some providers are considering

returning other human services contracts to the city. Should agencies be forced to make such decisions, the resulting ripple effect on children, families, and communities will be devastating, and the cost to the City cannot be overstated.

Totality of Loss to Prevention Funding

For decades, there has been a longstanding partnership between the City and State to fund prevention services. New York State reimburses counties at a rate of 62% for investments made in these services. The total fiscal impact on the City exceeds the proposed $2.7 million cut to the City tax levy dollars. Since Prevention services funds are reimbursed by the State at 62%, the City's proposed $2.7 million cut will result in $4.3 million in State funds going unclaimed. Consequently, the total loss to prevention services will amount to $7 million. The City should maximize every available dollar to invest in keeping families together.

Impact of Cuts to Families

Families currently receiving prevention services are being informed that their relationships with staff and providers will soon change. Any such change carries the risk that families may discontinue the prevention program if their cases are transferred to different provider agencies, despite the potential safety risks to children who are no longer enrolled in services. Given the unique circumstances surrounding the approaching end of the budget process, the provider agencies' fiscal years, and the specific needs of the families served by prevention services programs, it is important to note that there is a precedent for reversing preliminary decisions regarding targeted cuts through last-minute executive or legislative restorations. This practice has been in place for over a decade (https://citylimits.org/mayors-budget-scolds-state-saves-child-care-slots/).

Call for Immediate Restoration of All Prevention Funding

We urge the Administration to immediately restore the proposed $2.7 million in cuts to prevention services. This decision should not be postponed until June 30. Stability and predictability are essential for families relying on prevention services, and we must eliminate the uncertainty they currently face regarding support after June 30. Additionally, staff deserve assurance that their jobs are secure. Furthermore, because every day is critical in a child's life, we urge that these restorations be made immediately and that the four affected provider agencies be promptly informed that their contracts will be reinstated.

NYCBenefit Initiative

COFCCA and our members are alarmed by the omission of NYCBenefits from the FY2027 Executive Budget. Since 2023, the NYCBenefits initiative has helped New Yorkers secure and maintain public benefits to meet their food, housing, healthcare, and other basic needs. If NYCBenefits is not included in the budget, tens of thousands of New Yorkers will lose targeted benefits assistance, and over 400 nonprofit staff will be affected. We support the provider agencies, staff, and hardworking New Yorkers who rely on these public benefits to sustain themselves and their families. Without NYCBenefits funding and baseline support, a critical lifeline to the Department of Social Services (DSS) will be cut for tens of thousands of New Yorkers living in shelters, facing eviction, or lacking sufficient food, clothing, or other necessities. We urge the City to include funding for NYCBenefits in the FY27 Adopted Budget and to baseline future funding for ongoing NYCBenefits work.

Recommendations

We urge the City to act:

- Continue investing in family support through a comprehensive safety net of prevention services;
- Immediately restore the planned $2.7 million in cuts to prevention services;
- Assist New Yorkers in securing and maintaining public benefits to address their food, housing, healthcare, and other essential needs and;
- Include funding for NYCBenefits in the FY27 Adopted Budget and establish baseline funding for ongoing NYCBenefits work.

In conclusion, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony highlighting the urgent need to restore prevention funding. We urge you to notify the four agencies affected by prevention cuts about the reinstatement of their contracts, include $9.75 million for NYCBenefits funding in the June FY27 Adopted Budget, and baseline $15 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28 through FY32. COFCCA welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Council in a discussion regarding our testimony. We are available to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have about restoring prevention funding and the inclusion of NYCBenefits into the FY 2027 Executive Budget.

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To: New York City Council Committee on Finance

Subject: Fulfill Green Space Promises Made in the OneLIC Neighborhood Plan

Dear New York City Council Members,

I am writing as the President of the Court Square Civic Association, member of the OneLIC Oversight Task Force and Steering Committee, and Long Island City (LIC) resident to demand that the green space commitments made in the OneLIC Neighborhood plan are fulfilled on time.

In addition to serving as the above, I am also Co-Chair of the OneLIC Oversight Task Force Parks and Waterfront Open Spaces Sub-Committee. I want to call attention to the fact that the executive budget that was released does not address all of the commitments made in the OneLIC Neighborhood plan.

LIC already suffers from one of the lowest levels of open and green space per resident in New York City, and multiple public reviews of the OneLIC Neighborhood Plan acknowledge that the neighborhood's parkland and open space are already severely deficient. Community discussions and environmental review materials for OneLIC warn that, without meaningful investment, open space access will continue to worsen as thousands of additional residences are constructed. The City has repeatedly recognized these shortcomings and promised major investments in waterfront access, parks, public realm improvements, and new green space as part of the OneLIC Neighborhood Plan, including long-overdue expansion and restoration projects. However, explicitly promised funding for the following is not included in this budget:

- Waterfront esplanade and new open space construction, planned for completion in 2031, is not planned for funding until 2031
- Queensbridge Baby Park, planned for completion in 2031, is not planned for funding until 2032 or 2033
- Renewal of Queensbridge Park, planned for design in 2028, is not planned for funding until 2032

The continued delay in constructing Baby Park and renewing Queensbridge Park disproportionately harms historically underserved communities in western Queens, where many families already lack adequate access to safe, high-quality open space. Failing to deliver these long-promised investments only deepens longstanding inequities in access to parks, recreation, and environmental benefits.

As the City moves forward with significant new development in Long Island City, it is critical that these commitments are not delayed, deferred, or reduced. The City Council must ensure that the promised funding for parks, waterfront connections, and public open space improvements under OneLIC is fully funded and delivered on an appropriate and timely schedule so that neighborhood infrastructure keeps pace with growth and current residents are not asked to continue bearing the consequences of decades of underinvestment in green space.

We need the City to honor and prioritize its commitment to the previously promised funding by the Mayor's Office to ensure timely opening of desperately needed green space in our community. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Long Island City's future. Please ensure that timely funding is delivered for the completion of these projects.

Sincerely,
Christina M. Kaul, MD, MS
Long Island City, 11101
President, Court Square Civic Association; Co-Chair, Parks and Waterfront Open Spaces Committee, OneLIC Task Force

Covenant House New York

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New York City Council

FY 27 Executive Budget Hearing

Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Lee, and esteemed members of the New York City Council. My name is Dr. Shakeema North-Albert, and I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Covenant House New York (CHNY), where we provide comprehensive, trauma-informed services to young people ages 16-24 experiencing homelessness, including emergency shelter, transitional and long-term housing, mental and physical health care, anti-human trafficking services, and legal and educational/vocational support.

In FY25, we reached 1,256 young people and provided 138,157 nights of housing. The majority of youth served are young people of color (90%), nearly 40% identify as LGBTQ+, 41% are survivors of intimate partner violence, 20% have had experiences that meet both the NYS and federal definition of human trafficking, and 22% are newcomer youth, who have come to New York in search of a better future.

We are deeply grateful to the New York City Council for your continued partnership in supporting our work and ensuring youth homelessness remains a priority in the City's budget. Today, I respectfully request that you prioritize the following funding allocations in the FY27 budget to ensure CHNY can continue to meet the growing and complex needs of our youth:

First, **we request renewed funding, in the amount of $1,500,000, for our Guaranteed Income Program (Cash with Care).** Renewed funding for this multi-year discretionary contract will allow us to continue delivering unconditional monthly direct cash assistance and financial coaching to youth experiencing homelessness, paired with structured support to improve housing stability, savings, and long-term self-sufficiency. ***Although the program has been in operation for only one year, early outcomes are promising: in the first 9-months, 62% of participating youth secured their own apartments, and 82% are currently employed or enrolled as full-time students.*** We are requesting funding for an additional year to build on this strong start, continue supporting youth on their path to stability, and generate further evidence to inform the City's efforts to make guaranteed income programs a permanent component of its homelessness response system. Findings from the process and impact evaluations conducted each year of the program will be provided to the City and help position the program as a national model for innovative, youth-centered solutions.

Second, **we request the Council's support in restoring our $200,000 Legal Services Funding, awarded in FY26 through the Speaker's Discretionary Request** to expand our on-site Legal Clinic. CHNY's ability to continue providing direct legal representation, rights

education, and advocacy for youth experiencing homelessness is critical to sustaining our current legal services programming, which helps them resolve legal barriers, secure stability, and achieve long-term independence.

Third, **we request renewed funding, in the amount of $100,000, to continue our work under the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative.** This funding has allowed us to expand access to immigration legal services, housing support, and culturally responsive care for immigrant youth and young families, helping them achieve legal stability, secure housing, and long-term independence. Continued support will allow us to meet growing demand and ensure immigrant youth have the tools and support they need to stabilize.

Fourth, **we request restoration funding of $50,000 to continue the support we provide to survivors of human trafficking under the Citywide Council Initiative in Support for Victims of Human Trafficking**. Restoring this funding will allow us to continue offering transitional housing, individualized case management, therapeutic services, and survivor leadership opportunities for youth who have experienced human or sex trafficking, supporting recovery, safety, and empowerment.

Fifth, **we request $50,000 in increased funding to continue our work under the Domestic and Other Violence Emergencies (DOVE) initiative.** Through this program, CHNY provides specialized counseling, group support, and safety planning to youth who have experienced domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault, helping them achieve safety, independence, and personal empowerment. The funding also supports enhanced staff training and aftercare services. *Our FY26 award was $30,000*.

Sixth, **we request $42,969 to continue our HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care Program**, which provides HIV prevention, screening, and treatment services through our Federally Qualified Health Center, ensuring that young people experiencing homelessness and the broader community have access to critical, life-saving care and support. All youth entering CHNY receive a comprehensive health screening, including HIV testing, and have access to ongoing care, PrEP, and PEP. This funding will help us continue delivering critical care and prevention education.

Finally, **we request $35,714 in renewed funding to support our work under the Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants/Protect NYC Families initiative.** This funding has allowed us to expand our immigration-related legal services, representation, and advocacy for youth experiencing homelessness - helping them to navigate complex legal challenges, including immigration relief, housing stability, and access to public benefits.

Together, these requests total $1,978,683 in essential support for maintaining and expanding services across our citywide programs.

Advocating for Fair and Sustainable RHY Contract Rates

For years, Covenant House New York and our sibling Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) agencies have partnered with the city to deliver essential programs that benefit our communities. However, the persistent underfunding of these contracts has significantly

strained our ability to maintain the high-quality services that youth and young adults in need depend on, and this challenge is further compounded by the heightened fear and uncertainty surrounding the future of the federal grants we rely on to fund key programs within our continuum of care. With cuts and shifts in federal funding, we face an even greater risk of service disruptions at a time when our communities and our young people, especially, need stability and support the most.

Continuing to extend our current contracts without addressing the funding gaps only exacerbates the challenges we face in keeping our doors open and providing the quality of services the young people in our care deserve. As costs continue to rise—whether due to inflation, rising operational expenses, or the need to pay competitive wages—the funding we receive has remained stagnant for the past eight years, forcing us to do more with less.

Currently, the City funds our RHY contracts at $49,000- $52,000 per bed, while the actual operating cost for Covenant House New York, for example, is $75,000 per bed. The gap, which amounts to over $5.5M, forces us to seek alternative funding sources to maintain quality services, a solution that, in today's climate, is not sustainable or long-term.

CHNY joins peer organizations in advocating for the release of a new RHY RFP and an increase in the contract rate to $75,000 per bed. This will allow for standardization across the system and to account for the real cost of operating, which is closer to $75,000 for TILs and $80,000 for Crisis beds. Increasing the contract rate will also help stabilize operations, retain qualified staff, and maintain safe, supportive housing for New York City's most vulnerable young people.

With the City Council's partnership, CHNY remains committed to protecting and uplifting youth who have been marginalized, displaced, or denied stability. These funds are not just investments in programs - they are lifelines for young people who deserve dignity, opportunity, and hope.

With these targeted investments, Covenant House New York and other youth-serving organizations will continue to serve as vital resources for New York City's youth, offering not only immediate shelter but also a pathway to a brighter, more stable future. We ask for your continued partnership and support in prioritizing these funds to ensure our services remain robust and responsive to the evolving challenges these young individuals face.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to our continued work together to find solutions that will help us continue supporting youth and young adults seeking stability and a safe, loving place to call home.

Good morning, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Marie Wavre, and I am the Attorney Program Manager at the Crime Victims Treatment Center.

CVTC has provided free healing services to survivors of violence since 1977, and we are proud to be part of the New York City Sexual Assault Initiative. Today, I want to speak to a part of our work that survivors cannot heal without: legal help.

Founded as part of our expansion campaign and formation as an independent nonprofit in 2018, our Legal Services Program provides free, trauma-informed legal representation to survivors of crimes, including sexual assault and domestic violence. In each six-month period last year, our small team of just two attorneys and two paralegals served around 120 survivors — roughly half of them survivors of sexual assault.

Survivors' legal cases are never simple. In Family Court, we help our clients obtain orders of protection against their abusers, secure custody and child support, and finalize divorces. For immigrant survivors, we secure U visas, T visas, and VAWA protections — the legal status that lets a person leave an abuser without fearing deportation.

In today's climate, many immigrant survivors are terrified that coming forward, or cooperating with police, could cost them their family. That fear keeps crimes hidden and abusers unaccountable, and demand for this help has surged faster than we can meet it.

That is why I respectfully ask the Council to support two initiatives that fund this work: Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence and Gender-Based Harm, at $150,000, and the Culturally Specific Gender-Based Violence Initiative, at $125,000. This funding would let us add legal staff and reach more survivors who have nowhere else to turn.

Thank you for your time, and for standing with survivors.

The Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC) has provided free, comprehensive healing services to survivors of interpersonal violence since 1977 and remains a leader in trauma-informed care. Through our partnership with the four other organizations that comprise the Sexual Assault Initiative, we are able to reach survivors across New York City who face barriers to accessing support, regardless of where they live. **For Fiscal Year 2027, we respectfully request $2.5 million in funding, to be distributed equally among the Initiative's five member organizations.**

First funded by the City Council in 2005, the Sexual Assault Initiative enabled CVTC to establish critical programming for male survivors of sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence. Before receiving Council funding, CVTC served only about a dozen male survivors each year. Today, male-identifying survivors represent 36% of our client population—significantly higher than the national average for comparable programs.

We now provide individual trauma-focused psychotherapy and four specialized support groups designed specifically for male survivors, including those who are incarcerated. Council funding also enabled us to develop targeted outreach materials aimed at reducing the stigma and shame that too often prevent male survivors from seeking help. These efforts have been so successful that demand for our services continues to grow.

Most recently, CVTC assumed statewide coordination of New York's Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) program and continues to strengthen partnerships with correctional facilities, including the New York City Department of Correction and Rising Ground's youth facilities in Brooklyn and the Bronx. We remain committed to building sustainable infrastructure within City correctional facilities, and continued Council support will help us expand access to these life-changing services for incarcerated individuals who are too often overlooked.

Crime Victims Treatment Center

Funding through this initiative has also enabled CVTC to expand services into hospital emergency departments in Brooklyn and Queens, two boroughs that remain significantly underserved when it comes to sexual assault intervention and support. Our goal is simple: to ensure that a survivor's access to care and healing is not determined by the borough in which they were assaulted.

Beyond direct services, CVTC's Prevention Training Program advances community-driven strategies to prevent and respond to violence by addressing its root causes through culturally responsive, inclusive education and partnership. Key initiatives include middle and high school curricula that promote healthy relationships, positive identity development, bystander intervention, and youth leadership; training and resources that equip educators to support trauma-impacted students and foster safe, supportive learning environments; healthy nightlife programming that provides industry-specific tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence; and campus-based initiatives that help colleges and universities strengthen prevention efforts, awareness campaigns, and coordinated responses to domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence.

Support for the Sexual Assault Initiative extends far beyond the nearly 6,000 individuals who receive services through our programs each year. It strengthens families, supports communities, informs public policy, and drives systems-level change. The impact of this investment is felt not only by survivors, but by the neighborhoods, institutions, and systems that serve them. **We urge the Council to continue its longstanding commitment to survivors by funding the Sexual Assault Initiative at $2.5 million in Fiscal Year 2027. By doing so, the City will make a meaningful investment in healing, equity, and safety for survivors across New York City.**

Cultural Institutions Group Testimony for
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026
Stephanie Hill Wilchfort
Chair Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

New York City's cultural institutions are essential civic infrastructure. They anchor tourism, drive local economic activity, and strengthen community identity and wellbeing. These funds are not abstract line items; they support real jobs and real people. The impact would extend beyond individual institutions and be felt across the communities and neighborhoods that rely on them every day.

I would like to thank the Council for its continued leadership in advancing arts and culture funding. We are also grateful that the Fiscal 2027 Executive Budget includes $10 million, but this leaves a $20 million gap that must be restored and fully baselined to ensure stability for the sector.

We respectfully urge your support to fully restore and baseline the full $30 million for arts and culture in the Fiscal 2027 Adopted Budget, providing institutions with stable, predictable funding. We ask you to consider the following:

1. **Baseline Restoration:** We ask the city to fully restore and baseline the **$30 million** that was added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector. Baselining this funding is critical to ending the 'budget dance' and supporting sustainable culture and culture jobs. Huge swings in annual funding levels impede staffing, planning, and programming, and are most damaging to small community-based organizations in our coalitions.

2. **Annual Increases:** This year, we are asking the city to consider annual cost adjustments year over year to support staff wages and increased costs connected with inflation for arts and cultural organizations. Costs overall for our cultural institutions continue to increase, and we ask the city to consider a system for sustainability for our organizations that will allow us to retain, expand, and provide fair pay for the cultural workforce.

3. **Improve and Reform the Capital Project Process:**

    a. **Create transparency.** Update the open data portal for capital projects at cultural institutions, which has not been updated since 2021, and hold a hearing on capital projects so that Council Members understand the issues.

    b. **Plan responsibly.** Develop a capital infrastructure plan for culture to allow all organizations to build and maintain infrastructure more efficiently.

    c. **Identify key process improvements.** Cultural capital projects can take 6-10 years, or more, to complete. Consider key process improvements that allow CIGs and

other cultural institutions and organizations to leverage city capital funding in timely and efficient ways to preserve and invest in our buildings and effectively serve our communities.

Culture Stats

Education

- 2.5 million annual student visits
- The CIG-public school partnership makes NYC a world-class cultural hub and a leader in STEAM education and public programs.
- Organizations offer classes, workshops, tours, and teacher training to supplement school curricula and build 21st-century workforce skills.

Creative Workforce

- 100,000+ jobs citywide (15,700 CIG employees) and 5,800 union employees with living-wage jobs that participate in city health & retirement plans.
- 6,000+ artists, educators, and per diem staff
- 6,000+ New Yorkers participate in workforce training
- 1,000+ SCI Network STEM internships, prioritizing underrepresented youth

Public Access

- 400,000+ free cultural memberships through IDNYC.
- Free and discounted access for New Yorkers
- Safe, accessible third spaces for communities, families, and immigrants.
- Key partners for initiatives like PlaNYC, IDNYC, and CUNY Cultural Corps.

June 10, 2026

New York City Council, Committee on Finance
Written Testimony by Alicia Arana Esq.,

CUNY Citizenship Now! – ASLAN: Supplemental Asylum Services

Thank you, Chairperson Lee, and honorable members of the Finance Committee. My name is Alicia Arana, Supervising Attorney at CUNY Citizenship Now!

Launched in February 2026 as part of the **Asylum Seekers Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN).** We expanded our ability to serve the immigrant community through the City Council–sponsored **Supplemental Asylum Services Program (SAS)**. The program has quickly adapted to respond to changing policies affecting asylum, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and work authorization.

The program operates from our central office at CUNY Central, located at 555 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019, and through community-based services locations across New York City. To expand access to legal services and ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate support, CUNY Citizenship Now! partners with community-based organizations and academic institutions to deliver onsite services, targeted outreach, and community-based legal assistance.

New York City is home to more than three million immigrants.[1] Many came here fleeing persecution, violence, and instability and, having no other option, filed their own asylum applications without legal assistance. Those applications are often incomplete. They may lack supporting documentation, sufficient detail, or the legal framework needed to clearly present a claim for protection. As a result, cases can fail not because individuals are ineligible for asylum, but because the immigration system is extraordinarily difficult to navigate alone. This is precisely the gap the SAS Program was created to address.

As the asylum-seeking population remains at historically high levels, many individuals continue to face heightened vulnerability during USCIS appointments and EOIR court proceedings. The SAS Program provides critical legal support to individuals who previously filed Form I-589 asylum applications pro se and now need assistance strengthening their cases before life-changing decisions are made.

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[1] See https://www.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/MOIA -2024-Annual-Report_4.4.25.pdf

Our program provides:

- Review, correction, and strengthening of existing asylum applications
- Procedural guidance to prepare participants for asylum interviews and immigration court hearings
- Critical support aimed at preventing detention and removal for vulnerable individuals
- Clear explanations of the asylum process for individuals seeking full legal representation

In just five months, the program has served **240** New Yorkers and delivered **562** units of service.

Community Partnership and Service Locations

We work in partnership with faith-based organizations and nonprofit groups serving African and South American communities. These communities are among the most vulnerable and the most underserved.

Services are provided from our central office at 555 West 57th Street in Midtown Manhattan, at Afri-kana Community Partnership (215 W. 125th Street, New York, NY 10027) every Monday, and through outreach clinics.

To accommodate individuals who could not attend appointments during the workweek, SAS hosted a Saturday legal clinic at our 57th Street office, servicing 10 participants.

SAS partners with Afri-kana Community Partnership to provide onsite legal services and language-access support for African and Black migrants. Afri-kana volunteers provide interpretation and translation in French, Arabic, Soninke, Pulaar, Wolof, and other commonly spoken languages, helping participants receive services in a trusted and culturally responsive setting.

SAS partners with Lehman College's Bronx Observatory program, comprised of CUNY students and community liaisons, to identify asylum seekers in the Bronx and refer them to available legal services

SAS participated in two immigration legal clinics organized by the Bronx Observatory and hosted by Los Amigos de Tolentino, a faith-based group from the parish of St. Nicholas of Tolentine in the Bronx. Through these clinics, asylum seekers have expanded access to free legal screenings and consultations in the borough.

To address the shortage of affordable full legal representation, SAS partners with the American Immigration Council (AIC) to connect eligible participants for legal

representation services and specialized legal support. To date, 12 SAS participants have secured full legal representation through this partnership.

More than 90% of the individuals we serve fall below 400% of the federal poverty level. Therefore, we allocated $60,000 of our Council funds to support asylum-related filling fees and work authorization application fees.

Every application we strengthen gives an asylum seeker a better opportunity to present their case. Every participant we prepare for an interview or hearing is someone who will face that process with greater understanding and preparation. Every filing fee we cover removes a financial barrier for a family already facing significant hardship.

This work has become an essential safeguard for individuals at heightened risk. By strengthening applications and preparing participants for critical stages of their cases, the SAS Program helps ensure that vulnerable asylum seekers are not left to navigate a complex and unforgiving system alone, and that their claims are presented fully and fairly.

The need for these services continues to grow. As policies surrounding asylum, TPS, and work authorization continue to shift, more New Yorkers are finding themselves at risk. They are appearing at check-ins and hearings unprepared. They are losing opportunities for relief because they lack access to legal guidance at pivotal moments in their cases.

Current SAS Staffing

The SAS Program is currently staffed by seven team members:

- Supervising Attorney
- Program and Operations Manager
- Two attorneys (1 F/T, 1 Contract attorney)
- Project Coordinator
- Two paralegals

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Participants receive case-specific support that may include:

- **Pro Se Motion to Change Venue**
- **Pro Se Change of Address Form** (EOIR- EOIR33)
- **Pro Se Change of Address Form** (USCIS – AR11)
- **Pro Se Motion to Change Hearing to Appear via WebEx**
- **Pro Se Motion to Consolidate**

- **Pro Se Preparation for ICE Appointments** for participants with pending I589
- **Pro Se Initial and Renewal Form I765 (C8), Form I912** (where appropriate)
- **Pro Se FOIA requests (Freedom of Information/Privacy Act Request)**
- **Calling EOIR/USCIS with Participant** to request necessary information or submit an inquiry
- **Review Pending Form I589 to Assess Pretermission Risk** (Matter of CARR / Matter of HAAV — Missing information or detail on Form I589 / Unviability of claim)
- **Review Pending Form I589 to Assess ACA Pretermission Risk**
- **Review of Pending Form I589 and provide guidance** on how to amend orally at an individual hearing or asylum office interview
- **Pro Se Submission of Written Amendments to Form I589**
- **Pro Se Evidentiary Review for Asylum Office Interview**
- **Pro Se EOIR Evidentiary Filing** (Country Conditions for ACA Pretermission — *Matter of CIGM & LVSG*) if OPLA has moved for ACA pretermission for specified third country/countries and the respondent has been afforded the opportunity to respond

The data below reflects the breadth of support provided to asylum seekers.

<u>The people behind the numbers:</u>

These are not exceptional cases. This is what we see every day...

<u>"Luisa"</u>

Luisa Fled Venezuela after the police targeted her for seeking justice for her partner's murder, who was a student activist killed by a government sniper. She escaped with her children, spending five years in Peru under the "Tren de Aragua" gang extortion before reaching New York.

When Luisa came to us, she had a pending asylum case, no attorney, and no clear path forward.

The SAS team connected her with our American Immigration Council partner to secure full legal representation for her hearing next year.

The SAS team assisted her in applying for employment authorization and covered the filing fee. For someone rebuilding her life from nothing, the ability to work can make the difference between stability and survival.

Luisa's case reflects exactly what this program was built for: a woman with a credible compelling claim for protection, who simply could not navigate this system alone. She now has a fighting chance.

“Daniela”

Daniela’s asylum case was docketed in Michigan, hundreds of miles away from where she actually lives in New York City. When SAS reviewed her asylum application, they found critical gaps: missing entry information, an incorrect immigration status, and undocumented political persecution.

SAS reviewed and explained the faults on her I-589. We filed a motion for change of venue to bring her case to New York, and we strengthened her application to reflect the full truth of what she fled.

Daniela’s case is still pending, but she is no longer walking unprepared.

In Just five months, the SAS program has demonstrated the impact of targeted legal services, strategic partnerships, and community-based outreach. Continued funding will allow us to expand these efforts and meet the growing demand for asylum-related legal assistance across New York City.

Funding Request for FY 2027

For Fiscal Year 2027, for the ASLAN – Supplemental Asylum Services Program, we request the restoration of **$845,951** to ensure the continuation of this essential work.

Thank you for your leadership, your continued commitment, and your partnership in supporting immigrant New Yorkers. We look forward to building on this work together to ensure that every immigrant in our city has meaningful access to high-quality legal services and the opportunity to live with stability, dignity, and full participation in their communities.

Service Unit Breakdown (March 2026 – June 8, 2026)

Service Unit	Total Units Provided
Initial Consultation	240
Review of Pending Form I-589 to Assess Pretermission Risk (Matter of CARR / Matter of HAAV — Missing information or detail on I589 / Unviability of claim)	16
Review Pending Form I589 to Assess ACA Pretermission Risk	6
Review of Pending Form I589 and provide guidance on how to amend orally at an individual hearing or asylum office interview	12
Pro Se Submission of Written Amendments to I589	1
Pro Se Preparation for ICE Appointments for participants with pending I589	3
Pro Se RFE Response preparation for I765 (C08)	3
Pro Se Request to Restart EAD Clock	6
Pro Se EOIR Evidentiary Filing (Country Conditions for ACA Pretermission — Matter of CIGM and LVSG) if OPLA has moved for ACA pretermission for specified third country/countries and the respondent has been afforded the opportunity to respond	0
Pro Se Evidentiary Review for Asylum Office Interview	2
Calling EOIR/USCIS with Participant to request necessary information or submit an inquiry	23
Pro Se Change of Address Form (EOIR- EOIR33)	20
Pro Se Change of Address Form (USCIS – AR11)	21
Pro Se Motion to Change Venue	7
Pro Se Motion to Change Hearing to Appear via WebEx	3
Pro Se FOIA requests (Freedom of Information/Privacy Act Request)	17
Pro Se Initial and Renewal Form I765 (C8) and Form I912	90
I589 Form Fees Paid	3
I765 Form Fees Paid	90
TOTAL SERVICE UNITS PROVIDED	**563**

June 10, 2026

New York City Council, Committee on Finance
Written Testimony by Meetu Dhar

CUNY Citizenship Now! – Citizenship Plus City Council Program

Thank you, Chairperson Lee, and honorable members of the Finance Committee. My name is Meetu Dhar, Managing Attorney of the City Council Program at CUNY Citizenship Now and I am here on behalf of Monique Francis, Executive Director of CUNY Citizenship Now!, and our dedicated team of staff and volunteers to advocate for continued funding for our vital legal services program.

Now more than ever, immigrants in this city need our elected leaders to stand up for their rights. Uncertainty, fear, constant policy changes, visa bans, and prolonged processing times have become part of the current immigration landscape. In addition to the increased ICE activity, we have seen recent policy shifts and practices that continue to have a chilling effect on immigrant communities. Less than three weeks ago, USCIS issued a policy memorandum indicating that green cards will be granted to individuals in the United States only under very limited circumstances. This is unprecedented.

At the same time, DACA applicants seeking renewal are now waiting up to eight months for their employment authorization renewals, a stark contradiction to USCIS's own guidance advising individuals to apply 120–150 days in advance. These delays are not just administrative—they are life-altering. Many DACA recipients are losing their jobs, their health insurance, and their ability to support themselves and their families, through no fault of their own. Employers are forced to terminate valued workers, creating instability not only for immigrant families but also for the local economy.

CUNY Citizenship Now! is a lifeline for New York City's immigrant communities, providing trusted, free legal services at a time when misinformation and fear are at an all-time high. Our program provides up-to-date information, individualized guidance, and possible pathways in an increasingly complex and uncertain system. Without sustained funding, thousands of immigrants will be left without access to credible legal support, placing them at greater risk of exploitation, missed opportunities for relief, and potential harm to their immigration status, or even removal.

This moment calls for steadfast commitment, strong leadership, and the dedicated resources needed to protect our city's immigrant communities. Ensuring that every

immigrant New Yorker has access to free, reliable, high-quality legal assistance is essential to navigating an increasingly complex and ever-changing immigration system.

With continued support, we can uphold New York City's role as a place of opportunity, stability, and dignity for all.

Our Impact and Reach

CUNY Citizenship Now! was founded in 1997 and expanded into City Council districts in 2010. Since that expansion, the program has become a consistent and trusted presence in Council Members' offices, providing free immigration legal services across all 51 City Council districts. Services are delivered not only in Council Members' offices, but also through Council Member–designated community-based organizations and via remote platforms, ensuring broad and equitable access.

Through the City Council Program, CUNY Citizenship Now! has assisted more than 80,000 immigrants. In the current fiscal year alone, the program has received over 52,125 calls and inquiries and directly assisted more than 3,000 individuals. Of these, 2,225 individuals were supported in applying for U.S. citizenship—helping New Yorkers take the final step toward full civic participation and long-term stability for their families.

In addition to our nine monthly Saturday citizenship events—co-sponsored by three to four Council Members—and our annual Spring Citizenship event, where we assisted nearly 300 participants, we have continued to see strong demand for our services. However, at the start of the year, participation at the Saturday citizenship events temporarily declined due to heightened fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. Rapid policy changes, enforcement concerns, and widespread misinformation led many individuals to delay or avoid seeking services altogether. Through sustained outreach efforts, including close collaboration with Council Member offices and trusted community partners, we worked to rebuild confidence to reassure community members that safe, reliable legal support remained available. As a result, participation has steadily rebounded in recent months.

In response to the growing and evolving needs of our communities, we have also introduced several new initiatives this fiscal year. Once a month, under the sponsorship of a Council Member, we offer virtual consultation days, with appointments available on a designated Friday to increase accessibility. This fiscal year, we have provided a total of 404 general consultations across all services. We have also expanded our services not only by offering an additional day of service to Council Members, but also by extending our hours to include evening appointments until 8:00 PM on Wednesdays,

Thursdays, and Fridays. These expanded hours have significantly improved access for community members who are unable to seek assistance during traditional business hours.

These efforts reflect not only the demand for our services, but also the essential role the City Council Program plays in ensuring that immigrant New Yorkers have access to trusted, high-quality legal support. We have further strengthened our outreach by partnering with Council Members on 44 community engagement initiatives throughout the fiscal year. These efforts have included tabling events, presentations, Know Your Rights webinars, and canvassing in Council Members' districts. Several Council Members have also collaborated with us to produce videos and informational campaigns aimed at reducing fear, sharing accurate information, and encouraging community members to connect with CUNY Citizenship Now! for trusted guidance and support. These materials are shared across social media platforms to expand reach and build confidence in available legal services.

Vital to our success is our dedicated staff and Volunteer Corps. Our team includes 8 full-time attorneys and 10 part-time attorneys, supported by 7 full-time paralegals and 4 part-time paralegals. Our administrative team consists of 8 full-time and 7 part-time staff, along with 7 full-time administrators and 3 part-time administrators who ensure the smooth operation of our services. In addition, our program is strengthened by over 300 trained volunteers. Many of these individuals have gone through the immigration process themselves with our assistance and now give back by supporting others in their communities, while others are committed community members who volunteer their time to advance our mission.

As the need continues to grow, sustained and increased investment is critical to maintaining and expanding this necessary lifeline for the communities we serve.

Funding Request for FY 2027

For Fiscal Year 2027, we respectfully urge the Council to sustain and restore critical funding for immigration legal services. Through the Citizenship Plus Council Program, we request the restoration of our **$4.6 million** allocation.

Thank you for your leadership, your continued commitment, and your partnership in supporting immigrant New Yorkers. We look forward to building on this work together to ensure that every immigrant in our city has meaningful access to high-quality legal services and the opportunity to live with stability, dignity, and full participation in their communities.

June 10, 2026

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This moment calls for steadfast commitment, strong leadership, and the dedicated resources needed to protect our city's immigrant communities. Ensuring that every

immigrant New Yorker has access to free, reliable, high-quality legal assistance is essential to navigating an increasingly complex and ever-changing immigration system.

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These efforts reflect not only the demand for our services, but also the essential role the City Council Program plays in ensuring that immigrant New Yorkers have access to trusted, high-quality legal support. We have further strengthened our outreach by partnering with Council Members on 44 community engagement initiatives throughout the fiscal year. These efforts have included tabling events, presentations, Know Your Rights webinars, and canvassing in Council Members' districts. Several Council Members have also collaborated with us to produce videos and informational campaigns aimed at reducing fear, sharing accurate information, and encouraging community members to connect with CUNY Citizenship Now! for trusted guidance and support. These materials are shared across social media platforms to expand reach and build confidence in available legal services.

Vital to our success is our dedicated staff and Volunteer Corps. Our team includes 8 full-time attorneys and 10 part-time attorneys, supported by 7 full-time paralegals and 4 part-time paralegals. Our administrative team consists of 8 full-time and 7 part-time staff, along with 7 full-time administrators and 3 part-time administrators who ensure the smooth operation of our services. In addition, our program is strengthened by over 300 trained volunteers. Many of these individuals have gone through the immigration process themselves with our assistance and now give back by supporting others in their communities, while others are committed community members who volunteer their time to advance our mission.

As the need continues to grow, sustained and increased investment is critical to maintaining and expanding this necessary lifeline for the communities we serve.

Funding Request for FY 2027

For Fiscal Year 2027, we respectfully urge the Council to sustain and restore critical funding for immigration legal services. Through the Citizenship Plus Council Program, we request the restoration of our **$4.6 million** allocation.

Thank you for your leadership, your continued commitment, and your partnership in supporting immigrant New Yorkers. We look forward to building on this work together to ensure that every immigrant in our city has meaningful access to high-quality legal services and the opportunity to live with stability, dignity, and full participation in their communities.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CLINIC

MAIN STREET
LEGAL SERVICES

CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY2027

June 10, 2026

Good afternoon, Committee Chair, Linda Lee and members of the Committee on Finance and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ricxu Bacus and I am the Senior Attorney in Residence at CUNY Law's Community and Economic Development Clinic. I am here with worker leaders of worker cooperatives in New York, members of the network of partners that form the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI), and the trade association for worker cooperatives in New York – New York City Network for Worker Cooperatives (NYC NOWC).

In the CED Clinic, we believe that economic development and community development are separate but related terms. We believe that working people of New York have the capacity to thrive and support their communities, if only we can dismantle or diminish the structural barriers and inequalities they face. Worker and community self-determination of their property and production of goods has shown many times to be a significant factor in enabling working people to thrive. This is the reason why CED Clinic focuses on supporting worker cooperative businesses. Just this past FY26, through creative lawyering in partnership with worker owners around the city, the CED Clinic:

a) supported worker owners in assessing their financial systems and solving financial problems. As you may know, worker owners in NYC are overwhelmingly women, immigrant, and BIPOC workers. Not everyone has access to a degree in business and training on how money works, which may leave worker owners vulnerable to financial predators. CED Clinic worked with worker cooperatives to make sure they were able to comply with any financially related laws and regulations, and assess their financial flows, ensuring transparent accounting for everyone and avoiding and solving problems related to financial matters.

b) advocated on their behalf with financial institutions
The current situation of the country has also put a focus on documentation and changes in documentation. This can be difficult for worker owners in particularly vulnerable populations. Simple transactions such as changes in bank signatories can become inaccessible as a result but we worked with several coops in the city to help advocate on their behalf and eliminate potential barriers to these transactions.

c) supported worker owners to have more control over access to their information amidst political attacks.
Worker owners in NYC are overwhelmingly women, immigrant, and BIPOC workers. We helped them make confidentiality agreements tailored to their specific worker cooperative and industry; guiding them on government regulations that expand access to personal information; and ensuring protection for their intellectual property rights. Worker owners and their cooperatives unfortunately face increasing attacks against them and their personal information due to the political climate. Worker owners are afraid of their immigration status, gender identity, and other personal identifiers outed to people who may use the information negatively. Worker cooperatives can help mitigate those dangers through strict agreements with their business partners, regulations internally in the cooperative, and informed strategies on submitting information.

d) supported worker owners with advice and counsel when tariffs threatened their businesses. Tariffs have become a center of attention recently, but regardless of where people fall on the tariff conversation, it is undeniable that it impacts small businesses. Where otherwise worker cooperatives may be unsure or fear how tariff changes may affect them, we worked with them to increase their knowledge and helped them mitigate its effects.

These are specific things we have done for this fiscal year which is in addition to how worker cooperatives have been a means to help worker owners increase their average pay rate, set better conditions of employment, and boost the security of vulnerable populations (such as immigrants and trans folks).

CED Clinic is also uniquely positioned to continue to strengthen the infrastructure that supports worker cooperatives as the initiative grows. The student body of CUNY Law represents New York itself. Our students and staff have social justice in their heart and sharp lived experiences to understand what makes the city thrive. I, myself, am an immigrant from the Philippines, a graduate of a NYC public high school, and now a practitioner at the largest public university in New York City. We can and know how to build the bench of CLT practitioners because New York City is our roots. In fact, many of the current CED practitioners and worker cooperative attorneys were CED Clinic alumni. Allowing CED Clinic to support more worker owners also means investing in more future advocates in the work.

For this reason, we ask city council to enhance WCBDI's funding to **$5,097,082** to further strengthen support for worker cooperatives, worker owners, and their communities amidst the ongoing situation. We ask that city council specifically grant CUNY Law CED Clinic's increased request of **$340,000** as an investment in increasing support for worker cooperatives and ensuring a cohort to support them is available in the future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am open to any questions you may have.

Rodrigo Ricxu Bacus
Senior Attorney in Residence
CUNY Law, Community and Economic Development Clinic

Office of the University Student Senate
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New York City Council Committee of Finance

Testimony of Garrett Morgan Jr., Member of the CUNY University Student Senate and President of the Student Government Association at Laguardia Community College

June 10, 2026

Hello Chair Lee and honorable members of the Finance Committee. My name is Garrett Morgan Jr. and I am the Student Government Association President of LaGuardia Community College where I have the honor of representing over 13,000+ degree seeking students and additional 15,000+ Adult Continuing Education Program students. I am here today to talk to you all about why a free OMNY card program is essential to better student success and wellbeing for me and my peers at LaGuardia and all across CUNY. Community colleges are the backbone of New York City's higher education system. We serve a large population of working-class students, immigrant students, first-generation college students, and people returning to school later in life each and everyday. Most of our students are working students, either working part time or even full time jobs a long with taking our classes. We also have a large population of students that have family responsibilities either taking care of their own children or even taking care of their sick or elderly parents. At LaGuardia, we serve a large population of low-income students and provide affordable, high-quality education and real pathways to transfer and earn their bachelor degree or enter the straight into the workforce. No matter where a LaGuardia graduate chooses to go, wherever we go we make an impact.

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Yet many of our students still face preventable obstacles: the cost of getting to campus. Issues with finding good reliable jobs and internships both during our time at CUNY and after Graduation, and issues with critical areas around our campuses in desperate need of repairs. That's why I'm here today urging the city to expand transportation benefits to our CUNY Students., as well please expand funding for CUNY Beyond program, and Expand funding for the CUNY State of Good repair fund. The city recognized how important reliable transportation is, for younger students in the DOE, and it's made a real difference. Our college students deserve that same support. When students don't have to choose between transportation and basic needs, they show up more, perform better, and stay in school. Free transportation access improves attendance, boosts academic performance, and helps students fully participate in campus life. But also having good high paying jobs and internships are also critical. A recent study showed that nearly 8 thousand students experienced homelessness within the first year after graduation. While housing is part of the issue. Another large part is Not having Good High paying Jobs. CUNY Beyond intends to put an end to that. CUNY Beyond is new career readiness program. It weaves job prep, internships, and employer connections directly into every undergrad degree so students graduate both ready to work and with a job. Finally while we are at our campus it is vital that we have good,up-to-date, and repaired infrastructure that we are able to use.

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The State of Good Repair Fund will support the State of Good Repair initiatives at CUNY's community colleges, $100M from the city and a $100M state match ($200M in total) in funding is needed to support critical infrastructure renewal such as the replacement of the HVAC systems at Kingsborough Community College, replacement of roofs and façades at Queensborough Community College, the libraries at Borough of Manhattan Community College and Laguardia Community College, as well as funding to upgrade the State of the art LaGuardia Performing Arts Center which is the Largest Performing Arts center in all of west queens, and upgrade all of the student cafeterias throughout all of our community colleges.I respectfully ask this committee to prioritize and expand funding for transportation benefits to our CUNY Students., for CUNY Beyond program, and CUNY State of Good repair fund as it is an investment in our College students which is a smart investment in our city's future.

Thank you.

Garrett Morgan Jr.
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30 YEARS OF DANCEWAVE

Executive Budget Hearing Testimony on behalf of Dancewave, Inc.
New York City Council
Submitted via email by Whitney McIntosh-Joseph, June 2026

To the Members of the Finance Committee,

Thanks to the council's focused advocacy and the city's investment, Dancewave is empowered to provide accessible, inclusive, and culturally competent dance programming to an all-ages, citywide audience. We spend 80% of our budget -- $1.2 M annually -- employing artists and arts workers who engage 6200 individuals with meaningful arts experiences.

I write to you today to applaud the addition of 10M in baseline funding to the Cultural Affairs budget for FY27, and to urge you to go further. We began making progress in FY26, with the first budget increase to the Department of Cultural Affairs budget in 10 years, and we hope you will continue to support our efforts to meet the needs of our community in the midst of ever rising costs for both programming and operations and an increasingly unstable funding landscape.

We applaud Mayor Mamdani's advocacy at the state level to close New York City's budget gap with a pied-a-terre tax, and want to encourage the committee to prioritize increasing the baseline for cultural affairs funding by $30 M in the FY27 budget. The increase to baseline funding specifically provides much-needed stability to small and mid-sized cultural organizations such as Dancewave, who are striving to meet the needs of our communities for accessible and inclusive arts experiences, while adequately compensating the talented arts educators who deliver our vital programs.

Baselined multi-year funding helps us formulate plans to stabilize operations, and when finances allow, strategize toward growth to meet the ever-evolving needs of New Yorkers. In the midst of an affordability crisis, Dancewave is doing everything it can to scale up our free and affordable programming to provide New Yorkers with programs that support physical and mental health and community-building.

The other issue that I would like to highlight is the impact of the affordability crisis on our community of dancemakers. According to the 2025 Creative New York Report, New York City has lost nearly 19% of its dancers since 2019 – a significant blow to the fields of dance and dance education. Evidence gathered in the report shows that the attrition of artists from NYC is closely tied to the affordability crisis. In addition to the crucial housing work the city is undertaking, I urge you to prioritize the pilot of a portable health insurance benefits package and a pooled insurance program for small arts nonprofits. Taken together, these measures would have a significant impact on freelance arts workers citywide, and would allow small arts organizations to reallocate their budgets toward direct artist compensation.

Thank you for your ongoing work in support of New York City's cultural community. I look forward to continuing our collaboration to increase and stabilize support for artists and arts organizations across the city.

Sincerely,

Whitney McIntosh-Joseph
Executive Director

Committee on Finance
New York City Council Fiscal Year 27 Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

Eve Wolff
Executive Director, Dancing Classrooms

Greetings, Speaker Menin, Deputy Speaker Williams, Chair Lee, and members of the Finance Committee. I am Eve Wolff, Executive Director of Dancing Classrooms. On behalf of our staff, teaching artists, and the thousands of students we serve, thank you for holding this important hearing.

The Council's support for arts education has been–and remains–essential to ensuring that every young New Yorker, regardless of background, has access to the academic, social, and developmental benefits of the arts.

Through the joyful art and practice of social dances, Dancing Classrooms cultivates engaged learners, collaborative leaders, and inclusive spaces. We are proud to be one of the largest dance education partners to New York City schools. Each year, our professional Teaching Artists bring our culturally responsive programs to more than 10,000 K-12 students at over 100 schools and after-schools across all five boroughs, at no cost to students or families. In an educational system where less than 20% of schools have a certified dance teacher, we play an essential role in bringing art to NYC's youth.

But this work depends on a workforce that is increasingly at risk.

As many of you well know, the creative industry is a major economic driver for NYC generating thousands of jobs and contributing as much as 13% to the city's total economic output or GDP. Dance, in particular, contributes roughly 300 million to the city's economy. Teaching Artists and arts education providers like Dancing Classrooms sit at the nexus of our cultural and public sectors, bringing the high quality arts experiences NYC is known worldwide for directly to their daily learning experience. And yet, 79% of Teaching Artists report that their work does not provide sufficient income to live in or near the city, and New York City has seen a nearly 19% decline in professional dancers since before the pandemic. At the same time, many arts education providers are facing changes in the funding landscape, including widespread reductions in New York State Council on the Arts funding due to continued uncertainty around federal support for the arts and education. Together, these pressures are making it more difficult to sustain the cultural workforce that delivers these critical programs. Which is why a strong show of support for arts and culture, including arts education, in the Fiscal Year 27 Budget is necessary now more than ever.

Partnerships with organizations like Dancing Classrooms are critical to ensuring equitable access to what many view as the heart and soul of NYC - Arts & Culture. Embedded in our neighborhoods and communities are thousands of arts workers and arts educators dedicated to helping young people succeed. Families and school leaders need creative solutions, now more than ever, that support their students' well-being so they can be ready to learn, grow, and thrive. Access to dance education in school and after school equips kids against mental health challenges like isolation and low self-esteem. In particular, social dance education offers a powerful antidote to disconnection, fostering empathy, respect, and collaboration in ways that are both immediate and lasting. A complement to physical education, it can contribute to helping children meet the 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity that health experts say is necessary—and encourage lifelong healthy habits. Programs like ours offer schools unique, and economical, opportunities to achieve multiple student outcomes through a single delivery mechanism.

Principals and teachers have seen how our programs foster creative, academic, and social-emotional skills—like motivation, perseverance, connection, and listening—that help students become engaged learners and successful students. Even our young participants recognize the impact of having a quality dance program as part of the school day. A second grader in Community School District 6, previously routinely late for school, began arriving to school early, sharing that she did so just to dance with our Teaching Artist—and that in dance class she was learning to move her body "*without judgment!*"

These outcomes reflect what we see every day: **dance not only supports physical activity and self-expression, it also builds confidence, connection, and a stronger sense of belonging in school.** Third-party research has shown that our programs result in a real, measurable boost in the behavioral and social skills kids need to succeed. After experiencing our 10-week program, 95% of students—almost all of them—showed increased engagement and motivation, 89% saw an increase in self-discipline and focus, and 93% strengthened their collaborative and team skills.

However, schools can only pay for about half—or less—of what it actually costs to deliver our programs. The current Department of Education and Department of Youth & Community Development contracting structures severely limit our ability to meet the gap in arts programming for NYC youth. Applying for rate increases and new contracts requires months, or even years, of dedicated efforts, sometimes resulting only in a small % increase to rates which lag behind the rising costs of doing business in NYC. We are not charging ticket prices or class fees to our students, and remain committed to making dance education accessible for all students. That means, however, that we are forced to rely on a patchwork of funding streams, including contracts and grants from the Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development, Department of Cultural Affairs, City Council initiatives, and more. The limited availability of arts education funding through initiatives such as CASA, that for years has remained stagnant in scope and offers few allowances to accommodate for changing student and school needs, has resulted in a system where schools without a history of funding for the arts must simply make do with what they have.

Despite our efforts to close these funding gaps, we are hearing from more and more principals who tell us they can no longer afford to bring Dancing Classrooms to their schools—not because the need has gone away, but because budget uncertainty has made it impossible to plan.

Cuts to arts and arts education funding—or a failure to restore and baseline those funds—put essential cultural partnerships like ours at serious risk. These cuts will hit hardest in schools and communities without alternative funding sources, such as strong PTAs or the ability to pay for private dance classes, leaving the most vulnerable students with the least access to the arts.

The funding decisions you make as our elected council members are the key to ensuring equity and access to the transformative power and defiant joy of creative learning across our schools. And, if we are serious about equity in arts education, we must also be serious about sustaining the creative workforce and organizations who make it possible. To that end, I proudly join my colleagues in the It Starts With the Arts coalition in urging our City Council to maintain its strong support for high-quality arts education, with a focus on those who have the greatest needs.

We urge the Council to take the following actions:

Sustain and stabilize cultural funding

- **$30M Restore + Baseline for the Department of Cultural Affairs:** The FY27 Executive Budget includes a $10 million baselined increase for arts and culture, an important step forward for New York City's cultural sector. As the budget process continues, we urge the City to **restore and**

baseline an additional $20 million in the Adopted Budget to ensure sustained investment in cultural institutions, artists, and communities.
- **Establish year-over-year funding adjustments** to cover rising operating costs and wages for the cultural workforce.
- **Continue reforms to contracting with city agencies**. specifically targeting NYCPS' Multi-Task Award Contract (MTAC) and CASA contracts, to ensure timely contract remittance and payments, accessible processes, and fair per-class rates that reflect the true cost of programming and labor.
- **Launch insurance pilots to support teaching artist affordability**. Aligned with Creatives Rebuild NY and the Center for an Urban Future, NYC can reduce economic precarity for the arts workforce by piloting a freelancers portable benefits program and a pooled insurance program for smaller orgs.

Preserve & strengthen arts education in schools

- **Restore and Enhance "Support for Arts Instruction" initiative funding.** Increase allocation from $4M to $6M to meet city-wide demand for increased arts learning opportunities.
- **Require NYCPS arts funding be spent on the arts.** Boost the per student arts allocation to $100 from $89.76, and require that money be spent on arts education.
- **Ensure Every School Has a Certified Arts Teacher:** Ensure that all schools have at least one certified arts teacher, in part by reviving the successful supplemental arts certification program ($4M) and funding a PE Works-inspired improvement plan using the already baselined arts education funding.
- **Improve arts education data transparency.** Require mandatory reporting on school-level arts education access, participation, spending, and MTAC procurement (R1129/R1180) via T&C.
- **Update the NYCPS Blueprint for Arts Learning** to define sequential pathways for arts learning that integrate culturally-responsive pedagogy and reflect rapid advancements in media and technology (last updated in 2015).

For over 30 years, Dancing Classrooms has partnered with NYC schools to bring high-quality arts education to students who would otherwise lack access. But we cannot do this work without sustained investment in both programs and people.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of equitable arts education. I appreciate your commitment to our City and its students. We are proud to partner with New York City to help ensure all young people have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

The New York City Council's Finance Committee
Executive Budget Hearing
Honorable Chair Linda Lee
June 10th, 2026

Protect Essential Services and Cut All Police Vacancies
Testimony of the Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY

Good afternoon, and thank you Chair Lee, and members of the New York City Council Finance Committee. My name is Andrea Ortiz, and I am the Director of the Dignity in Schools Campaign–New York (DSC-NY), a coalition of 29 organizations working to create safe and supportive learning environments in NYC Public Schools. We organize with students, parents, educators, and advocates to expand restorative justice, increase mental health access, and strengthen protections for immigrant communities, while working to eliminate police, surveillance, and punitive discipline in schools.

We are gravely concerned that Mayor Mamdani's Executive Budget proposal cuts critical education services that students rely on, including restorative justice, mental health supports, and immigrant family communications. We are also deeply worried that the Council is advancing legislation to create buffer zones around schools that would expand police presence during protests, restrict freedom of speech, and further criminalize young people and their communities. We are moving in the wrong direction.

Public schools should be places where young people feel safe, supported, and able to learn. Yet we continue to see investments and policies that prioritize policing and surveillance over care and prevention—despite overwhelming evidence that these approaches harm student wellbeing and create barriers to learning, particularly for Black, Brown, immigrant, transgender and gender non-conforming students, and students with disabilities.

New York City is facing a youth mental health crisis. According to Former New York City Comptroller Brad Lander's report on youth mental health access, nearly half of students report symptoms of depression, and up to a quarter experience anxiety[1]. At the same

[1] See https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/new-york-city-faces-record-high-youth-mental-health-crisis-comptroller-landers-report/

time, longstanding disciplinary disparities persist. Research shows that Black students made up less than 20% of overall enrollment but received 45% of superintendent suspensions and 52% of School Police Interventions.

The solution is not more policing and punitive discipline. The solution is investment.

We urge the City Council to take the following actions:

- Freeze hiring for school police, eliminate vacancies, and reinvest approximately $90 million in savings into restorative justice, mental health supports, and immigrant protections.
- Protect restorative justice and mental health access by baselining $6 million in expiring restorative justice funding and $5 million for the Mental Health Continuum serving 50 high-need schools.
- Protect immigrant students and families by baselining $4 million for outreach and communication and Passing Intro 798 to eliminate the NYPD Gang Database.
- Oppose the proposed bill on security perimeters around educational facilities and amend it to instead require the NYPD to publish and report on their current policies and procedures for responding to protests around schools in order to better protect young people and protesters in New York City.

We have already seen what works. Suspensions have been declining since before the pandemic and continue to decrease—even amid reduced school police staffing. In 2025, suspensions dropped 8% compared to the previous year, including a 22% decline in long-term suspensions. This progress reflects the results of schools increasingly using restorative practices, peer mediation, in-school counseling, and referrals to external mental health providers to respond to student needs, which is keeping students engaged in their learning while maintaining safe school communities.

Research from other cities reinforces this. In Chicago high schools implementing restorative practices, there was a 35% decline in student arrests in school, a 15% reduction in out-of-school arrests, and an 18% decrease in suspensions, alongside improved student perceptions of safety and belonging.[2]

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[2] See https://news.uchicago.edu/story/uchicago-education-lab-study-finds-decrease-arrests-suspensions-schools-use-restorative



These approaches are not only more effective but cost-efficient. It costs close to a million dollars a year to incarcerate a young person in New York State. By contrast, restorative justice and mental health supports prevent harm, reduce system involvement, and strengthen school communities.

New York City has a choice to make.

We can continue to invest in systems that criminalize young people and restrict their rights, or we can invest in the supports that actually make schools safe: trusting relationships, mental health care, restorative justice, and immigrant support.

Real school safety is not built through policing and surveillance. It is built through care, trust, and investment. We urge the Council to stand with students and families by protecting these critical programs in the final budget and rejecting policies that expand policing in our schools.

Thank you.

Submitted by:

Andrea Ortiz
Director
Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY

EDGEMERE ALLIANCE

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY
FROM BEACH TO BAY

June 10, 2026

NYC Council Hearing: Executive Budget – June 10, 2026
Submitted by: Jackie Rogers, C: 347-757-1174, Email: edgemerealliance@gmail.com

Dear City Council Members:

As a member of the Far Rockaway Trauma Center Task Force, President of the Edgemere Alliance, and a local homeowner, I am writing to request additional capital funding and support for the Far Rockaway Trauma Center.

The need for local trauma care is urgent. The Rockaways are geographically isolated, and with summer approaching and two drownings already reported, our current infrastructure is insufficient. Having recently witnessed a family member experience a cardiac episode, I know firsthand how critical immediate access to care is for sustaining life.

While Far Rockaway has historically faced disinvestment, the area is currently seeing a renaissance with thousands of new housing units. This population growth must be supported by essential infrastructure, specifically the acute care that only a Level 1 Trauma Center can provide.

Our community has made significant progress by securing $50 million in capital funding and identifying a project site, but additional resources are required. As the City finalizes the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, I ask the Administration and Council to prioritize the needs of Far Rockaway residents. Please allocate the additional capital funding necessary to bring healthcare equity to the Rockaways and make this Trauma Center a reality.

Sincerely,

Jackie Rogers
President, Edgemere Alliance
Connecting the Community from Beach to Bay

edtrust NEW YORK

Testimony for New York City Council
Fiscal Year 27 Preliminary Budget - Education
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed education budget. EdTrust-New York is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity. We work to attain educational justice through research, policy, and advocacy that results in students of color– particularly Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native American students, and students from low-income backgrounds – achieving at high levels from early childhood through college completion.

Overall, EdTrust-New York is pleased by the Council's commitment to:

- **Invest over $17M in funds to support NYC Reads and NYC Solves, and**
- **Provide increases for childcare, including:**
  - **$40M to increase childcare provider rates**
  - **$25M to baseline Promise NYC**
  - **$33M for child care vouchers**
  - **$36.4M for Early Childhood staffing at NYCPS**
  - **$10M for Infant/toddler child care seats in high-need communities**

While we are grateful for these investments, we continue to urge the Council to address additional priorities that are included in our written testimony, including support for Immigrant Families, Multi-Lingual Learners/English Language Learners, Pathways, School Integration, the Class Size Law, and Universal Child Care and the Child Care workforce.

In our brief testimony today, I want to highlight the following EdTrust-NY priorities:

1) **Provide an additional $183M toward NYC Solves and NYC Reads to further expand and ensure the proven efficacy of these programs,** with a focus on evidence-based literacy and math instruction, robust coaching and professional learning for teachers, and targeted interventions for students, particularly Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLLs/ELLs) and students with disabilities to ensure they have access to the new curricula.
2) **Provide $27.4 million to support Multi-Lingual Learners/English Language Learners**, with a focus on bilingual programming, Standalone English as New Language instructional materials, and professional learning for educators.
3) We stand with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling on the City to restore and baseline funding for essential education programs that are at risk of significant funding cuts in July, **including $4M for immigrant family outreach.**

4) **Redirect the proposed $122 million investment** in class size reduction to support the many equity-centered priorities outlined in this testimony.
5) Child Care
    a. Continue working with the State **to ensure sufficient funding for child care vouchers** and prepare to address shortfalls with city funding.
    b. Continue to call on the state to fully fund and implement a **$1.2 billion child care workforce compensation fund.**
    c. **Prioritize communities with high rates of low-income families with young children** for universal projects and 3-K expansions.
6) Provide baseline funding of **$2 million annually**, beginning in Fiscal Year 2027 and continuing for three years, to support the Community School District Diversity Working Groups, as required under Local Law 225 of 2019.
7) Strengthen supports and emergency aid for students in college, including targeted resources for programs like CUNY's ASAP and ACE

Thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony.

Written Testimony: NYC Council Committee on Finance

Hearing: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget—Public Housing
Submitted for the record: June 10, 2026 hearing
From: Karl Johnson, Founder, Elevator Advocate | karl@elevatoradvocate.nyc

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To: New York City Council Committee on Finance
CC: Committee on Public Housing—Chris Banks, Chair; Members Elsie Encarnación, Christopher Marte, Darlene Mealy, Chi A. Ossé, Lincoln Restler, Julie Won
Date: June 11, 2026
Subject: Before the City Expands PACT, It Should Examine the Track Record of the Contractors Receiving It

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My name is Karl Johnson. I am the founder of Elevator Advocate, and I am a tenant. I live in Longwood, in the South Bronx, in a building managed by Wavecrest Management Group. For seven years, I have watched that elevator break down—sometimes for weeks at a stretch, often in the summer heat—and I have watched elderly neighbors and residents with disabilities become stranded, unable to leave their homes or return to them, because the only elevator in the building was out. I built Elevator Advocate because I suspected my building could not be alone in this. It is not.

Elevator Advocate is a free public platform that lets any New Yorker look up their building's elevator complaint history using NYC Open Data. It tracks every building in the five boroughs with a complaint history, flagging "chronic offenders"—buildings with one or more complaints in the last 12 months and three or more in the last three years.

Across New York City, the citywide chronic offender rate for buildings with elevator complaint histories is **10.7%**. Among buildings managed by Wavecrest Management Group, that rate is **38.4%**—**3.6 times the citywide average**, across 292 buildings. Those 112 chronic buildings account for **at least 5,500 residential units**—a floor, since unit counts are missing for a portion of the portfolio. The buildings Wavecrest is failing are not empty. They are homes.

In the Bronx alone, Wavecrest manages 92 buildings with elevator complaint histories. Nearly half—**48.9%**—are chronic offenders. The census tracts where those buildings sit have a disability rate **40% above the citywide median**: 14.9% versus 10.6%. The people

most dependent on functioning elevators are disproportionately the ones living in buildings Wavecrest is not maintaining.

Among Wavecrest's 42 single-elevator buildings—buildings where a breakdown means complete loss of service, with no backup—**15 are chronic offenders (35.7%)**, nearly three times the citywide rate of 12.8%.

One building in this group, 1975 Birchall Avenue in the Bronx, has logged **43 elevator complaints in the last three years**. For seniors, disabled residents, and anyone who cannot use stairs, a single-elevator chronic offender is not an inconvenience. It is a health and safety crisis on a timer.

The Mayor's budget allocates $1.3 billion toward RAD/PACT privatization—a program that has already converted 40,000 NYCHA units to private management, with 22,000 more targeted by 2028. Wavecrest is the largest PACT contractor in Elevator Advocate's dataset—registered under multiple names in HPD's system, their combined PACT portfolio totals approximately 102 converted buildings. The city is proposing to entrust more public housing to a management company whose existing portfolio fails elevators at 3.6 times the citywide rate.

PACT conversion has not improved Wavecrest's maintenance performance. Even among their converted buildings—the ones receiving public subsidy—the chronic elevator offender rate is **27.6%**, still **2.6 times the citywide average**. PACT has not brought Wavecrest into compliance with the program's own stated goals. It has simply transferred public assets to a company that was already failing them.

Wavecrest is not alone. Of the eight PACT contractors with portfolios of five or more buildings, only one falls below the citywide average. C&C Apartment Management—the second-largest PACT contractor in Elevator Advocate's dataset—runs at **47.4%** across 57 buildings. This is not a Wavecrest problem. It is a contractor accountability problem—and the city's budget does not require contractors to demonstrate or report on maintenance outcomes as a condition of receiving public funds.

The numbers make that gap concrete. NYCHA buildings under direct management have a citywide chronic elevator offender rate of 4.9%. RAD/PACT-converted buildings run at 34.0%—**nearly 7 times higher** (Figure 1). The program's stated premise is that privatization produces better maintenance outcomes. The elevator complaint data does not support that premise.

The Committee on Finance has an obligation to ask: better maintenance outcomes by what measure, and verified how? If the answer is not independently auditable, building-by-building maintenance data, then the financial assumptions underlying this allocation deserve scrutiny before another dollar flows.

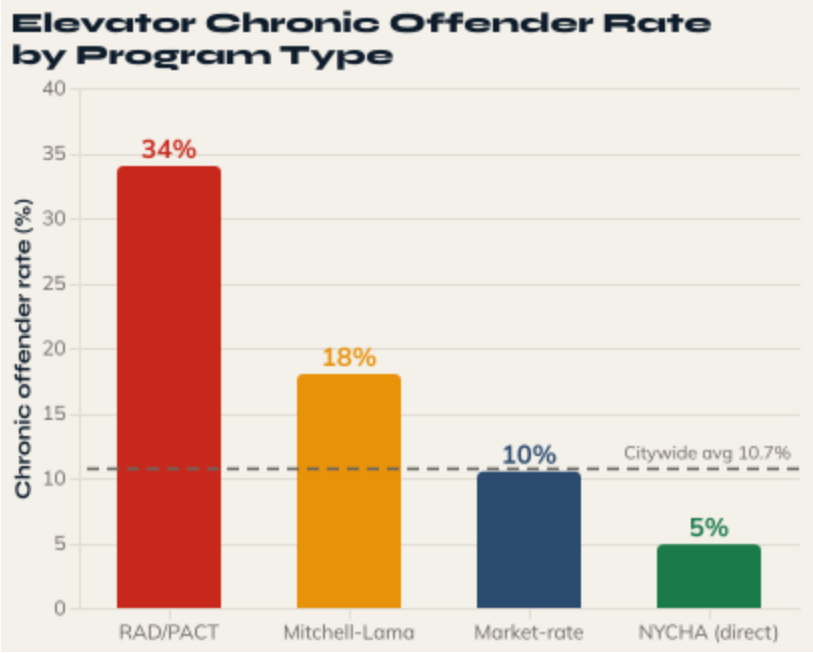


Figure 1. *Chronic elevator offender rate by program type. RAD/PACT: 34.0% — nearly 7× NYCHA direct (4.9%). Source: NYC Open Data; elevatoradvocate.nyc.*

Elevator Advocate already provides this data layer—for free, in real time, using public records. Any building in New York City can be looked up at elevatoradvocate.nyc. The chronic offender methodology is transparent and reproducible from NYC Open Data.

I urge the Committee on Finance to require that PACT contractor approvals and ongoing subsidy eligibility be conditioned on publicly accessible, building-level maintenance performance metrics—including elevator complaint rates. A contractor with Wavecrest's track record should not receive expanded public allocations without a demonstrated improvement plan, independently verified.

This is not an argument against repairing NYCHA buildings. It is an argument that the public deserves to know whether the companies being paid to repair them are actually doing so—and that the data to answer that question already exists.

The Finance Committee has the opportunity to make that accountability structural—before this budget is adopted, and before more buildings change hands.

Thank you for your consideration.

Karl Johnson
Founder, Elevator Advocate
karl@elevatoradvocate.nyc | elevatoradvocate.nyc

Written Testimony in Support of Increased Baseline Funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs

Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Finance

My name is Valkyrie Yao. I am a multidisciplinary artist, educator, producer, and the Founder and Executive Director of ELSEHERE, a New York-based international arts nexus working across performance, publishing, artist development, and cross-cultural collaboration.

I am writing in support of increasing baseline funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs by $30 million.

As someone who works both as an artist and as the founder of an emerging cultural organization, I have seen firsthand how much of New York City's cultural life depends on small organizations, independent artists, and community-based initiatives that operate with very limited resources.

When people think about New York's cultural sector, they often think about large museums, major performing arts institutions, and internationally recognized venues. These organizations are important, but they represent only one part of the city's cultural ecosystem. Much of the cultural life that makes New York distinctive is created by artists working in small studios, rehearsal spaces, classrooms, community venues, storefront galleries, independent publications, and grassroots organizations.

These artists teach, organize, produce, publish, mentor, and create public programs. They build relationships across neighborhoods and communities. They preserve cultural knowledge, create new forms of expression, and help residents connect across differences of language, background, generation, and experience.

Yet many of these artists and organizations operate under extraordinary financial pressure.

In my own work, I regularly encounter artists who are balancing multiple jobs while continuing to create and contribute to the cultural life of the city. I meet emerging artists, immigrant artists, teaching artists, and independent producers who are generating meaningful public value while navigating unstable income, rising living costs, limited access to space, and increasing production expenses.

At the same time, small and emerging organizations face many of the same operational responsibilities as larger institutions. They must build programs, manage administration, maintain public-facing platforms, support artists, develop partnerships, and serve communities. However, they often do so without access to the philanthropic networks, endowments, staffing structures, or financial reserves available to larger organizations.

For organizations at this scale, public investment can make the difference between growth and stagnation. It can determine whether artists are paid fairly, whether public programming remains accessible, whether partnerships can be sustained, and whether new cultural initiatives have an opportunity to take root.

As an immigrant artist working in New York, I also believe that public cultural funding plays an important role in supporting the city's diversity. Many of the artists and cultural workers contributing to New York's creative landscape come from international, multilingual, and cross-cultural backgrounds. Their work expands public dialogue, creates opportunities for cultural exchange, and reflects the reality of New York as a global city. Stable public support helps ensure that these voices remain part of the city's cultural future.

Arts and culture are not luxuries. They are part of the civic infrastructure that shapes how people gather, learn, imagine, and participate in public life.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the New York City Council to support a $30 million increase in baseline funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued support of New York City's cultural community.

Respectfully submitted,

Valkyrie Yao
Founder & Executive Director, ELSEHERE International Arts Nexus
Multidisciplinary Artist, Educator, and Producer
New York, NY

Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
June 2026 Executive Budget Hearing

55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041-8190

New York City Council Committee on Finance – Executive Budget Hearing

Testimony of EmblemHealth

June 10, 2026

On behalf of the thousands of New Yorkers we employ and serve, EmblemHealth would like to thank Chair Lee and the members of the Committee on Finance for providing the opportunity to share information on the programming at EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care and how we can better address the needs of our communities with funding support from the City Council.

EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care is a non-profit providing free, culturally competent health and wellbeing support at 15 sites across New York City's five boroughs. Our team provides one-on-one support and individuals come to us with any challenges they may be facing. We provide connections to community resources to address social determinants of health needs such as food, transportation, and housing, and connection to medical providers for health care services. We provide free health and wellness classes that help individuals learn healthy behaviors and make connections in the community, with topics including Zumba, art therapy, and cellphone literacy. We also have virtual programming available to ensure we can reach homebound individuals. We are located in many under resourced communities, and our staff represent and reflect the communities they serve. We provide services and support in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Haitian Creole, and 81% of our team members are bi or trilingual. In 2025, we supported community members in over 103,000 encounters at our sites. We also welcomed nearly 60,000 attendees at over 4,700 wellbeing classes and special events, including 96 food pantry and farmers market events where we reached nearly 9,700 recipients. We are seeking funding to enhance our ability to address the most pressing health and wellbeing needs of our communities, particularly around food insecurity, and loneliness and social isolation.

We are seeking $50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Older Adult Centers, Programs, and Services. This funding would enhance the support and programming we provide that is tailored to the mind and body wellbeing needs of older adults. Over 23% of individuals we serve are over the age of 65, making us uniquely positioned to address their challenges. With funding support, we would create social spaces, increase food access, and host special events to address the wellness needs of older adults, which complement our ongoing classes such as chair yoga and digital literacy. We have found that creating a safe, social space for individuals to gather is integral to combatting the loneliness and social isolation challenges that many older adults face, especially since we know that in New York City, 28% of adults over the age of 65 live alone.[i] We also know that loneliness and social isolation can increase risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, dementia, and more – and with 1 in 3 American adults reporting feeling lonely, and 1 in 4 reporting a lack of social and emotional support, it's critical that we provide comprehensive support to this community.[ii] By focusing programming on enhancing food access, social connectivity, and learning healthy behaviors, we can ensure that the basic needs of older adults are more fully met, and we create opportunities for them to thrive.

We are also seeking $50,000 in city-wide initiative funding for Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education, as well as $50,000 for Feeding our Communities funding. Food access is the primary concern of those coming through our doors, and we know that food insecurity is on the rise across all

EmblemHealth Plan, Inc., EmblemHealth Insurance Company, EmblemHealth Services Company, LLC and Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York (HIP) are EmblemHealth companies. EmblemHealth Services Company, LLC provides administrative services to the EmblemHealth companies.

five boroughs, impacting over 1.4 million NYC residents.[iii] [iv] Funding support would bolster our ability to address food insecurity, while connecting individuals to additional resources, support, and our free health and wellness classes. It's this unique approach that our trusted team members offer that ensures that individuals aren't just given a bag of food, they're met where they are and are connected to ongoing support. Specifically, funding would allow us to host lunch socials that include health education, address hunger, and create connections in the community. We would also like to bolster the number of food distributions we hold and keep more shelf-stable food items on hand, to offer immediate relief to those who come seeking connections to food resources. Recognizing that there can also be stigma related to accessing food, we would also like to offer healthy snacks to our class participants, to build trust as a food partner, and provide a snack before anyone needs to ask. Ultimately, funding support would enhance food security and wellbeing at Neighborhood Care, with the aim of preventing health complications and supporting healthier lives and futures for all community members.

We have also requested Council district level funding for each of our 15 Neighborhood Care sites. With $10,000 in local funding for individual locations, we would address wellbeing needs of the community through enhancing food access, creating social connection spaces, and offering wellbeing programing to help community members learn healthy behaviors. We are also seeking $10,000 in Support Our Older Adults funding, which would allow us to target programming to reach the large older adult population that we serve, foster supportive environments for connection, and combat loneliness and social isolation. We are also seeking $10,000 in Food Pantries funding, which would enable us to increase the number of food distributions we hold, keep more shelf-stable items on hand, and offer snacks at our health and wellness classes, building upon the trust we have fostered in the community. With local funding support, we could provide more culturally appropriate support that is responsive to the most pressing needs we see among the community members we serve.

EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care is proud to provide free resources, education, and community connection for many underserved communities. With your support we hope to expand our reach and increase our impact even further. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that everyone in our communities has access to equitable, holistic wellbeing support, education, and resources.

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[i] https://www.nyc.gov/assets/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/downloads/pdf/Older-Adults-in-New-York-City-Report.pdf
[ii] https://www.cdc.gov/social-connectedness/risk-factors/index.html
[iii] https://www.nyc.gov/assets/foodpolicy/downloads/pdf/NYC-Food-by-the-Numbers-2025.pdf
[iv] https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2023/overall/new-york/county/new-york

Testimony before the New York City Council
- Committee on Finance -

June 10th, 2026

Marcus Jackson
Director of Advocacy & Government Relations
Encore Community Services

Good morning, Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

For nearly 50 years, Encore has served older New Yorkers through home-delivered meals, congregate meals, case management, and supportive services that help thousands of older adults age with dignity and independence throughout Manhattan.

Throughout my work, one issue remains clear: older adults do not stop being hungry on weekends.

Home-delivered meals are a lifeline for many of the older adults we serve. For some, the meal delivered to their door is their most reliable source of nutrition all day. Many are living on fixed incomes and must choose between paying for food, medication, rent, or utilities.

Beyond nutrition, our meal delivery staff provide something equally important—human connection. For many homebound older adults, a meal delivery worker may be the only person they see that day. These interactions help combat social isolation and loneliness while serving as an informal wellness check for vulnerable seniors.

Yet providers are being asked to do more with less. Funding has not kept pace with rising costs for food, fuel, labor, and operations. The current model also leaves providers dependent on charitable support to help fill weekend meal gaps because City funding only covers one meal per day, five days per week.

Additional investment would allow organizations like Encore to hire more cooks, drivers, and meal delivery staff; improve aging infrastructure and kitchen equipment; expand service capacity to reach more older adults; and raise wages for Encores frontline workers to a wage of $27/hr in New York City.

The City must do more to ensure older adults have access to nutritious meals every day of the year.

Therefore, Encore respectfully urges the Council to:

1. Pass Intro. 280 and allocate $30 million to support seven-day home-delivered meals.
2. Increase funding for congregate meal providers by $60 million to address years of flat food funding and rising costs.
3. Maintain the $5 million emergency infrastructure fund to support critical repairs and improvements at aging service facilities.
4. Continue investing in the human services workforce through wage equity and sustainable funding for providers.

New York City's older adults deserve a food security system that reflects the reality that people need to eat seven days a week—not five. Let’s stop expecting our neighborhood nonprofits to bridge the gap between "brand-name" charity and the actual cost of care.



Ending NYC's HIV Epidemic is Within Our Reach - Let's Finish the Job
Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2027 Budget

New York City (NYC) and New York State (NYS) have made significant progress implementing the historic 2015 NYS Blueprint for Ending the Epidemic (NYS Blueprint) recommendations. Scientific advances in antiretroviral therapy as HIV prevention and treatment enable us to maintain optimal health for people with HIV and to stop new infections, making it possible to end HIV as an epidemic even without a cure. The NYS and NYC plans for ending the HIV epidemic are based on:

- Increasing access to HIV prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP);
- Linking and retaining people diagnosed with HIV in care to achieve and maintain viral suppression; and
- Advancing sexual health equity for all New Yorkers.

Our efforts enabled us to "bend the curve" of the NYS epidemic by the end of 2019, decreasing HIV prevalence for the first time since the epidemic began. However, new challenges and troubling trends demand a sustained and even accelerated NYC HIV response. **In 2024, 1,791 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, up 5.4% compared with 2023. This represents the fourth consecutive year in which new HIV diagnoses increased or remained relatively stable.** The number of new HIV infections estimated to have occurred in 2024 increased 17% compared with 2023. Further, stark and unacceptable disparities persist, with HIV continuing to disproportionately impact Black and Latino/a people, transgender people, and men who have sex with men (MSM). **In 2024, of all people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, 86% were Black and Latino/a and 42% lived in high- or very-high poverty neighborhoods.**

We now face new challenges posed by federal actions that threaten public health funding and infrastructure supporting our HIV response. Signed into law last July, H.R.1 introduced significant changes to Medicaid and other safety net programs, including the largest Medicaid funding cut in history and restrictions on Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility and coverage. These changes are of particular concern for the HIV community, since Medicaid is the largest source of insurance coverage for people with HIV in the U.S., covering an estimated 40% of adults under the age of 65 who have HIV.

Further, at the beginning of April, President Trump released his administration's FY 2027 budget request, which – like his administration's FY 2026 budget request – proposes fully eliminating over $755 million in CDC funding for HIV prevention and $529 million in funding for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS program, moving the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program from HRSA to a newly proposed Administration for a Healthy America (AHA), and combining into block grants reduced funding for STIs, tuberculosis, and viral hepatitis.

Our ending the epidemic efforts are further threatened by the federal government's retreat from health equity goals, and by the unprecedented and ongoing federal attacks on communities disparately impacted by HIV, including Black and Latino/a people, new immigrants, people experiencing

homelessness, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) people.

As we face the ongoing fight to protect the federal funding and infrastructure necessary to end the HIV epidemic, as well as the basic human rights of vulnerable communities, City investment is more critical than ever. The end of NYC's HIV epidemic is within our reach. Now is the time for renewed efforts and innovative approaches if we are to end our HIV epidemic for all NYC communities and populations and advance health equity.

URGENT PRIORITIES:

The End AIDS NY Community Coalition is a group of over 90 health care centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations across NYC and NYS that are fully committed to realizing the goals of our historic NYS Blueprint for all New Yorkers. While each investment and policy recommendation set forth below is necessary to advance full realization of our ending the HIV epidemic goals, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition highlights four critically important immediate priorities required to address the stark and persistent HIV health inequities that undermine our NYC HIV response, leaving individuals and communities behind.

Urgent End AIDS NY Community Coalition Priorities		Funds Required
1. Sustain and Increase Funding for the NYC Council's HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care Initiative	In the City's FY 2026 adopted budget, the NYC Council combined its longstanding Ending the Epidemic initiative and HIV/AIDS Faith Community Based initiative to create a new HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative. The HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative is the primary driver of our NYC HIV response, supporting community-based, culturally competent HIV testing, treatment, and prevention services that are key to continued progress toward our ending the epidemic goals. The initiative supports innovative approaches to improve health care coordination and data-to-care strategies, programming and services designed to meet the unique needs of communities most affected by HIV, and efforts to expand access to comprehensive HIV prevention. This funding provides support for the NYC Department of Health's flagship PlaySure Network HIV and sexual health program, as well as population-specific programs such as the upcoming SHARP sexual health and aging clinical training and EmpowHER women's HIV prevention and sexual health programs. The initiative also supports a network of dozens of faith-based organizations to deliver HIV outreach services to their congregations, with the goals of promoting HIV, STI, and hepatitis C testing, treatment, and prevention services; mobilizing communities; and reducing stigma and discrimination. In FY 2026, the HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative was level funded at the FY 2025 level of $11,339,653. In light of the continued uncertainty in federal support for the HIV response, the troubling increase in new HIV diagnoses and estimated new HIV infections, and ongoing inequities in HIV's impact on Black, Latino/a, and low-income New Yorkers, **the End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently asks the NYC Council to increase FY 2027 funding for the HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative to at least $15M annually.** We also respectfully request that the NYC Council work with the Administration on plans to baseline this funding, so that providers and their clients have the certainty of ongoing support for these critical services.	$15M annually baselined

2. Sustain and Increase Funding for the NYC Sexual Health Clinics to Enhance Services	The NYC Sexual Health Clinics are a core component of the City's ending the HIV epidemic efforts, providing low- to no-cost services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. People 12 years and older can receive services at any clinic, regardless of immigration status. Parental consent is not necessary. In 2024, the clinics fielded nearly 83,600 visits from over 47,000 unique patients, with visits still down 17% compared with 2019 before clinic closures due to COVID-19. It is critical to reopen in FY 2027 at least one of the two clinics that remain closed to ensure New Yorkers have access to the HIV and STI testing, treatment, and prevention services they need, in light of persistent racial and ethnic disparities in STIs, low PrEP uptake among Black and Latino/a NYers compared to White NYers, and increased new HIV diagnoses after years of decline. While we expect clinic visits to increase with the reopening of a clinic and better promotion of services, volume is unlikely to return to pre-COVID-19 levels, underscoring the need to increase funding for HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care to support the City's broader HIV and sexual health infrastructure. In addition, all NYC 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. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently requests $10M in FY 2027 to fund the NYC Sexual Health Clinics to:** • Reopen at least one of the two clinics currently closed; • Expand clinics' hours of operation and the array of available services, including ensuring more clinics offer PrEP continuity of care, and medication abortion. Launch new clinic services, including hepatitis C treatment, syringe service programs (SSPs), and gender-affirming care; • Establish youth-focused and women-focused practices at one or more clinics; • Make the minimal investment necessary to allow additional clinics to utilize COVID-19 Express testing equipment for express STI testing services; • Increase awareness of clinic services, including expanded and new services, through social marketing campaigns and community outreach; and • Support continued necessary facility and infrastructure renovations at clinic sites.	$10M annually baselined

3. Sustain and Increase Funding for the NYC Council's Peer Specialists Initiative to Include Dedicated Resources for HIV Peer Specialists	The End AIDS NY Community Coalition applauds the NYC Council for its vision and leadership in establishing a new $4.5M Peer Specialists Initiative in the FY 2026 adopted budget to increase the number of peer specialists in the mental health workforce to support services for a range of vulnerable communities. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition urges the NYC Council to expand the Peer Specialist Initiative to include funding for additional peer specialists to support HIV prevention and care. Ensuring HIV peer specialists are part of our efforts to end the epidemic is a low-cost, high-impact evidence-based strategy to increase health care access and retention. Well-trained and deeply committed HIV peer specialists support the safety net by amplifying the reach and impact of under-resourced organizations. The specialized training and experience received by HIV peer specialists also provide life-changing economic mobility opportunities for people living with or at risk for HIV. HIV peer specialists have a potent "superpower" in that they reflect and represent the communities in which they work—including people taking PrEP, women with HIV, older people with HIV, LGBTQ+ and TGNCNB people, and people with substance use disorder. Having faced similar challenges and lived experiences with the people they serve, peers bring valuable knowledge, insights, and cultural and linguistic competencies to their work. These qualities make HIV peer specialists an exceptionally effective force in advancing our ending the HIV epidemic priorities. Investing in HIV peer specialists is more essential than ever as our communities face looming mandatory community engagement requirements for Medicaid eligibility and other unprecedented barriers in accessing health care, employment, benefits, HIV treatment and prevention services, and other supportive services proven to reduce persistent health disparities. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently asks the NYC Council to broaden the scope of the Peer Specialist Initiative and add $1.2M in funding for the initiative in the FY 2027 budget to expand the number of HIV peer specialists,** while sustaining level funding at $4.5M in the FY 2027 budget in Peer Specialists Initiative support for mental health peer specialists.	$1.2M annually For $5.7M in total annual funding

4. Invest to Advance PrEP Equity	Despite the proven efficacy of PrEP to protect against HIV infection, uptake remains alarmingly low among Black and Latino/a people, women, and people over 50—populations disproportionately impacted by HIV. In 2024, Black and Latino/a people made up 85% of people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, but among 29,408 people with known race and ethnicity who filled a PrEP prescription in 2024, only 36% were Black or Latino/a. Women accounted for 24% of new HIV diagnoses but they were only 8% of those who filled a PrEP prescription. New York City must act boldly to eliminate these disparities by investing in community-rooted outreach and scaling access to the latest prevention tools, including a groundbreaking new option, lenacapavir. Approved by the FDA in June 2025, this ultra-long-acting injectable PrEP requires just two doses per year and has shown 96–100% efficacy in preventing HIV infection in clinical trials. This new PrEP option will make effective HIV prevention more accessible to communities vulnerable to HIV infection. It holds transformative potential for people facing barriers to traditional PrEP access. To fully realize the promise of all PrEP modalities, **the End AIDS NY Community Coalition urges the NYC Council to invest $4 million in additional funding to the NYC Health Department to support community-based organizations to implement novel and effective PrEP education, navigation and services tailored to communities that have not seen PrEP uptake commensurate with HIV risk.**	$4M annually baselined

Additional End AIDS NY Community Coalition Priorities		Funds Required
Enhance the NYC Council's Trans Equity Programs Fund	The Trans Equity Programs fund is a lifeline for transgender and gender-expansive New Yorkers, but the FY 2026 funding at $6.45M fell short of meeting the growing need, especially for trans-led, BIPOC-led organizations doing front-line, community-rooted work. The Trans Equity Programs fund supports a range of services to help empower TGNCNB communities, including education programs, workforce development, health care navigation, legal guidance, community workshops, and mental health programs, among other services. Given the unprecedented attacks on TGNCNB people and their rights nationwide, and this federal administration's persistent actions to erase transgender identities, eliminate medically necessary health care for TGNBNC people, and threaten their human and civil rights, we expect the needs of TGNCNB service providers in NYC to continue to increase dramatically in FY 2027. It is particularly important to increase funding for trans-led programs to empower them to sustain and grow this work. Additional funding is also needed to provide technical assistance to strengthen capacity and sustainability, ensure that culturally competent, affirming services reach those most impacted, and to stabilize community-based organizations delivering critical care, housing, and support. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls on the NYC Council to increase Trans Equity Programs funding to $10M, baseline the funding going forward to ensure sustained investment, and prioritize trans-led organizations for funding.**	$10M annually baselined
Sustain the NYC Council's Opioid Prevention and Treatment initiative	The NYC Council's Opioid Prevention and Treatment initiative, funded at $3.075M in the FY 2026 adopted budget, supports community-based organizations that serve New Yorkers affected by the opioid epidemic, including family members of people who use drugs, by conducting localized prevention and treatment efforts around opioid use disorder. This funding is critical to ensure the ongoing delivery of a range of essential services that currently support program participants. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that the NYC Council sustain level funding of $3.075M in the FY 2027 budget for the Opioid Prevention and Treatment initiative.**	$3.075M annually baselined

Wage Equity for Human Services Workers	Human services workers, funded primarily through government contracts, provide essential services but receive poverty-level wages. Despite being highly educated and skilled, the human services workforce, made up predominantly of women of color, receive wages that are among the lowest of any industry in the City's economy, and far less than comparable workers in the public sector. Fringe benefits for human services workers also lag far behind their public sector counterparts. This leaves many human services workers, who provide vital services to the City's most vulnerable residents, financially insecure. Low wages in City contracts also result in high turnover, and place non-profit providers at a serious disadvantage in a competitive job market. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition joins the #JustPay Campaign to urge the city to invest in the human services workforce so that New Yorkers receive consistently high quality and effective social services. **Specifically, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls on the City to continue to fund the 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers from 2026-2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA deal commitment, and to Pass Wage Equity Legislation (Int 0452-2026), which would align nonprofit and government human services job titles, and through that, raise salaries for nonprofit human services workers.**	TBD
Support Human Services Agencies with Adequate Indirect Funding	Non-profit human service organizations that have been on the front lines of the HIV, viral hepatitis, COVID-19, and mpox responses as NYC vendors face ongoing and new challenges as the result of years of severe underinvestment in essential infrastructure needs. While the End AIDS NY Community Coalition welcomed the adoption by the City several years ago of a contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate after years of inadequate funding, to date total contract amounts have still not been adjusted to reflect the additional infrastructure funding, and social service agencies employing their approved indirect rate have been required to cut direct services by an amount equal to the additional indirect costs covered. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the NYC Council to support the funding required to amend each existing NYC human services contract as soon as practicable to increase the total contract amount to reflect the contracting agency's	$2M annually baselined

	approved federal indirect rate "below the line" without impacting contract funding for direct services. **For HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative contracts alone, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls for approximately $2M in additional indirect funding to be added to existing contracts to afford providers their Federally approved indirect rates.**	
Fund Non-Profit Legal Services Organizations to Address Source of Income Discrimination	To maximize the effectiveness of existing NYC voucher programs, including NYC HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) rental assistance and CityFHEPs vouchers, requires more consistent and effective legal action to enforce NYC Human Rights Law prohibition on source of income discrimination. It is critical to leverage the experience of non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address the continued illegal discrimination by brokers and landlords who refuse to accept government-funded rental vouchers. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $4.4M in FY 2027 funding to support contracts with non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address source of income discrimination.**	$4.4M annually baselined
Housing Assistance as HIV Prevention	Evidence shows that lack of safe stable housing significantly increases vulnerability to HIV acquisition among populations already overrepresented among new HIV infections, including people of trans experience and Black and Latino MSM. There is an urgent need for housing assistance as HIV prevention for highly vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness, to enable them to benefit from comprehensive HIV prevention, including PrEP. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $10M in FY 2027 funding to support housing assistance as HIV prevention for highly vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness.**	$10M, annually baselined

Support for Routine Testing to Address Congenital Syphilis	There were 37 reported cases of congenital syphilis in 2024 in NYC, representing a 5.7% increase compared with 2023. Reported cases were relatively low prior to 2018 but increased by 117.6% from 2019 to 2024. These data underscore the need for new investment to support implementation of recommendations in the New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework, including improving access to syphilis testing; delivering congenital syphilis education for patients, their partners, and the public; and ensuring provider, emergency department, and health care system compliance with the third trimester syphilis screening mandate. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $200K in FY 2027 funding to the NYC Health Department to support implementation of New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework recommendations.**	$200K
Health Services for Un/Underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers	Uninsured or underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers are in need of access to affirming and culturally competent comprehensive health services, including primary, behavioral, sexual, and reproductive health services. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $980K be allocated to the NYC Health Department to support LGBTQ-affirming and culturally competent comprehensive health services for un/underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers.**	$980,000 annually baselined
Harm Reduction as HIV Prevention	Harm reduction services are a highly effective, evidence-based HIV prevention intervention. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls for expansion of the number of 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, STI testing and prevention education, and onsite supportive services, including behavioral and mental health services, drop-in services, food and nutrition services, and hygiene services. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $9M in FY 2027 funding to expand the availability of harm reduction services in NYC.**	$9M annually baselined

Free HIV Home Tests for New Yorkers	TakeMeHome is a partnership between Building Healthy Online Communities, NASTAD, and Emory University enabling local and state health departments to offer free in-home sexual health tests to community members. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $250,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to support a partnership with TakeMeHome to expand the NYC Health Department's Online Home Test Giveaway (OHTG) and ensure that free HIV home tests are available to order online for delivery to locations in any of NYC's ZIP codes.**	$250,000 annually baselined
STI and Sexual Health Services for Uninsured New Yorkers	The NYC Health Department funds agencies to provide to uninsured New Yorkers routine, quality sexual health care, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis screening, diagnostic testing, and treatment, and hepatitis A and B, HPV, and mpox vaccines. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $500,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to ensure the sustainability of this program.**	$500,000 annually baselined
Free Safer Sex Products for New Yorkers	The NYC Health Department's NYC Condom Availability Program (NYCAP) distributes safer sex products— including male condoms, internal condoms, and lubricant packets— across NYC, including at traditional sites (e.g., hospitals, clinics, community-based organizations) and nontraditional sites (e.g., barber shops, beauty salons, nail salons, bars, clubs, liquor stores, churches, schools). NYCAP also fulfills orders for safer sex products placed via the Safer Sex Portal. The NYC Health Department funds agencies to recruit and maintain networks of nontraditional sites that actively distribute safer sex products. Funded agencies conduct extensive targeted outreach (e.g., drop-in groups, street and non-traditional outreach, social media outreach) to ensure products are reaching priority populations. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $200,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to ensure an adequate supply of safer sex products and avoid interruptions in product distribution.**	$200,000 annually baselined

Mobile Sexual Health Clinic for Sex Workers	Through this new program, the NYC Health Department would fund an agency to operate a mobile unit designed to serve sex workers and patrons of commercial sex venues and nightlife spaces across NYC. Located and scheduled to meet the needs of these communities, the mobile clinic would provide HIV and STI testing and provide or provide referral to other sexual health services, including HIV prevention (e.g., emergency PEP starter packs), STI prevention (doxy PEP, mpox vaccination), and linkage to HIV and STI treatment. The mobile clinic would also provide safer sex products, sexual health education, and health promotional materials tailored to the needs of these communities. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $275,000 (in fiscal year 1 only, in CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to cover the cost of the mobile unit to serve as the mobile clinic for the duration of the program.** **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $684,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to cover ongoing staffing and operational costs of the program,** including $600,000 for staff lines (e.g., medical providers, outreach specialists, data staff); $55,500 for commercial vehicle liability insurance, malpractice insurance, and general liability insurance; $12,000, $10,000, and $4,500, for mobile unit parking, maintenance, and gas, respectively; and $2,000 for NYS Certificate of Need and other licensure costs. This funding would also cover minimal NYC Health Department administrative and fringe costs.	$275,000 FY26 one-time funding $684,000 annually baselined

equity advocates

Testimony Submitted by
Mikaela Perry, Advocacy Manager, Equity Advocates
Before the New York City Council
FY27 Executive Budget Hearing:
Committee on Economic Development

June 4, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Hudson and members of the General Welfare Committee:

My name is Mikaela Perry, and I am the Advocacy Manager at Equity Advocates, a nonprofit organization that builds the capacity of food justice leaders from across New York State to advocate collectively to dismantle food inequity through policy and systems change. We accomplish this through policy development, advocacy education and training, and coalition leadership. Equity Advocates also proudly convenes the NYC Food Policy Alliance, a network of 60+ food system stakeholders that advocate for public policies to ensure equitable access to a healthy, sustainable food system.

Last year's passage of the federal H.R. 1 bill unleashed the largest cuts to food assistance in our nation's history, leaving New York City to manage a food affordability crisis. Under H.R. 1, roughly 180,000 New York City households are projected to lose their SNAP benefits, half of whose members are children and senior citizens. Estimates suggest that 70,000 residents in our city will be pushed below the poverty line every single year starting in 2028. As the federal government retreats, the City must step forward..

We urge the Administration and City Council's Committee on Economic Development to enact a budget that invests in access to healthy, affordable food, strengthens urban agriculture and supports the next generation of farmers, and fosters long-term resilience and economic opportunity in the City's food system. Specifically, we respectfully request your support for the inclusion of the following recommendations in the FY27 City Budget:

1. **Increase funding for Health Bucks to $1 Million, Maintain $3.1 Million in Funding for Get the Good Stuff, and Increase Funding for Groceries to Go to $14 Million** to enhance reach and impact.

   Health Bucks, New York City's longstanding farmers market SNAP incentive program, has been baselined at $500,000 for several years, which is no longer sufficient to meet growing demand. The current $500,000 in baselined funding for Health Bucks is divided between supporting SNAP incentives at farmers markets and providing free Health Bucks to community and faith-based organizations (CBOs) for distribution through their nutrition and health programs. In 2024, the NYC Department of Health and Mental

Hygiene (DOHMH) received 600 applications from CBOs but was unable to fully fund all requests, leaving organizations underfunded or without support entirely.

By distributing Health Bucks through CBOs that integrate them into nutrition and health programming, the program reinforces nutrition education efforts, ensuring that participants have both the knowledge and the financial resources to choose locally grown and seasonal fruits and vegetables. This incentive structure strengthens the impact of nutrition education, increasing the likelihood of sustained behavior change. Importantly, Community Health Bucks are not tied to SNAP participation, making them a vital resource for individuals ineligible for public benefits, particularly in light of federal cuts to SNAP and barriers to immigrant families' access to public assistance.

Additionally, by increasing funding for Health Bucks, local farmers and producers selling at farmers markets will see increased sales, bolstering our local economy. Over 75% of farmers in New York State are small-scale, and financially bolstering this program provides an increased opportunity to support small-scale businesses, especially women- and BIPOC-owned farms.

Get the Good Stuff, which provides SNAP users with matching dollars to purchase fresh produce at participating grocery stores, should also be funded at $3.1 million and expanded to include more stores and communities. The current $10 per day match cap for SNAP incentives should be increased to further support families in purchasing sufficient ingredients for their families. As food prices have risen substantially, $20 is not adequate to purchase fruits and vegetables to last several days, particularly for larger households. By increasing investment in these programs, the City can make fresh, healthy food more accessible to low-income communities while maximizing federal funding opportunities.

Finally, we urge the council to fund **Groceries to Go** at $14 Million to expand the program's reach and extend the current 18-month participation limit. Groceries to Go serves a uniquely vulnerable population: NYC Care members who are managing chronic conditions like hypertension or diabetes. By providing monthly credits of up to $270 that cover not just food, but also delivery fees and tips, this program is a lifeline for homebound New Yorkers and those with limited food accessibility options who cannot physically shop in person.

According to recent program evaluation funded by the NY Health Foundation, the program's success is undeniable, with redemption rates reaching as high as 99.9% and documented improvements in participants' diet and health. The infrastructure—including a highly efficient, multi-lingual call center and a customized data system—is already in place and ready to scale. What is missing is the city's investment. Increasing funding will ensure that the City can move beyond the current enrollment of 4,000 participants and provide long-term, stable food security to those who fall through every other safety net.

Together, these three programs provide an incredible opportunity for the city to increase food security for its residents, despite cuts at the federal level. We urge the council to include funding for these programs in the FY27 Executive budget.

2. **Increase baseline funding to $100 million for Community Food Connection (CFC)** to meet the growing demand for food assistance across NYC. We applaud the City Council for increasing this critical investment to $74.5 Million in its Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget Response. Due to an 83% rise in emergency food visits from 2019 to 2024, NYC's emergency food system is under unprecedented strain. An investment of $100 million in CFC is essential to meet the growing demand for food, address increasing food prices and cuts to SNAP, and provide critical support for vulnerable communities facing worsening affordability and food insecurity crises.

   According to the 2023 New York City True Cost of Living Report, published by United Way of New York City, 50% of working age New Yorkers are struggling to cover their basic needs. Families struggling to make ends meet live in every NYC neighborhood but across family composition, work status, and education, the report finds that people of color are disproportionately likely to lack adequate income. Further, 80% of households below the True Cost of Living had at least one working adult and the presence of children in the household almost doubles the likelihood that a household will have inadequate income.

   Federal Cuts to hunger programs make an already dire situation even worse. Now is the time to meet current need and prepare for the increased demand for emergency food that will likely occur due to federal actions that weaken SNAP, freeze funding for pantries and farmers, and raise food prices. Food pantries are the last line of defense against hunger for so many of our neighbors, yet these essential services are being asked to do more with less.

   A substantial investment in funding for the CFC would accommodate the increased costs of adding fresh food into the program, rising cost of produce, and continued need in New York City. This increase will also help to address the inefficiencies found in using third-party vendors particularly in the procurement of kosher and halal items. Kosher- and halal-observant New Yorkers make up 21% of enrollees in GetFoodNYC. It is critical the City's food assistance programs have sufficient kosher and/or halal certified product available and allocate funding to agencies that can effectively store and distribute that food in a culturally competent way. Finally, we urge HRA to engage in an outreach and education campaign to ensure smaller, community-based providers are able to participate in the program, and are adequately supported to continue serving their communities.

3. **Allocate $100 Million in Capital Funds and Commit to Sustained Operating Investment for city-owned supermarkets.** This represents one of the most ambitious

and potentially transformative affordability interventions currently under consideration in New York City. We commend the Council and Administration for engaging seriously with a public model that has the potential to reshape food access, reduce household expenses at scale, and establish a new national benchmark for food affordability policy.

As discussions move from concept toward implementation in the FY27 City Budget, the NYC Food Policy Alliance urges the City to integrate several critical considerations necessary to make this initiative a success.

While the $70 million included in the Preliminary Budget is an impressive baseline to initiate this project, achieving real affordability requires a model that operates at a sufficient scale. We respectfully request the inclusion of **$100 million in capital funds** in the FY27 City Budget to support this initiative. If the City's goal is to create stores that meaningfully lower grocery bills, operational funding is foundational.

To achieve this, the City should utilize a military commissary-style model, where public subsidy is used to offset operating costs in order to pass savings directly to consumers. Without this support, these stores risk becoming conventional retailers operating within the same razor-thin margins that already constrain the private grocery sector. Current projections suggest that approximately $20 million per store in annual operational subsidy is necessary to ensure sustained affordability, quality jobs, and a dignified grocery experience. If implemented correctly, this will function as one of the most direct and visible forms of cost-of-living relief available to working families.

Meaningful affordability must also extend across the entire supermarket, not simply within a narrowly defined "core basket" of discounted goods. New Yorkers do not shop exclusively from a limited basket of essentials; families purchase culturally relevant foods, fresh produce, and everyday necessities. A model that only subsidizes a small subset of products risks creating a two-tiered shopping experience. For these stores to become genuine community assets, consumers need to experience broad, noticeable savings throughout the entire store.

As the City develops its operator selection process, evaluation criteria must extend beyond financial capacity alone to include demonstrated commitments to equity and workforce standards. We urge the City to remain open to values-aligned, mission-driven operating entities—such as nonprofit partners and worker cooperatives—whose structures align with public goals around affordability and long-term neighborhood stability.

Additionally, there is a critical need to ensure there are clear pathways to source food from local and regional farmers and producers. Offices such as the Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture have existing relationships with urban farmers within the five boroughs and farmers throughout the regional foodshed. This office is uniquely primed to ensure

that sourcing aligns with public values, specifically prioritizing BIPOC, Women-owned, and small-scale producers.

By intentionally connecting these stores to our regional foodshed, city-owned supermarkets can become a powerful catalyst that simultaneously addresses food security, climate justice, and local economic development.

The NYC Food Policy Alliance also supports the following in the FY27 City Budget:

STRENGTHEN FOOD SECURITY

- **Combat older adult hunger by investing $60 million in congregate meals at Older Adult Centers**, to account for steep increases in inflation over the last several years. In addition, ensure NYC Aging has at least $27 Million in funding to provide homebound older adults with home-delivered meals 365 days per year.
- **Continue to fund the following Council Discretionary Initiatives:**
    - $8.47M for the Food Pantry Initiative
    - $2.134M for the Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education Initiative
    - $1.4M for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative

INVEST IN URBAN AGRICULTURE

- **Allocate at least $250,000 to fund the Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)** to ensure strong food systems, climate justice, and economic justice within the administration. MOUA has proven its impact by leading programs such as **Reimagining Farm to School in NYC** and **Values Aligned Purchasing.** These programs align with the administration's priorities of greening public schools, providing access to fresh local foods for students, increasing agricultural and climate education for youth, and supporting local farmers in NYC's foodshed. This office has seen tremendous success with a small staff, and an increased investment will only multiply their impact. Further, we urge the incoming Administration to move forward with appointing an Urban Agriculture Advisory Board, as required under Local Law 123, to strengthen accountability and space for community voice.
- **Maintain $2.6 Million in funding for GreenThumb and $6.2 Million for NYC Community Composting programs** to provide essential resources for community gardeners.

BUILD LOCAL FOOD ECONOMIES

- **Create a $5 million Food Justice Fund** for community-led projects designed to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities. In *Food Forward NYC*, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy calls for the establishment of a Food Justice Fund. We urge the City to invest in this program at $5 Million and offer grants for both planning and implementation projects serving high need areas identified by Racial Equity Task Force. Funding would be allocated directly to community food organizations historically serving NYC residents with a demonstrated history of meeting the cultural

and food needs of their communities. As this field of work requires long term investments, the fund should prioritize 2 year grant cycles and allow for flexibility on spending deadlines upon receiving grants. We also ask that the City explore a private-public partnership and leverage its convening power to secure matching investment from local philanthropic foundations.

- **Increase Council Discretionary funding** to $4.9 Million for the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative to allow for a specific focus on those operating in the food sector and maintain $1.5 Million for the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to working with the City Council to achieve these goals in the upcoming budget.

Mikaela Perry
Equity Advocates
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Saskia Traill
President & CEO, ExpandED Schools

Testimony before the NYC Council Committee on Children & Youth and Finance
NYC Council FY27 Executive Budget Hearings – June 10, 2026

My name is Saskia Traill, and I am the President/CEO of ExpandED Schools. Thank you to Speaker Menin, Chair Stevens, Chair Lee, and the Committee on Finance, as well as the Committee on Children and Youth, for the opportunity to testify here today. It is a pleasure to work collaboratively with all of you to create effective strategies to increase access, equity, and quality in expanded learning opportunities for young people across New York City. ExpandED Schools is dedicated to ensuring that all young people in New York City have access to enriching programs that affirm their identities, teach them valuable skills, and spark new possibilities in and out of the school day.

We are a youth-serving intermediary that supports direct service community-based organizations (CBO's) across the five boroughs to cultivate positive relationships with school leaders and deliver high-quality programs to students and families. For the past 28 years, ExpandED has worked to build, refine, and sustain New York City's foundational system of school-community partnership for afterschool programming. We know that afterschool is a place where our city's youth and families turn for fundamental supports beyond child care: a space for youth to deepen their skills and interests through extra learning time, connect to their peers and caring adults, and explore new opportunities and innovative programming none of which could be possible without the foundation of a strong afterschool system.

For more than 20 years, we have invested City Council funds in CBOs to augment direct city contracts and provide necessary afterschool services throughout the five boroughs. We also provide robust professional development to afterschool staff, support quality afterschool by visiting programs and providing regular support to afterschool site directors, and convene site directors to learn from one another's practice.

In FY25, a citywide discretionary award from the City Council enabled ExpandED to fund programs in 39 Council Districts. These funds directly supported approximately 5,851 students in 73 afterschool programs and 731 educators in 32 professional development events with staff from 96 CBOs. Last year, we served more than 88 community partners and 290 schools throughout all five boroughs. And since our inception, we have served more than 1.6 million public school students. The vast majority of our students identify as young people of color (85%), and most live in low-income communities (75%).

I would like to thank the Council, this Committee, Chair Stevens, and the Department of Youth and Community Development for the $4M investment for afterschool enrichment in last year's budget process.

This year is a pivotal one for the City's afterschool infrastructure with the new contracts through the City's COMPASS program. After many years of extending contracts, these

contracts will breathe new life into our vital system and bring in new community-based providers to offer dynamic, exciting programming to our children throughout the city.

Getting so many new partners up and running smoothly will not be easy, and we are in an all-hands-on-deck moment as a field. ExpandED is eager to support this growing ecosystem. We fully support additional capacity-building efforts and coordination from DYCD alongside other public and privately funded efforts. We stand ready to support the Council, DYCD, and the hundreds of providers offering afterschool activities for our young people.

We are grateful and proud of what we have been able to do in partnership with the council through our **$4.0M Afterschool Enrichment Citywide Initiative Award in FY26.** Programs use subgrants to fill gaps and enable them to fortify their staffing, serve students, or boost program quality. As a result of these funds, the Council is able to meet family and community needs that remain urgent and unmet. To scale our work and to meet this pivotal moment, we request additional funding.

Our FY27 request of $6.0M would enable ExpandED to support community organizations across the five boroughs in offering afterschool slots for K-12 and to improve quality. Additional Afterschool Enrichment Initiative funds would enable us to support more young people, more programs, and more districts during this period of extraordinary need for afterschool and positive youth development throughout New York City. It would also give us greater capacity to serve communities where there are continued gaps. The buzz about the expansion and new contracts has increased the number of queries about how to receive publicly funded afterschool services. We welcome a partnership with each Council Member to identify school partners in need of our support because you know your constituency and districts best.

Thank you again to Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Stevens, and the rest of your respective committees for holding this hearing and for all the work that you do for children and families across the City. I look forward to continuing to be a partner in services to young people and the community, particularly in extended learning time enrichment programming and in cultivating the safe, validating spaces they deserve.

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony of Britny McKenzie, Policy Director
Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC)
June 10, 2026

My name is Britny McKenzie, and I am the Policy Director at the Fair Housing Justice Center. I would like to thank Chair Lee and the Council Members for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of increased funding for the New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR). Specifically, we:

- Call on City Council to increase the CCHR budget by $10 million to bring the agency's budget to $25 million; this increase can meaningfully improve the lives of countless New Yorkers in the areas of employment, public accommodations and housing, by addressing years of under-funding that have left CCHR without the ability to meaningfully enforce fair housing laws.

- Affirm that CCHR has a critical role in enforcing NYC's Fair Housing Laws to eliminate source of income and disability discrimination and implement the Fair Chance in Housing Law.

About the FHJC

The FHJC is a non-profit civil rights organization based in Queens, NY. The FHJC service area covers over 8 million people across the five boroughs of New York City. Our mission is to eliminate housing discrimination, promote policies that foster open, accessible, and inclusive communities, and strengthen the enforcement of fair housing laws. The FHJC primarily serves low-income individuals and communities that have experienced historic and continuing patterns of segregation, discrimination, and exclusion in housing. The FHJC's services are provided to the public free of charge and without regard to household income. Its investigations have led to over 170 successful legal challenges to discriminatory housing policies and practices by private housing providers and government agencies to bring them into compliance with fair housing laws. FHJC's work has led to a monetary recovery of over $55 million and has opened over 81,000 housing units to people that were previously excluded.

About the NYC Human Rights Law Working Group

FHJC is a member of the Human Rights Law Working Group, a coalition of over 20 New York City nonprofits, grassroots organizations, think tanks, and legal services

providers. The breadth of our coalition illustrates the critical work of CCHR in enforcing the City's comprehensive Human Rights Law. The New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), administered by CCHR, prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations, and protects against discriminatory lending practices, retaliation, discriminatory harassment, and bias-based profiling by law enforcement. The NYCHRL is one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the country and its list of protected classes goes beyond those recognized by the federal and New York State governments, including sexual orientation, height, weight and status as a veteran or active military service member.[1]

We are at a critical time for civil rights in New York as executive actions on the federal level have threatened and will continue to threaten civil and human rights protections and enforcement. The Working Group asks the City to fund the Commission at $25 million, a level commensurate with its heightened importance and to compensate for years of under-funding. The agency's budget grew every fiscal year under the previous Adams administration and this is the first agency budget decrease in four years. CCHR's current budget, less than $15 million, is less than 0.1% of the City's budget. With an increased budget, the Working Group recommends the following actions:

1. Resolve eligible cases through early intervention within two weeks.
2. Appoint a Deputy Commissioner of Adjudications with appropriate staff.
3. Establish an Affirmative Litigation Team.

In addition to increasing CCHR's budget, the agency needs the ability to spend their money immediately and roll over unspent money from year-to-year. To fulfill their mission, CCHR requires adequate staffing, which is hampered by the Office of Management and Budget's practice of allotment, the two-for-one hiring policy where the agency is only allowed to hire for half the number of people who left in the last two months. Currently, CCHR has 32 vacancies and needs the ability to staff these positions promptly.

CCHR Has a Critical Role in Enforcing NYC's Fair Housing Laws

CCHR serves a civil law-enforcement role like that of the district attorney's office in criminal matters, with both prosecutorial and punitive responsibilities. CCHR can investigate complaints, resolve cases, and refer matters to the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH). It may also assess fines, secure monetary damages, negotiate remedies such as rehiring, policy changes, training, and accessibility modifications, and mediate reasonable accommodation requests.

Unfortunately, CCHR currently operates with limited funding, which constrains its staffing and capacity and negatively affects NYC residents. Effective fair housing enforcement should foster accessible, inclusive communities, free of discrimination. While CCHR has a baseline infrastructure to support its mission, its impact depends on

[1] The New York City Human Rights Law.

adequate resources. We have seen CCHR do commendable work, and its settlements have led to meaningful resolutions for victims of housing discrimination. For example, in 2024, CCHR reached a landmark $1 million settlement with Parkchester Preservation Management and held the company responsible for an unjustified minimum income requirement that prevented voucher holders from accessing critical affordable housing opportunities.[2] As a result of CCHR's work and the City's commitment to protecting the housing rights of New Yorkers, the settlement secured 850 apartment units to be set aside for housing voucher holders, the most ever secured in a CCHR settlement.

We know from this experience that CCHR holds great promise to enforce fair housing laws; however, they are impeded by a lack of funding and staffing which has led to alarming delays. An audit by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli in December 2025 found that CCHR cases experience substantial waiting periods and New Yorkers experiencing housing discrimination are not receiving timely action or prompt resolution.[3] Auditors found significant delays in case resolution, intake appointments, and filing complaints; the average time frame to resolve a discrimination case took nearly three years. The FHJC's intake department has heard from NYC residents who have been turned away after attempting to work with the agency on numerous occasions due to lack of efficiency. Only by bolstering funding and staff capacity can CCHR develop policies and implement the necessary procedures to process housing discrimination complaints and help victims in a timely manner.

CCHR Needs Sufficient Funding to Eliminate Source of Income (SOI) discrimination

The law has prohibited SOI discrimination since 2008; but despite this, landlords continue to refuse to rent to voucher holders. SOI discrimination is CCHR's most common form of complaint with over 600 claims filed in the last fiscal year.[4] Without the staffing needed to process claims quickly, proper enforcement of the city's fair housing laws remains impossible. The delay in processing these cases increases the likelihood that the vouchers are not utilized. This undermines the city's investment in rental assistance programs, such as CityFHEPs and FHEPS, meaning that the City is not in fact expanding opportunities as intended for New Yorkers facing housing instability. To realize CCHR's full potential, the city must take immediate steps to ensure it is adequately funded and staffed.

New Yorkers with Disabilities Face Challenges in Acquiring Affordable and Accessible Housing

New York City Human Right's Law goes beyond the requirement of state or federal civil rights law, is a bulwark for thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities who need

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[2] Mayor Adams Announces Largest Civil Rights Settlement in City History, Protecting New Yorkers from Housing Discrimination. August 22, 2024.

[3] Office of the New York State Comptroller, Thomas P. DiNapoli. "New York City Commission on Human Rights: Oversight of Housing Discrimination Complaints." December 2025.

[4] NYCCHR FY 2025 Annual Report.

reasonable modifications to their apartments to be able to enter their apartment building or use their bathroom. Disability discrimination is the second most common form of housing complaint—CCHR receives an average of one report per day.[5] In FHJC's experience, it is difficult to find attorneys to help individuals with reasonable modification requests, making CCHR the ideal venue for investigating and resolving such claims. But because reasonable modification requests are so time-sensitive, CCHR and their Project Equal Access (PEA) team, which is focused on accessibility for New Yorkers, needs to be adequately staffed to process these claims quickly. Otherwise, individuals can wait months or years to have access to their apartment building's front entrance with a ramp, or use their toilet safely with the assistance of grab bars.

CCHR Needs Sufficient Resources Because Disability Discrimination is Rampant

New York City Human Right's Law goes beyond the requirement of state or federal civil rights law, is a bulwark for thousands of New Yorkers with disabilities who need reasonable modifications to their apartments to be able to enter their apartment building or use their bathroom. Disability discrimination is the second most common form of housing complaint—CCHR receives an average of one report per day.[6] In FHJC's experience, it is difficult to find attorneys to help individuals with reasonable modification requests, making CCHR the ideal venue for investigating and resolving such claims. But because reasonable modification requests are so time-sensitive, CCHR and their Project Equal Access (PEA) team, which is focused on accessibility for New Yorkers, needs to be adequately staffed to process these claims quickly. Otherwise, individuals can wait months or years to have access to their apartment building's front entrance with a ramp, or use their toilet safely with the assistance of grab bars.

The Commission Needs an Increase in its Budget to Enforce the New Fair Chance in Housing Law (FCHA)

The Fair Chance in Housing provision of the City's Human Rights Law, which took effect on January 1, 2025, requires a housing provider to follow a specific process if they choose to conduct a background check after a conditional offer has been made. Given the new expansion to the NYCHRL, CCHR requires an increased budget necessary to prevent discrimination under the law; CCHR submitted a fiscal impact statement in 2023 that indicated a need for $1.4 million to hire new staff and conduct a public education campaign for the new provision.[7] The Commission is primarily responsible for informing housing providers and the public about their rights and obligations under the law, processing FHCA complaints, mediating cases, and filing enforcement actions, but the Commission has not received an increase in its budget to support this new protection.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] ibid.

[7] Testimony by The Fortune Society at the Committee on Civil and Human Rights Oversight Hearing – Budgeting for Equity.

Early investigation of and enforcement of this law by FHJC has demonstrated that providers are either ignoring or uneducated about their obligations under the law. In 2025, FHJC filed its first complaint under the Fair Chance in Housing Act after finding systemic discriminatory screening practices that categorically excluded certain applicants with criminal records.[8] CCHR has yet to file any cases, even with housing providers blatantly disobeying the law and discouraging prospective applicants from housing opportunities

We reiterate our ask for City Council to increase CCHR's budget by $10 million, to a total of $25 million. This increased budget would be small, less than 0.02% of the City's total budget, but have a vast impact on vulnerable New Yorkers.

With a well-funded CCHR, we believe that the Commission can properly investigate complaints and provide meaningful relief to New Yorkers experiencing discrimination. Adequate resources and staffing will ensure that CCHR's enforcement keeps pace with the scope and complexity of housing discrimination facing New Yorkers. We need this enforcement to ensure that key city programs are not being undermined by discriminatory practices and that the promise of the NYCHRL is realized for all.

Thank you again to the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify. To connect with us or for further questions regarding this testimony contact Britny Mckenzie, Policy Director at bmckenzie@fairhousingjustice.org and/or Yvette Chen, Policy Associate at ychen@fairhousingjustice.org.

[8] Criminal History Discrimination Alleged at Multiple NYC Apartment Buildings.

TESTIMONY
Submitted to the
New York City Council Committee on Finance
on the subject of the Executive Budget for FY27
June 10, 2026

Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Finance, the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC) thanks you for the opportunity to submit testimony on our concerns regarding how the Administration's FY27 Executive Budget will serve extremely low-income families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in NYC.

The FHC is a membership body with organizations offering expertise in all facets of New York City's (NYC) systems of family care and advancement from shelter to permanent affordable housing to community-based services to child advocacy to workforce to education to families who have lost housing and navigated the complex safety net systems. We promote child and family well-being when shelter is unavoidable and advocate for the creation of additional permanent housing resources for homeless children and their families to prevent the condition of homelessness in the future.

We wrote to the Committees on General Welfare and Housing and Buildings in March expressing concerns about the Administration's Preliminary Budget and now write to you, more deeply concerned about the Executive Budget for FY27. Ending homelessness may seem a lofty or unattainable goal, however, New York City did not always have a crisis of family homelessness with 66,000 people in families in shelter per night. Rising rents, stagnant wages, and choices to not fund sufficient affordable housing for the last three decades have led us to the conditions of the present day. Ending the cycle of housing instability for the city's lowest income families that leads to homelessness in a high-cost housing market requires budgeting and programmatic focus on commensurate to the crisis the City is facing. The FHC does not see in the FY 27 Budget, the resources or strategic approach necessary to end family homelessness for the 150,000[1] children in the city who experience it in a single year, nor do we see the resources sufficient for the 17,000 families with children staying in shelter to secure housing. We call on the City Council to remedy this error and to commit to ending homelessness through housing resources for families.

The Family Homelessness Coalition's pillars of Prevention, Access to Quality Shelter, and Housing translate into straightforward budget asks for the City Council:

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[1] Advocates for Children of New York. (2025, October 20). *Student Homelessness in New York City, 2024–25.* https://advocatesforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/student_homelessness_2024-25.pdf

Increase resources for Homebase commensurate with the responsibilities that are added.
We are pleased that the Administration's Housing Plan mentions the importance of Homebase in preventing families from losing housing, however, the budget does not sufficiently support current, much less, additional housing stability services housed at Homebase. As rental housing costs in the city have increased in recent years, the City has not scaled Homebase to meet the growing number of families who need housing retention support. Simultaneously, the City added programmatic responsibilities to Homebase without sufficiently resourcing its core functions. As a result, families facing eviction must now wait a long period of time for an initial Homebase appointment. During this time, some families lose their housing and enter shelter when they could have remained stably housed if Homebase was properly funded and allowed to conduct its core functions. The program is overstretched and will remain so or worsen in FY27 unless the Council allocates additional funding to this essential program in preventing homelessness.

Improve Administrative Shelter Functions
The FHC supports City Council bills Intro 232 and 816 which would reform the administrative processes currently used to approve shelter applications of households experiencing homelessness. Changing the look-back length and allowing self-attestation for housing history are two administrative changes that would not only improve outcomes for families experiencing housing instability by shortening their length of wait to stabilize in shelter, but would produce administrative cost savings by removing unnecessary procedural steps and time from the process used by the Department of Social Services. These bills should be passed by Council and understood for their budget impacts.

Increase CityFHEPS Rental Assistance for Families to Move Out of Shelter
The Administration in its Housing Plan, cites intent to maintain the 65,000 City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) rental assistance vouchers but does not indicate it in the housing plan nor in its Executive Budget that it will continue to use this successful housing program to assist additional families from exiting shelter.

CityFHEPS is a proven and critical rental assistance program that reduces and prevents homelessness in New York City. Since 2018, it has proven effective in supporting more than 13,000 families in exiting shelter and moving into permanent housing in a single year. Expansion of this program is one of the most impactful tools the City has to help families exit shelter and shift the trajectory of the family homelessness system. With more than 17,000 families with children in shelter a night and a legal mandate to increase the number of households the program currently services, there is no reason for the administration to underfund this resource.

Increase and dedicate capital funding to create units affordable to extremely low-income households staying in shelter at a level sufficient to end family homelessness.
The Housing Plan calls for new units affordable to extremely low-income households including those staying in shelter. We urge you to ensure funding for units affordable to extremely low-income households is sufficient to direct households that are currently in shelter to enough units to reverse course on family homelessness. The Council should not leave families experiencing homelessness and in shelter with no substantial change from FY26.

The FHC calls on the Committee on Finance, using its budgetary powers, to make the choice to end family homelessness in New York City. The City Council has the right housing, rental assistance, and prevention tools at hand and simply needs to make a choice to fund them sufficiently. We urge members to work with the Committees on Housing and Buildings and General Welfare to sufficiently budget and align funding for housing rental assistance-project-based and tenant-based- and housing capital funding serving extremely low-income families to determine a multi-year pathway for all families to exit homelessness into housing and reduce housing instability leading to shelter intake.

We thank the Committee for its attention to and consideration of these comments.

The Family Homelessness Coalition [2]

[2] Steering Committee Members: *Advocates For Children, Barrier Free Living, Camba, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Coalition for the Homeless, CSH, Enterprise Community Partners, Family Action Board, Terra Linda Housing Services, Homes for the Homeless, Henry Street Settlement, Homeless Services United, Homes for the Homeless, New Destiny Housing, Riseboro, Safe Horizon, Sanctuary For Families, Settlement Housing Fund, Volunteers of America-Greater New York, Win*

NYC Council – Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

I am writing to urge the City Council to honor the commitment made during the One LIC negotiations by including funding for a lighting study in the Long Island City IBZ in the executive budget. Inadequate street lighting has created serious safety concerns — and an equally serious perception of unsafety — that make it increasingly difficult for businesses and their employees to operate in the neighborhood.

Faviana Int'l Inc is located at 31-10 and 31-16 Hunters Pt Ave and has been in there for 11 years. Faviana, a fashion design firm, owns and operates out of these 2 locations but we also has multiple tenants/ businesses that operate out of the 2 locations. Between the 2 buildings there are over 100 people who work there.

The Long Island City IBZ lacks the retail presence that typically provides natural lighting, foot traffic, and informal street safety. As a result, streets and sidewalks remain dangerously dark — and because most business activity occurs inside the buildings themselves, sidewalks receive little of the foot traffic that would normally deter crime. This becomes especially concerning during evening hours, when employees arriving and departing are left vulnerable in poorly lit conditions. These concerns are not unfounded: over the past three years, the IBZ has seen documented incidents including verbal and physical assault, grand larceny, and illegal dumping. A comprehensive lighting study is a critical and overdue step toward addressing these conditions.

Our need for improved lighting is well-documented and long-standing. We have advocated through 311 submissions and in partnership with the Long Island City Partnership (LICP), the area's local economic development organization. Through that process, NYC DOT reviewed our submissions and approved eight lighting installations across the Long Island City IBZ — a determination made over four years ago. Yet despite that approval, not a single light has been installed. When LICP followed up with DOT, they were told that no contract is currently in place to carry out the work. The approved lights exist on paper; what is missing is the commitment to fund and execute their installation.

We have tried reaching out to our local elected officials through LICP, but there has been no traction. We were encouraged when this became part of the agreement with One LIC thanks to Councilmember Julie Won, but was extremely disappointed when it was left out the draft executive budget. It has been clear that without the City Council's advocacy, these lights will not be installed, nor does the opportunity for new lights exist at all.

Faviana is very happy operating in LIC, but the perception of safety concerns has hurt our business with safety and lighting concerns of our team members.

We hope that you consider our testimony and include the funding for the lighting study in the budget.

Sincerely,

Navid Moradi

COO

Faviana Int'l Inc.

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the New York City Council.

My name is Jazz Reed-Cordero, and I am the Director of Communications & Development at Figure Skating in Harlem, a Harlem-based youth development organization that has been serving New York City girls for nearly 30 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today as the Council considers the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

At Figure Skating in Harlem, we know that investing in young people changes lives. Through our unique combination of education, leadership development, wellness, and figure skating, we have helped over 1500 girls build confidence, strengthen academic performance, develop critical life skills, and prepare for college, careers, and leadership opportunities.

Last year alone, 100% of our students advanced to the next grade level, 100% of our graduating seniors matriculated to college, and 95% of participants reported increased confidence. These outcomes are possible because New York City invests in youth development programs that provide safe spaces, caring mentors, and opportunities that help young people thrive.

As the Council finalizes the FY27 budget, we respectfully ask for support of three critical investments that will allow Figure Skating in Harlem and similar organizations to continue serving New York City's young people.

First, we support the Speaker's Initiative request of $150,000 through the STARS Citywide Girls Initiative to ensure parity among participating organizations and help meet the growing demand for high-quality programs serving girls and young women.

Second, we respectfully request $35,000 through the Manhattan Delegation to support the continued expansion of our academic, leadership, and youth development programming. While Figure Skating in Harlem is rooted in Harlem, our impact reaches young people across Upper Manhattan and the Bronx.

Finally, we ask Council Members to continue investing in local youth through discretionary awards of $15,000 per Council Member. These flexible funds directly support programs like I Can Excel, Summer Dreams, college and career readiness, and other opportunities that help young people thrive both in and out of school.

Together, these investments will ensure that more girls have access to the academic support, mentorship, leadership development, and safe spaces they need to succeed.

Warmly,

Jazz Reed-Cordero
Director of Communications and Development, Figure Skating in Harlem

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the New York City Council.

My name is Milena Benmergui, and I am a senior at Figure Skating in Harlem.

I am here today because programs like Figure Skating in Harlem have changed my life.

Over the years, I have learned far more than how to skate. I have learned how to advocate for myself, how to lead, how to speak publicly, and how to use my voice to create change. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to testify before the City Council and advocate for funding that supports girls like me. That experience showed me that young people have the power to make a difference when adults are willing to invest in us. After City Council, I headed to Albany to meet with elected officials and speak about not only my experience but the experience of 1500+ girls that FSH has served in 30 years. Now I am here, to tell you about support and opportunities given through programs and services like meeting with the College and Career counselor who helped me write my essay when my school could not.

Because of the support I received through Figure Skating in Harlem, I will be attending Sarah Lawrence College this fall. I plan to study human rights and continue pursuing a career in public service.

Today, I am asking the Council to continue investing in girls and young people across New York City by supporting three important funding requests.

First, I ask you to support the $150,000 Speaker's Initiative request through the STARS Citywide Girls Initiative so that organizations serving girls have the resources needed to meet growing demand.

Second, I ask you to support the $35,000 Manhattan Delegation request for Figure Skating in Harlem so that more young people can access academic support, leadership development, and opportunities that help them prepare for college and their futures.

Finally, I ask Council Members to continue supporting youth programs through discretionary awards of $15,000 per Council Member. These investments may seem small in a city budget, but for students like me they create life-changing opportunities.

Because of investments like these, I will be attending college this fall and pursuing a future in public service. I know firsthand that when New York City invests in young people, those investments pay dividends for generations.

Warmly,

Milena Benmergui
FSH Senior and Graduate

Subject: Testimony in Support of Increased Funding for Arts and Culture in the NYC Executive Budget

Testimony to the New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing on Finance
Submitted by Flex Dance Program

Dear Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of increased investment in arts and culture within the Fiscal Year Executive Budget.

Flex Dance Program (FDP) is a Brooklyn-based arts organization that works with justice-involved youth, youth in foster care, and underserved communities through dance, mentorship, and creative expression. Through our FlexIN and FlexOUT programs, we use culturally rooted dance practices to support youth wellness, leadership development, and violence prevention.

At a time when New York City youth are facing rising rates of anxiety, depression, social isolation, and community violence, arts organizations are providing critical spaces for healing, connection, and opportunity. Yet community-based cultural organizations—particularly those rooted in Black and Brown communities—continue to be significantly underfunded despite their deep impact.

Flex dance culture itself is an important part of Brooklyn's cultural history. In the 1990s, the groundbreaking showcase "Flex N Brooklyn," aired on BCAT/BRIC, became one of the earliest platforms dedicated to uplifting local dancers, musicians, and youth voices from Central Brooklyn. Created by pioneers including Sandra Dee Cobb and Rocky Cummings, the platform helped develop what is now internationally recognized as the Flexn dance style. At a time when many young people lacked opportunities and safe spaces, Flex N Brooklyn created a community-centered platform where youth could express themselves creatively, build confidence, and stay connected to positive artistic spaces.

BRIC has continued to play an important role in elevating this cultural movement. In 2019, Flex Dance Program partnered with BRIC to present "Flex Hyperborealis," a performance and community event that highlighted the artistic evolution, storytelling, and healing power of Flex dance. These partnerships demonstrate the importance of sustained investment in culturally specific art forms that originate directly from New York City communities.

Our teaching artists are more than performers—they are credible messenger mentors with lived experience who build trust with young people navigating trauma, housing instability, foster care involvement, and justice system contact. Through dance, youth gain emotional outlets, leadership opportunities, and

pathways toward community engagement.

We urge the City Council to:
• Increase baseline funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs
• Expand investment in grassroots cultural organizations serving Black and Brown communities
• Support arts programming connected to youth wellness, violence prevention, and mental health
• Invest in culturally rooted dance and performance traditions born in New York City communities
• Recognize teaching artists and credible messenger mentors as essential cultural workers
Arts and culture are not optional services—they are essential infrastructure for healthy communities, youth development, and public safety. Investments in organizations like Flex Dance Program help preserve New York City's cultural legacy while creating opportunities for the next generation of artists and leaders.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to New York City's cultural communities.

Sincerely,
Flex Dance Program
Flex@flexdanceprogram.org
www.flexdanceprogram.org
Instagram: @flexin_flexout

FLUSHING TOWN HALL
FLUSHING COUNCIL ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Ellen Kodadek
Executive & Artistic Director

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Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations
Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026
Testimony – Flushing Town Hall

Good afternoon members of the finance committee – thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Sami Abu Shumays, deputy director at Flushing Town Hall, one of the smaller CIGs based in Queens; I also sit on the steering committees of the Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LXNY) and the Cultural Equity Coalition of New York (CECNY).

Arts and Culture are a major component of the fabric of New York City, and our cultural institutions are essential civic infrastructure, from the smallest dance companies to the largest museums. We provide what New Yorkers can't live without, and what draws travelers to us.

At Flushing Town Hall, we serve an extraordinarily diverse community, and we're proud to say that in our city, public funding supports the arts and cultural heritage of peoples from all over the globe.

We know that the city council gets it, and we thank you for your continued leadership and advocacy for cultural funding. We are also enormously grateful that the FY2027 Executive budget included an additional $10 million in the baseline – and it has had a meaningful impact on Flushing Town Hall already, stabilizing our funding so that we can continue to serve New Yorkers of all kinds.

Yet this leaves a $20 million gap, and so **we respectfully urge your support to fully restore and baseline the full $30 million for arts and culture in the Fiscal 2027 Adopted Budget.**

We are also asking the city to consider annual cost adjustments year over year to support staff wages and increased costs connected with inflation for arts and cultural organizations.

Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC) Funding
We also want to underscore the importance of continued investment in the Coalition of Theatres of Color initiative. We support the allocation of $8 million for CTC, recognizing its role in connecting cultural resources to communities with the greatest need and expanding access across the city.

Finally, although it is not a direct ask for the FY2027 budget, for the long term I encourage the council and the administration to make substantial commitments to funding equity through new investment**.** Equity doesn't need to come at the expense of other organizations. There is an opportunity to grow overall cultural funding while directing new resources toward under-resourced communities**. A target of $20 million per City Council district, bringing DCLA's budget to just over $1 billion, would be a meaningful step toward citywide equity while still remaining under 1% of the City's total budget**. This should be our goal over the next four years.

Thank you very much for your support!

FORESTDALE
FAMILY WHEN FAMILIES NEED US

Testimony Before the New York City Council, June 10, 2026, Executive Budget Hearing

Good afternoon, Chair Stephens and members of the City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Dr. Amy Wilkerson, Chief Program Officer at Forestdale Inc. Forestdale is a longstanding provider of preventive services in Queens. I am here with deep concern and urgency regarding the Administration for Children's Services' proposal to close our Family Support Program in North Queens effective June 30, 2026.

This decision came as a complete surprise. Based on prior communication from the Mayor's Office and Social Services leadership, we understood that critical social services would not be reduced in this budget. However, this action is not a technical adjustment, it is a direct service cut that will immediately impact at-risk families and weaken the preventive services system.

Forestdale is one of the highest-performing preventive service providers in New York City. We ranked in the top tier for multiple years, including achieving the number one ranking for Family Support in both Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025. The City has consistently relied on our work to stabilize families, prevent foster care placements, and reduce long-term system involvement.

The program slated for closure is not theoretical, it is a lifeline. It serves one of the highest-need areas in Queens, second only to Jamaica in child protective investigations and preventive cases. At this moment, we are working intensively with more than 50 families, approximately 150 individuals, and annually we serve over 500 families facing crises such as domestic violence, mental health challenges, housing instability, and the risk of child removal.

Forestdale's approach is unique in New York City. Our model is comprehensive, robust, community based and designed not only to stabilize families in crisis but to strengthen them long-term. Through this program, families receive parenting support, mental health and trauma-informed interventions, access to health care, cash and material assistance, and connections to education and employment resources. This is not a narrow service; it is a coordinated safety net that surrounds families with the support they need to stay together.

FORESTDALE
FAMILY WHEN FAMILIES NEED US

Our results speak for themselves: 98% of the families we serve avoid foster care placement. For many, we are their only support system.

The financial impact of this closure is also significant. The program's budget is approximately $1.9 million for FY27, including $1.16 million in direct program costs supporting 14 staff positions. Eliminating it will not only remove services; it will also destabilize our broader preventive infrastructure and jeopardize support for families across Queens and Brooklyn.

Additionally, more than 20 skilled staff including experts in trauma, domestic violence, and family stabilization will lose their jobs. This loss of workforce further weakens the City's capacity to support vulnerable families.

We are also deeply concerned by ACS's rationale. Our utilization rate of approximately 60% is consistent with system-wide patterns, and the claim that Forestdale can absorb administrative losses is inaccurate. This plan would create a nearly $2 million annual gap, leading to layoffs beyond this program and potentially undermining other critical services at Forestdale.

Council Members, the families we serve cannot absorb this loss and the city cannot afford the consequences. Preventive services are what keep families together and reduce future costs in foster care and crisis systems.

We urge you to partner with us to prevent the closure of this program. The stakes are simply too high.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to the families of Queens.

FORESTDALE
FAMILY WHEN FAMILIES NEED US

Testimony for the New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Krista Larson, and I am the Assistant Executive Director for Preventive Services at Forestdale. For many years, Forestdale has provided high-quality preventive services in Queens. Our Family Support program has consistently been one of the highest-rated in New York City, yet our North Queens program is among the programs ACS has proposed eliminating.

Preventive services work because they reach families early—before stress, instability, and unmet needs escalate into deeper crisis or family separation. It is no small thing to invite someone into your home and share the most personal details of your family's life. Families make that choice when they believe the support will be respectful, effective, and grounded in partnership. They do it because they want to protect their children, work to stabilize their household, and move through a difficult period with help that builds on their strengths.

Families consistently tell us that their relationship with preventive staff is one of the most important parts of the service. Many of our families experience tremendous isolation, they may be new to NYC, new to the US, or may be separated from their support systems because of ruptured relationships. Families tell us that the staff provide a combination of information, encouragement, a listening ear, and some straight talk. It is these relationships that help families believe that change is possible. In preventive services, the relationship is not separate from the work; it is what makes the work possible.

When a preventive services contract is cut, families experience the loss immediately. They lose continuity, stability, and the momentum that comes from steady, relationship-based support. When that support is reduced or interrupted, families lose not only access to services, but also the trusted connection that helps build confidence, progress, and hope. Starting over with a new provider means retelling painful experiences, rebuilding trust from the beginning, and trying to engage all over again at the very moment consistency matters most.

I urge the Council to restore funding for this contract and protect continuity in preventive services for families in Queens. If we want families to reach for help early, trust the system, and do the difficult work of change during a crisis, then the help we offer must be stable, timely, and dependable. Families should not lose support at the very moment they begin to

trust it. Protecting preventive services means protecting the relationships that keep families connected, children safe, and crises from becoming something far worse.

FORT GREENE PARK CONSERVANCY

June 10, 2026

New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation
Executive Budget Hearing

Re: Fort Greene Park Conservancy's Testimony on Executive Budget

Good afternoon, my name is Rosamond Fletcher, and I'm Executive Director of the Fort Greene Park Conservancy. I am testifying today as a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition which includes over 450 organizations. We thank the Committee on Finance for holding this hearing.

CITY FUNDING FOR PARKS REMAINS GROSSLY INADEQUATE and Mayor Mamdani's Executive Budget does not get us to where we need to be.

This is NOT yet the promised pathway toward 1% of the City's budget.

You might ask how this affects Fort Greene Park. At 30-acres, the Park is neither large nor small but it is incredibly well-used. Park use per acre is actually double that of Prospect Park, and nearly the same as Central Park.

Fort Greene Park is directly adjacent to Downtown Brooklyn. The density of the area has increased dramatically since its rezoning in 2004. 35,000 new residential units have come online but only one new 1-acre park. We all know we need this level of housing production, but the investment in parks has not kept pace.

The impact of this planning failure is the ongoing degradation of Fort Greene Park's landscape and the unsustainable upkeep of its public space: erosion of the park's hills, exposed tree roots that threaten its canopy, barren lawns that look like lunar landscapes and require intensive seasonal restoration, overflowing trash cans that require frequent day and evening pickups, and unleashed dogs whose owners ignore off-leash hours. **These are maintenance and operational challenges that require more park staffing.**

In order to ensure safe, well-maintained parks, the City needs to permanently fund 115 NYC Parks workers whose contracts will expire in July. And we're asking the City Council to add 276 critical positions needed to rebuild agency capacity after four years of budget cuts.

Funding parks is funding affordability AND livability. Thanks for your time,

Rosamond Fletcher
Executive Director

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info@fortgreenepark.org
fortgreenepark.org

URBAN JUSTICE CENTER | Freedom Agenda

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance
Submitted by Ashley Davis
June 10, 2026

My name is Ashley Davis, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Freedom Agenda as a member of the Campaign to Close Rikers. I'm also a young New Yorker who has been directly impacted by the criminal legal system. Thankfully, I had the opportunity to participate in an alternative program, where I gained skills, in addition to taking accountability for my actions.

I've also seen the impact of jails on my family, friends, and peers. I strongly believe that the city should redistribute the money being used to fund jails and prisons for more beneficial and impactful resources for those who struggle with their mental health. My parents have mental illness, and at times struggle to maintain their mental well-being.

Many New Yorkers who face serious mental health challenges are held at Rikers, where they cannot get the treatment they need. In fact, 60% of incarcerated individuals on Rikers face mental health challenges. Even when leaving Rikers, many of these same New Yorkers are released without treatment and housing. At the same time, the City is proposing nearly $3 billion for DOC, while spending nearly half a million per person each year on Rikers. This system is over-resourced and ineffective. We must eliminate unnecessary vacancies, reduce overtime, and begin closing jails on Rikers.

Everyone should be entitled to have their basic health-related needs met, especially ones involving mental health concerns. New York City can move much closer to doing that by shifting resources from the Department of Correction to programs that improve community well-being and keep people out of jail.

We are urging the City Council to allocate at least $39.2 million to meet mental health needs, including community-based mental health treatment, in-patient residential treatment, and crisis respite centers. We are also urging the Council to invest $47.2 million in diversion and reentry services, including Alternatives to Incarceration, reentry programs, youth mental health services, and at least 150 units of low-barrier housing.

By getting DOC's spending under control, we can finally fund the programs and services our communities have always deserved. You can read our full budget analysis here

CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE ✷ DEFEND ✷ DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

FY2027 City Budget Analysis & Priorities

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create community safety. The FY2027 Executive Budget includes some key steps toward reining in jail operation costs, and reinvesting those savings in true public safety. And in order to Close Rikers as quickly as possible, we'll need to do more. To align the FY2027 budget with the City's legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, it must include:

1. **An additional $39.2M to meet mental health needs outside of Rikers,** including:
    a. **At least $66.3M, baselined, for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams,** $22M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which should eliminate the current waitlist.[1]
    b. **At least $23.8M, baselined, for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT),** $4.5M more than the Executive Budget allocates.[2]
    c. **At least $6M, baselined, for Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT),** $2M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which provides both mental health and reentry services to people returning from jail and prison.[3]
    d. **$1.7M to establish an outpatient competency restoration pilot program** for 50-75 people who might otherwise be waiting at Rikers for transfer to a state hospital.
    e. **$3M in capital funds to support 60 new residential treatment beds** for people with serious mental illness and with co-occurring addictions.[4]
    f. **At least $8.8M, baselined, for crisis respite centers,** $6M more than the Executive Budget allocates, to open four new centers, in compliance with Local Law 118-2023.[5]
2. **An additional $47.2M for diversion and reentry services through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), including:**
    a. **$10M** in new funds for ATI programs and **$10M** in new funds for Reentry Services, as recommended by the ATI/Reentry Coalition, to scale up these evidence-based models.
    b. **$6.9M** to expand programs serving court-involved youth with mental health needs.
    c. **$20.3M**[6] to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.
    d. OCJ should also publish an analysis of the full need for transitional reentry housing, and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for Justice Impacted Supportive Housing (JISH), a permanent reentry housing model.[7]
3. **An additional $3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction (BOC), and expand their oversight capacity.** The Executive Budget shows $605,000 in cuts to BOC's budget.[8] These cuts

[1] Per DOHMH testimony on June 5, 2026, the waitlist is 600 people. Each new IMT team can serve 27 people.
[2] The combined waitlist for all ACT teams, including FACT and SPACT, was 654 people as of June 5, 2026 per DOHMH testimony. The City should also work with the state to eliminate the waitlist for all ACT teams.
[3] For FACT teams, the City adds approximately $675,000 per ACT team to supplement state funding by adding reentry specialists.
[4] State funding through OASAS would provide operational funds.
[5] The FY2026 budget for crisis respite centers was $5.3M, but only $2.8M in the FY2027 Preliminary Budget, as reported by DOHMH.
[6] Approximately $135,000 per unit, based on similar Safe Haven models.
[7] While JISH funding would come through DOHMH, OCJ coordinated the first (and only) data match, when the program was launched.
[8] $233,000 is associated with cutting two vacancies, and $374,437 is associated with cuts to OTPS

are unwise and unnecessary. The Board of Correction has testified that they need at least 60 staff roles (29 more than the Executive Budget includes)[9] to carry out their oversight responsibilities, as a first step to rightsizing their budget.[10] Expanding BOC's capacity could not only improve conditions in the jails, but also protect the city from future liability, like the $123 million dollars paid out in FY2025 for claims against DOC.

Meanwhile, DOC remains over-resourced. With new management in place, DOC can better deploy resources, not rush to fill vacancies. The FY2027 budget should build on smart vacancy reductions announced in the Executive Budget, and:

4. **Eliminate vacancies for DOC uniformed staff, to begin to rightsize the agency**
    a. The Executive Budget authorizes 6,474 positions for uniformed officers in FY2027 (down from 7,060 in FY2026), but as of January 1, 2026 DOC employed 5,759 officers and 1,301 positions were vacant.[11] Filling DOC's remaining 715 vacancies would cost an additional **$95.6M annually.**[12] These remaining vacancies should be eliminated, in order to reduce incarceration and cut wasteful spending.
5. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where 109 officers are still assigned.[13]
6. **Conduct and release a staffing analysis as soon as possible,** to determine how many staff DOC actually needs to operate the facilities it currently manages.

The Executive Budget also includes 580 more police officers, among a surge of low-level arrests that frequently impact New Yorkers who lack stable housing and need mental health services. These resources should instead be used for housing, healthcare, and other community-based interventions.

DOC Budget Breakdown

- The Executive Budget proposes spending at least **$2.96 billion[14] for jail operations in FY2027**. This represents a slight reduction from the FY2027 Preliminary budget, but still a 3.8% increase from last year's adopted budget.[15]
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- DOC is on track to spend **$369 million on overtime** for uniform staff in FY2026 - 229% of their adopted budget.[17]
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Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Submitted by Darren Mack, Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

Chair Lee and Council members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm Darren Mack, Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We are led by our members who have experienced incarceration themselves, or through a loved one. We're one of the organizations leading the Campaign to Close Rikers.

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create safety. The Executive Budget eliminates some waste in DOC's budget, and restores what would have been devastating cuts to mental health, diversion and reentry programs, **but we'll need to do more than maintain the status quo to get Rikers closed.** Specifically, we need at least:

- **$39.2M more to meet mental health needs in the community** through investments in Intensive Mobile Treatment, Assertive Community Treatment, an outpatient competency restoration pilot program, Crisis Respite Centers, and capital funding for new dual-diagnosis residential treatment beds.
- **$47.3M more for diversion and reentry programs** including funding alternative to incarceration and reentry programs to scale, expanding mental health programs for court-involved youth, and opening new units of low-barrier housing for people with court involvement and mental health diagnoses.
- **$3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction and increase their oversight capacity.**

The City Council has fought hard in the past few years for investments in evidence-based programs that strengthen communities and keep people out of Rikers. These programs are not just effective, they're also popular. A recent survey of crime survivors in New York City showed that 3 of 4 preferred alternatives to incarceration and mental health treatment instead of jail.

And yet, more than 1,000 people still sit on waiting lists for community-based mental health treatment. In the meantime, too many spiral into crisis, are met with police instead of healthcare workers, and end up at Rikers, where their health almost always deteriorates. ATI and reentry programs also remain underfunded, while Riker is set to operate at a cost of **$2.96B in FY27**.

New York City CAN afford to invest in these programs that work. The Executive Budget eliminates 586 vacancies for uniformed officers at the Department of Correction. That's a good start, but at least 715 of these vacancies remain. Eliminating them could free up $96 million – an amount that could pay for the budget needs we outlined, with money to spare.

The budget also includes funding for 580 more police officers, at a time when NYPD is arresting more and more people who need housing and mental health services. Hiring more police will not address the reasons why people are sleeping on the subway or stealing food, but it will consume funding that could be used to address their needs.

The FY2027 budget will show this Mayor's priorities, along with the City Council's. We need an Adopted Budget that shows the City is serious about taking a whole of government approach to meeting its moral and legal obligation to close Rikers. We are not there yet, and we cannot afford another year of arresting and jailing our neighbors who need housing and healthcare, and then being surprised when they cycle back through Rikers.

Included with this testimony is **full budget analysis** **that outlines the amendments needed to align the FY27 budget with closing Rikers Island.**

As we look toward closing Rikers, we also need to begin planning for the repurposing of the land to benefit impacted communities, and our entire community. **We urge the City Council to ensure the adopted budget includes $10 million to conduct a master plan for Renewable Rikers.**

We also strongly support the proposal put forward by the People's Plan to collect on the billions owed to the City by the largest lawbreaking corporations.

Thank you,

Darren Mack

Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

Dmack@urbanjustice.org

[attached – FY2027 Campaign to Close Rikers Executive Budget Analysis]

CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE ✷ DEFEND ✷ DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

FY2027 City Budget Analysis & Priorities

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create community safety. The FY2027 Executive Budget includes some key steps toward reining in jail operation costs, and reinvesting those savings in true public safety. And in order to Close Rikers as quickly as possible, we'll need to do more. To align the FY2027 budget with the City's legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, it must include:

1. **An additional $39.2M to meet mental health needs outside of Rikers,** including:
    a. **At least $66.3M, baselined, for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams,** $22M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which should eliminate the current waitlist.[1]
    b. **At least $23.8M, baselined, for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT),** $4.5M more than the Executive Budget allocates.[2]
    c. **At least $6M, baselined, for Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT),** $2M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which provides both mental health and reentry services to people returning from jail and prison.[3]
    d. **$1.7M to establish an outpatient competency restoration pilot program** for 50-75 people who might otherwise be waiting at Rikers for transfer to a state hospital.
    e. **$3M in capital funds to support 60 new residential treatment beds** for people with serious mental illness and with co-occurring addictions.[4]
    f. **At least $8.8M, baselined, for crisis respite centers,** $6M more than the Executive Budget allocates, to open four new centers, in compliance with Local Law 118-2023.[5]
2. **An additional $47.2M for diversion and reentry services through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), including:**
    a. **$10M** in new funds for ATI programs and **$10M** in new funds for Reentry Services, as recommended by the ATI/Reentry Coalition, to scale up these evidence-based models.
    b. **$6.9M** to expand programs serving court-involved youth with mental health needs.
    c. **$20.3M**[6] to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.
    d. OCJ should also publish an analysis of the full need for transitional reentry housing, and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for Justice Impacted Supportive Housing (JISH), a permanent reentry housing model.[7]
3. **An additional $3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction (BOC), and expand their oversight capacity.** The Executive Budget shows $605,000 in cuts to BOC's budget.[8] These cuts

[1] Per DOHMH testimony on June 5, 2026, the waitlist is 600 people. Each new IMT team can serve 27 people.
[2] The combined waitlist for all ACT teams, including FACT and SPACT, was 654 people as of June 5, 2026 per DOHMH testimony. The City should also work with the state to eliminate the waitlist for all ACT teams.
[3] For FACT teams, the City adds approximately $675,000 per ACT team to supplement state funding by adding reentry specialists.
[4] State funding through OASAS would provide operational funds.
[5] The FY2026 budget for crisis respite centers was $5.3M, but only $2.8M in the FY2027 Preliminary Budget, as reported by DOHMH.
[6] Approximately $135,000 per unit, based on similar Safe Haven models.
[7] While JISH funding would come through DOHMH, OCJ coordinated the first (and only) data match, when the program was launched.
[8] $233,000 is associated with cutting two vacancies, and $374,437 is associated with cuts to OTPS

are unwise and unnecessary. The Board of Correction has testified that they need at least 60 staff roles (29 more than the Executive Budget includes)[9] to carry out their oversight responsibilities, as a first step to rightsizing their budget.[10] Expanding BOC's capacity could not only improve conditions in the jails, but also protect the city from future liability, like the $123 million dollars paid out in FY2025 for claims against DOC.

Meanwhile, DOC remains over-resourced. With new management in place, DOC can better deploy resources, not rush to fill vacancies. The FY2027 budget should build on smart vacancy reductions announced in the Executive Budget, and:

4. **Eliminate vacancies for DOC uniformed staff, to begin to rightsize the agency**
    a. The Executive Budget authorizes 6,474 positions for uniformed officers in FY2027 (down from 7,060 in FY2026), but as of January 1, 2026 DOC employed 5,759 officers and 1,301 positions were vacant.[11] Filling DOC's remaining 715 vacancies would cost an additional **$95.6M annually.**[12] These remaining vacancies should be eliminated, in order to reduce incarceration and cut wasteful spending.
5. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where 109 officers are still assigned.[13]
6. **Conduct and release a staffing analysis as soon as possible,** to determine how many staff DOC actually needs to operate the facilities it currently manages.

The Executive Budget also includes 580 more police officers, among a surge of low-level arrests that frequently impact New Yorkers who lack stable housing and need mental health services. These resources should instead be used for housing, healthcare, and other community-based interventions.

DOC Budget Breakdown

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FY27 Executive Budget Hearing | June 10, 2026
Submitted to NYC Council Finance Committee
Organization: Freelancers Union | EIN: 13-3858323
Contact: Andrea Gordillo, Chief of Staff, agordillo@freelancersunion.org

Chair Lee, and members of the committee,

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Freelancers Union. Below you will find more information about our public programs and services.

About Freelancers Union

Founded in 1995, Freelancers Union is a membership organization serving more than 750,000 independent workers nationwide, with a significant concentration in New York City. Membership is free and open to freelancers across all industries. Freelancers Union provides direct services, advocacy, and community infrastructure to a workforce that is systematically excluded from the protections and benefits available to traditional employees.

The Need

New York City's independent workforce is large, growing, and underserved, with an estimated number of 1.3 million freelancers citywide. Freelancers — including creative workers, care workers, consultants, tradespeople, and gig economy participants — are ineligible for employer-sponsored benefits, excluded from most labor protections, and largely invisible in the public data and policy frameworks that shape city services. At the same time, structural shifts in the labor market driven by AI adoption, platform consolidation, and the erosion of traditional employment are accelerating the growth of this workforce and deepening its vulnerabilities. Freelancers Union is one of the few organizations in New York City providing free, direct services to this population at scale.

Services Supported by City Funding

A $400,000 citywide investment in FY27 would sustain the following programs:

Freelancers Legal Clinic — Free, one-on-one legal consultations with experienced attorneys covering contract review, non-payment disputes, business formation, and intellectual property

protection. For freelancers who cannot afford private counsel and have no employer HR department to turn to, this clinic is often the only accessible legal resource available. Since its inception two years ago, we have resolved over 600 cases, and helped recover over $1.5 million in funds owed to freelancers.

Tax & Financial Center — Expert guidance to help independent workers navigate self-employment taxes, set financial goals, plan for retirement, and build long-term stability without the safety net of employer-matched benefits or payroll withholding support.

Insurance Consultation Services — Personalized, one-on-one support from experienced brokers helping freelancers identify, compare, and enroll in health, dental, vision, disability, life, and liability coverage. Independent workers face a health insurance market that was not designed for them; this service ensures they can make informed decisions about coverage and cost.

Freelancers Hub — A free co-working space in New York City offering access to workshops, legal clinics, and professional development programming. The Hub functions as a community anchor for independent workers who lack access to workplace community and professional infrastructure. In the last year, we have hosted nearly 100 community events and workshops on a wide range of topics, where over 3,000 members attended.

The Request

Freelancers Union respectfully requests $400,000 in FY27 city funding to sustain these programs and continue providing free, accessible services to New York City's independent workforce. The increase from our FY26 Speakers' Initiative of $250,000 will help underwrite the expansion of our reach to NYC's freelancer community, legal services, and the prospective opening of a new Hub to be able to serve more members.

This investment reflects the city's commitment to the full breadth of its working population — not only those in traditional employment, but the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who are working hard, paying taxes, and building this city's economy without the protections their labor deserves.

Sincerely,

Elle Toussi, Interim Executive Director

Elsie Soto, Director Friends of Hart Island

[redacted]

Bronx, NY 10468

Good morning members of the Council,

My name is Elsie Soto, and I am the Director of Friends of Hart Island. I also hold degrees in Public Health, Health Education and Disability Studies, but most importantly, I have both my father and brother buried on Hart Island.

Hart Island is New York City's municipal cemetery located in the Bronx, but this is not just a Bronx issue. Hart Island serves families from all five boroughs, and the City's budget needs to reflect that.

While we appreciate the progress made since Hart Island was transferred from the Department of Correction to the Parks Department, families are still struggling just to spend meaningful time at loved one's gravesite.

Right now, family visitation is only offered two days a month, on weekends only, with visits lasting about 1.5 hours. Public tours are also offered two days a month, but those tours can last up to 3 hours. Families should never have less time at their loved one's gravesites than the general public visiting the island.

We are simply asking the City to expand services that already exist:

- More family visitation days.
- Weekday visitation options.
- Longer visitation hours.
- Expanded transportation access by extending the existing bus service to the Pelham train station.

Transportation remains one of the biggest barriers for families. The Pelham train station is about 3.6 miles from the ferry departure point, and there is only one MTA bus servicing City Island every 20 to 25 minutes. Missing that bus could mean missing your visit entirely.

There is already a passenger bus being used for Hart Island visitors, but it currently only drops people off at City Island Avenue, forcing families to wait for another bus that can often be unreliable. For those visiting from Staten Island, the trip can require taking a bus, a ferry, a train, another bus, and then a ferry just to spend a short amount of time grieving a loved one. Families are already carrying enough pain. Accessing a loved one's gravesite should not be this difficult.

The Parks Department held a Hart Island Transportation Study and community meeting in 2022, where it was proposed to extend the existing bus service to the Pelham train station. Years later, nothing has changed.

Hart Island holds over one million people, including those lost to HIV/AIDS, overdose, poverty, homelessness, and COVID-19. These families deserve dignity, compassion, and access.

As the Council discusses this year's budget, I ask you to remember that behind every grave on Hart Island is a family still trying to heal.

Thank you for your time.

Testimony of Friends of Mount Prospect Park to the New York City Council Finance Committee Regarding the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

delivered via zoom on June 10, 2026, by Hayley Gorenberg, President

Maybe it would help if we cut a big red ribbon to celebrate maintaining parks.

New Yorkers need basic care for parks, like staff and supplies to seed bare patches in our neighborhood park's well-used lawn, and clear debris from the drainage system. Maintenance helps Mount Prospect Park do what it was designed to do: provide shared, free, flexible green space – for soccer games and ball drills, off-leash mornings, picnics and birthday parties, and everyday access to nature.

Volunteers picking up litter and mulching around trees don't replace maintenance. And deferred care has left Mount Prospect Park disturbingly vulnerable to a harmful project that looks to spend eleven million taxpayer dollars to pave the lawn for a regional-scale concrete skateboard complex. Those pushing the plan suggest that thousands of petitioning park-lovers, Brooklyn Community Board 9, and environmental health, neighborhood and historical organizations opposing should stand down and accept it, because the City would also finally seed the lawn and clear the drains.

That's not leadership; it's coercion.

In the borough with the least green space per person, the plan would require spending extra public money on engineering, because paving so much permeable parkland is harmful. The plan cuts and threatens shade trees – in the borough with the worst tree canopy. It concentrates yet another skate facility in the borough with more than 40 percent of the City's total – many neglected, and mostly grouped around Mount Prospect Park.

Furthermore, the City Council passed the Adopt a Park law to raise money for maintenance, but records indicate the agreement here zeroed-out a million-dollar

payment from celebrity Tony Hawk's organization, which has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars lobbying New York officials.

Mayor LaGuardia dedicated Mount Prospect Park as a monument to good government. Good government today requires that people in power not exploit neglect**.**

Fund parks maintenance? Absolutely! Stop your spend for this flagrantly damaging project, contradicting laws the City Council passed to protect our physical, mental and financial wellbeing? You have the responsibility to do so.

Thank you.

***

Friends of Mount Prospect Park supplements our two minutes of live testimony with the following materials, and invites follow-up from the City Council. The vital unmet needs detailed by New Yorkers over the course of thirteen hours of testimony June 10, 2026, further reinforce the obligation of every City Council Member to ensure taxpayer millions are spent responsibly; the Mount Prospect Park expenditure is irresponsible.

We are fighting to fix the threat to this public greenspace, dedicated by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia in 1939 as a monument to good government. Over 3,000 petitioning[1] park-lovers, Brooklyn Community Board 9 (two resolutions detailing bad public policy[2] and calling for investigation[3]) and a host of diverse environmental health, historical and climate-conscious skateboarding organizations[4] are calling on you to save beloved, historic neighborhood green parkland, and shift any public investment to already-paved space.

We've been shut out for two years, despite (or because of?) the fact that this multimillion-dollar taxpayer-bankrolled, Adams-era scheme undermines…

- **Professed commitments to fairness and serving everyday New Yorkers, including through the Vital Parks initiative purportedly prioritizing making parks green, safe and equitable:** In addition to Brooklyn's ranking lowest for green space per person and tree canopy coverage, this construction would consume Mount Prospect Park's central open greenspace, beloved and heavily used for varied recreational purposes like kids' ball drills and free play, picnics and birthday parties, off-leash mornings with pets, soccer games, etc.[5] Plus – Brooklyn already has more than 40% of the entire city's

[1] https://www.friendsofmountprospectpark.org/petition
[2] https://www.nyc.gov/assets/brooklyncb9/downloads/pdf/2024/CB9MountProspectParkResolution.pdf
[3] https://www.nyc.gov/assets/brooklyncb9/downloads/pdf/2026/BKCB9-Mt-Prospect-Resolution.pdf
[4] https://www.friendsofmountprospectpark.org/public-statement
[5] https://www.instagram.com/p/DZVUv_wOM7E/
https://www.instagram.com/p/DBv5DdAume3/
https://www.instagram.com/p/DZIG3L7OZot/

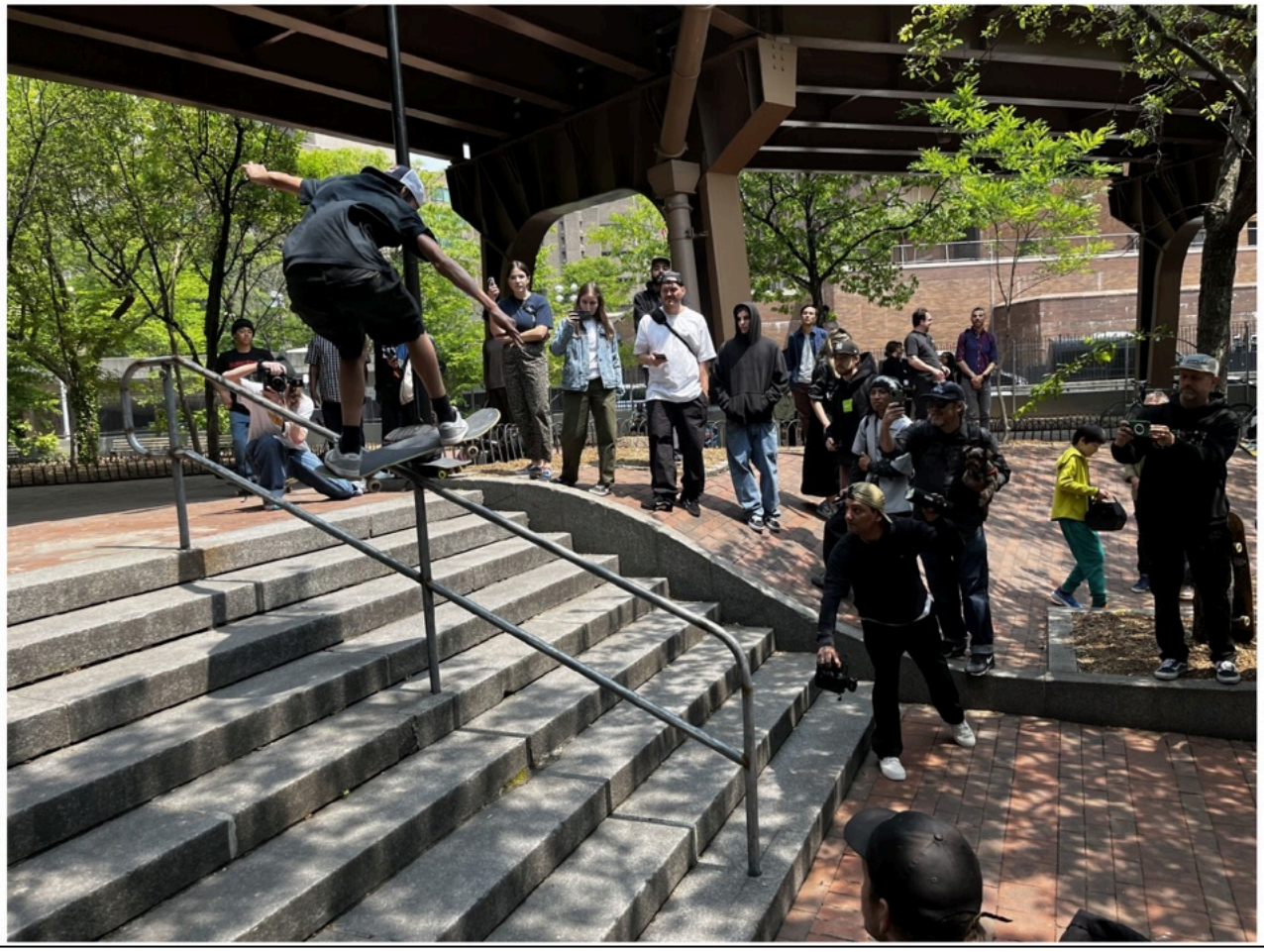
skate facilities – most clustered around Mount Prospect Park, many of those neglected for many years, while South Brooklyn is largely a skate "recreation desert." Playground-adjacent skate sites molder, unimproved despite pledges. Meanwhile, under-bridge sites prized by skateboarders for "cool" vibes and shade, and celebrated by Tony Hawk as "iconic," e.g., Brooklyn Banks, are consistently misrepresented in PR driving this project as suddenly "marginalizing" people who enjoy skateboarding. Here's the City's map of skate facilities in Brooklyn:



https://www.instagram.com/p/DIwXa-uR5jU/
https://www.instagram.com/p/DKl1loexRVB/

NYC Brings Back Iconic Brooklyn Banks Skate Park After 13 Years

The city is also adding pickleball and basketball courts, but skateboarders are most excited about the park's inclines and smooth surfaces.



https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-05-25/nyc-brings-back-iconic-brooklyn-banks-skate-park-after-13-years

- **Basic science and environmental health:** The project would replace free, flexibly used, naturally cooling green space with a new concrete heat island, despite the counsel of public health experts, groups like WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and even the City comptroller's office. They have extensively documented how thousands of New Yorkers are sickened – and nearly 600 die each year – from the impact of extreme (and worsening) heat, dangers of urban heat island impacts, and New Yorkers' lack of consistent access to cooling spaces, including public green space. Green space also ties to mental health and reduced urban violence.

- **NYC's City's Urban Forest Plan**: This construction would cut and endanger trees, after promises that none would be harmed.

- **Climate Budgeting**: Construction price tag also includes expensive additional engineering, legally required due to causing environmental harm by paving over existing permeable green parkland.

- **Participatory Budgeting**: "Down payment" kicking off the project was voted in a different district, and funding was secretly assembled, without disclosing that the site was on another district's green parkland, where constituents had no vote. Proponents bolstered the budget item with a petition later acknowledged to be signed mostly by people outside New York, and even changed the petition header and petition text to indicate Mount Prospect Park – but after people had already signed.

- **NYC Adopt a Park Law** (Admin. Code Section 18-133): The law requires (1) preserving the integrity of a temporarily "adopted" park, and (2) was passed to raise money to maintain City parkland. Pouring concrete throughout the center of a historic park fails to maintain its integrity. Furthermore, drafts of the agreement compared to the final document indicate a $1M contribution from the sponsor was zeroed-out, leaving only reduced "in-kind" contribution from the multimillionaire-led foundation with deep industry connections and more than $400,000 of lobbying expenditures targeting New York officials.

Site-specific dangers (and associated municipal liability) of building a skateboard complex on this secluded, hilltop park have been summarily dismissed, as if community members somehow wildly imagined them – when they are actually pulled from expert skateboarding materials.[6]

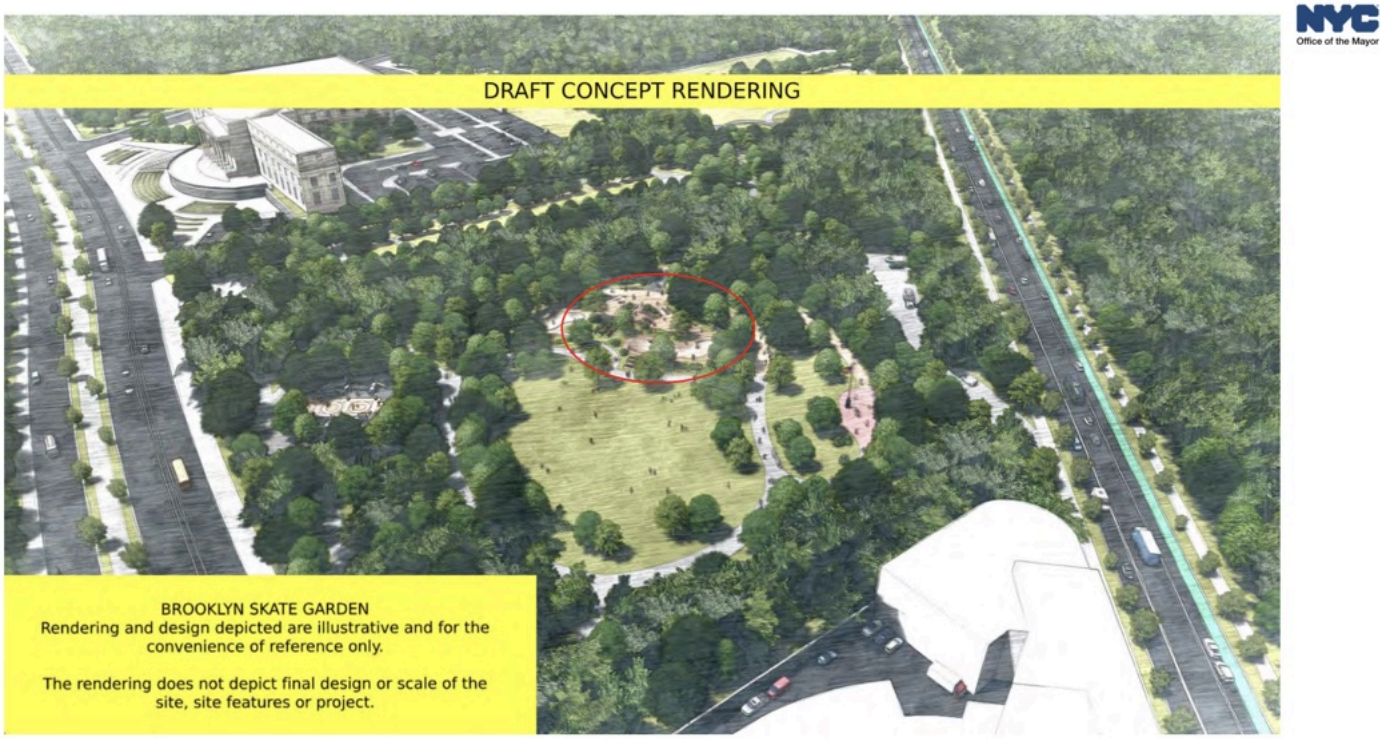
The project is riddled with deceptions. For example,

- There was no Feasibility Study conducted – though officials claimed there was. It is not credible that in overwhelmingly paved Brooklyn quality urban planning would lead to skate facility construction that destroys historic green parkland.
- Proponents used their years-developed Instagram to circulate an image depicting Mount Prospect Park – a National Register-eligible WPA park – as a vacant dirt lot. It appeared many attendees were unfamiliar with this modest-sized neighborhood park. The public was instructed to give input only on design elements for the skate facility.



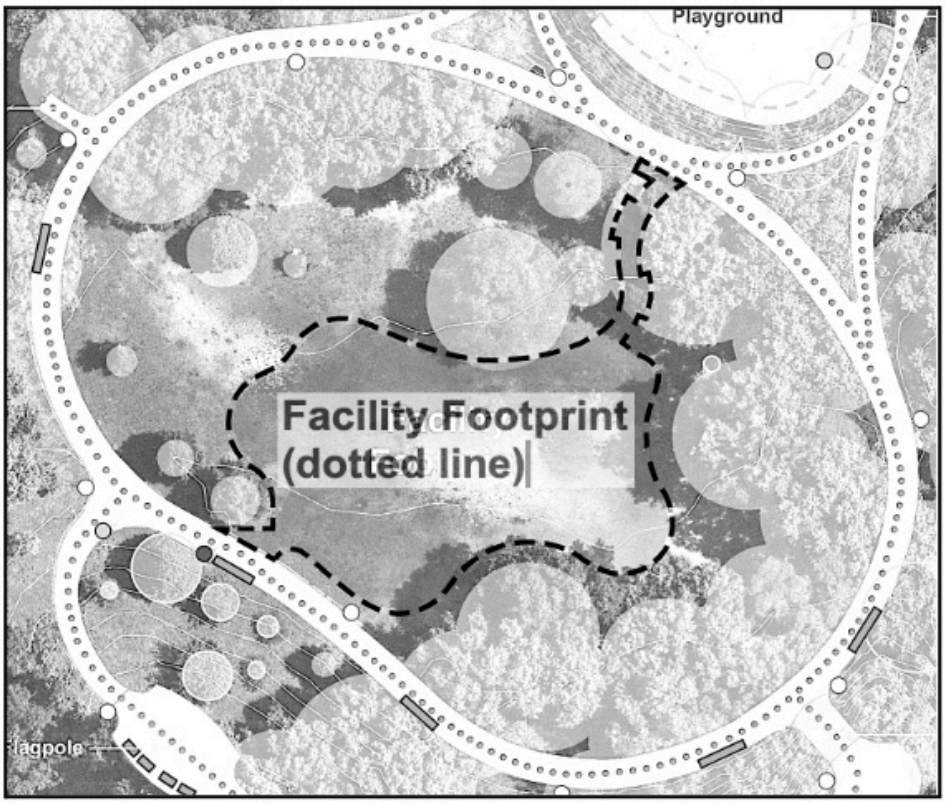
[6] https://www.friendsofmountprospectpark.org/safetyquestions

- The image given to the public in 2024 indicated small construction in a corner of the park; the actual design consumes the neighborhood park's central open space. And after telling the community we should wait until the design was released, and that we were premature in attempts to organize, officials presented the design for a vote by the Public Design Commission within days of disclosure.
- Proponents told the Public Design Commission of mayoral appointees that Brooklyn Community Board 8 "explicitly" specified Mount Prospect Park for construction and verified that form-letter emails in support originated in Brooklyn Community Board 8 – even though CB8 leadership vehemently denied both statements.[7]
- City officials publicly displayed this image in 2024, suggesting a small facility in a back corner of Mount Prospect Park:



But in 2026, officials disclosed a design that consumes the neighborhood park's central lawn and puts it behind barriers:

[7] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KJkuWnXyecEGatzwqM5zJaoa_k4RgEtZ/view?usp=drive_link



This project merits deep scrutiny. New Yorkers who need Mount Prospect Park for their health and wellbeing – now and in the future – have been steamrolled to-date. The City Council is entrusted with the public's money and wellbeing. **We look to each member of the Council to own and act upon your leadership responsibility before it is too late, and cherished green space central to community health is destroyed.**

Testimony Before the New York City Council Finance Committee
FY 2027 Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Submitted by the Board of Directors, Friends of the QueensWay

Honorable Chair Ty Hankerson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of continued funding for the QueensWay project, specifically Phase 1 - known as "MetHub" - for which New York City has already committed $50 million in capital funding.

Friends of the QueensWay is a volunteer-led grassroots community organization dedicated to transforming the long-vacant former Rockaway Beach Branch corridor into a vibrant, safe, and accessible public space that delivers meaningful benefits to surrounding neighborhoods. The QueensWay represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reclaim underutilized land and create new green space, recreational opportunities, and community connections for Central and Southern Queens.

Phase 1, MetHub, located between Metropolitan Avenue and Forest Park, is envisioned as a welcoming gateway to the broader QueensWay corridor. The project will provide open space, recreational amenities, community programming, and improved connectivity while laying the groundwork for future phases of development. Importantly, MetHub is positioned to deliver tangible community benefits in the near term.

Over the past several years, Friends of the QueensWay, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, has worked diligently to engage local residents, civic organizations, schools, and stakeholders to build support for this vision. Our outreach and stewardship efforts have included:

- Organizing dozens of cleanup events in Forest Park and along the QueensWay corridor;
- Participating in community engagement efforts through tabling at local farmers markets and Metro Village Community Day for three consecutive years;
- Engaging students at local schools, including Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School (MELS);
- Conducting presentations and briefings for civic organizations, including the Forest Park Trust and the Women's Club of Forest Hills;
- Organizing community 5K races in Forest Park; and
- Hosting site tours and informational sessions for members of the community and local stakeholders.

This sustained outreach reflects both our organization's long-term commitment and the broad, diverse base of support that exists for the QueensWay project.

The QueensWay is also supported by a strong coalition of elected officials at every level of government. This alignment presents a rare and important opportunity for the City to advance a transformative community investment with substantial public backing.

The need for additional accessible open space in this part of Queens is significant. Approximately 245,000 people live within one mile of the QueensWay corridor, spanning the neighborhoods of Rego Park, Forest Hills, Glendale, Richmond Hill, Woodhaven, and Ozone Park. Within a ten-minute walk of the corridor are:

- 28 schools;
- 7 subway stations; and
- 35 bus stops.

The QueensWay has the potential to become a critical recreational and environmental asset serving residents of all ages and backgrounds.

While we respect ongoing discussions regarding future transit possibilities along portions of the corridor, it is important to note that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has repeatedly identified reactivation of the Rockaway Beach Branch as a very low priority within its long-term capital planning process, including in the MTA's 2023 Twenty-Year Capital Needs Assessment (2025–2044). That assessment estimated potential costs at approximately $5.9 billion and did not prioritize the proposal relative to the agency's broader transit infrastructure needs.

By contrast, the QueensWay is a fully actionable project with FY27 funding committed and the ability to deliver near-term public benefits. Discontinuing or delaying the current work would mean losing a valuable opportunity to improve quality of life, expand access to green space, enhance public safety, and catalyze community and economic development in neighborhoods that deserve investment today.

The first 0.3-mile MetHub phase alone will create approximately five acres of new open space and serve as a proof of concept that can position the broader QueensWay project for future public grants and private philanthropic support.

The QueensWay is aligned with the City's priorities around parks, public health, environmental resilience, recreation, and equitable neighborhood investment. Most importantly, it is ready to move forward now.

For these reasons, Friends of the QueensWay respectfully urges the Committee and the City Council to support the continued allocation of $50 million in FY 2027 capital funding for the QueensWay MetHub project.

Thank you for your consideration.

girls inc.
of New York City

Official Appeal of Contract Award: EPIN 26026P0003 (Queens 01-Middle School) – TYWLS Astoria

Date: May 21, 2026

To: Sandra Escamilla-Davies, Commissioner, Department of Youth & Community Development
From: Girls Inc. of New York City
Subject: Formal Protest and Appeal Pursuant to PPB Rule § 2-10

Proposing Organization: Girls Inc. of New York City **District Borough Number (DBN):** 30Q286 **CC:** Wendy Johnson, Agency Chief Contracting Officer; Office of the NYC Comptroller, Bureau of Contract Administration)

Dear Commissioner Escamilla-Davies,

Girls Inc. of New York City (GINYC) is formally submitting this appeal regarding the non-selection of our proposal for the COMPASS/SONYC program at The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) of Astoria.

Since 2014, GINYC has served as a cornerstone of the TYWLS Astoria community—serving as the primary partner for the majority of the school's total existence. Over the past 12 years, we have evolved beyond the role of a service provider to become a vital, embedded component of the school's academic and social-emotional framework. As the school principal has expressed, GINYC is "woven into the cloth" of the school's culture and operations. To transition this site to a new provider at this stage would not only create an avoidable detriment to the school's daily operations and overall stability, but it would dismantle a decade of institutional knowledge and community trust that cannot be replicated nor replaced—ultimately disrupting a partnership currently performing at the highest standard of DYCD evaluation metrics.

We are filing this formal protest and request a re-evaluation of this determination based on the following:

1. Years of Consistent "Far Above Standards" Performance

GINYC's tenure at this site is defined by a consistent trajectory of excellence, systematically exceeding DYCD's most rigorous performance benchmarks. Our official DYCD records, verified through DYCD Connect, confirm:

- **2021-2022 School Year:** Achieved an **Above Standard** rating for Site Visit 1 and a **Meets Standard** rating for Site Visit 2.
- **2022-2023 School Year:** Achieved an **Above Standard** overall rating for the year's Site Visit evaluation.
- **2023-2024 School Year:** Demonstrated a trajectory of excellence with an **Above Standard** rating for Site Visit 1, a **Far Above Standard** rating for the Mid-Year Evaluation, a **Meets Standard** rating for Site Visit 2, and a **Far Above Standard** rating for the End of the Year Evaluation.

- **2024-2025 School Year:** Maintained peak performance with **Above Standard** ratings for Site Visit 1 and Site Visit 2, and **Far Above Standard** ratings for both the Mid-Year Evaluation and the End of the Year Evaluation.
- **Current School Year (2025-2026):** Both official Site Visits conducted during the current school year resulted in **Far Above Standard** ratings, and our current Mid-Year Evaluation also holds a **Far Above Standard** designation.

2. Multi-Year Trend of Exceptional Enrollment & Retention

GINYC's track record at Astoria is not merely a reflection of meeting contract requirements but a demonstration of the deep-rooted trust we have built within this community. Our team does not simply "deliver" a program; they embody our organizational values, creating a comprehensive sanctuary where students are seen, supported, and empowered as their full selves—academically, socially, and emotionally. This genuine passion and human connection have created a trajectory of growth that has seen enrollment increase every single year for the past five years:

- **FY 2025-2026:** 129 students enrolled (143% of goal).
- **FY 2024-2025:** 114 students enrolled (127% of goal).
- **FY 2023-2024:** 113 students enrolled (126% of goal).
- **FY 2022-2023:** 102 students enrolled (113% of goal).
- **FY 2021-2022:** 94 students enrolled (104% of goal).

Superior Retention: Our consistent retention rates are the direct result of 12 years of intensive community-building. While other organizations may share a similar broad mission, the institutional knowledge and generational trust we hold cannot be replicated or transferred to a new provider. Our official Rate of Participation (RoP) records confirm a standard of excellence that has remained steady even through the most challenging academic years:

- **FY 2025-2026 (Current): 71.56%** (As of late April 2026, well on target to surpass the 75% end-of-year benchmark).
- **FY 2024-2025: 99.24%** RoP
- **FY 2023-2024: 89.42%** RoP
- **FY 2021-2022: 76.95%** RoP

To disrupt this partnership would be to dismantle a safe haven that has become a fundamental pillar of the school's framework for over a decade. Our results prove that we are the only community-based organization with the demonstrated ability to maintain, and consistently exceed, this level of stability and excellence. Preserving this continuity is critical to the best interests of the TYWLS Astoria students and families we serve.

3. Proven Community Impact: Family Testimonials

The following testimonials are a direct reflection of GINYC's 12-year legacy at this site. As of this filing, we have received a rapidly growing response of over 160 formal petitions and testimonials—a number that continues to rise hourly. This overwhelming coalition of current families, alumnae, and past families provides definitive evidence of the generational trust and community stability we have cultivated. The voices below represent a decade of institutional history and the collective demand for GINYC's continued presence. They prove that our impact is not temporary, but lifelong.

- *"Girls Inc. is not just an after-school program; it's the reason my daughter feels brave enough to lead. You cannot replace 10 years of sisterhood with a new name on the door."* **– TYWLS Parent**

- *"The staff here know our girls' names, their struggles, and their dreams. They have helped my daughter through her toughest years. Losing them would be a heartbreak for this entire school."* – **7th Grade Parent**
- *"I was a student here, and now I see my younger sister thriving in Girls Inc. They are the heartbeat of Astoria."* **– Alumni/Family Response**

4. Explicit Leadership Support & Operational Momentum

Beyond community demand, our partnership is defined by the full and explicit support of the school's leadership. Principal Allison Persad has expressed firm opposition to this transition, citing GINYC as an indispensable pillar of the school's daily operations. Principal Persad has formally stated that GINYC is uniquely aligned with the school's core values, viewing our organization not merely as a vendor but as a native partner deeply woven into the school's institutional fabric. To remove GINYC is to disrupt the school's social-emotional ecosystem and academic support structure; Principal Persad's direct advocacy for GINYC underscores the operational risk inherent in this decision.

Furthermore, as of May 2026, we have already secured over 50% of our projected enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year. This high level of early registration—achieved through our active collaboration in current school-led orientations for incoming students—demonstrates the strong demand for our services and our deep integration within the community. Our impact extends even to families brand new to the school who have already chosen GINYC as their provider. We are ready to maintain this momentum; to stop it now contradicts the true interest of the families we serve and ignores the explicit needs of the school leadership.

Conclusion

The consistent "Far Above Standards" ratings across 12 consecutive years, combined with our current 143% enrollment surge, demonstrate that GINYC is performing at the highest possible level. To move away from a long-term partner that has achieved a 99.24% RoP is a high-risk decision that contradicts the "Best Value" procurement standard and ignores the demonstrated needs of the Astoria community.

Beyond the data, GINYC offers unmatched operational certainty. We are a turnkey solution with a fully recruited student body and a staff already integrated into the school's fabric. Replacing us with an unproven provider at this site creates an unnecessary and significant risk of service disruption for the students of TYWLS Astoria.

Given our 12-year proven track record, the firm advocacy of Principal Allison Persad, and the clear voice of the Astoria families, we respectfully request a formal re-evaluation of the award for this site. We are ready to continue our mission without interruption.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to present this appeal.

GMHC
END AIDS. LIVE LIFE.

GMHC Testimony: NYC Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing (T2026-1906)

June 5, 2026

Thank you, Chair Schulman and members of the Health Committee and Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jason Cianciotto, and I am the Vice President of Public Policy and External Affairs at GMHC. Founded in 1982 as the world's first HIV and AIDS services organization, GMHC continues to support the most vulnerable populations in NYC with comprehensive psychosocial services in a safe and culturally competent environment. We remain committed to our mission amidst federal policies and regulations that are so harmful to the populations we serve. No matter what, GMHC will continue to serve New Yorkers living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

In 2025, GMHC served 7,562 clients who lived throughout all five boroughs of NYC. Our clients represented NYC's poorest and most vulnerable residents:

- 45% were known to be living with HIV and AIDS.
- On intake over 78% lived under the FPL.
- Over 47% were people of color and 33% identified as Hispanic or Latino.
- 62% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning.
- 5% were transgender, gender non-conforming, or nonbinary (TGNCNB), a significantly higher proportion than that of the NYC population overall.
- Over 37% were ages 50+.

Upon intake, most of our clients arrived with dire needs of food security (73%), access to health and other safety net benefits (63%), legal services (61%), and mental health support (46%). In addition to serving clients at GMHC's facility, we partnered with QCare+ to offer telehealth services, successfully providing PrEP to 1,852 clients, 87% of whom filled their prescriptions through GMHC's 340B pharmacy program. Overall, a total of 1,915 clients utilized GMHC's telehealth and pharmacy services.

In 2025, GMHC provided supportive housing services to 424 unique clients with histories of chronic homelessness through our connections with the Federal Department of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD) and the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program. This was a nearly 10% increase over the number of housing clients served in 2024. In fact, GMHC started four HOPWA programs in 2025: HOPWA Families; HOPWA Mental Health; HOPWA Self-Pay; and HOPWA Substance Use.

I testify today in support of the Ending the Epidemic (EtE) coalition's FY27 City budget priorities and in support of GMHC's initiative and discretionary funding applications.

<u>EtE Coalition Budget Priorities</u>

1. **Increase and baseline funding for the NYC City Council's HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative to $15M**: In light of the continued uncertainty in federal support for the HIV response, the troubling increase in new HIV diagnoses in NYC for each of the past four years, and the challenge posed by the stark and unacceptable inequities in HIV's impact on Black, Hispanic, and low-income New Yorkers, we urgently ask the NYC City Council to increase FY27 HIV/AIDs Pathways to Care initiative funding to $15M. This increase should enhance and expand the community-based services repeatedly demonstrated to be most effective for engaging disparately impacted New Yorkers in effective HIV prevention and care. We also respectfully request that the Council baseline this funding so that providers and clients have the certainty of ongoing support for these critical services.
2. **Fully fund NYC Sexual Health Clinics at $10M annually, baseline, and enhance services:** The NYC Sexual Health Clinics are a core component of the City's 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. Annually, these clinics serve more than 35,000 New Yorkers and provide over 60,000 visits. However, the clinics in Riverside and Crown Heights that were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic remain closed. Consequently, the number of visits to clinics has not returned to pre-COVID-19 numbers, despite *increased* need, as rates STIs are on the rise, PrEP uptake among Black and Latino/Hispanic communities disproportionately affected by HIV continues to trail uptake among White communities, and progress toward bringing down new HIV diagnoses has slowed. It is critical to reopen these clinics. 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:

a. Expand clinic hours of operation and the services offered at each clinic, including PrEP initiation and continuity of care, medication abortion, contraception services, and supportive services (e.g., social work services, patient navigation).
b. Launch new clinic services, including hepatitis B vaccine, hepatitis C treatment, syringe service programs (SSPs), and gender-affirming care.
c. Establish youth-focused and women-focused practices at one or more clinics.
d. Establish "Quickie Labs" at additional clinics (currently, only Chelsea and Fort Greene have Quickie Labs) to provide "express," automated and streamlined STI testing.
e. Increase awareness of clinic services, including expanded and new services, through social marketing campaigns and community outreach.
f. Support continued necessary facility and infrastructure renovations at clinic sites.

3. **Increase funding for the Council's Peer Specialists Initiative to $5.7M to include dedicated resources for HIV Peer Specialists**: The additional $1.2M in initiative funding would grant $850,000 to CBOs to hire people living with and at risk for HIV in paid Peer Specialists positions, as well as $350,000 to Path to Jobs, Inc. to match Peer Specialists to jobs, offer technical assistance/capacity building to CBOs, and provide ongoing support to ensure successful Peer placements to the entire network of Peer Specialists-funded providers.
4. **Invest and baseline $4M to advance PrEP equity**: Despite its proven efficacy, PrEP uptake remains alarmingly low among Black and Hispanic New Yorkers, women, and those over 50—populations disproportionately impacted by HIV. In 2024, Black and Hispanic individuals made up 85% of new HIV diagnoses in New York City but only 25% of PrEP prescriptions. Women accounted for 24% of new HIV diagnoses but only 8% of PrEP prescriptions. NYC must act boldly to eliminate these disparities by investing in community-rooted outreach and scaling access to the latest prevention tools, including groundbreaking ultra-long-acting injectable PrEP technology that requires just two doses per year and has shown 96–100% efficacy in preventing HIV in clinical trials.

5. **Increase and baseline funding for the Trans Equity Programs Initiative to $10M**: The unprecedented attacks on TGNCNB people and their rights nationwide are meant to paralyze, frighten, and divide. As these new challenges exacerbate ongoing needs for mental health, substance use treatment, and food, the coalition expects the needs of TGNCNB service providers like GMHC to continue to increase dramatically in FY27. To meet this need, the coalition urges the Council to not only increase and baseline funding, but also to make the application process more accessible by contracting a technical assistance organization to provide free support to eligible applicants who have been left out of previous funding cycles and to prioritize trans-led organizations for funding.

The following summarizes the FY27 NYC Council Initiative funding requests GMHC submitted, including, where relevant, key program and service metrics.

<u>Trans Equity Programs (TEP)</u>

GMHC respectfully requests $555,000 to sustain our TGNCNB Hub, an innovative and responsive care navigation and support program for TGNCNB New Yorkers living with or at high risk for HIV. 5% of GMHC's clients identify as TGNCNB, a significantly higher proportion than that of the NYC population overall (~0.5%). Our TGNCNB Hub provides a safe, affirming, and non-judgmental space for dedicated programs that have a proven record of significantly improving the well-being of TGNCNB New Yorkers. Weekly empowerment groups and other services enable these clients to receive lifesaving resources, gender-affirming materials, and interpersonal advice and care, as well as internal and external referrals to lifesaving care.

During the 2025 grant period, *Project Transcend*, a client-centered approach to service navigation, held 39 weekly peer empowerment sessions that served a total of 995 duplicated participants, with 25 new clients enrolled. It also provided HIV navigation services for 109 unique clients, 49 of them living with HIV. Most of the navigation services were for primary care, transportation, treatment adherence, and housing. Based on need, some of the clients were referred to our Testing Center for HIV/STI/HCV testing and PrEP services. Between January and December 2025:

- 139 TGNC participants were tested for HIV.

- 15 clients received PrEP services.
- GMHC distributed 96 Gender Neutral Supply kits
- GMHC hosted a special "Transgiving" holiday event, dedicated to providing resources for TGNCNB clients. 30 clients attended, including six new members.
- GMHC hosted the annual TGNCNB Self Care Conference, attended by 61 participants.
- GMHC's legal department hosted 9 TGNCNB-focused webinars that reached 76 participants.

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative

GMHC respectfully requests a $60,000 renewal to support our long-standing legal services program that addresses issues of permanency planning, discrimination, and civil rights for people living with HIV and AIDS. GMHC has offered legal assistance since its founding over 40 years ago. Our attorneys and accredited immigration representatives help clients navigate HIV-specific legal challenges, particularly those related to housing, healthcare access, and immigration.

Many vulnerable New Yorkers, including those living with HIV, need advice on their legal rights and options, particularly regarding housing access, employment, healthcare, and education, due to unjust discrimination based on their circumstances. GMHC is a trusted legal resource for New Yorkers living with and at high risk for HIV and AIDS. Our legal services are highly accessible to people living in all five boroughs. Our deep history in providing legal services to people living with HIV and AIDS makes us uniquely positioned to serve this community. Our legal services are open to all clients and include citizenship discussion, legal consultations, direct representation in hearings, and client advocacy. In 2025, across our range of legal services GMHC provided counsel and representation to over 500 clients, totaling 2,391 hours.

HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care

GMHC respectfully requests a total of $573,851 to support our HIV & STI Testing services. This includes $523,851 for services provided at our Midtown Manhattan facility, as well as $50,000 for our mobile testing unit, which provides services throughout the five

boroughs, at citywide testing events, and in partnership with five colleges/universities: CUNY Graduate School, LaGuardia Community College, Lehman College, Manhattan School of Music, and New York University. GMHC provides free integrated HIV and STI testing, including for Hepatitis C, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia. Since 2022, GMHC has operated a 340B pharmacy, which supplies our testing services with rapid and at-home testing tools. With our partners, Callen-Lorde and Mount Sinai, we provide linkage to medical care for clients living with HIV, as well as PrEP and PEP access to those at high risk of new exposure to HIV.

In 2025, GMHC provided over 2,200 HIV tests and over 7,500 STI tests. Additionally, through GMHC's continued partnership with QCare+, over 2,130 clients were supplied PrEP. Of those clients, over 2,100 filled their prescriptions through GMHC's 340B pharmacy program, with many also receiving their PrEP care from QCare+ telehealth services.

Pride at Work Initiative

GMHC respectfully requests $50,000 to support our workforce development programs, which include comprehensive vocational assessments, training, job placement assistance, and retention services to ensure clients experience successful transitions to work and achieve greater financial independence. In 2025, we served a total of 148 clients with counseling and training services, and 81 (55%) were new clients. 35 clients were employed in part-time or full-time jobs or internships. 23% of these clients reached the 30-day employment milestone. All participants placed into jobs receive career counseling, mentoring, and connection to additional training, as needed. We conduct follow-up to obtain wage information, employment verification and other key information at 30-day, 90-day, 180- day and 365-day milestones. GMHC provides lifelong career support regardless of current job status or goals.

Thank you again for the Council's critical support for GMHC and the broader effort to end the HIV epidemic in NYC. Any questions about this testimony or GMHC in general can please be directed to: Jason Cianciotto, V.P. of Public Policy & External Affairs, by email at JasonC@GMHC.org or cell phone at [redacted].

NYC Council Testimony
May 28, 2026, 12:00pm
Executive Budget Hearing, Children & Youth

TESTIMONY

Thank you Chair Lee, Chair Steven and members of both committees for the opportunity to testify today. I am Laura Louison, Vice President of Programs at Good+Foundation. For 25 years, Good+ has worked to dismantle multi-generational poverty by providing families with essential goods through community-based organizations across New York City.

Engaging fathers is central to our work. The evidence is clear: father involvement is one of the strongest predictors of long-term family stability. Yet despite this, the vast majority of family services remain focused on mothers and children. Under-resourced fathers are too often left out — sometimes unintentionally, but with real consequences for families.

For the past 15 years, Good+Foundation has been working to change that. We help community organizations strengthen father engagement practices and intentionally include dads in their programs. The results speak for themselves: since 2020, our

partners have reported a significant increase in father participation among the families they serve.

I am here today on behalf of Good+ because all fathers in NYC need support and resources to thrive as men and caregivers. We applaud New York City's investment in fatherhood programs through DYCD's Fatherhood Initiative. The new cohort of community-based organizations funded this year now serving fathers across all five boroughs — with a goal of reaching 3,000 men — represents exactly the kind of targeted, systems-level commitment that changes lives and communities. Good+Foundation is proud to support these programs with donations of essential goods, training and technical assistance.

We urge the Council to continue and grow this investment. Fatherhood programs are not a peripheral service or ‘nice to have’; they are a must have and a proven strategy for improving outcomes for children and families. Sustaining funding for community-based organizations delivering fatherhood programs is essential.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of New York's families and for allowing us to testify on this important topic. We look forward to continuing this work with all of you.

TESTIMONY

The New York City Council

Committee on Finance

Re: Executive Budget

Grand St. Settlement
80 Pitt Street
New York, New York

June 10, 2026

Testimony of Grand St. Settlement
To the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Regarding The Executive Budget

June 10, 2026

Aaron M. Sanders, Deputy Director of Government & Community Relations

Thank you, Thank you Chair Lee and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit written testimony of the FY27 budget.

Grand St. Settlement (Grand Street) is a 110-year-old multi-service Settlement House. We serve over 18,000 New Yorkers through vital early childhood, youth, and older adult programs with impactful benefits assistance in the Lower East Side, Manhattan, and recently the Bronx.

We are also a member of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), a policy and social change organization, representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach 800,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. As a member organization, we work collaboratively to support early childhood education. Additionally, we are a member of the Day Care Council of New York, a membership organization dedicated to the expansion of quality child care and family services.

In my testimony today, I will update the committee on budgetary needs for the community we serve. As Grand Street Settlement noted in our Preliminary Budget testimonies before the Committees on Aging, Children & Youth, Contracts, Education, the communities we serve continue to face significant challenges that require sustained public investment. While we are encouraged that several of our priorities were reflected in the Executive Budget, critical gaps remain. Many essential programs that support children, families, older adults, immigrants, and other vulnerable New Yorkers continue to rely on City Council Funding.

Early Childhood Education and 2-Care

As a longtime provider of early childhood education services, Grand Street Settlement has seen firsthand the transformative impact that affordable, high-quality child care has on children, families, and communities. We are encouraged that early childhood education is receiving the attention and investment it deserves, and we commend the Mamdani Administration and the New York City Council for their commitment to strengthening and expanding the city's early childhood system. We are particularly eager for the implementation of free child care options for two year olds, which is based on the 2-Care proposal that we championed. This initiative is led by our partners at New York United for Childcare and United Neighborhood Houses.

Child Care Outreach Funding

The FY26 Adopted Budget included one-time funding for early childhood education outreach to help families better understand and access available programs. This investment has been critical in helping families navigate complex enrollment systems, understand their child care options, and connect to services that meet their needs. For the diverse communities Grand Street serves across New York City—including immigrant families, multilingual households, and families facing economic barriers—effective outreach is often the difference between accessing care and being left behind.

It is especially important that outreach efforts include robust multilingual support and culturally responsive engagement strategies that can effectively reach families with limited English proficiency and others who may face challenges navigating eligibility and enrollment requirements. Grand Street and many of our community-based partners provide this type of trusted outreach and enrollment assistance and have seen firsthand how it increases access to early childhood programs while supporting stable and predictable enrollment for providers. We are happy to see that the budget acknowledges the value of this work by benchmarking $5 million in child care outreach funding.

NYCBenefits

Since 2023, the NYCBenefits initiative has helped New Yorkers secure and maintain public benefits to meet their food, housing, healthcare, and other basic needs. This high-impact program is a partnership between the Department of Social Services (DSS), 35 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and three Technical Assistance (TA) providers. Settlement houses in UNH's network operate 40% of the NYC Benefits contracts (15 programs).

NYCBenefits' work is absolutely critical now in the face of an increasing affordability crisis in New York City and an attack on the social safety net at the federal level, but the program is in jeopardy: NYCBenefits was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget. If NYCBenefits loses funding, tens of thousands of New Yorkers will lose targeted benefits assistance and over 400

nonprofit staff will be impacted. Furthermore, it is vital that funding be secured so as not to disrupt operations and service delivery within DSS.

The City must:

- **Include $9.75 million for NYCBenefits funding in the June FY27 Adopted Budget.**
- **Baseline $9.75 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28-FY32 to ensure program continuity.**
- **Include $5 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28-FY32 to allow for its expansion to serve additional youth and families.**

The impact of this work speaks volumes: In the first 9 months of FY26, NYCBenefits social service providers served 28,000 low-income New Yorkers, already on track to outpace the 34,000 New Yorkers assisted in FY25.

Thus far in FY26, clients that applied for or recertified for SNAP with NYCB CBOs have received over $20 million in annual benefits. In addition to feeding families, this money goes right back into NYC's economy.

CBO staff help clients citywide enroll in or renew essential benefits that range from SNAP, Medicaid, and Cash Assistance to FHEPS, One-Shot Deals, and Fair Fares. Staff serve clients from all 200+ NYC zip codes and collectively provide services in 54 languages. This local, linguistically and culturally responsive one-to-one support leads to more successfully completed applications, upholds client dignity, and makes benefits more accessible in diverse communities. These resources help families put food on the table, keep up with rent, access health coverage, afford child care, and navigate the increasing cost of living in New York City. Ensuring residents can access these supports is essential to promoting economic security and helping communities thrive.

Without sustained funding for NYCBenefits, thousands of New Yorkers could lose access to a trusted resource that helps them secure essential support, including food assistance, housing stability, healthcare, and other critical benefits. At a time when many families are struggling to make ends meet, eliminating this funding would weaken the City's ability to connect residents with the resources they need to thrive. We ask that the City include NYCBenefits funding in the FY27 Adopted Budget and establish it as a recurring investment to ensure providers can continue delivering this vital service and advancing a more equitable future for all New Yorkers.

NORCS In Every Neighborhood

As a provider serving older adults across New York City, Grand Street Settlement sees firsthand the growing need for community-based supports that help older New Yorkers age with dignity, remain connected to their neighbors, and continue living safely in their homes. Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs play a critical role in achieving these goals by providing access to social services, wellness programming, benefits assistance and community engagement that improves and strengthens quality of life for older adults. Grand Street **recommends that New York City include a new investment of $10 million in the FY27 budget to ensure that there is a NORC in every neighborhood.**

As New York City's older adult population continues to grow, significant disparities remain in access to NORC services across many neighborhoods. Currently, there are 31 neighborhoods without access to them. Thousands of older adults live in communities without a contracted NORC program despite demonstrated need. Expanding NORC programs citywide would help ensure that older New Yorkers, regardless of where they live, can access the supports necessary to age in place and remain active members of their communities.

We support increased investment in NORC expansion and encourage New York City to seize upcoming opportunities through NYC Aging's procurement process and new state investments to establish additional NORC programs in underserved neighborhoods. A meaningful expansion of NORCs would strengthen the City's aging services infrastructure and help create a more age-friendly, equitable, and inclusive New York for older adults.

NORC Council Initiative

The City Council NORC initiative provides vital supplemental funding for programs, and also independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. Since the Council began providing these funds in 2019, the standard hourly rate to hire nurses has increased from $85 to approximately $100 per hour. This rising cost must be reflected in future allocations to ensure programs can continue delivering essential care.

Council initiative funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs, and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council’s enthusiasm for the NORC program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. **In FY 2027, the City must baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council’s NORC Initiative of approximately $1 million, and continue to fund the Council’s NORC Initiative funding.**

Congregate Meals for Older Adults

Rising inflation rates have affected senior meals programs, especially food costs for congregate meals. There has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget at older adult centers (OACs) in years, since at least the last RFP in 2021 which predated a period of abnormally high inflation. Food costs have reached record highs, placing an immense strain on an already chronically underfunded meal program. Rising food costs have made it increasingly difficult for providers to provide culturally-competent and nutritious meals. At Grand Street, we see firsthand the necessity for healthy congregate meals. In addition to the physical benefits, our congregate meal services enable older adults to develop social connections.

Our coalition partners at UNH documented the dramatic increase in meal costs in our 2025 report, ***Let's Eat: The Need to Invest in Congregate Meals for Older New Yorkers***, which highlighted Census data on the growing financial hardship of older New Yorkers and the impact of inflation on their mental and economic well-being. As one example noted in the report, inflation has gone up by 22% for food since older adult center contracts began in 2021, though some providers reported wholesale food price increases that have gone up as much as 76%. The costs faced by providers have significantly outpaced general inflation rates. Still, the City has not provided any new funding for food in that time period. Older adult centers are doing the best they can with extremely limited funds to ensure seniors receive the meals they need.

Concurrently federal reductions to SNAP and ABAWD regulations are driving more older New Yorkers to older adult centers to utilize their meal programming. This places an even greater strain on meal programs at Older Adult Centers across the City, most of which are already stretched thin and lack the resources to accommodate the growing number of participants. The time is now to plan for expanded units at OACs and ensure additional funding to support expected growth in food needs, including ensuring that culturally competent, nutritious meals remain consistently available.

The City must ensure inflation costs are included annually in future budgets for congregate meals at OACs. The City must **increase food budgets at older adult centers with a $60 million investment in FY27 to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services**. This $60 million figure is consistent with an analysis of the on-the-ground needs from UNH and our advocacy partners, taking into account inflation rates and the true cost of food for OACs, which has risen much faster than inflation rates**. We also urge contract flexibility and additional funding to meet the expected growing demand for congregate meals in light of federal SNAP cuts and ABAWD requirements for SNAP.** Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced.

Wage Equity Bill (Int. 0452)

Int 0452, introduced by Council Member Althea Stevens, would help close the pay gap between nonprofit and government human services workers, and make progress towards true wage equity.

The City is a primary funder of human services nonprofits through contracts, and therefore a primary setter of wages for nonprofit human services workers. When the City offsets costs by outsourcing essential services to nonprofits, it does so by paying nonprofit employees less than City employees for the same work.

The impact of this bill cannot be understated: this legislation would codify a system that provides equitable pay to nonprofit human services workers who are predominantly women and from BIPOC communities comparable to their City counterparts. Further, the legislation stipulates transparency and accountability in compensation, ensuring that every human services worker is paid fairly based on their qualifications and experience.

We urge the Council to adopt a budget that preserves and expands these critical investments in early childhood education, benefits access, aging services, and food security so that all New Yorkers—regardless of age, income, language, or neighborhood—have the opportunity to thrive. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing to partner with the City to build stronger, healthier, and more equitable communities.

Executive Budget Hearing - Finance Committee

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

[Isidore Douglass-Skinner, 2nd Year YEP Intern, Green Guerillas]

Thank you to Chair Lina Lee and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Isidore Douglass-Skinner, and I am a member of Green Guerillas located in Brooklyn.

I have worked with Green Guerillas for 3 years, and I have seen the importance of green spaces first-hand. They're places for children to play, and teens to slow down and relax or learn life lessons about teamwork and community-building. Please remember, youth aren't our future, they're our **now**.

I appreciate the $15 million baselined in funding to NYC Parks workers but GreenThumb's 17 seasonal staff also needs to be baselined, along with $2.6 million dollars restored to their funding, as they are the primary support system for more than 550 gardens across NYC.
I implore that you introduce legislation to permanently protect all NYC community gardens on city-owned land from rezoning and development. Under Eric Adams, I personally collected signatures to protect gardens from development, and saw how emphatically people wanted to protect their communities while also building new ones.
As a youth intern at Green Guerillas, I also request that you Invest in more jobs for youth in green spaces, and support environmental education and advocacy in gardens. At my internship, we learn and grow as people, as advocates, and as community members. We develop a greater appreciation for not just green spaces, but for our beautiful City as a whole.
Lastly, I ask that you strengthen funding for the Get Stuff Clean Initiative to combat rodent infestations and illegal dumping. Illegal dumping is undoubtedly the biggest thing I've seen gardeners (both seasoned and new) respond to when I ask them to sign the Green Guerillas Policy Platform.

Thank you,

Isidore Douglass-Skinner,

Green Guerillas

Guild for Exceptional Children

1273 57th STREET
BROOKLYN, NY 11219
(718) 435-2554
ewhalen@gecbklyn.org

June 9, 2026

To the Committee on Finance,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Elizbeth Hope Whalen and I am a staff member of The Guild for Exceptional Children's 4410 Preschool Special Education program.

4410 preschool special education programs have existed for decades serving NYC's students with disabilities. Our highly trained school staff includes special education teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists who work with students with complex educational and physical needs. Placements for preschoolers with special needs requires the thoughtful development of individualized educational plans. Without qualified special education staff, the promise of early intervention for NYC's most vulnerable students will fall short. **Salary parity needs to be addressed for 4410 programs to continue to provide services to students with special needs.** Our educators and therapists commit years of their time and financial resources to obtaining the training and certification required to serve this unique 4410 population. We cannot continue to find and keep these highly qualified professionals in a competitive city like New York, without help from Albany to equitably fund 4410 schools.

I urge the City Council to ensure 4410 programs are fully and equitably incorporated into plans and budgets for universal childcare.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hope Whalen

Noah Bullard | noah@harrimanprograms.org

Harriman Summer Camp S-11, Inc Written Testimony| City Council Hearing June 10, 2026

I am writing as CEO/Executive Director of Harriman Programs, a long-standing provider of afterschool programming serving New York City students and families. After watching the May 28th City Council Committee on Youth Services FY27 budget hearing, I felt compelled to share concerns regarding the recent DYCD COMPASS After School Programs RFP process and its impact on providers, schools, and communities.

For more than a decade, afterschool provider selection largely involved meaningful input from school principals who understood the unique needs of their students and communities. Under the recent COMPASS RFP, providers were encouraged to engage schools and secure principal support, leading organizations like Harriman to invest significant time and resources in interviews, relationship-building, staffing, and program planning.

Harriman participated in seventeen school interviews, and fifteen principals ranked us as their first choice, including several schools with which we had no prior relationship. Yet principal rankings ultimately appeared to have minimal influence on award decisions. This has raised serious concerns among providers and school leaders about how community voices were incorporated into the process.

Additional concerns center on scoring consistency and transparency. Harriman submitted substantially similar applications across multiple schools, yet scores varied by approximately twenty points. During our debrief with DYCD, we were informed that different evaluators reviewed applications and that individual scoring details would require a Freedom of Information Law request. Such disparities raise legitimate questions regarding evaluator consistency, transparency, and accountability.

The consequences extend beyond one organization. Providers across the city made substantial investments in staffing, recruitment, training, partnerships, and operational readiness based on expectations created during the procurement process. Many organizations are now facing uncertainty affecting employees, students, families, and school communities.

We respectfully request that your administration review the COMPASS RFP process and consider a localized review mechanism for protested awards that includes school principals, parent representatives, community stakeholders, and DYCD leadership. Such a process would

strengthen transparency, restore confidence in procurement decisions, and better reflect the needs of the communities these programs are intended to serve.

Harriman remains committed to serving New York City's children and families. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our experience and provide additional information that may assist your administration in ensuring a fair, transparent, and community-centered process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Noah Bullard
CEO/Executive Director
Harriman Programs
noah@harrimanprograms.org

Testimony of Jeremy Reiss
Executive Vice President for Partnerships & Innovation
New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
May 28, 2026

Thank you to Chair Stevens, Chair Lee, and all Committee members for the opportunity to testify. Founded in 1893, Henry Street's mission is to open doors of opportunity to enrich lives and enhance human progress for Lower East Side residents and other New Yorkers through social services, arts, and health care programs. Throughout our history, Henry Street has consistently launched innovative and community-informed solutions to address our neighbors' evolving needs, and one of our key program areas is youth services, which serve 4,000+ youth annually through Early Childhood Education, afterschool programming, and youth development programming.

We would like to highlight a critical need for increased funding for center-based COMPASS programming. While the Department of Youth and Community Development has made great strides in recent years in increasing the number of school-based COMPASS slots available, the number of slots for center-based programs have remained stagnant. As a result, there was intense competition for the limited number of available slots for center-based programming, and Henry Street's Boys & Girls Republic (BGR), was one of many existing COMPASS programs that lost funding in DYCD's latest procurement.

We believe that rather than limit the number of available slots in a district with such acutely high needs, all eligible, qualified providers with proposals of merit should have been awarded to meet the full community need. The fact that multiple centers lost their existing contracts, despite submitting qualified proposals, demonstrates that there is still an intense need in our community for increased center-based programming. This is especially true for BGR.

BGR is an established program with a track record of performance and a unique self-government program design. BGR has been a trusted neighborhood anchor serving Manhattan's Lower East Side since 1930. Under Henry Street's leadership since 1997, BGR has provided life-changing services for thousands of children and families with afterschool programming for close to 100 years.

The loss of our COMPASS Elementary slots at BGR will directly impact the 100 highly vulnerable children and families we served for the past 20 years, with disruption in service continuity and increased travel and scheduling hardship to families.

BGR serves a population of primarily youth/families of color, with approximately 20% who are experiencing homelessness at any given time. BGR also specializes in working with a high number of neurodivergent youth

in CD3, featuring a tailored state-of-the art sensory room, paraprofessional staff, and comprehensive resources.

BGR is also situated directly within a NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing community (located onsite at Wald Houses and adjacent to Riis Houses), and serves a high proportion of students/families residing in the developments who depend on this service.

We believe that the need for increased slots in our community was obfuscated by the income disparity that exists in Manhattan Community District 3 as the result of gentrification. CD 3 presently has the highest level of income disparity of all 59 community districts in the City. While many high-income areas surround the program, BGR itself is located in two of the lowest-income census tracts in the neighborhood.

Once again, we urge the New York City Council to find increased funding for center-based COMPASS programs. The latest procurement did not fully meet needs across the City, and many qualified and longstanding programs are at risk of closing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue on behalf of Henry Street Settlement. If you have any questions, please reach out to Jeremy Reiss at jreiss@henrystreet.org.

Enclosed: Letters of support from local families

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April 15, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
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Sincerely,

Jessica Sorel

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Sincerely,

Alicia Torres

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Sincerely, Zayyo. Isiah German

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Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
2 Lafayette Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani, Speaker Menin, and Commissioner Escamilla-Davies:

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Sincerely,

Nia Davies

HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT
265 Henry Street
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fx: 212.791.5710
henrystreet.org

April 15, 2026

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City Hall
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Sincerely, Mehbub Khan

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Sincerely,

Ciara Beau-Hall.

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Sincerely,

Jennifer Thejes

Zarriah Johnson

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Adan Gomez

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Sincerely,

SII 1-308 without prejudice

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Sincerely,

Marbon Anner

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Sincerely,

MICHAEL ALLEN

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Sincerely,

Theresa Miller
Angela Miller
Faith Nelson

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Sincerely,

Rosa Lee Rodriguez aka "Nani"

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Sincerely,

Sonia Ramos

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Sincerely,

HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT
265 Henry Street
New York, NY
10002-4808
ph: 212.766.9200
fx: 212.791.5710
henrystreet.org

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
2 Lafayette Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10007

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Sincerely,

Mariko Ayoob

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Sincerely,

Leilani Cruz

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Sincerely,

Lisa M. Cruz

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City Hall
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Sincerely,

Maria Rojas

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HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT
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Sincerely, Maia Matos

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Sincerely,

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265 Henry Street
New York, NY
10002-4808
ph: 212.766.9200
fx: 212.791.5710
henrystreet.org

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker, New York City Council
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Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
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Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
2 Lafayette Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani, Speaker Menin, and Commissioner Escamilla-Davies:

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Sincerely, Maud Hernandez

HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT
265 Henry Street
New York, NY
10002-4808
ph: 212.766.9200
fx: 212.791.6710
henrystreet.org

April 15, 2026

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Joi Lakes

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Sincerely,

Wendi Webb

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Sincerely,

Yohanny P.

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Bette Scott

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April 15, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
2 Lafayette Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10007

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Sincerely,

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Sincerely,

Elsy Dales

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Sincerely,

Diamond Acevedo
Real aunt

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Sincerely,

Isaura Sanchez

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Sincerely,

M. A. Papper

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Sincerely,

N. BROWN

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Sincerely,

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265 Henry Street
New York, NY
10002-4808
ph: 212.766.9200
fx: 212.781.5710
henrystreet.org

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall
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Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
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Oramis Walker

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Sincerely,

Eileen

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Millie Rivera

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Sincerely,

Roberta

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Yelisa Jenkins

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BGR is located in **two of the highest-need census tracts in Community District 3 (CD3)**, where the median income is below $25,000 a year. Of all 31 census tracts in the District, these rank among the bottom five in terms of median income, and the families who live here often need to navigate the effects of historical disinvestment in the area.

BGR has brought key resources to our family and other families who haven't always had an easy time accessing high quality services like those that BGR provides. On top of arts, sports, academic enrichment, and celebrations that bring our community together, BGR also offers a student-centered governance model that gives our children the unique opportunity to drive real change and to speak up knowing they'll be heard, even from a young age. That kind of environment is extremely valuable in this part of the Lower East Side, especially for the children and youth we're raising to be the next generation.

Additionally, BGR offers a uniquely supportive and holistic approach for meeting families' unique needs. For example, because BGR operates a continuum of evening youth programming, the center affords COMPASS families the flexibility/safety for late pick-ups due to work and emergencies as needed. BGR also specializes in working with a high number of neurodivergent youth in CD3, featuring a tailored state-of-the art sensory room, paraprofessional staff, and comprehensive resources

BGR has been a trusted anchor institution in this community for nearly 100 years. Generations of families in this neighborhood have grown up in BGR's programs for students of all ages, many of them starting in elementary school and continuing through high school and beyond. We need the services BGR provides more than ever, and we urge our representatives in government to fully support the BGR COMPASS program.

Sincerely,

C. Roman

HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT
265 Henry Street
New York, NY
10002-4808
ph: 212.766.9200
fx: 212.791.5710
henrystreet.org

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Sandra Escamilla-Davies
New York City Department of Youth and Community Development
2 Lafayette Street, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10007

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Sincerely,

HER JUSTICE
Shift the Power

Testimony: Hamra Ahmad, Esq., Deputy Director, Head of Legal Programs and Policy
Hearing: New York City Council Committee on Finance
Date: June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the City's FY2027 Executive Budget. I am Hamra Ahmad, Deputy Director, Head of Legal Programs and Policy at Her Justice, a legal services nonprofit organization that has advocated with and for women and gender minorities living in poverty in New York City for more than 30 years.

In Fiscal Year 2025, Her Justice provided a range of legal assistance to more than 4,000 women and their children in our practice areas of family, matrimonial, and immigration law. Her Justice clients come from communities across all five boroughs of New York City with 31% of clients from Brooklyn, 30% from Queens, 23% from the Bronx, 13% from Manhattan, and 2% from Staten Island. Among the clients served, 93% are women of color, 87% are survivors of domestic violence.,70% are mothers, and 60% of our clients were born outside the U.S., coming from 103 countries across the world.

Her Justice recognizes that the need for legal representation in New York far outstrips the supply of help. Through our unique pro bono first model, Her Justice pairs thousands of well-trained and resourced pro bono attorneys from the City's premier law firms with women who have urgent legal needs. This model helps fill the "civil justice gap" – the difference between the number of Americans who need civil legal assistance and the few who receive help given inability to afford legal assistance and resource constraints on the availability of free legal help. By ensuring that more women have lawyers by their side, we help make their voices heard and we begin to break down systemic barriers to access to justice.

Her Justice is grateful for the New York City Council's longstanding partnership in expanding access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence. Council support through Citywide Domestic Violence Empowerment (DoVE), Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE), and the Speaker's Initiative has allowed Her Justice to provide critical legal services to low-income survivors of domestic violence and immigrant women in New York City. We hope the City Council will reaffirm and enhance resources for survivors and women living in poverty and recognize legal services as essential to ensuring their economic well-being and safety. Her Justice respectfully seeks support through the following City Council initiatives:

Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE)	[2176965]	$300,000
Divorce Proceedings Representation for Domestic Violence Survivors Initiative	[2226514]	$250,000
Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence and Gender-Based Harm Initiative	[2226500]	$200,000
Citywide Domestic Violence Empowerment (DoVE)	[2226399]	$150,000
Immigrant Opportunities Initiative	[2226447]	$100,000
Speaker's Initiative	[2183862]	$100,000

In this testimony, we present strategies to address the unmet civil legal needs of women living in poverty in New York, including through our unique pro bono legal services model, the need for specialized representation in divorce and immigration matters, and the importance of continued city investment in legal services that help women and families access justice, secure critical legal protections, and rebuild their lives.

I. The Unique Her Justice Model and Impact

Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE)	[2176965]	$300,000
Citywide Domestic Violence Empowerment (DoVE)	[2226399]	$150,000
Speaker's Initiative	[2183862]	$100,000

Her Justice serves women and gender minorities living in poverty in child/spousal support, custody and visitation, and order of protection matters in Family Court; divorces in Supreme Court; and immigration matters under the Violence Against Women Act. Many of the people who contact us for help are matched with a pro bono volunteer lawyer to provide full representation throughout the duration of their case. Volunteer lawyers are assigned an experienced Her Justice staff attorney mentor who helps strategize, answer substantive and procedural questions, review documents before they are filed, and provide referrals for social and other services. In addition, four law firm attorneys work full-time in our office as externs, providing court representation in complex or emergency matters. Volunteer forensic accountants and investigators support litigation by compiling and analyzing the documentation necessary to obtain fair divisions of marital assets, maintenance awards, and child support orders for our clients.

This novel and holistic approach has enabled us to assist tens of thousands of women over the years, far more than we could have reached relying exclusively on direct service. It also allows Her Justice to offer representation for many of the cases other legal services organizations do not have the bandwidth to take on – for example, child and spousal support matters, and litigated divorces. **In FY2025, Her Justice's 13 staff attorneys actively trained and mentored 1,642 pro bono attorneys and non-attorneys (summer associates or paralegals) who worked on both open and closed cases with Her Justice clients.** In addition to training and mentoring pro bono attorneys, Her Justice in-house attorneys provide representation to some clients whose legal issues are particularly urgent or complex.

Her Justice's work is centered in two core practice areas: Family and Matrimonial Law and Immigration. Through our Family and Matrimonial practice, we help women living in poverty secure safety, financial stability, and family autonomy through child support, spousal support, custody/visitation, orders of protection, and divorce proceedings. **In FY2025 Her Justice worked on 866 family and matrimonial matters serving 2,048 women and children**. Through our Immigration practice, we provide free legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence, sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence as they seek to stabilize their immigration status in the United States. **Last year our attorneys provided legal information, advice, and representation on 2,058 immigration matters, securing legal status for 802 clients and their children.**

Women living in poverty, particularly Black and Brown women, are forced to rely on a civil justice system that has been historically and systematically under-resourced. Many access the Family Courts to secure basic freedoms – personal autonomy, financial independence, and safety from abuse – through orders of protection, financial support from partners, or court-ordered visitation schedules. Yet most New York Family Court litigants are unrepresented, with the patchwork right-to-counsel laws providing this resource in only limited case types.

This burden is even more onerous for our undocumented immigrant clients who are often doubly disadvantaged waiting years for the historically under-funded immigration system to review their applications for legal status and employment authorization documentation (or work permits) which are critical for families' stability.

City investments in legal services play a key role in ensuring that survivors can access them. Through initiatives such as DoVE, SAVE and the Speaker's Initiative, Her Justice can provide legal advocacy that addresses the financial consequences of abuse while helping survivors rebuild economic stability. Continued support for these initiatives ensures that survivors can obtain meaningful relief from coerced debt, restore their financial footing, and move forward safely and independently.

Unlocking Millions of Dollars of Legal Representation. The need for legal representation in litigated matters, such as custody, visitation, child support, and litigated divorces, is great. And the impact of our legal services in these areas is significant. **In FY2025, the pro bono attorneys working with Her Justice clients donated more than 55,000 hours, unlocking nearly $55 million in legal services. With our services, in FY2025, Her Justice clients obtained financial awards and settlements totaling $1,092,560 and monthly benefits totaling $36,102.**

II. Her Justice Leads Access to Divorce Representation for Domestic Violence Survivors

Divorce Proceedings Representation for Domestic Violence Survivors Initiative	[2226514]	$250,000

New York City has demonstrated important leadership in recognizing the need for legal representation in divorce for survivors of domestic violence. Her Justice, alongside our pro bono partners, provides legal advice and representation to hundreds of women seeking divorce each year. **In FY2025, Her Justice served 506 divorce clients, 69% of whom were survivors of domestic violence and 65% of whom had children under the age of 18. Of these cases, 68% involved uncontested divorces and 29% involved litigated divorce proceedings**, demonstrating both the breadth of our matrimonial practice and our experience representing survivors in complex, contested matters. These figures underscore both the significant demand for divorce representation and the critical role divorce proceedings play in promoting long-term safety and economic stability for survivors and their families.

Navigating the legal process of divorce is especially critical for women who are often the lower-earning spouse within a marriage. A fair divorce process helps ensure equitable determinations of child support, spousal support, and the division of marital assets, providing single mothers with a critical financial safety net as they transition to independent households. For survivors of domestic violence, financial stability is often essential to maintaining safety and independence after leaving an abusive relationship. Divorce representation is therefore not only a legal service but an economic mobility intervention. Through divorce proceedings, survivors may gain access to child support, spousal maintenance, retirement assets, housing equity, and other marital resources that are essential to rebuilding their lives.

Addressing Financial Abuse and Coerced Debt. Domestic violence often extends beyond physical harm. Many of our clients experience financial abuse, a form of coercive control in which one partner restricts the other's access to financial resources, undermining their ability to achieve economic independence. Financial abuse can include coerced debt, identity theft, and manipulation of credit or financial accounts. To address these challenges, Her Justice has developed specialized expertise in financial abuse and coerced debt that is widely recognized within the New York legal community. As part of our holistic legal services, we provide representation, legal advice, brief services, referrals, and financial advocacy across both family and divorce matters. We now run credit reports for 100 percent of our family and matrimonial clients to identify whether additional financial advocacy or services may be necessary. These legal services are essential to helping survivors rebuild financial stability and autonomy. In parallel with our direct services work, Her Justice remains committed

to advocating for greater recognition of the economic realities of domestic violence within the law and the courts to ensure survivors receive full and meaningful relief.

Divorce cases involving domestic violence are often among the most legally complex and resource-intensive matters in the civil legal services system. Survivors frequently face contested litigation involving custody, support, equitable distribution, financial abuse, coercive control, and orders of protection. Her Justice is uniquely positioned to provide this specialized representation. Her Justice was proud to support the passage of Int. 1175-2025 (Menin), which recognizes the importance of legal representation for survivors navigating divorce proceedings, and the New York State coerced debt law (S.8830/A.9460), which provides critical relief for survivors burdened with debt incurred through coercion or control.

Her Justice already provides representation across litigated and uncontested divorce proceedings and has the infrastructure, expertise, and pro bono network necessary to scale services under Int. 1175-2025. Continued investment in this initiative will ensure that survivors have meaningful access to legal representation, enabling them to secure fair financial outcomes and rebuild stability, safety, and independence for themselves and their children.

III. Her Justice Provides Critical Legal Pathways for Immigrant Survivors

Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence and Gender-Based Harm Initiative	[2226500]	$200,000
Immigrant Opportunities Initiative	[2226447]	$100,000

Representation on Immigration Applications. New York City has demonstrated strong leadership in protecting immigrant survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence through its sanctuary policies and investments in legal services. The Council's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative and the Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence and Gender-Based Harm Initiative are instrumental in ensuring that immigrant survivors can stabilize their status and rebuild their lives. For survivors whose abusers exploit their immigration status as a means of coercion and control, access to specialized immigration legal services can be life changing. Through these initiatives, survivors can pursue immigration relief such as VAWA self-petitions, U visas, and T visas while also addressing family court and safety-related legal needs. Securing lawful status or work authorization allows survivors to obtain employment, secure housing, pursue custody and child support, and rebuild economic independence. Continued investment in these initiatives strengthens both individual safety and the City's broader sanctuary framework by ensuring that immigrant survivors can meaningfully participate in legal processes and access the protections available to them under the law.

Protecting Critical City Infrastructure for Immigrant Survivors. It is critical that the City protect and maintain the infrastructure that allows immigrant survivors to access these forms of relief. This includes preserving U and T visa certifier capacity across City agencies, including ACS, NYPD, DOHMH, DOE, and HRA, and ensuring these functions are not diminished through staffing reductions or budget cuts. Timely certifications are often essential for survivors seeking humanitarian immigration protections, work authorization, and long-term stability. Delays or reductions in certification capacity can prolong survivors' vulnerability, undermine safety planning, and create barriers to accessing justice. Continued investment in trauma-informed training, language access, and interagency coordination is essential to ensuring that immigrant survivors can safely engage with City systems and meaningfully access the legal protections available to them.

Work Authorization as a Tool for Safety and Economic Independence. Her Justice's immigration practice provides relief to undocumented survivors of gender-based violence and, with our pro bono partners, has filed more than 1,000 work permit applications over the last decade. These outcomes help survivors obtain lawful status, work authorization, and the resources necessary to safely rebuild their lives. Access to work authorization is often a critical turning point for immigrant survivors. Without a work permit, many survivors are unable to work lawfully, obtain a Social Security number, secure stable housing, or achieve financial independence. Her Justice's research has demonstrated that work authorization improves economic stability, housing security, mental health, and survivors' willingness to seek help from courts, law enforcement, and service providers. Continued investment in legal services helps ensure that survivors can access these life-changing protections.

At a time when heightened immigration enforcement and federal adjudication delays are increasing fear within immigrant communities, access to trusted legal services is more important than ever. Many immigrant survivors are reluctant to seek assistance from lawyers, hospitals, and law enforcement out of concern for detention or removal. City-funded legal services help ensure that survivors can safely access protections available under the law while pursuing stability for themselves and their children.

IV. Her Justice Policy and System Reform Approach

We believe that our client-centered services must also be paired with policy work to advance systemic reform while meeting individual needs through independent efforts and partnerships with peer organizations and coalitions. Our policy work is informed by the lived experiences of our clients, women and gender minorities living in poverty whose livelihoods and well-being are often shaped by the civil justice system. Through this framework, we work to break down systemic barriers embedded in the civil justice system that reinforce and exacerbate economic, gender, and racial inequities. Her Justice is deeply committed to exploring the power of data to inform and support policy change. We have developed expertise in conducting original research to build civil justice data collections and leverage these to support reform.

- In November 2024, Her Justice launched our newest policy research project, *Report From Court*, which surveys pro bono attorneys representing Her Justice clients in New York City Family Court about their experiences and case outcomes and presents survey data in real time on a website. By making visible the Family Court experience and the perspectives of pro bono attorneys, *Report From Court* aims to fill a critical gap in Family Court data and support meaningful reform.

- Her Justice has also conducted research on the legal needs of immigrants in our community to support policy reform. Our 2023 report, *Stories from Immigrant Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: The Impact of Work Authorization,* features findings from qualitative interviews with 31 undocumented immigrant survivors about the impact of employment authorization on their employment, income, housing, access to government services, interactions with the criminal justice system, and mental health. Her Justice continues to highlight this research in local and federal advocacy around rights and benefits for immigrants.

- In 2021, Her Justice released our first policy research report, *Towards Justice for Parents in Child Support Courts*, which presented an analysis of 800 court observations in New York City child support cases and recommendations for Family Court reform. Her Justice leveraged this research to support a legislative campaign focused on reforming the New York child support courts.

V. Community Outreach

Her Justice maintains a strong network of community-based organizations, service providers, government agencies, and elected officials across all five boroughs, enabling us to reach women and families in every New York City Council district. Clients access our services through referrals from trusted community partners, independent research, and word-of-mouth recommendations from former clients and community members. Recognizing that no single organization can meet the needs of every survivor alone, Her Justice prioritizes community engagement and partnership building as core components of service delivery. Our Client Services team conducts outreach events, trainings, referral town halls, and know-your-rights presentations to ensure that community partners have current information about legal protections and available resources for women living in poverty and survivors of domestic violence. These partnerships are essential in identifying unmet legal needs and connecting individuals to free legal assistance. **In FY2026 to date, Her Justice conducted 109 community outreaches, including informational and know-your-rights presentations, reaching 2,171 individuals across New York City and strengthening the referral networks that help women access safety, stability, and economic security.**

Thank you again for the opportunity to highlight Her Justice's longstanding commitment to meeting the need for critical civil legal services in our community through our unique pro bono first model and our research-driven policy and advocacy efforts. We thank the Council for continued support for the essential services we provide. We look forward to continued collaboration and partnership around innovative ideas and greater investment in legal services for indigent New Yorkers.

Respectfully,



Hamra Ahmad, Esq.
Deputy Director, Head of Legal Programs and Policy
hahmad@herjustice.org

HISTORIC RICHMOND TOWN

Testimony of Jessica B. Phillips
Chief Executive Officer, Historic Richmond Town
Member, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing – Arts & Culture

Good afternoon, Chair Williams and members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations.

My name is Jessica B. Phillips, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Historic Richmond Town, Staten Island's living history village and museum, and a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), a coalition of 39 cultural institutions located throughout all five boroughs.

First, I would like to thank the Council for its continued commitment to New York City's cultural sector and for its advocacy in securing increased investment in arts and culture in recent budgets. Your support has helped cultural organizations recover, rebuild, and continue serving New Yorkers in every neighborhood.

Historic Richmond Town preserves and interprets New York City history through historic preservation, exhibitions, educational programs, public events, and hands-on learning experiences. Each year, we welcome over 100,000 students, families, seniors, and visitors to experience Staten Island's history in a way that is accessible, engaging, and affordable. Like many cultural organizations across the city, we serve as a trusted community anchor, educational partner, and public gathering place.

Today, I urge the Council to support the cultural sector's Fiscal Year 2027 requests, particularly the restoration and baselining of the **additional $20 million in cultural funding, bringing the total new baselined investment to $30 million.**

For organizations like Historic Richmond Town, baselining this funding is critical to ending the annual budget uncertainty that has become all too familiar for cultural institutions. One-time restorations help organizations survive from year to year, but baselined funding allows us to plan responsibly, invest strategically, and sustain the workforce that makes our mission possible. The annual cycle of funding reductions followed by restorations creates instability that impedes staffing, long-term planning, and program development. These fluctuations are particularly damaging for medium-sized and community-based organizations that do not have large endowments or extensive private resources to absorb financial uncertainty.

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www.historicrichmondtown.org

HISTORIC RICHMOND TOWN

Culture in New York City is not limited to major institutions in Manhattan. It lives in local history museums, community arts organizations, theaters, botanical gardens, zoos, and cultural centers in every borough. These organizations provide free and discounted access, educational opportunities, welcoming third spaces, and meaningful civic engagement for all New Yorkers. They bring culture directly into neighborhoods and make it accessible to residents who may never visit the city's larger institutions.

We also support the Council's call for **annual cost adjustments** that recognize the realities of inflation and rising operating expenses. Like many nonprofit employers, we face increasing costs associated with wages, benefits, utilities, insurance, maintenance, and programming. If New York City wishes to retain a strong cultural workforce and ensure fair compensation for the culture worker, funding must grow alongside those costs.

Finally, I urge the Council to **advance reforms to the cultural capital process**. Historic Richmond Town stewards dozens of historic structures and significant collections on behalf of the people of New York City. Across the CIG and broader cultural sector, capital projects routinely take six to ten plus years to complete. Greater transparency, improved project management, and a comprehensive cultural infrastructure plan would allow institutions to preserve and modernize facilities more efficiently while maximizing the City's investment.

New York City's cultural sector generates enormous educational, economic, and civic value. It provides millions of student visits, supports thousands of jobs, strengthens neighborhoods, and creates affordable opportunities for learning, connection, and belonging. Most importantly, it ensures that culture remains accessible to all New Yorkers, regardless of income or zip code.

We remain grateful for the Council's partnership and respectfully ask for your support in restoring and baselining the full $30 million for arts and culture, establishing annual cost adjustments, and advancing meaningful capital reform. These investments will strengthen institutions like Historic Richmond Town and help ensure that culture continues to thrive in every community across New York City.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica B. Phillips
Chief Executive Officer
Historic Richmond Town

Good afternoon, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Alice Mo, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at Homecrest Community Services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

For nearly 30 years, Homecrest Community Services has provided culturally responsive, language-accessible, community-based social services to low-income and limited-English-proficient AAPI older adults, families, and youth across Southern Brooklyn. We operate two NYC Department for the Aging-funded Older Adult Centers in Sheepshead Bay and Bensonhurst, as well as two additional centers in Sunset Park and Bay Parkway. We provide nutritious hot meals; social, educational, and wellness programming; exercise and recreational activities; and case management support, including assistance with applications for Medicaid and Medicare, SNAP and cash benefits, housing, home energy assistance, and reduced-fare and Fair Fares OMNY transit access.

From January to December 2025, Homecrest delivered over 17,000 case management services and served over 10,000 clients through case management. We provided nearly 110,000 older adult services, served nearly 1,800 older adult members, engaged over 4,500 individuals through community outreach, and served almost 90 youth through our youth services program. These numbers reflect both the scale of need in our communities and the essential role that community-based organizations play in helping New Yorkers access critical support.

In FY 2026, the New York City Council responded to an unprecedented surge in immigration enforcement targeting Asian communities by allocating funding for Legal Services for AAPI Communities. This funding was critical to the creation of the Rapid Immigrant Support and Empowerment (RISE) Network, a coordinated network of nearly 20 Asian-led and Asian-serving

CBOs across New York City. Homecrest is proud to be a member of this coalition, which provides critical immigration and legal support to New Yorkers during a period of intensified enforcement and heightened fear. We strongly urge the Council to protect and expand funding for Legal Services for AAPI Communities to $3.5 million in the FY 2027 budget.

As a member of LiveOn NY, a coalition of more than 110 community-based nonprofits, Homecrest supports a $2.3 billion investment in older New Yorkers in the FY 2027 budget. This includes supporting 100% affordable senior housing, providing $30 million for seven-day home-delivered meals, and expanding aging services to meet the clear and growing needs of older adults across the city.

Homecrest is also a proud member of the 18% and Growing Campaign, led by the Coalition for Asian American Children + Families (CACF), which unites over 90 AAPI-led and AAPI-serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members. We urge the Council to support the campaign's key priorities for the FY 2027 budget, including expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million, the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million, and the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million.

Too often, the responsibility for meeting urgent community needs falls on CBOs and nonprofits that are asked to fill gaps left by city government. This is a budget equity issue. When AAPI communities are underfunded, language-accessible and culturally responsive services are stretched thin, and our communities are left without the full support they need and deserve.

We urge the Council to invest in the community-based infrastructure that allows families, older adults, youth, and low-income New Yorkers to live with safety, dignity, and stability.

Thank you for your commitment and leadership to older New Yorkers and to New York City's immigrant communities.

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Public Testimony: NYC Council FY27 Executive Budget Hearing
Date: June 10, 2026

Thank you to the City Council, Finance Committee Chair Lee, and the Committee on Finance for their attention to the 2027 New York City Budget.

I am writing on behalf of **Hot Bread Kitchen**, a nonprofit organization that promotes economic mobility for New Yorkers who face barriers to economic opportunity through job training and placement, food entrepreneurship programs, and a wraparound ecosystem of individualized support. I am the Chief Executive Officer, and oversee all of our mission-driven operations.

Over the past 18 years, Hot Bread Kitchen has supported a community of over 2,700 program participants, who we call members, in launching careers in the food industry, starting and growing their small businesses, and accessing the resources they need to succeed at work and in the world. Hot Bread Kitchen uses the food industry as our opportunity catalyst because it is uniquely powerful — offering broad economic opportunity and celebrating the diversity that defines this City. The food industry is New York State's second largest employer, offering over 800,000 jobs (National Restaurant Association). It also represents a key industry that is AI-resistant, offering accessible jobs that have longevity and stability.

We offer our members a number of programs in order to reach economic mobility: Workforce and Management Training; Job Placement; Wraparound Support Services; and Small Business Incubation. In 2025, and for the first time ever, we served **700+ members** across our programs and generated an estimated **$9.9 million in economic impact for New York City** through the wages our graduates earned and the businesses our entrepreneurs built. This year has started off strong for Hot Bread Kitchen - we have served 10 cohorts of students, graduated 135 members, and hit a 'rolling one year' **job placement rate of 84%**, well above industry averages

We are grateful to have received funding from the City Council previously, which has supported our growing number of enrolled members and our expansion of offerings into other boroughs. **We are seeking the Council's support again in FY27** as we continue our work to expand access to and deepen the impact of our work.

Funding from the Speaker's Initiative, Welcome NYC and Support for Immigrant and Women Workers Initiative, and Job Training and Placement Initiative will specifically support the launch of a permanent training center in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and the continuation of our **Culinary Pathways for New New Yorkers program,** which provides urgently-needed pathways to employment in the food industry for asylum seekers and recently-arrived migrants.

The launch of a **permanent training center in Sunset Park, Brooklyn,** to be built in collaboration with **City Harvest**, will give Hot Bread Kitchen its first permanent outpost and will deepen our foothold in the Brooklyn borough. The Sunset Park site will be the new home of our Culinary Pathways for New New Yorkers program, serving an

estimated 117 New Yorkers annually. 100% of the space will be used for frontline services: the training kitchen will be used for hands-on culinary training, the large classroom will be used for English language and professional readiness classes, and the meeting rooms will be used for staff to meet with program members to carry out case management and job placement sessions, as well as further wraparound support for our members as needed.

Our employer partners have found that hiring graduates of our Culinary Career Pathways for New New Yorkers program gives them a skilled workforce and a genuine operational advantage. Here are what a few of them have shared with us:

> *"Partnering with Hot Bread Kitchen has been a major operational asset for us. The candidates we hire are not only fully authorized and ready to work, but they also bring a level of dedication and professionalism that is essential to our hospitality-first approach. Furthermore, engaging with this program has encouraged us to stay educated on the latest immigration and work authorization laws. By prioritizing compliance and staying informed on federal regulations, we have the full confidence to hire from this talented pool of individuals. These team members have had a consistently positive impact on our operations throughout NYC, and we encourage other businesses to embrace this partnership with the same confidence."*
>
> - David Rodriguez, Regional Talent Acquisition Recruiter, OTG Management

> *"Partnering with Hot Bread Kitchen and the New New Yorkers program has been an incredibly positive experience for Great Performances. Through this partnership, we have connected with talented, motivated individuals who bring a strong work ethic, resilience, diverse perspectives, and a genuine passion for hospitality.*
>
> *Hiring program participants has had a meaningful impact on our business by helping us build a stronger and more inclusive workforce across our kitchens. Many of the individuals we've welcomed through this partnership have demonstrated reliability, adaptability, and a willingness to learn and grow within the company. Their contributions have strengthened team collaboration, enhanced workplace culture, and supported our ability to deliver exceptional hospitality experiences to our clients and guests. We look forward to interviewing and hiring more candidates."*
>
> - Shacazia Brown, Director of Human Resources, Great Performances

These testimonials are from two of our nearly 400 employer partners, each of whom serves a vital part in New York City's food industry and economy. Our FY27 funding requests will allow Hot Bread Kitchen to continue connecting skilled and diverse talent to New York City businesses and linking our 2,700+ members to professional networks that will support them throughout their careers.

On behalf of Hot Bread Kitchen, I respectfully urge the Committee on Finance to continue investing in Hot Bread Kitchen's work and to support our ambitious 2027 agenda. Launching a new training center and deepening the impact of our Culinary Pathways for New New Yorkers program will allow us to reach more members and employers than ever. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Leslie Abbey, Chief Executive Officer, Hot Bread Kitchen

Housing Conservation Coordinators
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

AT THE:

CITY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING: CITY FISCAL YEAR 2027

REGARDING:

LEGAL SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME NEW YORKERS AND WORKING CLASS NEW YORKERS

June 10, 2026

BY:
Leslie Thrope (lthrope@hcc-nyc.org/212-541-5996)

Thank you Chair Lee, Committee on Finance and the New York City Council at large for the long-standing support of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition through the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers initiative (the

"Working Poor Initiative"). Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC) is one of the five members of this Coalition that also includes Mobilization for Justice (MFJ), CAMBA Legal Services, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC), and TakeRoot Justice.

The mission of HCC, a community-based organization anchored in Hell's Kitchen, is to advance social and economic justice and fight for the rights of poor, low-income and working individuals and families. We provide the highest-quality free, direct civil legal assistance, conduct community education and build partnerships to achieve justice for all New York City residents.

The Coalition was created with support from the City Council over 20 years ago 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, thus rendering them ineligible for free civil legal services. LSWP's services are critical to allow working New Yorkers to maintain financial independence and preserving economic stability in communities across New York City.

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers initiative was funded at $9,255,000 from the City Council, with each of the five Coalition members receiving $455,000. In FY 27, HCC and the other members of the LSWP Coalition are each requesting a $600,000 allocation from the City Council, which includes a full restoration of the $455,000 allocated in FY 26. A $600,000 allocation to each of the five Coalition partners would support critical legal services and allow providers to deepen their impact in the practice areas of immigration, consumer, worker's rights, and benefits law. Additionally, the impacts of cuts and actions on the Federal level significantly threaten the social safety net for working poor New Yorkers. We call on the City Council to make critical

investments into legal services in FY 27, including the Working Poor Initiative. Additional resources are needed to safeguard against misaligned Federal policy.

We continue to see that working poor New Yorkers, who can barely make ends meet, face catastrophic consequences as a result of a civil legal problem. Common problems include not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime; identity theft; a restrained bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they were never notified about; or being denied benefits to which they are entitled. The consequences of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. Without access to lawyers to assist them, these working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor. Our legal services organizations represent these New Yorkers in all five boroughs in consumer, worker's rights, foreclosure, immigration, benefits, and housing matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

A good illustration of the critical nature of this work is LSWP client, Ms. Rallings, a 91-year-old longtime Hell's Kitchen resident, faced possible eviction after declining mobility and pandemic-related isolation contributed to significant household clutter that threatened her housing stability and received notice that she faced eviction. Our legal team provided fierce advocacy during her HPD proceedings and inspections and coordinated with property management to declutter the apartment. As a result, the housing court action was withdrawn, a temporary monitoring plan was successfully completed, and in-home care services were established to support her continued housing stability and independence. Ms. Rallings, because of Working Poor Initiative funding, was able to avoid lengthy legal proceedings, homelessness, and restore her dignity.

Conclusion

This Council's funding for Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers 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. It is *vitally* important that the City Council not only continue to support this flexible funding stream but increase its funding 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 invest in civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers allocation in particular. In FY 27, the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition is respectfully asking the City Council to enhance the allocation of each of the five Coalition partners from $455,000 to $600,000. Thank you.

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Housing Solutions of New York (HSNY)
Presented Before the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Finance
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Human Resources Administration (HRA), Department of Social Services (DSS), and
Department of Homeless Services (DHS)

June 4, 2026

Good morning, Chair Crystal Hudson, Chair Justin Brannan, and members of the Committees on General Welfare and Finance.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget and its impact on New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, housing instability, hunger, and poverty.

Housing Solutions of New York is committed to ending homelessness. Across our network of more than 30 sites throughout New York City, we provide shelter, supportive services, food assistance, workforce development, housing placement, and wrap-around social service programs that help individuals and families move from crisis to stability. Each year, HSNY serves more than 7,800 New Yorkers, including over 1,100 children each month, and supports nearly 1,000 households in securing permanent housing.

We would like to thank Speaker, the City Council, Mayor, and the Administration for their continued investment in the social safety net and for recognizing the critical role that nonprofit providers play in responding to New York City's homelessness and housing crisis.

While New York City has made meaningful progress in reducing the shelter census from its historic peak, the demand for shelters, supportive services, food assistance, and permanent housing solutions remains extraordinarily high. Providers continue to face significant challenges, including rising operating costs, workforce shortages, increased behavioral health needs, and an affordable housing market that remains out of reach for many of the households we serve.

At HSNY, we see firsthand the interconnected nature of homelessness, hunger, and poverty. Families entering shelter often arrive with limited financial resources, food insecurity, health challenges, and barriers to employment. Addressing homelessness requires more than a bed, it requires a coordinated investment in housing, nutrition, workforce development, healthcare access, and long-term stability.

In response, HSNY has expanded its service model to better meet the needs of New Yorkers. This year, we've expanded our Community Health Pantry initiative, providing residents and community members with access to healthy food, nutrition education, and wellness resources through a dignified "No-Line" model that removes barriers and promotes choice. We continue to invest in workforce development, financial literacy, behavioral health supports, and housing placement services that help individuals and families build pathways toward self-sufficiency.

As the Council considers the FY27 budget, we respectfully offer the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Invest in the Human Services Workforce

Nonprofit providers remain the backbone of New York City's homelessness response system. Continued investments in wage enhancements, workforce retention strategies, and contract reimbursement rates are necessary to recruit and retain qualified staff. Social workers, case managers, security personnel, housing specialists, and frontline staff are essential to achieving positive outcomes for shelter residents.

Recommendation 2: Expand Investments in Permanent Housing and Housing Placement

The most effective way to reduce shelter utilization is to increase access to affordable and supportive housing opportunities. We encourage continued investment in rental assistance programs, supportive housing development, housing vouchers, and placement initiatives that help households exit shelter more quickly and remain stably housed.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Community-Based Food Security Initiatives

Food insecurity remains a significant challenge for many New Yorkers both inside and outside of shelter. The City should continue expanding support for food access programs, community pantries, nutrition education initiatives, and innovative models that integrate food security with broader health and housing interventions.

Recommendation 4: Preserve Funding for Prevention and Wraparound Services

Homelessness prevention remains one of the most cost-effective investments available to the City. Programs that provide legal assistance, eviction prevention, case management, employment support, mental health services, and benefits navigation help keep families housed and reduce future demand on the shelter system.

New York City's nonprofit providers stand ready to continue partnering with the Administration and the City Council to advance solutions that are compassionate, effective, and fiscally responsible. Together, we can strengthen pathways out of homelessness, reduce food insecurity, and ensure that every New Yorker has the opportunity to live with dignity and stability.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for your continued partnership in serving New York City's most vulnerable residents.

Respectfully submitted,



Seth Muraskin
Chief Executive Officer
Housing Solutions of New York (HSNY)

Testimony of Housing Works
Before
The New York City Council Committees on Finance
Regarding
T**he New York City Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget**
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chairperson Lee, and Members of the Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Housing Works, a healing community founded in 1990 with a mission to end the dual crises of homelessness and AIDS. My name is Anthony Feliciano, and I am the Vice President of Community Mobilization for Housing Works. We currently 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 marginalized and underserved—those facing the challenges of homelessness, HIV, mental health issues, substance use disorder, other chronic conditions, and incarceration. and, most recently, migrants displaced from their homes due to violence or other crises who seek safety and a better life in the United States. Our comprehensive prevention and care services range from over 750 units of supportive housing to medical and behavioral health care delivered through our six Federally Qualified Health Centers, including licensed New York State Article 31 Office of Mental Health (OMH) Office of Mental Health and Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) programs, to legal services and job training.

Housing Works is also a founding member of the *End AIDS NY Community Coalition* (EtE Community Coalition), a group of over ninety healthcare centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations that are fully committed to ending AIDS as an epidemic in all New York communities and populations.

We will highlight a few urgent priorities in this testimony and urge Members of the Committee to review all the End AIDS New York Community Coalition *Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2027 Budget* attached to this testimony. We will also comment on actions needed to transform our City's failed response to the homelessness and mental health crises that continue to drive poor individual and public health outcomes among NYC's most marginalized residents.

<u>We Must Prepare for Unprecedented Threats to the Health of New Yorkers</u>

Housing Works calls upon the City Council to act in this year's budget to address the very real uncertainty and urgent threats posed by Federal actions that already have and will potentially continue to undermine essential NYC medical and public health systems.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has already taken drastic steps to transform the nation's public health infrastructure and federal workflows. A sweeping reduction in force (RIF) and reorganization of HHS agencies and operating divisions threaten to dismantle the federal infectious disease infrastructure and undermine decades of progress to end the HIV and viral hepatitis epidemics.

The proposed HHS consolidation of other federal HIV programs under the new Administration for a Healthy America (AHA) threatens to erase decades of disease-specific expertise that has been critical to progress in HIV prevention and treatment. Folding HIV into a broad, non-specific framework risks undermining the technical assistance, data systems, and program infrastructure that

health departments and providers rely on daily. Without dedicated HIV expertise at the federal level, we risk losing ground on prevention, disrupting care systems, and reversing progress toward ending the epidemic.

We now face new challenges posed by federal actions that threaten public health funding and infrastructure supporting our HIV response. Signed into law last July, H.R.1 introduced significant changes to Medicaid and other safety net programs, including the largest Medicaid funding cut in history and restrictions on Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility and coverage. These changes are of particular concern for the HIV community, since Medicaid is the largest source of insurance coverage for people with HIV in the U.S., and is the primary source of healthcare coverage for roughly half of all New Yorkers with HIV.

These cuts to Medicaid will have a significant impact on all New Yorkers. Nearly half of New York City residents are enrolled in Medicaid, the majority of whom are children, older adults, and people with disabilities. In New York City, 60% of children are covered by Medicaid, and 55% of babies born in the city are born to parents covered by Medicaid. Approximately $56 billion flows through New York City's health care system to cover care for residents enrolled in Medicaid.

Meanwhile, some 450,000 New Yorkers statewide will lose access on July 1st to the Essential Plan, and the failure to extend the Affordable Care Act (ACA) health exchange premium tax credits will leave many other New Yorkers, including people with HIV, unable to afford coverage. Equally disturbing is the fact that an estimated 250,000 immigrant New Yorkers are currently prohibited from enrolling in Medicaid, the Essential Plan, or public health programs. It is critical to note that while Ryan White supports HIV care for persons without health coverage, the Ryan White program could not support the number of persons with HIV who face potential loss of Medicaid coverage.

Further, President Trump's FY27 budget request—like his administration's FY26 budget request—proposes fully eliminating over $755 million in CDC funding for HIV prevention and $529 million in funding for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS program, moving the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program from HRSA to a newly proposed Administration for a Healthy America (AHA), and combining into block grants reduced funding for STIs, tuberculosis, and viral hepatitis. We are left to advocate and hope that Congress will once again reject these devastating cuts.

Our ending the epidemic efforts are further threatened by the federal government's retreat from health equity goals, and by the unprecedented and ongoing federal attacks on communities disparately impacted by HIV, including Black and Latino/a people, new immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) people.

Together, these attacks place lives at risk and jeopardize New York's ability to sustain our plan for Ending the Epidemic, and our decades of progress in HIV prevention, care, and health equity. As we face the ongoing fight to protect the federal funding and infrastructure necessary to end the HIV epidemic, as well as the basic human rights of vulnerable communities, City leadership and investment is more critical than ever.

Housing Works and the EtE Community Coalition, on behalf of the marginalized New Yorkers we serve and represent, implore the City Council to ensure essential funding for the services that sustain

and support our most vulnerable citizens and the City agencies and non-profit providers that work on the front lines of public health, poverty, and homelessness to meet critical needs, and to ensure that taxpayer investments support evidence-based interventions demonstrated to be effective at improving individual and public physical and behavioral health.

Make Investments to Promote Individual and Public Health

Sustain and Accelerate NYC's Progress Towards Ending Our HIV Epidemic

New York City (NYC) and New York State (NYS) have made significant progress implementing our historic *Ending the Epidemic (EtE) Blueprint* recommendations. Scientific advances in antiretroviral therapy as HIV prevention and treatment enable us to maintain optimal health for people with HIV and to stop new infections, making it possible to end HIV as an epidemic even without a cure. Our New York plan for ending the HIV epidemic is based upon: increasing access to HIV prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP); linking and retaining people diagnosed with HIV in consistent care to achieve and maintain viral suppression; and advancing sexual health equity for all New Yorkers.

Our EtE efforts enabled us to "bend the curve" of the epidemic by the end of 2019, decreasing HIV prevalence for the first time since the epidemic began. However, **new challenges and troubling trends demand a sustained and even accelerated NYC HIV response** if we are to reach our goals of ending our NYC HIV epidemic in every community and for all New Yorkers.

Despite a 32% reduction in new HIV diagnoses in NYC since 2014, after decades of decline we are deeply troubled that new HIV diagnoses have increased in NYC in the last two years, with a 5.4% increase in new HIV diagnoses from 2023 to 2024, following a 6.9% increase from 2022 to 2023. The number of new HIV infections estimated to have occurred in 2024 also increased for the first time in decades, by 17% compared with 2023. Further, stark and unacceptable disparities persist, with HIV continuing to disproportionately impact Black and Latino/a people, transgender people, and men who have sex with men (MSM). **In 2024, of all people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, 86% were Black and Latino/a and 42% lived in high- or very-high poverty neighborhoods**. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated barriers to HIV prevention and care, suppressing uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), HIV testing, and connection to care, and progress on improving HIV care outcomes have remained flat in recent years.

Confronting these challenges and the federal threats to our public health infrastructure described above to end the HIV epidemic in all New York communities and populations requires both sustained EtE efforts and new action to advance health equity. Together with DOHMH, community-based providers have worked hard to regain momentum lost due to COVID and to continue the work necessary to end our HIV epidemic. The end of NYC's HIV epidemic is within our reach. Now is the time for renewed efforts if we are to end our HIV epidemic for all New York communities and populations and advance health equity.

Fund the New York City Council Pathways to Care Initiative at $15M
In last year's FY26 budget, the NYC City Council combined its longstanding Ending the Epidemic and HIV/AIDS Faith and Community Based Initiatives to create the City Council's HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care Initiative.

The HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative is the primary driver of our NYC HIV response, supporting community-based, culturally competent HIV testing, treatment, and prevention services that are key to continued progress toward our ending the epidemic goals. The initiative supports innovative approaches to improve health care coordination and data-to-care strategies, programming and services designed to meet the unique needs of communities most affected by HIV, and efforts to expand access to comprehensive HIV prevention. This funding provides support for the NYC Department of Health's flagship PlaySure Network HIV and sexual health program, as well as population-specific programs such as the upcoming SHARP sexual health and aging clinical training and EmpowHER women's HIV prevention and sexual health programs. The initiative also supports a network of dozens of faith-based organizations to deliver HIV outreach services to their congregations, with the goals of promoting HIV, STI, and hepatitis C testing, treatment, and prevention services; mobilizing communities; and reducing stigma and discrimination.

In FY 2026, the HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative was flat funded at the FY 2025 level of $11,339,653.

In light of the continued uncertainty in federal support for the HIV response, the troubling increase in new HIV diagnoses and estimated new HIV infections, and ongoing inequities in HIV's impact on Black, Latino/a, and low-income New Yorkers, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently asks the NYC Council to increase FY 2027 funding for the critical HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative to at least $15M annually.

We also respectfully request that the NYC Council work with the Administration on plans to baseline this funding, so that providers and their clients have the certainty of ongoing support for these critical services.

Invest $10M Annually to Fully Fund the NYC Sexual Health Clinics and Enhance Services
Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the City Council and the Administration to make an additional $10M annual investment in the City's essential Sexual Health Clinics. The NYC Sexual Health Clinics are a core component of the City's ending the HIV epidemic efforts, providing low- to no-cost services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. People 12 years and older can receive services at any clinic, regardless of immigration status. Parental consent is not necessary.

In 2024, the clinics fielded nearly 83,600 visits from over 47,000 unique patients, with visits still down 17% compared with 2019 before clinic closures due to COVID-19. It is critical to reopen in FY 2027 at least one of the two clinics that remain closed to ensure New Yorkers have access to the HIV and STI testing, treatment, and prevention services they need, in light of persistent racial and ethnic disparities in STIs, low PrEP uptake among Black and Latino/a NYers compared to White NYers, and increased new HIV diagnoses after years of decline. While we expect clinic visits to increase with the reopening of a clinic and better promotion of services, volume is unlikely to return to pre-COVID-19 levels, underscoring the need to increase funding for HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care to support the City's broader HIV and sexual health infrastructure.

In addition, all Sexual Health Clinics must have the resources to offer comprehensive, state-of-the-art sexual health and supportive services needed to effectively address the full range of overlapping sexual health needs. This requires additional investments to expand clinics' hours of operation and the array of available services, including ensuring more clinics offer PrEP continuity of care, and

medication abortion; can launch new clinic services, including hepatitis C treatment, syringe service programs (SSPs), and gender-affirming care; establish youth-focused and women-focused practices at one or more clinics; make the minimal investment necessary to allow additional clinics to utilize COVID-19 Express testing equipment to provide express STI testing services; increase awareness of clinic services, including expanded and new services, through social marketing campaigns and community outreach; and support continued necessary facility and infrastructure renovations at clinic sites.

Fully equipped, staffed and functioning Sexual Health Clinics are of particularly critical importance as many New Yorkers face the loss of Medicaid, Essential Plan, or Affordable Care Act coverage, as well as non-citizens barred from enrolling in available health coverage. It is absolutely essential that a robust system of Sexual Health Clinic Services be available to meet the needs of these uninsured or underinsured New Yorkers if we are to continue to meet our obligations to all New Yorkers.

Increase Funding for the Council's Peer Specialists Initiative by $1.2M (for total funding of $5.7M annually) to Include Dedicated Resources for HIV Peer Specialists

We applaud the New York City Council for its vision and leadership in allocating $4.5M in new Peer Specialists Initiative funding in FY2025-2026 to increase the number of peer specialists in the mental health workforce to support services for a range of vulnerable communities. We urge the City Council to sustain funding of your Peer Specialists Initiative at a level at least equal to the FY26 funding and to consider increasing initiative funding by $1.2M to expand Peer Specialist employment opportunities for people living with and at risk for HIV.

Ensuring HIV Peer Specialists are part of our efforts to End the Epidemic is a low-cost, high-impact, evidence-based strategy to increase health care access and retention. Well-trained and deeply committed HIV peer specialists support the safety net by amplifying the reach and impact of under-resourced organizations. The specialized training and experience received by HIV peer specialists also provide life-changing economic mobility opportunities for people living with or at risk for HIV.

HIV Peer Specialists have a potent "superpower" in that they reflect and represent the communities in which they work—people on PrEP, women living with HIV, older people living with HIV, LGBTQ+ and TGNC individuals, and people with substance use disorder. Having faced similar challenges and lived experiences with the people they serve, peers bring valuable knowledge, insights, and cultural and linguistic competencies to their work. These qualities make HIV peer specialists an exceptionally effective force in advancing our ending the HIV epidemic priorities.

Broadening the scope of the Council's Peer Specialist Initiative with an additional $1.2M to expand the number of HIV peer specialists is more essential than ever as our communities face looming mandatory community engagement requirements for to sustain Medicaid eligibility and access to lifesaving SNAP benefits, as well as and other unprecedented barriers in accessing health care, employment, benefits, HIV treatment and prevention services, and other supportive services proven to reduce the persistent and worsening health disparities revealed by recent HIV surveillance data.

Invest $4M to Advance PrEP Equity

Despite the proven efficacy of PrEP to protect against HIV infection, uptake remains alarmingly low among Black and Latino/a people, women, and people over 50—populations disproportionately impacted by HIV. In 2024, Black and Latino/a people made up 85% of people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, but among the 29,408 New Yorkers with known race and

ethnicity who filled a PrEP prescription in 2024, only 36% were Black or Latino/a. Women accounted for 24% of new HIV diagnoses but they were only 8% of those who filled a PrEP prescription.

New York City must act boldly to eliminate these disparities by investing in community-rooted outreach and scaling access to the latest prevention tools, including a groundbreaking new option, lenacapavir. Approved by the FDA in June 2025, this ultra-long-acting injectable PrEP requires just two doses per year and has shown 96–100% efficacy in preventing HIV infection in clinical trials. This new PrEP option will make effective HIV prevention more accessible to medically underserved communities vulnerable to HIV infection. It holds transformative potential for people facing barriers to traditional PrEP access.

To fully realize the promise of all PrEP modalities, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition urges the NYC Council to invest $4 million in additional funding to the NYC Health Department to support community-based organizations to implement novel, culturally competent PrEP education, navigation and services tailored to communities that have not seen PrEP uptake commensurate with HIV risk.

Enhance and Baseline the Trans Equity Programs Fund at $10M Annually

Housing Works and the EtE Community Coalition were very pleased to see the Council increase last the Trans Equity Programs fund to $6.45 Million in last year's FY26 budget. The Trans Equity Programs fund is a lifeline for transgender and gender-expansive New Yorkers, but the FY26 funding still fell short of meeting the growing need, especially for trans-led, BIPOC-led organizations doing front-line, community-rooted work. We call on the City Council and Administration to increase the Trans Equity Programs fund to $10 Million annually, to baseline the funding going forward to ensure sustained investment, and to prioritize trans-led organizations for funding**.**

The Trans Equity Programs fund supports a range of services to help empower TGNCNB communities, including education programs, workforce development, health care navigation, legal guidance, community workshops, and mental health programs, among other services. Given the unprecedented attacks on TGNCNB people and their rights nationwide, and this federal administration's persistent actions to erase transgender identities, eliminate medically necessary health care for TGNBNC people, and threaten their human and civil rights, we expect the needs of TGNCNB service providers in NYC to continue to increase dramatically in FY27.

It is particularly important to increase funding for trans-led programs to empower them to sustain and grow this work. Additional funding is also needed to provide technical assistance to strengthen capacity and sustainability, ensure that culturally competent, affirming services reach those most impacted, and to stabilize community-based organizations delivering critical care, housing, and support.

Expand and Baseline the City Council's Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative at $5M

It is also critically important to sustain efforts to end the co-occurring hepatitis C (HCV) epidemic. The NYC City Council's Viral Hepatitis Initiative established in 2014 has provided a strong public health response to NYC's hepatitis B and C epidemics. To adequately address NYC's viral hepatitis

epidemic and fully implement the Plan to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis as a Major Public Health Threat in New York City by 2030, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition proposes that the City significantly increase the $2.4M allocated by the Council for this initiative in FY26, and that the Administration baseline this funding to expand the NYC City Council's Viral Hepatitis Initiative as follows.

Approximately 314,300 NYC residents are estimated to be living with chronic hepatitis B and C. Given these high rates of infection, it is crucial to sustain and expand the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative to safeguard the health of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, and to provide a model and beacon of hope for similar initiatives across the nation and the world. This additional funding for the NYC Health Department would support critical investments to purchase Xpert® point-of-care hepatitis C RNA tests to distribute citywide and GeneXpert® Xpress IV molecular testing systems to support increased testing, with a focus on areas with highest prevalence of undiagnosed hepatitis C; support and improve Hep B and Hep C patient navigation programs to increase access to care and treatment; build NYC's hepatitis B and C surveillance infrastructure; and increase public awareness and provider training, among other key investments in our viral hepatitis prevention and care infrastructure.

Prioritize Care, Not Criminalization, of New Yorkers With Mental Health Needs

We call on the City Council and the Mayor to fund real solutions to the mental health crisis affecting so many New Yorkers, young and old, and the lack of adequate and accessible care, especially for low-income New Yorkers in Black and Latino/Hispanic communities and those experiencing homelessness.

At Housing Works, we know from regular experience how difficult or impossible it is to access care for serious mental illness. We are unable to access desperately needed mental health even for residents of our supportive housing programs. Indeed, a significant challenge facing Housing Works and other supportive housing providers are the unmet needs of residents who experience significant mental health crises, often combined with substance use disorder. We provide over 700 units of supportive housing for the most vulnerable New Yorkers, including many residents people dealing with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues. While the overwhelming majority of residents manage these and other issues through behavioral health care provided by Housing Works or other community-based providers, not infrequently a resident will experience a crisis that necessitates transfer by EMS to the hospital. Invariably, these residents are released within a few hours, with no outpatient treatment plan. In one extreme case, Housing Works called emergency services four times over the course of three days for a resident experiencing psychotic episodes. Each time he was released back to us without any intervention, to the frustration not just of Housing Works but also the NYPD and EMS. Supportive housing is a compassionate and effective intervention, but without access to inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance use disorder treatment, untreated residents pose threats to others in a supportive housing environment that can eventually lead to their eviction – the worst possible outcome for the resident and the community.

Increase Availability and Improve Access to Community-Based Mental Health Care
New York City and State have been left with a fragmented care system that fails many of its citizens, ultimately filling up correctional institutions with patients needing psychiatric and behavioral health care. Today we find ourselves in a situation where New York State's acute care hospitals (Article 28

authorized Diagnostic and Treatment Centers) provide the largest share of inpatient psychiatric services. Just under a hundred New York State acute care hospitals have inpatient psych program beds. Of the total available psych beds in the mental health-care system, New York State's psychiatric hospitals represent just under 30% of the state's inpatient psych capacity. And the New York City Health + Hospitals System (NYC H+H), our largest public safety net hospital system, holds the lion's share of certified inpatient psych capacity in the city. We know how important understanding the mental health care delivery system is to recognize how woefully under-bedded the state is already in terms of inpatient psych capacity. Still, the ongoing need for beds, overall psych beds in New York has declined since the implementation of the Berger Commission (aka Hospital Closing Commission) and restructuring recommendations. Due to this, we know the state primarily regulates the distribution and planning of beds. Therefore, the City must continue calling on the State for more beds, but local efforts and funding must be focused to:

- Support existing evidence and promising housing, social service, and public health models to address socioeconomic stressors that worsen the mental well-being of all New Yorkers, especially marginalized communities.
- Ensure equitable review when deciding needs and where to place psychiatric beds. This assessment must not occur at the State Department of Health in a vacuum, but with critically necessary community input and leadership.
- Stress that our voluntary (private) hospitals and academic medical centers take their fair share of expanding psych beds because our public hospitals have disproportionately provided inpatient behavioral care.

Equally important is the scale-up of effective voluntary community-based mental health care. Coercive mental health treatment has not proven to have better outcomes than voluntary treatment, and is disproportionately applied to Black, Latinx, immigrants, LGBTQI people, and other communities of color who are often over-diagnosed and under-served. There are exemplary voluntary mental health programs that engage people with serious mental illness that should be expanded and invested in, including recovery-based mental health programs, respite centers, peer supports, clubhouses, harm-reduction programs, and other trauma-informed culturally and linguistically appropriate care that is accessible to Black, Latino and other New Yorkers of color.

Remove NYPD from Mental Health "Co-Response Teams"

Creating a safe NYC requires deep and sustained investments in creating strong, healthy, and safe communities - not more policing. While we welcome Mayor Mamdani's appointment of a new deputy mayor tasked with creating and then overseeing a new office of community safety, this "first step" is not an adequate solution to the crisis we face. We call on the Council and Administration to immediately remove NYPD and police from mental health "co-response teams" and cut funding for these positions from the NYPD. Redirect this funding to strengthen the non-police mental health response, including: 1) crisis response teams that do not include police officers and 2) community-based mental health services and programs that can provide general mental health services (including crisis prevention), crisis response and post-crisis wraparound support.

NYPD co-response teams should be eliminated, and NYPD should have no role in the mental health response. People in crisis don't need police, they need trained mental health workers and peers who will respond without violence and connect them to services. When police respond to people who are/or perceived to be in mental health crisis, they are more likely to end up in jail, hurt,

or worse - killed by officers. In 2021, at least 104 people were killed in the US after police responded to someone "behaving erratically" or having a mental health crisis. When police respond to mental health crisis calls, they endanger New Yorkers who really need services and support, and low-income members of BIPOC communities are at greatest risk. According to the last publicly available data, NYPD Mental Health Co-Response Teams were only able to connect people to services 32% of the time, with no data about if these folks were able to stay connected to services. In comparison, mental health teams that are comprised of peers and mental health workers have a 98% success rate of getting people connected to services. Not surprisingly, according to the Mayor's Office of Community Health, Black, Latinx, and Asian American Pacific Islander New Yorkers are significantly less likely to be connected to mental healthcare than White New Yorkers, and the highest poverty neighborhoods have over twice as many psychiatric hospitalizations per capita as the lowest poverty neighborhoods in New York City.[1]

Transform the City's Failed Response to Homelessness and Behavioral Health Issues

Adopt Evidence-Based Public Health Responses to Unsheltered Homelessness

Housing Works continues to strongly oppose efforts to expand involuntary inpatient and outpatient commitment initiatives, and in particular any effort to involuntarily commit an individual based on a determination of "*substantial inability of the person to meet his or her basic need for food, clothing, shelter or medical care."* For over 35 years, Housing Works has successfully employed low- threshold, harm reduction strategies to engage the most marginalized New Yorkers in effective care to address co-occurring medical, mental health, and substance use disorders. What we have learned first-hand is that New Yorkers struggling to cope with serious mental health issues face multiple, significant barriers to voluntary access to the care they seek, especially those who are also trying to survive without a safe, stable place to live. These often-insurmountable barriers include a lack of supportive housing, low reimbursement rates for needed services, a shortage of health care professionals, high caseloads, and low pay for contracted service workers that makes it difficult to recruit or retain staff. As one result, on any given day, there are approximately 1,400 people with serious mental illness in City jails, where mental health services are woefully inadequate, leaving our most vulnerable New Yorkers to cycle between the streets, shelters, and jails with little or no access to voluntary care.

End Street and Subway Sweeps and Coercive Involuntary Removals

Housing Works, on behalf of the vulnerable New Yorkers we serve and represent, were deeply disappointed by the resumption by this Administration of sweeps of homeless encampments. Regardless of the agency responsible for carrying out such sweeps, harassing people experiencing homelessness through sweeps of the subways or encampments of those who opt for survival in public rather than entering frightening shelters is not a solution. We must stop stigmatizing people experiencing homelessness, especially those who are dealing with untreated or undertreated chronic medical and/or behavioral health issues while trying to survive in shelter or on the streets.

We strongly agree that the City has both a legal and a moral obligation to assist homeless New Yorkers suffering from untreated severe mental illness who are unable to meet their basic needs. But an involuntary removal approach skips over the issues of a seriously underfunded public mental health system and almost complete lack of safe and appropriate housing placements for people with serious mental illness. It is meaningless and even cruel to harass and involuntarily remove people in

[1] https://mentalhealth.cityofnewyork.us/dashboard/

an attempt to force them into a system of care that lacks the capacity to serve them. In addition, due to the continued involvement of police in mental health episodes, much of the provision of mental health care has now fallen to our carceral system. Homeless outreach, conducted by trained outreach workers instead of the police, must focus instead on connecting people to resources they want, including low-barrier shelters and permanent housing. Likewise, our response to behavioral health crises must change, with increased funding and commitment to support and expand competent, evidence-based, interventions to address mental health and substance use disorder emergencies that are conducted solely by mental health professionals, with no police involvement unless specifically requested by a response team.

As noted in the New York State Comptroller's report on Services for the Unsheltered, New York City's unsheltered population continues to grow despite a dramatic increase in spending on services, there is little evidence that current efforts are effective in moving people from the streets into permanent housing, and it is critical that we develop a better understanding of what type of interventions are truly effective in meeting the needs of this most marginalized and vulnerable group of New Yorkers. Housing Works implore New York City to transform the City's ineffective response to the homelessness crisis by urgently adopting innovative, evidence-based approaches that will save lives and money.

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. While we welcome the Mayor's acknowledgement that additional investments are needed to address the needs of unsheltered New Yorkers, it is important to note the ongoing barriers posed by existing models of care for those who have been afraid or unwilling to engage with the Department of Homeless Services. Neither traditional Safe Havens with on-site services but congregate sleeping areas, nor Stabilization Hotels with private rooms but no on-site services can meet the needs of many unsheltered persons with significant behavioral health needs and/or distrust of conditioned shelter. Truly low-threshold facilities that combine a drop-in center with on-site medical and behavioral health care with private hotel rooms to provide transitional housing without preconditions are perhaps the most effective way to engage unsheltered persons with behavioral health needs who are unable or unwilling to access more traditional shelter or treatment programs.

Invest in an Innovative, Low-Threshold, Evidence-Based Intervention to Address the Crises of Unsheltered Homelessness and Mental Health Issues

After five years of fruitless efforts to work with the previous Administrations to open an innovative new model of comprehensive housing and services for unsheltered New Yorkers, Housing Works seeks Council support to work with the Mamdani Administration on the development of a thoughtful new pilot program focused on street homelessness. This model, which could support 150 private safe haven rooms (one person per room), a co-located 50-chair drop-in center with on-site behavioral health care, and access to a full range of primary care, mental health, and substance use services, would require $12 million annually in City funding.

Our model involves operating a drop-in center with co-located private safe haven transitional beds; its cornerstones include delivering on-site behavioral health care through a harm reduction modality, prioritizing safe haven beds for drop-in center clients who reject "traditional" entryways into DHS shelters, and addressing chronic physical and behavioral health conditions

that persist among drop-in and safe haven clients alike. These innovations were developed in thoughtful consultation with DHS and based on Housing Works' experiences delivering DHS funded services at the height of the COVID pandemic, including operating two DHS COVID isolation/quarantine hotels and providing medical and behavioral health services at all DHS COVID isolation sites citywide.

Between 2020 and 2023, Housing Works received both DHS and OMB approval to operate the proposed model at three distinct locations: Chelsea, Chinatown, and Jamaica. Unfortunately, in all three cases, the sites fell through for different reasons. (In June 2020 the Chelsea hotel owner pulled out one week before opening, betting that NYC tourism would rebound; in May 2022 the hotels union persuaded Mayor Adams to object to and kill the Chinatown project; and in February 2023 the Jamaica hotel operator reneged on its deal with Housing Works to pursue—successfully—a more lucrative contract to use the site as a DHS asylum facility.)
Despite these setbacks, Housing Works remains committed to bring its model of street homeless services to one of New York City's most impacted neighborhoods experiencing an unmet need for street homeless services and substance use and mental health interventions. We propose to leverage our 36 years of experience providing housing, supportive services, and primary and behavioral health care to populations other providers deem "too difficult to serve."

We seek a site with proximity to one of Housing Works' six Federal Qualified Health Centers, in order to leverage the full range of medical and behavioral health care for safe haven and drop-in center clients. As we understand that opioid use, overdose, and co-occurring medical and mental health conditions are among the top public health issues experienced by street homeless populations, we will focus on leveraging on-site medical and behavioral health teams who can provide 24/7 crisis intervention and navigate clients toward buprenorphine induction, ongoing mental health care, and other appropriate interventions available at one of our community health centers. Staff between the two sites would work hand in hand to monitor client progress and health outcomes through interdisciplinary team meetings, integrated case conferences, and shared client data across our common electronic medical record and case management systems.

In 2023, Housing Works was awarded a grant from the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHF) to conduct a rigorous academic evaluation of the proposed model; while Housing Works returned the grant when the last site fell through, NYSHF has graciously invited us to reapply when a new site becomes available. Through a multisector partnership of government, nonprofit, and academic partners, we hope to provide an evidence-based model that would strengthen New York City's ability to better address unsheltered homelessness and its associated issues.

Create and Preserve Housing Opportunities for New Yorkers Experiencing Homelessness

Improve and Expand the CityFHEPs Program
Housing Works is grateful for the expansions to the CityFHEPs program enacted by the City Council in 2023 and continues to support efforts to enforce their full implementation by the Administration. We understand that the Executive Budget does not include any budget for expansion while the *Vincent v. Adams* litigation is ongoing but strongly urge the Administration to advance a settlement of the litigation that provides some immediate relief to New Yorkers in need as well as a path to full implementation of CityFHEPS expansion approved by the Council. At a bare minimum, equity dictates an immediate expansion of the voucher program to all residents of New York City operated emergency or transitional housing, including not just shelters operated by DHS,

but also housing for people experiencing homelessness operated by DYCD, HRA, MOCJ, HPD, HRO, HASA, etc., homeless drop-in centers, transitional housing, and street homeless households who don't already have access to a rent subsidy, regardless of immigration status.

Housing Works fully supports the stated goals of improving and simplifying the troubled and inefficient administration of the CityFHEPS vouchers program to improve the experience and outcomes for voucher holders. We all know that the CityFHEPs process is plagued by unpredictable and lengthy delays, rampant discrimination from landlords and brokers, and administrative missteps that discourage applicants, alienate landlords, and prolong homelessness. Still, we are troubled by the Executive Budget projection of $235M in reduced costs for the CityFHEPS program in FY27 and outyears to be realized through City efforts to contain cost growth. We implore the Council to diligently oversee these efforts to ensure the Administration's assurance that vouchers will continue to be issued to eligible persons and that voucher holders' rights will be protected. For example, we urge the Council to hold the Administration accountable to reverse the CityFHEPS rent hike that would increase working tenants' share from 30% to 40% after 5 years.

Meanwhile, the expansion of the CityFHEPS program remains a crucial tool in realizing our shared goal of a more affordable New York for working-class and low-income New Yorkers. To accomplish this goal, New York City must continue to invest in cost-effective solutions like CityFHEPS that keep people in their homes and get people housed and out of the expensive and disruptive cycles of shelter and other institutional settings.

As just one example, The MOCJ Emergency and Transitional Housing Program (MOCJ ETH) provides up to twelve months of a safe stable place to live for people leaving incarceration without housing, while providing vocational, educational, and therapeutic services as well as assistance to secure permanent housing. Housing Works, as one of several non-profit MOCJ ETH program providers, provides 356 beds combined with skills building, job training, access to medical and behavioral health services, and housing placement assistance. Originally initiated during the COVID crisis, the MOCJ ETH program has been continued and expanded in recognition of the fact that New Yorkers leaving incarceration often require housing assistance and supportive services to make a successful transition back into the community. However, while many of our program participants complete job training and secure employment they are not able to afford housing on the open rental market.

During the COVID crisis, MOCJ ETH program participants had access to Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) under the Housing Choice Section 8 program, but the supply of those vouchers has dried up, and our MOCJ ETH participants are not eligible for any other housing subsidies. Like other supportive housing programs for the justice-involved population, the MOCJ Transitional Housing Programs generate reductions in shelter and jail use, inpatient hospitalizations and related Medicaid costs, and substance use. However, this worthwhile investment is squandered when at the end of a successful 12-month transitional housing stay, participants who have completed educational and job training programs, and are stable and employed, are pushed back into homelessness in the mass shelters or on the streets, and in the worst-case scenario end up back in jail. It makes no economic sense to spend over $130/day on shelter or over $500K annually to keep someone at Rikers, when the City has invested $50K to $60K annually in supportive transitional housing but is unwilling to afford participants a housing voucher that would cost only $25K to $36K a year.

Support Evidence-Based Housing First Harm Reduction Housing Interventions
From our beginning, Housing Works has been committed to a low-threshold, harm reduction approach to housing assistance, where admission and retention in housing is based on behaviors, rather than status as a drug user, person with mental health issues, or other condition. Residents are held accountable, as we all are, for the behaviors and conditions necessary to live safely with neighbors, are entitled to privacy within their own home, and are encouraged to feel safe to share behavioral health needs or crises without concern about jeopardizing housing security or being required to engage in a particular course of treatment. Our programs demonstrate that this approach works, empowering residents to take action to improve their health and wellbeing, as shown by the high rate of viral load suppression, consistently over 90%, among the formerly homeless people with HIV we house. We have successfully employed a "Housing First" approach for over 35 years, which prior to the current federal administration was widely acknowledged as an evidence-based model that was endorsed as best practice by HUD and HRSA.

On behalf of the homeless and formerly homeless New Yorkers we serve, we implore New York City leadership to continue to support and fund "housing first" low-threshold housing interventions from federal attacks. We are deeply grateful for New York State Attorney General Letitia James' leadership in bringing a lawsuit and securing a temporary injunction to protect billions of dollars in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that provide housing and other services to help address homelessness through HUD's Continuum of Care (CoC) program. For decades, CoC prioritized the "housing first" approach to fighting homelessness, providing immediate shelter to those in need without forcing them to meet burdensome requirements that can leave many without a safe place to sleep.

In November, the Trump administration attempted to impose new and illegal conditions on CoC grants that threaten to upend the services the program supports, including a drastic cut in funding for permanent supportive housing that could result in the eviction of some 7,000 formerly homeless households in New York City, barring CoC funding from organizations that acknowledge the existence of transgender or nonbinary individuals or that practice harm reduction, excluding programs that provide services for mental disabilities to prioritize those that only serve people with physical disabilities, and imposing new conditions to withhold funds from regions that do not conform their local homelessness laws to the administration's priorities regarding sweeps of persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness and other forms of criminalization of homelessness.

While the November 2025 HUD CoC NOFO was stayed by the federal courts, just last week HUD issued a new 2026 CoC NOFO that imposes many of the same conditions on applicants for federal homeless housing assistance, including the exclusion of organizations that employ evidence-based low-threshold, harm reduction housing approaches, or acknowledge the existence of transgender people. Likewise, to be competitive, jurisdictions must demonstrate that they criminalize unsheltered homelessness, employ involuntary commitment, and deploy law enforcement to perform sweeps. We implore New York City leadership to stand firm in our City's long and effective recognition of the critical importance of "housing first" approaches that provide stable housing coupled with the active offer of supportive services to provide the respect and autonomy required for meaningful individual change.

Fund Non-Profit Legal Services Organizations to Address Source of Income Discrimination
To maximize the effectiveness of existing NYC voucher programs, including HASA rental assistance and CityFHEPs vouchers requires more consistent and effective legal action to enforce

the City prohibition on source of income discrimination. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition respectfully assert that in addition to any enforcement resources added to the City's Human Rights Division, at least $4M in funding be made available annually to support contracts with non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address the continued illegal discrimination by brokers and landlords who refuse to accept government-funded rental vouchers.

Increase Access to Supportive Housing and Housing With Deep Affordability

Of course, addressing our housing and homeless crises requires substantial new City investments in housing with deep affordability, including supportive housing for those who need it. At Housing Works, we believe as a core value that housing is healthcare and a basic human right.
Our mission is to provide safe, secure, and stable housing to New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, employing a low-threshold, harm reduction approach that respects the dignity of every person. At Housing Works, we have witnessed firsthand both the powerful impact of safe, stable housing and the barriers posed by the underfunding and understaffing that cripples our City's response to the affordable housing and homeless crises.

Support the "Rentals within Reach" Initiative
Housing Works fully supports the Rentals within Reach initiative, a FY27 budget proposal from Council Progressives to unlock and preserve existing public and supportive housing as key to the long-term stability of vulnerable and working-class New Yorkers. The proposal calls for $248M in city dollars ($144M in Capital, $104M in Expense) to go toward clearing the waitlist for NYCHA vacant units, which currently stand at over 6,000 and to renovate and preserve over 1,000 supportive housing units. The proposal includes for $171M in resources to significantly accelerate the return of public housing units, which the City currently prepares at a rate of just 390 a month, to steadily increase that rate to 1,000 apartments a month over the course of Fiscal Year 2027. Additionally, the proposal calls for a $78 million investment to preserve and renovate supportive housing units, Including a $13 million flexible expense pot to renovate or repair up to 1,000 units of supportive housing and $44 million in capital and $21.3 million in expense funding to preserve at least 325 units in FY27. At a time when the City is suffering a severe shortage of affordable and supportive housing, this proposal would provide access to 20,000 New Yorkers in desperate need. This is a critical investment, even during a lean budget year.

Support the Administration's "Block by Block" Housing Plan
Housing Works is also encouraged by the administration's "Block by Block: The Housing Plan for A New Era," which calls for an historic $22 billion investment over five years that will put New York on a path to create 200,000 new affordable homes and preserve another 200,000 existing homes over the next decade. We support the plan's focus on deeper affordability, increased homeless housing set-asides, justice-involved supportive housing, and the development of housing for older adults. Ensuring sufficient funding to adequately expand the City's affordable and supportive housing stock is one of the most important issues facing New Yorkers that must be prioritized. We also strongly support the administration's stated commitment to expanding the Supportive Housing Loan Program and additional tools aimed at protecting deeply affordable housing from financial distress. These investments are critical to ensuring the long-term viability of the supportive housing infrastructure serving some of the city's lowest-income and highest-need New Yorkers. Equally important is the administration's recognition of the operational bottlenecks that can delay move-ins and keep apartments vacant longer than necessary – including challenges related to leasing-up new

supportive housing, scheduling apartment viewings, and timely access to units after a tenant passes without an identified next of kin. Addressing these barriers is crucial to ensuring supportive housing can serve New Yorkers as quickly and efficiently as possible. Finally, we appreciate the plan's focus on housing stability initiatives, including investments in Housing Court reforms, expanded Right to Counsel funding, and upstream eviction diversion efforts such as connecting tenants to financial support when they fall behind on rent.

As a developer of affordable and supportive housing, Housing Works also calls for administrative action to facilitate and streamline these efforts. It is also necessary to provide higher per-unit subsidies to address construction cost inflation that post-pandemic have resulted in cost increases that exceed existing HPD subsidy caps. Gap financing required ranges from $50,000–$100,000 per unit, depending on building type, labor structure, and sustainability requirements. On a 100-unit project, this equates to an additional $5–10 million beyond currently available subsidies. Our developments are also needlessly delayed by difficulties getting permits and approved certificates of occupancy. It is essential that DOB and HPD be adequately staff to efficiently manage these processes. We also call for the establishment of a specific unit within DOB assigned to expedite supportive housing and affordable housing development.

Accelerate the City's Commitment to Create Supportive Housing

Housing Works welcomed last year's actions to accelerate realization of its commitment to develop 15,000 new NYC-funded supportive housing units by 2030, including shifting the focus of the 15/15 from the scattered site model to the creation of congregate, single site supportive housing units, the funding provided for rental assistance over three years to support and preserve 15/15 units. We urge the City Council to ensure that the NYC 15/15 initiative is employed to accelerate production and preserve older housing stock, and to remove arbitrary barriers to the housing created. It is equally important for the City to amend eligibility for the program to remove, to the extent possible, the requirement that residents meet the federal definition of "chronic homelessness." This definition can be difficult or impossible for many people experiencing homelessness to demonstrate, and while we acknowledge that it is a requirement for programs funded at least in part by Federal Continuum of Care homeless housing funding, the City should not employ the definition to define eligibility for any program that does not receive CoC funding.

Invest in the City's Human Services Workforce and Infrastructure

Once again, the Executive Budget fails to address the significant strains experienced by the City's critical front-line human services sector.

Invest in the City's Human Services Workforce

The Executive Budget once again this year fails to make critically needed investments in the City's non-profit workforce. Housing and homeless service providers, and other members of the human services workforce, made up predominantly of women of color, are grossly underpaid. Housing Works, as part of the #JustPay Campaign, urge the city to invest in the human services workforce so that New Yorkers receive consistently high quality and effective social services. Specifically, we call on the City to continue to fund the 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers from 2026-2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA deal commitment, and to Pass Wage Equity Legislation (Int 0452-2026), which would align nonprofit and government human services job titles, and through that, raise salaries for nonprofit human services workers.

Support Human Services Agencies with Adequate Indirect Funding
It is also time for meaningful action to address the underfunding of critical non-profit infrastructure needs. Non-profit human service organizations that have been on the front lines of the HIV, viral hepatitis, COVID-19, and mpox responses face ongoing and new challenges as the result of years of severe underinvestment in essential infrastructure needs. While we welcomed adoption by the City several years ago of a contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate after years of inadequate funding, to date total contract amounts still have not been adjusted to reflect the additional infrastructure funding, and social service agencies employing their approved indirect rate are required to cut direct services by an amount equal to the additional indirect costs covered. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the Council to support the funding required to amend each existing NYC human services contract as soon as practicable to increase the total contract amount to reflect the contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate "below the line" without impacting contract funding for direct services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Housing Works calls on the Council and the Administration to be bold when it comes to addressing NYC's overlapping housing, humanitarian, and public health crises that drive poor individual and public health outcomes among NYC's most marginalized residents. We call for increased Council oversight of the City's mental health and homeless responses, an increased emphasis on peer and community health workers, the appropriate urgency in addressing our housing affordability crisis, a focus on cultural competency in service delivery, and implementation and rigorous evaluation of innovative new approaches.

Thank you for your time. Please direct any questions to Anthony Feliciano, Vice President of Community Mobilization at Housing Works, Inc., at a.feliciano@housingworks.org.

Attachment:
End AIDS New York Community Coalition Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2027 Budget



Ending NYC's HIV Epidemic is Within Our Reach - Let's Finish the Job
Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2027 Budget

New York City (NYC) and New York State (NYS) have made significant progress implementing the historic 2015 NYS Blueprint for Ending the Epidemic (NYS Blueprint) recommendations. Scientific advances in antiretroviral therapy as HIV prevention and treatment enable us to maintain optimal health for people with HIV and to stop new infections, making it possible to end HIV as an epidemic even without a cure. The NYS and NYC plans for ending the HIV epidemic are based on:

- Increasing access to HIV prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP);
- Linking and retaining people diagnosed with HIV in care to achieve and maintain viral suppression; and
- Advancing sexual health equity for all New Yorkers.

Our efforts enabled us to "bend the curve" of the NYS epidemic by the end of 2019, decreasing HIV prevalence for the first time since the epidemic began. However, new challenges and troubling trends demand a sustained and even accelerated NYC HIV response. **In 2024, 1,791 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, up 5.4% compared with 2023. This represents the fourth consecutive year in which new HIV diagnoses increased or remained relatively stable.** The number of new HIV infections estimated to have occurred in 2024 increased 17% compared with 2023. Further, stark and unacceptable disparities persist, with HIV continuing to disproportionately impact Black and Latino/a people, transgender people, and men who have sex with men (MSM). **In 2024, of all people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, 86% were Black and Latino/a and 42% lived in high- or very-high poverty neighborhoods**.

We now face new challenges posed by federal actions that threaten public health funding and infrastructure supporting our HIV response. Signed into law last July, H.R.1 introduced significant changes to Medicaid and other safety net programs, including the largest Medicaid funding cut in history and restrictions on Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility and coverage. These changes are of particular concern for the HIV community, since Medicaid is the largest source of insurance coverage for people with HIV in the U.S., covering an estimated 40% of adults under the age of 65 who have HIV.

Further, at the beginning of April, President Trump released his administration's FY 2027 budget request, which – like his administration's FY 2026 budget request – proposes fully eliminating over $755 million in CDC funding for HIV prevention and $529 million in funding for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS program, moving the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program from HRSA to a newly proposed Administration for a Healthy America (AHA), and combining into block grants reduced funding for STIs, tuberculosis, and viral hepatitis.

Our ending the epidemic efforts are further threatened by the federal government's retreat from health equity goals, and by the unprecedented and ongoing federal attacks on communities disparately impacted by HIV, including Black and Latino/a people, new immigrants, people experiencing

homelessness, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (TGNCNB) people.

As we face the ongoing fight to protect the federal funding and infrastructure necessary to end the HIV epidemic, as well as the basic human rights of vulnerable communities, City investment is more critical than ever. The end of NYC's HIV epidemic is within our reach. Now is the time for renewed efforts and innovative approaches if we are to end our HIV epidemic for all NYC communities and populations and advance health equity.

URGENT PRIORITIES:

The End AIDS NY Community Coalition is a group of over 90 health care centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations across NYC and NYS that are fully committed to realizing the goals of our historic NYS Blueprint for all New Yorkers. While each investment and policy recommendation set forth below is necessary to advance full realization of our ending the HIV epidemic goals, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition highlights four critically important immediate priorities required to address the stark and persistent HIV health inequities that undermine our NYC HIV response, leaving individuals and communities behind.

Urgent End AIDS NY Community Coalition Priorities		Funds Required
1. Sustain and Increase Funding for the NYC Council's HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care Initiative	In the City's FY 2026 adopted budget, the NYC Council combined its longstanding Ending the Epidemic initiative and HIV/AIDS Faith Community Based initiative to create a new HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative. The HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative is the primary driver of our NYC HIV response, supporting community-based, culturally competent HIV testing, treatment, and prevention services that are key to continued progress toward our ending the epidemic goals. The initiative supports innovative approaches to improve health care coordination and data-to-care strategies, programming and services designed to meet the unique needs of communities most affected by HIV, and efforts to expand access to comprehensive HIV prevention. This funding provides support for the NYC Department of Health's flagship PlaySure Network HIV and sexual health program, as well as population-specific programs such as the upcoming SHARP sexual health and aging clinical training and EmpowHER women's HIV prevention and sexual health programs. The initiative also supports a network of dozens of faith-based organizations to deliver HIV outreach services to their congregations, with the goals of promoting HIV, STI, and hepatitis C testing, treatment, and prevention services; mobilizing communities; and reducing stigma and discrimination. In FY 2026, the HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative was level funded at the FY 2025 level of $11,339,653. In light of the continued uncertainty in federal support for the HIV response, the troubling increase in new HIV diagnoses and estimated new HIV infections, and ongoing inequities in HIV's impact on Black, Latino/a, and low-income New Yorkers, **the End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently asks the NYC Council to increase FY 2027 funding for the HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative to at least $15M annually.** We also respectfully request that the NYC Council work with the Administration on plans to baseline this funding, so that providers and their clients have the certainty of ongoing support for these critical services.	$15M annually baselined

2. Sustain and Increase Funding for the NYC Sexual Health Clinics to Enhance Services	The NYC Sexual Health Clinics are a core component of the City's ending the HIV epidemic efforts, providing low- to no-cost services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. People 12 years and older can receive services at any clinic, regardless of immigration status. Parental consent is not necessary. In 2024, the clinics fielded nearly 83,600 visits from over 47,000 unique patients, with visits still down 17% compared with 2019 before clinic closures due to COVID-19. It is critical to reopen in FY 2027 at least one of the two clinics that remain closed to ensure New Yorkers have access to the HIV and STI testing, treatment, and prevention services they need, in light of persistent racial and ethnic disparities in STIs, low PrEP uptake among Black and Latino/a NYers compared to White NYers, and increased new HIV diagnoses after years of decline. While we expect clinic visits to increase with the reopening of a clinic and better promotion of services, volume is unlikely to return to pre-COVID-19 levels, underscoring the need to increase funding for HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care to support the City's broader HIV and sexual health infrastructure. In addition, all NYC 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. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently requests $10M in FY 2027 to fund the NYC Sexual Health Clinics to:** ● Reopen at least one of the two clinics currently closed; ● Expand clinics' hours of operation and the array of available services, including ensuring more clinics offer PrEP continuity of care, and medication abortion. Launch new clinic services, including hepatitis C treatment, syringe service programs (SSPs), and gender-affirming care; ● Establish youth-focused and women-focused practices at one or more clinics; ● Make the minimal investment necessary to allow additional clinics to utilize COVID-19 Express testing equipment for express STI testing services; ● Increase awareness of clinic services, including expanded and new services, through social marketing campaigns and community outreach; and ● Support continued necessary facility and infrastructure renovations at clinic sites.	$10M annually baselined

3. Sustain and Increase Funding for the NYC Council's Peer Specialists Initiative to Include Dedicated Resources for HIV Peer Specialists	The End AIDS NY Community Coalition applauds the NYC Council for its vision and leadership in establishing a new $4.5M Peer Specialists Initiative in the FY 2026 adopted budget to increase the number of peer specialists in the mental health workforce to support services for a range of vulnerable communities. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition urges the NYC Council to expand the Peer Specialist Initiative to include funding for additional peer specialists to support HIV prevention and care. Ensuring HIV peer specialists are part of our efforts to end the epidemic is a low-cost, high-impact evidence-based strategy to increase health care access and retention. Well-trained and deeply committed HIV peer specialists support the safety net by amplifying the reach and impact of under-resourced organizations. The specialized training and experience received by HIV peer specialists also provide life-changing economic mobility opportunities for people living with or at risk for HIV. HIV peer specialists have a potent "superpower" in that they reflect and represent the communities in which they work—including people taking PrEP, women with HIV, older people with HIV, LGBTQ+ and TGNCNB people, and people with substance use disorder. Having faced similar challenges and lived experiences with the people they serve, peers bring valuable knowledge, insights, and cultural and linguistic competencies to their work. These qualities make HIV peer specialists an exceptionally effective force in advancing our ending the HIV epidemic priorities. Investing in HIV peer specialists is more essential than ever as our communities face looming mandatory community engagement requirements for Medicaid eligibility and other unprecedented barriers in accessing health care, employment, benefits, HIV treatment and prevention services, and other supportive services proven to reduce persistent health disparities. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition urgently asks the NYC Council to broaden the scope of the Peer Specialist Initiative and add $1.2M in funding for the initiative in the FY 2027 budget to expand the number of HIV peer specialists,** while sustaining level funding at $4.5M in the FY 2027 budget in Peer Specialists Initiative support for mental health peer specialists.	$1.2M annually For $5.7M in total annual funding

4. Invest to Advance PrEP Equity	Despite the proven efficacy of PrEP to protect against HIV infection, uptake remains alarmingly low among Black and Latino/a people, women, and people over 50—populations disproportionately impacted by HIV. In 2024, Black and Latino/a people made up 85% of people newly diagnosed with HIV in NYC, but among 29,408 people with known race and ethnicity who filled a PrEP prescription in 2024, only 36% were Black or Latino/a. Women accounted for 24% of new HIV diagnoses but they were only 8% of those who filled a PrEP prescription. New York City must act boldly to eliminate these disparities by investing in community-rooted outreach and scaling access to the latest prevention tools, including a groundbreaking new option, lenacapavir. Approved by the FDA in June 2025, this ultra-long-acting injectable PrEP requires just two doses per year and has shown 96–100% efficacy in preventing HIV infection in clinical trials. This new PrEP option will make effective HIV prevention more accessible to communities vulnerable to HIV infection. It holds transformative potential for people facing barriers to traditional PrEP access. To fully realize the promise of all PrEP modalities, **the End AIDS NY Community Coalition urges the NYC Council to invest $4 million in additional funding to the NYC Health Department to support community-based organizations to implement novel and effective PrEP education, navigation and services tailored to communities that have not seen PrEP uptake commensurate with HIV risk.**	$4M annually baselined

Additional End AIDS NY Community Coalition Priorities		Funds Required
Enhance the NYC Council's Trans Equity Programs Fund	The Trans Equity Programs fund is a lifeline for transgender and gender-expansive New Yorkers, but the FY 2026 funding at $6.45M fell short of meeting the growing need, especially for trans-led, BIPOC-led organizations doing front-line, community-rooted work. The Trans Equity Programs fund supports a range of services to help empower TGNCNB communities, including education programs, workforce development, health care navigation, legal guidance, community workshops, and mental health programs, among other services. Given the unprecedented attacks on TGNCNB people and their rights nationwide, and this federal administration's persistent actions to erase transgender identities, eliminate medically necessary health care for TGNBNC people, and threaten their human and civil rights, we expect the needs of TGNCNB service providers in NYC to continue to increase dramatically in FY 2027. It is particularly important to increase funding for trans-led programs to empower them to sustain and grow this work. Additional funding is also needed to provide technical assistance to strengthen capacity and sustainability, ensure that culturally competent, affirming services reach those most impacted, and to stabilize community-based organizations delivering critical care, housing, and support. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls on the NYC Council to increase Trans Equity Programs funding to $10M, baseline the funding going forward to ensure sustained investment, and prioritize trans-led organizations for funding.**	$10M annually baselined
Sustain the NYC Council's Opioid Prevention and Treatment initiative	The NYC Council's Opioid Prevention and Treatment initiative, funded at $3.075M in the FY 2026 adopted budget, supports community-based organizations that serve New Yorkers affected by the opioid epidemic, including family members of people who use drugs, by conducting localized prevention and treatment efforts around opioid use disorder. This funding is critical to ensure the ongoing delivery of a range of essential services that currently support program participants. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that the NYC Council sustain level funding of $3.075M in the FY 2027 budget for the Opioid Prevention and Treatment initiative.**	$3.075M annually baselined

Wage Equity for Human Services Workers	Human services workers, funded primarily through government contracts, provide essential services but receive poverty-level wages. Despite being highly educated and skilled, the human services workforce, made up predominantly of women of color, receive wages that are among the lowest of any industry in the City's economy, and far less than comparable workers in the public sector. Fringe benefits for human services workers also lag far behind their public sector counterparts. This leaves many human services workers, who provide vital services to the City's most vulnerable residents, financially insecure. Low wages in City contracts also result in high turnover, and place non-profit providers at a serious disadvantage in a competitive job market. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition joins the #JustPay Campaign to urge the city to invest in the human services workforce so that New Yorkers receive consistently high quality and effective social services. **Specifically, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls on the City to continue to fund the 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers from 2026-2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA deal commitment, and to Pass Wage Equity Legislation (Int 0452-2026), which would align nonprofit and government human services job titles, and through that, raise salaries for nonprofit human services workers.**	TBD
Support Human Services Agencies with Adequate Indirect Funding	Non-profit human service organizations that have been on the front lines of the HIV, viral hepatitis, COVID-19, and mpox responses as NYC vendors face ongoing and new challenges as the result of years of severe underinvestment in essential infrastructure needs. While the End AIDS NY Community Coalition welcomed the adoption by the City several years ago of a contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate after years of inadequate funding, to date total contract amounts have still not been adjusted to reflect the additional infrastructure funding, and social service agencies employing their approved indirect rate have been required to cut direct services by an amount equal to the additional indirect costs covered. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the NYC Council to support the funding required to amend each existing NYC human services contract as soon as practicable to increase the total contract amount to reflect the contracting agency's	$2M annually baselined

	approved federal indirect rate "below the line" without impacting contract funding for direct services. **For HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative contracts alone, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls for approximately $2M in additional indirect funding to be added to existing contracts to afford providers their Federally approved indirect rates.**	
Fund Non-Profit Legal Services Organizations to Address Source of Income Discrimination	To maximize the effectiveness of existing NYC voucher programs, including NYC HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) rental assistance and CityFHEPs vouchers, requires more consistent and effective legal action to enforce NYC Human Rights Law prohibition on source of income discrimination. It is critical to leverage the experience of non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address the continued illegal discrimination by brokers and landlords who refuse to accept government-funded rental vouchers. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $4.4M in FY 2027 funding to support contracts with non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address source of income discrimina**tion.	$4.4M annually baselined
Housing Assistance as HIV Prevention	Evidence shows that lack of safe stable housing significantly increases vulnerability to HIV acquisition among populations already overrepresented among new HIV infections, including people of trans experience and Black and Latino MSM. There is an urgent need for housing assistance as HIV prevention for highly vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness, to enable them to benefit from comprehensive HIV prevention, including PrEP. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $10M in FY 2027 funding to support housing assistance as HIV prevention for highly vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness.**	$10M, annually baselined

Support for Routine Testing to Address Congenital Syphilis	There were 37 reported cases of congenital syphilis in 2024 in NYC, representing a 5.7% increase compared with 2023. Reported cases were relatively low prior to 2018 but increased by 117.6% from 2019 to 2024. These data underscore the need for new investment to support implementation of recommendations in the New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework, including improving access to syphilis testing; delivering congenital syphilis education for patients, their partners, and the public; and ensuring provider, emergency department, and health care system compliance with the third trimester syphilis screening mandate. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $200K in FY 2027 funding to the NYC Health Department to support implementation of New York State Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework recommendations.**	$200K
Health Services for Un/Underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers	Uninsured or underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers are in need of access to affirming and culturally competent comprehensive health services, including primary, behavioral, sexual, and reproductive health services. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $980K be allocated to the NYC Health Department to support LGBTQ-affirming and culturally competent comprehensive health services for un/underinsured LGBTQ New Yorkers.**	$980,000 annually baselined
Harm Reduction as HIV Prevention	Harm reduction services are a highly effective, evidence-based HIV prevention intervention. The End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls for expansion of the number of 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, STI testing and prevention education, and onsite supportive services, including behavioral and mental health services, drop-in services, food and nutrition services, and hygiene services. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $9M in FY 2027 funding to expand the availability of harm reduction services in NYC.**	$9M annually baselined

Free HIV Home Tests for New Yorkers	TakeMeHome is a partnership between Building Healthy Online Communities, NASTAD, and Emory University enabling local and state health departments to offer free in-home sexual health tests to community members. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $250,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to support a partnership with TakeMeHome to expand the NYC Health Department's Online Home Test Giveaway (OHTG) and ensure that free HIV home tests are available to order online for delivery to locations in any of NYC's ZIP codes.**	$250,000 annually baselined
STI and Sexual Health Services for Uninsured New Yorkers	The NYC Health Department funds agencies to provide to uninsured New Yorkers routine, quality sexual health care, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis screening, diagnostic testing, and treatment, and hepatitis A and B, HPV, and mpox vaccines. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $500,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to ensure the sustainability of this program**.	$500,000 annually baselined
Free Safer Sex Products for New Yorkers	The NYC Health Department's NYC Condom Availability Program (NYCAP) distributes safer sex products— including male condoms, internal condoms, and lubricant packets— across NYC, including at traditional sites (e.g., hospitals, clinics, community-based organizations) and nontraditional sites (e.g., barber shops, beauty salons, nail salons, bars, clubs, liquor stores, churches, schools). NYCAP also fulfills orders for safer sex products placed via the Safer Sex Portal. The NYC Health Department funds agencies to recruit and maintain networks of nontraditional sites that actively distribute safer sex products. Funded agencies conduct extensive targeted outreach (e.g., drop-in groups, street and non-traditional outreach, social media outreach) to ensure products are reaching priority populations. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests $200,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to ensure an adequate supply of safer sex products and avoid interruptions in product distribution.**	$200,000 annually baselined

Mobile Sexual Health Clinic for Sex Workers	Through this new program, the NYC Health Department would fund an agency to operate a mobile unit designed to serve sex workers and patrons of commercial sex venues and nightlife spaces across NYC. Located and scheduled to meet the needs of these communities, the mobile clinic would provide HIV and STI testing and provide or provide referral to other sexual health services, including HIV prevention (e.g., emergency PEP starter packs), STI prevention (doxy PEP, mpox vaccination), and linkage to HIV and STI treatment. The mobile clinic would also provide safer sex products, sexual health education, and health promotional materials tailored to the needs of these communities. **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $275,000 (in fiscal year 1 only, in CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to cover the cost of the mobile unit to serve as the mobile clinic for the duration of the program.** **The End AIDS NY Community Coalition requests that $684,000 (per fiscal year, in baseline CTL funding) be allocated to the NYC Health Department to cover ongoing staffing and operational costs of the program,** including $600,000 for staff lines (e.g., medical providers, outreach specialists, data staff); $55,500 for commercial vehicle liability insurance, malpractice insurance, and general liability insurance; $12,000, $10,000, and $4,500, for mobile unit parking, maintenance, and gas, respectively; and $2,000 for NYS Certificate of Need and other licensure costs. This funding would also cover minimal NYC Health Department administrative and fringe costs.	$275,000 FY26 one-time funding $684,000 annually baselined

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

Submitted by:
Gloria Kim
Director of Policy, Research, and Impact
Human Services Council of NY

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Lee, and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Gloria Kim, and I am the Director of Policy, Research, and Impact at the Human Services Council (H SC), a membership organization representing 180 human services providers in New York. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so that our members can focus on running their organizations and providing critical direct support to New Yorkers. These are the nonprofits that support our city's children, seniors, those experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, individuals who are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the justice system, immigrants, and individuals coping with substance abuse and other mental health and behavioral challenges. We strive to help our members better serve their clients by addressing matters such as government procurement practices, disaster preparedness and recovery, government funding, and public policies that impact the sector.

Support Int. 0452

Our sector is deeply grateful for the Council's continued partnership and leadership in supporting the workers and organizations that form the backbone of the City's human services system. Every day, nonprofit providers deliver essential services that New Yorkers rely on, from early childhood education and homeless services to workforce development, legal services, older adult programs, and behavioral health care.

We especially want to recognize the Council's strong support for wage equity for human services workers. The fact that 27 Council Members have signed on in support of Int. 0452 sends a clear and important message: the City must address the longstanding pay disparities facing City-contracted human services workforce. Human services workers carried New York City through the pandemic and continue to serve communities under extraordinarily difficult conditions, yet too many remain underpaid compared to their public sector counterparts. We appreciate the Council's leadership in advancing this conversation and pushing toward a more equitable future for the workforce.

Support a Multi-year COLA

We are also pleased to see the final year of the human services cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) implemented beginning this July. This investment is critical and appreciated by providers across

the city that are facing rising operational and labor costs. At the same time, we urge the City to begin thinking proactively about establishing a multi-year COLA structure for contracted human services workers in future budgets. Inflation and rising costs do not operate on one-year cycles, and neither should the City's commitment to sustaining the nonprofit workforce. Predictable, recurring COLAs would provide stability for providers, improve retention, and help ensure continuity of care for New Yorkers.

Late Contracting Issues

At the same time, these investments cannot reach their full impact if the City does not address the longstanding contracting crisis facing nonprofit providers. Late contracts and delayed payments remain one of the most serious operational threats to the human services sector. Despite years of discussion and reform efforts, many nonprofit organizations are still waiting months, and in some cases more than a year, for contracts to be registered after services have already begun.

Providers are routinely asked to continue operating programs, retain staff, and serve vulnerable New Yorkers without knowing when reimbursement will arrive. Nonprofits are effectively functioning as unwilling lenders to the City, fronting payroll, rent, insurance, and program costs while waiting for contracts to move through the procurement system. For many organizations, especially smaller community-based nonprofits, this creates unsustainable financial strain.

The consequences are real and immediate. Organizations are forced to draw down reserves, delay hiring, freeze wages, reduce programming, or take on costly lines of credit simply to maintain services the City itself depends on. In an environment where providers are already struggling with workforce shortages and rising costs, contracting delays further destabilize the sector and make it harder to recruit and retain staff.

The City has made important commitments around procurement reform, and we appreciate the attention that both the Administration and the Council have brought to this issue. However, reform cannot succeed without sufficient operational capacity. The Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) must be adequately funded and staffed to fully implement procurement reforms, improve interagency coordination, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, and ensure contracts are processed on time.

Technology improvements and process reforms are important, but nonprofits need measurable results. Providers need contracts registered before services begin, timely invoice processing, greater accountability across agencies, and a procurement system that recognizes nonprofits as essential partners rather than afterthoughts trapped in administrative quicksand.

New York City's nonprofit human services sector remains committed to partnering with the City and Council to build a stronger, more equitable system for both workers and the communities they serve. We thank the Council for its continued leadership and urge you to continue advancing investments that strengthen the human services workforce and the infrastructure that supports it.

Gloria Kim
Director of Policy, Research, and Impact

Human Services Council of NY
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2026 Hearing of the NYC Council Committee on Finance.

June 10, 2026

Testimony of Beth Williams, New York State Policy Director of Hunger Free America

Thanks so much for holding this vital hearing today. My name is Beth Willians, and I am the New York State Policy Director for Hunger Free America, a national direct service and advocacy nonprofit group headquartered in Manhattan, with a field office in the Bronx.

I am honored to submit this testimony today on behalf of more than 1.2 million city residents who are now struggling against hunger.

FY27 Budget Asks:

- $5 million for citywide and neighborhood nonprofit organizations to enable their clients to meet their SNAP ABAWD work reporting requirements.
- Fund and baseline $9.75 million for the NYCBenefits program in FY27 and beyond to keep offering targeted benefits enrollment and support. T
- $200,000 in FY27 funding ($75,000 more than FY26) to support Hunger Free NYC with SNAP and emergency food assistance benefits education, outreach, and training; SNAP eligibility screening, application, and recertification assistance; and technical assistance provided to low-income individuals.
- $75,000 in FY27 for funding for Hunger Free NYC ($25,000 more than FY26) to support increased participation in SNAP, other nutrition assistance benefits and to assist low-income households citywide who remain eligible to retain benefits and to also provide technical assistance to food pantries and soup kitchens.
- $100 million in baseline funding for the Community Food Connection (CFC)

Our message is simple: New Yorkers face massive hunger and food insecurity crises citywide, made worse by the recent passage of H.R.1, which aims to systematically remove federal nutrition program participants. We need a massive response from the City, especially one that

focuses on increasing participation in and otherwise strengthening federally funded nutrition assistance programs like SNAP, WIC, school breakfasts, and Summer EBT.

According Hunger Free America's analysis of the most recent USDA data, one out of every five children in New York City experiences food insecurity, while nearly half of the children in the Bronx are food insecure. Food insecurity is also soaring among employed adults, whose meager salaries often do not cover all key living expenses, including food.

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) – and help existing SNAP recipients keep their benefits by meeting the new work reporting requirements or by being declared exempt from them. Doing both of those would dwarf any impact that merely increasing charitable food distribution would have.

Even after the federal cuts to SNAP, the program still is the centerpiece of fighting hunger in New York City. In December of 2025, 1.7 million City residents received $415 million in federal grocery support through SNAP.

If current caseloads and benefits levels were to stay stable, federal SNAP spending in New York City over the next year would be $5.0 billion, which dwarfs City and private spending on charitable food. However, **around a third of the SNAP caseload in the City is subject to the new federal SNAP work reporting requirements, and if all those households lost SNAP, those residents—and the city's economy – could lose up to $1.5 billion is grocery support over the next year.**

In contrast, if the City created a comprehensive plan to work with nonprofit organizations to help all those households to keep their benefits, and 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 $250 million in extra federal spending on food relief.

It is important to note that, not only is every penny of SNAP benefits, for the time being, still 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 partially matched 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. **Every City dollar that Hunger Free America spends on SNAP outreach work generates $30 in federal benefits that fill the grocery carts of struggling new Yorkers. Since every City dollar spent on such SNAP outreach is 25% matched by federal funds, every City Council dollar allocated to one of our SNAP outreach workers now generates $38 in federally funded food. That is a far higher return on investment than when the city directly pays for food purchases or food vouchers.**

Therefore, we are requesting the City Council provide our local division Hunger Free NYC, $200,000 in FY27 funding ($75,000 more than FY26) to support SNAP and emergency food

assistance benefits education, outreach, and training; SNAP eligibility screening, application, and recertification assistance; and technical assistance provided to low-income individuals. We are also requesting $75,000 in FY27 for funding for Hunger Free NYC ($25,000 more than FY26) to support increased participation in SNAP, other nutrition assistance benefits and to assist low-income households citywide who remain eligible to retain benefits and to also provide technical assistance to food pantries and soup kitchens.

Additionally, we are asking that you fund and baseline $9.75 million for the NYCBenefits program in FY27 and beyond to keep offering targeted benefits enrollment and support. The program serves 34,000 people annually and connects them to an array of benefits to promote greater economic security. NYCBenefits supports 35 community-based organizations and three technical assistance providers to reach thousands of New Yorkers and connect them to an array of benefits that support economic security, helping with our City's affordability crisis.

Through this program, CBOs deploy dedicated staff members to help their community access benefits such as SNAP, cash assistance, affordable housing, Medicaid and tax assistance, among others; with a holistic approach that addresses various areas of need. In FY25, NYCBenefits providers served 34,000 New Yorkers. Thus far in FY26, clients that applied for or recertified for SNAP with NYCB CBOs have received over $20 million in annual benefits. In addition to feeding families, this money goes right back into NYC's economy.

We are also proposing that the FY27 budget provides $5 million for citywide and neighborhood nonprofit organizations to enable their clients to meet their SNAP work reporting requirements. Properly implemented, such funding could not only help the most vulnerable New Yorkers to retain hundreds of millions of dollars of federally funded groceries through SNAP but could also create processes to help an even larger number of New Yorkers retain health coverage when Medicaid work requirements go into effect.

The funding would allow nonprofits to perform the following work.

1) **Enable their clients *who already do meet the work requirements* to be able to correctly report their employment, job training or volunteer work that fulfills the requirements to HRA.**

2) **Pre-screen clients for physical and/or mental disabilities and refer those who may have a disability to be formally diagnosed by a health care professional.** This is particularly important given that many New Yorkers with non-apparent (invisible) disabilities do not self-identify, self-disclose, or always realize their condition qualifies as a disability. Also, help ensure that anyone with a disability submits the required documentation to NYC HRA,

3) **Enable their clients to meet the paid work or job training requirements of 80 hours per month. (**We also believe the State and City of New York should each better draw down federal SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) funds to support such activities).

4) **Help their clients meet work requirements through voluntary community service.** It is not widely known that, because New York State is a "workfare state," the number of hours of community service required to continue receiving SNAP or Medicaid is almost always *far less* than the required 80 hours per month for paid work or job training activities. The number of hours one would need to participate in volunteer work is based on their SNAP benefit divided by the local minimum wage, which is now $17 per hour in New York City. Thus, if, for instance, one gets $170 monthly in SNAP, then they have to complete only 10 hours of unpaid community service each month to continue receiving SNAP. If they received the minimum monthly benefit of $24 per month, they'd only need to volunteer an hour or two each month. Per the attached flyer, Hunger Free America is not only informing both service providers and SNAP recipients about these rules (since many are unaware of them) but is also providing concrete ways to help service providers host volunteers and for SNAP recipients to meet their work requirements through volunteerism.

5) **Utilize new decision-support software tools for SNAP recipients, such as eddifi, which operates "upstream" by helping participants navigate the rules so they can comply, "midstream" by helping participants respond to emerging risks of non-compliance, and "downstream" by helping participants recover from non-compliance and regain eligibility.** Given how complicated the new rules are, such tools could be of great use to both nonprofit groups and HRA.

Additionally, we would like to address Mayor Mamdani's planned municipal grocery store program. Given that the five planned stores will be located within easy shopping distance of only a very small percentage of the city's population, we are urging the city to enact a much broader food affordability agenda.

That agenda should focus both on increasing usage of federally funded food benefits (such as SNAP, WIC, school breakfast, Summer EBT, and summer meals) and on making groceries more affordable in ***every*** neighborhood of the city by using the new municipal groceries stores as home or neighborhood center delivery hubs, testing mobile markets, and instituting a food voucher program to make a discounted market basket of food available at perhaps thousands of retail locations citywide. Such efforts would also enable more existing food retailers to maintain their incomes and workforces and might also ameliorate some of their opposition to the municipal grocery plan.

First, I want to reiterate that Hunger Freer America, and our NYC affiliate, Hunger Free NYC—are all in on Mayor Mandami's and the council's affordability agenda—including free childcare, free busses, rent freezes, and more affordable groceries—with the wealthiest New Yorkers paying higher taxes. We greatly appreciate your progressive leadership and dedication to reinventing City government to work better for all New Yorkers. We are especially thrilled that the mayor, speaker, and majority of City Council have shined a spotlight on the food affordability crisis. I was honored to attend the events at which the mayor announced both the Manhattan and Bronx municipal grocery store locations.

Yet we want to stress that, while the five municipal grocery stores may help address the problem, they are greatly limited by the following factors:

Limited neighborhood reach of the stores: As we know, most New Yorkers prefer to shop near where they live, and most New Yorkers won't live near the five new municipal stores. In the announcement of the Manhattan site, the mayor indicated that 65,000 people live within a ten-minute walk of La Marqueta. But that means that 96% of Manhattan's 1.6 million residents don't live within walking distance. Given that the broader neighborhood surrounding the Peninsula is still mostly in commercial use, and that it is nearly half a mile from the nearest subway stop, it will likely serve only a small percentage of Bronx residents. No matter where you site the stores in the other three boroughs, they will be able to serve only a small percentage of each brough's residents.

Travel cost to stores: We support City Council's call to dramatically increase the Fair Faires Program that provides half price subway and bus rides, but currently, only about 4% of the city's population is enrolled in the Fair Fares Program. But even if someone were enrolled in Fair Fares, at current MTA rates, a round trip to the city supermarket would cost $3. If someone had to pay full fare, that would cost $6 round trip. Thus, for those who would need to take public transportation to get to a city grocery store, unless the market was at least $6 cheaper per visit than the one in their neighborhoods, they would lose more money on transportation than they would gain in groceries.

Travel time to the stores: Time is money, especially for low-income New Yorkers, who usually get paid by the hour and are also busy taking care of their families. From the Lower East Side, the round trip to La Marqueta by public transportation would likely take at least an hour; from Inwood, it would take at least an hour and a half. But lets' say, the average round trip to La Marqueta from somewhere in Manhattan took only 45 minutes; if a worker were earning the minimum wage of $17 per hour, that would mean their round-trip travel time would equal $12.75 in lost wages, or at least 45 minutes less time to spend with their families.

Small impact of five stores on the overall NYC food retail economy: There are about 10,000 food retailers in NYC – and about 8,000 of those accept SNAP. There are also at least 700 food pantries, soup kitchens, and other food charities in the city that provide entirely free food. Thus, it is unlikely that five new stores—with discounted prices on select items— will significantly reduce food prices overall across the city.

For these reasons, we believe that the council and the mayor should prioritize the previously mentioned budget items to decrease hunger in New York City.

Background on The Current State of Hunger in New York City

According to raw USDA data analyzed by Hunger Free America:

Across New York City, 15.4% of the population, or 1.2 million people, lived in food insecure households between 2022 and 2024. The Bronx is New York City's hungriest borough in terms of prevalence and number of hungry people, with 24.5% of residents (330,329 people) living in food insecure households.

One out of every five children (20%) in New York City experiences food insecurity, while almost half (46.1%) of children in the Bronx are food insecure. Food insecurity in Manhattan and Queens among employed adults increased when comparing 2022-2024 to 2019-2021 levels. The number of food insecure older New York City residents increased to 258,991 between 2022 and 2024.

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 we would be glad to discuss, we believe 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 in 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. 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), as of 2021, USDA estimated that whopping 45 percent of the pregnant women and children under five that are 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.

If the City were truly serious about reducing hunger statewide, it would:

1. Ensure that the State significantly raises the minimum wage, including for tipped workers, and increase the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
2. Increase the City EITC.
3. Dramatically reduce the costs for quality housing.
4. Significantly increase free childcare.
5. Make buses free.
6. Authorize, fund, and implement a government-wide "Assets Empowerment/Middle-Class Wealth Generation Agenda" across multiple City agencies. This will dramatically increase economic opportunity and mobility by enabling more families to transition from owing and paying interest on non-productive debts to owning assets such as first homes, small businesses, and savings accounts that can earn interest, increase in value, and/or provide profits. Stop the penalization of hard work – enact initiatives to eliminate, or at least reduce, "benefits cliffs" in which workers who get raises or work more hours are punished by having their governmental benefits cut or stopped entirely just when they start doing a little better.

Beyond those broad steps to reduce poverty and expand economic opportunity, the most cost-effective thing the City can do, by far, is to increase participation in and otherwise strengthen federally funded nutrition assistance programs like SNAP, WIC, school breakfasts, and Summer EBT. Specifically, by:

- Increase the Civic Impact Fund to fund nonprofit organizations to host SNAP recipients as volunteers to meet their work reporting requirements.

- Create a comprehensive, rapid effort to create one digital portal where New Yorkers can simultaneously learn about, apply for, recertify for, and access and utilize the full range of benefits and services they need, not only including services provided directly by city agencies, but also nonprofit services funded by the City, as well as key other programs (such as WIC) not directly funded by the City. Mayor Adams promised, but failed to create such a portal, but it is imperative that the Council and the Mamdani Administration work together to get this done rapidly and effectively.

- We are aware that this Committee doesn't oversee DOE, but we think it's imperative that the entire Council be aware of how imperative it is for DOE to ensure that all classes in all New York City public schools provide school breakfasts either in-classroom or as grab and go breakfast in their hallways. At least 310,205 New York City children live in food insecure homes and more than 154,000 New York City public school students—nearly one in every seven—experienced homelessness during the 2024–25 school year. Yet DOE is failing to adequately utilize one of the most impactful, cost-effective ways to ensure that such vulnerable students have the food and nutrition necessary to succeed at school: school breakfasts. In fact, NYC DOE has one of the lowest school breakfast participation rates of any large urban school district in the U.S. (and is much lower than Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston.) In October 2023 (the last month for which we data), only 39.6% of DOE students who received school lunches also received school breakfasts, one of the lowest school breakfast participation rates out of any big city school district in the nation. This means that more than 60% of students failed to obtain breakfasts, forcing many students to skip breakfast entirely or eat less healthy food they picked up at a bodega on the way to school. If DOE increased the ratio of breakfast to lunch consumption from 39.6% to 100%, that would feed another 345,540 kids per day, equaling about 62 million more breakfasts over the course of a year, which would be paid for entirely (or almost entirely by federal and state funds). Even if the ratio were brought to only 80%, that would feed an additional 235,205 students per day, or about 42 million more breakfasts over the course of a year. To fix this, New York City Public Schools must make sure that all classes in all schools offer students the ability to eat breakfast in their first period classrooms and as grab and go breakfast in the hallways before the first period.

- Move beyond a reliance on means-tested programs aimed at mostly the impoverished to also focus more broadly on helping a wide array of New Yorkers obtain—and maintain—a full stake in the American dream with both universal programs (such free child care, buses, and school meals for all) and comprehensive policies to specifically help struggling New Yorkers develop assets in order to move from owing to owning.

- Make healthier food more accessible, affordable, and convenient in all neighborhoods, while utilizing food as an engine of community-based economic development. We hope that the City dramatically expands free food voucher programs, which likely are more economically efficient, equitable, and practical than creating a few City-owned grocery stores.

- Create formalized systems to empower New Yorkers with lived experience with poverty and food insecurity to advise the mayoral administration.

We hope you can take these actions rapidly. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

ICARE
COALITION

Defend Their Future: Sustain Legal Services for Immigrant Children and Youth

About ICARE: ICARE is a coalition of legal service organizations dedicated to expanding access to legal representation for immigrant children and youth facing deportation in New York City and advocating for universal access to counsel so no child has to face the immigration system alone.

The Challenge: In FY26, City Council made a significant investment in immigrant youth legal services, enabling providers to expand capacity, reduce waitlists, and reach more young people than ever before. That investment has made a measurable difference and we're deeply grateful. The need remains urgent.

Legal protections for immigrant youth continue to erode. Cases that were once straightforward now require significantly more time, coordination, and specialized advocacy, including federal habeas work to secure release for detained youth. Federal funding remains unstable, and more youth are facing detention and emergency legal needs. Without sustained investment, this year's progress could quickly be reversed, leaving thousands of youth to face court alone, with life-threatening consequences.

Every year, thousands of immigrant children and youth in NYC face complex immigration proceedings without an attorney. Without counsel, they have only a 15% chance of winning their case. With ICARE-supported representation, that rate jumps to over 90%.

What We Do: Through the Unaccompanied Minors & Families Initiative, ICARE providers deliver coordinated, high-quality representation to immigrant youth and families fighting deportation in NYC, including KYRs, legal screenings, direct representation, connections to city & social services, and centralized referrals to reduce duplication and increase efficiency.

Our Impact (Since 2014)	Screened 15,000+ children and youth for relief	Represented nearly 4,000 children and youth	Obtained relief for 2,000 children and youth

Unaccompanied Minors & Families Initiative

FY27 Discretionary Funding Request: $18,559,420

Sustained City Council investment will determine whether **nearly 3,000 young New Yorkers** and their families have access to counsel or must face removal proceedings alone.



No child should face the immigration process alone

CATHOLIC CHARITIES COMMUNITY SERVICES · THE DOOR · Safe Passage Project · KIND KIDS IN NEED OF DEFENSE · THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY · CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGAL ASSISTANCE · Human Rights First

www.icarecoalition.org

ICARE
COALITION

Stability Is Protection: Protect SIJS Representation

About ICARE: ICARE is a coalition of legal service organizations dedicated to expanding access to legal representation for immigrant children and youth facing deportation in New York City and advocating for universal access to counsel so no child has to face the immigration system alone.

The Challenge: Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is a federal humanitarian protection available to children who have experienced parental abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Securing SIJS requires navigating two separate legal systems, New York Family Court and federal immigration proceedings, a dual-system process that is uniquely complex and resource-intensive.

Federal backlogs and processing delays have created prolonged uncertainty for eligible youth. Even after SIJS approval, continued representation is necessary to secure lawful status and protection from deportation. Without sustained City investment, youth who qualify for SIJS risk remaining in legal limbo, or losing access to the protection Congress intended, protections the City has supported so these young people can thrive.

What We Do: Through the SIJS Initiative, ICARE providers secure Family Court findings, file and monitor SIJS petitions with USCIS, provide removal defense when necessary, and coordinate referrals across the city to ensure youth remain supported and able to move forward safely. SIJS representation protects children who have already experienced profound harm and provides a pathway toward lawful permanent residence.

Why It Matters: Without counsel, immigrant children are far less likely to secure relief. With representation, they can obtain lawful status, stability, and safety. SIJS is a statutory protection established by Congress. Continued City investment ensures that youth who qualify can meaningfully access that protection, remain safely and continue to build stable futures in New York.

In the first six months of this initiative, 502 youth were screened and nearly 350 youth were matched to representation, a clear signal of both unmet needs and the importance of continued City support.

SIJS Initiative FY27 Discretionary Funding Request: $2,575,000

Sustained investment will ensure that children and youth who qualify for SIJS can secure lawful status and long-term stability — rather than remain trapped in system that is impossible to navigate alone.



No child should face the immigration process alone

Catholic Charities Community Services · The Door · Safe Passage Project · Lutheran Social Services of New York · PR · The Children's Law Center · Lawyers For Children · Immigration Law & Justice New York

www.icarecoalition.org

ICARE
COALITION

TESTIMONY

New York City Council Committee on Immigration

FY27 Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by:

Sierra Kraft, Executive Director, ICARE Coalition

June 10th, 2026

ICARE
COALITION

Good morning, Chair Lee, and members of the Finance Committee.

My name is Sierra Kraft, and I am the Executive Director of the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE), we lead a coalition of 13 legal service providers working together to ensure unaccompanied immigrant children and youth have access to free legal representation and the support they need to navigate one of the most complex legal systems in the country.

I want to begin by thanking the Council for its continued leadership and significant investment in immigrant youth through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative and the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative. At a time when immigrant communities are facing unprecedented attacks, New York City has continued to demonstrate that due process, fairness, and access to counsel are values worth defending.

Your investment is making a measurable difference. In just the first nine months of this fiscal year, providers across our network have collectively supported nearly 2,500 unaccompanied children and similarly situated youth through legal screenings, consultations, and full representation. Through UMFI and SIJS, children have been connected to attorneys, families have received legal guidance, and young people have been able to pursue protection, stability, and lawful status.

Just as importantly, the Council's investment has allowed us to strengthen and coordinate a citywide network of providers at a time when collaboration has never been more important. No single organization can meet the needs of immigrant youth alone. Through ICARE, providers are sharing expertise, coordinating referrals, identifying capacity across organizations, and working collectively to ensure that children do not fall through the cracks. Together, we have built one of the strongest systems of legal support for immigrant youth anywhere in the country.

Yet even as this network has grown stronger, the environment facing immigrant youth has become significantly more challenging.

The children entering our network have often fled violence, abuse, trafficking, persecution, and family separation in search of safety. Increasingly, however, they are finding themselves caught in an immigration system that is moving faster, becoming more punitive, and placing greater obstacles in the way of relief.

Over the past several months, we have seen troubling shifts in immigration court. Judges are granting 14- or 21-day continuances rather than 3-6 months, leaving little time for attorneys to prepare cases involving children who may have experienced profound trauma and who often require extensive screening, evidence gathering, and coordination with family members, schools, social service providers, and experts. Cases that once allowed time to identify viable forms of relief are now moving forward at a pace that places enormous pressure on both youth and their legal representatives.

At the same time, we are seeing prolonged detention of unaccompanied children and an increasing need for emergency legal intervention. Providers that were once primarily focused on affirmative immigration relief now find themselves filing habeas petitions, responding to detention-related emergencies, and fighting to secure the release of children who should not be languishing in custody. Attorneys are not only pursuing SIJS findings and adjustment pathways, but also preparing complex asylum applications and navigating a rapidly shifting federal policy landscape.

The work has become more urgent, more intensive, and more resource demanding. And yet this is precisely the moment when legal representation matters most.

When a child is placed on an accelerated docket, there is even less room for error. When detention is prolonged, legal advocacy becomes even more critical. When federal policies create new barriers to protection, attorneys are often the only people standing between a child and deportation.

Lawyers remain the last line of defense. Without legal representation, children can lose access to protections for which they are legally eligible, not because they lack a claim, but because they lack the ability to navigate an increasingly complex system on their own. Due process only has meaning when children have a meaningful opportunity to present their case.

Unfortunately, the resources available to meet this moment have not kept pace with the need. Federal funding remains unstable, and while we appreciated the State's slight increase in immigration legal services this year, the final budget fell far short of what was necessary to address the growing challenges facing immigrant children and families.

As a result, many providers are operating with significant uncertainty. Organizations are being asked to do more complex work, respond to more urgent crises, and serve more vulnerable populations without the resources needed to sustainably meet those demands. Without continued City investment, providers will be forced to make difficult decisions about staffing and capacity at exactly the moment when children need legal representation the most.

New York City has built something extraordinary. Together, the Council, providers, advocates, and community partners have created a coordinated system capable of responding to the needs of immigrant youth. That system is working. It is connecting children to counsel, strengthening collaboration across providers, and helping ensure that young people have a fair opportunity to seek the protections available to them under the law.

We respectfully urge the Council to fully fund an **$18.6 million investment in the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative** and **$2.575 million for the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative.**

Unaccompanied Minors & Families Initiative:

- Catholic Charities Community Services

- The Door
- The Legal Aid Society
- Safe Passage Project
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
- Central American Legal Assistance (CALA)
- Human Rights First

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

- Project Rousseau
- Lutheran Social Services of New York
- Children's Law Center
- Lawyers for Children
- Immigration Law & Justice New York
- Catholic Charities Community Services
- The Door
- Safe Passage Project

At a moment when children are being fast-tracked toward detention and deportation, New York City has the opportunity to continue standing on the side of due process, fairness, and opportunity. We ask you to continue investing in the network, the providers, and the young people whose futures depend on it.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to immigrant children and youth.

In community,

Sierra Kraft
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June 9, 2026

RE: Written testimony – June 10, 2026 - New York City Council Hearing – Committee on Finance

Dear Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams and Finance Committee Members:

My name is Jirina Ribbens, and I am the Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York® (TINY), the City's one and only ice dance company.

Since our founding in 1984 by Moira North, our mission is to create dance on ice as an art form through our professional dance company, partnerships with choreographers, and public performances and classes for people of all ages.

This testimony is in support of increased Funding for Arts & Culture.

$30M RESTORE + BASELINE

The FY27 Executive Budget includes a $10 million baselined increase for arts and culture, an important step forward for New York City's cultural sector. As the budget process continues, we urge the City to restore and baseline an additional $20 million in the Adopted Budget to ensure sustained investment in cultural institutions, artists, and communities.

BUDGET COST ADJUSTMENTS

Establish year-over-year funding adjustments to cover rising operating costs and wages for the cultural workforce.

CREATE A CULTURE CAPITAL PLAN

Develop and implement a comprehensive cultural capital infrastructure plan to streamline project delivery, reduce delays, and enable institutions to maintain and modernize their facilities efficiently.

FUND CULTURAL INITIATIVES

Increase funding for the Coalition of Theaters of Color, CASA, SU- CASA, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Support for Arts Instruction, & create new initiatives to match Council priorities.

ITNY cannot take advantage of all these budget streams, but we support the full ask for our entire sector.

Dance contributes about 300 million to the city's economy — not including for-profits + individuals, enlivening public areas and digital spaces, engaging millions of people each year,

The creative industry is a major economic driver for NYC generating thousands of jobs and contributing as much as 13% to the city's total economic output or GDP

Social impact of culture and the arts include improved outcomes in mental health, education, youth involvement in the criminal justice system, safety, and other dimensions of social well-being of a community.

Every year Ice Theatre of New York® presents over 30 performances to over 12,000 viewers and introduces 1,500 NYC public school children to skating and dancing on ice, all around the City.

Watching ITNY's ice dance performances fills our audiences with beauty and joy and strengthens their mental health. We connect people across differences; strengthen communities; drive traffic to local businesses and improve public safety in the parks where we perform. We enrich the education of the participants in our outreach programs and introduce them to a whole new sports industry and the performing arts. We are the organizations that inspire and train and ultimately provide the talent for the commercial sector.

Our sector is in crises, and we deserve more public support. I believe strongly that the City budget designate at least 1% of the budget towards the non-profit cultural sector – a dream for future budgets.

The City government must invest back its fair share in the Arts and Culture sector, with a commitment that more equitably reflects the sector's role in the City's economy and impact on the quality of life of all New Yorkers.

I thank you for your attention and for your support in the budget negotiations.

Cheers,



Jirina Ribbens,
Executive Director
Ice Theatre of New York

ILR Buffalo Co-Lab

TESTIMONY

Russell Weaver, PhD
Research Director, Cornell University ILR School Buffalo Co-Lab

New York City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation and Committee on Contracts

September 29, 2025

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. My name is Russell Weaver, and I am the Research Director at the Buffalo office of the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations, or ILR School. Together with my colleague, Dr. Anne Marie Brady of the Cornell ILR School's Worker Institute, and in partnership with the Local 1010 Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust, I've been engaged in a months-long empirical investigation of recent tree-planting contracts issued by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR").

Please allow me to begin by saying how much I appreciate the City's, and DPR's, commitment to providing the public with rich, high-quality, and well-documented data on municipal activities through the NYC Open Data Program. I'd also like to express appreciation for the City's, and DPR's, evident commitment to tree-planting and tree-care. Your team sets a high standard that cities across New York and the nation would do well to emulate.

On that note, I'll briefly describe the work that Dr. Brady and I have been doing, and I'll summarize some of our key findings that might be relevant to this body and today's hearing. Our full report will be available for public distribution later this Fall, and we can ensure that a member of this panel will forward the final document when it is available.

In short, our report evaluates measurable outcomes from recent tree-planting contracts, specifically those that have been issued between Fiscal Years 2021 and 2024. In total, 43 DPR tree-planting contracts were identified and included in the analyses. Of those contracts, 36 were associated with competitive bidding and bid history data available through the NYC PassPortCentral website. Twelve of those 36 contracts (33.3%) were awarded to Local 1010 firms, and the remaining 24 contracts (66.7%) were awarded to non-Local 1010 firms. Drawing on street tree planting data from NYC DPR, we identified 27,769 individual trees that have been planted or scheduled for planting in recent years. More than 70% of those trees (n=19,477) were associated with contracts (and Work Orders) executed between 2021 and 2024. In total, 8,156 of these trees were marked as "Completed" and having been planted in the DPR street tree planting dataset. The bid- and contract-level analyses I am about to share are based on the 36 contracts for which complete bid histories are available, and the 8,156 trees planted under those contracts.

First, we observed ample competition for recent contracts. While we only studied outcome metrics for the 36 projects for which we were able to obtain complete data, the 43 projects we initially identified as occurring between FY21 and FY24 were associated with 183 unique bid proposals, or about 4.25 bids per project.

Second, although proposals from Local 1010 firms were linked to slightly higher bid prices – namely, the median Local 1010 bid was about 8% higher than the median non-Local 1010 bid – there was no significant

difference between contract awards. Thus, contrary to many popular claims that union labor tends to be more expense than non-union competitors, we did not observe significant differences between Local 1010 and non-Local 1010 median award costs.

Next, for the sample of 8,156 completed tree plantings that could be directly linked to one of the DPR contracts under investigation we found that the median Estimated Time to Planting – or number of days between a contract execution and a given tree-planting – was fourteen days, or two weeks, faster under Local 1010 contracts compared to non-Local 1010 contracts. That difference was highly statistically significant.

Fourth, of the 8,156 planted trees that can be linked to recent (2021-2024) DPR contract solicitations, 5,067 were associated with non-missing values in the field that describes the "condition of [a given] tree based on biological health and physical structure". For the 3,860 such trees that were planted under contracts won by Local 1010 firms, 75.9% are presently rated "Excellent" (i.e., the highest rating available) in the DPR dataset. Only 61.4% of the 1,207 trees planted under contracts won by non-Local 1010 bidders have "Excellent" ratings. Similarly, the percentage of non-Local 1010 tree-plantings coded as "Dead" (16.5%) is 1.25-times greater than it is for Local 1010 plantings (13.2%).

Consistent with longstanding empirical evidence that union construction labor might exhibit quality and safety advantages over non-union labor, these findings suggest that greater use of well-trained union tree-planters can generate long-term benefits with respect to tree preservation and survival in NYC.

Fifth, we examined the density of sidewalk safety complaints made to DPR via NYC's 311 system in the year 2025. We then overlaid the locations of the 8,156 tree points associated with trees that have already been planted under a recent (2021-2024) DPR Forestry contract onto the density of these 311 complaints. The median density of new (2025) sidewalk complaints made around the 4,913 trees shown in orange (Local 1010 planted) is 134.8 per square mile, compared to a median complaint density of 148.0 per square mile in the locations depicted in white (non-Local 1010 planted trees). This difference is highly statistically significant, meaning that it cannot be the product of chance alone. The implication of these findings is that spaces in which Local 1010 labor performed recent tree-planting work are associated with fewer – and a lower density of – sidewalk-related 311 complaints than the spaces where non-Local 1010 labor performed planting services. Importantly, defective DPR sidewalks cost taxpayers roughly $20 million in insurance settlements between fiscal years 2017 and 2023, according to open data on insurance claims filed against the City.

Based on these findings, as well as their compatibility with longstanding empirical literature on union advantages in construction labor, my co-investigator and I argue that efforts to apply prevailing union standards – e.g., for work quality, for wages, for benefits, worker training, and so on – to DPR tree-planting contracts has the potential to save trees, time, and money in New York City.

###

ILR Buffalo Co-Lab and ILR Worker Institute

SAVING TREES, TIME, AND MONEY FOR NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS

ANALYSIS OF NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION FORESTRY CONTRACTS FROM 2021-2024 SHOWS EVIDENCE OF MULTIPLE "UNION ADVANTAGES" ON TREE-PLANTING JOBS

This fact sheet previews selected findings from a forthcoming (Fall 2025) report authored by researchers at the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations ("ILR School") Buffalo Co-Lab and Worker Institute,[i] with support from the Local 1010 Laborers-Employers Cooperation and Education Trust ("1010 LECET"). The findings herein are taken from the report section that evaluates measurable outcomes from recent (2021-2024) tree-planting contracts executed by the New York City ("NYC") Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR"). In total, 43 DPR tree-planting contracts were identified and included in the analyses. Of those contracts, 36 were associated with competitive bidding and bid history data available through the NYC *PassPortCentral* website.[ii] Twelve of those 36 contracts (33.3%) were awarded to Local 1010 firms, and the remaining 24 contracts (66.7%) were awarded to non-Local 1010 firms. Drawing on street tree planting data from NYC DPR,[iii] the authors identified 27,769 individual trees that have been planted or scheduled for planting in recent years. More than 70% of those trees (n=19,477) were associated with contracts executed between 2021 and 2024. In total, 8,156 of these trees were marked as "Completed" and having been planted in the DPR street tree planting dataset. The bid- and contract-level analyses below are based on the 36 contracts for which complete bid histories are available, and the 8,156 trees planted under those contracts. All analyses are based on open-source, freely available data. Detailed data and methodological specifications are provided in the forthcoming report.

THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT PRICE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOCAL 1010 AND NON-LOCAL 1010 TREE-PLANTING CONTRACT AWARDS

Using the NYC PassPortCentral website, the research team identified 183 unique proposals submitted in response to DPR tree-planting projects that were subject to competitive solicitation between 2021 and 2024. Of these proposals, 90 were submitted by non-Local 1010 firms, 75 by Local 1010 firms, and 18 by firms whose status was not identifiable and therefore omitted from analyses. The median Local 1010 bid for tree-planting contracts between 2021 and 2024 was $3,519,890 (2024$), roughly 8% greater than the median non-Local 1010 bid of $3,248,400 (2024$).[iv]

QUICK FACTS

> **Local 1010 tree-plantings occur roughly two weeks sooner**

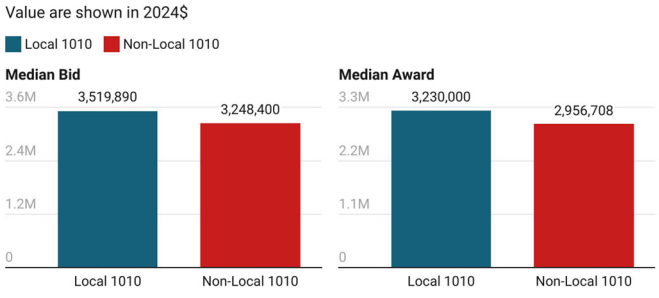
> **Local 1010-planted trees are more likely to be rated in "Excellent"** condition and less likely to be coded as "Dead"

> **Areas where tree-plantings were performed by Local 1010 labor have lower densities of defective sidewalk complaints**

The median contract *award* for Local 1010 firms was $3,230,000 (2024$), about 9% higher than the median award of $2,956,708 (2024$) for non-Local 1010 firms. However, statistical testing revealed no significant difference in these [median] award amounts.[v]

- Thus, in the aggregate, the cost of contracting with a Local 1010 or non-Local 1010 firm for DPR tree-planting projects might be roughly equal.
- As shown below, though, tree-planting labor performed by Local 1010 firms appears to have several quality and efficiency advantages that arguably create long-term benefits for NYC which outweigh the minor, non-statistically significant difference in contract award costs.

Comparison of Median Bid Prices and Median Contract Awards by Local 1010 Status, FY2021 - FY2024



Median Bid Universe: n=165 bids on competitive solicitations from FY2021 through FY 2024
Median Difference Universe: n=36 winning bids with complete data

Source: Authors' Analyses of NYC Open Data • Created with Datawrapper

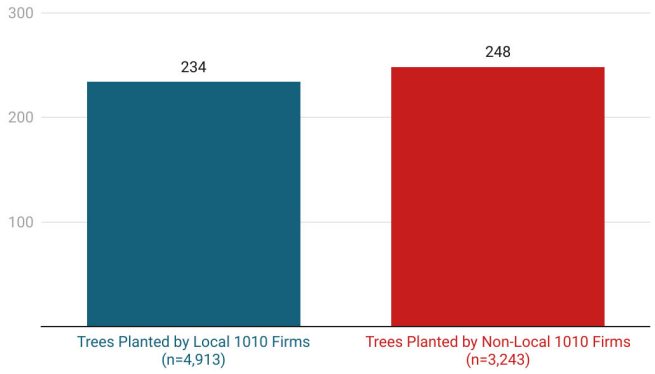
LOCAL 1010 CONTRACTS ARE LINKED TO FASTER TREE-PLANTING

As part of its street tree planting program, NYC DPR provides data on where and when trees are planted.[vi] Alongside identifying tree information, the DPR data show whether a tree planting is "Completed" or "Not Complete". The research team compared the planting date for "Completed" trees to their respective contract start dates.

For the sample of 8,156 completed tree plantings that could be directly linked to one of the DPR contracts under investigation we found:

- The median Estimated Time to Planting for Local 1010 firms was 234 days versus 248 days for non-Local 1010 firms.
- In other words, the median number of days between a contract execution and a tree-planting is two faster for Local 1010 firms compared to their counterparts.[vii]

Median Days Between Contract Start Date and Completed Planting for Selected Trees



Universe: 8,156 trees with completed planting dates planted under competitive bidding contracts awarded between FY2021 and FY2024.

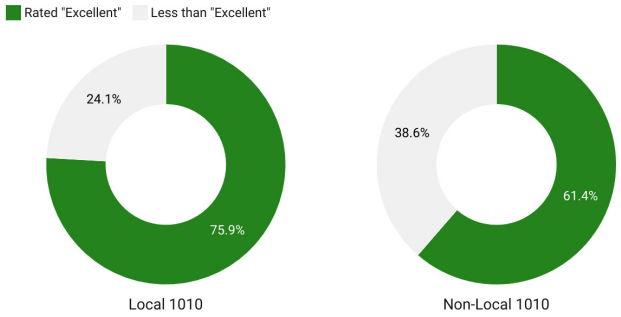
Source: Authors' analyses of NYC Open Data • Created with Datawrapper

LOCAL 1010 CONTRACTS SHOW BETTER TREE OUTCOMES AND LOWER TREE RISK RATINGS

Of the 8,156 planted trees that can be linked to recent (2021-2024) DPR contract solicitations, 5,067 were associated with non-missing values in the field that describes the "condition of [a given] tree based on biological health and physical structure".[viii]

- For the 3,860 such trees that were planted under contracts won by Local 1010 firms, 75.9% are presently rated "Excellent" (i.e., the highest rating available) in the DPR dataset. Only 61.4% of the 1,207 trees planted under contracts won by non-Local 1010 bidders have "Excellent" ratings.[ix]
- Similarly, the percentage of non-Local 1010 tree-plantings coded as "Dead" (16.5%) is 1.25-times greater than it is for Local 1010 plantings (13.2%).[x]

Percent of Recently Planted Trees in "Excellent" Condition



Universe: n=5,067 tree plantings completed under contracts executed between FY2021 and FY2024

Source: Authors' analyses of NYC Open Data • Created with Datawrapper

Relatedly, of the trees that were matched to non-missing condition ratings in the Forestry Tree Points dataset, 1,398 records exhibited non-missing values in the "Risk Rating" attribute, where higher values mean greater risk of tree failure. For the 954 of these records that were associated with Local 1010 contracts, the median risk rating was 4, compared to a median risk rating of 5 for the 444 trees linked to non-Local 1010 planting contracts.

> *"...the percentage of non-Local 1010 tree-plantings coded as "Dead"...is* ***1.25-times*** *greater than it is for Local 1010 plantings..."*

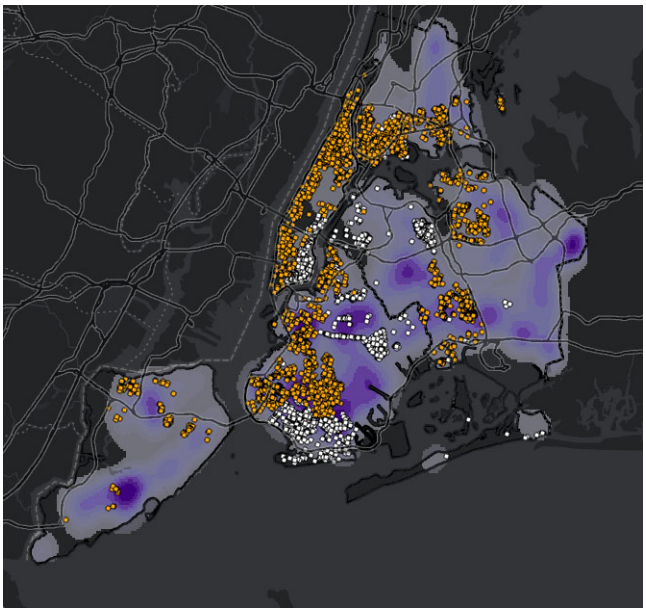
Consistent with longstanding empirical evidence that union construction labor often exhibits quality and safety advantages over non-union labor,[xi] these findings suggest that greater use of well-trained union tree-planters can generate long-term benefits with respect to tree preservation and survival in NYC.

THE DENSITY OF 311 COMPLAINTS FOR DPR TREE-RELATED SIDEWALK DANGER IS LOWER IN LOCAL 1010 CONTRACT PERFORMANCE AREAS

The final comparison looks at the density of sidewalk safety complaints that have been made to DPR via NYC's 311 system since the start of 2025. In the heatmap on the following page, darker-shaded purple areas represent spaces where the density of DPR sidewalk complaints per acre is high. Lighter purple and

light grey spaces are territories where 311 sidewalk complaints are relatively low. Overlaid onto the 311 complaint density layer is a layer containing the 8,156 tree points associated with trees that have already been planted under a recent (2021-2024) DPR Forestry contract. Orange points are trees planted under contracts won by Local 1010 firms, whereas white points show trees planted by non-Local 1010 firms.

The median density of new (2025) sidewalk complaints made around the 4,913 trees shown in orange (Local 1010 planted) is 134.8 per square mile, compared to a median complaint density of 148.0 per square mile in the locations depicted in white (non-Local 1010 planted trees).[xii] This difference is highly statistically significant, meaning that it cannot be the product of chance alone.[xiii]



The implication of these findings is that:

- Spaces in which Local 1010 labor performed recent tree-planting work are associated with fewer – and a lower density of – sidewalk-related 311 complaints than the spaces where non-Local 1010 labor performed planting services.
- Defective DPR sidewalks cost taxpayers roughly $20 million in insurance settlements between fiscal years 2017 and 2023, according to open data on insurance claims filed against the City.

$19.74 Million

Between Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2023, New York City paid out nearly $20 million for settlements related to defective sidewalks under DPR control.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, our analyses found that there is likely a "union advantage" in NYC tree-planting. Namely, trees planted by Local 1010 firms appear to be

(1) more likely to exhibit "Excellent" condition,
(2) less likely to be "Dead" and at less risk for failure, and
(3) situated in areas characterized by fewer defective sidewalk complaints per square mile.

Moreover:

(4) whereas Local 1010 have slightly higher initial bid prices than non-Local 1010 firms,
(5) the median contract award value to Local 1010 firms is not significantly different from the median contract awarded to non-Local 1010 firms, and
(6) Local 1010 firms are seemingly faster to plant trees once a contract is officially executed.

The authors therefore conclude that efforts to apply prevailing union standards – e.g., for quality, wages, benefits, worker training, etc. – to DPR tree-planting contracts has the potential to save trees, time, and money in New York City.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank Local 1010 LECET for sponsoring this project.

ILR Buffalo Co-Lab

ILR Worker Institute

LABORERS-EMPLOYERS COOPERATION AND EDUCATION TRUST 1010

ILR School

NOTES

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Russell Weaver, PhD: rcweaver@cornell.edu;
Anne Marie Brady, PhD: ab2532@cornell.edu

[ii] https://a0333-passportpublic.nyc.gov/index.html

[iii] https://www.nycgovparks.org/trees/street-tree-planting/locations

[iv] A Wilcoxon test reveals that this difference is significant at a 95% level of confidence. The Wilcoxon test is roughly a test for the equality of two medians (see: Weaver, R., Bagchi-Sen, S., Knight, J., & Frazier, A. E. (2016). *Shrinking cities: Understanding urban decline in the United States*. Routledge.). (n=165)

[v] Unlike the case with bids, this difference was not statistically significant at conventional confidence levels. Here, the p-value for the Wilcoxon test of the null hypothesis that Local 1010 and non-Local 1010 firms have equal median contract awards is 0.322, suggesting that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at conventional (e.g., 95% or 99%) levels of confidence.

[vi] https://www.nycgovparks.org/trees/street-tree-planting/locations

[vii] This difference was highly statistically significant (>99% level of confidence). The p-value for the Wilcoxon test was less than 0.0001, indicating that the observed difference is almost certainly not the result of chance alone.

[viii] DPR Forest Tree Points dataset available on NYC OpenData https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Environment/Forestry-Tree-Points/hn5i-inap/about_data

[ix] This difference is highly statistically significant (Pearson chi-square[1]=92.8; $p<<0.001$)

[x] This difference is highly statistically significant (Pearson chi-square[1]=92.8; $p=0.004$)

[xi] See, for example, the discussion in: Weaver, R., & Brady, A. M. (2023). Building Responsible Projects in New York City: Assessing the Impact of Prevailing Wage Benefits on Workers, Contractors, and the New York City Economy.

[xii] For each tree point represented in the map, the research team extracted the corresponding value from the 311 complaint density layer in that location. Importantly, 311 sidewalk complaints are not necessarily linkable to a specific tree. Complaints are often described spatially based on their location relative to the City's street address network, and locations are not always precise. As such, the summary data that follow are not specific to the trees shown on the map. They are, rather, indicative of whether complaints are generally higher or lower around trees planted by union or non-union firms in recent years.

[xiii] The p-value for the Wilcoxon test of the null hypothesis of (rough) equality of medians is less than 0.0001.

Immigration
Law & Justice
New York
A United Methodist Immigration Ministry

Good afternoon Councilmembers. My name is Reverend Paul Fleck and I serve as Executive Director of Immigration Law & Justice New York. We operate legal clinics in houses of worship in New York City, and provide extended representation to low-income and vulnerable immigrants we meet at those clinics. We also are proud members of the ICARE Coalition serving undocumented youth eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status protection.

The last time I came before you a couple of months ago, I complained. I complained about the painfully slow process that existed to get a contract in place and registered.

I am here today to tell you I have no complaints. In fact, I am here to express the joy of an Executive Director whose organization has a contract, it is registered, and the org has received funding with respect to existing SIJS eligible youth we are representing in the City. In addition, we have hired an additional Staff Attorney to represent even more clients.

The only way that extraordinary progress could grind to a halt is if City Council does not elect to fund the program at the requested level of $2,575,000 for FY27. We would be forced to stop just as we're getting started. Our existing clients need us, and prospective clients need us as well.

I want to end by thanking the folks who have walked with us through this process, in particular Council Finance staffers Florentine Kabore and Navdeep Bains. From the Department of Social Services there is Cornelia Branzan and from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs there is Phoebe Lee. Finally, I want to thank the New York City Council and its members: People like you who stand with immigrant children and provide them with the hope for the future.

From: Theseus Roche
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 2027 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS 6/10/26 9:30 a.m.
Date: Thursday, June 11, 2026 4:17:15 PM

[redacted]

Written Testimony of Theseus Roche
Executive Director, Imogen Foundation
New York City Council Committee on Finance Budget Hearing
Regarding DYCD COMPASS/SONYC RFP Process

Thank you to Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the recent DYCD COMPASS/SONYC RFP process.

My name is Theseus Roche, and I am the Executive Director of Imogen Foundation, a youth development organization founded in memory of my daughter, Imogen. We currently operate school-based afterschool programs in New York City, and we were recently selected for several awards through the DYCD COMPASS/SONYC RFP process.

I am submitting this testimony from a somewhat unusual position. Imogen Foundation was successful in this procurement. We are grateful for the opportunity to enter the DYCD-funded COMPASS/SONYC network and to serve more children and families through public investment in afterschool. At the same time, our experience with the award process has left us deeply confused about how final determinations were made, particularly in cases where competitive scoring, school preference, and the stated award rationale appear to point in different directions. I do not see our interests as opposed to the families, staff, principals, or providers who are upset by these outcomes; I believe we would all benefit from greater clarity about how final award decisions were made and how difficult transitions can be resolved.

This testimony asks the Council to help DYCD answer three central questions:

1. How were proposal scores, school preference, demonstrated capacity, and provider diversity weighted in final award decisions?
2. How is provider diversity defined and measured, particularly when awards went to some of the city's largest COMPASS contract holders?
3. What remedy exists when an award appears inconsistent with both competitive scoring and school preference?

Much of the public discussion has understandably focused on disruption to existing providers, families, and staff. That disruption is real. At the same time, I hope the Council will distinguish between the disruption caused by a competitive procurement outcome and the value of holding a competitive procurement in the first place.

I understand why families and staff connected to existing providers may be alarmed by the result of this process. I spent 20 years at Manhattan Youth, including many years leading its afterschool programs, and I helped build the organization's middle school expansion across Districts 2 and 3. I have deep respect for program staff, and I understand the real human consequences when a provider learns in late May that it may lose major contracts and may have to lay off staff within weeks.

At the same time, these contracts were opened to competition through a public RFP process. Existing contract holders knew they needed to apply to be considered for new contracts. Other qualified community-based organizations were finally given the opportunity to compete. That distinction matters. Continuity is important, but so is fair competition. Many of the concerns raised during the hearing about no-bid contracting should also be part of this conversation. If contracts never come up for meaningful competition, then smaller, newer, and community-rooted organizations have no pathway into the public afterschool system, regardless of the quality of their work or the strength of their relationships with schools.

That was our experience.

After leaving Manhattan Youth in 2020, I founded Imogen Foundation in my daughter's name. Our leadership and staff include people with long experience in DYCD-funded middle school programming, school-based afterschool, Summer Rising, youth development, social emotional learning, and school partnership. Yet until this RFP, we had no realistic pathway into the COMPASS/SONYC network. We could not serve middle school students through DYCD funding unless we already held COMPASS contracts, and we could not hold COMPASS contracts unless a competitive RFP gave us the chance to apply.

For that reason, we supported the existence of this procurement. We still do.

The issue is not that DYCD opened these contracts to competition. The issue is that, after doing so, the final award decisions in some cases appear difficult to reconcile with competitive results, school preference, and the stated goal of provider diversity.

Our understanding of the process was that qualified CBOs submitted proposals through PASSPort; DYCD reviewed and scored those proposals; viable proposals were shared with school leaders, who were given an opportunity to rank or recommend providers; and DYCD then made final award determinations based on proposal score, school input, demonstrated capacity, provider diversity, and other factors identified in the RFP.

That structure makes sense. It allows DYCD to evaluate program quality and organizational capacity while respecting the judgment of principals who know their school communities best. It also allows DYCD to think system-wide about access, equity, geographic distribution, and provider diversity.

What has been difficult to understand is how those principles were applied.

When we received our award letter, we were grateful, but also surprised. Some schools whose principals had expressed the strongest interest in working with Imogen Foundation were not among the schools we were awarded. At the same time, we discovered that some schools we were awarded had principals and families who had not selected us and who were organizing petitions or rallies in opposition to the award outcome.

That is not a good result for schools, families, providers, or DYCD. It has also caused real reputational harm to Imogen Foundation. In some communities, we have been named in petitions and public opposition, even when we were not the actual target of families' concerns. That has been painful and demoralizing for our team, particularly because we entered this process in good faith and have remained committed to serving any school community with care, humility, and respect. Clearer communication about how and why awards were made would have protected schools, families, existing providers, and incoming providers alike.

I reached out to DYCD and requested a debriefing. In meetings with ACCO and DYCD, we learned that Imogen Foundation's proposals across multiple competition pools had scored highly. In many cases, we understand that our proposal score was higher than the score of the provider that ultimately received the award. We also understand that if proposal scores and principal rankings had been applied in the way we expected, Imogen Foundation likely would have received a similar number of contracts, but at a different list of schools.

The stated basis for some of these decisions appears to have been provider diversity. We respect that goal. In fact, we are the kind of organization provider diversity should help bring into the system: smaller than the largest legacy contract holders, rooted in school communities, led by experienced youth development professionals, and newly able to compete for DYCD-funded middle school programming only because this RFP opened the door.

That is what makes the application of provider diversity so confusing. If a newer and smaller organization scored highly, and if a school leader selected that organization as the best fit for the school community, it is difficult to understand how provider diversity would be used as the rationale to award the contract instead to one of the city's largest COMPASS contract holders.

This concern is clearest at Ella Baker.

Ella Baker is a small Pre-K through 8th grade public school. Imogen Foundation currently operates the school's elementary afterschool program, serving Pre-K through 5th grade. We have served that community for three years, and the school community has expressed strong support for one coherent afterschool model across Pre-K through 8th grade.

At Ella Baker, our understanding is that the competitive proposal score pointed toward Imogen Foundation. The principal's choice also pointed toward Imogen Foundation. Yet the middle school award went to the YMCA. We have been told that the basis for that decision was provider diversity.

That raises a very specific question:

If the competitive score pointed to one provider, and if the principal's choice also pointed to that same provider, and if the stated reason for overriding those factors was provider diversity, then why was the award given to the YMCA, one of the city's largest COMPASS contract holders, rather than to the smaller provider selected by the school community?

This is not an attack on the YMCA. The YMCA is a large and respected provider. This is a question about the logic, transparency, and implementation of the award process.

At Ella Baker, the consequences are immediate. Because the school is so small, afterschool cannot be planned responsibly as two disconnected programs led by separate providers. The

elementary program has never been financially sustainable as a stand-alone program. The school's long-term goal has been to return to one coordinated afterschool structure across Pre-K through 8th grade, with shared leadership, communication, staffing logic, and school partnership. Without a path to one full-school provider, the future of the elementary program is now uncertain as well.

That means the award decision does not only affect the middle school contract. It affects the entire afterschool ecosystem at the school.

A process that values continuity should take school preference seriously. A process that values competitive quality should take proposal scores seriously. A process that values provider diversity should create meaningful opportunities for smaller and newer qualified organizations.

We are grateful to DYCD for the opportunity to participate in this RFP, and we are prepared to serve the schools we have been awarded with care, humility, and professionalism. But the process has placed us, some principals, and some families in a difficult and unnecessary position. In some cases, we were awarded schools that did not select us. In other cases, schools that did select us were awarded to other providers. That outcome undermines trust on all sides.

We therefore ask the Council to help secure clarity from DYCD on how final awards were weighted, how provider diversity was defined and applied, and what remedy exists when an award appears inconsistent with both competitive scoring and school preference.

At Ella Baker in particular, we ask the Council and DYCD to help identify a path that honors the school community's preference, supports a coherent Pre-K through 8th grade afterschool model, and applies the principle of provider diversity in a way that is consistent with its purpose.

The children and families of Ella Baker should not lose continuity because the award process produced a result that no one in the school community can understand.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued commitment to afterschool access, quality, equity, and accountability across New York City.

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New York City Council Oversight Hearing, Committee on Finance on FY27 Executive Budget
June 10, 2026

We would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Finance for holding this important oversight hearing on the City's FY2027 Executive Budget. My name is Chantall Lowe, and I am the Senior Director of Partner & Community Engagement at INCLUDEnyc. For more than 43 years, INCLUDEnyc (formerly known as Resources for Children with Special Needs) has helped hundreds of thousands of NYC families navigate the complex special education service and support systems.

While we celebrate the recent $11.5 million increase to the City Council Mental Health Services Initiatives, funding for the **Autism Awareness Initiative** has remained flat. After a $55,000 cut in FY24, funding remained at $3,261,846 through FY26.

To help providers address the rising costs of delivering these vital services, **we urge the Council to provide a 3% human services COLA increase, bringing the total FY27 investment to $3,359,704.**

This funding allows community-based organizations like INCLUDEnyc to support families in dire need. In FY2026 alone, our initiative-funded impact included:

- **1,200+ autism-related requests** resolved by our Help Line staff, including 328 for children under the age of 5.
- **41 specialized workshops** delivered to over 1,000 attendees.
- **550+ community members** engaged during our 10th Anniversary of *Outdoors for Autism* on May 31st.

Thousands of students with disabilities are currently going without their legally mandated services. This systemic failure drives up costly due process special education litigation. It also drains resources away from integrated programs at schools, leading to many students being educated in segregated settings. While recent investments in preschool special education, District 75, and contracted related services are a step forward, they represent only a fraction of what is required.

We urge the Council to make robust, ongoing investments to:

- **Hire additional evaluators** to provide timely, legally mandated, and high-quality assessments for referred students.
- **Close the Service Gap:** Hire more school-based providers to reliably fulfill IEP-mandated services.
- **Raise RSA Rates:** Increase reimbursement rates for Related Services Authorizations (RSAs) so families can successfully secure independent providers when schools are short-staffed.

We must expand what works, restore programs at risk of immediate cuts, and modernize our infrastructure:

- **Restore and Baseline Critical Programming:** Protect essential initiatives facing cuts next month, specifically **Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED)**, **Restorative Justice**, and the **Mental Health Continuum**.
- **Expand Student Support:** Increase access to proven literacy interventions and independent travel training.
- **Fund Physical Accessibility:** Commit at least **$450 million** in the 2025–2029 Capital Plan to upgrade facilities. Currently, only **one-third** of NYC public school buildings are fully accessible to students, staff, and community members with physical disabilities.

Every student in New York City has a legal right to the evaluations, services, and programs that allow them to learn and thrive. We look forward to partnering with the City Council to ensure the FY2027 budget reflects that commitment.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Sincerely,

Chantall Lowe
Senior Director Partner & Community Engagement

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Members of the NYC Council Committee on Consumer & Worker Protection
Members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance

FROM: Andrew Greenblatt, Policy Director, the Independent Drivers Guild

DATE: May 29, 2026

RE: **Driver Rights in the Deactivation Review Process During Budget Crisis**

Executive Summary

As New York City implements the new legislative framework governing the deactivation of high-volume for-hire vehicle drivers created under Intro 276-A, (Local Law 52 of 2026) we face a critical juncture. While the intent of the law—to provide due process for drivers—is vital, the current projected implementation costs and administrative hurdles present significant risks to both the City's budget and the drivers themselves.

To mitigate these risks, we propose a formalization of the "informal resolution process" already permitted under the law. By adopting specific language to empower experienced, worker-focused non-profits, the city can ensure drivers receive expert representation at no cost to the taxpayer, while allowing the DCWP to manage its resources more effectively during a period of fiscal constraint. If the city is unable to budget $23 million in increases to the DCWP during this financial crisis, our proposal gives drivers the protections they need while the DCWP more appropriately paces the hiring of the staff they will need going forward. The changes we propose can sunset in a year, allowing the DCWP to function during that time as more of an appellate court, setting precedents that can guide company behavior and future cases.

The Challenges of Implementation

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has estimated that the staffing and operational requirements for the DCWP to handle deactivation cases will cost the city **$23 million annually** and require a new staff of **171 employees**. In the current climate of budget tightening and departmental cuts, this represents a massive fiscal commitment. Furthermore, the DCWP faces several immediate hurdles:

- **The 6-Year Backlog:** The law allows for cases dating back six years. A new department, still in its "ramp-up" phase, will be immediately overwhelmed by thousands of legacy claims.

- **The Advocacy Gap:** Unlike the previous system, the DCWP process requires drivers to provide their own advocates or represent themselves. Most drivers, having just lost their primary source of income, lack the resources to hire professional help.
- **Linguistic and Cultural Barriers:** Our city's drivers are a diverse population. Effective resolution requires advocates who provide culturally and linguistically appropriate assistance—a service our organization has successfully provided for a decade.

The Solution: A Formalized "Informal Process"

The law already contemplates an "informal process" to settle claims before they reach the DCWP. We propose that the City Council or the DCWP temporarily adopt the following language to ensure this process is fair, standardized, and effective:

> "To qualify as an informal resolution process recognized under this chapter, the high-volume for-hire vehicle service must engage to represent the high-volume for-hire vehicle driver a worker-focused non-profit organization i) with a background in working with rideshare drivers or similar workers, and ii) be able to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate assistance. As part of the informal process, the high-volume for-hire vehicle driver must be given the opportunity to resolve an unresolved claim by an arbitrator, and any arbitrator chosen as part of the informal process must be agreed to through a procedure that equally includes the high-volume for-hire vehicle service and the non-profit organization representing the high-volume for-hire vehicle driver."

Benefits to the City and the Workforce

Adopting this language offers a pragmatic path forward that balances worker rights with fiscal reality:

1. **Immediate Fiscal Relief:** By allowing non-profits to handle the bulk of deactivations through this formalized process, the city can significantly reduce the $23 million annual expenditure.
2. **Immediate Relief for Deactivated Drivers:** Even if the DCWP gets the funding it needs, it will take over a year to hire the necessary 171 new staff and work through the backlog of cases. During this time, drivers will be left in purgatory, unable to work and feed their families.
3. **Expertise and Efficiency:** Our organization has a decade of experience in this specific niche. We can handle the rideshare load immediately.
4. **The DCWP has Other New Responsibilities:** The DCWP has a number of new responsibilities, including handling deactivation appeals for delivery workers. While we can provide an alternative for rideshare drivers, no other labor organization has the same years of experience and expertise representing delivery workers in appeals.
5. **DCWP as "Supreme Court":** Incorporating a fairer "informal process" would allow the DCWP to play a more appropriate "Supreme Court" role, setting precedent for cases brought before third-party arbitrators.
6. **No Driver Left Behind:** The proposed language ensures every driver has an advocate who speaks their language and understands their culture.

7. **Optional Sunset Provision:** This language could be implemented with a one-year sunset clause, allowing the City to utilize existing non-profit infrastructure now and reassess the DCWP's capacity once the initial backlog is cleared.

Conclusion

We urge the City Council and the DCWP to incorporate this language into the law or departmental rules. This is a common-sense solution that preserves the City's budget, utilizes existing expertise, and—most importantly—ensures that New York City drivers are not denied justice due to administrative delays or financial barriers.

We look forward to discussing how we can work together to make this process a success for the city and its essential workers.

INDEPENDENT RIKERS COMMISSION

Testimony of Zachary Katznelson, Executive Director
re: FY27 Executive Budget: DOC, DOHMH, CHS, MOCJ
June 10, 2026

I am Zachary Katznelson, Executive Director of the Independent Rikers Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. The following spending would improve public safety and the administration of justice. It would also bring NYC closer to shutting Rikers forever.

A. Department of Correction

The Department of Correction (DOC) is making strides under Commissioner Richards. But the Executive Budget misses opportunities to do more. There are three priority budget items.

1. Jail-Based Programming

Mayor Adams cut Rikers programming by $17 million. The Council clawed back $14 million, which is only now being spent. However, the Executive Budget fails to restore the remaining $3 million, nor does it move DOC closer to providing the legally-mandated 5 hours of programming every weekday. **Programming should be increased by at least $10 million.**

2. Re-entry Services

In 2017, NYC pledged to provide re-entry services to everyone leaving Rikers. It is far from that common-sense goal. That's especially problematic for people with mental illness, 50% of whom return to Rikers within 1 year. **Re-entry planning should be increased by at least $10 million.**

3. Crisis Intervention Training to Work with People with Serious Mental Illness

Rikers' once well-functioning units for people with serious mental illness, known as PACE and CAPS (the latter for people with SMI who commit serious disciplinary infractions), are shells of themselves. That means less treatment, and more violence. Correctional and health care staff used to take week-long Crisis Intervention Training together, then work as teams. That has completely fallen apart, and most of the specially-trained staff have left. **The Council could mandate restoration of cooperative Crisis Intervention Training as a budget condition.**

B. DOHMH

1. Medical Examiner

Timely forensic analysis is critical to ensuring faster case processing. And faster case processing is essential if we want to end the artificial inflation of the Rikers population – and provide

victims with answers and accountability. For instance, 25% of the Rikers population faces murder charges. But District Attorneys report they routinely wait 9 months or more for autopsy reports. **This budget cuts a net of 61 OCME positions. Those positions should be restored.**

2. Mobile Mental Health Treatment Teams

Mobile mental health treatment teams help stabilize people with serious mental illness (and often addiction). DOHMH testified that over 1,250 people sit on waitlists. This budget neither attempts to end those waitlists nor bolsters staff retention on existing teams. **The budget should add – and baseline – at least $22 million for IMT teams, and $4 million for FACT teams.**

C. Correctional Health Services

1. CHS Forensic Clinic

Spending is static for the CHS Forensic Clinic, which assesses whether people are mentally competent to stand trial. Today, these incredibly ill people wait weeks for assessments. They should be done within 14 calendar days. **Funding should be increased by $2 million.**

D. Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

1. Supervised Release

Supervised release helps ensure people who are released to the community pre-trial are connected with services and support, and return to court. Supervised release caseloads have grown from 28,986 in 2024 to 34,852 in 2025 to an estimated 37,368 in 2026 (12,456 through the first 4 months of 2026). **This budget cuts $2,657,106 from Supervised Release contracts. Those cuts should be reversed.**

Thank you.

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Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer

June 11, 2026

Chair Brannan and distinguished members of the Committee on Finance, my name is Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer, and I am the Executive Director of the Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY). I want to emphasize today the importance of investing in immigration legal services and ensuring that such funding reaches the grassroots and faith based legal service providers who provide the highest quality of work while serving clients with the utmost dignity.

Over the past year, immigration enforcement in New York City has disrupted every New Yorkers life. Roving patrols of ICE agents sow fear in communities throughout the five boroughs. Coupled with illegal courthouse arrests, ICE's policing has detained and deported thousands of New Yorkers. Immigration judges' administrative decisions, like the practice of pretermission or the current 'Mega Master Calendar' hearings, leave more individuals' status uncertain. Month after month, DHS invents finds new ways to strip protections from immigrants.

Too often, grassroots and faith-based organizations are overlooked in funding decisions, despite having the deepest relationships with the most directly impacted communities. Dating back to our founding 1997—but particularly since 2022-- the Interfaith Center of New York's religiously-diverse and civically-engaged grassroots and immigrant religious leaders have welcomed new New Yorkers across the five boroughs of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island and The Bronx.

Faith-leaders can't do it alone, however. It takes the work of lawyers, who can fight back against unjust rulings and to file crucial documents to make New York safe for all. Thankfully, there are a variety of legal service providers working to combat this crisis and protect immigrant communities. These organizations vary from large, multi-million dollar non-profits with significant staff and resources to grassroots organizations who make an outsized impact with limited funding. Because of our decades of community work, ICNY has been able to identify the faith based legal service providers whose pro bono and pro se work is effective and excellent.

Considering our position as a network, **ICNY** joined together with **Muslim Community Network, The Ark Immigration Clinic at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, and El Barrio Angels at the Church of St. Edward the Martyr** to form an Interfaith Collaborative to provide community-rooted legal services.

Together, these organizations served thousands of immigrants throughout FY26—filing asylum applications, accompanying clients to immigration court proceedings, and contesting the detention and deportation of New Yorkers. These pro se clinics do far more than provide legal advice: they build trust, offer pastoral care, connect individuals to critical social services, and ensure that no one faces immigration court alone.

<u>It is crucial that the City Council provides funding to all of these organizations.</u>

As New York City stares down the specter of only increasing attacks on our Immigrant communities, investment in the services which provide the most needed protections and support is needed now more than ever. In order take on this work head-on in Fy27, the Interfaith Collaborative has requested $1,261,000 across five organizations (The Interfaith Center of New York, Muslim Community Network, The Ark Immigration Clinic at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, and El Barrio Angels at the Church of St. Edward the Martyr to form an Interfaith Collaborative to provide community-rooted legal services.)

I respectfully urge the City Council to bolster support for Immigrant Legal Services in FY27, to not merely sustain but grow the protections for Immigrant New Yorkers. Thank you.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Chloe Breyer

Wednesday, June 10: Finance Committee, Executive Budget Hearing

Testimony from International Rescue Committee (IRC) in New York
On behalf the New York City Immigrant Resettlement Initiative (NYC-IRI)

Good afternoon, Chair Lee and members of the Council,

My name is Bethany Dill, and I am the Community Engagement Coordinator with the International Rescue Committee in New York, the IRC. I am grateful to be here alongside our partners in the New York City Immigrant Resettlement Initiative, the NYC-IRI. We believe our services for the refugee and immigrant community can be strongest and most effective not only by working closely together as the city's resettlement agencies but also, and importantly, by walking alongside our clients in a way that truly bears witness to their experience—grief and triumphs, past and present, and hopes for the future; and by reflecting that experience in conversations with community members and leaders.

I want to build on what you've heard today by focusing on what we are seeing daily and why case management, which we as a coalition of resettlement agencies are working to protect and strengthen, is so critical to newcomers in our city at this moment.

Across New York City, we are increasingly working with individuals and families who are eligible for services but facing many complex barriers to accessing and navigating them in a meaningful way. Rapid changes in federal policy, shifting rules for qualifying for and maintaining support, and fragmented systems mean that even highly motivated individuals are struggling to access housing, healthcare, legal support, and employment pathways in a coordinated way.

What we are seeing is not a simple lack of services; it is a breakdown in navigation: connecting to services and staying connected. Without consistent, trusted case management, small barriers compound quickly: a missed document, a misunderstood eligibility rule, a delayed referral. These gaps can lead to prolonged shelter stays, loss of work authorization opportunities, worsening health conditions, and avoidable strain on City systems. A colleague at IRC who serves as caseworker said to me just yesterday, "[Clients'] lives are inundated with fear and constraints."

This is where the NYC-IRI model is particularly important. It is not duplicating existing services—it is making them work. Case management ensures that individuals and families in the refugee and immigrant community can move through systems efficiently, access what they are already eligible for, find the stability they seek, and thrive as part of our New York City community.

From our experience responding to displacement in New York and across the country, this kind of early, coordinated, and responsive support is one of the most effective ways to reduce long-term costs and improve outcomes. When case management is strong, systems function as they are designed to. When it is absent, costs rise across the board.

The $1 million investment proposed is a strategic way to strengthen the City's existing infrastructure, ensuring that services already funded translate into real stability and well-being for new New Yorkers and the opportunity to share skills, cultures, and dreams that shape our city.

We respectfully urge the Council to include $1 million for each coalition member of the NYC Immigrant Resettlement Initiative in the FY27 budget.

Thank you for your time and continued advocacy and leadership.

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New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027
Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use
June 10, 2026

Natsuko Okazaki, Director
Japanese American Social Services, Inc

Thank you, Chair Tiffany L. Cabán, and members of the Committee on Mental Health & Substance Use, for holding this hearing and providing us with the opportunity to testify. My name is Natsuko Okazaki and I am the Director at Japanese American Social Services, Inc. (JASSI). We are testifying as part of the Asian American Federation's Asian American Mental Health Roundtable, a coalition of 15 Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations who work collaboratively to address challenges, create solutions, and share resources to increase access to culturally competent mental health care.

JASSI aims to support members of the Japanese and Japanese American community in maintaining and improving an independent lifestyle and maximizing their quality of life. During fiscal year of 2025 (July 1st, 2024 through June 30, 2025), JASSI staff made a total of 3,797 contacts and assisted 511 seniors in need. The most common inquiries we received from our clients were regarding the following issues; 1) JASSI Program/Events; 2) Health Insurance (Medicare);3) Public Benefits, Entitlements, Social Security, and MSP; 4) Financial (tax, low-income, etc.); 5)Health/Mental Health; 6) Hospital Escort/Homecare; 7) Housing issues (Eviction, etc.); 8) Assurance Call;9) Family; and 10) End of Life Issues.

Asian New Yorkers are living through a mental health crisis that is both urgent and largely invisible. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing major racial group in New York City, numbering roughly 1.5 million people. Yet one in three Asian New Yorkers is low-income, Asian seniors have the second-highest poverty rate of any racial group in the city, and nearly half of Asian New Yorkers have limited English proficiency.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, these pressures have been intensified by a sharp increase in anti-Asian violence and harassment, economic shocks, and social isolation. More recently, changes in SNAP benefits eligibility, public charge rules, and harsh immigration enforcement have discouraged community

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members from seeking help, even in emergency crises. Our community is actually foregoing care for fear of deportation and surveillance, so they suffer in silence, even as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidal ideation rise.

Since COVID-19, JASSI, as many Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations, has pivoted to providing mental health services to meet the growing demand for services. JASSI places strong emphasis on addressing mental health issues as part of our mission to support our community members and help them live with a sense of safety and well-being. In today's society, more people are struggling with stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation, making access to mental health support more important than ever. JASSI provided 120 individual mental health counseling sessions in Japanese, free of charge, to New York residents experiencing various challenges between July 1 and November 19, 2025.

However, the barriers to accessing in-language and culturally competent care remain steep. New York City faces a serious shortage of providers who speak Asian languages, understand Asian cultures, and are equipped to handle the complexities of the Asian immigrant experience. Too often, people are asked to share their most painful stories in English, a language they do not fully command, or with a provider who is ill-equipped to understand the racism and trauma that have shaped their lives.

The organizations in our Asian American Mental Health Roundtable bridge these gaps by providing culturally and linguistically competent mental health services to Asian New Yorkers, often without any dedicated mental health funding. We respectfully request that the City Council fund the following initiatives to support our mental health work and allocate more of this funding to Asian-serving organizations, like the organizations in our Roundtable:

- Hate Crimes Prevention funding to support programs that use community-based solutions to decrease hate crimes;
- The Immigrant Health Initiative funding to reduce mental health stigma within our local Asian community;
- The AAPI Community Support funds to provide culturally relevant services to the Asian community;
- Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative funding to support the development of culturally and linguistically relevant mental health and related services.

This funding is critical for organizations like ours who are a lifeline to the Asian community in NYC, and who are often overlooked in City funding streams.

The challenges faced by Asian New Yorkers demand long-term investment in mental health, and it starts with this support. JASSI is committed to advancing culturally competent care and advocating for our community. Thank you for your continued support and for the opportunity to testify today.

Committee on Finance

TOPIC: Executive Budget Hearing

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Testimony by

Abby Jeffrey, Assistant Vice President of Behavioral Health and Wellness, City Programs

JCCA

Good afternoon, Chair Lee, members of the Committee on Finance, and distinguished Council Members. Thank you for calling this hearing and inviting JCCA to submit testimony on behalf of the children and families to whom we provide behavioral and mental health services.

My name is Abby Jeffrey, Assistant Vice President of Behavioral Health and Wellness, City Programs. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 15 years of experience as a clinician and supervisor of mental health care for children and their families. Prior to joining JCCA's Behavioral Health and Wellness division, I worked both on our residential campus and in our foster home division.

JCCA is a child and family services agency that works with about 17,000 of New York State's children and families each year. We provide behavioral health, foster care, residential,

prevention, and educational services to young people across the five boroughs and Westchester. JCCA provides wellness supports for young people struggling with emotional challenges to prevent and address family dysfunction and instability.

Behavioral and Mental Health

Thank you to the City Council for your continued investment in two critical mental health Citywide Initiatives at JCCA.

1. Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative. This program provides counseling to youth who are court-involved or at-risk of court involvement. Its impact has been profound, reducing recidivism among participants by 90%. Due to its success, the program consistently operates with a waitlist, underscoring the need for expansion to reach more at-risk youth.
2. Opioid Treatment and Prevention Initiative. This program provides counseling to youth facing or at risk of an opioid addiction. Participants gain essential coping skills and therapeutic supports that help them reduce and prevent substance use.

JCCA provides a continuum of behavioral and mental health programs in New York City, many of which rely on Medicaid funding. These programs include:

1. Article 31 Clinics. Our Article 31 clinic in Brooklyn provides therapy and counseling to children with trauma. Recently, we also opened an Article 31 clinic in the Bronx.
2. Youth ACT. JCCA is proudly the first Youth ACT provider in New York City. As the sole Youth ACT provider in Brooklyn, our ACT team works with young people with Serious Emotional Disturbance who are at risk of or have recently returned from psychiatric hospitalization. Our ACT team receives accolades for its innovative and effective work with some of the most high-risk youth in the city. We are in the process of opening a second Youth ACT team, located in the Bronx.
3. Health Homes and Community and Family Treatment Support Services (CFTSS). We provide Health Homes case management for children and CFTSS. These programs

include in-home care coordination, skill building, and therapy, among other services. These services are generally utilized by clients in marginalized communities who struggle with the social determinants of health.

4. Foster Youth Therapeutic Teams. Our Psychology Department works with children in our foster and residential programs, and JCCA's Center for Healing offers trauma-informed treatment for youth who have experiencedsexual abuse or commercial sexual exploitation.
5. Home Based Crisis Intervention (HBCI). Our HBCI program provides crisis intervention to youth with intellectual disabilities and who are at risk of psychiatric hospitalization.

Many JCCA programs involve community-based work, where clinicians travel to clients' homes, while others increasingly work remotely from their own home or prefer comfortable office and school settings. Additionally, our clinicians work and travel to their clients in the evening when children are home from school.

Our committed mental health professionals offer therapeutic care and social support to young people and families experiencing crisis. However, like many organizations in the human services sector, we continue to face serious workforce shortages. This is primarily caused by low reimbursement rates, which made it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain staff. As a result, our programs often operate with waitlists, and we are unable to reach many children who need services because we do not have enough personnel. At JCCA, frequent staff turnover also disrupts continuity of care, which can undermine a young person's treatment progress. While we work hard to help young people process painful experiences, the departure of a trusted clinician during treatment can intensify the difficulty of healing from trauma.

To better assist families in crisis, here are a few recommendations on how the City can support mental health providers.

What can New York City do?

1. **Support wage equity for City-contracted human service workers**

   We encourage City Council to increase human service worker salaries so that our frontline staff are paid the wages they deserve for their hard work. We commend Council Member Stevens for sponsoring Int 0452 that will create a new wage requirement system for city-contracted human services workers; we call on City Council to pass this legislation. Without true wage equity, we continue to risk losing well-qualified staff, leaving our families with uncertainty that they will receive care without disruption.

2. **Invest in a diverse workforce through education and training supports**

   Part of building trust among our families is pairing them with clinical staff who reflect the communities we serve and speak the same languages. Much of our workforce is made up of people of color and so are many of the families we serve. Unfortunately, high tuition costs, burdensome student debt, unpaid or underpaid internships, and licensing fees create major barriers for aspiring clinicians who do not have access to substantial financial resources. We ask that the City to invest in the following supports:

   - Tuition assistance and student loan forgiveness;
   - Financial support for nonprofit mental health providers to cover continuing education costs for staff; and
   - Subsidized test preparation for licensure exams.

3. **Encourage State partners to raise reimbursement rates**

   Although the State budget has been enacted, low reimbursement rates continue to challenge our behavioral and mental health programs. We urge the City to actively partner with State agencies to raise both contract-based reimbursement rates and Medicaid

encounter-based rates so that services for high-acuity children and youth in hard-to-reach communities are properly funded.

Programs such as Youth ACT teams, Article 31 MHOTRS mental health clinics, CFTSS, and Health Homes play a vital role in serving underserved populations with significant mental health needs. Higher rates will help us raise salaries and retain staff, ensuring continuity of care for high-needs families.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to consider investing in the needs of children and their families through further investments in mental and behavioral health. By investing in supports for young New Yorkers, we can resolve crises early and build the stability necessary for our children and teens to realize their fullest potential.

Committee on Finance

TOPIC: Executive Budget Hearing

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Testimony by

Jestin Jennings

Vice President of Foster Care, Prevention, and ORR Programs

JCCA

Good afternoon, Chair Lee, members of the Committee on Finance, and distinguished Council Members. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of JCCA and the children, youth, and families we serve across New York City.

My name is **Jestin Jennings**, and I serve as **Vice President of Foster Care, Prevention, and ORR Programs at JCCA**. My professional experience spans residential foster care, juvenile justice, foster care, prevention services, and community-based child welfare programming. JCCA is proud to be a longstanding partner of the Administration for Children's Services. I would like to specifically acknowledge Deputy Commissioners Linares, Mendez, and Ginsburg, with whom we've had the pleasure of working closely, for their partnership, responsiveness, and commitment to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families.

We recognize the difficult fiscal environment facing the City and understand that ACS must make challenging budget decisions. At the same time, we urge the Council and Administration to consider that reductions to family services/prevention services, even when framed as efficiencies, still have a direct impact on families, communities, and the nonprofit providers responsible for delivering these essential services.

With that context in mind, I'd like to highlight several of our agency's successful programs—examples of what is at stake—before returning to the issue of these difficult budget decisions.

JCCA's Services to Children and Families

JCCA proudly serves children and families through various programs administered by ACS and DYCD. Some of these programs include **City Council funded Initiatives** such as:

- **Wraparound Services for Transitional Aged Foster Youth**, in which we provide college and career readiness services, financial literacy, and housing supports to youth aging out of foster care. This program helped our young people remain engaged and connected to the workforce, while developing postsecondary plans and completing high school.
- **City's First Readers**, an early childhood literacy initiative targeted to children aged 0-5. We provide read-alongs, interactive activities, and distribute books and literacy trainings to families to support their child's reading development. Over the past year, we distributed over 3,000 early literacy kits and books to foster care and preventive families, held six multilingual virtual storytelling sessions with families, and three trainings and educational programs for parents and foster parents to promote the development of early literacy.

Thank you for your continued support of these critical programs for young people. JCCA also delivers a range of additional ACS-funded programs including:

- **Enhanced Family Foster Care**, providing case management, treatment, and therapeutic services to children who experienced some level of trauma;
- **Specialized Family Foster Care**, providing specialized foster homes for children with complex medical conditions;
- **Residential Foster Care** for New York City youth, including specialized services for those with Intellectual and Development Disabilities, as well as Special Medical needs;
- **Family Support Services (formerly known as Prevention services)**, where we provide clinical support and treatment to help families in Brooklyn and the Bronx keep their children safely at home. These services include:
    - **Child Parent Psychotherapy**, an evidence-based model that works with families with children up to age five who experienced trauma;
    - **Family Treatment Rehabilitation**, an intensive program for families at risk of foster care placement due to substance abuse and/or mental health issues; and
    - **Solution Based Casework**, family support that builds on the strengths of families.

B. Challenges

Reinvestment Funding Sustainability

JCCA appreciates ACS's efforts to reinvest in family services and recognizes Deputy Commissioner Linares's continued partnership with providers. However, reinvestment funding must be sustainable. As currently structured, these investments often come at the expense of other provider slots either being cut or closed. At the same time, providers continue to face rising costs, including staffing, supervision, outreach, technology, transportation, family engagement, and direct client support. When reinvestment funding is temporary or uncertain,

agencies struggle to sustain the staffing, initiatives, and program improvements that families rely on.

The FY27 Executive Budget includes the closure of four family services programs totaling 360 slots. While the cuts have not impacted JCCA to date, the cuts will cause systemic challenges impacting families that need the services the most. While ACS has stated it will ensure continuity of services, any reduction in contracted capacity strains the provider network. Case transfers require staffing, coordination, engagement, and trust-building with families who may already be experiencing instability.

We respectfully urge the Council to support sustained funding for Family Support Services so that effective programs are not lost when temporary funding ends.

Shift Toward Agency-Led Outreach and Referral Generation

JCCA supports ACS' goal of expanding community-based referrals and connecting families to services before deeper child welfare involvement becomes necessary. ACS has reported increases in the number of community referrals, including referrals from schools, healthcare providers, and families themselves. This is a positive shift. However, it also represents a major operational change for program providers.

Family services agencies are increasingly expected to identify, engage, and enroll families through community outreach. This work requires dedicated staff time, community events, outreach materials, referral tracking, language access, transportation, and sustained partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, tenant associations, shelters, and other community partners.

We support this direction, but funding must match the expectations. Community outreach is not an add-on responsibility; it is a core function that requires real infrastructure. Many families still

struggle to find support even when providers have available slots. Stronger community-based infrastructure can help close that gap.

Workforce Recruitment and Retention Crisis

The workforce crisis remains one of the most significant threats to the stability of family services. Providers are competing with hospitals, schools, healthcare systems, managed care organizations, and government agencies that often offer higher salaries and stronger benefits. As a result, agencies experience chronic vacancies, turnover, increased caseload pressure, supervisor strain, delayed engagement, and service disruptions for families.

The starting salary for some therapists providing family supports/prevention services such as Child Parent Psychotherapy and Family Treatment Rehabilitation is approximately $56,500. These are highly skilled clinical roles serving families affected by trauma, mental health needs, substance use, domestic violence, housing instability, and child safety concerns.
Families are best served by consistent, qualified, and experienced staff. When staff leave for higher-paying opportunities, families experience disruption in relationships that are central to trust, engagement, and progress.

JCCA urges the Council to continue advancing wage equity for nonprofit human services workers and to ensure ACS contracts are funded at levels that allow providers to recruit and retain qualified staff.

What City Council Can Do

JCCA respectfully urges the City Council to work with the Administration to ensure the FY27 budget:

- Provides sustainable funding for Family Support/Prevention Services.
- Strengthens wage equity and workforce investment for nonprofit human services staff.

- Ensures reinvestment funding supports long-term service sustainability.

Conclusion

Thank you for your time, leadership, and continued commitment to New York City's children and families. A fair and equitable FY27 budget requires meaningful investment in the families, communities, and frontline staff who make this work possible.

KATAL

CENTER FOR EQUITY, HEALTH, & JUSTICE

Testimony

Executive Budget Hearing – Joint Hearing Between the Committee on Criminal Justice and the Committee on Finance

Yonah Zeitz, Advocacy Director
yonah@katalcenter.org

for

Committee on Criminal Justice

Tuesday, June 2, 2026 -- 9:30 AM
New York, NY

Thank you, Chair Selvena N. Brooks-Powers and Chair Linda Lee, for holding this joint New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing on the Department of Correction for Fiscal Year 2027. My name is Yonah Zeitz, I'm the advocacy director at the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice, based in Brooklyn. Our members are from across the city, and include people who have been incarcerated, family members of currently and formerly incarcerated people, and more. Many of our members know exactly how horrific Rikers is and are deeply troubled that the closure plan is off track. This FY2027 Executive Budget takes some steps in the right direction but ultimately falls short of making significant investments to reduce the jail population at Rikers. As a result, it leaves the Rikers closure plan in limbo and fails to reduce the jail population. While Mayor Mamdani continues to say he wants to close Rikers, those words fall short with this executive budget. Tinkering around the edges won't close Rikers; it will take decisive and large-scale action by the Mamdani administration. The city budget is where the rubber meets the road for saving lives and closing Rikers once and for all.

We submit this testimony to bring your attention to the crisis at Rikers and the need to shutter the notorious and deadly jail complex. Since the City Council passed the law to close Rikers Island in the fall of 2019, nearly 80 people have died in city jails. Violence at Rikers is out of control, and conditions at Rikers have long been horrific.[i] Today, Rikers is also the largest mental health facility in New York City and among the largest in the country. Roughly 60% of New Yorkers held at Rikers have needed mental health services, 22% are diagnosed with a serious mental illness, and 25% suffer from an opioid disorder.[ii]

As the humanitarian crisis at Rikers continues, New Yorkers' tax dollars are being used to perpetuate this violence. According to the City's Comptroller's Office, the cost of incarceration at Rikers is more than $500,000 a person per year, which is *$1,390 a day*.[iii] Incarcerating people in these inhumane conditions does not create safer communities, nor does it address survivors' needs. Investing in alternatives to incarceration has been proven to significantly reduce recidivism compared to jail and prison, and it also allows survivors to see the people who harm them held accountable and forge a pathway forward to create safer communities.[iv]

As the crisis at Rikers worsens, the jail population rises, and the closure plan remains off track, yet the FY2027 executive budget allocates $2.96 billion to DOC, which represents a 3.8% increase for the agency budget compared with last year's adopted budget.[v] The Vera Institute cites that the "DOC's budget increase is driven largely by personnel-related costs rather than investments like educational, therapeutic, and reentry programming, which receive just $14 million annually."[vi] We are glad to see the

Executive Budget reduce the uniformed headcount in the DOC by 586; however, there are still hundreds of vacancies, and the resources would be better spent on programming and decarceration efforts.[vii] If the mayor is truly committed to shutting Rikers, the city budget should *decrease* the DOC's budget and personnel costs to align with the closure plan and invest in proven solutions to safely reduce the jail population.

As the administration proposes increasing the bloated DOC budget, the Board of Corrections budget is being reduced at a time when oversight is critical. Additionally, this increased funding of the DOC means the mayor is not meeting his commitments to sustainable funding services that New Yorkers rely on: the mayor said he'd commit 0.5% of the city budget to libraries and 1% to parks, both of which fall short in this budget.[viii] But here we are discussing *increases* to the DOC budget. This budget continues the status quo of increasing the budgets used to cage people while inadequately funding the programs and services proven to keep our communities safe and thriving without relying on incarceration.

Another key problem with this executive budget is that it fails to investigate and address the increased costs to the Borough-Based Jails (BBJ), which have risen from the original estimate of $8 billion when the closure law was enacted in 2019 to nearly $16 billion today. The mayor and the city council have a moral and fiscal obligation to investigate why these costs are going up and what options might be available to reduce those costs, especially given that the timelines associated with these facilities (which now go well into the 2030's) are completely off-track and don't align with the mayor's stated position that he wants to follow the law to close Rikers by 2027.

While this budget is an improvement over the previous administration's abysmal budgets, it doesn't convey the urgency of the crisis at hand. The mayor and city council can no longer continue approving the DOC budget without more details on the BBJ's cost overruns and timelines. The city clearly has no intent to meet the legal closure deadline of 2027, but it has also not reconfigured the plan to provide a definitive date for when Rikers *will* be closed. This reality, coupled with the jail population currently at over 6,700 due to the city's limited efforts, raises major concerns about the city's commitment to closing Rikers.

The city has other options available—proven solutions to safely reduce the jail population and advance closure that the city can fund and implement in this year's budget. To reduce the jail population and advance closure, the mayor and city council must pass a budget that doesn't just restore funding from previous cuts, but significantly increases funding to ATI's, supervision release, re-entry services, Intensive Mobil Treatment (IMT) teams, Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams, B-HEARD crisis response, and low-barrier housing.

These recommendations offer clear, proven solutions to safely reduce the jail population and ensure people receive the effective care they deserve.

To address this ongoing crisis at Rikers, we urge the NYC Council to pass an FY2027 budget that fulfills its commitment to shutting down Rikers.

We urge this council to focus on three things: **first**, cut the budgets used for caging people – the DOC budget is bloated, wasteful, and must be cut. The city must also reduce the number of people incarcerated at Rikers by implementing the recommendations outlined above. **Second**, the closure of Rikers is not just a moral and legal imperative, but given the extraordinary savings that can be realized, it is also a *fiscal* imperative. The Council must pass a budget that advances efforts to shutter the notorious jail complex. **Third**, we must increase investments in things that produce real community safety: housing, healthcare, including mental health, education, and jobs. The city must also invest in responses to violence that are survivor-centered, accountability-based, safety-driven, and racially equitable.

The City Council must use its budgetary power to advance the closure of Rikers and hold the mayor accountable to the closure law. Lives are at stake.

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Good morning, Chair Lee and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marilia G. Richards and I'm the Managing Director of our Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) New York Field Office. I want to first thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to protecting some of the most vulnerable children in our city. On behalf of KIND, I am deeply grateful for your longstanding support of the Unaccompanied Minors & Families Initiative (UMFI) and the ICARE Coalition.

Because of your investment, thousands of immigrant children in New York City—many fleeing violence, trafficking, and persecution—have been able to access the legal representation they need to navigate a complex immigration system. As you know, children in immigration proceedings are not guaranteed counsel, and without it, they face overwhelming barriers to safety and due process.

ICARE plays a uniquely critical role in making this representation possible. As a coalition of legal service providers, ICARE ensures that unaccompanied children are efficiently connected to qualified attorneys through a centralized referral system, while coordinating services across a network of providers to reduce gaps and streamline care. Through UMFI, ICARE providers deliver coordinated, high-quality representation, including legal screenings, know-your-rights presentations, direct representation, and connections to social services.

This coordinated model is essential in a system where demand often exceeds capacity, allowing providers like KIND to maximize impact and reach more children in need. Just as importantly, ICARE strengthens the overall legal services infrastructure by improving collaboration, building provider capacity, and advancing advocacy to address systemic challenges affecting immigrant youth.

The impact of this investment is profound. Without representation, children have only about a 15 percent chance of winning their case. With ICARE-supported counsel, success rates increase to over 90 percent.

Since its inception, ICARE providers have screened more than 15,000 children, represented nearly 4,000, and helped over 2,000 secure relief—demonstrating the life-changing impact of this work.

KIND's mission is simple but urgent: to ensure that no child appears in immigration court alone. Through ICARE, we work alongside partners across the city to provide high-quality legal services that help children secure stability, protection, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

The need for these services remains critical. While City Council's investment in FY26 significantly expanded capacity and reduced waitlists, demand continues to outpace available resources.

At the same time, the policy environment is becoming more complex: cases now require more time, coordination, and specialized advocacy, while federal funding remains unstable and more youth are facing detention and urgent legal needs.

We are also seeing Immigration Court hearings advanced and asylum interviews scheduled more quickly than before, compressing timelines and leaving children with less time to secure counsel. In addition, recent shifts in how courts are treating previously approved forms of relief, such as SIJS petitions, are creating new uncertainty and leaving some children without a clear path to protection.

Meanwhile, New York continues to receive thousands of unaccompanied children who will need legal support in the coming years, placing sustained pressure on an already strained system. Without continued and increased investment, providers will be forced to turn children away or leave them unrepresented at critical moments in their cases.

Your support has made New York City a national leader in standing up for immigrant children, and it has changed the trajectory of countless young lives.

For FY2027, KIND respectfully requests $1.87 million to sustain and expand our services. At the same time, we strongly urge the Council to support the full Unaccompanied Minors & Families Initiative funding request of $18.6 million, which is critical to ensuring that nearly 3,000 young New Yorkers and their families can access counsel rather than face removal proceedings alone.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership and urge you to continue this commitment in the coming fiscal year. Together, we can ensure that every child—regardless of where they come from—has a fair chance to be heard, protected, and thrive.

Thank you for your support and leadership.

June 10, 2026
New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Public Testimony from: Kelsey Brow, Executive Director of King Manor Museum and resident of Jamaica Center

Have we learned nothing from the mistakes of Robert Moses? By now, we should understand that every time we widen a highway, we just have to widen it again in a few years. We spend billions trying to improve traffic, only to find ourselves back where we started.

We should likewise understand that once a park is built, it becomes politically and practically difficult to convert any part of it back to transportation infrastructure. If QueensWay supporters acknowledge the need to preserve the corridor for future transit, then why not build that transit now? Construction costs are not going down. The need for transit is not going away. Delaying the project only guarantees that it will become more expensive and more difficult.

Look at the history of the Second Avenue Subway. Other countries build entire transit networks in the time it took New York to complete a few miles of track. The longer we wait, the more expensive the project becomes and the harder it is to build consensus.

There is an old saying: buy cheap, buy twice. If it costs less to build QueensWay today, but requires tearing up part of that investment later to install rail infrastructure, taxpayers will end up paying more in the long run. Building QueensWay now and transit later means two construction projects, two disruptions, and two bills. Building QueensLink now means one project that addresses both transportation and public space needs from the start.

Furthermore, when we build a park without providing transit access, we are making a statement about who can reach different parts of our city. We are deciding who has access to jobs, education, recreation, and opportunity. Public transit is not just transportation infrastructure. It is economic infrastructure. It is social infrastructure. It is a tool for mobility in every sense of the word.

If we do not build this rail connection now, there is a very real chance it will never be built. Are you willing to build a city that curtails economic and physical mobility based on access to a car? Do you enjoy being stuck in traffic on the Van Wyck or the Jackie Robinson? Here's an even easier question: do you like breathing car exhaust? Are we prepared to accept a future with more cars on our streets, more traffic, and more air pollution in neighborhoods that already suffer disproportionately from vehicle emissions?

I don't think that is a very nice thing to do. I live in downtown Jamaica and I have asthma. I can't go for a jog in my neighborhood because I can't breathe. And it's not just me. The neighborhoods that would be improved by QueensLink average upwards of 35ppb of ground level ozone, some of the very highest in all of NYC. This causes and worsens respiratory illnesses. How does ground level ozone form? A chemical reaction between sunlight, and…you guessed it! Vehicle emissions.

Communities with poor transit access often experience higher rates of respiratory illness precisely because residents have fewer alternatives to driving. This is an intersectional problem too: most of those communities are also communities of color. A map of areas in Queens where where transit would be improved by QueensLink and a map of the Disadvantaged Communities as recognized by New York State's Climate Justice Working Group are nearly identical. Many of these communities have recently been or are in the process of being upzoned, so population density and need for transit is rapidly increasing. Without QueensLink, that means more cars, more traffic, and more respiratory diseases in neighborhoods already dealing with environmental justice issues.

The need for better transit connections between Southeast Queens, Central Queens, and Brooklyn is not a future need. It existed ten years ago. It exists now. Let's build QueensLink.

KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER
Building a Better Bronx

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
3101 Kingsbridge Terrace, Bronx, New York - 10463
Tel:718.884.0700 | Fax: 718.884 .0858 | www.khcc-nyc.org | @khccnyc

May 13, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following written testimony on behalf of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC) and in coordination with the Sexual Assault Initiative. KHCC is a multiservice agency with free programs and services across the lifespan. KHCC is embedded in the Bronx with multiple entry points, like our Early Head Start classes, food pantry, housing services, and afterschool programs. As such, KHCC is best positioned to reach and support families impacted by sexual assault who may not otherwise access services. Changing Futures is one of the only free treatment providers in the Bronx that offers long-term therapeutic services to children and adults impacted by trauma with a focus on survivors of child sexual abuse, and individuals impacted by domestic violence, and/or sexual assault. Established in 1982, services include 1) long term mental health treatment through individual, family, and group counseling; 2) crisis intervention, information and referral; and 3) education/prevention through workshops and professional training, 4) Alternative therapies including art, play, animal-assisted and horticultural modalities. In 2025 our Changing Futures Program provided 7475 direct services to 900 individuals.

As a member of the Sexual Assault Initiative, KHCC, along with four other agencies across New York City, elevates voices and advocacy efforts regarding the widespread issue of sexual violence. Sexual violence impacts individuals across all demographics citywide. Tackling it together is necessary and more powerful than only focusing on our own borough or district. On behalf of our communities we are advocating for ongoing attention from the City Council to fund the Sexual Assault Initiative.

Many members of our community do not have access to mental health care, especially specialized trauma treatment. For families that do not have insurance and/or are undocumented, the ability to receive treatment for child sexual abuse or domestic violence is nearly impossible. By continuing to not require health insurance, the Changing Futures program staff use participant milestones and progress to determine the length of treatment which is frequently substantially longer than the traditional outpatient clinic model. KHCC provides an opportunity for families to receive free long-term treatment and services that are both intensive and individualized.

The Changing Futures Program aims to help participants exhibit reduced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, increased coping skills, and a return toward normative development. Changing Futures provides interventions for children and youth, and the family as a whole, recognizing that abuse is often an intergenerational pattern. We partner with non-offending parents and guardians through one-on-one sessions, family therapy, and parenting groups to assist them in breaking the cycle of abuse and violence. We additionally work with an increasing number of adult survivors of child abuse, and adult survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault. The Changing Futures Program mission is to help trauma and abuse survivors and their families stabilize, heal, and thrive in the context of a safe, caring, and nurturing environment. Our vision is to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence in Bronx communities.

Our culturally-responsive, trauma informed services are available to every New Yorker, inclusive of gender, race, sexual and gender identity, and citizenship status. Specifically, we are advocating for an enhancement in funding for the Sexual Assault Initiative to $2,500,000. This enhancement will allow us to reach more survivors across New York City, and to support their increasingly complex needs.

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Building a Better Bronx

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To end my written testimony I will share one family's story that highlights the powerful work we do, day in and day out, with your support. A client, 10 years old started treatment to address child sexual abuse. She resides with her foster mom and two other siblings. She presented with significant symptoms, including nightmare, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping. The client had a history of sexual abuse by her biological father and expressed feeling betrayed and lacked the protection by her mother. She also displayed anxiety around the possibility of reunification with her mother. The treatment utilized was TF-CBT and art therapy as an intervention to create a safe space for trauma processing. We focused on emotional regulation, building a trauma narrative. After about one year of consistent therapy, the client demonstrated significant progress. She was able to openly discuss her past trauma, express her fears, and her needs related to unification with her mom. She used her voice to advocate for herself in court and with her family. The client wrote a heartfelt letter to the court and participated in a joint session with her mom and therapist where she clearly communicated her concerns and preference not to return to her mother's home. Her mom and the court agreed to let the foster mother adopt her. She's thriving in school and is currently on the honor roll and received a scholarship to go to a private high school.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Shaniqua Saxon

Shaniqua Saxon, LCSW

Changing Futures Program Director

Testimony in Support of Increased Arts and Culture Funding

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Kevin McEwen, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of the Kofago Institute and Kofago Dance Ensemble. I am here today to strongly support increasing baseline funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs by $30 million. Kofago's work is rooted in preserving, teaching, and presenting the cultural traditions of the African Diaspora through dance, music, storytelling, and community-based education. Through our performances, school programs, youth intensives, and community partnerships, we create spaces where young people, families, artists, and elders can see their histories honored and their voices represented.

Our programs serve communities that have often had limited access to consistent, high-quality cultural programming. We work with youth who are discovering their creative voices, college students preparing for professional careers, teaching artists who need sustainable employment, and community members who deserve access to art that reflects their lived experiences. For us, culture is not extra. It is education, healing, workforce development, identity, and community building.
Public arts funding makes this work possible. It allows organizations like Kofago to pay artists, train young people, build partnerships with schools and community institutions, and present culturally meaningful work across New York City. But too often, organizations serving communities of color are asked to do transformative work with limited and inconsistent resources.

If New York City truly values equity, then we must invest in the cultural organizations that are already doing the work on the ground. Increasing DCLA's baseline funding by $30 million is not just an investment in the arts. It is an investment in our neighborhoods, our young people, our cultural workers, and the future of this city.
I urge the City Council to support this increase and help ensure that arts and culture remain accessible, sustainable, and rooted in the communities that make New York City what it is.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,



Kevin McEwen
Executive Director
Kofago Institute Incorporated

Testimony to the New York City Council

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
Council Member Linda Lee, Chair

Committee on Aging
Council Member Susan Zhuang, Chair

June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee, Chair Zhuang, and members of the Committees on Finance and Aging:

My name is Helen Ahn, and I am the Managing Director of Aging Services at Korean Community Services (KCS), a member of United Neighborhood Houses. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the critical importance of older adult services and the urgent need for increased investment in the infrastructure and programs that support New York City's rapidly growing older adult population.

Older adults are the fastest-growing age group in New York City. Yet aging services continue to face chronic underinvestment, rising operating costs, and aging facilities that require significant capital improvements. At KCS Flushing Older Adult Center, we serve an average of 400 older adults every day. Last year alone, KCS Aging Services provided more than 210,000 meals through our Older Adult Centers, Home-Delivered Meals Program, and Senior Cafés—a testament to both the enormous demand for these services and the vital role they play in the lives of older New Yorkers.

As New York City continues to champion the vision of an Age-Friendly New York, we must recognize that age-friendly communities require age-friendly infrastructure. Older adults cannot benefit from services if the community-based organizations providing those services cannot secure and sustain safe, affordable, and accessible facilities.

1. Involuntary Relocation and Rising Facility Costs

KCS Flushing Older Adult Center—one of the largest culturally specific senior centers in New York City—is relocating this year for the first time in 24 years. This was not a discretionary decision. After serving the community in the same location for more than two decades, we were unable to renew our lease and were forced to relocate in order to avoid disrupting services for approximately 400 older adults who rely on our center every day.

While we are grateful to have secured a new location, the relocation comes with significant costs, including moving expenses, facility modifications, flooring replacement, infrastructure improvements, and substantially increased occupancy expenses. Most notably, our rent has increased by approximately 78 percent.

At the same time, finding appropriate facilities for Older Adult Centers has become increasingly difficult throughout New York City. Few landlords are willing or able to accommodate the accessibility, kitchen, programmatic, and space requirements necessary to operate a large senior

center. Yet there is currently no dedicated funding mechanism to assist providers facing involuntary relocations, lease terminations, or extraordinary facility-related expenses.

If New York City is serious about supporting aging in place, it must also support the facilities that make aging services possible.

2. Capital Improvements: Critical Safety and Infrastructure Needs

KCS has been engaged in capital improvement projects since 2017. We are grateful for prior support through NYC Aging and other City investments that helped fund kitchen renovations and improvements to classroom and cafeteria spaces. However, significant needs remain.

Most urgently, our fire alarm system requires replacement and remains severely underfunded. This is not simply a maintenance issue—it is a critical life-safety requirement and a prerequisite for operating our center. Without adequate funding to address these needs, the continuity of services for hundreds of older adults could be jeopardized.

Aging facilities require sustained, multi-year investment—not one-time allocations. We strongly support increasing the City's emergency capital infrastructure fund for Older Adult Centers from $5 million to $10 million to better address the significant repair, safety, and infrastructure needs across the aging services network.

3. Year-End Funding: Transparency, Predictability, and Fairness

For many years, NYC Aging recognized providers that exceeded contractual service levels by allocating year-end funding to support overutilized programs and units. These allocations allowed providers to continue meeting growing community needs without reducing access or quality.

This year, despite continued overutilization and increasing demand, many providers have been informed that no such funding will be available. Furthermore, the criteria used to determine year-end allocations have not always been clear or transparent.

Providers need a predictable, equitable, and transparent process in order to responsibly plan services, budgets, and staffing. We respectfully request that the City restore year-end funding support for providers exceeding contracted service levels and establish clear allocation criteria that recognize actual service demand and performance.

4. Culturally Appropriate Meals and Grocery Programs

KCS serves a predominantly immigrant Korean older adult population. For our seniors, culturally familiar meals are not simply a preference—they are essential to nutrition, participation, and overall well-being.

Every day, we meet older adults who come to our centers not only for a meal, but because they would otherwise spend the day alone. We have seen participants struggling with depression and social isolation regain confidence, connection, and purpose through the simple act of sharing a culturally familiar meal with others in their community.

We consistently observe higher participation and improved nutritional outcomes when meals reflect the cultural backgrounds of the communities being served. We urge the City to expand support for culturally appropriate ethnic meals and grocery programs as a core component of its aging services strategy.

Our Requests

We respectfully urge the New York City Council to:

• Increase support for facility, rent, utility, and infrastructure costs for Older Adult Centers to reflect current market realities;

• Establish a Facility Stabilization and Relocation Assistance Fund for centers facing lease terminations, involuntary relocations, or extraordinary occupancy cost increases;

• Expand the emergency capital infrastructure fund for Older Adult Centers from $5 million to $10 million;

• Restore year-end funding support for providers that exceed contracted service levels and establish transparent, equitable allocation criteria; and

• Expand support for culturally appropriate ethnic meals and grocery programs to ensure all older adults have access to nutritious and culturally relevant food.

Conclusion

New York City's older adults deserve more than basic services. They deserve safe facilities, nutritious meals, meaningful connections, and the opportunity to age with dignity in the communities they helped build.

An Age-Friendly New York cannot exist without age-friendly infrastructure.

I respectfully urge the City Council to make the bold and long-overdue investments necessary to strengthen aging services, stabilize community-based providers, and ensure that all older New Yorkers can age with dignity, health, and connection.

Thank you for your time and your continued commitment to New York City's older adults.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Ahn
Managing Director, KCS Aging Services

6/10/2026 : Committee on Finance - Mental Health Testimony

Good morning, Chair and members of the Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use.

My name is Sonyong Lee, and I serve as the bilingual counselor of the Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC). We support immigrant survivors of gender-based violence through trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically accessible services—including 24-hour crisis response, counseling, housing, legal support, and economic empowerment programs.

My clients navigate multiple complex systems simultaneously—from the criminal justice system and Family Court to ACS investigations. Often, their biggest barrier to seeking help isn't just fear of their abuser; it is the deep mistrust and anxiety toward the very systems meant to protect them.

Today, I am here to discuss how New York City connects residents to vital mental health services, particularly through 911 responses and the B-HEARD program. I would like to highlight three critical reasons why this legislation is vital:

First, Transparency and Accountability. Quarterly reporting on every 911 call involving a mental health crisis is essential. Aligning with the bill's mandate for the Office of Community Mental Health (OCMH) to report regularly to the Mayor and Council Speaker will allow policymakers and the public to evaluate the city's true response and address systemic gaps.

Second, Cultural Sensitivity and Trauma-Informed Response. In immigrant and minority communities, deep-rooted stigma and fear often prevent victims from calling 911. Subtle dynamics of control, stalking, or grooming are easily overlooked by untrained eyes. The B-HEARD program—which dispatches mental health professionals instead of police—provides the culturally sensitive, victim-blaming-free response that our clients desperately need to feel safe.

Finally, Data Integration and Over-Arrest Prevention. Integrating B-HEARD dispatch data with NYPD and FDNY Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) identifiers is a game-changer. Historically, police-only responses to mental health crises have too often led to unnecessary arrests, escalating trauma rather than defusing it. Data transparency ensures that specialized teams can intervene safely and effectively.

In conclusion, timely and specialized intervention saves lives. Transparent reporting, culturally sensitive care, and over-arrest prevention are the pillars of a safer, more equitable emergency system for all New Yorkers. This bill directly reflects these urgent needs, and I encourage its support.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

Respectfully submitted.

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027
Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Myoungmi Kim, CEO & President
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc.

Good afternoon, my name is Myoungmi Kim and I am the CEO & President of Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. Thank you very much for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to testify.

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) unites over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City to fight for a fair and equitable budget that protects the needs of our most vulnerable community members. We advocate as a collective in solidarity to hold New York City accountable in providing the necessary resources to serve and empower the diverse needs of all AAPI New Yorkers and other communities of color as "We Are Building A Community Too Powerful To Ignore."

AAPI communities across New York City are historically underserved and undersupported due to longstanding inequities and barriers to accessing services. Though AAPI New Yorkers represent nearly 18% of the city's population, many continue to face challenges related to language access, healthcare, economic stability, housing, immigration status, and social isolation. Community-based organizations are often the first and most trusted point of contact for individuals and families seeking support.

For over 50 years, KCS has provided culturally and linguistically responsive services to immigrant, low-income, and older adult communities across New York City and Long Island. Through workforce development, mental health, aging, immigration, public health, and education programs, KCS serves thousands of New Yorkers each year across Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Long Island, helping them access critical resources, improve their economic stability, and live healthier, more independent lives.

The need for these services continues to grow. Every day, KCS works with older adults seeking support to age safely in their communities, immigrant families navigating complex legal systems, job seekers striving for economic mobility, and individuals struggling to access healthcare and mental health services in their preferred language. City investments in community-based organizations allow trusted providers like KCS to meet these needs and ensure that vulnerable residents are not left behind.

KCS urges the New York City Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign, including expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million, the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million, and the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million. These investments strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations to deliver essential services and advance equity for historically underserved communities.

Additionally, while we are pleased that the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget extends and baselines funding for several education initiatives, there are other critical education programs excluded that are currently benefiting thousands of NYC students and their families.

As an organization that serves immigrant families across New York City, KCS sees firsthand how language access, mental health supports, and family engagement contribute to positive educational outcomes for students. Investments in these programs help ensure that AAPI and immigrant students have the resources they need to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

The following programs are funded for this year only and are therefore at risk of being rolled back or eliminated as soon as this July. This would negatively impact the 18.7% of NYCPS students who identify as Asian. We support the asks of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, including:

- **$6 million for restorative justice efforts that help students stay in school and resolve conflicts without unnecessary disciplinary action.**
    - Pacific Islander students are suspended at disproportionate rates - data shows 4.5 percent of Pacific Islander students, including 6.2 percent of Pacific Islander boys.
- **$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum, which provides critical mental health services to students. As anti-Asian bias, bullying, and youth mental health challenges continue to impact AAPI communities, investments in accessible and culturally responsive mental health supports remain essential.**
    - 80% of Asian Americans have experienced bullying, in-person, or online. According to CDC data, suicide was the leading cause of death among Asian Americans aged 15-24, and the second leading cause of death among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. A study conducted by the Stop AAPI Hate Youth Campaign found that 1 in 4 young Asian Americans have personally experienced anti-Asian hate.
    - We particularly need additional funding to support the expansion of the mental health continuum to schools with large AAPI populations. Currently, no school in the network serves majority AAPI students.
- **$4 million for immigrant family communications and outreach, ensuring that families receive important school information in languages they understand and through communication channels they can access. Language access is critical to meaningful family engagement and student success.**
    - This is the avenue through which many families can stay involved in their students' education and access relevant opportunities. 18% of NYCPS students identified as English Language Learners while approximately 44% of students enrolled with a primary language other than English. Many of the ELL/MLL students speak languages prevalent in AANHPI communities.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to restore, baseline, and expand funding for these programs in the final FY 2027 budget so that students, families, older adults, immigrants, and other vulnerable New Yorkers can continue to access the culturally responsive services and supports they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)
Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Good morning, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance.

My name is Joyce Wong, and I am the Immigration Program Coordinator at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York (KCS).

Since 1973, KCS has served immigrant New Yorkers through culturally and linguistically appropriate services in immigration legal services, public health, mental health, education, workforce development, and senior services. We are also proud members of the RISE Network, a coalition of nearly 20 Asian-led organizations that provide critical support to immigrant communities across New York City.

Today, I am here to thank the City for its continued commitment to immigrant New Yorkers and to urge the Council to strengthen investments in immigration legal services and community-based support programs at a time when the need has never been greater.

Over the past year, our staff have witnessed growing fear and uncertainty among immigrant families. Community members regularly come to us with concerns about immigration enforcement, prolonged processing delays, work authorization interruptions, and rapidly changing federal immigration policies. Many are afraid to seek help because of language barriers, misinformation, or concerns about interacting with government systems.

Immigrants are dealing with unprecedented delays with DACA renewals, green card processing and renewal, working visas, and other immigration applications. Because of this, having access to trustworthy legal services and more resources is more important than ever.

For these families, trusted community-based organizations serve as the first—and often only—point of access to accurate legal information and assistance.

The demand for services continues to outpace available resources. At KCS, we have seen significant increases in requests for legal consultations, citizenship assistance, green card renewals,

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38-24 149th St.
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Tel: 718-939-6137

MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC
42-16 162nd St, 2FL,
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: 718-366-9540

35-56 159th St., #2fl
Flushing, NY. 11358
Tel: 718-939-6137

410 Broad Ave. #201,
Palisades Park, NJ. 07650
Tel: 201-429-2866

family-based immigration services, and Know Your Rights education. Across the RISE Network, organizations are experiencing similar increases as immigrant New Yorkers seek reliable guidance and legal support.

As federal immigration enforcement efforts continue to expand, the need for accessible, community-based legal services is increasing—not decreasing. New York City cannot control federal immigration policy, but it can ensure that immigrant New Yorkers have access to trusted legal assistance, language access services, and culturally competent support.

Therefore, KCS respectfully urges the Council to prioritize:

Protecting and Expanding Immigration Legal Services

Sustained investment in immigration legal services enables community-based organizations like KCS to provide direct representation, legal consultations, citizenship services, family reunification assistance, and immigration screenings for low-income New Yorkers. These services help families remain together, maintain work authorization, and navigate an increasingly complex immigration system.grant

Strengthening the AAPI Community Support Initiative

Language access remains one of the greatest barriers facing immigrant communities. Continued investment in culturally specific organizations ensures that immigrant New Yorkers can receive services in their preferred language from trusted staff who understand their cultural and community needs. This support is essential to ensuring equitable access to legal services, public benefits, and critical information.

When immigrant New Yorkers walk through our doors in Queens and Manhattan, they are not seeking special treatment. They are seeking the opportunity to work, support their families, contribute to their communities, and fully participate in the life of this city.

New York City's immigrant communities have always been a source of strength, resilience, and economic vitality. Continued investment in immigration legal services and community-based organizations is an investment in the future of New York City itself.

HEADQUARTERS
(ADC | EDUCATION | HR | IMMIGRATION | PHRC | WF Develop.)

203-05 32nd Ave,
Bayside, NY 11361
Tel: 718-939-6137

100 Grove St,
Tenafly, NJ 07670
Tel : 201-541-1200

OLDER ADULT CENTER

42-15 166th St,
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: 718-886-8203

37-06 111th St,
Corona, NY 11368
Tel: 718-651-9220

633 W 115th St,
New York, NY 10025
Tel: 718-886-8203,
347-923-0124

PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (1)

315 5th Ave, #705,
New York, NY 10016
Tel: 212-463-9685

2460 Lemoine Ave, #400P,
Fort Lee, NJ 07024
Tel: 201-364-8375

103-04 39th Ave, #103,
Corona, NY 11368
Tel: 917-396-4149

PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER (2)

410 Broad Ave, #201,
Palisades Park, NJ 07650
Tel: 201-429-2866

154-05 Northern Blvd., #301-A
Flushing, NY 11354
Tel: 718-939-6137

WORKFORCE DEV ELOPMENT

31 W 34th St. Suite 7074
New York, NY 10001
Tel: 929-341-8302

410 Broad Ave. #201,
Palisades Park, NJ. 07650
Tel: 201-429-2866

EDUCATION

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Thank you for your continued leadership and your commitment to protecting and supporting immigrant New Yorkers.

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LxNY: Latinx Arts Consortium of New York
New York, New York
www.lxnyarts.org
info@lxnyarts.org

LxNY: Latinx Arts Consortium of New York Testimony

June 10th, 2026

New York City Council – Committee on Finance
Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, Majority Leader Shaun Abreu, Council Members Christopher Marte, Virginia Maloney, Shirley Aldebol, Oswald Feliz, Justin Sanchez, James F. Gennaro, Phil Wong, Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Lincoln Restler, Crystal Hudson, Alexa Avilés, Darlene Mealy, Mercedes Narcisse, Frank Morano

Thank you for your time today. My name is Eva Mayhabal Davis and I am here speaking on behalf of LxNY: The Latinx Arts Consortium of New York.

Latinx-serving organizations operate at the intersection of culture, affordability, and civic infrastructure. Across our network of more than 50 small and mid-sized organizations, affordability is inseparable from access across language, income, immigration status, and geography. This work requires labor and infrastructure that funding systems rarely account for: multilingual engagement, intergenerational programming, and long-term trust-based relationships. These are not add-ons. They are core operating functions.

Affordability in New York City's cultural sector cannot be reduced to rent or ticket prices. For Latinx-serving organizations, affordability determines whether culture can function as a public good, whether immigrant communities can fully participate in civic life, and whether New York remains a city shaped by lived cultural practice rather than symbolic branding.

Immigration is foundational to New York's cultural ecosystem. Immigrant communities are audiences, yes—but they are also artists, cultural workers, organizers, and caretakers who sustain neighborhood-based cultural life.

LxNY: Latinx Arts Consortium of New York
New York, New York
www.lxnyarts.org
info@lxnyarts.org

Restoring and Stabilizing the Baseline

Across the sector, there is a shared need to restore and stabilize public investment in the arts. We support **restoring the full $30 million in arts funding and establishing it as a baseline**, with automatic annual cost-of-living adjustments so funding keeps pace with inflation rather than eroding over time. This stability allows both the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) and grantees to plan more effectively.

We want to plan for the future and investment in the future can start today. The arts ecosystem is vast. As an economic power, NYC's cultural engine generates an astounding 13% of the city's economic activity. It anchors local economies as employers, educators, caretakers, and generates street traffic to restaurants & small businesses.

Equity Through New Investment

Equity doesn't need to come at the expense of other organizations. There is an opportunity to grow overall cultural funding while directing new resources toward under-resourced communities. A target of $20 million per City Council district, bringing DCLA's budget to just over $1 billion, would be a meaningful step toward citywide equity while still remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.

Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC)

We also want to underscore the importance of continued investment in the Coalition of Theatres of Color initiative. We support the allocation of $8 million for CTC, recognizing its role in connecting cultural resources to communities with the greatest need and expanding access across the city.

We urge the City Council to approach cultural affordability with an ecosystem lens that recognizes the interdependence of artists, organizations, community groups and neighborhoods, and to align oversight and funding accordingly.

Thank you,

Contact:
info@lxnyarts.org

LxNY Steering Committee:
Arnaldo J. López — Pregones / Puerto Rican Traveling Theater
Charles Rice-González — BAAD! Bronx Academy of Arts & Dance
Cynthia Carrión — El Museo del Barrio
Libertad O. Guerra — The Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural & Educational Center
Marlène Ramírez-Cancio — BAX / Brooklyn Arts Exchange
Melody Capote — Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute
Mino Lora —The People's Theatre
Rafael Sánchez — Repertorio Español
Sami Abu Shumays — Flushing Town Hall
Sandie Luna — ID Studio Theater

LxNY Team:
Fernando Salazar, Communications Manager
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Testimony to the New York City Council City Council
Committee on Finance
New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings

June 10th, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Rosanna Rodriguez, and I am the Executive Director at the Laundry Workers Center. I would like to thank Deputy Speaker Dr. Natasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee and the Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of the creation of a Workers Rights Organizing and Education Initiative.

Laundry Workers Center is a grassroots and workers-led organization that provides community-based leadership development to improve the living and working conditions of low wage immigrant laundry, warehouse, and food service workers in New York City. Our approach connects community and workplace justice organizing to support families, grow political consciousness, and build grassroots power that is socio-economically sustainable.

As New York City enters a new era of affordability policy, we have a critical opportunity to center workers and economic justice in building a city where all New Yorkers can live and work with rights and dignity. In coalition with **Workers Justice Project, Street Vendor Project, and Desis Rising Up and Moving and Laundry Workers Center** we are requesting the creation of a $5 million Worker Rights Organizing and Education Initiative to support grassroots organizations with extensive experience building deep connections with non-traditional and essential workers, including street vendors, laundry workers and delivery workers. This initiative would enable targeted outreach and education on the new rights recently passed by the NYC Council, Just Cause protections and street vending reforms, strengthening networks to set the stage for stronger worker protections to come, and continuing educating workers about the existing protections.

The Laundry Workers Center empowering low-wage immigrant workers in New York City by conducting grassroots outreach and education, supporting organizing workplace justice campaigns, leadership development, and civic engagement. Our organization is conducting weekly outreach, visiting laundromat workers, providing educational materials to improve their conditions and close the gap for the lack of information access. To enforce the existing rights and protections it's critical to create the safety net and resources to effectively implement the new reforms.

Multilingual community engagement is essential to ensure that these non-traditional workers understand their rights and have clear pathways to exercise and defend them. Without this investment, new protections risk remaining on paper. With it, these policies can create real economic stability, job security, and dignity — building a city that is not only more affordable, but more just, and setting the stage for stronger worker protections to come.

Thank you for accepting our testimony today. Laundry Workers Center hopes that the City Council creates a Workers Rights Organizing and Education Initiative in this year's budget, to invest in the workers who have stepped out of the shadows to win historic labor protections.

Rosanna Rodriguez
Executive Director
Laundry Workers Center

New York City Council | Finance Committee
Executive Budget Hearings | June 10, 2026
Testimony of Matthew A Johnson | Deputy Director of Immigrant Justice | Legal Services NYC

Chair and Members of the Finance Committee of the New York City Council:

My name is Matthew Johnson, and I am the Deputy Director of Immigrant Justice at Legal Services NYC (LSNYC). LSNYC's immigration practice includes over 40 experienced advocates, including attorneys, paralegals, and at least one clinical social worker in every borough. With our 13 community-based offices, we meet our clients where they are.

I am here today to ask the Council to reaffirm its commitment to protecting the lives, families, and futures of New Yorkers through funding immigration legal services.

The situation our communities face is alarming. Just last week, the New York immigration courts began holding so-called "Mega Master Calendar Hearings," where hundreds of New Yorkers are rushed through a system that is already confusing, punitive, and nearly impossible to navigate without an attorney. More than half of the people in each of these hearings appeared without legal representation. Many were deported on paper without even being present, often because they did not have a lawyer to help them understand where to go, what to file, how to respond, or what was at stake.

Worse, just yesterday the Department of Homeland Security's so-called "border czar" threatened to send "more ICE agents than you've ever seen" to New York City in retaliation for the state's legislative efforts to protect New Yorkers from the racialized violence that the agency has inflicted across the country.

At this moment, a lawyer is a crucial barrier standing between an immigrant New Yorker and family separation, detention, deportation, and in some cases, even death.

Legal Services NYC is already doing this urgent work. But the need is far greater than our current resources allow us to meet. That is why we ask the Council to fund LSNYC's one-million-dollar request, so we can sustain the legal programs we are already carrying and expand our capacity to serve more New Yorkers in need.

New York City has long claimed to be a sanctuary city. We ask the Council today to make that promise real. Thank you.

LEGAL SERVICES NYC

Testimony of Shervon M. Small,
Executive Director, Legal Services NYC
Before New York City Council, Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Chair Lee, members of the Committee, and staff, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. Legal Services NYC (LSNYC) appreciates the Committee's continued leadership during the budget process and its recognition that fiscal responsibility must be paired with protecting essential services. As Chair Lee has noted, New Yorkers continue to face serious affordability challenges, and civil legal services are essential to helping families remain stable, housed, and secure.

My name is Shervon M. Small, and I serve as the Executive Director of Legal Services NYC (LSNYC). Legal Services NYC is the largest provider of free civil legal services in the country, serving more than 120,000 low-income New Yorkers each year across all five boroughs. Our mission is to fight poverty and advance racial, social, and economic justice by providing legal representation to low-income New Yorkers. That mission is especially urgent as rising costs continue to strain low-income and working-class families.

Through a staff of more than 700 attorneys, paralegals, and advocates, LSNYC provides legal representation and services in areas directly tied to housing and family stability as well as economic opportunity, including eviction defense, public benefits and cash assistance, immigration representation, family and domestic violence advocacy, consumer protection, civil rights, foreclosure prevention, and employment justice.

At its core, Legal Services NYC is not simply a legal services organization—we are a critical part of New York City's anti-poverty safety net and homelessness prevention infrastructure.

Our work helps people remain in their homes, maintain financial stability, access health care and food, obtain work authorization, escape violence, preserve income, and fight back against discrimination and exploitation. Without these services, poverty deepens, homelessness rises, and the City becomes less stable for everyone.

Today, I want to focus on the importance of sustained and expanded funding for civil legal services in several core areas for which we are deeply grateful to have received support from the New York City Council: Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers and Working-Class New Yorkers; the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative; the Low-Wage Worker Initiative; Legal Services for Veterans; Community Housing and Preservation Strategies. Additionally, I want to address supporting and investing in the broader nonprofit infrastructure that makes these programs possible.

Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers and Working-Class New Yorkers
Civil legal services are essential for low-income and working-class New Yorkers trying to remain stable in an increasingly unaffordable city. The people we serve include tenants facing eviction, workers whose wages have been stolen, immigrants seeking lawful status or work authorization, survivors of domestic violence, seniors, people with disabilities, families facing consumer debt, and homeowners at risk of foreclosure. In these uncertain times, the needs of our clients keep growing and evolving.

For these New Yorkers, a legal problem is rarely just a legal problem. It can be the event that causes a family to lose housing, income, benefits, employment, safety, or stability. Civil legal services prevent those crises from spiraling by helping people stay housed, preserve income, access benefits, resolve debt, challenge discrimination, and enforce their rights.

Funding for Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers and Working-Class New Yorkers must be preserved and expanded for two crucial reasons: (1) it allows providers to meet people's real, interconnected needs and (2) the flexibility of the funding allows providers to respond to new civil legal needs as they arise. A tenant facing eviction may also need help restoring benefits. A worker whose wages were stolen may also be facing debt collection. A survivor may need both family law assistance and housing advocacy. Flexible civil legal services funding allows providers to respond holistically rather than forcing clients into artificial program categories.

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative
The Immigrant Opportunities Initiative is one of New York City's most important investments in immigrant communities. At a time of heightened fear, instability, and federal enforcement pressure, immigrant New Yorkers need reliable, high-quality legal assistance more than ever.

Immigration legal services help families pursue lawful status, obtain work authorization, defend against deportation, protect children from family separation, and build stable lives in New York City. These services are also economically important: every immigrant we assist in obtaining work authorization is another New Yorker who can support themselves and their family, participate in the workforce, and contribute to the City's economy.

But IOI funding remains wholly inadequate relative to the need. From 1/1/25 to 3/31/26. LSNYC's access line received over 10,000 calls seeking immigration legal assistance. Unfortunately, we had the capacity to assist less than 10% of those callers. Removal defense, asylum work, work authorization, humanitarian relief, and legal screenings all require trained staff, supervision, interpretation, outreach, and sustained infrastructure. The City should preserve and expand IOI funding and ensure appropriated funds move quickly into services. Delays mean families remain in fear, miss opportunities for relief, and lose access to legal help when they need it most.

Low-Wage Worker Initiative
The Low-Wage Worker Initiative is a critical part of the City's civil legal services infrastructure. Low-wage workers care for children and seniors, clean buildings, deliver food, staff restaurants and stores, support households, and perform the labor that keeps New York City functioning. Yet

many face wage theft, retaliation, discrimination, unsafe working conditions, misclassification, unemployment insurance problems, and barriers to enforcing basic workplace rights.

For workers living paycheck to paycheck, stolen wages or a missed paycheck can mean falling behind on rent, losing access to food or medicine, incurring debt, or facing eviction. Employment legal services therefore do more than enforce workplace rights. They prevent homelessness, preserve income, and keep families stable. In FY 26 to date, LSNYC has handled over 1500 employment matters across all boroughs.

The City should preserve and expand funding for the Low-Wage Worker Initiative so working-class New Yorkers can recover wages, challenge retaliation, protect employment, and remain in the communities they help sustain.

Legal Services for Veterans

Civil legal services are also critical to New York City's veterans and their families. Through LSNYC's Veterans Justice Project and our broader practice areas, we help low-income veterans address legal problems that directly threaten stability, including eviction and housing insecurity, public benefits, consumer debt, family law issues, employment barriers, discharge upgrades, and access to federal, state, and local benefits.

Veterans are often navigating complex legal and administrative systems while also confronting service-connected disabilities, mental health challenges, limited income, or the long-term effects of military service. For a veteran facing eviction, loss of benefits, consumer debt, or barriers to employment or health care, legal assistance can be the difference between stability and crisis.

Preserving and expanding legal services for veterans is a meaningful way for the City to honor veterans' service by ensuring that those who served can remain housed, financially stable, and connected to the supports and benefits they have earned.

Community Housing and Preservation Strategies

Community Housing and Preservation Strategies are also essential to a stable and affordable New York City.

Individual eviction defense is critical, but it is not sufficient on its own. Many housing problems are building-wide, neighborhood-wide, or rooted in patterns of landlord neglect, harassment, speculative investment, foreclosure, deed theft, or displacement pressure. Preserving affordable housing requires both individual representation and broader community-based legal strategies.

Community housing preservation work helps tenants organize to address building conditions, challenge harassment, preserve rent-regulated housing, prevent displacement, protect homeowners from foreclosure and scams, and stabilize communities facing rapid change. This work is especially important in neighborhoods where low-income tenants, homeowners of color, seniors, and immigrant families face intense displacement pressure.

When legal services providers can intervene early and strategically, we can help preserve affordable housing before families are displaced and buildings are lost. That is far less costly—

and far more humane—than trying to respond after people have already entered shelter or after affordable housing has been permanently removed from the community.

The City should continue investing in Community Housing and Preservation Strategies as a critical complement to eviction defense and Right to Counsel. These strategies help preserve the housing stock, protect neighborhoods, and keep communities intact.

Civil Legal Services and Right to Counsel Are a Cost-Saving Investment
Funding civil legal services is not simply a moral obligation. It is a fiscally responsible investment and one of the City's most effective tools for preventing homelessness, preserving housing, and avoiding far greater downstream costs.

New York City made history by enacting the Access to Counsel law, recognizing that legal representation in housing court is essential to fairness, housing stability, and homelessness prevention. But that promise can only be realized if eligible tenants can access representation. With more than 120,000 eviction cases filed each year and current funding insufficient to meet the need, tens of thousands of New Yorkers facing the loss of their homes may never receive the legal assistance the City has determined is necessary.

That gap undermines one of the City's most effective housing preservation tools. When tenants are represented, families are more likely to remain housed, unsafe conditions are more likely to be addressed, unlawful rent demands are more likely to be challenged, and costly shelter entries are more likely to be avoided. Fully funding Right to Counsel is therefore not only a matter of legal access—it is a homelessness prevention, community stability, housing preservation, and fiscal responsibility strategy.

Legal Services NYC's eviction defense and public benefits work alone saved the City more than $350 million in averted shelter costs last year, representing roughly a 10-to-1 return on investment. When families remain housed, the City avoids the far greater costs of shelter, emergency services, disrupted schooling, family instability, and long-term poverty. Children remain in school. Workers keep their jobs. Seniors and people with disabilities remain in their communities. Survivors achieve safety. Immigrants who secure work authorization support their families. Veterans maintain housing and access earned benefits.

Failing to fund civil legal services does not eliminate costs. It simply shifts them into more expensive systems. When families are evicted, many end up in shelters. When people lose access to benefits, food, health care, or income, crises escalate. When immigrants cannot obtain lawful status or work authorization, families remain economically vulnerable. When workers lose wages, families fall behind on rent and other basic expenses. When veterans cannot access benefits or housing stability, the consequences ripple across households and communities.

The City pays for these failures one way or another. The choice is whether to invest early in prevention or pay later through shelter, emergency services, and crisis response. The data and the experience of our clients point in the same direction: investing in civil legal services up front prevents far greater costs down the line.

The Nonprofit Sector Delivering These Services Is Under Strain
At the same time, the nonprofit legal services sector that delivers these programs is under increasing strain. Providers face delayed contract payments, structural underfunding, rising operational costs, recruitment challenges, staff attrition, and federal funding uncertainty.

Contracting and reimbursement delays are especially damaging. Providers often wait six to ten months—or more—to be paid for work already performed. During that time, organizations must borrow to meet payroll and maintain operations. Scarce program dollars are diverted to interest payments instead of client services. In effect, the nonprofit sector is floating City government.

No nonprofit can operate under those conditions. If providers weaken, the consequences will ripple throughout the City's safety net: fewer tenants represented, more families entering shelter, and more New Yorkers losing access to benefits, income, health care, immigration stability, workplace protections, and safety.

The City Must Treat Legal Services as Essential Infrastructure
What we need is a smart, strategic investment. Legal services should be treated as essential civic infrastructure—just like sanitation, public health, and public safety. That means funding programs at sustainable levels, paying providers on time, setting contract rates that reflect the full cost of services, and protecting critical programs from federal funding volatility.

This is about justice, not charity. It is about homelessness prevention, fiscal responsibility, public safety, economic security, and the basic functioning of the City's safety net.

Civil legal services help ensure that New York remains a city for everyone—not only those with wealth and power. They help families raise children in stable homes, workers recover wages they are owed, seniors age in place, immigrants participate fully in civic and economic life, veterans access earned benefits, survivors achieve safety, and communities remain whole.

A strong, stable nonprofit sector is not a luxury. It is foundational to a stronger and more resilient New York City. We are incredibly thankful for the Council's support and commitment to civil legal services.

FY2027 Legal Services NYC Requests
For FY27, LSNYC has submitted the following City Council initiative requests for which we respectfully seek renewed funding. These funds are essential to our ability to provide critical legal services to low-income, working-class, and vulnerable New Yorkers across the five boroughs. They also allow us to remain responsive as community needs shift and legal crises emerge. We are deeply grateful for the Council's continued partnership and consideration of these requests.

- Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working-Class New Yorkers: $3,000,000
- Immigrant Opportunities Initiative: $1,000,000
- Low-Wage Worker Initiative: $600,000
- Legal Services for Veterans: $150,000
- Community Housing & Preservation Strategies: $89,986

Conclusion
Civil legal services are among the most powerful tools the City has to prevent homelessness, reduce poverty, stabilize families, protect workers, preserve affordable housing, support immigrant communities, honor veterans, and avoid far greater downstream costs.

But if the City wants these programs to function as intended, it must preserve and expand funding for civil legal services and treat nonprofit legal services providers as essential partners in the safety-net infrastructure this budget is meant to sustain. We ask the City Council to stand with us and to continue strengthening these vital programs so that New York remains a city for everyone.

Thank you for your time and for your ongoing commitment to equity and justice in this city.

Respectfully,



Shervon M. Small
Executive Director
Legal Services NYC
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LENOX HILL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE
SINCE 1894

Testimony to the New York City Council

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Committee on Finance
Council Member Linda Lee, Chair

Committee on Aging
Council Member Susan Zhuang, Chair

Submitted by Rose Ginsberg, Director of Institutional and Civic Engagement,
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee, Chair Zhuang, esteemed members of the Committees on Finance and Aging,

My name is Rose Ginsberg, and I am the Director of Institutional and Civic Engagement at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, one of the oldest settlement houses in the country. Founded as a free kindergarten for immigrant families in 1894, today the Neighborhood House continues to educate children, feed hungry neighbors, care for older adults, advocate for marginalized community members, and provide critical, comprehensive services to help more than 16,000 New Yorkers each year to thrive in their communities. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on the critical importance of older adult services, mental health care and early childhood education, and the urgent need to invest in these programs to meet the needs of our low-income neighbors.

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House is the largest provider of Older Adult Services on the East Side of Manhattan, supporting more than 11,000 older adults each year with the services and resources they need to age in place with independence and stability. Older adults make up more than one-fifth of our city's population and are our most rapidly growing age group. In our neighborhood on the Upper East Side, the older adult community has increased by more than 50% in the last 25 years. At the same time, more older New Yorkers than ever are living in poverty, at twice the rate of Americans in general. Our neighbors desperately need us to invest in aging services, especially nutritious congregate meals.

At the Neighborhood House, we know firsthand how essential congregate meal programs are for older adults. Our two Older Adult Centers serve farm-to-table breakfast, lunch and dinner to as many as 550 older adults a day—more than 136,000 congregate meals each year. For many of our participants, our meals are essential to their food security and nutritional health, as well as important opportunities to sit with friends, build community and avoid social isolation.

Amid skyrocketing grocery prices and food insecurity, the urgent and growing demand for these

congregate meals is clear: our Food Services team served 17,000 more meals in our Older Adult Centers last year than the year before. Food costs continue to rise without any increases in funding for congregate meals in years. Providers are asked to do more with less at the direct expense of low-income older adults, who need healthy, culturally relevant meals to maintain their health and wellbeing so they can age in place.

The Executive Budget did not include money for congregate meals at older adult centers. The City must include $60 million in the budget to meet growing food costs and the vital need for these congregate meals.

In addition to our farm-to-institution food and extensive older adult services, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House also provides individualized mental health services across our programs, from support groups for young parents in our Early Childhood Center to mental health screenings and individual counseling for older adults to comprehensive clinical care for the residents of our supportive housing residence and mental health shelter. This year, we recommend that the City Council restore funding to all 15 of the previously funded DOHMH Mental Health Council Initiatives, with some targeted increases, for a total value of $47.2 million.

We greatly appreciate the Council's long-standing support for these programs, which bring mental health services to low-income populations in their own communities. Year after year, these initiatives provide crucial funding to nonprofit providers like us so that we can offer mental health services in non-clinical community settings, including our Older Adult Centers, Early Childhood Center and supportive housing residence. Despite the fact that the funding must be restored each year by the Council instead of being on more stable multi-year contracts, the funding is flexible and allows us to best meet our clients' individual needs through creative solutions to a range of mental health challenges.

Funding levels for these initiatives have fluctuated over the last several years. In addition, resources have not kept pace with inflation or community need, putting providers under significant financial strain. To ensure these vital initiatives can keep up with rising costs and provide high-quality services, we urge the Council to provide at least a 3% increase to match the citywide human services COLA initiative, allowing providers to address the increasing costs to provide these services to their communities. In addition, we strongly recommend a targeted increase for Peer Specialist Supports. Every day we see the immense benefit of peer support for the residents of our Women's Mental Health Shelter, as our Peer Advocates help clients to adhere to treatment plans, prepare for housing interviews and maintain their stability and independence in permanent supportive housing. It is crucial that the Council at a minimum restore and invest all of this funding in the FY 2027 budget ($47.27 million total).

Finally, as a historic provider of early childhood education and current Head Start grantee, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House applauds the Mamdani Administration and the New York City

Council for their commitment to creating a universal, high-quality early childhood education system. Mayor Mamdani has made significant strides in recent months by prioritizing and investing in early childhood education. We are particularly eager for the implementation of free childcare options for two-year-olds and look forward to learning more about the expanded 2K initiative.

Investing in these programs is investing in stronger families, more resilient communities, and a more inclusive New York City. Yet with looming federal grant cuts, nonprofit organizations like ours cannot sustain this work alone. We need strong partnership and support from the city to ensure that our neighbors can access the resources and supports they need to live with dignity. Thank you for your time and for your ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of all New Yorkers.