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**Testimony of Louisa Chafee, Director, New York City Independent Budget Office  
On the Mayor's November Plan & IBO's Fiscal Outlook Report  
To The New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Monday, December 11, 2023**

Good afternoon, Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Louisa Chafee and I am the Director of the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO). I am joined here by my colleagues Sarah Parker and Sarita Subramanian, IBO's Senior Research and Strategy Officers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing on the November Plan.

In accordance with the New York City Charter mandate to enhance official and public understanding of the budgetary process and budget documents, IBO published the [Fiscal Outlook Report](#) this morning, which presents highlights of IBO's independent economic forecast and re-estimates of City revenues and expenses across the financial plan years. IBO projects that the City will end 2024 with an additional \$3.6 billion in surplus above OMB's estimates. (All references are to City fiscal years unless otherwise noted.) If the surplus prepays 2025 expenses, IBO projects a \$1.8 billion shortfall next year. Alternatively, any surplus may be used to cover increased spending in the current year instead of prepaying next year's expenses. The Mayor's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) projects a larger shortfall (\$7.1 billion) for 2025. IBO's gap projections for 2026 and 2027 (\$7.2 billion and \$6.6 billion, respectively), are higher than OMB's (\$6.5 billion and \$6.4 billion, respectively).

While New York City continues to face major budget challenges, the local economy continues to rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic, with an expected return to pre-pandemic levels of employment in the very near future, and a strong outlook for personal income. While not dramatically different than our projections in May, the national economic outlook has strengthened somewhat since then, with stronger GDP growth driven by sustained consumer spending, even amidst high interest rates, which are contributing to falling inflation. However, substantial risks to both the national and local economy remain.

In the November plan, OMB raised its 2024 revenue forecast by \$592 million to reflect stronger recent tax receipts. Consistent with past practice, OMB did not adjust its revenue forecasts for 2025 through 2027. IBO has re-forecast all major tax revenues to reflect the present economic outlook, which drives differences in revenue projections between IBO and OMB. IBO's tax forecasts exceed OMB's for almost all taxes, particularly for the property and personal income taxes. Barring an unexpected change to the economy, IBO expects that as OMB revises its revenue projections for the January plan, the IBO and OMB revenue totals will more closely align.

Overall, IBO estimates that the City will spend \$3.5 billion less than OMB forecasts in 2024, but \$366 million more than OMB's estimate for 2025. Highlights include:



- Cost of Services for Asylum Seekers: IBO has modeled three cost scenarios (published this morning) based on assumptions for the projected population, as well as daily costs, which may decline from higher rates paid under emergency contracts to lower rates likely to emerge from competitive procurements. These scenarios all result in lower expenditures than OMB projects for 2024 and 2025, and incorporate trends seen through November 2023, whereas OMB's estimates reflect trends observed earlier and presented in August. IBO did not re-estimate costs associated with asylum seekers in 2026 or 2027 due to uncertainty in future trends.
- Rental Housing Vouchers: IBO estimates \$200 million in additional annual expenditures for future years to match current levels for the City's primary housing voucher program, known as the City Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) program, relative to OMB's projections for 2025 through 2027.
- End of Federal Pandemic-Relief Funding for Out-Years: NYC received 13.5B in Federal Pandemic Funding, which is ending. Some of these funds were used for programs that are on-going. In the Department of Education and DYCD, alone, IBO estimates that the Administration will need to add over \$700 million in each year from 2025 through 2027 to replace this expiring federal Covid-era funding.
- Additional Education Spending: IBO projects additional annual expenditures of over \$600 million from 2025 through 2027 for Carter Case settlements and implementation of the State class size law.
- City Personnel Costs: During the first quarter of this calendar year, active City headcount dropped to its lowest level since 2015. As a result of the reduced headcount, IBO estimates that uniformed personnel overtime will continue to create upward pressure on the budget, requiring additional funds totaling \$575 million in 2024, growing to \$840 million in 2025. Existing vacancies and hiring attrition produced by the hiring freeze on non-uniformed staff will produce \$2.4 billion savings.

Although the City faces fiscal challenges, recent economic indicators and tax receipts, combined with re-estimates of City spending, provide a clearer picture of the City's fiscal health in the near-term. IBO estimates a budget surplus this year and the budget deficit for 2025 to be notably smaller than OMB's estimate. There is more uncertainty, however, around both revenues and expenditures in the later years of the financial plan. The City maintains several reserve funds, which may be a cushion for unexpected expenses or to make up for lower-than-anticipated tax revenues, although the City has not established clear standards for when and where the substantial use of reserves would be appropriate.

Thank you and we welcome your questions.



**OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT**

**ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

**City Council Committee on Finance  
Oversight Hearing - Mayor's November Financial Plan  
12.11.23**

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and thank you for holding this important hearing today. I am here representing Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to express his opposition to specific budget cuts outlined in the November PEGs. While financial projections require us to have tough conversations about cutting back, we need a data-driven approach that prioritizes quality of life for New Yorkers and hits critical social services last, not first.

As the Council is aware of the magnitude of these cuts, I want to focus my testimony on three areas of concern: education and youth, libraries, and community composting.

**Department of Education (DOE):**

**Early Childhood Programs:** Pre-K and 3-K lead to positive outcomes for student learning and provide an alternative to expensive childcare for working parents. Yet this administration has failed to support these successful programs - and is now using the lack of public awareness about them, and the fact that school day/school year seats don't meet the needs of working families - as an excuse to make cuts, while the need for these programs only grows.

According to the Center for American Progress, the estimated average cost of high-quality preschool in New York City exceeds \$15,000/year, while Kings County's median household income is \$67,753. Meanwhile, need is outpacing supply. The Office of Children and Family Services classifies over 60% of Brooklyn as a childcare desert (see map below). The answer isn't cuts, it's more aggressive and culturally sensitive outreach to communities with the most need and continuing to shift seats to extended day/full year so working families can participate.

Additionally, given the scale of these cuts, it seems unlikely that early childhood educators, who are predominately women of color, won't face layoffs. Along with the continual backlog of payments to providers and lack of pay parity for non-DOE teachers, this perpetuates an already inequitable system.

**Community Schools:** Community Schools play a critical role in supporting 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning. The more than 100 community schools in Brooklyn transform neighborhoods and provide vital wrap-around services to children and their families. City Council's support has so far buoyed these schools against proposed cuts, yet the administration seems determined to set

them up to fail. Despite DOE's recent testimony in which they committed to no individual community school closures, it is hard to see how it will be possible for them to maintain quality programming after these cuts. Every Community School should have the ability to operate a meaningful program, especially now that many are supporting our newly arrived families and students. By reducing community school funding, we only limit our schools' and providers' ability to adequately serve these students and their families.

**Computer Science for All:** According to the Center for an Urban Future, fewer than 5% of new teachers each year are equipped to offer instruction in computational thinking despite 91% of public schools now offering Computer Science. With the growing need for children to master and leverage fast-growing and changing technology such as AI, we must not only support rapid and enhanced teacher training efforts through programs like CS4All, but also expand to younger grades. New York City Public Schools made a commitment to CS4All when it adopted participation and equity goals citywide, as did New York State with its rollout of 2020 learning standards prioritizing foundational concepts such as computational thinking, networks and system design, and digital literacy. For our students to receive high quality instruction and programming and to prepare them for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century labor market, it is imperative that CS4All remain fully funded.

**Per-Diem/Per Session Reductions:** While this round of cuts does not directly impact instruction, the reduction of Per Deim/Per Session funding extremely limits principals' ability to enhance their schools. Principals will often leverage Per Deim funding to offer high-impact tutoring opportunities for students in small group settings, supplement after-school programming, cover day-to-day substitutes, and incentivize staff to engage in professional development opportunities.

**Vacancies:** Finally, the lack of clarity on where cuts to vacant positions will be made is concerning. DOE has several important non-instructional positions, such as Family Workers who handle outreach and support services for special education evaluations, or Occupational and Physical Therapists who serve our students with disabilities. It is important that DOE provide transparency about what positions will be eliminated and the potential impact of those cuts.

These PEGs are even more impactful coming on the heels of mid-year budget cuts. According to UFT, 650 schools saw a total of \$109M in cuts citywide, approximately \$35.7M of which was to Brooklyn schools. Borough President Reynoso supports recent calls for the DOE to release \$11M owed to schools that have welcomed newly arrived families and students in temporary housing.

The Fair Student Funding Working Group proposed a comprehensive and fair set of recommendations to the DOE and Panel for Education Policy (PEP), including additional weight for schools with a concentration of needs. To withhold this funding while cutting our schools' budgets is unacceptable. Our schools need this funding and budget restored in order to improve instruction, expand and sustain programming for students, and support our most marginalized families. In addition, as schools begin planning to comply with new State class size mandates, they will need funding to hire additional staff and paraprofessionals, address breakages, convert classrooms, and more.

## **Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)**

**Summer Rising:** With over 115,000 applicants last summer, there is no question that New Yorkers rely on Summer Rising to provide productive learning experiences and enrichment opportunities for our youth. Especially given the unfortunate uptick in crimes committed by youth this year, a \$20M reduction in programming is problematic, particularly for our middle school population. The administration has advocated for exactly this type of program in its Blueprint to End Gun Violence, and these cuts undermine that important work. Instead, the administration should address vacancies with improved community outreach, expansion of program offerings, and direct work with CBOs to tailor programs to students' interests.

**COMPASS:** Brooklynites are in dire need of after-school programming that is both housed centrally in schools and aligned with working hours to meet the needs of working families. Again, with improved outreach, the 3,538 COMPASS slots proposed for cuts would be easily filled.

## **Libraries**

Our communities successfully fought earlier this year to avoid cuts to our library systems, showing how deeply New Yorkers rely on their services (ranging from literacy programming and tutoring for youth, to immigrant legal services and language classes, to tech assistance for older adults, and that's just scratching the surface). Now this administration is again putting our public libraries on the chopping block. We've already begun to feel the effects as eight of our Brooklyn locations have ended Sunday services (Borough Park, Brooklyn Heights, Central, Greenpoint, Kings Highway, Macon, Midwood, and New Lots). It is unacceptable for our libraries to continually have to fight for their existence, and I look forward to working with the City Council and advocates to restore these cuts.

## **Community Composting**

Among many misguided cuts to the Department of Sanitation, the most egregious is the \$3M cut to community composting, which will eliminate the NYC Compost Project starting next month. DSNY maintains that the (partially delayed) rollout of curbside compost collection renders community composting unnecessary, but this is far from the case. The Compost Project provides multiple community benefits, including:

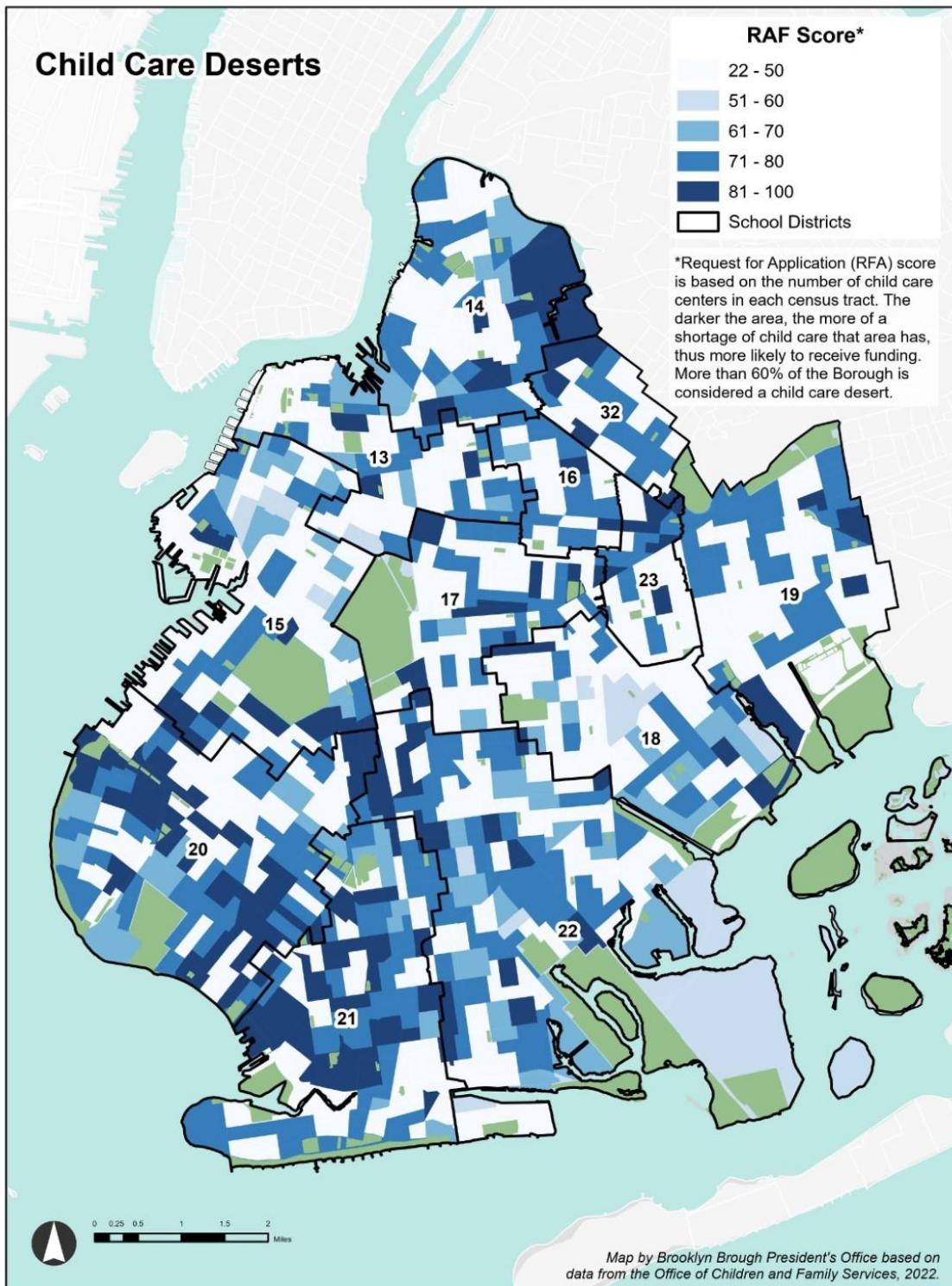
- **Diverting waste from landfill:** Last year, the Compost Project diverted 8.3 million pounds of food waste from landfills, collecting scraps from approximately 68,000 NYC households. Starting next month, New Yorkers who do not have access to curbside pickup or smart bins will have no options to divert their food waste (aside from often-locked community gardens). This will put DSNY in violation of the CORE Act bill that the City Council passed this year, which requires at least three drop-off sites per community district. Additionally, the Compost Project utilizes traditional composting methods, which the EPA rates as preferred over co-digestion, the method DSNY uses for much of the scraps collected curbside and in bins.
- **Providing compost to our communities:** The Compost Project provides free compost to the Parks Department, community organizations, street tree maintenance, school gardens, Botanical Gardens, and community gardens to support urban gardening initiatives

citywide. They also support independent, community-based compost collection, such as at BKRot in Bushwick.

- **Creating jobs:** The Compost project estimates 115 people will lose their jobs due to these cuts.
- **Educating youth and the public:** Compost Project staffers conduct outreach and education about composting, including tabling and door-knocking, workshops and classes, and the Master Composter Certificate Program. Many of the organizations also provide youth education programs, which will be jeopardized by staffing cuts.

In the scale of the City's budget, \$3M is a drop in a very large bucket, yet it has an outsized impact on our zero waste goals and our ability to educate New Yorkers about sustainable practices.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. Borough President Reynoso stands ready to support the City Council in efforts to fight these cuts and restore critical social services.





**DONOVAN RICHARDS**  
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**Testimony for Hearing on Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
**New York City Council's Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

Good morning, my name is Donovan Richards Jr., and I am President of the Borough of Queens.

Thank you, Chair Brannan, for giving me the opportunity to present testimony regarding the budget modifications proposed in the Mayor's November Financial Plan.

The budget cuts included in the November Plan would of course all have a far-ranging impact on city services. But this morning I would like to discuss one particular proposed cut that would have an especially devastating impact.

That cut would be the one proposed for the city's community composting program.

I strongly believe composting is an essential service. I'm proud to say my advocacy of composting led to an expansion of composting services in Queens and other parts of the city. And with New Yorkers producing huge amounts of organic waste, and our New York City Community Compost Project programs processing thousands of tons of that organic material, it's clear we need to support our community-based composting organizations to enable them to help address our composting needs.

Many of the organizations that do this composting work have done so for decades. With environmental problems continuing to mount both globally and locally, eliminating the ability of these organizations to help lead our efforts to become one of the world's most sustainable cities would be a grievous error with potentially tremendous negative consequences.

We should note that it costs us more to send our organic waste to landfills than it does to compost. That means cutting community composting would certainly be a "penny wise, pound foolish" way to solve our city's fiscal problems.

At the end of the day, if we eliminate the community composting program, we will be delivering a significant setback to our efforts to build a more sustainable New York City.

Thank you for your time and attention on this important matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Donovan Richards Jr.  
President  
Borough of Queens



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness  
for Women and their Children

## Testimony of Win for the New York City Council Committee on Finance Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan. December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Introduction + Impact of Budget Cuts

Thank you to Chair Brannan and to the esteemed members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Chirstine Quinn, and I am the President and CEO of Win. Win is the City and nation’s largest provider of shelter and services to families with children experiencing homelessness. Each night, more than 6,500 people, including 3,600 children, sleep in one of Win’s 15 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs.

The 5% reduction to city spending outlined in the Mayor’s November Financial Plan will be devastating for the families Win serves and for the essential staff who work every day to end the cycle of homelessness. The Mayor is alleging that he must cut costs because of expenses related to providing shelter and services for migrants, yet he is gutting the funding for the very agencies and organizations that are on the frontlines of responding to this crisis. While Win is working internally to mitigate the impact of these cuts on our families and staff, a 5% reduction to provider contract rates and the full 15% cut the Mayor intends to execute will undoubtedly result in programs closing across the city, thousands of shelter beds being eliminated, and families and children—new arrivals and long-term New Yorkers alike—sleeping on the streets.

**These shortsighted cuts will be felt immediately by Win families and children** and make it even harder for agencies and non-profit organizations to provide homeless New Yorkers and asylum seekers with the support and services they need to actually achieve stable housing and economic independence. Any PEG is punishing, but the Mayor’s November Financial Plan indiscriminately targets the services that are critical to supporting those most in need, like legal services, English classes, and job training programs.<sup>i</sup> These supports are proven to reduce the City’s long-term costs by creating pathways to self-sufficiency for New Yorkers, but the Mayoral Administration is myopic in its austerity measures. Therefore, Win is instead advocating for alternative public policies that would produce savings to avert these cuts and serve as real solutions to the housing and homelessness crisis.

### Solutions to the Housing and Homelessness Crisis

**First and foremost, we are calling on Mayor Adams to uphold the right to shelter.** For over four decades, the right to shelter has prevented more than one million homeless New Yorkers from sleeping on the streets. Although the Adams administration has claimed eliminating the right to shelter is necessary because the City is out of room, only 2 faith-based shelters have come online because of bureaucratic delays. There are hundreds of faith-based organizations that are ready willing and able to work with the City and house thousands of people at significantly less cost **than sheltering them** in hotels, yet the Adams administration has failed to utilize these



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness  
for Women and their Children

beds because of bureaucratic challenges. Eliminating the right to shelter is not necessary and would result in a healthcare crisis, with increased deaths of people experiencing homelessness and the expenditure of medical resources on increased emergency department use.<sup>ii</sup> The humanitarian and fiscal cost of street homelessness is far beyond the cost of providing shelter, and studies have shown that healthcare spending among unsheltered adults can be over three times that of sheltered adults.<sup>iii</sup> The right to shelter has allowed for New York City to defy the trends of mass street homelessness and encampments seen in other major cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Portland. Eliminating this right would betray our values as a city and result in a mass rise of families with children—who comprise over 75% of the homeless population in New York City—living and dying on the streets of New York City.

**The City must make administrative changes to CityFHEPS to expedite the leasing and move-out process for families.** Win recommends fixes that would decrease overhead costs and increase move out rates, such as decreasing shopping letter delays by automating shopping letters, eliminating redundancies in the preapproval process, implementing the electronic processing of checks, allowing completely online applications through Current or integration into the Access HRA platform, and reducing redundancies in the unit preclearance process.

**The City must also implement the CityFHEPS bill package (Intros 878, 229, 893, and 894) to help more than 92,000 New Yorkers gain and maintain housing and relieve the current strain on the shelter system.** These bills would slow the shelter census and open safe and quality beds for migrant families who need emergency shelter by moving eligible households into permanent housing. This bill package would also result in huge savings for the City. According to a Win analysis, expanding CityFHEPS vouchers to New Yorkers at risk of becoming homeless would cost just over \$1 billion annually, far less than what City Hall has predicted and less than one percent of the City Budget. On the other hand, the cost of doing nothing and letting these New Yorkers become homeless would be more than \$1.7 billion—which means there would be net savings of approximately \$730 million if CityFHEPS vouchers are expanded.

**Finally, City Hall and City Council must expand CityFHEPS to noncitizens.** Sheltering migrants families can cost nearly \$400 a night, and current expenditures have exceeded \$1.7 billion.<sup>ii</sup> In [a report](#) released earlier this summer and coauthored by Win and the New York Immigration Coalition, we demonstrated how **permanently housing rather than just sheltering asylum seekers could save the City over \$3 billion annually and help tens of thousands of New Yorkers leave shelter.** Instead of paying over \$383 nightly for an emergency hotel room, the City and State could spend significantly less on housing a family with a voucher, which would cost on average around \$50 for a state subsidy and \$72 for a city subsidy nightly.

## **Conclusion**

As the City continues to face historically high levels of homelessness, the Mayor is scapegoating asylum seekers for the City's budget shortfalls while simultaneously cutting funding for the very



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for Women and their Children

services that are addressing this influx. We cannot cut our way out of a crisis, and the City needs to invest in services and resources to see any significant savings. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions – like improving and expanding CityFHEPS – rather than hindering the organizations and agencies that are supporting it. The City cannot withstand a 5% cut to its budget, and if the Mayor continues to pursue the full 15% cut as intended, it will gut the social service sector, undermining the public safety, health, and livelihood of New York City.

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<https://www.tbf.org/news-and-insights/reports/2020/february/roi-of-esol-2020>

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AUGUST 2023

**SAVINGS & STABILITY**



# Permanently Housing Rather Than Just Sheltering Asylum Seekers Could Save the City Over \$3 Billion Annually

**Christopher Mann, MA**

Director of Policy & Advocacy, Win

**Hannah Tager**

Policy Analyst, Win

**Theodore Moore**

Vice President of Policy & Programs, NYIC

***I came here out of necessity. People think we come here for selfish reasons, but if I had an opportunity to work in my country or I could depend on anything there, I would have stayed in my home.***

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

## Context

Presently and historically, New York City has been the home to the country's largest foreign-born population.<sup>i</sup> As this number has grown in recent months, the city's social services have also adapted to meet the emerging needs of these new arrivals. **Over 100,000 asylum seekers have arrived in New York City over the past year, with the majority of them depending on the city for shelter and services.** Currently, 57,300 asylum seekers are living in City run facilities and the Mayor projects that this number will continue to grow.

Furthermore, these figures do not account for the thousands of immigrants who were already living in New York City shelters before governors from southern states began inhumanely busing migrants to New York City in August 2022. **These many immigrant households have been systematically excluded from the social safety-net, most notably rental assistance, resulting in them becoming long-term stayers in the shelter system and forcing families into prolonged poverty.** New York City's homeless response system, which was already under strain from the expiration of pandemic related funding and protections for renters, has been pushed beyond its limits. Shelter capacity is at less than 1%, and many immigrants living in shelter have no prospect of leaving.

Currently, these vulnerable families and children are ineligible for most housing subsidies, a denial that is exacerbating the capacity crisis and trapping noncitizens in transitional housing shelters for incredibly long periods of time. **New York has the authority to act unilaterally and expand housing vouchers to households in need, regardless of their immigration status. This expansion could save up to \$2.9 billion per year while helping the newest New Yorkers exit shelter, freeing up space in our homelessness response system.**

***I've been here for five years, and I haven't gotten any closer to leaving.***

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

## Solution

**Housing subsidy programs are widely recognized as one of the most effective tools to combat homelessness.** The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's [Family Options Study](#) revealed that, rather than staying in shelter, receiving long-term rent subsidies sharply reduced homelessness and increased housing stability.<sup>ii</sup> In addition, rental subsidies also promoted benefits in other domains of family well-being, including halving intimate partner violence, reducing adult psychological distress, parent-child separation, absenteeism and behavior problems for children, and increasing food security.<sup>iii</sup> In FY22, of the 5,207 families with children in New York City that exited shelter to permanent housing, 79% of placements were subsidized.<sup>iv</sup> Many sheltered, unhoused, and at-risk households rely on housing subsidies to transition to permanent housing, and **over 30,000 households gained or maintained permanent housing with CityFHEPS, the City's most widely**

**used voucher, in FY22.**<sup>v</sup> Furthermore, without housing subsidies, families often struggle to make a sustainable exit from shelter. **In FY22, 15% of families with children who exited shelter without a subsidy returned within one year, compared to less than 1% of families who exited with a subsidy.**<sup>vi</sup>

When properly implemented, housing vouchers can be New York's permanent and inclusive solution to the homelessness crisis. However, this crisis cannot be contained without solutions that include immigrant New Yorkers. Giving all households the support necessary to break the cycle of homelessness with vouchers will promote fairness and maintain the integrity of the nation's most expansive social services system. **New York has the responsibility to provide a permanent housing solution for households regardless of immigration status and should implement the expansion of the vouchers to all New Yorkers.** Vital benefits have been provided legally to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status through Promise NYC, HHC Options, and others, and **New York has the legal authority to grant immigrants access to housing vouchers.**

*“It's so hard to want something, but not be able to achieve it. Like a job: I can't work, and my children need a home.*

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

## Cost Savings

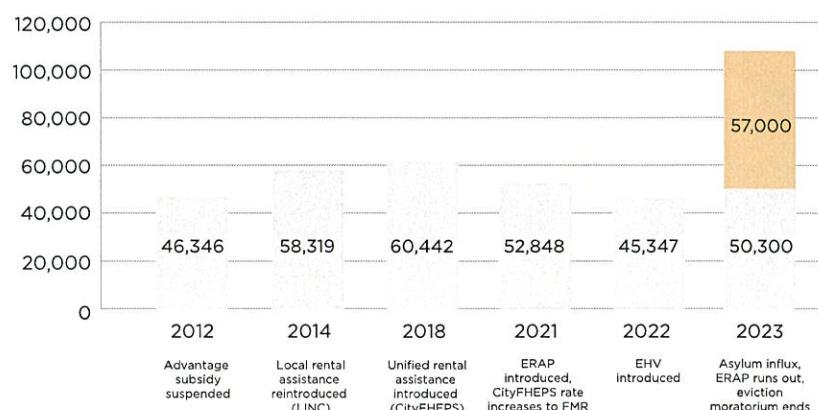
Not only is providing subsidized housing vouchers the solution that has the best proven well-being outcomes, but it is also the most cost-effective approach to addressing homelessness. **Offering housing subsidies to households regardless of immigration status would increase capacity in shelters, making it easier and less expensive for New York to care for homeless families.** Over time, changes in the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter census show that the introduction of rental assistance subsidies is correlated with a decline in the homeless population and associated costs (Table 1). This past year's growth in the shelter census and costs can be attributed to the fact that the current vouchers in circulation are not available to most recent arrivals. Furthermore, improvements and expansions of vouchers also increase move-outs, and in the five months after the value of the CityFHEPS voucher increased in May 2022, Win's CityFHEPS placements were 79% higher compared to the months immediately before, and 40% higher compared to the previous year.

### DHS Shelter Census, Contextualized

#### Values

Sum of Recent Asylum Seekers

Sum of Other Shelter Residents



**Table 1. DHS Shelter Census, Contextualized**, by Catherine Trapani, Homeless Services United March 2023, updated by Hannah Tager, Win, August 2023. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page>

In general, the expansions and introductions of housing vouchers can lead to future savings, as the subsidies reduce shelter costs enough to almost entirely offset the cost of the voucher. **Savings associated with permanent housing are returned through decreased reliance on the health care, corrections, and emergency shelter systems, which may be close to or above the cost of rental assistance and services.**<sup>viii</sup> As well, the halving of intimate partner violence associated with the utilization of rental subsidies can result in improved economic outcomes for individuals and communities.<sup>ix</sup>

While the vouchers currently available have been extremely effective and economically efficient, expanded access is still necessary for those who aren't eligible for existing vouchers. **Put another way: excluding the newest New Yorkers from using vouchers comes with an immense social and fiscal cost. For example, the CityFHEPS voucher costs just \$72 per night for families living in a 2-bedroom apartment.**<sup>x</sup> **In contrast, New York City is spending on average \$383 to shelter households in emergency hotels.**<sup>xii</sup> In a public briefing on August 9th, 2023, Mayor Adams noted that there are 57,000 asylum seekers in the care of the city, comprised of 25,604 households. **xiii The cost of sheltering 25,604 households per year in emergency welfare hotels, equates to \$3.58 billion dollars. It would cost just \$673 million to house those households with CityFHEPS vouchers, a cost savings of \$2.9 billion per year.**

**Similarly, the proposed NYS Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) would cost as little as \$50 per night for household.**<sup>xiii</sup> If the State were to pass and implement the HAVP voucher or something similar, it would cost just \$465 million to house the 25,604 asylum-seeking households with HAVP for a year. **Housing families with state-level vouchers instead of sheltering them in emergency hotels could result in saving over \$3.1 billion per year.**

New York should take the commonsense and cost-effective step to extend eligibility for housing subsidies to all households most in need, regardless of their immigration status. Noncitizen households, rather than becoming long-term stayers in the shelter system, should have access to long-term solutions that will relieve the shelter system and allow families to truly thrive.

*I've been here so long...My daughter was basically raised in the shelter system. I don't want that for her.*

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

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Since its founding to provide emergency shelter to four homeless women and their children, Win has grown into the largest provider of family shelter and supportive housing in New York City and the country. Win offers transitional housing and permanent supportive housing that's coupled with programs and services developed to support long-term housing stability. All of Win's services are guided by its mission—to transform the lives of New York City homeless families with children by providing the safe housing, critical services, and the ground-breaking programs they need to succeed on their own—so families can regain their independence and children can look forward to a brighter future.

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The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) is an umbrella policy & advocacy organization that represents over 200 immigrant and refugee rights groups throughout New York.

The NYIC serves one of the largest and most diverse newcomer populations in the United States. The multi-racial and multi-sector NYIC membership base includes grassroots and nonprofit community organizations, religious and academic institutions, labor unions, as well as legal and socioeconomic justice organizations. The NYIC not only establishes a forum for immigrant groups to voice their concerns, but also provides a platform for collective action to drive positive social change.

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JUNE 2023

**SAVINGS & STABILITY**



# CityFHEPS Bills Could Save NYC Millions and House Thousands of Families

By: Martin Gamboa, PhD; Christopher Mann, MA; Cassidy Teminsky, Hannah Tager, Henry Love, PhD

win

# Introduction

On May 25, 2023, the New York City Council passed a package of bills that would significantly improve and expand access to CityFHEPS housing vouchers. Win fiercely advocated for this package of bills, through advocacy and a [report](#) on the financial impact associated with the legislation.<sup>i</sup>

The bill package is comprised of:

- [Intro 878](#), sponsored by Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, ends the 90-Day Rule requirement that voucher applicants live in shelter for 90-days before they are eligible to apply for rental assistance vouchers.
- [Intro 229](#), sponsored by Council Member Tiffany Cabán, prohibits the deduction of utility costs from the maximum rental allowance.
- [Intro 893](#), sponsored by Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez, expands voucher eligibility to all individuals at risk of eviction that meet the other CityFHEPS requirements.
- [Intro 894](#), sponsored by Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez, eliminates the work requirements and raises the income eligibility for rental assistance vouchers.

Although the New York City Council passed the bills with a veto-proof majority in a vote of 41-7, Mayor Eric Adams is considering vetoing the package and has criticized the legislation for its cost. In contrast, Win's analysis of eviction data estimates dramatic savings accrued through reductions in shelter and other service utilization. In addition to bringing about significant social and emotional benefits, Intro 878, Intro 229, Intro 893, and Intro 894 will also result in financial savings of over \$730,000,000 for New York City.

***On a per person basis, the cost of doing nothing and allowing individuals to become homeless is \$18,883.16 as opposed to just \$10,950 to prevent homelessness with the CityFHEPS voucher, a savings of \$7,933.16 per person per year.***

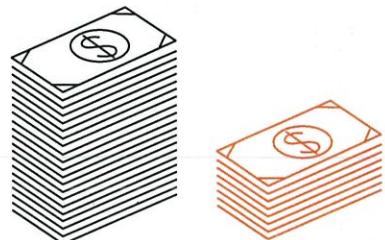
The upfront investment to the CityFHEPS program outlined in these bills is more than offset by savings in costs associated with eviction and homelessness, such as shelter, healthcare, foster care, education, and justice involvement.

# \$730 million+

The CityFHEPS Bill package could save NYC **\$730,000,000+** per year.

# 92k+

CityFHEPS could help **92,000+** New Yorkers gain and maintain housing.



On a per person basis per year, the cost of doing nothing and allowing individuals to become homeless is **\$18,883.16**.

On a per person basis per year, the cost of providing CityFHEPS vouchers is **\$10,950**.

# \$7,933.16

With the CityFHEPS voucher, preventing homelessness provides savings of **\$7,933.16** per person per year.

# Costs of the CityFHEPS Expansion

In this study, we looked at the cost of expanding CityFHEPS to households at risk of eviction, as outlined in the bill package. To solve for the annual cost of this expansion, we looked at the number of families displaced annually by eviction for rent non-payment reasons by looking at the number of eviction filings from May 2022 through May 2023 in New York City [122,868]<sup>1</sup> for non-payment [82%]<sup>2</sup> and determining the expected percentage of executed eviction petitions [9%]<sup>3</sup>, plus the total number of informal evictions [4%]<sup>4</sup> coming out to 13,098 families. We then multiplied our defined population by the cost of providing the CityFHEPS voucher, estimated at \$72/night, to these families for one year [\$26,280.00].<sup>5</sup>

***Overall, to provide the CityFHEPS vouchers and prevent homelessness for these 13,098 families annually would cost New York City \$344,215,440.***

We are aware that for every eviction notice filed there are many more households unstably housed and facing rent demands. To account for those additional households, we examined the savings from the expansion of CityFHEPS to a more inclusive population of eligible folks that includes all households with income below 50 percent area median income (AMI) who are currently severely rent-burdened, as per a similar study done by The Community Service Society of New York.<sup>6</sup> Their defined population that would be able to benefit from the expansion of CityFHEPS is more inclusive, as they looked at the 38,681 households with incomes below 50 percent AMI who are currently severely rent-burdened (paying more than 50 percent of their household income on rent) and would be evicted without the CityFHEPS voucher.

***If we apply this number to our formula, it would cost the City \$1,016,536,680 to expand CityFHEPS to this population.***

## Savings from the CityFHEPS Expansion

To determine the savings associated with the CityFHEPS bill package, Win analyzed the financial impact of factors associated with eviction and homelessness. To do so, Win approximated the financial impact for households who are currently denied the CityFHEPS voucher due to eligibility guidelines requiring a previous stay in shelter. While numerous systemic savings are associated with eviction prevention, for this study, Win specifically looked at medical, juvenile detention, educational, child welfare, and shelter costs for displaced families whose evictions could be prevented with an expansion of CityFHEPS. To determine medical costs, Win looked at additional expenditures on the healthcare system that individuals living in shelters and on the street expense annually versus their housed peers, \$1736.21 more annually, accounting for inflation.<sup>7</sup> We also examined youth incarceration, as homeless youth are at a higher risk of justice involvement because of increased interaction with surveilling systems and the criminalization of homelessness.<sup>8</sup> For these estimates, Win looked at the price of juvenile detention and multiplied it by average length of stay, coming out to \$88,307 per a displaced or homeless youth who could otherwise remain housed with the CityFHEPS bill package.<sup>9</sup> For savings related to education, we examined the anticipated differences in earnings between students who were homeless and their peers. In addition to having lower educational achievement (lower math and ELA scores)<sup>10</sup>, children who had experienced homelessness had lower earnings than other students. On average, students that had experienced homelessness and went into the labor force after high school earned \$766 less than similarly disadvantaged students that entered the workforce at the same time.<sup>11</sup> Children and youth who do not graduate high school tend to have a net negative fiscal cost on society, meaning that the cost of providing benefits to them is, on average, not offset by the annual tax payments made by that group. We also examined the cost of child welfare investigation and placement for

children who are displaced and enter homelessness that could be prevented by the CityFHEPS expansion. We found that there was an annual cost of \$63,478<sup>ix</sup> per child that was placed in foster care and that 18% of homeless youth are involved in child welfare<sup>x</sup>, with 23% of those youth ending up in foster care.<sup>xi</sup> Finally, we looked at the price of housing displaced households in an emergency hotel, where most new families are being sheltered since family shelters are at capacity, costing the city \$383 a night.<sup>xii</sup>

Altogether, by looking at these costs and solving for the households and children who could experience homelessness because of voucher denial, New York City spends almost \$600,000,000 in medical, juvenile detention, education, foster care, and shelter costs alone.

Our forecasted cost of the CityFHEPS expansion for individuals at risk of eviction is \$344,215,440.

***Subtracting the medical, juvenile detention, educational, foster care, and shelter costs diverted as a result of this bill package will result in savings of at least \$249,380,600 for New York City and prevent homelessness for 31,000+ New Yorkers.***

***Furthermore, by applying this savings model to the broader population defined by The Community Service Society of New York, we find annual savings of more than \$730,000,000 and prevent homelessness for more than 38,000 families and 92,000+ individuals.***

## Constraints

The findings of this analysis are subject to limitations, and the calculations required assumptions due to data constraints. First, the context of housing and homelessness in New York City is unique, even among other high cost of living locales. While we attempted to find cost data specifically focused on New York City, this was not always possible; when our baseline data was not New York specific or from recent years, we performed cost-of-living and inflation adjustments in order to offer a more accurate cost analysis. The total count of the impacted population who would be eligible for CityFHEPS voucher is also an area where assumptions were necessary. The City's financial analysis for the bill estimated that 47,000 new families would be eligible for the voucher, though their budget does not specify the percentage breakdown of those people who are currently housed in the community and those who are in shelter. The Community Service Society of New York estimated that there would be 40,000 new families eligible, and that 10,000 of those families would enter shelter without access to CityFHEPS through the passage of the bill package. However, the number of households lacking adequate shelter or precariously housed is likely greater than the reported count, as multiple studies have shown that **1)** people will live in overcrowded units with families or friends before going to homeless shelters and **2)** heads of households that are housing unstable do not always disclose their situation out of fear of punitive measures.

## Recommendations

This suite of bills represents a multi-faceted effort to keep some of the poorest New Yorkers in their homes and reduce the stress on an already overburdened homeless service system. This analysis, and others like it, demonstrate that the passage of these bills would not be as expensive as the NYC Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) analysis suggested, and would provide cost savings and shelter relief in the short-term and increase the likelihood for upward mobility in the long-term. In order to ensure that these bills have their maximum positive impact, Win has the following recommendations:

- The Mayor and the Council should streamline the process of ensuring qualified applicants receive their vouchers in a timely manner, rather than having to apply multiple times.
- Reducing the amount of times applicants reduces the review of redundant paperwork, while ensuring families do not cost the city money by entering shelter during a voucher limbo period.

According to the New York City Housing and Vacancy survey, the number of habitable units that are unavailable for rent has increased sharply across price ranges, reducing available supply, and therefore increasing price and demand for the housing stock that remains.<sup>xiii</sup> State, city, and local officials should incentivize making this hidden stock available, and disincentivize using housing as a speculative asset in the midst of a housing crisis.

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## About Win

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**Testimony of Henry Garrido,  
Executive Director  
District Council 37, AFSCME  
Before the City Council Committee on Finance  
December 11, 2023**

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and fellow Councilmembers. I am Henry Garrido, Executive Director of District Council 37. I come before you today to express my displeasure with the November Budget Modification.

The City's November Budget Mod, intended to close the FY 2025 Budget Gap, makes the wrong choices for all New Yorkers by cutting thousands of vital City jobs and reducing services that all New Yorkers need and deserve. The budget decisions made by the City will adversely affect all New Yorkers – especially the most vulnerable amongst us. Consider the following cuts, which will devastate the City's ability to deliver public services to all New Yorkers:

**Job Cuts** – The November Budget Mod, through the City's PEG program, cuts 2,465 positions. These cuts are draconian, unfair, and will cut vital public services that will impact all New Yorkers. The elimination of these jobs has additional, very destructive effects:

1. Reduces opportunities for advancement to the middle class for thousands of New Yorkers, particularly people of color, for whom civil service has long served as a path to upward mobility and economic security.
2. The loss of thousands of jobs means the loss of the economic activity that these jobs create. Eliminating over 2,000 jobs means the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity, including millions of dollars of much needed tax revenue. This is terribly shortsighted and counterproductive.

**JTP (Job Training Program)** – This vital and successful program has provided job training for thousands of New Yorkers over the years and has given many New Yorkers the opportunity to obtain employment at the Parks Department. As a result, many individuals have benefitted by gaining entry into secure, good-paying City jobs.

The November Budget Mod eliminates the JTP Street Cleaning Program at Sanitation, cutting \$2 million from the agency's budget in FY24 and \$4 million in FY25.

DSS will be outsourcing its JTP program entirely – transferring the participants in the Job Training Program it runs for the Department of Parks and Recreation to “existing employment services” and also transferring Job Training Program participants in the program it runs separately for Sanitation, into “existing employment services”.

The elimination of JTP programs at DSS, Sanitation, as well as Parks and Recreation shifts some \$47 million to “existing employment services”, which means unsupervised, unaccountable outside contractors. The JTP program ought to remain under City control, supervised and managed by City employees.

**Libraries** – The Budget Mod cuts \$24 million in FY24 (mid-year budget cuts) and \$22 million in FY25. All three Library systems have stated they will be forced to eliminate all Sunday service within the five boroughs (with the exception of one branch in Queens) starting this month.

Eliminating Sunday service will adversely impact many families and individuals who really need the services provided by our public libraries. Libraries not only provide crucial resources, but are also safe havens for many.

**Department of Parks and Recreation** – The Budget Mod eliminates 284 positions, slashing the Parks budget by \$32 million in FY24 and 25. That's a cut of almost 300 workers responsible for parks maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and beautification. These are draconian cuts to an agency already severely understaffed in its ability to manage and maintain its facilities.

**Police Department** – The November Budget Mod eliminates 325 civilian positions for a cut of \$20 million in FY25 and cuts 322 positions in the School Safety Division for a cut of \$17 million in FY24 and FY25. DC 37 has long pushed for greater civilianization at the NYPD, which would free officers for the job they are trained to do – protecting all New Yorkers. Cutting hundreds of civilian jobs is absolutely the wrong approach to take. We also are deeply concerned with the potential adverse impact on school staff and students of cutting School Safety staff by 322 positions. The safety of our children must always be our top priority.

**DoITT** – this vital agency – the nerve system connecting all parts of City government – has had its staff cut by 154 positions in the November Budget Mod. As technology becomes ever-more complex, including the ever-increasing daily risks City computer networks face – cutting staff is terribly shortsighted. The \$32 million the City proposes to “save” in FY24 and 25 pales compared to the risk the City runs by short staffing DoITT.

**DOE** – DOE faces the largest PEG – nearly \$1.2 billion in FY24 and 25. There is a cut of 432 positions. This is shocking given the influx of thousands of children whose families are seeking asylum and have come to New York. Indeed, school enrollment has recently increased as asylum seeker children have enrolled in our schools. Additionally, City schools are also slowly recovering from the devastation of Covid-19. With increasing enrollment, as well as the increasing needs of the students the DOE serves, cutting hundreds of positions is absolutely wrong. These cuts are in addition to the cuts to school safety of 322 positions. The DOE PEG will result in some 750 fewer dedicated public servants in our schools to protect and meet the needs of students.

**The Contract Budget** – The City is projected to spend about \$12 billion to address the asylum seeker crisis across Fiscal Years 2023-2025 and \$11 billion over just FY24 and FY25. Billions of dollars have been and continue to be spent with a lack of proper oversight by the City. The Comptroller has given the Adams administration the power to award contracts to firms supplying goods and services to asylum seekers without his office's pre-approval (though the Comptroller has announced it is withdrawing this permission). The City will still have the authority to issue emergency contracts (although the Comptroller's office will have to review).

City contract records indicate about a half billion dollars in asylum services emergency contracts have been awarded since May alone. Billions of dollars of funding for these services will be awarded in the current and coming fiscal years (FY24 and FY25).

Given the enormous sums of money involved, and the fast-tracked nature of many of the contracts that have been, and will be awarded, there is ample opportunity for waste and fraud.

Over 2,000 jobs of hard-working, dedicated public servants are being eliminated in order to help pay for the billions of City dollars flying out the door with little oversight. This is terribly unfair to New Yorkers and to our dedicated public servants and enormously wasteful of the public purse.

Prior to the first round of PEG announcements, the city was already facing a shortage of over 21,000 city workers. With the hiring freeze and the high attrition rate, compounded by the increased need for city services, it is getting more and more difficult to maintain city services.

These PEGs are shortsighted and harm the most vulnerable New Yorkers. I urge the City Council to do what it can to fight back to maintain vital city services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I will be happy to take any questions you may have.

**Testimony of Joyce McClammy  
Vice President, Local 205, DC 37  
Before the City Council Finance Committee  
December 11, 2023**

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and fellow Councilmembers. I want to thank you for hosting this hearing on the budget cuts by the Mayor that will have a tremendous impact on our city.

The \$120 million dollar cut to the child care budget will take away from our most vulnerable population that cannot fight for themselves. Day care is vital to our children's formative years. Education is the key to our children becoming our next president, becoming an attorney, doctor or anything they would like to be.

In addition, the Mayor wants to downsize the libraries, which would not only affect our children, but people who do not have access to literature, the use of computers, and other services that our libraries offer.

Day care, education, and libraries cannot survive anymore cuts. The \$120 million cut to child care city will have an adverse impact on children and families who need the service the most. Parents need a place to drop off their children where they can learn and socialize with other children in a safe environment.

Furthermore, the cuts to police and fire will also devastate our city. There must be other ways to find savings without gutting services. The city needs more services, not less.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES  
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME  
MAYOR'S NOVEMBER FINANCIAL PLAN  
SUBMITTED TO  
THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
DECEMBER 11, 2023  
10:00 AM

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

Mayor Eric Adams has recently released his November financial plan, which includes budget cuts across various sectors due to the "migrant crisis." While the influx of asylum seekers has placed a strain on New York City resources, it should not come at a cost to our children and the job security of our employees.

#### SAPIS

Local 372 represents thousands of workers who provide essential support services to help prepare the 915,000 public school children in New York City, including the 30,000 newly arrived migrant children. The influx of 30,000 additional children into our public school system brings with it a significant challenge in addressing their mental health needs. These children are likely to be carrying the psychological weight of trauma from their journeys and the process of relocation. This influx necessitates a proactive approach from our public schools and communities to ensure their well-being and successful integration. Now, more than ever, the need to fund SAPIS is vital in ensuring the children of New York City have the support they need.

Since 1971, SAPIS have always provided mental health services, taught essential social-emotional strategies, and provided services to help students remain learning-ready. SAPIS use OASAS-approved Evidence-Based Program ("EBP") presentations applied in group and individual settings as positive alternatives for NYC public school students in need. SAPIS serves K-12 throughout New York City's 32 school districts, including special education.

Local 372 has long testified to this panel about the devastating effects of cuts to the SAPIS program and the loss of over 200 SAPIS counselors since 2006. There needs to be more SAPIS to meet the needs of our at-risk children and their families, particularly during these challenging times. This is not acceptable in the current environment. New York City needs to increase the number of SAPIS positions due to the increased number of public school students.

For more than ten years, the state and city have maintained an agreement to fund SAPIS on a dollar-for-dollar basis. This agreement was breached for the first time this year. If the \$2 million restoration is not restored, New York City may face a reduction in 256 SAPIS employees. This

could have a detrimental effect on the safety and well-being of the city's residents. We must take action to ensure that our communities are adequately protected, and this restoration is a critical step in ensuring that we have the necessary resources to do so.

### Conclusion

School support staff are critical to a functioning school system. Local 372 members show up daily to provide essential services to the public school system. SAPIS are invaluable assets to the New York public education system. Their work is essential for promoting students' mental health and well-being and creating a positive learning environment for all.

On behalf of the Local 372 leadership team and our 24,000 members, we thank the City Council for seeking resources to improve essential services throughout the city. We appreciate your commitment to maintaining the success of our public school system by prioritizing our children and members.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**Testimony of Deborah Allman  
President, Local 1930, DC 37  
Before the City Council Finance Committee  
December 11, 2023**

Good Afternoon All. My name is Deborah Allman and I am the President of Local 1930 representing workers in the New York Public Library (NYPL) system. Joining me today is Margaret Gibson, Vice-President of Local 1321, Queens Public Library workers, and Joseph Reece, Vice President of Local 374 representing custodians and security in NYPL.

The Mayor's 5% PEG is already having an adverse impact on library services and workers. This unilateral cut has forced the three library systems to eliminate Sunday service in the city. Families who depend on library services on Sunday cannot go to their local library. All the needed programs people depend on like Story time and the many computer workshops have been eliminated.

In addition, this cut has forced the three library systems to cut their collections and materials budget. We will now buy less hardcopy books, audio books, E-books, DVDs, and CDs. By having less materials, this limits the invaluable resources for library users.

Furthermore, the cut has also forced the library to cut its capital budget. Now, when we have a broken window, instead of replacing it with glass, it is replaced with plywood. Now, when a boiler breaks we do not know when it will get fixed. This could result in a branch closing indefinitely until the repair gets done.

Given the high number of vacancies in the system, the New York Public Library has moved staff from the closed locations that were under renovation and reassigned them to fill vacant positions at the open libraries.

Lastly, the Mayor's cuts have forced the three library systems to implement hiring freezes, impacting the services we provide. At NYPL, eight of its branches have been closed indefinitely and removed the much needed outreach and services to communities. As a result, the services the community has come to rely on is being affected. Libraries have always been known to be safe havens, but with less hours and Sunday branch closures, many people will have to find other resources to rely on.

I and my fellow library colleagues urge the City Council to find ways to restore these drastic cuts.



**Testimony of  
Kevin Jones  
AARP New York**

**NYC Council Finance Committee**

**Subject: NYC Budget**

**12/11/2023**

**Contact: Erik Kriss (518) 360-9213 | [ekriss@aarp.org](mailto:ekriss@aarp.org)**

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the City Council Committee on Finance. My name is Kevin Jones, I am Deputy Director for Advocacy at AARP New York. We advocate on behalf of all New Yorkers ages 50 plus and our 750,000 members in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Older adults represent New York's fastest-growing demographic. According to a new report from the Center for an Urban Future, New York City's 65-and-over population grew by 36 percent, or more than 800,000 people, over the past decade, while the under-65 population shrank by nearly half a million.

Every borough's 65-plus population increased. However, a particularly worrisome truth about NYC's growing older adult population is that the poverty rate among older adults stands at 18%. Despite this demographic reality, we've seen time and again the city does not prioritize the basic needs of our older adults. NYC Aging receives less than one percent of the city budget, and now the Mayor wants to cut that even further.

The 5% cuts to NYC Aging and other agencies' budgets, announced as "PEGs" in November Financial Plan, would have a huge impact on the large older adult population that is already struggling. Additional 5% planned cuts coming alongside each of the Mayor's budget proposals next year would hinder the continued operation of community programs for older adults.

We recognize that there are a lot of competing demands for City funding, but the budget should never be balanced on the backs of our older adult population when so many have trouble making ends meet. We must ensure sufficient funding for the important programs that address the many significant challenges faced by older adults. More than half of older adults have trouble paying their rent, many are food insecure, and others lack home-based care and access to social connections.

AARP's first budget priority is sufficient funding to combat hunger and food insecurity, which a gut-turning 10% of older adults are experiencing. The Mayor's proposed cuts to Home Delivered Meals and Older Adult Care Center Meals programs come just as older adults face increased food prices and considerable cuts to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps. As it is, funding the city currently provides for meals does not cover the actual cost of providing them. The City must increase food program funding for community-based older adult centers and home-delivered meals to ensure our older adults will not go hungry.

We are also concerned about appropriate investments in community-based care and support for nonprofits providing services that allow older adults to safely age in the homes they love. Specifically, we must ensure a sufficient level of homecare and case management services that help older adults avoid costly institutions. This is crucial because the demand for these services is rising. Thousands of older adults are on waitlists for what are essentially lifesaving services. The City must fund NYC Aging's home care program and restore funding to clear the case management and homecare waitlists.

One of the critical challenges in meeting demands for services is a worker shortage. It's not unusual for nonprofit organizations to have 20% and even 50% staffing shortages in their programs. We are calling on the city to provide all human services workers with a 6.5% cost-of-living adjustment as an increase directly in their organizations' contracts, so more people will take – and stay in – these important jobs.

The last priority I'd like to mention today is affordable housing. A lack of affordable housing is the biggest concern for over half of city voters aged 50+. In a recent Quinnipiac poll, affordable housing is now ranked on par with crime, with 25 percent of New Yorkers labeling it as their top concern. To help older adults age in their communities, we reiterate our call for the city to increase the reimbursement rate for Senior Affordable Rental Apartments and allocate capital funding to develop 1,000 new units of affordable senior housing per year.

Older New Yorkers built this city and made it great. Without real investment in the services they need, we will leave our city's older adults behind. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts for the nonprofit sector will be disastrous for older New Yorkers. The more than 1.8 million older adults living in New York City deserve better.

Thank you.



# 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: November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

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Kim Sweet

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Matthew Lenaghan

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

As an organization that works every day with families of students who face some of the biggest barriers to educational success – students with disabilities, immigrant students, students who are homeless or in foster care, among others – we are deeply concerned about the impact of the \$547 million cut to New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) this year – and the more than \$600 million cut next year.

In addition to concerns about cuts to programs like community schools and 3-K, we are already seeing the impact of the hiring freeze and vacancy reduction. While central staff is needed to operate the school system for *all students*, staff working outside of schools are particularly important to support students with the greatest needs. Cutting hundreds of NYCPS staff members means it takes longer for immigrant students to get a school placement, for students who are homeless to get a bus route, and for students with disabilities to get services. As just one example, we have had calls about families of preschoolers in the Bronx who cannot get services because the blanket hiring freeze has left the Committee on Preschool Special Education short-staffed. The City has legal obligations to these students that cannot be ignored.

It is important to note that, in addition to the cuts listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, NYCPS has been using around \$1 billion per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary



Advocates for Children

of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

long before the pandemic and will continue to be needed long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. More information about each of these programs and the amount of temporary federal funding currently being used for each one is available in the call-to-action signed by more than 160 organizations available at <https://bit.ly/NYCCTA>. In addition, the immigrant family communication and outreach program, the Mental Health Continuum, an additional 25 shelter-based coordinators, Promise NYC (providing child care to children who are undocumented), and additional community schools are funded with one-year city funding slated to end in June as well. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. We need the Council's leadership – in Albany and in City Hall – to ensure these programs continue.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

# Call to Action to Sustain Education Programs Funded with Expiring Federal COVID-19 Relief

SEPTEMBER 2023

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**We call on our elected leaders to take immediate action to sustain critical education programs currently supported by temporary federal COVID-19 stimulus funding set to run dry in June 2024.**

Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) benefitted from more than \$7 billion in federal stimulus funding. NYCPS used this influx of funding not only to help address temporary pandemic-related challenges, but also to launch and expand a range of essential programs to meet needs that existed long before the pandemic—but had gone unmet or under-funded—and that will remain long after the federal COVID-19 relief funds expire. Notable examples of this year’s investments include:

- **\$456 million for 3-K**, allowing the City to guarantee a seat for every three-year-old in 12 of the City’s 32 community school districts and doubling the number of children participating in this early learning program from 17,500 in 2019-20 to 35,700 in 2022-23.
- **\$96 million for preschool special education**, helping the City address the significant shortage of legally required preschool special education classes, helping programs recruit and retain certified special education teachers, and adding service providers and staff to help with the development of service plans.
- **\$80 million for Summer Rising** to help provide 110,000 students with access to full-day summer programming that includes academic enrichment, arts activities, field trips, and recreational activities.
- **\$67 million to hire 450 school social workers**, allowing nearly 194,000 students to gain access to a social worker; even with this investment, there is only one school social worker for every 435 students enrolled in NYCPS schools and more than 240,000 students do not have access to a full-time social worker.
- **\$65 million for school nurses**, enabling every school building to have a nurse; prior to the pandemic, at least 137 schools serving a combined 70,000 students did not have a school nurse.
- **\$55 million to expand community schools**, increasing the number of schools that provide students and their families with wrap-around supports from 266 in 2020-21 to more than 400.

- **\$22.5 million to launch the Sensory Exploration, Education, and Discovery (SEED) program**, which 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.
- **\$12 million for restorative justice practices**, allowing more schools to use alternatives to exclusionary discipline that keep students in the classroom while helping them build and repair relationships; this federal funding represents the majority of the City's investment in restorative justice.
- **\$10 million to hire 60 school psychologists and 15 family workers** to address delays in the evaluation process for students with disabilities.
- **\$10 million to hire bilingual staff to support the education of English Language Learners**, only 46% of whom graduated from high school in four years even before the pandemic.
- **\$9 million for shelter-based coordinators** to help children who are homeless get to school every day and access needed educational support.
- **\$7 million for literacy instruction and dyslexia programming**, helping to support screening, new specialized programs for students with dyslexia, and targeted reading interventions in dozens of schools.
- **\$7 million for translation and interpretation services**, which are particularly vital at a time when more than 40% of students speak a language other than English at home and when the need has grown.
- **\$3.3 million for Student Success Centers in 34 high schools**, where trained youth leaders build a culture of college-going in their schools and help their peers with the college admissions process.

The impending expiration of federal COVID-19 funds not only threatens the continuation of these newly-launched and expanded programs; temporary federal funds have also been used to stave off more drastic budget cuts at schools that have seen enrollment declines (\$160M in FY 24) and to maintain longstanding initiatives jeopardized by pandemic-related fiscal challenges. As just one example, NYCPS is using:

- **\$33M in federal COVID-19 funding for Learning to Work**—which provides support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan—representing more than 70% of the program's total budget.

This summary does not reflect every investment NYCPS has made using temporary federal stimulus dollars, but underscores the enormously high stakes for students—especially those whose needs have too often been overlooked—as well as the urgent need for elected leaders to act before this funding runs dry. In total, we estimate that NYCPS is investing more than \$1 billion in programs and supports to meet needs that will persist far beyond the funding's expiration date.

We are at a critical juncture. Our elected leaders must choose between allowing these programs to end on their watch—dealing a massive setback to public education—or taking action to identify new funding sources so students can continue receiving critical supports and services. We are counting on our elected leaders to sustain essential education programs and build on the progress made, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of students for years to come.

## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

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Abundant Waters After-School  
Adaptive Design Association, Inc.  
Advocates for Children of New York  
AHRC NYC  
All My Children Daycare Inc.  
All Our Kin  
Alliance for Quality Education  
The Arc New York  
Astor Services  
B'Above Worldwide Institute Family Child Care Network  
Barrier Free Living  
Birch Family Services  
Block Institute Pre-K  
Bloom Creative Arts and Preschool  
Bronx Developmental Disabilities Council  
Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Council  
CAMBA  
CASA-NYC  
Catholic Guardian Services  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)  
Child Care Solutions Inc.  
The Child Center of NY  
Child Study Center of New York  
Children's Aid  
Children's Defense Fund-New York  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York  
City Year New York  
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families  
The Coalition for Community Schools Excellence  
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families  
Commonpoint Queens  
The Community-Based Education Movement  
Community Resources Staten Island  
Council of Family and Child Care Agencies (COFCCA)  
Counseling In Schools, Inc.  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation  
Day Care Council of New York  
Dignity in Schools Campaign-New York (DSC-NY)  
DreamYard  
DRUM – Desis Rising Up and Moving  
ECE On the Move  
The Education Trust-New York  
Educators For Excellence - NY  
El Puente  
exalt  
ExpandED Schools  
Faith in New York  
Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project  
FPWA  
Girls for Gender Equity  
Global Kids  
Goddard Riverside  
Good Shepherd Services  
Graham Windham  
Grand St. Settlement  
The Guild for Exceptional Children, Inc.  
Harlem Dowling-West Side Center  
HeartShare St.Vincent's Services  
Hispanic Federation  
Homeless Services United  
Hudson Guild  
ICCD  
INCLUDEnyc  
IntegrateNYC  
InterAgency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc.

Jackson Developmental Center	The New York City Coalition for Children with Special Needs (Birth to Five), Inc.
JCCA	New York Edge
Jeremiah Program	New York Immigration Coalition
Jewish Community Center of Staten Island, Inc.	New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Inc. (NYLPI)
Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center	New York Legal Assistance Group
KAVID (Kings Against Violence Initiative)	New York State Alliance for Children with Special Needs
Kennedy Children's Center	New York State Network for Youth Success
Keshet Learning Center	New York State Society for Clinical Social Work (NYSSCSW)
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center	New York Urban League
Latino U College Access (LUCA)	NIA Community Services Network
LatinoJustice PRLDEF	Nido De Esperanza NYC
LEAP	North Brooklyn Development Corporation
LERU Multi Service Agency	NY Coalition for Educational Justice
Lexington School for the Deaf	NYC Arts in Education Roundtable
Literacy Academy Collective	NYU School of Law Education Advocacy Clinic
Little Meadows Early Childhood Center	OmniLearn
Lutheran Social Services of NY	Operation Exodus Inner City
Make the Road New York	The Opportunity Network
Manhattan Developmental Disabilities Council	Parents for Inclusive Education
Manhattan Mothers & Others	Parents Supporting Parents NY
Marie Pense Center	Partners for Dignity & Rights
Metropolitan Parent Center, Sinergia Inc.	Partnership with Children
Millennium Development	Phipps Neighborhoods
Mobilization for Justice, Inc.	PROSPECT KIDS LLC
Moms United for Black Lives NYC	Providence House, Inc.
Mouse	QCDD (Queens Council on Developmental Disabilities)
NAACP New York State Conference of Branches	QSAC, Inc.
NASW-NYC	Queens Centers for Progress
New Alternatives for Children	Queens Community House Beacon
New Settlement	Community Center @ PS149
New Settlement Parent Action Committee	Queens Community House-Childcare Network
New York Appleseed	Restorative Justice Initiative
New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP)	Rivendell School
New York Center for Child Development	
New York Charter Schools Association	
New York City Bar Association	

Rose F. Kennedy University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities  
Sanctuary for Families  
Sauti Yetu Center for African Women, Inc.  
Seamen's Society for Children and Families  
Small Wonder Preschool, Inc.  
South Asian Youth Action (SAYA)  
Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers, Inc.  
Special Education Law and Advocacy Clinic,  
Cardozo Law  
Special Support Services  
St. Dominic's Torch and Annex  
St. Mary's Hospital for Children  
Stanley M Isaacs Neighborhood Center  
SteppingStone Day School  
Teachers Unite

Team First, Inc  
Therapy and Learning Center  
uAspire  
UFT/UNECE  
UJA-Federation of New York  
United for Brownsville  
United Neighborhood Houses  
United We Stand of New York  
Urban Youth Collaborative  
Volunteers of America-Greater New York  
Wediko, NY at The Home for Little Wanderers  
Wiggle Room  
YMCA of Greater New York  
Zone 126

*Updated November 15, 2023*



ALL OUR KIN INC

NEWYORK@ALLOURKIN.ORG 917-933-3282 [WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG](http://WWW.ALLOURKIN.ORG)

**Testimony Submitted by Steven Morales, NY Policy Director of All Our Kin  
for the Public Hearing on “Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan”  
New York City Council Committee on Finance  
December 11, 2023**

Honorable Members of the City Council,

My name is Steven Morales and I’m the New York Policy Director at All Our Kin. All Our Kin is a nonprofit organization that trains, supports, and sustains home-based family child care educators in New York City. Most of the educators we serve are located in the Bronx, where we work with nearly 300 family child care educators with the capacity to care for over 4,000 children.

Family child care – licensed child care programs that operate out of an educator’s home – plays an essential role in caring for and educating our city’s youngest children. Many parents choose family child care because of its unique ability to offer flexible hours, mixed age group care, and culturally responsive care in a family’s home language. And many family child care educators participate in the city’s EarlyLearn and 3K programs in order to offer care to children in their communities.

**We are writing today to join the call for the Administration to reconsider its proposed cuts to the 3K program.** Thousands of children, families, and child care educators count on 3K as a crucial component of our city’s early childhood system. As the cost of living in New York City continues to rise, families need to know that the city is committed to sustained investment in early childhood programming so that they can continue to live and work here. Research has shown time and again that investments in early childhood education provide massive returns on investment by way of increased tax revenue, increased economic output for parents, and the long-term benefits children receive from access to high quality learning environments.

**Rather than cutting these crucial programs, we call on the city to maintain and, over time, increase its investment in early childhood education, including 3K, for the long term health and sustainability of our families, children, and educators.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Steven Morales  
[steven@allourkin.org](mailto:steven@allourkin.org)



**To: Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and Members of the Committee on Finance**  
**From: Amshula Jayaram, Campaigns Director, Alliance for Quality Education**  
**Re: Written Testimony on the November Financial Plan, Program to Eliminate the Gap**

**December 14, 2023**

My name is Amshula Jayaram, Campaigns Director for the Alliance for Quality Education, and I am respectfully submitting written testimony for the hearings on the latest round of budget cuts. While my testimony will primarily focus on the impact of the PEG's on our students and families, I will note that AQE recognizes that all of our human service institutions are deeply connected and critical to the well being of all New Yorkers. We remain extremely concerned about the cuts to education and child care, as well as cuts to libraries, higher education, mental health services, sanitation, services for the elderly, justice involved youth, and all of the systems that our communities rely on.

**A Thirty Year Fight for Fiscal Equity**

As many of you on the Council may know, the Alliance for Quality Education was borne out of a lawsuit. Then parent leader and now State Senator Robert Jackson sued the State of New York for underfunding New York's high needs public school districts. The Alliance for Quality Education, or "AQE," was formed and became the leading statewide organization in the Campaign For Fiscal Equity, to ensure that all schools received full funding under the state's Foundation Aid formula. As AQE has continued to evolve, we now recognize that the right to an education and care begins with our youngest, and that not only do we have an obligation to provide a quality K-12 education, but we must also ensure that early childhood education, which covers the most critical years of brain development, is funded robustly, offers thriving wages and is available to all.

**Unprecedented Cuts**

We are grateful to be in lockstep with many of the members of the New York City Council in expressing our profound concern at the scope of the continued budget cuts since June. The budget cuts since June are totalling in the billions, which we would argue is far more than a budget "modification." This not only has serious implications for thousands of New Yorkers, but it flies in the face of the democratic processes whereby the Mayor and Council negotiate and vote

on a final enacted budget. With cuts of this size, there is nothing final about the enacted FY24 budget. Instead, the Administration appears to be exploiting the modification process to sidestep the Council, and in turn the New Yorkers who are represented on that body, to craft an austerity budget that would face far greater chances of passage during the actual budget session.

As the leading organization in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, dedicated to ensuring that all districts received full funding, and in particular, our high needs district that have been underfunded for decades, we find these cuts to be particularly egregious. After three decades, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity was finally won, when the New York State Legislature fully funded Foundation Aid in 2021, the first year of a permanent increase for New York State public schools, driving much needed aid to NYCPS in particular. The Administration has repeatedly claimed that the State is not doing enough and so the city must suffer. However, when it comes to education, the last two years have seen an increase of 1.3 billion in State Aid for NYCPS. In addition, AQE is also fighting for the state to dedicate money to researching and updating the Foundation Aid formula, which would guarantee even more money flowing to New York City public schools. Tragically for NYC students, these efforts are entirely in vain if the Administration continues to make drastic, repeated cuts to public education. Furthermore, while the Administration justified the last round of cuts as a necessary right-sizing due to enrollment declines, more recent data has shown an increase in enrollment and yet rather than reversing course, the Administration continues to cut school budgets.

The Council has doubtless heard many of the specific concerns regarding cuts to public education, including:

- The DOE has borne the brunt of budget cuts under Mayor Adams, [losing 32% of funding, as compared to the NYPD reduced by only 8%;](#)
- [Cuts to District 75 schools](#) serving students with special needs, and for whom the state is legally obligated to provide services;
- [\\$120 million in cuts to 3K and pre-K programs](#), which will result in 10,000 children being deprived of crucial education and care, while also forcing parents to leave the workforce to care for their children;
- Cuts to Summer Rising for middle schoolers, [including elimination of Fridays](#), which families have come to depend on;
- [\\$10 million](#) in cuts to Community Schools for FY24, and [\\$24 million from FY25-FY27 despite the evidence](#) that these schools are the best poised to deal with the complex challenges that students and families face, especially in a post-pandemic world;
- [Drastic cuts to public libraries and their operating budgets](#), including cuts of over \$8 million to the NYPL, and over \$6 million to the Brooklyn and Queens public libraries in FY24 alone;
- Millions of dollars in cuts to alternative to incarceration programs, at a time when Riker's Island may come under federal monitorship due to the severity of the human rights crisis and the mounting death toll;

It is worth stating again that these cuts are happening at a time when the State has funded public education at record high levels. The Administration claims the money isn't there, but when it comes to funding for public education, that is an outright lie.

### Budget Forecasting & Solutions Oriented Leadership

Office of Management and Budget Director Jiha answered every objection from City Council regarding the disastrous PEG's by stating, simply, that we have to close a \$7.1 billion budget gap in the next thirty odd days. From his response, it would seem that the issue is clear and the solution is unassailable. Neither are true. Budget forecasting is just that, a set of predictions based on a set of assumptions. If you make different assumptions, you will wind up making different predictions. As a result, credible financial institutions almost always differ on their forecasts, sometimes in significant ways. During the last budget cycle in New York City, four different agencies, namely the Office of Management and Budget, the Independent Budget Office, the Office of the Comptroller, and the City Council Finance Division, each credible in their own right, made four different predictions on revenue and budget gaps. For example, In their [preliminary report on the Mayor's FY24 budget proposal](#), the Council stated they found \$2.7 billion in the budget which could be used to restore the proposed cuts, while still putting half of that money into the reserve fund. This was largely ignored by the press, but that does not diminish its significance. This was an alternative analysis which would have afforded a solution to care for New Yorkers rather than increase their suffering. OMB's predictions should not be the last word on the budget, particularly when the lives of millions of New Yorkers hang in the balance.

As was noted repeatedly in the hearing, OMB is consistently wrong on their predictions. The Fiscal Policy Institute noted in their [testimony](#) that after reviewing a decades worth of City budget gaps, they found that budget gaps are always closed as a result of actual revenue exceeding projected/predicted revenue. That means every year for the last decade, we have closed predicted gaps in our budget because we always bring in more tax revenue than OMB anticipates, which, given that New York City by itself is one of the strongest economies in the world, makes sense. FPI also notes that the cost of emergency services for asylum seekers may have been high this year, but it is a temporary cost that will inevitably reduce as we build out real infrastructure to care for newly arrived families, and eliminate expensive, emergency contractors. FPI also urged the Council and the Administration not to cut critical services, which will have a long term deleterious impact on the economy, based on a temporary expense.

The Fiscal Policy Institute is not the only financial institution sounding the alarm. The Independent Budget Office [writes](#), "Among the \$2.3 billion in PEG's so identified, we found that: (first bullet point) The cuts collectively could impact several vulnerable populations across the City, including public school students (particularly in early childhood), individuals requiring mental health support, individuals experiencing family violence, individuals who are justice-involved, and juvenile justice-involved youth." The IBO has also predicted that we will close out the calendar year with \$3.6 billion more in revenue than OMB's prediction (consistent

with OMB's trend of underestimating revenue), which could be used to restore this latest round and upcoming rounds of budget cuts.

### We Need Revenue Raising Solutions, Not Cuts

Ultimately, New Yorkers deserve actual policy solutions. Budget cuts may solve a problem on paper, but they create real crises in the lives of people. Citing "fiscal responsibility" is easy enough for highly paid bureaucrats who will not have to choose between a job and reliable child care, or paying for food versus paying for rent, or face the reality of a child with special needs falling farther through the cracks while their peers in rich suburbs thrive. **In the short term, the City should use every available resource, from surplus tax revenue to reserve funding (which is currently in the billions), to restore these vital services for vulnerable New Yorkers.** In the longer term, the City and State must work together to raise more revenue. While the majority are under the purview of the state legislature, the Administration and City Council have an important role to play in passage, given the power of downstate's constituency and economic role for New York State. Passing the buck is inexcusable. Here are a few of the policy solutions that should be pursued:

- Wealth Taxes: [The Invest In Our New York](#) platform, which AQE fully endorses, includes five bills that, through modest increases on the wealthy, corporations, and financial transactions, would net an estimated \$45.5 billion annually. In addition, the Billionaire's Tax ([S.1570-Ramos/A.3252-Kelles](#)) would bring us an additional \$18.5 billion in the first year (and 1.5 billion annually every year after).
- Elimination of property tax exemptions for Madison Square Garden: State law provides MSG free residence in the heart of New York City. This results in a loss of an estimated [\\$42.4 billion a year](#), according to the Department of Finance. The IBO notes that the true number could be even higher.
- [Luxury Pied a Terre Tax](#): This would tax properties worth more than \$300,000 (3 million in market value) that are neither occupied nor rented out by the owners. This has long been championed by lawmakers, think tanks, and the NYC Comptroller.
- End NYC payment of charter leases: New York City is on the hook for payment of expensive leases for the city's charter schools, despite the [extraordinary wealth](#) of the industry, and despite the fact that everywhere else in the state, municipalities are reimbursed fully for tuition and charter leases. According to the NYC Comptroller, charters have cost NYC taxpayers [roughly \\$2.9 billion in FY24](#). With the opening of 14 new "zombie charters," these costs will only climb, as public schools continue to be drained of funding.

### Conclusion

As we have stated many times, true leadership means coming up with real and lasting solutions to problems. Severe budget cuts for critical services close budget gaps on paper, but they open

up crisis and chaos for millions of New Yorkers. At the Alliance for Quality Education, we have not just demanded solutions, we have fought for them. In addition to winning historic Foundation Aid, we have battled Albany for expansions of child care access and better wages, progressive taxes so that the rich pay their fair share, and updates to the state formula to better reflect the needs of school districts. We fight these battles to ensure that NYC students, and students all across the state, have what they need to grow and thrive. Once again, all of that effort is in vain if the Administration continues to slash programs and services when the money comes to New York City. These cuts not only defy the will of the State, but they undermine the work of the people. The cuts should be restored, and the Administration and Council must work with partners in Albany to pass wealth taxes, eliminate unnecessary and harmful tax exemptions, which will put New York City on permanently strong financial footing.

To Whom it may concern.

I am Raylene Paris-Salazar and am part of the non-profit organization America on Tech, Inc (AOT).

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

AOT placed 77 interns using city funding through Ladders for Leaders in 2022 and 135 interns in 2023. This year, we have been granted 15 - 20 internship subsidies. Not only does this directly impact our students who want and expect challenging summer internships (which we know impacts lifelong potential earnings), but could also harm the trust we've built with funders who anticipate us expanding the professional pathways available for our students.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why America on Tech joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Sincerely,

Raylene Paris-Salazar

**Questions?** Contact our Vice President of Policy, Chai Jindasurat-Yasui at  
[cjindasurat@nonprofitnewyork.org](mailto:cjindasurat@nonprofitnewyork.org)



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Gwendolyn Thomas, and I work at ArtsConnection with our office location in Manhattan although we serve NYC Public schools in all boroughs.

The mission of ArtsConnection is to address the educational challenges of the 21st-century, ArtsConnection's research-based arts programs create socially just learning environments. Our programs support literacy, communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. ArtsConnection's partnerships include and strengthen the diverse voices of NYC's children and youth, cultivating their arts and academic skills for success in a changing world. We are in up to 85 schools in a given year. During the 2022-23 school year, ArtsConnection's 95 teaching artists worked in 79 public schools, reaching 21,430 students. Teaching artists provided 8,300 hours of instruction in experiential learning in theater, storytelling, puppetry, spoken word, music, music media/songwriting, dance, 2D/3D visual art, and photography. These programs integrated the arts into student learning and helped develop both pre-literacy and language skills as well as serve students with disabilities. We also engaged family members and caregivers in arts experiences that helped build community and connected to student learning in the classroom.

The looming budget cuts this year have halted many of our school partnerships from moving forward with annual programs this year. Students are unable to have arts residencies that they were expecting, families are not able to see childrens' ending celebrations, performances and overall growth through art experiences that they otherwise do not have. Additionally, the artists who serve these communities are also facing economic setbacks as they are unable to continue the enriching programming and pursue the living that they had planned to this year. The inability to plan the outlook of our cash flow as an organization has been very unsettling this year.

The past few years of financial support for art programs have proven beneficial to student growth amidst troubling circumstances of post pandemic social emotional challenges many have faced. Teachers consistently note the arts have helped to provide a return to some aspects of normalcy as parents attend student performances and workshops where students create and share their own stories in new ways. The arts experiences allow for all to interact and recall how “in person”, collaborative and artistic learning can help us heal. The past year has also given us the opportunity to see how the integration of arts can support learning despite language barriers as we seek to serve multilingual populations with the visual, movement-based and auditory processes that are inherent in arts learning, and inclusive of a variety of ways to reach students in order to break down academic barriers.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because **success starts with the arts.**

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Gwendolyn Thomas  
Director of In School Programs  
ArtsConnection



Kyla McKoll - ArtsConnection

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,

Hon. Just Brannan, Chair

Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. My name is Kyla McKoll and I work for ArtsConnection, and live in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. As both a parent of a NYC public school student and as an arts educator I am urging you to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities.

For 45 years, ArtsConnection has brought innovative arts programming to millions of New York City public school students. Our organization is founded on the belief that art possesses the power to deepen our collective understanding, encouraging students to think critically and introducing them to new avenues of creative expression. ArtsConnection's research-based programming not only promotes literacy and communication, but sharpens students' talents, better equipping them to navigate the world as socially engaged citizens. We believe no student in New York City should be deprived of a vibrant arts education due to lack of access. Each year, we partner with over 120 schools across all five boroughs, offering students in grades pre-K-12 classes in theater, dance, music, visual arts, media, puppetry, and spoken word taught by a trained faculty of professional artists. Additionally, we also provide teens with a variety of out-of-school initiatives, preparing them for life in and out of the classroom, and train arts educators across the country.

Budget cuts will be detrimental to our NYC student population one of the first pieces of our education budget to get cut is always arts education yet, Arts education has been proven to produce significant positive impacts on student academic and social development as demonstrated by Houston Education Research Consortium study on arts education, "For students in elementary schools, which were the main emphasis of the Initiative and comprised 86 percent of our school sample, we find that the intervention also improves student engagement, college aspirations, and arts-facilitated empathy. We also find that these effects varied substantially by student subgroups. Students receiving "limited English proficiency" (LEP) and gifted and talented (GT) program services appear to benefit more from these arts learning experiences" (Bowen & Kisida). In addition COVID-19 has made many students' trauma responses visible and highlighted our national deficit of emotional intelligence as the mental health needs of young people have reached a crisis (American Psychology Association, 2022; CDC, 2022). At the same time, SEL programs have been associated with a practical increase in academic performance that surpasses many exclusively educational interventions." (Durlak, 2022). Arts education provides students with entry points for healing-centered emotional processing, the building of communication skills and the creation of deep and authentic connection to complex academic concepts.

Artists and Nonprofits are a huge group of NYC's vibrant community and many of our collaborating artists will lose significant work with these budget cuts - as much of their direct income between professional artistic jobs comes from their work in the community and in schools. Both our artist educator staff and administrative staff will be deeply impacted by these cuts. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of our community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

As a Teaching Artist myself I have witnessed first hand the impact of arts education on many students. Including 4 students who have spoken for the first time in my classes. Beyond those truly transformational experiences - I also have students who have expressed that their arts classes were the spaces they felt seen and heard and "like their voice really mattered". We all know that social, and emotional skills are vital to a thriving community and the arts prioritizes teaching the whole child - building communication skills, peer to peer interactions, cultural competency, and empathy.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years. Important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Kyla McKoll

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Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm here with the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools. My name is Rachel Watts and I am the executive director of ArtsConnection.

Since 1979 we have provided programming in all art forms to over 100 public schools per year and impacted the lives of over 3 million young people representing all 5 boroughs of the beautiful city. Young people represent our future and what we do now impacts the city's future. ArtsConnection supports schools in helping young people think critically, creatively, and as part of a team, much-needed skills for the leaders of tomorrow.

I have been affiliated with ArtsConnection since 1998 and took on the Executive Director role in September 2020. For the last 3 years I have seen cuts to our funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs, the largest of which was this year with a 66% cut that has significantly impacted our organizational capacity to sustain programming.

Cuts to city funding create an exponentially negative impact because it means that non-profits like ArtsConnection are limited in their capacity to raise the additional private dollars that support programming. Without organizations like ArtsConnection raising additional funds, children and schools would not be able to experience arts programming. The last NYC DOE Arts in the Schools report noted that 417 organizations provided some sort of arts programming, with 71% of the reporting schools saying they worked with at least one outside organization. We are a necessary resource to schools.

This calendar year we have had to reduce the size of our staff and because of the ongoing budget uncertainties, work in the schools has been minimal impacting the livelihoods of the artists on our roster.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our students. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

  
Rachel Watts



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for supporting arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Sophia Harrison, and I am the Executive Director and Founder of Art's House Schools of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts located in Coney Island, Brooklyn.

The mission of Art's House Schools (AHS) is to provide culture in the humanities for children in Coney Island while providing them with the opportunity to build self-esteem, self-confidence, and develop poise, grace, and balance. AHS is a unique institution in Southern Brooklyn and one of its longest-standing CBOs for children providing year-round formal music, dance, and art training and instruction to children, 3-17 during after-school and out-of-school times.

As Coney Island's only year-round arts and culture institution dedicated to children, we believe our responsibility is to engage the culturally under-resourced youth in our community in meaningful artistic activities. Art's House Schools (AHS) annually serves 75 on-site students, ages 3-17, in music, dance, and fine arts.

In FY 2022, Art's House Schools was awarded a multiple-year award from the Department of Cultural Affairs through the Cultural Development Fund. Based on the FY 2022 fiscal award, Art's House Schools created a budget for FY 2023 using the previous year's figures. We anticipated receiving \$ 47,230. These funds have been allocated to employ two dance instructors, to pay rent, general liability, flood, and employment insurance.

A fifteen percent cut to our award would mean we would have to cut our two dance instructors' employment hours, as the other costs are non-negotiable. Dance teachers would lose 236 hours of wages for the year, approximately \$7,085. Losing these wages will create undue hardships, negatively impacting their ability to pay an average of three months' rent, purchase winter clothes and boots, and buy healthy groceries and food options.

The loss of teachers would decrease after-school and out-of-school programming for girls ages 10-17 by 236 hours for the FY. These are 236 hours that these girls will not be positively engaged. This time creates more opportunities for Social Media distractions, the use of drugs, gang violence and teenage pregnancy. These cuts will reverse the progress the City has made with lowing rates of crime and violence in Coney Island and throughout the city.

Art's House Schools' 'Dance Off the Streets'(D.O.t.S.) program, established in 2006, has engaged over 425 children, male and female. From September 2022 to June 2023, twenty-five female students aged 5-17 were recipients of a D.O.t.S. scholarship. Most D.O.t.S. students took three or more hours of class a week. The students studied Ballet, Tap, Modern/Hip-hop, and Acro/Tumbling. Ballet students were taught Vaganova ballet techniques and skills. Tap beginners were taught basic tap skills, while advanced

beginners and intermediate students were taught skills and techniques of Hoofing. Modern dance students were taught avant-garde dance techniques, jazz, and hip-hop. Dance classes were taught by Judi Jaekel, Stephanie Harrison, and Sophia Harrison.

Classes were held Monday- Saturday and attendance was taken daily for every class. The majority of these students boast at least an 85% attendance rate.

Parents and students have expressed gratitude and satisfaction with the program. On June 9, 2023, twenty-four D.O.t.S. participants participated in Art's House Schools' annual show. Students experienced a sense of pride and accomplishment as they performed on stage while their friends, families, and instructors cheered them on.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take out our budget shortfalls on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

This fifteen percent cut to the City budget may not dramatically affect the million and billion dollar companies, but it will affect the day to day lives of hardworking citizens. Many New Yorkers will lack the basic physiological, safety, and social needs to live whole and full lives.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Sophia Harrison



Executive Director

Art's House Schools, Inc.

# Arts in Education **ROUNDTABLE**

Written Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
Monday, December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your commitment to New Yorkers and support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City.

My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable. We work with thousands of artists, educators, and cultural organizations each year to improve and advance arts education in NYC. **I'm testifying as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities.**

The creative sector accounts for 13% of the city's total economic output. 1 out of every \$8 in NYC's economic activity can be traced directly or indirectly to the arts and culture sector. Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools jeopardize not only the creative economy but the very fabric of our city's prosperity and well-being. To stifle this economic engine is to stifle critical services, exacerbate the volatile employment situation for arts workers still recovering from the pandemic, and harm the very heartbeat of our city's economic growth.

Furthermore, these cuts will have an immediate and long-lasting impact on our city's young people. Arts and culture provide an essential lifeline of support to New Yorkers of all ages. Engaging students in learning, increasing parent involvement, supporting student mental health, providing safe out-of-school spaces, improving academic outcomes, and boosting student attendance. **It all starts with the arts.**

Yet, the November Financial Plan has already resulted in arts education program delays and cancellations. This translates to lost work for artists, eliminated arts instruction, and lost opportunity for NYC students to build critical life skills.

These damaging cuts are further compounded by delayed city payments and the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and

community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

With more cuts on the horizon, the additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these arts and community programs. That's why the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable also joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts.**

We're grateful for the City Council's diligence and support of New Yorkers. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

# Arts in Education **ROUNDTABLE**

Erin Orr

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Erin Orr, and I work at ArtsConnection , who sends me to PS 130K in Kensington, Brooklyn.

The mission of ArtsConnection is to address educational challenges for the 21st century, through research based arts programs that create socially just learning environments. Our programs support literacy, communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. ArtsConnection's partnerships include and strengthen the diverse voices of New York City's children and youth, cultivating their arts and academic skills for success in a changing world. Through ArtsConnection, and in collaboration with the classroom teachers at PS 130k, I've designed and taught a sequential puppetry curriculum in grades pre-k through 2nd grade for over 20 years. The goal of our puppetry program is to offer children a variety of expressive entry points to storymaking and storytelling, build collaboration skills and come together as a community to celebrate the voices, ideas and creations of children.

Until this year, our puppetry program ran all the way into 5th grade, offering the students at this school a unique opportunity to develop deep knowledge, skills and confidence within this art form. The third, fourth and fifth grade residencies were cut this year, cutting short puppetry experience that the upper elementary students have been looking forward to. The artists who have dedicated over 10 years to developing the upper grade residencies are left without employment that they usually depend upon. PS130K is a strong partner, but it is difficult for any school to support ongoing work, when there is so much uncertainty. There are even more schools who will never have the chance to develop this sort of ongoing arts partnership if their budgets are under continual threat.

We continued our puppetry program through the pandemic, providing a much needed chance for kids to create, collaborate and build community. Every year, there are children in our program who find a way into expressing their ideas, and who experience the joy of working together toward a shared vision. Every year, the teaching artists in this program learn more about their own art form from seeing how these young artists take it on and make it their own. Every year, the classroom teachers discover something about how the artists in their classroom learn and express themselves, that helps them to draw connections in other areas of instruction. A lot can be accomplished through sustained partnership between schools and arts partners, but stable funding is required.

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster

for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Erin Orr

# KEY TALKING POINTS

Specifically, we believe it would be helpful for the Council to hear:

- Talk about the impact of city funding on your ability to reach students and engage with new/returning partner schools (and that this level of funding should be continued).
- Specific results and examples of successfully providing arts and cultural education this year will be the most impactful for continuing to let the City Council know that Arts Education is Essential (i.e. trends they saw in learning, outcomes that tell the story of how arts ed can reach students in important ways);
- Specific examples of how you are currently experiencing or anticipate seeing the negative impact of budget cuts on your organization and students (to help create urgency to prioritize funding these areas).
- Stress the well-documented research showing that kids engaged in vibrant arts programs have markedly better academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- Thank the City Council for their investment and commitment to arts, culture, and arts education (this is the floor not the ceiling, when it comes to funding the arts in schools!)
- Universal access to arts education is an issue of equity in education; we still have a long way to go and these cuts stand to set us back considerably to reaching a point where all students have access to arts education.
- We encourage you to uplift messages of other coalitions as it relates to you and your work! Here is some additional written testimony language from other advocates:

**Nonprofit New York:** The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why **[YOUR INSTITUTION HERE]** joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

**Advocates for Children:** In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

**New Yorkers for Culture & Art:** Check out [NY4CA's one-pager](#) for information about their talking points and how to testify.



December 11, 2023  
New York City Council Committee on Finance Public Hearing  
Testimony from the Asian American Arts Alliance

Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the Council.

My name is Lisa Gold and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance, a 40-year-old nonprofit organization that works to ensure great representation, equity, and opportunities for Asian American artists and arts organizations.

I am sharing my testimony to voice my opposition to the Mayor's draconian budget cuts that will invariably adversely impact the most vulnerable New Yorkers, but most definitely **create a lower quality of life** for all New Yorkers.

The NYC Department of Cultural Affairs' (DCLA) budget of \$241 million is one of the smallest of any city agency. Millions of New Yorkers and tourists who flock to NYC to experience culture (and fund city coffers) avail themselves of the offerings of the thousands of arts and cultural organizations who rely on the DCLA for substantial funding.

An across-the-board PEG cut will disproportionately impact small agencies like DCLA, thus furthering inequity in the city. Based on the most recent data from the Asian American Federation, Asian Americans make up almost 18% of the city's population and are the city's fast growing ethnic group. Yet **AAPis receive less than 2% of DCLA funding**, almost of all of which comes through the Department's Cultural Development Fund (as there is not a single AAPI-led or serving member of the Cultural Institutions Group or CIG). Cuts to DCLA will most definitely result in cuts to the budgets of small and mid-sized AAPI organizations who pull more than their weight and provide rich and unique offerings, adding to the city's cultural tapestry.

Additionally, many of these smaller organizations are integral parts of their communities, **making the city safer, cleaner, and healthier.**

Our organization has already suffered a cut in city funding from previous years and is likely to see an even greater reduction in support due to the Mayor's imposed cuts. 15% cuts in our funding mean less money in the pockets of artists who make this city great. Less money to present programs which draw New Yorkers to local restaurants and shops. Less money to purchase good and supplies from local businesses upon whose tax revenue the city depends.

We ask why 15%? It makes no sense to cut funding to one of the few agencies in the city that directly supports revenue generating entities.

Small arts organizations like A4 do so much with so little. For example, during the spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, our organization launched a program called What Can We Do? which offered small grants of \$500 to artists to present public acts of creative care to the AAPI communities in Flushing and Chinatown. With a grant of \$30,000, A4 was able to pay 4 staff members and 30 artists who presented more than 35 programs reaching more than 250,000 New Yorkers!

Cutting our funding by 15% would mean that 100 seniors would not experience a singalong of Chinese folk songs performed by pianist Beata Moon at the Hamilton-Madison House, 20 Asian language interpreters would not receive free training in language justice and community interpretation impacting hundreds more individuals whom they serve, and Chinatown community members would not receive free self-defense training workshops over a period of 6 weeks.

While we recognize that the budget shortfalls must be addressed, we respectfully request that the budget not be balanced on the backs of the most vulnerable and those already disenfranchised, furthering inequity in this city.

Thank you.



## **Testimony to the Committee on Finance on the Mayor's November Financial Plan**

*December 11, 2023*

### Written Testimony

I want to thank Chair Brannan and the Council Members of the Finance Committee for holding this hearing and for providing an opportunity for the Asian American Federation (AAF) to testify. My name is Andrew Sta. Ana, I am the Deputy Director of Research and Policy at AAF. At the Federation, we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits, several of whom will testify and submit testimony, who serve 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

We are here today to discuss the Mayor's November Financial Plan. Without question, a 15% reduction across all city agencies will have disastrous effects on many of our community-based organizations, which are the lifeline of our communities. As we head into the next Fiscal Year, the pan-Asian community continues to reconcile and recover from dual crises, from a teetering economy post-COVID-19 to continuing anti-Asian hate. Indeed, across the city, our member organizations are on the ground, leading the way in numerous service sectors, and programming organized and led by AAF requires continuous, sustained support. As our community continues to grow, our specific needs become more urgent.

Since 2010, the Asian population in New York City has increased 34%, growing from over 1.1 million in 2010 to over 1.5 million in 2020, making up 17.3% of our city's total population. Overwhelmingly, Asian New Yorkers are immigrants, with two out of three in the city being foreign-born. Of those Asian immigrants, 24% arrived in 2011 or after. Additionally, language barriers remain high among Asian New Yorkers. Overall, 44% of Asians over 5 years old have limited English proficiency in New York City, compared to a citywide rate of 22%. Furthermore, 81.5% of all Asian seniors are limited English Proficient.

These cuts demonstrate the lack of attention to the needs of AAPI and Immigrant Communities. By allowing these cuts to happen, many Asian-Led, Asian-serving organizations who have been struggling since the pandemic from the virus itself to the rise in Anti-Asian Violence, on top of many crises facing New Yorkers.

#### **1) AAPI-and-immigrant-serving nonprofits in New York are chronically underfunded. These cuts make our work more urgent and the circumstances more dire.**

AAPI non-profits, like many other nonprofits that serve communities of color, are regularly and historically underfunded. Often we are regularly required to do more with less. Now, Mayor Eric Adams wants to slash the lifelines that keep us afloat, the critical services that AAPI New Yorkers rely on for our survival and dignity. These cuts will hit the most vulnerable among us: children, women, and older adults. We fear that they will debilitate the community-based organizations and their dedicated staff who serve hundreds of thousands of Asian New Yorkers with the services and resources that the government cannot provide.

These cuts will devastate non-profits, community members, AAPI and Immigrants alike. Distinctly, AAPI non-profits often rely on government funding to support our lifesaving work in unique ways. For example, according to Asian American/Pacific Islanders In Philanthropy, for every \$100 awarded by foundations, only 20 cents was designated for Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities. While we still do not know about the complete details of these cuts, the Asian American Federation and our 70 member organizations will continue to support AAPI New Yorkers with the services they need, from language access to mental health and after school care. We cannot afford human lives to be compromised for budget savings.

**2) Asian New Yorkers are Immigrants, and Asian New Yorkers are Migrants.**

The administration states the cuts are in response to the rising cost of the influx of migrants and asylum seekers, as well as insufficient federal and state aid and policy interventions. We have regularly heard the rhetoric that these budget cuts are made to address the recent wave of migrants to NYC. We reject some of the unspoken divisions of this framing, particularly in the context of the budget. This rhetoric ‘pits’ our communities against one another, “immigrant” against “migrant.” Our communities will not fall for this rhetorical trap aimed at creating a political and financial wedge. New York City’s AAPI communities are diverse and dynamic.

There are over half a million undocumented immigrants in New York City, and based on the Migration Policy Institute’s estimates, about one in five Asian immigrants may be undocumented in New York City. Additionally, the ongoing migrant crisis has magnified the importance of our community-based organizations, who provide immediate services to new Americans in language-accessible and culturally competent ways, especially considering the complexity of navigating our immigration processes.

We are immigrants, we are migrants, we speak many languages, we are workers, small business owners, we are parents, students, we are seniors, we are active community members, we are voters. Immigrants and migrants are our neighbors, family members, and community members. These cuts will reduce essential services for our communities and the benefits our member organizations provide.

Through the simultaneous crises facing our community, our member organizations have continuously demonstrated that they’re the experts in providing the most needed services. As the City Council deliberates on the Mayor’s proposed cuts, we implore all to listen to the narratives of our member organizations. the community members they serve. Decisions this drastic must be done so with transparency and with the input of nonprofits, who bear the brunt of these cuts. We must be included in budget conversations, and our expertise must be incorporated as we envision solutions for these issues.

Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity, and we look forward to working with you to get critical services to our most vulnerable populations.

**12/11/2023**

**To: Mayor Eric Adams**

**Re: The Need to Sustain the NYC Budget for Resiliency**

Thank you to the Council for hearing these important bills and inviting testimonials. My name is Wendy Andringa, I am the founder of Assemblage Landscape Architecture, based in Brooklyn, NY, a coalition member of Forest For All NYC, and a board member of the American Society of Landscape Architects NYC Chapter.

Now is the time to increase investments in resiliency planning for the devastating effects of climate change that result in flooding and heat-related damages and injury to New Yorkers.

As our city faces significant increases in the number and intensity of heat waves and extreme precipitation events in the coming decades, green infrastructure and the urban forest will help mitigate the urban heat island effect and flooding. We are making progress in this regard, but there's still a lot of work to be done by our city agencies, nonprofits, and local institutions, and community members, and we need a budget commitment alongside the plans and laws that galvanize the hard work we do.

The recently implemented budget cuts, and the additional proposed cuts in 2024 affect all planned investments. Coupled with the immediate hiring freeze, this initial 5% cut has devastating impacts on personnel and reverses important progress towards achieving a more resilient future for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wendy Andringa, RLA, ASLA  
Assemblage Landscape Architecture, DPC

# BINDLESTIFF FAMILY CIRKUS



P.O. Box 386, New York, N.Y., 10009

[bindlestiff.org](http://bindlestiff.org)

Unceded Lenapehoking

[circus@bindlestiff.org](mailto:circus@bindlestiff.org)

347-404-0422

Written Testimony of Keith Nelson

Executive Director

Bindlestiff Family Variety, Arts, Inc.

[Keith@Bindlestiff.org](mailto:Keith@Bindlestiff.org)

347-404-0422

To the New York City Council Finance Committee

Oversight Hearing

December 11, 2023, 10 a.m.

Dear Council Members,

My name is Keith Nelson and I am the Executive Director and co-founder of Bindlestiff Family Variety Arts, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping circus and variety arts vibrant and relevant, inspiring people that anything is possible and bringing communities together.

I'm here today to share with you my deep concern about the proposed November Budget Plan and its citywide budget cuts.

While we recognize the economic challenges facing NYC, I am shocked and confused by these dramatic cuts. Social, environmental, and cultural program cuts will negatively impact New Yorkers.

This city relies heavily on arts and culture to drive tourism. Only a year ago the city's conversation emphasized how art and culture lured visitors. The effect of these cuts will make tourism, community, culture, innovation, quality of life, and local economies suffer.

Bindlestiff's programs employ. In 2022 we provided work for more than 300 people with 200 free productions across the city. This past year, after the loss of federal

pandemic relief funds, We employed 130 people, presented 90 shows in 40 different locations, and entertained over 23,000. City funding enables Bindlestiff to provide access to the arts for thousands, ensuring that the performing arts stay affordable, accessible, and inclusive for all.

Arts and culture are central to what makes New York New York. Like many others, we were dealt a major blow in 2020 with COVID. Our industry came to a halt. The following two years, federal funds kept the creative sector alive. As the funds ended a year ago, we like many others, continue to face great challenges. Just as the arts are starting to find a post pandemic footing, the city is ready to pull the rug out from under us. These cuts will be felt by creative workers currently struggling to survive. These are the people who bring magic to the city.

We bring performances into communities, which in turn generates revenue for local businesses. Our programming fosters community, draws crowds, brings sales and foot traffic to adjacent businesses, this transfers into real dollars. As research indicates, public arts provide positive economic impact where events take place. The proposed budget cuts are counter intuitive.

For these reasons, Bindlestiff Family Variety Arts joins the 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget process. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit and cultural sectors to work toward finding creative solutions to sustaining this critical funding.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Keith" on the top line and "Nelson" on the bottom line, with a horizontal line extending from the end of "Nelson".

Keith Nelson  
Executive Director



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New York, NY 10032  
212.568.2030

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[www.bhc.org](http://www.bhc.org)

**Broadway Housing Communities Testimony  
NYC Council Finance Committee Hearing  
December 11, 2023**

As a pioneer of the supportive housing movement, and the first to develop permanent supportive housing for homeless and at-risk families, Broadway Housing Communities (BHC) is dedicated to providing housing, educational, and cultural equity for adults, children and families living in Washington Heights and West Harlem. Since 1983, BHC has developed seven, and now operates five, residential buildings; two early childhood centers; three community art galleries; and a remarkable cultural institution, the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling (SHCMAS).

We are grateful to the New York City Council for your long standing partnership in the fight to support these programs.

Working together, we have proven that permanent, affordable community-based housing paired with services for those who need them is the most effective - and most cost-effective - solution to the homeless crisis, and that housing stability paired with access to high quality early education and the arts builds healthy communities to drive lasting, meaningful generational change.

The real-life impact of recent and proposed budget cuts on our staff, programs, partners and community members threatens to take us backwards at a time when the need for our high- impact services is greater than ever.

NYC Council funding is critical to our capacity to provide and expand access to permanent affordable and supportive housing, high quality education programs, and access to the arts in a community burdened by decades of disinvestment and neglect, resulting in a lack of affordable housing and low-performing public schools with little to no arts funding.

Today, gentrification is driving a “tale of two cities” narrative, where generational poverty, immigration status, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 have pushed stable housing, high quality education and cultural enrichment opportunities further out of reach for the communities we serve.

BHC's buildings are beacons of housing stability for formerly homeless and at-risk single adults and families with children. Our innovative Front Desk program provides job readiness skills and steady employment for tenants and members of the wider community.

**Broadway Housing  
Communities**

—  
[The Delta](#)  
[Benziger-Abraham House](#)  
[The Rio](#)  
[Dorothy Day Apartments](#)  
[Sugar Hill Apartments](#)

—  
[Dorothy Day Early  
Childhood Center](#)  
[Sugar Hill  
Museum Preschool](#)

—  
[Rio Penthouse Gallery](#)  
[Rio Gallery II](#)  
[Rio Gallery III](#)

—  
[Sugar Hill  
Children's  
Museum of  
Art & Storytelling](#)



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BHC's Early Childhood Programs serve some of NYC's most vulnerable children from birth to age five and their families, and SHCMAS's Family Programs and School Partnerships, provide free arts and cultural programming and partnerships with Title I schools including P.S. 28 Wright Brothers. BHC's Youth Leadership Institute supports youth living in BHC residences and the larger community as they transition into adulthood. BHC's Tenant Services Program provides BHC tenants and community members with information and support services to secure and maintain permanent affordable housing.

Our high quality early childhood program supports the cognitive, emotional and social development of children whose families are living at or below the federal poverty line. Wellness support for children and families includes dental services, two nutritious meals - breakfast and lunch - during the school day, and nutrition workshops for families.

Until recently, NYC DOE funding for our early childhood programs was based on enrollment but is now based on ATTENDANCE, which means that when a child misses school for any reason - illness, a family emergency - the funding we receive is reduced accordingly. The uncertainties of this new approach to funding – which amounts to a budget cut of an unspecified amount against fixed expenses - means we cannot plan or budget effectively or responsibly to meet the needs of the families we serve.

NYC funding is critical to our capacity to serve our community. We are grateful to the City Council for your ongoing partnership in this important work.

**Broadway Housing Communities**

—  
[The Delta](#)  
[Benziger-Abraham House](#)  
[The Rio](#)  
[Dorothy Day Apartments](#)  
[Sugar Hill Apartments](#)

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[Dorothy Day Early Childhood Center](#)  
[Sugar Hill Museum Preschool](#)

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[Rio Penthouse Gallery](#)  
[Rio Gallery II](#)  
[Rio Gallery III](#)

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[Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling](#)

# Brooklyn Museum

Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair  
Committee on Finance  
New York City Council  
250 Broadway, Suite 1825  
New York, NY 10007

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Hon. Chi Ossé, Chair  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations  
New York City Council  
250 Broadway, Suite 1743  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairs Brannan and Ossé,

I am writing with regard to the administration's proposed budget cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) and CIG funding that would be catastrophic to the Brooklyn Museum, its staff and the communities we serve. We respectfully request your assistance in staving off any further cuts to our critically needed funding and programs.

The proposed multi-quarter PEG cuts would result in millions in lost funding for the Brooklyn Museum. The Museum is already up against drastically rising cost of labor contracts, goods, urgent infrastructure upgrades, and costly investments needed to attract and retain more visitors. These announced cuts have forced the Brooklyn Museum to consider serious cutbacks to critical services and investments, such as our staffing, educational offerings, public programs, technology infrastructure and currently underway capital projects.

**Staffing.** The proposed cuts would cause an immediate hiring freeze. The Brooklyn Museum is supported by over 350 staff members. We employ two unions, Local 2110 and DC37; and the majority of our staff lives right here in Brooklyn. We pride ourselves on taking care of our staff first and these cuts will put immense pressure on current staff if we are not able to hire open roles. If the cuts prolong past this fiscal year, we will be forced to reduce our staff. This will affect our ability to sustain a multitude of work streams including collections upkeep, exhibitions, education programming, tech infrastructure, building maintenance and the ability to take care of our staff.

**Education.** Due to the City budget cuts many public schools in Brooklyn are unable to provide continuous arts and culture education. The Brooklyn Museum has filled this gap by providing free curriculum support, tours and arts education to Brooklyn public schools. We serve over 170 schools and 50,000 students, over 75% of which attend for free. A cut to our budget would greatly reduce our staff capacity and resources to host tens of thousands of students each year.

**Public Programs.** Central Brooklyn calls the Brooklyn Museum home. We put on a multitude of free programs throughout the year, serve as a voting location, host school graduations and community events and celebrations. These free events are made possible with our government funding. Due to the rising cost of goods, we were already forced to reduce our First Saturday offerings this fiscal year-- with the proposed cuts, we may have to eliminate this program completely.

**Tech** The Brooklyn Museum is amidst a tech transformation- adding improved Wi-Fi, a functioning website, a recognizable brand, and the first CRM system ever. These are critical projects to bring the Museum into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to allow us to improve our financial sustainability. These projects will have to come to a stop without the staff and resources to support them, setting back our advancement by years.

**Building** Our city-owned building is buckling under the weight of severe weather and outdated infrastructure. The major focus of our operations team is to move toward green energy and install new industrial equipment that will last for decades and save the Museum money. The storms and flash flooding we suffered this year made serious damage to our basement floor and put our art and archives at risk. With these infrastructure improvements, our staff will constantly be in responsive crisis mode rather than moving toward a sustainable future.

This year we have engaged architects to begin our capital transformation to our fourth and fifth floors. After years of preparing our galleries and systems, we will have to completely halt this project to focus exclusively on maintenance of the building.

The Brooklyn Museum is a vital piece of the New York City economy and essential to the health and wellbeing of the Central Brooklyn community. We employ over 350 staff members, 70% of which are union members, and welcome nearly 700,000 visitors through our doors annually. In a fiscal year with historic inflation and effects from COVID losses still very present, we need sustained support from the city to invest in our infrastructure, programming, art, and community.

We thank you for all you have done for the Brooklyn Museum and the CIG community and ask that you continue to ensure the Brooklyn Museum remains available to our great borough and all its diverse communities as a vital resource for art, education and community support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Pasternak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'A' at the beginning.

Anne Pasternak

C: Hon. Crystal Hudson

**BROOKLYN PARKS**   
**AND OPEN SPACES**   
**COALITION** 

December 11, 2023

The Honorable Justin Brannan  
Chair, NYC Council Committee on Finance

**Re: Testimony re: Oversight–Mayor’s November Financial Plan**

Dear Chairman Brannan,

I belong to Brooklyn Parks and Open Spaces Coalition (BPOC), a parks advocacy group. We are a member of New Yorkers for Parks’ “Play Fair for Parks” Coalition, which includes over 450 organizations from across the five boroughs.

The Mayor’s proposed cuts to the Parks Department’s budget jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

Three years ago, the Parks Department’s budget was similarly cut and within months, by the agency’s own metrics, our parks descended into the worst conditions in 20 years. Parks were strewn with trash, lawns went unmaintained, bathrooms were in terrible condition or closed, programming was cut, and our parks felt unsafe.

Our parks have stepped up in crises: during the pandemic and now during the asylum seeker crisis. Our parks are a critical tool in managing climate change, mitigating heat island effect, absorbing carbon dioxide and storm water. We cannot afford to cut our parks system further, especially as our planet has experienced record-breaking heat and flooding. Parks are not a luxury. They are critical infrastructure. We demand no more cuts to parks.

Kind regards,



Joe Mayock  
Steering Committee Member  
Brooklyn Parks and Open Spaces Coalition (BPOC)

cc: Adam Ganser, Executive Director, New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P)

My name is Kulsoom Tapal & I am the Education Policy Coordinator representing the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, CACF. We are the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization bringing together community partners and youth to fight for equity for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI).

Today, we express our profound concern and opposition to the recent proposed budget cuts. Specifically - nearly \$550 Million cut from the NYC Department of Education, \$23 Million cuts from CUNY, and \$120 Million cuts from Universal Pre-K programs, among other cuts. **These budget cuts will disproportionately affect communities of color and further disadvantage New York City's already underserved and under-resourced populations, including the AAPI community, exacerbating prevailing disparities and impeding educational equity.**

Reducing funding for the Department of Education will not only impede the advancement of crucial educational support initiatives, such as the implementation of inclusive curricula, but also exacerbate existing challenges. Defunding the DOE poses a direct threat to the progress of essential services for our most marginalized students, including English language learners, immigrant and refugee students, low-income students, and students with disabilities.

18% of New York State Administered Prekindergarten population in NYC's is AAPI. Universal Pre-K program, a vital educational initiative, is set to face a reduction of \$120 million, affecting approximately 100,000 3- and 4-year-olds. Access to pre-kindergarten is crucial as it lays the foundation for a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development, fostering essential skills that set the stage for future success. AAPI students and all students deserve access to early educational opportunities to ensure they have a strong foundation for future academic success.

More than 20% of the CUNY student body is AAPI. The \$23 million cut to CUNY and its support programs is particularly concerning. CUNY has been a gateway to higher education for many AAPI students, providing an affordable and accessible option. The support programs at CUNY, now at risk due to budget cuts, have been instrumental in addressing the many challenges faced by AAPI students, including language access, cultural responsiveness, and financial constraints.

This year, more than 45,000 students were denied spots in the Summer Rising program, a lifeline for many AAPI families, offering enriching educational experiences during the summer months. This exacerbated a childcare crisis over the summer for many families and limited education opportunity for many students. An additional \$20 Million in cuts to this program would only intensify these challenges.

We are witnessing reductions across nearly every facet of our education system. This comes at a critical juncture where increased investment is imperative for supporting student mental health, bolstering after-school and summer programs, ensuring access to CUNY, and sustaining universal Pre-K. **We urge city council to reject all proposed budget cuts to education because we firmly believe that New York City's AAPI students and families deserve a budget that prioritizes care, services, and resources over austerity.**

**CAMBA**  
**Testimony Before the New York City Council**  
**Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
**Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

Council Member Brannan and members of the Finance Committee, my name is Joanne M. Oplustil, and I am the President and CEO of CAMBA, Inc. I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and affording us the opportunity to testify. CAMBA has been providing high quality services to our City's most vulnerable individuals for more than 40 years. Today, I would like to address the significant concerns that CAMBA has regarding the potential impact of Mayor Eric Adams' November Plan on the individuals and communities we serve, and more importantly the City's social services sector. Mayor Adams proposed 15% budget cut directive for all city agencies during the current fiscal year will effectively disrupt all social services. For decades, CAMBA has been dedicated to enhancing the well-being of our residents through various programs, including education and youth development, community support, economic development workforce initiatives, and critical housing services. The proposed budget cuts outlined in the November Plan pose a threat to these programs, jeopardizing the progress we have made in fostering a stronger, more resilient city.

My goal is to shed light on the potential repercussions of Mayor Eric Adams' November Plan, particularly in relation to the budget cuts proposed and their implications for critical areas such as education and youth development, community support, the workforce in New York City's economic development sector, and housing.

**Education and Youth Development:**

CAMBA has played an instrumental role in promoting education and youth development through its afterschool and student support programs, offering a safe and nurturing environment to over 17,000 children and adolescents. These programs contribute significantly to the holistic development of our youth, fostering academic success, character building, and the acquisition of crucial life skills. However, the proposed budget cuts threaten the stability and continuity of these essential initiatives. Programs such as Community Schools and Learning to Work, which help some of the City's most vulnerable students, could be eviscerated if the cuts become reality.

Reduced funding for afterschool programs would compromise the quality and reach of educational support services provided by CAMBA. Our children deserve every opportunity to succeed academically and socially, and any cutbacks in this area may hinder their future prospects, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage that our city can ill afford.

**Community Support:**

CAMBA's commitment to community support extends beyond education, encompassing a wide array of services that address the unique needs of diverse populations. From job training and placement to mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and assistance for individuals with

disabilities, CAMBA is a lifeline for many New Yorkers facing hardships. The proposed budget cuts threaten the very fabric of these vital support networks, jeopardizing the well-being of countless individuals and families.

Workforce within NYC's Economic Development Sector:

As a key player in the economic development sector, CAMBA empowers individuals to secure meaningful employment and contribute to the growth of our city. Job training programs, career counseling, and placement services provided by CAMBA bridge the gap between employers and a skilled workforce. Reductions in funding for these programs may lead to a decline in the preparedness of our workforce, negatively impacting the economic vitality of New York City.

Housing:

CAMBA's initiatives in housing, beginning with Homebase, have been indispensable in addressing the city's housing crisis. Homebase provides New Yorkers experiencing housing instability with various homeless prevention services and aftercare services. The proposed budget cuts place these critical programs in jeopardy, endangering the stability of thousands of households. As we grapple with a shortage of affordable housing, any reduction in funding for initiatives like this would exacerbate the already dire situation, leaving vulnerable populations at risk of homelessness and impacting an already stressed shelter system. At the beginning of the current fiscal year, CAMBA shelters sites took a 2.5% cut. With surging rents, fringe rates and the 15% cuts levied by this administration, CAMBA will be forced to make difficult decisions.

With regard to our congregate housing portfolio, the pandemic has led to a surge in the number of clients we see with severe mental illness, substance use disorders, and other behavioral challenges. This has created a need for increased clinical services, with funding needed to provide clinical staff for more hours of the day. It also has led to a need for more security staff to maintain safety and order.

Impact on CAMBA's Programs and the Social Service Sector:

The proposed budget cuts, if implemented, will not only undermine the effectiveness of CAMBA's programs but will also have a ripple effect across the entire social service sector. The human services sector currently has the fifth lowest average pay among large-employing industries in New York City. Human services workers have been underpaid for decades, placing many of them in similar situations as the clients that they serve, such as depending on Public Assistance, SNAP, and other benefits to make ends meet. Without a #JustPay, many of these workers are leaving the sector, or even leaving New York State altogether, in search of more competitive wages. The proposed cuts will undoubtedly make it a challenge to retain staff while maintaining programming.

Additionally, the social service sector as a whole faces increased financial burden with the rising cost of living and high interest rates that potentially will lead to a rise in unmet needs and a surge in demand for emergency services. This not only compromises the welfare of those currently benefiting from CAMBA's programs, but also hampers the city's ability to address emerging challenges and crises effectively.

In closing, I urge the Committee on Finance to carefully consider the far-reaching consequences of the proposed budget cuts within Mayor Eric Adams' November Plan. While balancing the FY24 budget is undoubtedly a difficult task, it is crucial to prioritize the well-being of all New Yorkers by safeguarding the essential services provided by organizations like CAMBA. I encourage the Committee to explore alternative avenues for revenue generation and to advocate for increased state and federal aid to ensure that essential programs and services are not sacrificed in an effort to reach a balanced budget. Our city's future depends on the well-being and success of New Yorkers, and now, more than ever, we need to invest in the social infrastructure that supports the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

## 12/11/23 Testimony Submitted to NYC Finance Committee

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Dear Members of the NYC Finance Committee,

As a lifelong New Yorker and a former employee of the NYC Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, I submit this testimony to voice strong opposition to Mayor Eric Adams' proposed budget cuts and proposal. The current financial plan proposed by Mayor Adams will have far reaching and severe consequences that will exacerbate social problems, and in turn, reduce safety.

I currently serve as the Managing Director of Research And Data at Campaign Zero, an organization dedicated to ending police violence and improving safety through non-carceral approaches. Our work at Campaign Zero focuses on data-driven strategies to ensure safety and justice for all communities. Equitable and just budgets are necessary for public safety reinvention. The cuts targeting essential services such as Sunday library hours, expansion of universal pre-K, cuts to after school programs and affordable housing programs are deeply concerning. These services are not luxuries; they are fundamental to the safety and health of communities. The decision to reduce funding in these areas while sparing the NYPD from similar financial scrutiny is not only unjust, it undermines the important work of creating a safer city.

In contrast to social services budget cuts, the NYPD's budget remains bloated, despite a history of fiscal overreach, costly civil lawsuit settlements, and continued racially discriminatory practices impacting Black and Brown residents. This budget sends a troubling message about our city's priorities, one that prefers punitive measures over restorative ones. The city's continued financial support for an institution plagued by racist patterns of practice reflects the neglect on the part of the elected representatives.

Further, from a research perspective, we know that investments and spending in social and public health services is associated with higher crime reductions than investments in policing.<sup>1</sup> CZ would be open to meeting and support on providing evidence-based strategies and solutions to improve safety through non-carceral approaches.

We strongly urge this committee to reject Mayor Adams' budget proposal and encourage a proposal that reallocates funds from the NYPD to programs that have proven to enhance community well-being and safety through restorative, non-punitive approaches.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted on **December 11, 2023**.

*Abdul Nasser Rad*  
Managing Director, Research & Data  
Campaign Zero

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<sup>1</sup> See references.

## References & Resources

Chalfin, Aaron, Hansen, Benjamin, Weisburst, Emily K., & Williams, Jr., Morgan C. (2020). "Police Force Size and Civilian Race." *Journal of Public Economics* 183: 104135. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28202>.

Sipsma, Heather L., Maureen E. Canavan, Erika Rogan, Lauren A. Taylor, Kristina M. Talbert-Slagle, and Elizabeth H. Bradley. "Spending on Social and Public Health Services and Its Association with Homicide in the USA: An Ecological Study." *BMC Public Health* 17, no. 1 (2017).

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5652551/>.

### **Research on Social Services Spending and Crime**

#### ***Investments in Social and Public Health Services versus Policing***

A study by Sipsma et al. (2017) illustrates this by showing that every \$10,000 investment in social and public health services per 10,000 population is associated with a reduction of 8.7 homicides. In contrast, additional spending on police force, as per Chalfin et al. (2020), yields a far smaller impact, reducing homicides by only 0.1 per 100,000 population

From the first study (Sipsma et al., 2017), \$10,000 in spending on social and public health services per 10,000 population is associated with a reduction of 0.87 homicides. To convert this to per 100,000 population, we multiply the reduction in homicides by 10 (since 100,000 is ten times larger than 10,000). So, the reduction in homicides becomes 8.7 per 100,000 population.

From the second study (Chalfin et al., 2020), the hiring of an additional law enforcement officer, costing an average of \$45,000, is associated with a reduction of 0.1 homicides per 100,000 population.

Standardized Comparison:

- An additional \$10,000 in spending on social and public health services leads to a reduction of 8.7 homicides per 100,000 population.
- The hiring of an additional law enforcement officer at a cost of \$45,000 leads to a reduction of 0.1 homicides per 100,000 population.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations and differences in methodologies and scopes while still recognizing the value of each study such as differences in research methodologies, scope, contextual factors and broad implications versus specific interventions. Moreover, instead of reallocating, it is important to designate it to specific programs which have been found to reduce crime and improve safety, not just broad spending on social services and health.

We can live in a world beyond policing.

[campaignzero.org](http://campaignzero.org)

## Testimony on the Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

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.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the federal government has provided the New York City Department of Education with \$7 billion in COVID-19 stimulus funding. While some of that money was used to address short-term problems caused directly by COVID, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using approximately \$1 billion per year on programs that address long-term challenges predating the pandemic- such as staffing shortages, outdated and ineffective curricula, and a youth mental health crisis. Those funds will officially expire in June of 2024. The issues they have been funding will not.

Rather than attempting to find alternative sources of revenue to maintain and support these programs, the City's November Financial Plan instead includes an additional \$600 million in cuts to education. Between this plan and the expiring federal funds, the New York City public school system is about to face catastrophic program cuts.

These cuts will disproportionately affect students with disabilities, as they attempt to navigate a school system that is actively reducing support for preschool special education, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, community schools, restorative justice, Summer Rising, school social workers, school nurses, school psychologists, coordinators working in homeless shelters, and bilingual staff, at a time when enrollment is up and more students than ever are in need of these services.

It is hard to find evidence of a disaster averted, so it is hard to quantify the good these programs do, even when they exist in an imperfect form. Children with dyslexia are at higher risk for experiencing anxiety and poor mental health, according to a review of multiple longitudinal studies of the correlation between mental health and dyslexia published in 2023 by Wilmot et al, and a lack of understanding from teachers is listed as one of the main contributing factors. The City is proposing to cut programs that train educators in more effective methods of teaching dyslexic students. A Bureau of Labor Statistics report published in 2022 revealed that people with disabilities who do not receive a high diploma are more than twice as likely as people without disabilities who do not receive a high school diploma to be unemployed (11.6% vs 5.1%). In 2021 the National Center for Education Statistics found that students with disabilities were also twice as likely to drop out of high school as their nondisabled peers (10.7% vs 4.7). We know that the more a student's needs are met, the less likely they are to drop out. The City is proposing to cut programs that make accommodations accessible to students with disabilities, especially for students whose first language is not English.

We know that at the beginning of the pandemic, special education evaluations dropped by 57%, and that as students returned to schools with more social workers and psychologists and teachers who cared, the number of evaluations began to tick up. We know from a New York City Department of Health Survey that approximately 9% of City high school seniors reported they attempted suicide in 2021. The City is proposing to cut the number of mental health professionals in its schools. We know our students are in crisis. This proposed budget advocates cutting the lifelines.

The City is currently planning to address this mental health crisis in the form of a \$26 million contract with Talkspace for a telehealth network. While an accessible network is beneficial, it is shortsighted. Investing in prevention is much more cost effective, and certainly much better for the students, than solely investing in treatment. A backlog in the Individualized Education Program (IEP, which provides a plan that schools are required by law to implement to address the needs of a student who requires services or accommodations after the student has been evaluated by qualified professionals) has already cost the City over \$25 million in audits alone. During the 2022 fiscal year, the City spent almost \$1 billion on Carter Cases- providing families with private school tuition because public schools were deemed unable to provide their children with necessary services. The cost of treatment wouldn't be so high if the City invested in programs that provided students with disabilities with critically needed supports in the first place.

There is no question that there is a need for action within the New York City public school system. However, that action surely does not involve a budget cut. Instead, the City should act to find alternative revenue streams to replace the federal funding it will soon lose, and work to maintain at least the level of support it now provides to students, especially those with disabilities.

This proposed budget will eliminate so many programs- those discussed above and a multitude of others- which positively impact New York City students. Please do not let these programs end on your watch. Please reject the Mayor's November Financial Plan. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Molly Senack (She/Her)  
Education and Employment Community Organizer  
Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York  
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**Courtney Bryan.** Executive Director

**Center for Justice Innovation  
New York City Council  
Finance Committee  
December 11, 2023**

Good morning, Chair Brannan, and esteemed members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Center for Justice Innovation.

My name is Hailey Nolasco. I am the Director of Government Relations at the Center for Justice Innovation (the Center). Since our inception, the Center has supported the vision embraced by the Council of a fair, effective, and humane justice system and public safety built through sustainable, community-driven solutions. The Center's long standing partnership with the Council over the past 25 years has helped bring this vision to life through evidence-based programming that spans the justice continuum.

It does not go without notice that our City is experiencing unprecedented fiscal challenges and we wholeheartedly understand the City's responsibility to respond to competing needs. However, it is important to make a conscious effort to not divest from vital services that will directly impact public safety and address growing community needs. We must work our way through this fiscal crisis together without major cuts to programs that will have detrimental effects to the vulnerable communities we serve for years to come.

Thousands of people city-wide are engaged in our programs each year where they receive meaningful resources ranging from alternatives to detention and incarceration, conflict mediation, therapeutic support, economic empowerment, and domestic violence services. In addition to these services, the Center's programs also have made a deep impact in improving public safety in communities that have experienced historic disinvestment through community revitalization programs such as placekeeping.

Our work takes a preventative approach, addressing the root causes of crime, in many instances, before harm ever occurs. In communities impacted by crime, facing divestment and marginalization, our programs provide a wealth of opportunities and network of resources for residents to live safe, successful, and joyful lives. We have been appreciative of the support we have received from the Administration as it has gone towards making deep investments throughout our most vulnerable neighborhoods preventing gun violence, promoting housing stability, and working at the intersection of the justice and behavioral health systems.

**Courtney Bryan.** Executive Director

Particularly as we look towards a future without Rikers Island, these programs will be relied on even more. Data shows that incarceration often fails to address the underlying causes of crime, resulting in high rates of reoffending and recidivism.<sup>1</sup> Incarceration can also create collateral consequences such as losing housing, employment, access to higher education and benefits, which all serve as protective factors that deter criminal activity. Meanwhile, the full annual cost of incarceration has nearly quadrupled from 2011 to 2021, coming in at \$556,539 per year per person held in jail.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, incarceration is only a viable response after a crime has occurred. Our array of evidence-based programmatic offerings work to prevent crime in the first place, treating the issues that can lead to criminal justice system involvement and reducing the associated costs. At the Center, our aim is to provide meaningful and proportionate responses to crime, treat all people under our care with dignity and respect, prioritize public safety, and produce much-needed cost savings for the City.

While the Center applauds the City's choice to move away from carceral responses to crime, the efficacy of these programs are reliant on investments to do so responsibly. Preventative community safety programs provide much needed services that address criminogenic factors like lack of economic opportunity, mental illness, substance use issues, and domestic violence. The time and investment dedicated towards our participants ensures that they will be equipped with the tools and resources they need to be productive and safe members of their communities.

Today, I will be detailing a number of our vital programmatic offerings, ranging from preventative work in impacted communities, to supportive interventions for justice-involved individuals.

### **Preventative Services**

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<sup>1</sup> Ly, L. & R. Sanchez (August 22) "Recidivists fuel New York City's rise in crime, mayor and police officials say." New York, NY: CNN <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/03/us/new-york-city-mayor-police-recidivists-bail-reform/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> "Comptroller Stringer: Cost of Incarceration per Person in New York City Skyrockets to All-Time High." *Comptroller.Nyc.Gov*, 6 Dec. 2021, [comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/)

Courtney Bryan. Executive Director

### **Neighborhood Safety Initiative (NSI)**

Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) supports the implementation of NeighborhoodStat (NSTAT), a resident-driven community organizing initiative within the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP). NSTAT is a comprehensive strategy to enhance public safety and strengthen community well-being in 30 public housing developments.

MAP enlists residents, City agencies and community-based partners to help move beyond enforcement and address the factors underlying safety – providing opportunities for work and play, health and well-being, and youth development; promoting activated, well-maintained spaces through community and human-centered design; and improving trust between neighbors with a responsive and just government. MAP's mission is to improve community safety in places impacted by historic disinvestment by creating opportunities for residents to identify key issues underlying crime and participate in the decision-making to address these priorities. Through NeighborhoodStat (NStat), the operational centerpiece of MAP, we harness the collective expertise of residents, government, and community partners to drive meaningful dialogue, problem-solving, and ultimately change at both the neighborhood and administrative levels.

NeighborhoodStat aims to connect resident access to social services and community resources, increase the security and quality of shared community space by working with residents to physically improve and maintain public space thereby enhancing a positive sense of ownership, increase civic engagement, and enhance the capacity of its residents to improve public safety and wellbeing in their communities. Adopting a participatory justice model, NeighborhoodStat works with local organizers to provide direct investment into historically underserved communities and ensures that those most affected and most marginalized, especially those who have been historically left out of these conversations, have a say in improving health and wellbeing, safety and justice, economic stability, physical space, and youth development policies that affect their lives.

**Courtney Bryan.** Executive Director

The program has reached over 60,000 residents of the New York City Housing Authority utilizing the following strategies:<sup>3</sup>

- **Invest in Residents:** Neighborhood Safety Initiatives hires, trains, and supports community organizers; recruits and organizes resident leadership teams; designs and implements social programs; manages community action plans; and implements data collection and evaluations. Social programs include youth mentorship, coding courses, music mentorship, adult entrepreneurship training and support, intergenerational green space stewardship, healing and justice events, public education campaigns like those around COVID-19, summer time basketball series, economic mobility events, and more. Neighborhood Safety Initiatives also respond to residents' immediate needs. The program coordinates collaboration across city agencies and other non-profit partners to answer food needs, connect residents to resources, and host conflict resolution events. In 2023, more than 465 intergenerational residents were actively involved in resident stakeholder teams, taking the lead in identifying both the issues plaguing their communities and driving positive change.
- **Transform Public Spaces:** Neighborhood Safety Initiatives works with residents to re-envision public spaces to make them more welcoming and promote people's well-being. In the last five years the program has designed and implemented a series of community gardens and recreational public spaces, wayfinding projects, murals, creative lighting installations, and a pop-up outdoor program with movable kiosks where partner agencies can provide information and supportive services to the community. Since 2017, NSI has overseen the co-creation and implementation of over 65 built environment projects and social programs. These initiatives include murals, open plazas, community gardens, pop-up modular resource hubs, music programs for youth, and adult entrepreneurship programs in collaboration with NYCHA community stakeholders.

### **Wraparound Services**

The Center does not just focus on safety as it is traditionally understood. Through our community safety programs, we are able to provide a range of wraparound services. These

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<sup>3</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. *Neighborhood Safety Initiatives*. New York, NY.

<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/neighborhood-safety-initiatives/more-info>

**Courtney Bryan.** Executive Director

services are not one-size-fits-all. They are hyperlocal and have deep roots in the community. They are built on relationships of trust amongst community members who know and care for each other. There is a significant amount of labor involved for these programs to blend seamlessly into the fabric of a neighborhood and gain the respect of its residents. Among the services we offer are:

### **School Conflict Mediation Services**

In New York City, there are often stark discrepancies in school suspension rates based on race, gender, and disability. School conflict mediation services play a pivotal role in addressing the needs of at-risk youth, particularly in schools heavily impacted by violence. Mediation services within schools most impacted by violence, are provided by Crisis Management System partners such as our Save Our Streets (SOS) program through investments of the DYCD Office of Neighborhood Safety and act as a crucial intervention mechanism. By fostering a supportive environment for conflict resolution, credible messengers empower students to navigate challenges peacefully, reducing the likelihood of escalations that can lead to violence. This preventative approach is essential for creating a safer learning atmosphere, allowing students to focus on their education without the constant threat of conflicts.

The funding directed toward school conflict mediation services are a lifeline for at-risk youth, enabling the implementation and sustainment of programs that directly address the unique challenges faced by these students. By investing in these services, we work to break the cycle of violence and create opportunities for positive growth. This funding not only supports the immediate needs of conflict resolution but also fosters long-term community development by nurturing a generation capable of handling adversity constructively.

The ripple effect of these investments goes beyond the classroom, influencing societal dynamics and contributing to the creation of safer, more resilient neighborhoods. In essence, the funding for school conflict mediation services serves as an essential tool in building a foundation for the safety and success of at-risk youth and their communities.

### **Therapeutic Supportive Services**

**Courtney Bryan.** Executive Director

Public safety solutions that are not trauma-informed can perpetuate past harms. Our programs offer services in areas that have experienced tremendous individual, community, and historical trauma. That is why we strive to integrate healing and resilience into all of our projects and programming, creating spaces and conducting activities dedicated to emotional, mental, and physical restoration while emphasizing the importance of caring for self and others.

We understand the complexities and intersecting factors that impact community trauma. We support healing from trauma on an individual level, while also incorporating a broader-based community healing approach to truly create a transformational experience for not only youth, but the impacted community as a whole. Staff coordinate grief counseling, support circles in response to violence, and ongoing circles for survivors of gun violence. Justice Centers provide individual and group- based support including counseling, advocacy, and peer-based groups focused on healthy relationships, trauma and healing, and wellness.

- **Individual and group counseling** provides space for participants to receive the support they need, navigate challenges, and access opportunities for healing.
- **Leadership retreats** support healing for our participants and build their ability to be successful in programming and work toward future goals. Participants have the opportunity to participate in the two-day out-of-state retreat incorporating rites of passage, leadership development, and healing activities.

### **Economic Mobility**

We understand that long-term community safety cannot be achieved without addressing the centuries-old connections between crime, poverty, and structural racism. An integral part of our safety approach is providing mobility out of poverty through a combination of entrepreneurship training, incubating local small business ideas, and creating safe public spaces and business corridors that can attract businesses, customers, activity, and investment.

Programs offered at a range of our sites include:

- **Workforce Development:** The Center offers a range of workforce development and work readiness programs including certification programs such as OSHA and security, drivers training programs, and community internship programs.

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- **High School Equivalency:** Onsite high school equivalency programming allows participants to study and obtain their high school equivalency. The programming is integrated with youth and workforce programs to increase engagement and success.
- **Youth Entrepreneurship** provides participants with hands-on, project-based training to develop and launch their own business. Participants gain skills to develop side hustles into entrepreneurial ventures while also creating collective projects focused on community safety and healing.
- **Community Internship Program** provides supported opportunities for youth to gain work experience and receive mentorship from successful professionals, while investing in and supporting small locally-owned businesses.
- **The Anti-Gun Violence Youth Employment Program (AGVYEP)** provides youth most at risk of harm or criminalization with valuable opportunities for work experience and mentorship. By intertwining employment and mentorship, AGVYEP not only offers immediate connection to economic opportunity but also offers individuals who may not yet be ready for traditional forms of employment a pathway into the workforce. Through meaningful work experiences, participants gain skills, confidence, and a sense of purpose, steering them away from the perils of crime and violence. The mentorship component further enhances this impact, providing a supportive relationship that guides and inspires these at-risk youth, fostering personal growth and resilience against the challenges they may face. AGVYEP exemplifies a holistic approach to reducing opportunities for violence and empowering young individuals to build a more promising future.

#### **Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement (RISE) Project**

The RISE Project transforms responses to intimate partner violence, focusing specifically on its intersection with gun violence. Gun violence and intimate partner violence are often viewed as separate problems that require different responses, but neighborhoods impacted by high rates of gun violence also have the highest levels of reported domestic violence incidents. Access to a gun makes it five times more likely that a partner experiencing abuse will be killed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. *Rise Project*. New York, NY.  
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/rise-project>

**Courtney Bryan.** Executive Director

In neighborhoods across New York City, RISE implements community-centered interventions that build local capacity to respond to and prevent intimate partner violence. RISE works with people causing harm in their relationships to stop the violence and transform behaviors and offers people experiencing harm the support they need to navigate systems to obtain safety. RISE's program offerings seamlessly integrate public health, healing-centered approaches, and restorative justice strategies through the following:

- **Community Initiatives:** By engaging communities most impacted by violence, RISE builds capacity to co-create safety in the community and within our homes by changing the societal norms that tolerate intimate partner violence. RISE implements community healing, placemaking, and community organizing strategies that activate neighborhood spaces to prevent violence and support healthy relationships. Youth programming provides space for youth to understand how to maintain healthy relationships, develop youth advocacy projects, and build networks of peer support.
- **Prevention Strategies:** RISE engages community members to play a role in preventing, responding to, and ultimately ending intimate partner violence through workshops, youth programs, community events, and neighborhood-specific public education campaigns.
- **Capacity Building:** Through tailored training and technical assistance to community-based and gun violence prevention organizations, RISE builds community capacity to prevent violence, support healthy relationship norms, and reduce tolerance for intimate partner violence
- **Crisis Response:** RISE responds to crises through immediate interventions and addressing existing service gaps that make it difficult for those most marginalized or impacted by intersectional violence to access support.
- **Youth Programs:** RISE engages youth to develop and implement projects focused on changing harmful behaviors around intimate partner violence. Youth learn about dating violence, consent, and navigating relationships through workshops, public education campaigns, arts initiatives, and community events.
- **Transformative Initiatives:** Community-based interventions engage individuals who cause harm in their intimate relationships. The goal for the individual is to stop causing harm, take accountability, and change their behavior to ultimately prevent abuse

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- **Individual Interventions:** RISE provides individual services to support participants in recognizing the root causes of their harmful behaviors and co-creates strategies to change behavior using an intersectional and restorative framework.
- **Group-Based Interventions:** RISE supports people to hold themselves accountable and to build networks of peer accountability through group interventions. Voluntary, neighborhood-based groups facilitated by trained staff provide accessible space to challenge harmful behaviors and beliefs around intimate partner violence.
- **Community Strategies:** RISE provides community healing circles and interventions to provide ongoing support when violence has been caused in the community. RISE also develops tools, trainings, and interventions to increase community engagement to challenge violence such as bystander intervention trainings, community-focused safety planning, and community campaigns.

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### **Supportive Interventions**

#### **Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs)**

Alternatives to incarceration (ATIs) are diversion programs mandated by judges that provide participants with supportive services in their communities instead of a jail or prison sentence. For defendants with substance use disorder, serious mental illness, and other treatable issues, incarceration can prove to be significantly destabilizing.<sup>5</sup> This can result in reoffending and reincarceration, which generate harm and create steep costs for the City. With the goal of breaking that cycle, ATIs link participants with mental health and substance use treatment, vocational and educational supports, individual and group counseling tailored to participants' needs, as well as supervision and regular reporting to the court. ATI programs therefore reduce the court's reliance on incarceration, lower the jail population, and allow people to remain in their communities while receiving the tools they need to avoid further justice system involvement.

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<sup>5</sup> *A Safer, More Effective Option Than Rikers, A More Just NYC: Independent Commission on NYC Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform*, Oct. 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b6de4731aef1de914f43628/t/6530056e07c0614a1a3d6655/1697645934489/1500+Secure+Treatment+Beds+to+Help+Close+Rikers+White+Paper.pdf>.

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Our funding allows staff to undergo significant training which assures a high level of care, and fidelity to the service model. Through adherence to evidence-based practices, we know our programs are successful in reducing reoffending and reincarceration. Our programs also offer longer term services to participants on a voluntary basis following the completion of their court-mandated program, assuring they have continued access to services should they encounter any obstacles along the way. With this high level of care, ATIs work to set justice-involved individuals up for success in their community.

During one study period (publication forthcoming) of our ATI program at Manhattan Justice Opportunities, participants who successfully completed the program would have collectively served a total between 58 and 258 years of incarceration. This would present an immense cost to bear, anywhere between \$32 million and upwards of \$143 million.<sup>6</sup> ATIs are less expensive and represent an investment not just in the individuals, but also the communities they reside in by contributing to safety overall.

### **Supervised Release**

The Center has played an instrumental role in demonstrating the success of the Supervised Release program, an Alternative to Detention (ATD). An effective pilot program showed that releasing more people from pre-trial detention does not compromise public safety, and the Center now runs Supervised Release in Brooklyn and Staten Island.<sup>7</sup> The Supervised Release model employs social workers and case managers who check in regularly with Supervised Release participants to not only help plan for upcoming court dates and address needs and barriers to court attendance, but also to connect them to community-based resources and services that can provide lasting support beyond the duration of a court case.

An independent evaluation found that Supervised Release is as effective as cash bail at preventing failure to appear in court without recourse to the documented harms of

<sup>6</sup> "Comptroller Stringer: Cost of Incarceration per Person in New York City Skyrockets to All-Time High." *Comptroller.Nyc.Gov*, 6 Dec. 2021, [comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2/)

<sup>7</sup>Hahn, J. (2016, February). *An Experiment in Bail Reform: Examining the Impact of the Brooklyn Supervised Release Program*. New York, NY: Center for Justice Innovation. <https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/experiment-bail-reform-examining-impact-brooklyn-supervised-release-program>

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incarceration.<sup>8</sup> In 2020, a citywide measure showed that since 2016, 87 percent of participants never missed a single court date while enrolled in Supervised Release. Court attendance remains high following major bail reforms in January 2020 which made all cases eligible for the program, with approximately 90 percent of scheduled court dates attended.<sup>9</sup> In FY23, Brooklyn Justice Initiatives worked with nearly 6,700 unique individuals, and Staten Island Justice Center more than 1,400, to provide them with supervision and resources in order to ensure their return to court and help them address any other needs.<sup>10</sup>

The funding received for Supervised Release is essential for ensuring defendants can remain in community, without compromising public safety. For individuals involved in the justice system, remaining in community allows them to maintain connections to their loved ones, keep attending school or work, and hold onto protective factors that can be hard to regain once lost. While engaged in Supervised Release, intensive casework provides participants with a network of support and resources they can rely on, all while avoiding the additional trauma of incarceration.

### **Pre-Arraignment Diversion**

In recent years, a critical and growing part of the Center’s work has been an effort to develop proportionate responses that shrink the footprint of the justice system and minimize its harms. This has led to the launch of several early diversion programs which provide offramps to individuals even further upstream than traditional system responses have allowed for, such as:

#### **Bronx HOPE**

Bronx Heroin Overdose Prevention and Education (HOPE), an initiative of Bronx Community Solutions, addresses substance use issues with a harm reduction model at the precinct level. By giving clients the option of accessing community services instead of appearing

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<sup>8</sup> Bloom, H., C. Redcross & M. Skemer (2020, September). *Pursuing Pretrial Justice Through an Alternative to Bail: Findings from an Evaluation of New York City’s Supervised Release Program*. New York, NY: MDRC.

<https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/pursuing-pretrial-justice-through-alternative-bail>

<sup>9</sup> Center for Justice Innovation, New York City Criminal Justice Agency & CASES. (2021, October). *Supervised Release: A Proven Alternative to Bail*. New York, NY.

<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/supervised-release-five-years-later>

<sup>10</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2023). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

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in court, Bronx HOPE gives Bronx residents the opportunity for rehabilitation and connection to community rather than jail or options that don't address the underlying issues.

The process begins when an individual is issued a Desk Appearance Ticket from the New York Police Department. The NYPD will forward this ticket to the Bronx District Attorney's Office, which will review the individual for eligibility. Individuals who receive a ticket for drug possession will have the option to participate in the HOPE program. If an individual is eligible, they will be met at the precinct after their arrest by a peer mentor with similar lived experience. The peer mentor explains the program, provides a Naloxone kit and overdose prevention education, and connects the individual to Bronx HOPE case managers. If an individual chooses to participate, they must meet with a Bronx HOPE case manager within seven days of their arrest. Case managers then conduct an assessment and work with the individual to develop an individualized plan of care, help identify services that address an individual's needs, and provide support in the completion of services.

Bronx HOPE demonstrates that eligible cases are more likely to engage in programming with peer presence at the precinct. In 2022, Bronx HOPE had a contact rate of 84 percent for dispatched cases. Of those cases that were dispatched, 81 percent completed their services, thereby preventing the need for those participants to appear in court and face criminal charges.<sup>11</sup>

In the past fiscal year, the Center has served almost 17,000 people through our ATIs, pre-arraignment diversion programs, and Supervised Release program.<sup>12</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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Through a comprehensive array of programming, ranging from Alternatives to Incarceration to domestic violence services focusing on individuals causing harm, the Center works to generate public safety within communities. The Center applauds the City's efforts to close Rikers Island and transition away from reliance on traditional carceral settings. At the same time, these programs will truly be compromised if we divest during this time. The success of these programs relies on adherence to evidence-based practices and fidelity to service

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<sup>11</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2023). Justice Center Application database. [Data file].

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



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models. As we look towards closing Rikers Island and diminishing the jail population, we should not simultaneously be divesting in these programs.

The Center looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with Council to continue providing these vital services to communities. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

## **New York City Council Finance Committee Oversight Hearing on the Budget Plan**

### **December 11, 2023**

**To:** The Honorable City Councilman Justin Brannan

**From:** Elisha Rhodes, Executive Director, Center for Racial Justice in Education

**Date:** December 11, 2023

Dear Councilman Brannan,

For over 20 years, we at the Center for Racial Justice in Education (CRJE) have worked alongside educators and students to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in their schools and communities. Since 2021 alone, CRJE has guided over 7,000 educators and leaders in deepening their understanding of race, racism, and the impact of racial bias—including their own unconscious biases—on youth. Grounded in our mission to train and empower educators to dismantle patterns of racism and injustice in our schools and communities, we envision a world where all young people learn and thrive in racially equitable, liberating, and empowering educational spaces.

On behalf of the thousands of educators we partner with across New York City, we would first like to ask: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November, with devastating rippling effects on the communities they serve. These cuts disproportionately affect low-income communities of color who rely the most on these services.

We are particularly concerned about the cuts to racial equity initiatives, afterschool programs, and youth services. In the wake of the pandemic, racial inequalities in education that have persisted for decades have deepened. The proposed budget cuts will only further exacerbate these disparities. School districts with the highest percentages of students of color, who have historically had the lowest per-pupil expenditures, have seen their expenditures [decline at a faster rate](#) than other school districts. Asian-American and White students are almost twice as likely as their Black and Hispanic peers to earn grades of “proficient” in ELA in grades 3–8; [the gap](#) is even greater in math. Persistent segregation in New York City Public schools has maintained racial isolation for students of color. Despite the racial diversity of the city’s school-aged population, [73% of middle schools](#) have a single race in the majority. Students with the highest needs are concentrated in [districts with the fewest resources](#). Black and Brown students are in urgent need of academic and social-emotional support. Teacher turnover has increased drastically, especially for Brown and Black teachers. Schools are in dire need of resources to support their Black and Brown students and to support teachers in remaining in the profession.



Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. That's why the Center for Racial Justice in Education joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and wellbeing of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you for your consideration.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ER".

Elisha Rhodes  
Executive Director  
Center for Racial Justice in Education

## Testimony for Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 hearing with Finance Committee on PEG Budget Cuts

I worked as an architect and sustainability leader for 25 years in NYC, and led the American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment from 2017-2022. Then in 2017 I led the development of the Zero Waste Design Guidelines, and since then have been advocating for the city to separately collect organic waste, and containerize waste, to improve streetscapes, reduce rats, and help the city reach zero waste, climate, equity and resiliency goals. So, I applaud the current administration and DSNY leadership for forwarding these strategies. But I also know how crucial the NYC Compost Project is to the city.

**Community Composting is essential for NYC to be a green, clean, healthy and resilient city. It makes no sense for Mayor Adams to cut funding for something so valuable that costs ±\$7 million a year, around 0.4% of the DSNY's budget.**

Community-scale composting is vital for the successful rollout of the city's curbside collection program AND for maintaining street trees, rain gardens and community gardens. It also is an established community engagement program and makes no sense to disinvest in it, especially when the city is putting in such effort to engaging community members.

**1. New York City has developed a vision for a greener, cleaner, healthier, and more resilient city over the last 2 decades, and community composting has a vital role to play in it.**

- a. Across three administrations, the successive mayoral plans have advanced significant climate and sustainability initiatives.
  - i. Bloomberg's "PlaNYC: A Greener Greater New York" included expanding park lands, the million tree initiative, and [more than \\$9 billion](#) invested in green infrastructure.
  - ii. De Blasio's "[OneNYC](#): The Plan for a Strong and Just City" incorporated measures to address rising inequality, social and climate resilience, as well as a bold environmental plan for zero waste to reach landfills by 2030.
  - iii. Adams' administration has proposed "[PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done](#)" which adds a focus on improving the quality of life of all New Yorkers and building the green and circular economy - adding measures to increase urban tree canopy, advance nature based solutions and incentivize New Yorkers to steward green spaces.
- b. Mayor Adams has created roles for leaders of Urban Agriculture, Public Space and Rat Mitigation. Just last week, the City Council approved the NYC Department of City planning's zoning reforms for [City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality](#), allowing distributed small-scale composting facilities across the city.
- c. Community composting plays a vital role within these goals, as explained below.

**2. Community Composting is required to maintain street trees, rain gardens, community gardens and green spaces.**

- a. The city needs the good-quality compost that community compost creates to properly maintain the [millions of dollars](#) of green infrastructure that it has recently installed. When compost is applied to street trees, rain gardens, parks and community gardens it [makes the soil](#) and plants healthier: reducing flooding and air pollution, providing summer cooling and making the city greener and cleaner.
- b. NYC Compost Project sites provide over 90% of the compost which Green Thumb distributes to community gardens for communities to grow healthy food.
- c. The vast majority of the organic waste collected by the city is not composted, but goes to Newtown Creek and is anaerobically digested, producing biogas and digestate, which goes mainly to landfill. It does not provide a healthy soil amendment.
- d. Other [research](#) demonstrates how compost applied to soil surfaces can absorb as much as 80% of a 10-cm (4-in) rainfall event, [reducing runoff generation by up to 97%](#) over multiple high-intensity, high-accumulation storm events; shrink stormwater peak flows — when runoff is at its most destructive and erosive — [by up to 51%](#); and increase [microbial carbon in disturbed soils by 60%](#), resulting in a 300% increase in plant cover compared to conventional vegetation establishment practices.

**3. NYC Compost Project educates and engages New Yorkers**

- a. Thousands of master composters are trained every year and these people help schools, community gardens and other places set up and run on-site composting, requiring no trucks and generating valuable compost to improve soils. Thousands of volunteers get to see how disgusting garbage can be instead turned into a valuable resource to make the city greener and healthier.
- b. The NYC Compost Project partners such as Big Reuse have been doing all the outreach work to educate the public on separating food scraps for the City's curbside organics collection program. Without their outreach curbside collection will be much less successful.
- c. "A study of volunteer tree planters participating in the MillionTreesNYC found that—other than voting or attending religious services—tree planting was many participants' first act of volunteerism; follow up interviews found that they went on to be more highly civically engaged in their communities in other ways" see [link](#)
- d. As the city looks to increase community engagement and strengthen social resilience, it makes no sense to disinvest in a low cost, established, successful community engagement program such as community composting.

Now is not the time for short-sighted cuts to community-scale composting, which is about 0.005% of the city's budget. The city should instead be expanding the number of small-scale compost sites to enable a [substantial percentage](#) of our food scraps and yard waste to be transformed into a valuable neighborhood resource.

Community composting helps regenerate city soils, neighborhood by neighborhood, reducing flooding, providing summer cooling and creating healthier urban ecosystems. The programs' stewardship opportunities foster civic engagement and social resilience, strengthen cultural connections to healthy food, and offer tangible steps for New Yorkers to start living in a more sustainable way. These cost-effective programs contribute to a more equitable, livable city with fewer rats, cleaner streets, and thriving green spaces. NYC has spent decades and invested millions of dollars building up successful community compost programs, so let's commit to their future success.

The Center for Zero Waste Design is willing to discuss any of these ideas with council members or the administration,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clare Miflin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct 'M' and 'f'.

Clare Miflin,  
Executive Director, Center for Zero Waste Design



## **Chain Theatre Testimony for 12/11 City Council Hearing**

### **#WHY15 CAMPAIGN**

Dear City Budget Committee,

My name is Christina Perry and I am the Director of Development for the Chain Theatre, a non profits arts organization that serves thousands of artists and tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year. We thank you for the opportunity to share our voice and the impact of these most recent budget cuts.

Our organization is active within our community District 3 community. We are dedicated in building up the neighborhood we reside; attending Town Halls, community building events with our local precinct, offer free and discounted arts opportunities to the residents of Hell's Kitchen, all in addition to being an artistic hub that provides free and affordable opportunities for artists to share their stories.

As an independent theatre venue we are left in the dark about decisions made regarding city budget.

Why 15? Why are these cuts being made? If the city of New York was truly committed to bettering their communities, funds would increase for cultural institutions like the Chain who provide only positive foot traffic on the block we reside. We are still recovering from the pandemic. That battle has not yet ended.

I personally have witnessed the continuing effects budget cuts have had outside our very door. **The increased drug activity and unaddressed mental health epidemic, homelessness, continuous garbage on our side walk, and used needles. Myself and artists feeling unsafe on our very block. We have already lived through this in full force for the past three years as the effects of the pandemic have taken their toll in our community here in Midtown.** If it's this bad now, what happens as those funds continue to backslide?

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. **That's why the Chain Theatre, joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget.** We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- **Share with us how you will ensure the safety of our artists and patrons who frequent our theatre in a community already at risk.**
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

**We understand that this incredible city we are lucky enough to call home is a complex eco system. Continuously cutting the arts and public services is not the answer in building a stronger community.** We are here to have a dialogue. We are committed to the people of New York and work tirelessly to make a safe space for patrons and artists to call home.

Our theatre, our community, our home cannot withstand another 15% cut.

Respectfully,  
Christina Perry  
Director of Development  
Chain Theatre  
312 W. 36th Street, 3rd &4th Floor  
New York, NY 10018  
[christina@chaintheatre.org](mailto:christina@chaintheatre.org)  
[www.chaintheatre.org](http://www.chaintheatre.org) (917) 261-2446



# ADVANCING OUR COMMUNITY

## Chinese-American Planning Council Testimony Before the New York City Council Finance Committee Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair December 11th, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the finance committee for the opportunity to testify. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities. We are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve.

CPC is part of the Peoples Plan and we strongly endorse their platform in investing in our communities through care not budget cuts. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would have detrimental repercussions to our services and the communities that we serve. New Yorkers deserve to live a dignified life with a strong social safety net. However, our Mayor has continued to propose austerity budgets and has placed essential services at the chopping block while maintaining bloated budgets for policing and our carceral system. The City has consistently pointed towards the influx of asylum seekers as the reason behind these budget cuts. However, according to an analysis from the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#), they found that “while the growth in asylum seeker costs is adding new fiscal strain, the City’s request for 15 percent cuts across all agencies — which totals \$10 billion in cuts in one year — significantly overstates the fiscal impact of migrant arrivals.”

At CPC, we provide wraparound services serving community members from all stages of life. However, in this current budget (FY24), the City is cutting \$16.4 million from the Department for the Aging (DFTA). We have heard directly from community members the difficulties that the pandemic posed to them as there was an increase in isolation and feelings of loneliness. As we are recovering from the pandemic and our senior center has reopened, our seniors continue to find solace and community at our senior centers. Furthermore, according to the Asian American Federation, they reported that the Asian American population in New York has a [43.9% Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\) rate](#) and it is statistics like these that remind us how critical community-based organizations are in providing in-language and culturally responsive services especially for our seniors.

Moreover, in this current budget (FY24), the City is cutting \$43.7 million from DYCD, which includes \$1.5 million for a 3.8% reduction in Comprehensive Afterschool System of NYC (COMPASS) positions. In addition, Summer Rising Program hours will be reduced as a result of budget cuts. CPC served 1,400 students through Summer Rising over the past summer. Many families rely on these programs not only for child care but with the hopes that their children are receiving the educational enrichment that they rightfully deserve. Our communities thrive as a whole when we have quality education programs in which students are able to discover their full potential.

To make matters worse, the City is also cutting \$25 million from 3K (preschool for 3 year olds), and \$120 million in coming years. This would impact at least 10,000 children and disproportionately impact specifically working class New Yorkers.

It also remains counterintuitive to make budget cuts to the very same agencies that provide critical services to migrant families. The City has cited fiscal strain and their inability to support the overwhelming migrant population. However, there are tangible and effective solutions that can be utilized to alleviate this burden like raising revenue through establishing a progressive tax structure. In one of the richest countries in the world and in the richest city in the world, we need to ensure that our vulnerable communities are not struggling and that starts with the top 5% of New Yorkers paying their fair share.

When we create a social structure that prioritizes the investments of public goods and ultimately meets the basic needs of every New Yorker including affordable and quality housing, education, and high-paying jobs, we create an environment that is safer, secure, and brighter for all New Yorkers. Thank you so much for your time and if there are any questions, please reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at [achen9@cpc-nyc.org](mailto:achen9@cpc-nyc.org).



# ADVANCING OUR COMMUNITY

Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the finance committee for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Nicholas Lombardo, and I am an after-school educator at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC), the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S. I am joining my colleagues at CPC and from many other organizations to vehemently oppose the proposed 5% cuts to the funding for educational, cultural, environmental, and social services programs. I ask the Council and Speaker Adrienne Adams to use all of their powers to ensure the budget modification does not pass.

The City has told us that these cuts are “necessary,” because funds from the worst of the pandemic have dried up, and there is a so-called “migrant crisis”. The only crisis that I see is what happens if our already underfunded programs continue to lose funds.

Rather than cut our funding, we need to raise the revenue necessary to continue to provide and to expand access to these services to *all* New Yorkers, recently arrived or not, but especially the folks in the greatest need.

I work with high school seniors from across the City, all of whom come from lower income, immigrant families. It is my job to empower them by guiding them through their college applications, providing paid internships, and teaching leadership skills. We do our best with what we receive from DYCD, serving over 100 students between three staff, but to make sure that all students’ needs and deliverables are met, we often work overtime.

The proposed cuts will mean a reduction in paid summer internships, which my students rely on to save for college and gain critical job experience.

It means our already small team will have even fewer resources to help incoming first-generation college students to submit college applications.

Slashing budgets by 5% will mean even less money to effectively run programs that serve lower income families who have recently come to the United States. Social service agencies like CPC have been pivotal to the social and economic mobility of our community members. The Asian American population in New York has a 43.9% Limited English Proficiency (LEP) rate, reminding us how critical community-based organizations are in providing in-language and culturally responsive services.

We urge the City to roll back these cuts and invest in our communities. Thank you for your time and we appreciate the opportunity to speak on the issues that greatly impact our communities.

Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the finance committee for the opportunity to testify. My name is Farris Albokhiti and I am a Family Development Coach at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC).

I want to start off by sharing a common student experience from New Utrecht High School:

There are 2 college counselors in the school of 3,000-4,000 students.

It is rare for students to have a meaningful conversation with a college counselor as they are only able to meet with them once or twice by their senior year. A majority of the students are new immigrants and first generation college students- and without close support college becomes a nearly impossible prospect. The lack of resources disproportionately hurts students of color, immigrants and low-income students.

At CPC, we provide our students with the guidance and resources to navigate the complex college application process. However, the proposed budget cuts directly target these critical services provided by social service agencies like CPC. These budget cuts also impact our students even earlier in the education pipeline including cuts to hours and services for Summer Rising programs for middle school students, in which CPC served over 1,400 students over the past summer. This means that working class families will have to struggle to find care and our students will lack the enrichment that they deserve.

Social services are historically undervalued and the first victims of budget cuts. However, they are the very services that our communities rely on during challenging times, which was especially evident during the recent pandemic. In addition to education services, we provide services to community members from all stages of life and the City has proposed cuts that would disproportionately harm our most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

We urge the City to reconsider and roll back these proposed budget cuts. Investing in the social safety net and public goods is an investment in the future of our city and its young people. By ensuring all New Yorkers have access to the necessary resources, we can build a more equitable and prosperous future.



FOR THE RECORD

FOR THE RECORD

240 West 35<sup>th</sup> Street ■ Suite 302 ■ New York, New York 10001

## Testimony on NYC November 2023 Financial Plan

Submitted to the New York City Council Finance Committee

December 11, 2023

*Ana Champeny, Vice President for Research, Citizens Budget Commission*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on New York City's November 2023 Financial Plan. I am Ana Champeny, Vice President for Research at the Citizens Budget Commission, a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank and watchdog devoted to constructive change in the finances, services, and policies of New York State and City governments.

New York City's fiscal health is extremely precarious. I want to be very clear. The budget problems are real and large. The choices made in the coming months will determine whether the City emerges as fiscally stable and competitive or risks both its ability to serve New Yorkers in need and its attractiveness to residents and businesses.

The choices will be hard; the City cannot provide everything to everyone. But it can thrive and help our most in-need neighbors if it prioritizes key services, relentlessly manages them to get results, and operates effectively and efficiently. It is not the time to raise taxes, which would weaken New York City's competitiveness, or dip into reserves, which would weaken the City's ability to withstand any future recession.

How did the City's budget pressure get to the boiling point? The rapid and persistent influx of migrants and asylum seekers has come with an immense, unanticipated fiscal cost. Furthermore, the federal government has not contributed anything close to its fair share. While the State has stepped up, it also should shoulder more of any non-federal burden.

The cost to serve migrants is just part of the problem, responsible for approximately half of CBC's estimate of the full budget gap, assuming OMB's estimates of migrant costs hold.

The rest of the gap is due to short-sighted choices—choices, not external events—to increase recurring spending without the support of recurring revenues, predictably leading to the City's current situation.

First, temporary federal COVID aid was used to support and expand recurring programs that will be unfunded once the aid is depleted—the federal fiscal cliff.

Second, the City's temporary personal income and business tax revenue surge was used to expand City services. But as the economy normalizes, the money is not recurring. This City fiscal cliff is more than twice as large as the federal cliff.

Third, the recent collective bargaining agreements, while providing reasonable raises, did not include any offsetting productivity increases to help pay the \$16 billion in added costs through 2027.

The City's financial plan shows a \$7.1 billion gap for fiscal year 2025. However, this does not include the impacts of the fiscal cliffs, or other areas that the City regularly underbudgets. Adding these brings the gap to a more accurate \$10.6 billion, a significant shortfall even if tax revenues modestly exceed the forecast or migrant costs are overestimated.

CBC urges the Administration and City Council to make the hard choices—and to make them thoughtfully and strategically. Now is not the time to focus on expanding services but rather to prioritize those services with significant impact and to increase efficiency.

Mayor Eric Adams' directive to identify savings in agency budgets is right. CBC's analysis of the previous four savings programs found that 92 percent of savings measures would not directly affect program services; instead they lowered spending by re-estimating costs, eliminating vacant positions, and shifting costs to federal or State sources when possible. Much low hanging fruit has been plucked, but there is more.

The most recent PEG is weighed more heavily to program reductions. CBC's preliminary analysis finds that 20 percent of the savings will affect current programs. The question is whether these are the wisest choices. How many police officers are needed for public safety and are they all deployed directly for that purpose? What strategies really increase student achievement? How do we pare down to the most critical services for migrants and asylum seekers and provide them cost effectively.

Making wise, hard choices requires transparent data on program impact and a relentless effort to manage programs well. This informed, strategic approach is needed to ensure that a budget axe is not swung blindly, which could slice key services. The Council should focus on the data to help make the hard choices and minimize the impact on New Yorkers.

Additionally, labor must be part of the solution. The City will not identify and be able to deliver services efficiently without the input of labor and without agreed-upon changes to work rules, job titles, health insurance, and other benefit administration structures.

This is not the time to raise revenue. The City's residents and businesses already face the highest marginal personal income and business taxes; especially post pandemic, further increases could undermine the City's recovery.

This is also not the time to use the City's precious reserves. Dipping into the reserves would delay fixing the underlying problems. It's simply kicking the can on tough budget calls further down the road, and recklessly depleting reserves that will be needed if the economy takes a downturn.

This is the time for collaborative, informed, and thoughtful discussions to drive the hard choices. These should be grounded in the realization that current spending levels are not sustainable, and the focus should be on identifying the most critical priorities and services and delivering them well.



**Citizens' Committee  
for Children of NEW YORK**

**Testimony of Alice Bufkin, Juan Diaz, Jenny Veloz, and Caitlyn Passaretti  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Committee on Finance  
November Modification Budget  
December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure the wellbeing of New York's children, families, and communities.

We would like to thank Chair Brannan and all the members of the Finance Committee for holding this hearing on the November Budget Modification. Critical programs for children, families, and communities are facing budget reductions of historic magnitude in this budget adjustment, including over \$7.5 billion in cuts to City Tax Levy funding (\$1.7 billion in reductions in the current FY24 fiscal year and \$1.9 billion in each of the outyears FY25-FY27). Concerningly, proposed cuts in the November Budget Modification represent only one third of a 15% reduction anticipated as part of the Mayor's release of the Preliminary and Executive Budgets for FY25.

**The November Budget Modification proposes a devastating future for New York's children and families, and CCC calls on city leaders to fully reject these cuts and instead ensure children and families have the services and supports they need to thrive. Make no mistake: the wellbeing of New York City's children and families is central to the City's economic recovery and the health of the city as a whole.**

Below we outline areas of particular concern within the November proposal.

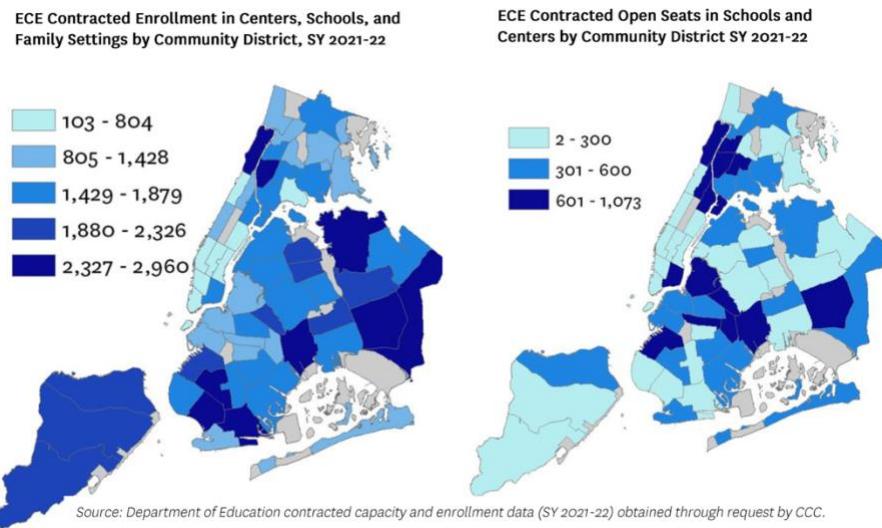
**Education**

The Department of Education (DOE) is facing a sweeping array of cuts in the November Budget Modification, including nearly \$550 million this year (FY24) and \$600 million in outyears. If additional cuts occur in the Preliminary and Executive Budgets, the extent of DOE cuts could reach \$2.1 billion.

The November Modification's proposed cuts to the early care and education system are particularly devastating. These reductions include a \$25 million cut to staffing in FY24, as well as a cut of \$120 million cut to services in the outyears. These cuts could lead to the loss of between 6,000 and 10,000 slots in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs, and they come at a time when data analysis reveals 80 percent of New York City families cannot afford care for children under five.

The maps provided below illustrate the distribution of children under five enrolled in DOE-contracted seats during the 2021-22 school year, alongside available open seats within the same period. These maps suggest a probable reduction in seat availability across existing services in these communities. The scale

of these cuts within the early care and education system could have devastating consequences for families.



Quality early care and education serve as crucial cornerstones for a child's development and preparedness for school. The proposed cuts threaten to strip families of affordable and dependable care choices, worsening socio-economic disparities while impeding children's educational and developmental prospects.

The DOE is facing significant cuts in other crucial areas, including the elimination of 432 vacant non-classroom positions; reductions to Community Schools totaling \$10 million in FY24 and \$8 million in outyears; and \$60 million from school food.

These cuts are on top of reductions already taken last fiscal year, as well as the anticipated loss of approximately \$1 billion in federal COVID-19 relief funds that have been used to support critical programs such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal fiscal relief funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are on top of the cuts laid out in the November Plan. The social emotional wellbeing and academic preparedness and success of children is at risk as the result of these cuts.

## **Afterschool and Summer Programs, Youth Justice, and Community Services**

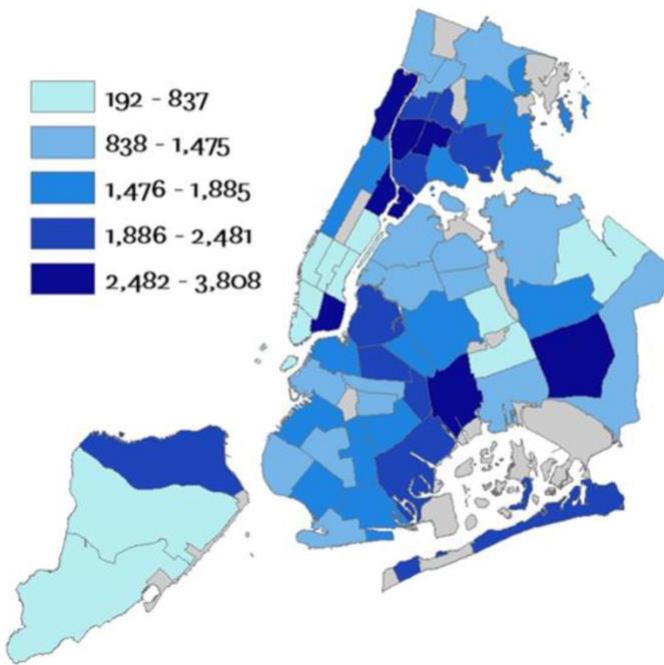
### **Afterschool and Summer**

Young people across the city are continuously [calling for more afterschool programs and community supports](#). Yet the cuts proposed in the November Modification promise sweeping cuts to some of the programs and services most essential to fostering youth opportunity and success.

COMPASS Afterschool programs are facing a \$1.5 million cut in FY24, and a \$6.9 million cut in the outyears. This will result in a loss of over 3,500 seats. As youth and families try to rebuild from the

pandemic, our city's young people require opportunities to grow and connect with peers in ways that advance their social, emotional, and physical development as well as their academic preparedness and success. Programs like COMPASS are vital lifelines for countless youth individuals, offering crucial support, mentorship, educational opportunities, and a safe space for personal growth and development. Reductions in these programs would disproportionately impact low-income youth and families who rely on these services for their children's growth and safety and as vital resources for working caregivers. Reductions are also likely to hit hardest in communities where children, youth and families were hardest hit by the socio-economic ramifications of the pandemic.

#### COMPASS Capacity by Community Districts, FY 22



CCC is also deeply concerned about the impact of funding cuts on summer programs, including \$19.6 million from the Summer Rising Program in FY25 (which commences July 1st, 2024) and outyears. As a result, this program will be shortened to 4 days a week for middle schoolers. Additionally, while not connected to the November Mod, federal funding for the DOE portion of Summer Rising will expire, resulting in an even larger funding gap. Youth deserve joy, fun, and positive youth development programming year-round, and we urge city leaders to reverse cuts that threaten access to these supports.

Additionally, the November Modification cuts \$20.5 million in unallocated funding from DYCD, which is projected to impact the Advance and Earn Expansion, Summer Youth Employment Program MetroCards, the Precision Employment Initiative, and the Readi Initiative.

## **Libraries and Parks**

Another major victim of the November cuts are libraries, which are slated to lose over \$21.7 million in FY24 and over \$20 million in the outyears.<sup>1</sup> These cuts have already resulted in New York's libraries closing on Sundays to accommodate the loss of funding. Libraries serve as crucial community hubs enabling New Yorkers to access the internet and computers, engage in group classes, participate in community activities, and more. They are also an important site for youth to spend time after school and on weekends.

New York City parks also face substantial losses from the November modification, jeopardizing crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. These cuts will result in a total loss of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care, and maintenance of parks, as well as limiting regular cleaning and service to many areas to just 1-3 times a week. Communities will face overflowing garbage and unusable bathrooms as a result of hiring freezes and staffing losses. Parks are invaluable resources that foster physical and mental health, and New Yorkers deserve cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain safe havens for children and families to enjoy.

## **Services for Justice-Involved Youth**

The November Budget Modification also threatens crucial services for justice-involved youth. Close to Home, which allows youth sentenced for crimes to remain closer to families and communities while receiving therapeutic services, is facing a \$6.7 million cut. Raise the Age programming, which provides wrap-around services, alternatives to detention/incarceration programming, and other rehabilitation services, is facing a \$2 million cut. Furthermore, a \$1.6 million cut for prevention re-estimates will result in fewer resources to support families experiencing child welfare involvement or youth justice system interaction. The November Mod also cuts \$5.4 million for the Office of Neighborhood Safety in the outyears, causing a reduction to legal services, recreational events, youth service coordination and technical assistance typically offered from the Office. This is on top of \$1 million in cuts in FY24-FY27 to Arches, a transformative mentoring program, as well as \$2.2 million in FY24 and \$2.6 million in outyears to Next STEPS. Next STEPS is a preventative program intended to help youth avoid criminal activity and reengage with education, work and community. Both programs offered mentorship and were successful in supporting young people. As such, these cuts will be incredibly harmful to the youth who rely on these programs.

Rather than slashing resources for justice-involved youth, our city should be investing in proven, cost-effective prevention programs, diversion programs, and alternatives to detention/incarceration programs.

## **Access to Housing and Benefits**

CCC is deeply concerned about the ongoing impact of previous funding reductions to New York's most important social services agencies, as well as the threat of additional cuts in the Preliminary and Executive Budget. Data from the State Comptroller makes clear the harms that cuts and staffing

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<sup>1</sup> The cuts for the New York Public Library system are as follows:

New York Public Library: \$8.6 million cut in FY24, \$8 million in FY25, and \$8.1 million FY26-FY27

Brooklyn Public Library: \$6.4 million cut in FY24, \$6 million in FY25 and \$6.1 million in FY26-FY27

Queens Public Library: \$6.7 million cut in FY24, \$6.3 million in FY25, \$6.39 million in FY26-FY27

reductions have had on the city's ability to serve New Yorkers. According to the 2023 Mayor Management Report (MMR), 20% fewer people are working in DHS and 18% fewer in DYCD as compared to the start of 2020, and HRA's cash assistance timeliness rate has fallen from 92% in January 2020 to 13% in August 2023. Additionally, the MMR indicates households receiving SNAP increased between FY22 and FY23, yet timeliness of SNAP benefit receipt dramatically decreased from 60.1% to 39.7% during that same period.<sup>2</sup>

Staff shortages and vacancies at HPD, DHS, DSS, and HRA will continue to undermine the ability of city agencies to provide families with timely and life-saving housing, food, and social supports. We therefore urge city leaders to exempt DSS, HRA, DHS, and HPD from the Mayor's 15% PEG and hiring freeze, and instead prioritize the filling of open city agency staff lines. Additional budget cuts will further exacerbate the waiting time to access emergency prevention in low-income communities, increasing the likelihood of shelter entrance. We also urge city leaders to reject cuts to non-profit human services, homelessness prevention, and shelter services.

The City should instead focus on implementing CityFHEPS expansion, which would remove administrative and eligibility barriers and expedite access to housing support for families in the community and in shelters. Moreover, the City should improve technology for public benefits (cash aid, food stamps, Medicaid, housing subsidies, childcare) applications and Access HRA by removing repetitive documentation and questions, by expediting access, and by reducing red tape across benefits. Timely access to benefits will bring greater stability to families and bring resources to households that will be spent in the local economy.

**We also recommend the city explore budget-neutral solutions to improve access to affordable housing:**

**Lease-up of Affordable Housing/Housing Connect 2.0:** Over the past several years, HPD-financed affordable housing buildings have experienced much longer time frames to get the buildings fully leased up with tenants. It can regularly take upwards of a year, despite the overwhelming need and substantial numbers of applicants. Recently, the City has announced helpful steps to expedite—such as moving to a back-end audit for income verification—but more is needed. We recommend:

- Allow all homeless household types from any of the 5 shelter systems to have access to HPD Homeless Set Aside units, as promised in page 51 of the Housing Our Neighbors blueprint. As of now, only New Yorkers in DHS shelters can access these units, even households in HPD's own shelter system are left out.
- Fully reviewing the Marketing Handbook with a goal of reducing and combining steps. For example, it is currently required that marketing agents have to go through various set-asides in batches rather than working on a parallel track to fill all available units simultaneously.
- Both the 15% Homeless Set-Aside requirement and CityFHEPS voucher placements have challenges. Stakeholders should be convened to find efficiencies to greatly reduce the time it takes to refer and approve these tenants.

**Open up city-funded supportive housing, NYC 15/15, to domestic violence survivors and their children:** Supportive housing is one of the safest and most cost-effective housing solutions for survivors of domestic violence. Yet, unlike state programs, survivors are not an eligible population for NYC 15/15.

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<sup>2</sup> Mayor's Management Report 2023.

[https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023\\_mmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023_mmr.pdf)

## **Conclusion**

The choices made today will have an immediate impact on child, family, and community wellbeing. Should the cuts we have discussed stand, and future cuts in these areas proceed, the wellbeing of children, youth, families, and communities will be in grave jeopardy and the City's economic stability and recovery will also be at risk. We urge the City administration to prioritize investments in children, youth and families and we look forward to continuing to partner with the City Council and our direct service, advocacy, and community partners to keep the focus on child, family and community needs as the budget process unfolds.



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### **New York City Council Committee on Finance**

Monday, December 11, 2023

Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.

Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee, and thank you especially to Parks Chair Krishnan for your dedication to parks.

I’m Heather Lubov, Executive Director of City Parks Foundation, the citywide nonprofit that encourages New Yorkers to use and care for their neighborhood parks and open spaces, and also the administrator of the NYC Green Fund, a private campaign to support grassroots stewardship efforts in under-resourced communities. We are a proud member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and the #WHY15 campaign.

I’m here on behalf of the thousands of New Yorkers who volunteer through Partnerships for Parks, the program we jointly manage with the Parks Department. And I’m here on behalf of the millions of New Yorkers who cannot volunteer but who rely on their local parks to be their gyms, their classrooms, their concert venues, their gathering spaces, and their respites.

We run a very lean operation to coordinate with the agency so that 26,000 volunteers can work in parks. I could talk about the 5 full time and the 4 seasonal positions that will go unfilled, making it virtually impossible for us to sustain the current level of volunteer engagement. Or I could talk about the accumulation of vacancies within the agency that will make it even harder for us to contract, secure permits, or purchase tools and supplies like gloves and trash bags needed for volunteer projects, even though the success of the administration’s Let’s Green NYC initiative largely depends on our ability to organize and staff these volunteer projects.

But I’m really here to talk about the current 300-plus full time positions already vacant and frozen plus the loss of 1,450 front-line maintenance workers in the Parks Opportunity Program. Combined, these lost positions will result in devastating consequences in our parks and will also put an enormous burden on the remaining staff, who are already burned out from years of underfunding for the agency. You may recall the trash piling up in parks during the early pandemic budget cuts, and the corresponding constituent complaints. We cannot go back to that.

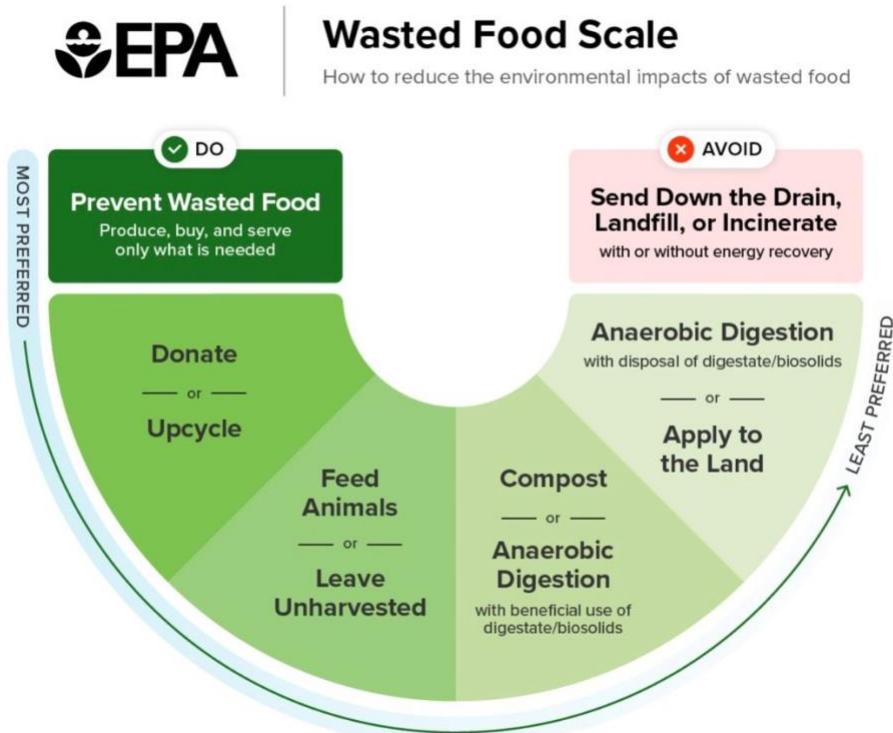
Volunteers are not a replacement for staff. Nor is private fundraising a replacement for the public dollars that by right should be used to adequately fund our park system, which, with libraries, is our city’s most democratic and critical community resource and makes neighborhoods livable. We are undermining climate change mitigation as we experience more flooding, and we are compromising safety, subjecting visitors to trash, broken glass, and needles, while also reducing access to fountains, sprinklers and pools amid the increasing summer heat. Our parks and our city deserve better.

Oral testimony: Mary Arnold, Civics United for Railroad Environmental Solutions:  
civicsunited@gmail.com

Thank you so much, Chair Brennan. Please fund Community Composting and its 115 green jobs.

At the December 7th Rat Hearing DSNY Deputy Commissioner Joshua Goodman affirmed that DSNY eliminated Community Composting and initiated a procurement for back-end processing of Brooklyn's and Queens' organics without using OMB climate budgeting guidance and sustainability and city resiliency evaluation tools. How do we know this? Because DSNY affirmed that OMB didn't provide them to DSNY, as it told the City Council it would.

It's a fact that DSNY is employing three of the worst ways for New York City to manage organics, according to US EPA's October 2023 Wasted Food Scale. These are landfilling, incinerating, and co-digesting sewage with organics. Goodman said that DSNY's criteria were "beneficial use of organics" and "keeping organics out of landfills" -- criteria EPA's scale shows are too crude.



Goodman's sneering denigration of Community Composting at the Rat Hearing and the OMB Director's characterization of Community Composting today as "small and inefficient" are unwarranted, since DSNY's chosen technocratic model isn't meeting US EPA's 2023 standards, and lacks foundational climate, sustainability, and resiliency standards.

Community Composting increases DSNY's compliance with US EPA standards, making DSNY more efficient and effective in reducing greenhouse gases, toxic pollution, and waste exports, and increasing community benefits, quality of life, and resiliency. Please work with the Mayor and Commissioner Tisch to support immediate restoration of funding for Community Composting and its 115 workers. Thank you.



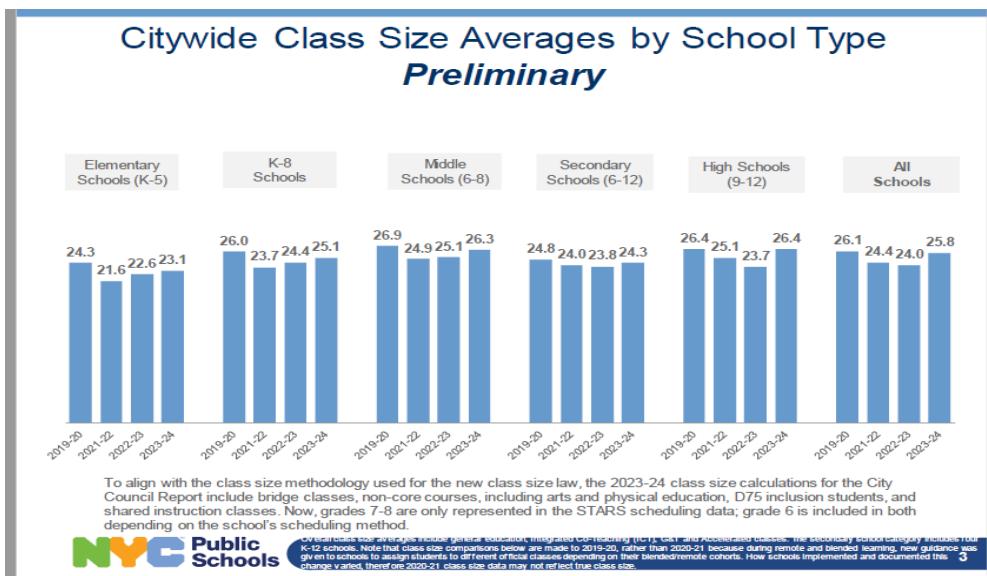
Class Size Matters  
124 Waverly Pl., New York, NY 10011  
Phone: 917-435-9329  
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[www.classsizematters.org](http://www.classsizematters.org)

## Class Size Matters Testimony before the Finance Committee about the Mayor's proposed budget cuts to education

December 11, 2023

My name is Leonie Haimson, I am the Executive Director of Class Size Matters, and thank you for the opportunity to testify to you today. We are very concerned about the proposed cuts to the education budget that are being imposed midyear, and those that are proposed for the future that could total over a billion dollars.<sup>1</sup>

Our concerns are even more intense given that these cuts they already follow two years of cuts to schools that have already caused class sizes to increase, according to the Department of Education's own data. For elementary, K-8 and middle schools, this was the second year of increases, according to the DOE's own class size summary.<sup>2</sup> Cuts of this magnitude would not only cause the loss of many critical education programs and services, but also lead to even sharper increases in class size, making it impossible for the city to comply to with the new class size law that requires at least 40% of academic classes to meet the new mandated class size caps.<sup>3</sup>



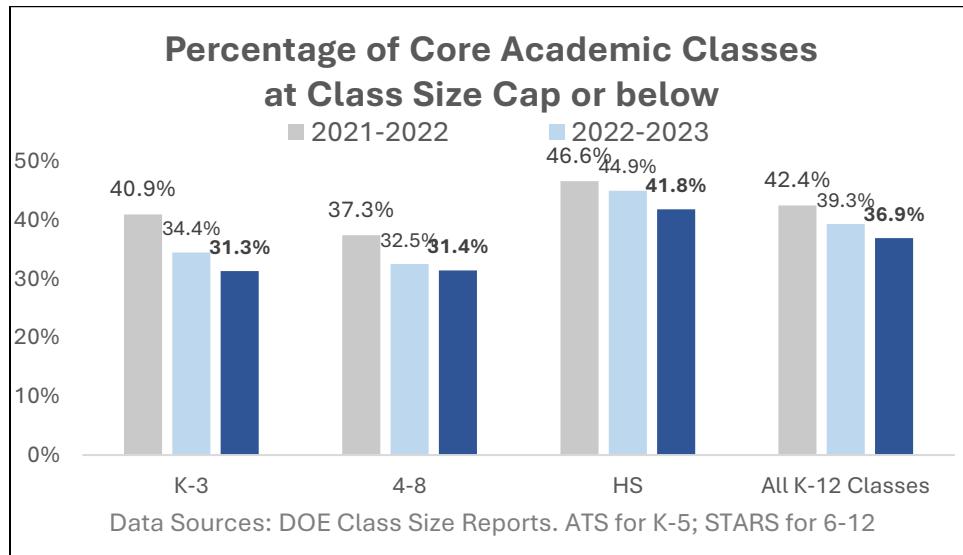
<sup>1</sup> The administration proposes to cut \$547 million from DOE budget for this fiscal year, to be followed by an additional cut of \$602 million in FY 2025, \$625 million in FY 2026 and yet another \$625M in FY 2027. See:

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/peg11-23.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2023-24-preliminary-average-class-size-summary.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> These caps are no more than 20 students per class in Kindergarten through third grade, 23 students per class in grades fourth through eighth, and no more than 25 students in core academic high school classes. See

The class size data over time also reveals that this is also the second year in a row in which the percentage of classes that were able to meet the caps in the new law declined, of no more than 20 students per class in grades K-3, 23 students per class in grades 4<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup>, and 25 students per class in core high school academic classes.



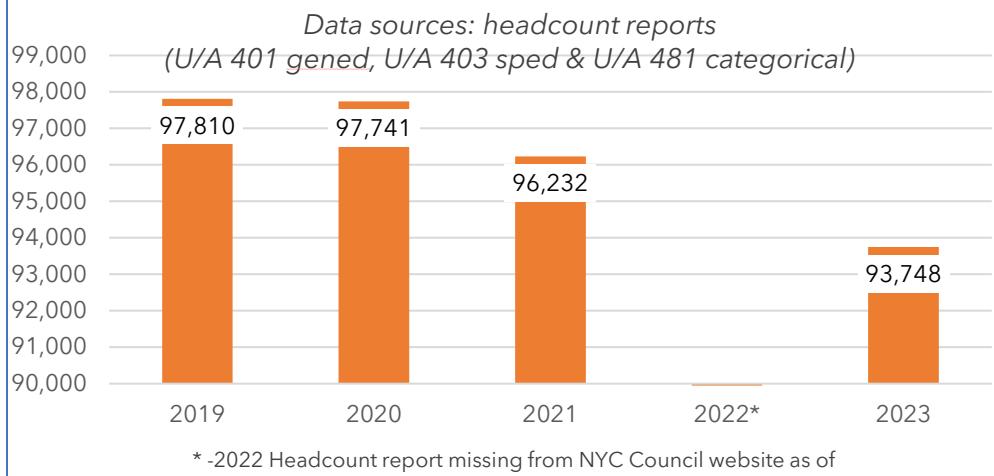
The city's failure to properly fund and plan for class size reduction in accordance with the law caused Class Size Matters and the Alliance for Quality Education to send a letter to the State Education Department on November 30, urging them to require the city immediately develop a corrective action plan to meet the goals in the law.<sup>4</sup> The IBO estimates that it would cost \$214 million in 2026 and \$427 million in 2027, respectively, to cover salaries for additional teachers over the first two years of the three-year phase-in period.<sup>5</sup>

And yet according to official DOE headcount data, provided to the City Council, the number of K12 teachers has already decreased by over 4,000 K12 teachers since FY 2019.

<sup>4</sup> <https://classsizematters.org/class-size-matters-aqe-urges-state-education-department-to-require-doe-submit-a-class-size-corrective-action-plan/>

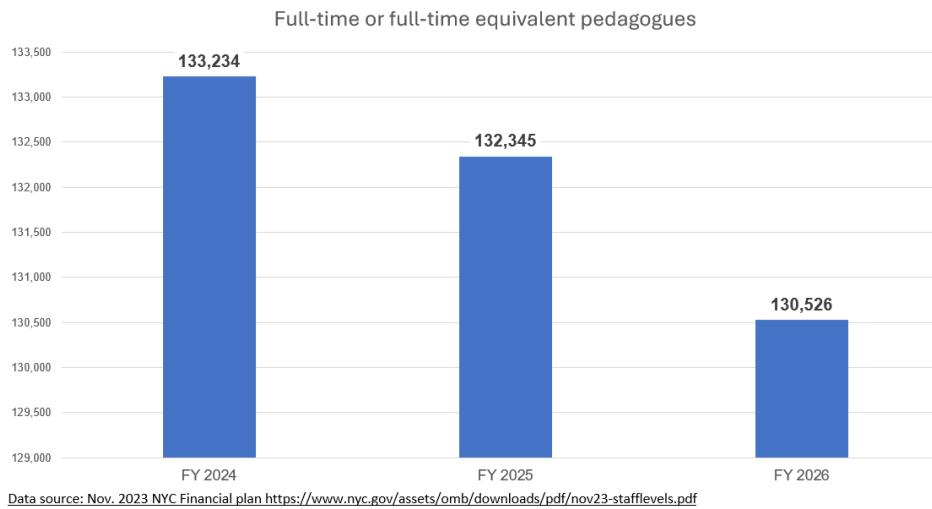
<sup>5</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/mind-the-gap-new-york-citys-economy-shows-resilience-while-inflation-cools-but-expenses-yield-budget-uncertainty-fiscal-outlook-december-2023.pdf> This estimate assumes that DOE will meet the caps for next year, which we believe is unlikely for the reasons stated above.

## NYCPS lost over 4,000 full-time K12 teaching positions FY 2019 - FY 2023



The city's financial plan projects an additional loss of over 3,000 more full-time teachers between June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2026.<sup>6</sup>

## NYC financial plan projects loss of over 3,000 more full-time teachers over next two years



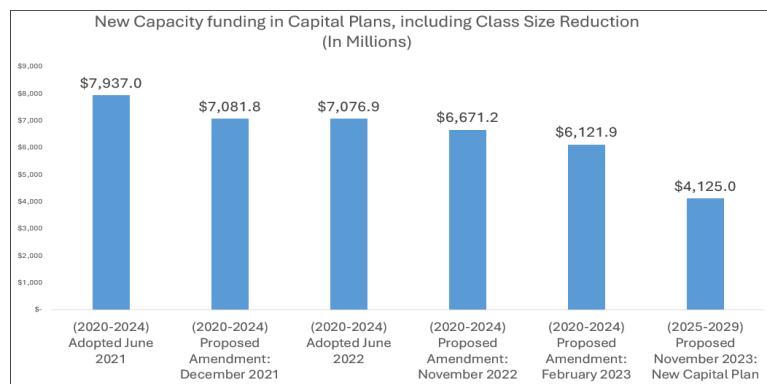
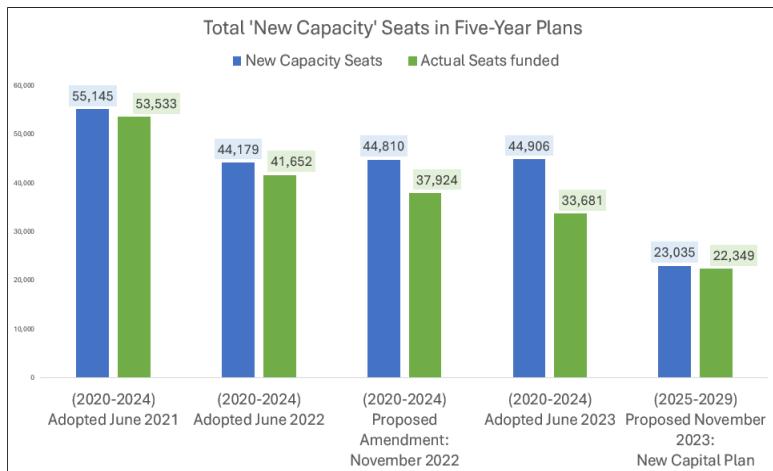
To make it even more unlikely that the DOE will create sufficient space to lower class size, last month the School Construction Authority released the new proposed five-year capital plan for FY 2025-2029. The proposed plan would cut \$2 billion in new capacity and more than 20,000 seats compared to the current five-year plan, continuing a steadily declining number of new seats funded since June 2021.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/nov23-stafflevels.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital\\_Plan/Capital\\_plans/11012023\\_25\\_29\\_CapitalPlan.pdf?sv=2017-04-17&sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=LMmx0Vrv3O960CtQmVnvz17PVxP194AIUHhmsdJktNo%3D](https://dnnhh5cc1.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/Capital_Plan/Capital_plans/11012023_25_29_CapitalPlan.pdf?sv=2017-04-17&sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=LMmx0Vrv3O960CtQmVnvz17PVxP194AIUHhmsdJktNo%3D)

According to DOE officials, elementary schools in Districts 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28 and 31 do not currently have the space to cap even Kindergarten classes at twenty students or less.<sup>8</sup> And yet five of those districts do not have any seats specified in the proposed Five-year Capital Plan for FY 2025-2029.

In Districts 27 and 31, the number of seats funded have been sharply cut back in the new proposed plan, compared to the current plan. As it takes at least four to five years to site and build new schools, without significant changes to the capital plan in conjunction with enrollment adjustments across schools, it will be impossible to meet the class size mandates in the law.



Instead, 77% of the funded seats remain unidentified according to borough, district, or grade level. Instead, the plan says that from now on, *“projects will be officially listed in the Plan following the identification of a suitable site and the commencement of the school facility’s design process.”*

This omission leaves the public out of the process completely and without any input as to where new schools are needed or sited. It also appears to violate the class size law, which requires the DOE to report **“how many classrooms will be added in each year and in which schools and districts to achieve the class size targets”**, as well as Education Law § 2590, that requires the Chancellor to annually prepare an **“educational facilities master plan...including a list of prioritized projects to the extent ascertainable and [to] list each proposed new educational facility and set forth a justification, including demographic data, documenting the long term need therefor.”<sup>9</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> Office of Student Enrollment, Modeling Enrollment Reductions through Admissions: Kindergarten Match Simulations, June 2023.

<sup>9</sup> <https://codes.findlaw.com/ny/education-law/edn-sect-2590-o/>

We also have deep and continuing concerns about the city's lack of maintenance of effort, and the fact that the DOE is making these cuts to education despite the requirement in the Contracts for Excellence law that it must supplement rather than supplant education funding.

New York City is now receiving more than \$1.3 billion in annual Foundation Aid, phased-in over three years since FY 2021. The additional Foundation Aid was agreed to by the Governor and the Legislature to settle the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, in which the city's excessive class sizes were a central issue in the case. And yet not a single dollar of these additional funds has been specifically targeted by the DOE to lower class size.

We are heartened by the fact that as reported by the Council Finance committee, the city will benefit from tax revenues amounting to \$1.2 billion more this fiscal year than the mayor's office reported just last month.<sup>10</sup> There are also billions of dollars in the city's reserve funds.

There are also many other budget options that would increase city revenue, most of them requiring the state's approval. We include a list of them in the Appendix, but wanted to draw your attention to three of them that would directly add to the DOE budget. The two would provide more fairness to NYC, which is penalized by the state and carries particularly onerous financial burdens as regards charter schools, unlike any other district in the state.

- **Require the state to cover the entire cost of NYC charter school rental subsidies, which would save the DOE more than \$75 million this year, and even more in future years.**<sup>11</sup> NYC is the only school district in *the nation* that is required to help pay for charter school rent., and this is an unfair burden on the NYC taxpayer as well as the education budget
- **Require the State to provide NYC with state charter transition aid**, which would provide about \$93 million to DOE this fiscal year. NYC is the *only* school district in the state that does not receive this aid, designed to reimburse districts for part of the cost of charter school expansion. Because of this exemption, NYC has been excluded from \$2.81 billion in state transitional aid from 2011 to 2023.<sup>12</sup>
- Lastly, **the capital reimbursement for school construction should be raised to 50%, which could provide billions to help pay for new schools, necessary to alleviate overcrowding and lower class size.** According to the School Construction Authority, NYC receives only 25% reimbursement for new school construction currently, while still receiving 50% for other capital improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://gothamist.com/news/city-council-budget-report-sees-ways-around-mayor-adams-spending-cuts> and <https://council.nyc.gov/press/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2023/12/Council-FY24-November-Plan-Forecast-FINALbed72e2de824b0c9eee770bcb19b215bee66977d476a5045903fbeed7bc0c16e.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/savings-options-reducing-subsidies-december-2022.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://edlawcenter.org/news/archives/new-york/the-unsustainable-cost-to-new-york-city-schools-of-charter-school-growth.html>

# Revenue options for New York City

## Potential education revenue and savings

### **I. Require the State to cover the entire cost of NYC charter school rental subsidies**

**Costs NYC ~\$75 million in FY 2023<sup>13</sup>** an amount that is increasing rapidly each year. While the state only currently covers 60% of these subsidies, NYC is the only school district in *the nation* that is required to help pay for charter school rent.

### **II. Require the State to provide NYC with state charter transition aid**

**Revenue: Additional ~\$93 million in FY 24**

NYC is the *only* school district in the state that does not receive this aid, designed to reimburse districts for part of the cost of charter school expansion. Because of this exemption, NYC has been denied \$2.81 billion in state transitional aid from 2011 to 2023<sup>14</sup>.

### **III. Raise the capital reimbursement for school construction to 50%, where it was previously**

**Revenue: Could provide billions more in capital expenses**

According to SCA/DOE, NYC receives only 25% reimbursement for new school construction currently, possibly because of a cost cap, while still receiving 50% for other capital improvements.

## Other revenue options for NYC as a whole (could raise > \$2b annually)

### **I. Raise The Personal Income Tax On High-Level Earners**

**Revenue: ~\$900M million annually<sup>15</sup>**

Increase taxable incomes above \$500,000 for singles, \$750,000 for head of household, and \$1 million for married couples filing jointly to 4.46% (0.584 percentage points above the current top rate); for filers with taxable income above \$5 million, raise the tax to 5.0% (+1.124 percentage points above the current rate); and raise for filers with taxable income above \$25 million, to a marginal rate of 5.5%.

### **II. Establish a Pied-A-Terre Tax**

**Revenue: \$232M annually<sup>16</sup>, \$277M according to Comptroller for FY25<sup>17</sup>.**

On houses with market values of \$5 million or more, and condominiums and coops with assessed value of \$300,000 or more, with exemptions if it is the primary residence of at least one owner or a parent or child of at least one owner, or properties rented on a full-time basis to tenants for whom the property is their primary residence.

<sup>13</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/savings-options-reducing-subsidies-december-2022.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://edlawcenter.org/news/archives/new-york/the-unsustainable-cost-to-new-york-city-schools-of-charter-school-growth.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/raising-revenues/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/raising-revenues/ \]](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/raising-revenues/)

**III. Impose property taxes on Columbia University & NYU or make them contribute PILOTs (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) instead**

Revenue: Could raise as much as \$327M annually.<sup>18</sup> Many large private universities pay fees in lieu of property taxes across the nation.

**IV. Establish a Retail Storefront Vacancy Tax Surcharge**

Revenue: \$170 million annually<sup>19</sup>

**V. Extend the Mortgage Recording Tax to Co-ops**

Revenue: Over \$95 million annually<sup>20</sup>

**VI. Impose a City “Mansion Tax” for properties sold for \$2 million or more**

Revenue: \$270 million annually<sup>21</sup>

**VII. Implement a Carbon Tax and Dividend**

Revenue \$264 million annually<sup>22</sup>

Under this option, a tax would be collected by electric, gas, and heating oil companies and assessed on the carbon intensity of their energy mix.

**VIII. Impose Penalties for Failed Façade Inspections and for delays in Façade Repairs**

Revenue: \$150 million annually<sup>23</sup>

Would also reduce the growing number of sidewalk sheds.

**IX. Impose Impact Fees on developers**

Revenue: \$26 million to \$63 million annually<sup>24</sup>

Helps cover part of the cost of the additional infrastructure required to serve residents, including the need for new schools.

**X. Eliminate the Property Tax Exemption For Madison Square Garden**

Revenue: \$42 million in 2023<sup>25</sup>, estimated \$44M by Comptroller<sup>26</sup>

**XI. Reimpose the General Corporation Tax on Insurance Companies**

Revenue: \$510 million annually<sup>27</sup>

NYC insurance corporation tax was eliminated in 1974 and these companies are the only large category of businesses that are currently exempt from NYC business taxes.

**XII. Tax Carried interest under the Unincorporated Business Tax**

Revenue: \$75M annually<sup>28</sup>

*Compiled by Class Size Matters, 12/10/23*

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/10/nyregion/columbia-nyu-property-tax-exemptions-legislation.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2022-may-all.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/cgi-park3/2018/12/28/revenue-options-eliminating-or-reducing-tax-breaks/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/raising-revenues/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/budgetoptions-2023-eliminating-or-reducing-tax-breaks.html>

<sup>28</sup> <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/budgetoptions-2023-eliminating-or-reducing-tax-breaks.html>



**UNUSUAL STORIES, UNUSUALLY TOLD**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Maria Striar. I am the Artistic Director at Clubbed Thumb, a theater whose mission is to develop and produce funny, strange, and provocative new plays by living American writers.

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut? Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

As you know, the not-for-profit Off and Off Off Broadway community is an essential part of the cultural life of New York City and a significant economic force consisting of 748 theatrical organizations that generate \$512M in wages annually for 8,400+ full time employees and thousands of artists and other freelance workers. Non-profit theaters bring together New Yorkers and visitors from around the world to experience the transformative power of boundary-pushing stories from singular and dynamic artists that may not have the platform to share their stories elsewhere, and we support the larger theater ecosystem as the place where many Broadway shows, national tours and regional productions begin. The greater impact of this sector is vast – theater uniquely has an economic ripple effect: we bring customers to restaurants, bars and many other local businesses in the community in which we are situated.

Most of Clubbed Thumb's resources go to emerging artists. These artists have already been impacted by the shuttering of countless early-career programs. They are vulnerable to sudden financial shifts, and most rely on support from Clubbed Thumb and government-funded arts initiatives to pay their bills. The additional 5% planned cuts in January could devastate these artists and their families.

Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Clubbed Thumb joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

On behalf of everyone in the Clubbed Thumb community, thank you for your service. Your leadership is invaluable in helping us continue to empower artists, engage audiences and inspire future theater-makers.

With gratitude,

Maria Striar, Artistic Director

Council Member: Candace Belle  
Council Member: Nicole Branker  
Council Member: Tanisha Gaskin-Christie  
Council Member: Ingrid Douglas  
Vice-President/BPA: Victor Iroh



Treasurer: Terrance Johnson  
President/BPA: NeQuan C. McLean  
Council Member: Christina Raymond  
Council Member: Stephanie Sandeus  
Recording Secretary/IEP Representative: Marta Torres

Testimonial Letter to the  
New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight–  
Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

December 8, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for their support for New York City's public schools. My name is Christina Raymond, and I am an elected member of the Community Education Council for District 16 (CEC 16). I also chair the CEC 16's Subcommittee on Research Policy, which is committed to addressing the continuing effects of city-wide funding cuts on District 16's students, families, and schools.

District 16—which predominantly serves the community of Bedford-Stuyvesant—is the smallest public school district in the City of New York, and as you know well, its schools are historically underresourced. And yet, this district's students, educators, and leaders are often lauded for their admirable achievements (see, e.g., "New York City Hopes Phonics Will Save It From National Reading Crisis", *Wall Street Journal*, May 9, 2023, featuring District 16's K628).

In addition to navigating severe year-over-year budget cuts, our already chronically underfunded schools, including Title 1 and Community Schools, are now facing mid-year, enrollment-based cuts, which have pushed many of our schools tens of thousands of dollars further into the red. That is, in addition to being required to provide quality educational services to students while spending less year-over-year (in the wake of a global pandemic, and amid related learning losses, no less), nearly half of our district's schools must now also **return** funds to the City of New York (with estimated resulting deficits at each of those affected schools ranging between \$19K-\$150K).

District 16's students and their families are feeling the effects of mid-year budget cuts in other ways, too, with services provided by local arts partners, after-school providers, and neighborhood libraries having been drastically slashed.

The CEC 16 wishes to thank Council Member Chi Ossé for his important work as Chair of the Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations, and we urge him to continue to advocate for our community's public school children to have access to arts and culture equal to that which other districts' students receive.

Our city's youth—including those attending public schools in District 16—are the future of New York City. Cuts that deny our young people a high-quality education, as well as equitable access to arts and culture, must be among the last to be made in a financial crisis—never among the first.

If allowed to continue, these potentially devastating budget cuts may be remembered as one of New York City's most profound failures.

In Partnership,  
Christina Raymond  
CEC 16 Council Member



Leadership, voice and vision for child welfare in New York State

### **Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies**

**Written Testimony Presented by:  
Dr. Sophie Charles, Associate Executive Director, Downstate**

**New York City Council  
Finance Committee  
Monday, December 11, 2023**

I am Dr. Sophie Charles, Associate Executive Director, Downstate at the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA). Our member agencies include more than 50 nonprofit agencies providing NYC-contracted child welfare services. Our members provide foster care, adoption, family preservation, juvenile justice, and special education services. We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony to the NYC Council Finance Committee on the November budget plan, including a 5% cut to the City budget. We want to highlight the enormously negative impact that PEGS will have on children and families, migrant families, asylum seekers, the human services workforce, and the nonprofit agencies delivering services to families in NYC. Child welfare caseworkers deliver vital family stabilization services to thousands of children and families across numerous City funded programs. Budget cuts will reduce service delivery to families. We are concerned about the impact of 15% cuts on the children and families that our agencies support and serve, and want to ensure that these children and families are top of mind for the City in evaluating the impacts of all budget decisions.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. We understand that the city is under a great deal of pressure to address a myriad of service needs of migrant families and asylum seekers. COFCCA members are committed to meeting the needs of all New Yorkers including our newest arrivals. Over the past twelve months, our agencies have been responding to calls from many city agencies to provide services to this new population of newcomers. Our programs have become a lifeline to migrant children and families with many efforts to address this growing humanitarian crisis. Currently, our programs support approximately 7,000 families with a wide range of services that include: food, clothing, shelter, child care, health care, mental health services, family counseling, legal services, housing, access to public benefits, and immigration and educational support. An application of a 15 percent cut across the child welfare sector will devastate a field that is already under resourced, understaffed, and plagued by underbudgeted operational challenges that threaten the viability of services offered by agencies.

We are concerned about the turnover and vacancies that our member agencies experience especially in recruiting and retaining front line staff, the staff who directly make an impact on children and families' lives through their work. The child welfare workforce are essential workers, primarily, women of color who continuously work above and beyond to keep the vulnerable populations in this city safe, housed, and fed.

Child welfare workforce retention is vital to New York City, particularly during this period of influx of a growing migrant population that is in dire need of basic life sustaining services. We request to work with the City to sustain a badly needed workforce to deliver essential human services. In 2022, the NYC Prevention caseworker turnover rate was 43% according to a COFCCA survey of providers and the vacancy rate was 18%. The average starting salary for an NYC Prevention caseworker (Bachelor's Degree) is \$48,063 compared to \$55,463 in the public sector. Our workforce requires a commitment to pay parity with public sector wages, as well as an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for prevention and human services workers. We strongly support the Human Services Council #JustPay Campaign to invest in the essential human services workforce that supports the City every day.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why COFCCA joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

The City can directly build bridges and offer fiscal support for the human service sector and protect service provisions to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable NYC children and families. We ask that the City:

- Invest in the Human Services Sector through #JustPay: Make it possible for the human services and child welfare workforce to earn a living wage so they can live above the poverty line in this city, support their families, and continue to deliver lifesaving services to needy families.
- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of including the human services sector in the decision-making process to minimize the impact of budget cuts to nonprofit organizations. We welcome the opportunity to engage the Council in a conversation to discuss this important issue and to be helpful to you as budget cut decisions are made. We are available to answer any questions or for any assistance that you might need.

**Sophine Charles, PhD**  
**Associate Executive Director, Downstate**  
**Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies**  
**[scharles@cofcca.org](mailto:scharles@cofcca.org)**  
**(212) 929-2626, ext. 212**  
**254 West 31 Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor**  
**New York, NY 10001**

**New York City Council, Committee on Finance**

**Oversight - November Budget Plan**

December 11, 2023

Good afternoon. I am Dr. Shakeema North-Albert, Chief Executive Officer at Covenant House New York. Covenant House New York (CHNY) is the nation's largest, non-profit adolescent care agency providing housing and support services to youth experiencing homelessness. During this past year, CHNY served over 1,500 young people and provided over 132,000 nights of housing across our residential programs. In addition to crisis, transitional, and long-term housing, our continuum of care includes services to support mental health and wellness, legal services, educational programming, workforce development, and life-skills training, all geared towards moving them from homelessness to housing stability and ultimately ending the cycle of youth homelessness in their lives. 90% of the youth we serve are people of color, nearly 40% identify as LGBTQ, and over the past year, we have served over 250 undocumented youth. That is twenty-five times more than we served in the years prior to the start of the migrant crisis.

Programs and services like the ones we provide at Covenant House New York have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations like Covenant House New York touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, human and health services, and cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Covenant House New York joins with our sibling organizations in the nonprofit sector in calling on the City to partner with us and work towards creative solutions - not ones that further hinder our collective work. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Specifically, I ask that the City:

- Provide an analysis for why a 15% cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

As organizations like ours remain on the frontline and at the forefront of the many intersecting crises this city faces, we stand ready to partner with you so that the underserved populations in our City get what they need to survive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Dr. Shakeema North-Albert

Chief Executive Officer, Covenant House New York. [snorth@covenanthouse.org](mailto:snorth@covenanthouse.org)



**Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance**  
**Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair**  
**Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan | December 11, 2023**

December 8, 2023

Chairperson Brannan and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Dancewave, a nonprofit dance organization located in Brooklyn.

For 28 years, Dancewave has provided engaging arts programs to New Yorkers citywide. We serve a diverse audience of over 6,300 youth, adults and seniors annually; our programs are free or low-cost to participants, aligned with our vision to make dance accessible to all.

Like many other arts organizations, Dancewave is counted on by the City to provide essential services. Our Community Outreach Program, for example, provides dance education in New York City schools where the arts are not a curricular priority. Last year, Dancewave partnered with over twenty public schools with significant volumes of migrant students, many of whom live in temporary housing. We understand the importance of providing safe, inclusive, and engaging programs to reach these young people at such a critical time. We also know that art has been proven to help people feel connected, valued, seen and heard, in addition to improving academic performance and developing the social and emotional skills necessary for success. Students surveyed reported that their experience with Dancewave's program was one of the first times that they truly felt seen and celebrated in their new country.

Budget cuts of \$16.4M to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's economic prosperity, and will have detrimental and long-lasting impacts. In the short term, these funding cuts will force nonprofit organizations like Dancewave to eliminate programs, which the City leans on to help fill persistent service gaps in New York City schools, older adult centers, shelters, libraries, and community and social service centers citywide. In the long term, these cuts will cause significant and lasting damage to the health and vibrancy of our neighborhoods as social disconnection further exacerbates the current mental health crisis, and as youth have fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful and future-affirming activities, just to name two examples.

Our city and its future is at stake. Let us not make New York -- where arts and culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs -- a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. These budget cuts may be presented as a short-term savings solution, but they will only cost us more in the long run.

I ask that the Committee advocate for our city's arts and cultural organizations, who represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

*Nicole Touzien  
Executive Director, Dancewave*



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,

Hon. Just Brannan, Chair

Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Nany Kleaver, and I am the Executive Director of Dancing Classrooms, which serves over 125 schools and 15,000 students across the five boroughs each year.

Dancing Classrooms (DC) cultivates engaged learners, collaborative leaders, and inclusive spaces through the art and practice of social dances. We envision a world that values social dance as foundational to every child's well-being and joy, celebrates the beauty of diversity, and amplifies our shared humanity.

Approximately 50% of Dancing Classrooms' revenue comes from the program fees that our Dept of Education school partners contribute to help cover the costs of programs. 10% of our revenue comes from the Department of Cultural Affairs and NY City Council grant initiatives like CASA. The rest we raise from individuals and foundations to deliver essential arts services to the children of NYC. More than half of our school partners have worked with us for over 10 years, many of those for over 20 years. We are partners in the truest sense. We are seeing already that the fear of shrinking budgets is causing principals to cancel our programs this year and it is hitting our bottom line, leaving us with a projected operating deficit of almost \$250,000.

The vast majority of the students we reach with our programs, which bring classmates together to learn merengue, swing, waltz, and other culturally rich and collaborative dance forms, do not have access to dance and arts education outside of their schools. The Mayor's proposed budget threatens to remove one of the most effective strategies for developing social-emotion learning skills and supporting youth mental well-being. Social dance, which blends exercise, physical touch, the therapeutic effects of music, and the celebration of culture, is a magical formula that leaves everyone who participates more relaxed, joyful, and empathetic. When children across the city are suffering from isolation, anxiety, and depression, this age-old practice should be a consistent presence in their lives.

Budget cuts will also deeply affect our devoted staff of 50 cultural workers – program staff, administrators, and teaching artists who are still building back their lives after two years of lost work due to pandemic interruptions. These employees have stuck by the city's schools and students throughout, learning new skills to teach remotely and socially distant and returning to teach in person before the virus was tamped down, putting their

health at risk to deliver the joy and connection of our programs that they know young people so separately need.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which have funded considerable arts education programming to support students' academic recovery and social-emotional well-being over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Flack".



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance  
on Cuts to Early Childhood Education in the Mayor's November Financial Plan**

**Prepared by Gregory Brender, Chief Policy and Innovation Officer and  
Shelby Lohr, Policy Analyst**

**December 11th, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Brannan, and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify.

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early care and education providers across New York City. DCCNY supports its member organizations and New York City's early childhood field at large through policy research and advocacy, labor relations and mediation, professional development and training for early childhood educators, directors and staff, and referral services for parents looking to find child care. DCCNY member organizations provide early care and education at over 200 sites in neighborhoods across all five boroughs. Most DCCNY member organizations operate with contracts with the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), while a smaller portion work with federally-funded Head Start contracts or through private funding. DCCNY member organizations seek to provide quality early care and education services to New York's children and families across all five boroughs.

DCCNY member organizations employ over 4,000 New Yorkers, the majority of whom

are Black and Brown women. Day Care Council of New York is an active member of Campaign for Children, the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and the Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs. We echo their statements on the proposed funding cuts.

DCCNY envisions a future where all children have access to quality early childhood education and where early childhood providers—and all those working in early care and education programs—have the tools and resources necessary to offer the highest quality early childhood education. This includes a fair and thriving wage for early care and education providers, directors, teachers, and support staff. The early childhood field is underpaid, and this underpayment represents a legacy of discrimination against work that has been classified as women’s work. We consistently call for salary parity between early childhood providers, directors, teachers, and support staff and their counterparts in New York City Public Schools.

As providers of early childhood education, DCCNY’s member organizations know that all children benefit from the education and socialization that quality early care and education programs provide. Yet, too many families are struggling to access affordable child care, and far too many providers are struggling to keep their doors open. Amid an already-strained infrastructure, the Mayor’s proposed cuts carry the potential to drastically undermine early childhood education in the city.

The Mayor’s \$120 million cuts to early childhood education—among the highest cuts across the board—would amount to roughly 7,100 early childhood education seats eliminated in each round of budget cuts.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there are a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Since 2020, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using approximately \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, including two early childhood education programs 3-K and preschool special education as well as other Education services including Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more.

The 3-K program, in particular, will experience a budget loss of \$93 million with the loss of this funding. With those two funding cuts combined, early childhood education in New

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<sup>1</sup> Based on an analysis recently conducted by Citizens’ Committee for Children on behalf of the Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs.

York City will lose \$213 million dollars in the next fiscal year, alone. As a city that cares about its children, this cannot and should not be the case.

We also want to address some of the rationales that have been offered to justify this devastating cut. In particular, the administration has cited under-enrollment in some 3-K programs. However, this underutilization is the result of policy choices the City made and does not reflect a lack of demand.

Early childhood providers and advocates and the City Council have been calling for reforms which will simplify access to 3-K programs and ensure children are receiving the education that they need. On February 28, 2023, twenty-nine members of the City Council led by the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus of the City Council signed a letter with recommendations for reforming the early childhood education system, including:

- Develop a two-pronged enrollment system that allows parents the option of enrolling directly through CBOs or through the DOE, giving more agency to families and entrusting them to make the best decision for their children.
- Ensure that the distribution of early childhood care and education seats (for infants and toddlers, 3-K, and UPK) addresses high-need communities, service deserts, and prioritizes meeting the full-day, year-round needs of working families.
- Ensure home-based family child care providers benefit from the increased rate of reimbursement, which has increased to 80 percent from 65 percent.
- Make it easier for families to access care by investing in an extensive multi-lingual and culturally competent outreach campaign to inform New York families about their options and improve enrollment in services.

Instead of taking these steps, the administration has now proposed drastically cutting a much-needed program.

[In a recent study](#), Citizens' Committee for Children found that 80% of families cannot afford care for infants, toddlers, 3K and Pre-K, and school-age youth. Together, budget reductions will leave thousands of children and youth, and their families without access to essential services, at a time when services are desperately needed to help them recover from the ramifications of the pandemic. Communities of color that bore the brunt of loss of loved ones, job and income loss, disruption in school and child care, and learning loss, will bear the brunt of service reductions.

While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless City leaders act, we are at risk of experiencing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

*DCCNY Testimony on Cuts to Early Care and Education in the FY 2024 November Budget Modification- December 11, 2023*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please reach out to Gregory Brender [gbrender@dccnyinc.org](mailto:gbrender@dccnyinc.org) or Shelby Lohr [slohr@dccnyinc.org](mailto:slohr@dccnyinc.org) with any questions.

## **Older Adult Members**

### **Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens**

#### **CCNS Peter. J. DellaMonica Older Adult Center**

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

With these budget cuts, we are afraid that our center will:

- Have to cut the days of operation.
- Essential Supplies and resources.
- We serve more than 3000 meals a month. Cuts on meal services may be expected.
- Cuts on Programs, Services, Events, etc.
- Cut on essentials Staff.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why CCNS Peter J. DellaMonica Older Adult Center joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Please note that our center is a hub for socializing, shelter, and for fresh cooked meals. It's a way to come relax and enjoy our time. DellaMonica provides so much for us that we are very grateful that we have the center. DellaMonica is a second home to all of us. Older Adult Centers are essential to everyone 60 and older. They take care of us, listen to us, and advocate for us.

Please listen to our testimony and don't cut our budget!

# DreamYard

December 11, 2023

Dear City Council Members and Committee on Finance:

My name is Tim Lord, Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, and I am writing on behalf of the DreamYard Project in the Bronx. We are a race equity centered arts and social justice education organization that works with young people, families, schools and communities to build pathways to equity and opportunity. We work with 40 public schools in the Bronx, K-12th Grade, including the DreamYard Prep High School, offer after school, Saturday and summer programs at our two community spaces, the DreamYard Art Center and the BX Start Gaming and Entrepreneurship Center, and offer hundreds of paid internships to high school and college young people through our Legacy and Internship Program. We work with over 10,000 Bronx young people and families annually.

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

We are most concerned about cuts to after school programs such as COMPASS and SONYC and to the Community Schools Program. We are the lead partner at the Community Schools Program at PS 51 in the Bronx, where our attendance initiative and our after-school programs have provided the supports families need to help their young children get to school- our attendance has risen 8% since we began the program a year ago. That is dozens of young people at ONE SCHOOL who will now be on track to graduate on time by being in school. Cutting supports to programs such as these is extremely short sighted and will only cost the city much, much more in years to come.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. The burden of managing this budget gap is falling unduly on New York City's most vulnerable populations.

Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why the DreamYard Project joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Jason Duchin  
Tim Lord

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS

Philip Seymour Hoffman  
(1998-2014)  
Susana Leval  
Charles P. Lord  
(1994-2016)  
Marina Purcell  
Robin Skye  
Landon Slane

## DREAMYARD PROJECT

1085 Washington Avenue  
Ground Floor  
Bronx, NY 10456  
718-588-8007  
[www.dreamyard.com](http://www.dreamyard.com)

# DreamYard

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary.
- Work with the Partnership for New York City and others to engage corporations, sports teams and others that benefit from preferential tax treatment to help close this budget gap.
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions.
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Tim Lord  
Co-Executive Director, on behalf of the DreamYard Project

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

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Tim Lord

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December 11, 2023

Dear City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Brannan, Parks Chair Krishnan, and Sanitation Chair Nurse,

The East River Alliance writes today to share our objections to the proposed Parks budget cuts and the elimination of community composting.

### **Community Composting**

Our home park, East River Park, is currently undergoing the multi-billion dollar East Side Coastal Resiliency project - work necessitated by the impacts of climate change. The choice is simple. We can tackle the climate crisis or we can continue an endless cycle of profoundly expensive defensive measures. Cutting the community composting programs - which cost only 0.2% of what we're spending on ESCR alone - is foolish. These programs divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year, a volume the curbside program is not prepared to handle.

We are proud that East River Park is the home of the Lower East Side Ecology Center, a pioneer of NYC community composting, and a working compost yard. They provide compost outreach and education to thousands of New Yorkers annually, making the city aware of food waste's contributions to the climate crisis while providing the opportunity to address this critical issue. They also produce and distribute finished compost to local community groups, parks, street tree care events, and individuals each year.

We recently heard from a neighbor at Baruch Houses, next to the construction zone, whose first ESCR question was: "When will the compost program be back?" New York City should be investing in - not eliminating - the community composting program. It plays a vital role in allowing our community to say Yes to climate crisis action in their daily lives.

### **Parks**

With East River Park construction scheduled to continue through the end of 2026, our community is more reliant than ever on other local parks, pools, and green spaces to be recreational areas and sanctuaries, and provide heat island mitigation.

Of particular concern to the Lower East Side and East Village are:

- Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as thousands of trash cans overflow with garbage and uncollected compost. We are already a hotbed of rat activity. Trash collection and community compost collection are important tools in the fight against rats.
- Without care for trees and plantings, including watering, our new street and East River park trees will not survive. This will increase the heat island effect, decrease the number of shady respite sites, and increase air pollution.
- The loss of essential Parks staff will limit access to public pools.

We demand continued funding to the community composting program, and no more cuts to parks. Parks and community composting are critical infrastructure and services in our community, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

Sincerely,  
East River Alliance  
Dianne Lake, President



**New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023**

**Testimony of Ambreen Qureshi Executive Director, Educational Video Center**

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your steadfast support of vital arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. My name is Ambreen Qureshi and I am the Executive Director of EVC, the Educational Video Center.

EVC's media-arts education programming and broader initiatives help young people heal, grow, and thrive as learners, leaders, and artists; build capacity of teachers and public schools to create transformative learning environments; and use original media to disrupt systems and narratives harming BIPOC youth and their communities.

For the last 40 years, EVC has supported positive life and career pathways for over 28,000 BIPOC and working class young people, trained over 1,100 teachers, and created 230+ highly acclaimed youth-produced documentaries that have gone on to win over 180 awards including 2 White House honors and an Emmy! Alumni from our programs have gone on to work at the [Urbanworld Film Festival](#), [CNN](#), and become members of the [International Cinematographers Guild](#).

EVC teaches credit-bearing film and media arts programs to BIPOC and working class young people from historically excluded communities. We work to ensure that NYC's youth remain in and emerge from high school prepared to succeed in college and career pathways during a time when education has been profoundly disrupted.

Over the last 3 years alone, EVC has served almost 1,700 students who have secured over 2,500 credits towards high school graduation, and earned over half a million dollars in paid internships. Youth at EVC thrive. Our annual indicators show remarkable percentages of participants seeing meaningful growth: 94% critical literacy; 98% social emotional learning; 91% civic engagement; and 96% documentary arts. Furthermore, we partner with 40+ schools every year to help create transformative learning environments across all 5 boroughs. And 15,000 global viewers see EVC videos and hear the voices of youth speak out on critical issues.

Critical issues like income inequality in the 2023 EVC youth-produced film "[Gatekeeping the Bills](#)," divestment in under-resources communities in the 2021 film "[Unjust and Unequal: Education in Black and White](#)," and relentless gentrification in the 2019 film "[The Ones Who Bought Bushwick](#)."

As the economy tightens, budget constraints are already impacting the EVC community and our young people. Some of our partner schools do not have the funds for art teachers. Yet their students, already facing barriers to graduation, require arts credit to graduate. These schools increasingly rely on EVC as a provider of credit-bearing arts programming, creating ballooning demand for our services. The detrimental cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan will thwart our efforts to meet this critical need.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC public schools jeopardize not only vital arts education organizations like EVC, but threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and most importantly our beloved youth.

***Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success starts with the arts.***

# EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK

**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Hearing for the Committee on Finance  
Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Brannan and the Committee on Finance, for allowing me to submit testimony today.

My name is Chelsey Pelot and I am the Manager of Government and Community Affairs at El Museo del Barrio. El Museo del Barrio is the only Collection-holding Latinx arts institution in New York City, and an East Harlem cultural hub, serving over 50,000 visitors each year. El Museo is also one of 34 organizations within the CIG—the Cultural Institutions Group—a diverse coalition that shares a public-private partnership with the City of New York, and a member of the Latinx Arts Consortium of NY, a peer network dedicated to knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and collective action towards systemic change.

For over 50 years, El Museo del Barrio has promoted and preserved the art and culture of Puerto Ricans, Latin Americans, and the greater Latinx community. Through our gallery exhibitions, community programs, educational initiatives, and cultural celebrations, we function as a space of education and celebration for Latinx Museum-goers ranging in age, income, background, and more. Additionally, as an anchor institution in the historically marginalized neighborhood of East Harlem, we work to provide essential resources and cultural offerings for local residents, and ensure that our work continues to be free and widely accessible to our immensely diverse, intergenerational audiences.

Like many other cultural nonprofits across New York City, El Museo's work reaches far beyond that of a traditional museum and plays an essential role in our community's local ecosystem. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Latinx New Yorkers sought out El Museo's virtual programming to find solace and comfort during times of uncertainty. El Museo's virtual Three Kings Day Celebration allowed our audiences to partake in sacred cultural tradition and virtually connect with their loved ones when in-person interaction was few and far between. When East Harlem was disproportionately affected by the virus, with infection rates and deaths higher than any other neighborhood in Manhattan at its peak, our neighbors turned to our institution, not only for mental and emotional reprieve, but for tangible resources. El Museo partnered with fellow CIGs to serve as a COVID-19 test kit distribution site so that New Yorkers had the ability to obtain as many free tests as needed. Similarly, at the peak of the migrant crisis in 2022, El Museo partnered with local East Harlem organizations to serve as a clothing donation drop-off site for our newly arrived neighbors. Moreover, while the population of dual-language learners steadily grows in our local school district, El Museo continues to provide high-caliber, bilingual arts education to 12,000-15,000 school students each year, benefitting their social wellbeing and improving overall academic outcomes. This year, when the City established their newest participatory budgeting initiative, The People's Money, El Museo served as a voting site, encouraging neighbors to cast their vote and exercise their right to influence how funding is spent in East Harlem, one of the City's designated TRIE neighborhoods.

# EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK

If the City proceeds with implementing additional PEG cuts throughout the remainder of this fiscal year, El Museo del Barrio will not be able to serve New Yorkers in the capacity our communities both need and deserve. Budget cuts of this magnitude will drastically affect Museum staffing, which will have a direct impact on programming, daily operations, and cross-sector partnerships. Without adequate staffing, we will have no choice but to reduce free community programs, vital educational initiatives, and longstanding cultural celebrations that have become part of the fabric of our neighborhood.

As a small institution of color, our ability to recover from such cuts will be near impossible. In turn, our audiences, mainly comprised of BIPOC New Yorkers, will tangibly feel the effects of our reduced operations for years to come, and we anticipate enduring, negative ripple effects in our local community. Based on the data examined in the UPenn Social Impact of the Arts Project's 2017 report, *Culture and Social Wellbeing in New York City*, there is a significant relationship between the presence of cultural assets in a neighborhood and social wellbeing, particularly in low-income areas like East Harlem. Findings show that access to cultural resources positively impact a range of social wellbeing factors including public safety, community health, and school effectiveness. Adversely, the divestment of cultural institutions like El Museo will have monumentally harmful impacts on areas across the five boroughs like East Harlem, that are historically underfunded and lack access to basic resources.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like El Museo del Barrio touch every vital aspect of daily life – from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions – not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Thank you.

Chelsey Pelot  
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## Good Morning/Afternoon Councilmembers

My name is Rosemarie Pinks, and I serve as Finance Director at Encore Community Services. Every day, we serve thousands of meals to older New Yorkers in Manhattan's West Side. Collectively, we provide more than 500,000 meals per year. Our members rely on our services for nutrition, connection, and enrichment as they age. During the COVID-19 crisis, we were called on to deliver and execute the city's emergency meals program, ultimately serving more than 1.2 million meals. Our services were essential then and remain so now.

The older adults we serve represent the grit, determination, and hard work that built this city. And yet, the Department for the Aging remains the lowest-funded agency in New York City. For years, agencies like ours have been asked to do more - even after inflation decimated our purchasing power and an anemic Cost of Living Adjustment left our committed employees struggling to make ends meet. Now, our operation is under threat yet again as the city considers a devastating 15% budget cut.

Human service workers, against all odds and despite being among the lowest paid of any sector in the city, continue to deliver. They are unsung heroes, but no amount of personal gratitude can compensate them for their long hours and miserly wages. They are burnt out. Roughly two-thirds of all human services workers had 2019 earnings below the city near-poverty threshold, and 20 percent received SNAP benefits. Women of color constitute 55 percent of this workforce. Until last year, New York's statutory cost of living adjustment was deferred, stripping human service workers of more than half a billion dollars in pay over a six-year period. The reward for their service to our city is the specter of the largest budget cut in recent memory.

The future is grim without your help. Champions like Commissioner Cortes-Vazquez have worked miracles in years past to support the tapestry of nonprofits like Encore that serve older adults in our city. Without renewed investment, however, minor miracles won't be enough. There is no foundation, no tranche of private money for us to rely on.

We are at a critical moment where the need for social services for the aging has never been greater. Encore strives to provide a safe and welcoming environment – from meals to social services to housing - by nurturing, respecting, and enabling. Without investment in our programs, the most vulnerable members of our community are at risk.

I want to be clear: Equal cuts are not equitable cuts. For DFTA - again, the lowest funded agency in the city - and the organizations like ours that rely on them - arbitrary cuts like the ones proposed for the coming fiscal year will be a death sentence for essential programs and put nutrition for aging New Yorkers at risk. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, and cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Encore Community Services joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Rosemarie Pinks | Finance Director  
Encore Community Services



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance  
462 36th Street, 3F, Brooklyn, NY 11232 | [www.NYC-EJA.org](http://www.NYC-EJA.org)

On the ground — and at the table.

**Testimony on the Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
**New York City Council Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

*Founded in 1991, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens by the coordination of campaigns designed to inform City and State policies. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability of low-income communities of color to thrive. NYC-EJA is led by the community-based organizations that it serves.*

The Mayor's November financial plan is potentially disastrous for the climate and health of New Yorkers. From cuts to community composting to interim flood protection measures, many of these budget cuts will not make a real impact on the City's expected \$1.82 billion budget shortfall. At a time when agencies are unable to staff up and retain employees to plan and implement the work that is necessary, we not only need funding for new climate projects, programs, and policies, but we also need to keep intact and bolster existing services and programs that enable people to cope with a wetter, hotter city. With a steeper citywide Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs) and hiring freezes, agencies are being forced to do more with less. We are in a moment where we need large-scale, sustained, and transformative City agency climate action and planning to meet both the City and State's emission targets and prepare NYC for a changing climate. The City must recognize services, such as tree and park maintenance and libraries, as critical in the fight against climate change rather than extraneous.

Community composting programs have had a demonstrated positive impact on New York's neighborhoods and environment, demonstrating that a true circular economy is possible. Community Composting only costs New Yorkers \$3 million dollars a year and serves as a critical tool in combating climate change. With expected delays in the rollout of the mandatory curbside composting program, the necessity of community composting becomes more clear. Many community composting programs are already set to cease operation entirely by this week as a direct result of these proposed budget cuts. Millions of pounds of organic waste will now be diverted into landfills or incinerators, producing emissions that will further impact our environment and warm our planet. The City has also made no commitments to ensuring that organic waste collected by the Department of Sanitation is directed to composting rather than landfills or anaerobic digestion. At a time when the "newest and best" anaerobic digesters at

Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility are barely operating and flaring excess methane into the neighborhoods of Greenpoint and Williamsburg. Funding and expanding community composting is the only way to make sure that our organic waste is turned into something that improves soil health, sequesters carbon, provides green jobs, educates neighbors, and builds communities.

Until permanent, large-scale flood protection measures and infrastructure can be put in place, interim flood protection measures are vital temporary solutions to protect residents vulnerable from coastal flooding. Low-lying coastal areas that have coastal resiliency projects under construction are the ones that currently need interim measures that can be quickly installed and deployed until these larger-scale projects are completed. While we are thrilled to hear the Mayor is now restoring cuts to this program after initially announcing nearly \$2.7 million in cuts, we are concerned that the administration even considered a program meant to address a significant flood risk gap to be on the chopping block. This points to a major shortfall of this administration in not seeing the many connections between climate change, health, community cohesion, and quality of life.

Basic services and amenities, such as libraries, trees, and parks, are critical in mitigating climate change risks and impacts on NYC residents. The New York Public Library's locations across the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island serve as NYC Cooling Centers during heat-related emergencies, which is critical, especially during the weekends and evening hours when other cooling centers don't operate. Parks and urban canopies help reduce the urban heat island effect and require staff and funding to grow and maintain. Additionally, parks and libraries act as congregation places for communities and people, which increase community cohesion. Research shows community cohesion, particularly when it comes to extreme heat, can increase climate resiliency and help people prepare and respond to climate emergencies. Cuts to the libraries and Parks Department will then ultimately put New Yorkers at risk to the dangers of the climate crisis.

The Mayor's proposed budget cuts, in addition to increasing vacancies at City agencies, especially at the Department Of Buildings (DOB) is also of critical concern, given that we are entering the first compliance period of Local Law 97 (LL97). It brings into question how these changes will impact the implementation of this critical piece of legislation that aims to drive down emissions from the largest contributing section - buildings. As advocates who worked tirelessly to ensure the passage of LL97 in 2021, we question whether DOB has the adequate budget resources needed to successfully carry out the implementation of this complex law in terms of staffing and other department resources. Overall, there is much to be done for the City to comply with existing laws that would help protect NYC residents. The Mayor's proposed budget cuts are inexcusable, unacceptable and cannot be justified.



**SASKIA TRAILL | PRESIDENT/CEO | EXPANDED SCHOOLS  
TESTIMONY  
NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
OVERSIGHT HEARING: MAYOR'S NOVEMBER FINANCIAL PLAN  
DECEMBER 11, 2023**

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My name is Saskia Traill and I am the President and CEO of ExpandED Schools, an afterschool intermediary working in partnership with direct service providers in service of students and families citywide. Thank you to Chair Brannan, Speaker Adams, and the rest of the committee members for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record today. Understanding the realities of financial resources having to be allocated to support an influx of newcomers to the United States seeking asylum, further gutting already fiscally vulnerable services that serve low income New Yorkers (including the newcomers in question), and that are directly responsible for creating conditions whereby families can thrive, cannot be the premier strategy by which we solve for this and the sunsetting of COVID-19 education relief funding.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and elevate the work that the City's leadership, this body included, has been taking on to leverage existing resources (and at times finding new resource) to create an infrastructure to support and show a great deal of empathy to humans from across the globe seeking to find a home and make a life here in New York City. With that said, if we truly believe that high quality afterschool programs are a valuable part of the educational equation whereby academic, social/emotional, and family economic gains can be achieved<sup>1</sup>, I am concerned about the reductions under the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) portfolio in the administration's November Financial Plan. Setting aside, for now, the fact that providers have not seen a newly enacted COMPASS/SONYC RFP in approximately 8 years and are meeting a post pandemic moment with antiquated contracts, these cuts further weaken a sector struggling to recover while consistently stepping up to the plate in terms of service delivery.

Multiple ExpandED partner organizations who also have DYCD contracts describe serving between 15 and 200 newcomer students whose families are seeking asylum across their contracted programs and have expressed major concerns with the implications that cuts will have on their ability to staff their programs and/or maintain their slot count. Along with schools, but often with a less sound infrastructure around them, it has taken approximately two years for many of these organizations to find some semblance of familiar footing after the initial impacts of the pandemic. Now, they face further compounded challenges around youth mental health and are working with what they have to create healing centered spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/policy/benefits/>



Published PEG documents describe a reduction of 3, 538 *underutilized* COMPASS slots. There are significant concerns around how this is being defined. In December 2020, Afterschool Alliance's "America After 3pm" survey - recognized as one of the most comprehensive reports on afterschool supply and demand - showed that for every child in an afterschool program in New York State, 4 are waiting<sup>2</sup>. Juxtaposing this data with the fact that 43% of New York State's population lives here in New York City<sup>3</sup>, and the fact that we know firsthand of programs with extensive wait lists, it begs the question of how underutilization is being determined and if there is a better answer for communities than simply taking them away.

Organizations and their site directors often use supplemental funding acquired via subgrants from ExpandED Schools to fill gaps and support their needs such as staffing, increasing student enrollment, student wellness support, etc. Therefore, the NYC Council's investment in afterschool via the Citywide Discretionary allocations to ExpandED Schools (**\$4.0M via Afterschool Enrichment & \$1.55M via Educational Programs for students in FY24**) has been, and continues to be, essential. It is clear that this chamber prioritizes program access and quality. However, this investment is designed to be complementary and so, if there is divestment from the overall infrastructure, there are repercussions for the work of intermediaries as well and negative impacts on the value add of your investment.

As we look forward to an uncertain calendar year, a presidential election, the ambiguity around the fate of federal immigration policy connected that election, and the looming date that signals the end of federal pandemic relief dollars, New Yorkers need more answers to questions such as (but not limited to): How are streams such as Rainy Day Funds and General Reserves (totaling \$3.2B in the FY24 adopted budget)<sup>4</sup> being leveraged during this time? What kind of revenue generating policies are being pursued at the state level to provide additional budgetary "breathing room" in the out years? The goal of the dialogue that grows out of these inquiries is to be solution oriented, as well as to move the conversation away from one that pits historically excluded communities against one another to one that is inclusive and seeks to center service.

Lastly, extended learning time functions as a continuum. The strength of each individual component (i.e. early childhood education, afterschool, summer learning, community schools, etc.) has implications for the results and viability of the other. For example: afterschool programming is uniquely positioned to build on the learning cultivated in early childhood spaces and summer learning programs, like summer rising, help maintain the momentum from afterschool programming. Therefore, I would like to lift up PEG cuts and vulnerable COVID relief funding impacting those strategies and initiatives, as well as state for the record that we stand in solidarity with the providers, leaders, and families raising concern about them.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NY-AA3PM-2020-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork>?

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/site/omb/reserves.page#:~:text=Revenue%20Stabilization%20Fund%20>



Thank you, once again, for the opportunity to submit remarks on this topic. I look forward to continuing to be a partner when it comes to the well-being of students and families, particularly as it relates to supplemental, enriching educational experiences beyond compulsory school time.

NYC Council Budget Hearing Testimony  
Andrew Perry, Senior Policy Analyst  
Fiscal Policy Institute

December 11, 2023

Good morning — I am Andrew Perry, Senior Policy Analyst at the Fiscal Policy Institute, a nonpartisan research organization committed to improving public policy to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers.

## Overview:

New York City faces real fiscal strain in the current fiscal year and next year. However, projected gaps are the result of an unexpected and temporary fiscal shock — the costs of services to asylum seekers — rather than a permanent structural imbalance. A temporary fiscal shock can be addressed through the use of non-recurring resources. Permanent cuts, which weaken public services and cause long-term economic damage, should be a last resort — rather than the first approach. As such, to manage the City's fiscal strain, the City should not make additional cuts; the City should avoid using conservative budgeting practices as a pretext for reactive cuts to critical services; and finally, the City should mobilize non-recurring resources to close any remaining shortfall next year. Given the fiscal resources available to the City, these steps can be taken while restoring \$200 million of cuts that were already taken from essential services such as libraries, education, and sanitation.

## FY 2024 Budget

Between New York City June 2023 adopted budget and the November 2023 financial plan, the City substantially revised its projected city funds spending on services for asylum seekers, adding \$1.4 billion in the current fiscal year — fiscal year 2024 — and \$4.8 billion in the next fiscal year. Over the same period, the City revised its city funds revenue estimates for the current fiscal year upward by \$800 million and instituted \$1.6 billion in PEG cuts and savings. These updates allow the City to carry \$643 million into the next fiscal year while retaining its planned \$1.2 billion general reserve spending — a fiscal cushion that will also carry forward into next year. As such, the fiscal year 2024 budget remains balanced. No additional cuts to fiscal year 2024 in the January or April 2024 financial plans are necessary.

Given the City's sound economic footing, it is likely that revenue will continue to exceed projections, which were revised upward only modestly in the November financial plan. Above trend revenue, together with the City's general reserve allocation for fiscal year 2024, give the City the ability to both reverse the most damaging November PEG cuts and to carry additional fiscal relief into fiscal year 2025. Conversely, cuts to libraries that reduce service hours, a Department of Education hiring freeze, cuts to early childhood education and community schools programs, and a Department of Sanitation hiring freeze will quickly deteriorate the quality of core services. Cutting these programs will damage the City's economy and quality of life over the coming years. These cuts can be reversed by instead tapping into the fiscal year 2024's

general reserve allocation by approximately \$200 million, while retaining \$1 billion of that fund to prepay expenses for next year.

New York City always projects budget gaps in future fiscal years. In recent years, the budget gaps projected in November financial plans for the following fiscal year have averaged 4 percent of projected revenue. The Fiscal Policy Institute recently [reviewed ten years of City budget gaps](#) and found that these routine budget gaps are consistently closed as a result of actual revenue exceeding projected revenue. While actual spending tends to hew close to projected spending, realized revenue exceeds one-year-out projections by 4.8 percent, on average. These routine budget gaps, therefore, are the result of conservative revenue estimation. While this reflects prudent financial management and reduces the risk posed by unexpected shocks, these routine gaps should not serve as a pretext for reactive budget cuts.

## **FY 2025 Budget**

The November 2023 financial plan raised fiscal year 2025's projected budget gap by \$2 billion, bringing the projected shortfall to \$7.1 billion — 6.7 percent of revenue. The fiscal year 2025 gap was driven by the City spending on services for asylum seekers, which rose \$4.8 billion to \$5.5 billion since the June 2023 financial plan. If not for the asylum seeker costs, the City would be on strong footing heading into fiscal year 2025, with a projected gap of \$1.6 billion — or 1.5 percent of revenue — lower than the level routinely projected.

The asylum seeker costs represent a temporary shock to the City's budget, however, some have voiced concern that there may be more permanent structural gaps in the City's budget. For example, some argue that the costs of recent collective bargaining agreements drive recent gaps. However, the estimated costs of labor contracts — and total expenditures other than for asylum seekers — have not increased since the April 2023 executive budget, which projected outyear budget gaps in line with routine levels. Further, recently ratified bargaining patterns keep workers' wages in line with recent and projected inflation over the contract period. As the City struggles with excess vacancies across the public workforce, keeping workers' wages on pace with the cost of living will be essential for attracting and retaining workers. More broadly, reviewing the size of the City's budget over the last decade reveals that the budget has grown in direct lockstep with growth in total private wages in the City — a key measure of the City's tax base. Thus, FPI sees no cause for concern that the City budget has grown beyond its means.

### *Balancing the FY 2025 Budget*

The projected budget gap for fiscal year 2025 of \$7.1 billion exceeds the levels routinely projected for the first outyear at this stage in the budget cycle. Because this gap is the result of an unanticipated fiscal shock — the cost of services to asylum seekers — and not a structural budget imbalance, it is appropriate to use non-recurring resources to close this short-run shortfall. These resources may include:

- State aid: New York State is on solid fiscal footing and should provide one-year appropriations to support the city through this crisis. These appropriations may be financed by state revenue, or, depending on its budget at the end of its fiscal year, the State's considerable reserve balances, which include \$13 billion non-statutory reserves and \$11 billion general fund balance not designated as reserves that are available for use. State aid may also take the form of repealing unfunded mandates to the city, including its liability for charter school rent.
- City revenue: Fiscal year 2024 revenue is likely to continue to exceed projections in the remainder of the fiscal year. This above-expectations revenue, together with the remaining general reserve allocation, will allow the City to prepay fiscal year 2025 expenses, lowering the projected gap. Further, because the City's underestimation of outyear revenue is highly consistent, it is likely that actual revenue will exceed the City's conservative projections next year. In the event that these pessimistic expectations become reality, withdrawals from the City's \$2 billion revenue stabilization fund would be appropriate.
- City expenditures: The city allocates \$1.2 billion as a general reserve each fiscal year. This allocation serves as a fiscal cushion to guard against unanticipated fiscal strain. Given next year's unprecedented challenges, this allocation should be drawn down by \$900 million. This would leave the general reserve for fiscal year 2025 at \$300 million — the same level allocated during the Bloomberg administration.

Further, estimates of asylum seekers spending assume each asylum seeker household will cost the city \$383 per night in both fiscal year 2024 and 2025. That is, in the November Financial Plan, the City's cost estimates assume that there will not be any cost efficiencies over the next two years. As the arrival of asylum seekers moves from an abrupt emergency to a multi-year reality, the City should invest in the creation of supportive housing, rather than continuing reliance on market rate hotels rooms. Additionally, the cost estimates included in November 2023 were formed in August 2023. These estimates, therefore, do not account for the October 2023 redesignation of Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelan asylum seekers, which will expand access to work permits for recent arrivals and likely reduce demand for City-funded shelters.

Finally, savings associated with PEG expense re-estimates tend to be substantially underestimated in outyears. That is, it is likely that the City will continue to find substantial savings in lower-than-expected program costs that do not affect the scope or quality of existing services.

Taken together, there are numerous resources and efficiencies available that are less damaging and disruptive than the recent and potential future cuts to services. These resources and efficiencies can support a balanced fiscal year 2025 budget while restoring counterproductive cuts to the Department of Education, Sanitation, and libraries. Moreover, additional PEGs for fiscal year 2025 are unnecessary. Preemptively planning for deeper cuts will further disrupt agencies' ability to deliver core services.

In April 2024, following the State budget, the City will have a clearer picture of the actual size of the fiscal year 2025 shortfall, after accounting for state aid and updated city revenue projections. At this point, the City can and should determine the non-recurring resources available to close any remaining gaps.

The City is additionally projecting budget gaps in fiscal years 2026 and 2027. Excluding asylum seeker costs, these gaps would align with historically routine gaps at this point in the budget cycle. As such, they are likely to narrow over time. Given the high level of uncertainty associated with asylum seeker costs, these projections do not provide pretext for reactive budget cuts.

December 11, 2023

New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
New York City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Re: Monday, December 11, 2023 Oversight Hearing of Mayor's November Financial Plan.

Dear New York City Council Committee on Finance:

We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 450 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting us to submit testimony about the mayor's November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. Our parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance. Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week. Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage. During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks.

I'd like to highlight two of the ways these cuts directly impact Fort Greene Park, the greenspace that serves, Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, and the residents of Downtown Brooklyn, among other neighborhoods:

- **Less workers = less summer programming.** We currently have 3 POP workers at Fort Greene Park, representing a quarter of the on-site NYC Parks staff team. The discontinuation of their positions, not only impacts their financial and housing security, but will also significantly affect the park in the coming year. Fort Greene Park is not just a green space; it is a lively, cultural and community hub that is well-used by us and other community organizations for public programs. Less workers cleaning the park, particularly for the evening shift in the coming summer season will mean that we'll have to cut back on our programming – less or no evening concerts, less film screenings, less support for community gatherings like The Lay Out, in order to prioritize the typical day-to-day litter pickup. We've already had to discuss this with the Director of Fort Greene Park. *These losses should not be tolerated in the heart of Brooklyn!*
- **Less workers = more drug debris = more community outcry & divisiveness.** Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. We recently experienced an outcry from parent and park users about drug debris found on the lawns and playgrounds of Fort Greene Park where children and pets play. *The outcry quickly started to devolve along racial and new/old resident lines, threatening the social cohesion we work hard to facilitate.*

We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

Our Conservancy continues to step up to try to fill some of the park's staffing needs, now grant-funding three NYC Parks positions, but our optimal role as a partner is to complement, not replace the role of government. As an example, our Community Wellness Team offers mental health and related services to all users of Fort Greene Park. This is the type of work we excel at providing for the community, not shoring up traditional government maintenance positions.

Please do not allow the Mayor to cut the budget to NYC Parks any further. The impact of these cuts is too devastating for our communities.

Sincerely,



Rosamond Fletcher  
Executive Director



## Four Freedoms Democratic Club

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
Re: November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

My name is Debra Freeman, and I Co-Chair the Education Working Group of Four Freedoms Democratic Club (FFDC). Founded in 2014, Four Freedoms Democratic Club is an active, progressive democratic club representing the 76<sup>th</sup> Assembly District in Manhattan's Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island and dedicated to the ideals of FDR's "Four Freedoms" speech.

I am here to testify, on behalf of FFDC, for increased funding for New York City public schools by opposing the budget cuts to New York City public schools in the November Financial Plan.

We are deeply concerned that the impact of the drastic \$547 million cut to New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) this year-and the \$600 million cut next year will be devastating for students, schools, and families. Public schools need more funding, and not less, as they continue to struggle with unprecedented learning loss and mental health challenges due to the pandemic. At this time of overwhelming need in NYCPS, public education needs sufficient funding more than ever to help students recover from the pandemic and prepare for success in college and careers. This is not the time for budget cuts.

Our concerns are increased since in addition to the \$600 million in cuts in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block due to imminent expiration of federal funding. Over the last few years, NYCPS has been using around \$1 billion dollars annually in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary pre- pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, including, arts education programs, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, Summer Rising, 3-K, preschool special education, 75 homeless shelter coordinators, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. With federal funding expiring in June, if elected officials don't act now, there is a risk of cuts to these programs on top of the cuts in the November plan. We need City Council's leadership to do everything possible now to ensure continuation of education programs (including arts education programs) funded with federal pandemic relief funds. Please prioritize investment in education to help NYC students --the future of our city.

Thank you for the opportunity, on behalf of FFDC, to present testimony on this important issue.



**Testimony of FPWA**

**Presented to:**

**Oversight Committee**

**Hearing on the November Financial Plan:**

**Prepared by the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget**

**Chair Justin Brannan**

**December 11, 2023**

**Prepared By: Emily Pisano**

**Fiscal Policy Analyst**

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## **FPWA on the November Financial Plan**

### **An Anti-Poverty Lens on the November Budget**

Good morning, Chair Justin Brannan and Oversight Committee members. Thank you for convening this important hearing on the Mayor's November Financial Plan.

FPWA is an anti-poverty policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing economic opportunity, justice, and upward mobility for New Yorkers with low incomes. Since 1922, our organization has driven groundbreaking policy reforms to better serve those in need. FPWA works to dismantle the systemic barriers that impede economic security and well-being, and strengthen the capacity of human services agencies and faith organizations so New Yorkers with lower incomes can thrive and live with dignity.

Our organization believes the cuts outlined in the November Financial Plan put the dignity and economic security of all New Yorkers at risk. With steep cuts to education and human services, and an additional 5% cut scheduled this January, this Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) only widens the inequality between all New Yorkers.

### **Non-Profits Can't Do More with Less**

As a member organization representing nearly 170 human services agencies and faith-based institutions, FPWA hears daily about the direct impact that insufficient funding has on providers. Plagued by late contract payments, gaps in workforce support, and reduced budgets, non-profits and human services agencies are already struggling to deliver vital services. Rather than focusing on improving care, the sector has to worry about keeping the lights on and making sure workers get paid.

We cannot keep asking our non-profit providers to do more with less. An uneven pandemic recovery and the important work to support new arrivals require our human services sector to be fully functioning – and fully funded.

Yet, as we speak, essential programming is being cut. The PEG threatens to worsen outcomes for entire communities. Cuts to afterschool programming (\$1.5M in FY24, then \$6.9M in FY25), summer enrichment (\$20M), community schooling (\$10M) and libraries (\$23.6M), will not only impact the children using these services, but will also cause undue hardship on the families and communities that rely on them. This hardship forces New Yorkers to scramble to find alternative arrangements for child care – one of the leading costs for households in New York, as demonstrated by our most recent report, [The Problem of Income Inadequacy in New York State](#). Existing crises in learning loss, child care access, and community networks, will be exacerbated without intervention.

### **Call for Transparency**

The City needs to be more transparent about how cuts could affect service providers in the long term. Insufficient information on the nature of PEG reductions has made it difficult to discern the effect of certain savings measures, particularly for vacancy reductions, personnel services cuts, and program cost reassessments.

Reductions based on reassessments of staffing and program cost could conceal the long-term impacts of cost reduction. Without more context on community needs and service constraints, the City risks

straining the government's capacity to deliver benefits and services. With over 18,000 outstanding vacancies across NYC agencies, reassessments and cuts to vacancies and personnel services may make temporary problems in service delivery permanent.

Dismal service attainment rates over the last fiscal year, highlighted in the Mayor's Management Report, show the need to carefully guard our city's service capacity. With only 30 percent of cash assistance applications and under 40 percent for SNAP meeting the criteria for timely processing, too many New Yorkers are falling between the cracks<sup>1</sup>. Without further information on the service impact of the PEG, New York City risk having its residents' vital services reduced or removed, without the necessary information to understand how this will impact their lives and well-being.

The November plan cuts \$120 million from early childhood education programs which could translate into 10,000 seats being cut from the system. When justifying these cuts to the Department of Education, the Administration termed these cuts "right sizing," which often suggests programmatic under-performance. This language implies that the rationale for cuts to the 3K program is based on "under enrollment." However, this is an incomplete narrative. Unfilled seats in 3K programs have been attributed to significant and persistent rollout issues with an arduous application procedure and insufficient program promotion making it difficult for New Yorkers to enroll their students. As discussed below, FPWA has warned about the impending fiscal cliff for federal funding that previously supported these programs. Due to its lack of planning and the halting and inadequate rollout, the City will fail to uphold its promise for universal 3K.

### **Looking Beyond the November Cuts: Loss of City, State, and Federal Funding in FY 25**

For several years now, FPWA has drawn attention to the impending fiscal cliff that would be caused by the expiration of Covid-19 funding. As highlighted in our most recent Human Services Funds Tracker report, that cliff is now upon us<sup>2</sup>. The City's failure to heed this warning and adequately plan for this eventuality has directly led to the fiscal challenges being faced today.

The total loss in anticipated federal funding, amounting to over \$4 billion dollars, will affect human services agencies profoundly.

Again, the Department of Education is particularly hard hit, facing a massive loss of over \$1B in temporary federal Covid-19 relief funds in the following fiscal year. This threatens important programs including preschool special education, Summer Rising, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 450 school social workers, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more.

The impact of November PEG cuts is just the tip of the iceberg. The Plan's outline for FY 2025 and subsequent outyears paints a worrying picture with a concurrent decline in City, State, and federal funding overburdening the public sector.

According to the expense breakdown, the City plans to reduce funding contributions to human services agencies despite losses to federal funding. In fact, reductions of City funds are greater than the loss of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023\\_mmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023_mmr.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fpwa.org/resource-center/in-the-news/new-fpwa-report-reveals-alarming-decline-in-federal-state-funding-for-city-agencies/>

federal funding for many agencies, including the Department of Small Business Services (DSBS), Department of the Aging, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

Similarly, the top-line figures for agency budgets obscure the depth of cuts with adjustments outside of the PEG like necessary collective bargaining increases and new needs spending not increasing agency capacity. For example, while it looks like the Department of Education's budget increased overall, the \$600 million PEG is hidden by legally required increases in spending for private-school special education funding as well as increased transportation costs.

Still, many of the proposed FY 2025 human service budgets are substantially lower than the current fiscal year. If accepted in its proposed form, the Department of Youth and Community Development's Budget would shrink by over 16% while the Department of Small Business Services (DSBS) budget could face a whopping 40% cut - before even accounting for inflation. Significant cuts in overall funding levels are slated for most human service agencies.

Agency	Percent funding change, FY24 to FY25, November Financial Plan
<b>Department of Small Business Services</b>	-39.6%
<b>Department of Health and Mental Hygiene</b>	-19.8%
<b>Administration for Children's Services</b>	-0.6%
<b>Department for the Aging</b>	-6.8%
<b>Housing Preservation and Development</b>	4.2%
<b>Department of Social Services</b>	-4.8%
<b>Department of Youth and Community Development</b>	-16.2%
<b>Department of Homeless Services</b>	7.8%
<b>Department of Education</b>	-3.9%

### Why15%? Say No to Austerity

Cuts at this level would be catastrophic for vital programming and cannot be the starting basis for the Mayor's preliminary Budget come January.

In a city where 50% of working-age households in New York City do not have sufficient earnings to keep up with the high cost of living, we cannot afford to reduce vital human services<sup>3</sup>.

Rather than feeding into a "doom loop" narrative, in which tales of mass migration and loss of federal funding spell the decline of New York, we must embrace solutions that allow us to build towards a "virtuous cycle" of public spending. The current strength of our economy, which boasts strong growth and low unemployment, speaks to the generative power public financing has for consumer spending and our economy. In taking away social support, we may cut costs in the short-term, but risk harming the economy and reducing revenues – not eliminating, but widening the gap.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.fpwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NY\\_FPWA\\_BriefOne.pdf](https://www.fpwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/NY_FPWA_BriefOne.pdf)

Only when we adequately invest in social outcomes can New York City achieve its growth potential while addressing the root causes of poverty.

On this basis, we call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the health and wellbeing of New York City.

To start a fair negotiation, we advocate for the City to:

- Ensure that non-profit and human services sectors have the funding to deliver services to New Yorkers in need, while paying workers' wages that meet the true cost of living.
- Improve transparency into PEG cuts, providing a deeper contextual assessment of vacancy reductions, personnel services cuts and program cost reassessments.
- Partner with the human services sector and nonprofits to advocate for increased State and federal financing, while also using city funds to ensure that human services are prioritized.
- Consider revenue raising solutions including progressive tax adjustments.
- Reject budget austerity, understanding that public investment, especially in those investments that support New Yorkers with the lowest incomes, is the foundation of our collective prosperity and financial security.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We at FPWA look forward to working closely with you to ensure that our human services system is supported, and New Yorkers receive the assistance they deserve.



Freedom  
Agenda

## Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance

Submitted by Sarita Daftary, Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

December 11, 2023

Thank you Chair Brannan and Council members, for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Sarita Daftary and I am a co-director of Freedom Agenda. We're a grassroots, member-led project, organizing with people and communities who have been impacted by incarceration. We're one of the organizations leading the [Campaign to Close Rikers](#), and we're a member of the The People's Plan and Communities United for Police Reform's Budget Justice Campaign.

The Mayor's budget cuts will have devastating impacts for our members, as they will for many other New Yorkers who are struggling find quality housing, healthcare, childcare, jobs, and education opportunities, while the resources available to arrest and jail them seem to be limitless.

Funneling so much of our City's resources to agencies that create so much harm in our communities, like the Department of Correction and the NYPD, has never made sense. At a moment when our City is facing difficult financial choices, it's reckless to continue that preferential treatment.

The Mayor's budget proposal allocates over \$2.6 billion to operate Rikers Island this fiscal year, including DOC expense budget and associated fringes and pension fund contributions. At a per person annual cost of over \$500,000, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective intervention our City has. For the same per person cost, our City could place 13 people in supportive housing, or divert 50 people to highly-effective alternatives to incarceration. While mass incarceration is generally a bad investment, the New York City Department of Correction is uniquely wasteful in its spending. New York City spends [350% more](#) per incarcerated person than the jail systems in Los Angeles or Cook County, Illinois, and yet, people in DOC custody are subjected to [some of the worst jail conditions in the nation](#). NYC has the only jail system in the country with more officers than people in custody, but DOC leadership has enabled officers to abuse sick leave, and to refuse to work in the posts most necessary to provide services to people in custody. In their [November 8 report](#), the Nunez federal monitor said "Definitive measures to ensure that staff are available in sufficient numbers and that they stay on post are obviously necessary. It is equally critical that staff *actually do their jobs* [emphasis in original]... Too often, staff are present and yet fail to enact or enforce even the most basic security protocols."

Still, while slashing funds and vacancies in agencies that provide essential services like housing, healthcare, youth services, and education, the **administration plans to let DOC hold on to at least 720 vacancies. Eliminating these vacancies is not only in alignment the City's moral and legal obligation to reduce the jail population and close Rikers Island, but could also save nearly \$100M in just the remainder of this fiscal year**, and could position the city for common sense savings in the future.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the Council smartly rejected the Mayor's effort to add 578 uniformed staff to the Department of Correction's headcount. That outrageous proposal from the administration add to DOC's budget bloat shows that Mayor's approach to DOC's budget is a reflection of his desire to reward his [friends in the correction's unions](#), instead of reflecting DOC's actual budget needs.

DOC's wasteful spending is not limited to staff lines. In last year, they were found with over [\\$780,000 in unused equipment](#) stashed in hidden lounge in a decommissioned jail, [spent over \\$240,000 on submachine guns](#) they have no need for, and paid more than [\\$40,000 to send staff to Europe](#). Their refusal to follow the law is likely to continue to cost the city hundreds of millions in claims, such as those connected to class actions surrounded [delayed releases](#) of people who bailed their bail, and [illegal use of solitary confinement](#).

The Mayor has similarly treated the NYPD's bloated, \$11B budget as untouchable, and shielding them from meaningful cuts means that their budget is actually projected to increase in the current fiscal year by close to \$135M (at least 2.3%).

The budget challenge our City is facing is a manufactured crisis due to Mayor Adams' mismanagement and misplaced priorities that threaten the health and safety of our communities.

We ask the Council to bring the budget modification to vote, and vote it down unless the Mayor rolls back cuts to essential services and such drastic budget changes are halted until the normal FY25 budget process where there will be more transparency and accountability.

Thank you,

Sarita Daftary

Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

[Sdaftary@urbanjustice.org](mailto:Sdaftary@urbanjustice.org)

City Council Finance Committee Testimony  
December 11, 2023  
Skip Blumberg, Friends of City Hall Park

I submit my **support for New Yorkers for Parks “Play Fair” recommendations** after waiting an hour at the City Council to testify in person (in my “Support Our Parks” shirt).

Thank you for allowing my testimony.

And I really mean it.

Whenever friends are distressed about the world and city conditions, I tell them that the **only solution is to elect excellent leaders**.

**So we count on you for solutions.**

Our city has big problems that require BIG solutions.

There are more than 100 billionaires and 300,000 millionaires in our city. In the wealthiest city in the wealthiest country in the world, **we should be able afford the best parks**, as well as the best police, health care, education, housing, all the way to best salaries for City Hall and City Council staff.

**The importance of parks is clear.** Not just for the benefits to health and mental health that are available equally to me, you, all your constituents and to all the visitors to our city, parks provide solutions to climate change's devastating impact.

Parks throughout the city can provide crucially **needed climate fixes**, in the context of our green infrastructure with our urban forest canopy and potential for rooftop greenery and solar panels, along with assisting with rainwater runoff, the potential for compost centers.

LA, Chicago, Minneapolis, San Francisco and **many other U.S. city's councils provide more of their city's operating budget to parks** than the big apple. No wonder Chicago is hosting the Democratic Presidential Convention next year... in addition to everything else, well-maintained parks are a **symbol of a city's effective government**.

**City Hall Park is a 6-acre precious neighborhood park in one of NYC's fastest growing neighborhoods, as well as all New Yorkers' city commons.**

Due to neglect from years of short staff and lack of budget, as well as the botched renovation of the 1999 renovation, CHP was in the **most deplorable condition** in FCHP history (since 1993).

With assistance from our elected officials we met with Mayor Adams a year ago in City Hall to present almost 100 needed fixes that are urgently needed.

DPR can be effective. As a result of that meeting, FCHP has been **working directly with DPR**, which has fixed most of the 21 broken paths lights, some of the dangerous broken bluestone pavements, all the drinking water fountains, the central decorative fountain and more. (There is still lots to do to restore the park to proper conditions that we continue to work towards.)

Mayor Adams told us at the meeting that if the funds were there he'd gladly increase DPR budget. **It's up to you to provide those funds now.**



Testimony for City Council Committee on Finance meeting on December 11, 2023

Prepared by Kathleen Corrigan MD,FAAP

On behalf of our volunteer group, Friends of Tompkins Square Park, I am testifying that NYC Parks deserve 1% of the City Budget. I am testifying against the proposed budget cuts for NYC Parks and the loss of 1400, primarily maintenance, jobs.

Tompkins Square Park is our “town square” in the East Village with 10.5 acres; it is the size of 10 football fields minus the end zones. Currently, the park lacks a fulltime gardener and is cleaned by a small maintenance staff directed by their Park supervisor.

The park is our “Urban Forest” and this essential outdoor space demands year-round care and maintenance especially with the increased frequency of severe weather events.

In October 2022, a small group of neighbors joined together with the support of the NYC Parks Department Staff and Partnership for Parks to restore and preserve the beauty, health and safety of the park. Over the past year, our volunteer group has dedicated Saturday mornings to sweeping under benches, collecting trash, weeding,

amending the soil, adding compost, and planting. We have hosted 20 volunteer events attended by over 200 volunteers.

We spent the past year restoring the Southeast quadrant of the park and learned firsthand the tremendous amount of dedication and physical labor that our Parks Staff does to care for our park. Our neighbors, volunteers and visitors to the park have embraced our work and now, we ask you to reject these proposed budget cuts.

Our “town square”, the size of ten football fields, will quickly become the “town dump” and an “all you can eat” buffet for rats with your proposed cuts to our maintenance staff.

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

Submitted by  
**Nickesha Francis, Policy and Advocacy Manager**  
Good Shepherd Services

Dec 11, 2023

**Thank you, Chair Justin Brannan and the Members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify on Mayor Adams' November Financial Plan and the impact the cuts will have on Good Shepherd Services.**

My name is Nickesha Francis, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at Good Shepherd Services. I am also a Member of the Campaign for Children, the Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, the Learning to Work Coalition, the Student Success Centers Coalition and the newly formed Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs.

Good Shepherd operates 94 programs that support over 33,000 children and families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Guided by social and racial justice, Good Shepherd Services partners and grows with communities so that all NYC children, youth, and families succeed and thrive. We provide quality, effective services that deepen connections between family members, within schools, and among neighbors. We work closely with community leaders to advocate, both locally and nationally, on behalf of our participants to make New York City a better place to live and work.

Nonprofits, like Good Shepherd Services, are managing concurrent crisis supporting the newcomers, absorbing the cuts to programs in the November plan and those that will follow and preparing for the funding gaps in Fiscal Year 2025 as a result of the sunsetting of the federal COVID relief funds. Additionally, we are advocating to the City to help us meet the needs of our workforce that includes support for a cost-of-living adjustment and an increase to base salaries to provide staff with a livable wage in New York City. That said, we are calling on the City to reverse these cuts and to engage the nonprofit community in discussions about how to cause the least harm as budgetary decisions are being made this Fiscal Year.

Regarding the November Plan, we have already seen cuts to crucial programs that Good Shepherd Services operates in communities across the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan.

- 1) ARCHES. The New York City Department of Probation terminated the Next STEPS mentoring program in August and later informed providers that youth could enroll in the ARCHES programs. However, in the November Plan, DOP is significantly reducing ARCHES slots. Where are youth supposed to get the support they need if this program is being cut?
- 2) The Department of Youth and Community Development made cuts to COMPASS and Summer Rising for middle school students. This will have a direct impact on services and we are concerned that the highly anticipated COMPASS and SONYC Request for

Proposal will reflect a reduction of slots across the system. Instead of us analyzing the real need in communities – including areas that have wait list, we are making across the board cuts that are impacting the longterm sustainability of the system.

- 3) The Department of Education proposed cuts to Community Schools that will impact 4 out of the 7 Community Schools Good Shepherd supports. Community Schools is set to experience a \$55M cut as a result of expiring COVID relief dollars. New York City is a leaders in the Community Schools space and yet, has no plan on how to address this funding gap.
- 4) The Administration for Children Services is set to re-estimate Close to Home Monitoring and Preventive Programs. Good Shepherd's Prevention Brooklyn Passages FFT-TCM (Functional Family Therapy- Therapeutic Case Management program) will be terminated effective June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, Sensory Exploration, Education, and Discovery (SEED) Program school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists and family workers, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and Student Success Centers in 34 high schools. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue.

Good Shepherd has 31 Education Support Programs supporting over 7,500 students. Our programs include Learning to Work, Student Success Centers, Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC), Transfer Schools and Community Schools.

These programs were needed before the pandemic and are even more important today for our city's long-term recovery. Cuts to these programs are an injustice to the most vulnerable and already under resourced children, families, communities, and the workforce that support them. We can all agree that children deserve more NOT less and yet, we see children and families targeted by the cuts in the November Plan.

Unless elected officials act NOW to reverse these cuts laid out in the November Plan, we are bearing witness to an alarming shrinking of the system and decrease in services to high impact communities still recovering from the devastating impact of COVID. Communities cannot continue to bear these mounting cuts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

## **Testimony**

New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
Monday, December 11, 2023

### **Gowanus Canal Conservancy Testimony, New York City Council Committee on Finance**

My name is Natasia Sidarta, and I am the Community Stewardship & Operations Director at Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC), where I oversee community stewardship and volunteer programs to empower local stakeholders in stewardship of local green spaces. We are a proud member of the Forest for All NYC Coalition and the Play Fair Coalition, and we know that investing in resilient ecosystems across the City is essential to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. We are here today to ask this Council to continue fighting for a budget that invests in critical environmental services, including Parks and community composting, in order to support health, quality of life, resilience, and justice for all of us.

Tree canopy, vegetation cover, and green space are crucial for the health, safety, and livability of Gowanus residents and NYC, and heat-related illness and death continue to impact communities of color and lower-income communities disproportionately. As our city faces significant increases in the number and intensity of heat waves and extreme precipitation events in the coming decades, trees, green spaces, and rain gardens, when adequately maintained, offer critical nature-based solutions that mitigate the urban heat island effect and stormwater flooding. In Gowanus alone, we see the effects of flooding in countless ways, including damaging local businesses and homes, halting public transit, and overflowing our combined sewer system.

Green infrastructure including street trees and rain gardens provide exponential benefits including flood management, cooling, and shade, especially as they mature. However, surviving to maturity depends on adequate maintenance and protection from City agencies, community based organizations, and volunteers. In Gowanus, we empower a network of volunteer tree stewards, youth apprentices, and community gardeners who water, weed, prune, and remove litter and debris. We partner with community composting organizations including Big Reuse, GrowNYC, LES Ecology Center, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and more to provide compost and healthy soil for street trees and local community gardens. These activities provide social infrastructure, offering opportunities for neighbors to participate in and organize neighborhood beautification events, all while combating climate change. Cutting community composting and the Parks budget will result in the elimination of these invaluable services, and as well as the loss of over 1,500 green jobs.

Our parks, street trees, rain gardens, community gardens, and community composting sites are critical public infrastructure and do not receive the resources they need to equitably serve New Yorkers. We need to be building capacity to tackle the climate crisis, not cutting it. We must

invest in community composting; end the long-term underfunding of the Parks Department and the workers who care for our city; and continue fighting for baseline funding of 1% to Parks.

Thank you,  
Natasia Sidarta  
Community Stewardship & Operations Director  
Gowanus Canal Conservancy



**GRIOT Circle** is an advocacy and service organization committed to the dignity, well-being, and quality of life of LGBTQ people of color as we age.

December 11, 2023

#### GRIOT Circle Testimony on City Budget

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs.

Organizations like GRIOT Circle touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further.

The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Aundaray Guess

Executive Director



**253 South Street  
New York, NY 10002  
212-349-3724**

December 11, 2023

Good Morning Chairman Brannan and members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance. My name is Bonnie Lumagui, Assistant Executive Director of Older Adults and Community Services for Hamilton-Madison House (HMH), a settlement house that has served the residents of Manhattan's Lower East Side and Chinatown since 1898. The programs we provide to older adults, adults, and youth are crucial lifelines for this vulnerable and underserved community. We have a particular ability to reach out to our Asian American non-English speaking neighbors. HMH's City Hall Older Adults Center is one of NYC's largest and longest-operating older adult centers, open to all our neighbors over 60 years of age while serving a large immigrant community, many of whom speak Chinese. Our services meet a wide range of needs, providing congregate meal programs, social services, after school programs, early childhood education, and mental health services to a growing population. Our programs serve more than 6,000 older adults per year.

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. We are very concerned how additional cuts will impact our congregate programs and little to no information is being shared at a time when our services are needed more and more, especially our congregate meal programs and home-delivered food pantry meals, the demand for which has risen 9% year-on-year (April 2022 – April 2023) given the ever-rising cost of groceries. We fear these cuts could be catastrophic to already underfunded programs at a moment when food insecurity is on the rise in our older adult neighbors. NYC Aging already has a very small budget to begin with, so cuts of this magnitude will have a direct impact on programs and the people they serve.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Hamilton-Madison House joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City administration:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary.
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions.
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits.

We appreciate the attention and time the City Council is giving to this pressing concern and look forward to working with you; to ensure an outcome that will allow our participants opportunities to continue to thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the Council to protect these services that are vital to the well-being of so many New Yorkers.

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*Testimony provided by Bonnie Lumagui, Assistant Executive Director of Older Adults and Community Services at Hamilton-Madison House. For follow-up questions, please reach out to [bonnielumagui@hmhonline.org](mailto:bonnielumagui@hmhonline.org)*



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**Carrie Zwiebel Bloss**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
Chair Brannan**  
**December 11, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance, for hosting this important hearing and the opportunity to testify.

My name is Carrie Bloss and I am the Executive Director of Heights and Hills which promotes successful aging in Brooklyn. Our programs and services are centered on the basic needs of older adults as they age to improve health, satisfaction, and longevity: financial and food security; access to health care; a safe, affordable, and comfortable place to live; the ability to accomplish life's basic tasks; and social supports to prevent isolation.

#### Background

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Heights and Hills joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

**There's no fat left to cut in Aging.** NYC Aging's total budget is \$466.7 million dollars, less than one half of one percent of the city budget and covers services for the almost 1.4 million New Yorkers aged 65 and older. Aging service staff are already some of the lowest paid workers in the city. **The overwhelming majority of costs incurred by Older Adult Centers are fixed.** We cannot renegotiate our rent, and we already operate with minimal staffing, most of which is contractually required. **The only significant costs that vary in our budgets are the meals, the price of which has only risen over the last year.**

This system has already been cut to the bone, and there is no more to lose before the system itself starts to fall apart. With such a small budget these additional cuts would save the mayor pennies, but they will cost New Yorkers their community, their food security, and their health and safety.

Based on these factors, we would offer the following recommendations:

**Recommendations**

Hold Aging Services Harmless in the FY25 Budget. Aging services are already underfunded. Despite this, Older Adults Centers and other services still work to multiply the dollars the city invests and pull in services the community needs that are not funded by the city. Our members have become vaccination clinics, housing clinics, intergenerational community spaces, food pantries, transportation providers, and refuges for folks who have nowhere else to go. Cutting this funding not only threatens the city funded programming and food, but threatens to collapse an already precarious service network with an impact far larger than the pennies the city will save through these cuts.

**We also join our nonprofit colleagues in asking that the city the City:**

- **Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary**
- **Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions**
- **Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the council to protect these services that are vital to the well-being of so many New Yorkers.

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*Testimony provided by Carrie Bloss, Executive Director Heights and Hills. For additional questions, please reach out to [cbloss@heightsandhills.org](mailto:cbloss@heightsandhills.org)*

**Testimony:** Amy Barasch, Executive Director

**Hearing:** Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan

**Host:** Committee on Finance

**Date:** December 11, 2023

Thank you, Chair Brannan and the Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to submit testimony on this critical matter. I am Amy Barasch, the Executive Director of Her Justice, a nonprofit organization that has stood with women living in poverty in New York City for 30 years. In 2022, Her Justice provided a range of legal help to more than 5,300 women and children in our practice areas of family, matrimonial and immigration law. Among the clients served, 92% are women of color, 83% are survivors of domestic violence and more than half are immigrants. Over a third of our clients do not speak English, which means they are effectively precluded from the legal system if language resources are not available. We are writing today to recognize both that legal services are essential to ensuring the security, stability, and safety of women living in poverty and that they are a necessary complement to social and other services for those in need. Both must be provided for either to have its full impact.

### **Organizational Background**

Through our pro bono first model, Her Justice pairs thousands of well-trained and resourced pro bono attorneys from the City’s premiere law firms with women who have urgent legal needs. This 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. By ensuring that more women have lawyers by their side in a system historically designed to have poor people navigate it alone, we ensure their voices and concerns are heard and we begin to break down systemic barriers to access to justice.

Her Justice offers information, advice, brief services and full representation in 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 in Federal proceedings. We offer representation for many of the cases other legal services organizations do not have the bandwidth to take on – child and spousal support matters, and litigated divorces, for example. Our staff provides a broad array of legal services including advice, review of papers, and tools to ensure our clients get the best outcomes they can on their own. We aim to match as many women as possible seeking full representation with pro bono attorneys to represent them in their case. The remainder of cases are handled in-house to ensure that we retain the necessary flexibility to respond to emergency situations, navigate particularly complex or lengthy legal issues, and stay fully engaged in the legal issues on which we train and provide support. During the long pendency of cases, Her Justice lawyers and the pro bono attorneys who provide representation continue to work with clients and stabilize the cases.

### **Support from the City is Critical to Nonprofit Service Providers**

City Council funding supports the critical legal services Her Justice provides to women living in poverty in all five boroughs of New York City. The SAVE, DoVE, and Speaker’s Initiative funding we have received in the past has allowed us to provide critical legal services to low-income survivors of domestic violence and low-income immigrant women in New York City. Support from the City Council helps Her Justice to provide direct representation and skilled advocacy in an arena that often fails to adequately serve the legal needs of the



marginalized. We have recently seen the City's deep commitment to the heightened need for assistance for asylum seekers. As New York City welcomes another influx of migrants, those seeking asylum are already facing increasing court delays, putting their legal status at risk, and further widening the access-to-justice gap. At Her Justice, we understand that our immigrant communities are an essential part of the fabric of our city and, for 30 years, have been committed to providing critical free legal services to undocumented immigrant women living in poverty who have experienced gender-based and domestic violence. We anticipate that many of our clients will be among this influx and, along with the City's support, we hope to support them with the dire legal services that are needed to bridge this gap.

Support from the City Council for Her Justice recognizes that legal services are essential to ensuring the security, stability, and safety of women living in poverty and their families. These services are necessary and complement social and other services for those in need. We know that when women living in poverty and their families have access to robust social services, they are more likely to engage with organizations like Her Justice for urgent legal relief and participate actively in their legal cases. Her Justice has long collaborated with other organizations assisting underserved communities throughout New York City. In addition to providing informational and know-your-rights presentations for women in their communities directly or in partnership with community-based organizations, Her Justice regularly engages in capacity-building trainings in family, matrimonial and immigration law for direct service staff and volunteers at small nonprofit organizations that do not have lawyers on staff or capacity or expertise to provide the legal services their clients need.

Our peer nonprofit service providers, too, depend on the City for critical resources to sustain the essential services they provide to New Yorkers. Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Her Justice and our partners touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions – not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Thank you for your continued support for Her Justice and the other nonprofit organizations that provide critical services to New Yorkers so that all of our communities can thrive.

Respectfully,

Amy Barasch, Esq.  
Executive Director, Her Justice  
abarasch@herjustice.org



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## Testimony re: Proposed November Plan and Budget Cuts

Submitted to:

New York City Council  
Finance Committee

Submitted by:

Ingrid Alvarez, Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement

December 13, 2023

Thank you, Chair Brannan and all other members of the Finance Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Ingrid Alvarez, and I am the Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement at Hispanic Federation (HF); a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy. HF's testimony is also informed by our more than 100 New York City community-based organization member agencies.

I am writing to express the deep concerns of Hispanic Federation (HF) regarding the proposed November Plan, which outlines substantial cuts to city agencies, consequently impacting community-based organizations (CBOs) and essential social services. HF, as an organization dedicated to serving the needs of communities of color across New York City, is witnessing the profound consequences of underfunded and over-stretched organizations that are tirelessly working to meet the overwhelming needs within their communities.

During the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, non-profits and CBOs emerged as the frontline responders, providing crucial services to the city. They acted as a safety net when New York City accommodated an influx of migrants seeking refuge, and they continue to be indispensable.

Unfortunately, CBOs have largely been excluded from discussions about the current and future needs of our city. Our input is crucial to ensure that the needs of New Yorkers are met and to prevent arbitrary budget cuts that will ultimately harm them.

City agencies have demonstrated resilience and adaptability, pivoting swiftly to provide direct services during times of crisis. Our city's CBOs, often the unsung heroes, have consistently proven to be the backbone of New York City. They have been there time and time again—before, during, and after crises. It is crucial to recognize that the safety net provided by these organizations is an integral part of the city's fabric, and any further reductions in funding would jeopardize the well-being of our hard-working families.

New York City cannot afford to compromise its safety net further, and it is not justifiable to balance the budget on the backs of our city's residents who depend on fully funded agencies and the vital services provided by grassroots non-profits and CBOs to thrive. HF calls on New York City to prioritize maintaining the integrity of community-based organizations and essential social services in the upcoming budget.

This week, new fiscal projections from the New York City Council have been made public, indicating an increase in tax revenues and the city's avoidance of a recession. These positive projections should serve as a compelling reason for City Hall to reconsider its budget recommendations. It is imperative to ensure that vital city services are not eliminated and continue to remain funded, benefiting New Yorkers in every borough.

In summation, Hispanic Federation urges the Finance Committee to advocate for the preservation of funding for community-based organizations and essential social services. The well-being of our communities depends on a robust safety net, and we implore you to prioritize the needs of the people you serve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hispanic Federation

Good morning Chairman Ossé and members of the Committee. On behalf of Historic Richmond Town (HRT), thank you for hearing my testimony and for your support of our city's arts and cultural institutions. I am here today to advocate for the continued financial support for cultural organizations and their outreach into New York City's communities, which enriches the life of our city and its people.

Historic Richmond Town has been a proud partner with Carnegie Hall Citywide. For the last two summers, we have hosted performances by world class musicians at our open air campus on Staten Island. These free concerts have delighted our visitors, many of whom come from the Richmondtown neighborhood adjacent to our site. Nestled in the middle of the island, our local residents and neighbors are accustomed to distance when it comes to arts and culture - knowing that long commute separates them from the entertainment capital of Manhattan. Carnegie Hall's Citywide initiative collapses that distance, bringing live music to their doorstep. The incredible talent of Jayme Stone's Folklife and Empire Wild drew hundreds of visitors to the center of town. These concerts bring a diverse group of people together in our village site - from across different age groups and communities across the island. Each audience member's experience is an encounter with this unique museum that will endure, inspiring them to seek out more experiences that excite the mind and engage them with the community.

HRT is a member of the City's Cultural Institutions Group and is the oldest cultural organization on Staten Island. Historic Richmond Town is dedicated to understanding and chronicling the unfolding human history of Staten Island - and providing experiences that inform, provoke, and delight. Whether that be a tour

program, a living historical reenactment, a school field trip, or a walk on our grounds - we remain committed to preserving the past and serving our public in the present.

Without the support of our Mayor and City Council, Carnegie Hall Citywide's initiative would not be possible - nor would HRT be able to adequately staff and host these beloved concerts, now an annual tradition for our community.

Parks, green spaces, and cultural institutions are vital to the health of our Borough and City. Carnegie Hall and Historic Richmond Town provide encounters with culture that connect today's citizenry to the arts and its rich and diverse past. With the continued financial support of the Mayor and City Council, these partnerships will continue to thrive, and be a driving force in the cultural heartbeat of the city.

Thank you once again Chairman Ossé and members of the Committee.



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### Homeless Services United's Testimony Before

#### The NYC Council Finance Committee on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 on the November Plan

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing, homeless prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency, and transitional housing, outreach, and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

HSU is extremely grateful to Speaker Adams, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, and members of the City Council for your steadfast leadership and commitment to preserving the human services safety net ensuring that New Yorkers in need can access public benefits, emergency housing assistance, and shelter when in crisis.

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and Department of Social Services the Human Resources Administration (HRA) are currently at a critical juncture. **With record numbers of individuals and families applying for benefits and seeking shelter, it is counterproductive to impose cuts on these already strained agencies.** The City rightly has the moral and legal obligation to **shelter everyone in need**, and while a confluence of factors including the reduction in Federal pandemic assistance contributed to a budget shortfall, **the City cannot seek to balance its budget on the backs of those most in need.**

**We urge the City to exempt DHS/DSS/HRA from the 5% PEG in the November Plan as well as additional 5% PEGs in both the forthcoming FY25 Preliminary and Executive Budgets. DHS/DSS/HRA must also be exempt from the hiring freeze and the 1-out-1-in requirement to backfill critically understaffed positions necessary to eliminate backlogs within their fiscal departments, IT department, and rental assistance and public benefits units.**

**DHS and HRA contracted homeless and eviction prevention providers must be held harmless from further cuts in FY24 and FY25.**

DHS contracted non-profit providers *already* slashed their personnel budgets by 2.5% for FY24 and onwards. DHS' guidance to providers was to eliminate vacancies and condense staff lines to achieve it, and in doing so entrenched unsustainably high caseloads within the program budgets for remaining staff, diminishing the level of services for clients. Providers tried wherever possible to blunt the impact of the previous cut, but as a result their program budgets are now extremely lean. **Further cuts to providers WILL negatively impact homeless services, reducing shelter staffing and service quality and increasing average lengths of stay in shelter at a time when our city can least afford it.**

While the DHS shelter system's vacancy rate is virtually zero, DHS and HRA contracted programs are stuck in a vicious cycle of burnout and turnover, as the entire human services sector has not received a meaningful Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in years, leaving programs unable to fill vacancies for low-paying and highly demanding work. Our providers report average vacancies of 20% across programs,



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with record-high turnover rates due to unreasonably high caseloads and stagnant wages. Further cuts to DHS/DSS/HRA risks undoing investments in specialized services and treatment models in favor of maintaining barebones shelter capacity sans the wraparound care which makes programs successful.

**The City's homeless services and eviction prevention safety net is at a crossroads- whether to divest in services and have shelters return to grim days of simply warehousing people or invest in the services and staff within DHS and HRA programs, increasing stagnant low-wages to fill vacancies and enabling providers to help New Yorkers access and preserve permanent housing.**

### **Staffing Deficiencies within DHS are weakening the fiscal health of non-profits:**

**DHS/DSS/HRA must be exempted from the City's hiring freeze and 1-out-1-in hiring requirements to rectify understaffing within the agency which is likely contributing to delays for multiple critical areas, including public benefits and rental assistance, as well as contract and amendment registrations, subcontractor Form 65A approvals, and invoice reimbursements.** As we previously testified at the September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 General Welfare Hearing, households applying for public assistance benefits, one-shot deals, and rental assistance are unable to get timely access to the help they need because HRA does not have enough staff to handle the immense caseloads. Similarly, more CityFHEPS applications of DHS shelter residents will churn through the application process, as DHS recently halved the amount of time shelter providers have to update pending CityFHEPS applications from 48 to 24 hours, citing staffing constraints of DHS packet evaluators. **Simply put, without robust staff at DHS, shelter service providers will not be able to quickly place people into permanent housing as they need their government partners to process necessary paperwork and approvals.**

Compounding budget cut concerns, non-profit homeless services providers are reeling from widespread fiscal delays within DHS and DSS, including late contract registrations and budget amendments, subcontractor approvals, and invoice reimbursements. **The Administration must move with all due urgency to enable DHS to eliminate the backlog and promptly pay contracted providers, including fully staffing up DSS and DHS fiscal teams, assembling rapid response teams to assist providers with invoicing, allow for the ability to batch multiple months of invoices, and commit to a payment floor of 75% of the contract value.** Contracting and payment delays are effectively strangling cashflow for nonprofit providers to the point that some providers are resorting to private loans to cover payroll and program costs. **One provider is paying \$17,000 in interest every month for private loans to cover the City's reimbursement delays.** Without the ability to reliably predict when the City will register contracts and pay invoices, experienced non-profit providers are deciding not to answer DHS' call to open new programs as they cannot take on additional financial risk from doing business with the City.

**The slow roll out of promised fiscal relief has left providers literally waiting years for essential funding for programs**, affecting not only the non-profits but also their staff and clients who rely on their services. Some provider contracts are still waiting for **Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) adjustments for budgets dating back to FY21** to better reflect overhead costs for programs. Wages for DHS-contracted non-profit staff have continued to stagnate despite efforts by the Council to provide relief, as some providers are still awaiting **FY22 amendments for prevailing wage, and** many are still waiting for DHS to implement **Workforce Enhancement Initiative (WEI) funding for FY23 and FY24.** It is extremely challenging work



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under the best circumstances, but when the City cannot make good on timely wage increases for non-profit staff after years without a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), it is no wonder that our workforce is experiencing record high turnover and 20% average vacancy rates across programs.

**The Form 65A subcontractor approval process is fraught with delays.** Providers are seeking vendor approvals from the Department of Social Services (DSS) for **requests dating back to FY21 and earlier.** DSS is working through a backlog of between four and five hundred pending requests, but providers cannot afford to wait years. Until approval is granted, providers cannot draw down funds from their contracts to pay their vendors, and these delays are **damaging relationships with reputable vendors.**

Even with Form 65A approvals, **providers' cashflow for their programs are being interrupted by chronic invoice processing delays with DHS.** Providers are resubmitting the same invoices multiple times and requesting guidance how to proceed, but despite best efforts to collaborate with DHS, providers are not seeing improvements in reimbursement delays. Bold steps must be taken by DHS to break the log jam in invoice reimbursements, including **assembling Rapid Response Teams to assist providers with invoicing, and bolstering resources for DHS' Fiscal department to accommodate processing multiple-month batch invoicing** to allow providers to submit invoices more efficiently. It is critically important for programs to be able to predict and maintain regular cashflow to manage workforce needs and ensure smooth provision of services and resources for clients.

### Staffing Deficiencies within DSS/HRA are hurting New Yorkers in need of assistance:

**Positions responsible for the application and administering of public benefits and rental assistance should be exempt from City hiring freezes and 1-out-1-in backfill requirements. Specifically, staff that determine eligibility, and processing applications, renewals, and “indexing” documents for public benefits, SNAP, Cash Assistance, One Shot Deals, CityFHEPS and FHEPS, as well as staff that conduct Cash Assistance interviews and rebudgets.** DHS contracted shelter and outreach staff as well as HRA contracted Homebase providers do not have access to the information they need to assist clients because of chronic delays with IT requests, waiting 6 weeks or more for access to CARES and StreetSmart data systems, which we suspect is due to insufficient staffing within DHS' IT department. As the number of people within NYC shelters continues to reach new record highs, this is exactly the worst time to divest in the homeless services safety-net.

**HRA should backfill vacancies and expand headcount until they have sufficient capacity to eliminate backlogs and attain a 30-day processing time for not only public assistance and SNAP benefits, but also One-Shot Deals, CityFHEPS and FHEPS vouchers.** As the administration testified, they are seeing record numbers of households applying for One-Shot Deals and public benefits, and as such, **HRA should expand beyond pre-pandemic headcounts to keep pace with the growing need.** The Agency cannot continue to rely on stop-gap measures like voluntary overtime and redeploying staff within the agency to address backlogs and meet the current need, as it burns out staff and creates new delays within the units the staff are pulled from, as all units are overtaxed.



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**In addition to staffing up to meet the current demand for benefits and rental assistance, HRA must ramp up capacity *in advance* of implementing the CityFHEPS bill package which will take effect this winter, widening eligibility to more households at risk of eviction or currently experiencing homelessness. In addition to expanding headcount with the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) which processes and approves CityFHEPS applications and the Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) which cuts checks for the voucher, HRA must expand capacity within the Family Independence Administration (FIA) to process public assistance applications, interviews, rebudgets, as this is a required step for applying for CityFHEPS. Additional staff are also required to manually “index” submitted documentation for applicants’ cases for benefits, one-shots, rental assistance, as delays with indexing have lead to denials for assistance. While HRA implemented on-demand phone interviews for Cash Assistance, there are simply not enough HRA staff to answer the phones, with holds of 4 hours or more being commonplace. HRA must also expand capacity with the Rental Assistance Unit (RAU) to approve One-Shot Deal requests and Centralized Rent Processing Unit (CRPU) to cut checks for One-Shots and public benefits.**

### **Impacts of delays at HRA:**

- 1) Homebase providers have become the de facto front door for HRA without being adequately resourced to fulfill that role.
  - a) HRA Benefits Access Centers are unable to keep up with the number of households coming to them for assistance and are routinely referring tenants to Homebase without indicating specific reasons for the referral, or for things which the Center staff are responsible for resolving/addressing such as CityFHEPS renewals or modifications and FHEPS applications, renewals, and modifications.
- 2) One-Shot Deals are being denied for households in arrears, necessitating multiple applications to get approved and risking eviction if unable to do so within the timeframe of the housing court proceeding.
  - a) Insufficient staffing levels at RAU and FIA Benefits Access Centers can't keep up with the number of applications being submitted. FIA staff must manually “index” submitted documentation to a One-Shot Deal packet for RAU to review. If a packet does not include all the supporting documentation necessary, RAU cannot issue a decision to approve, and given there is a limited determination period, OSDs will be denied if RAU can't see/review the documents in time. We're hearing that RAU is trying their best to approve as many requests as possible but are overwhelmed by the number of applications while suffering from a number of vacancies. Those that remain are working nights and weekends to approve cases which is commendable but unsustainable.
- 3) Due to HRA paperwork processing delays, households currently living in housing with a CityFHEPS vouchers are seeing their voucher either end at annual renewal or get auto-renewed without the requested rent increase, causing households to needlessly fall into arrears. Tenants and landlords are submitting requested documents well in advance of the renewal date, but due to the backlog in indexing documents, un-indexed documents will not be viewable within a person's case/application, and make it seem like the person did not submit everything necessary, even if they did. Tenants are needlessly falling into arrears because HRA does not have enough hands to process their paperwork,



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risking their housing stability and taking away precious capacity from Homebase programs to resolve what should be a perfunctory government function.

- 4) People are unable to exit shelter in a timely manner due to delays within RAP processing CityFHEPS applications and delays at FIA Benefits Access Centers receiving a Cash Assistance interview and rebudget, and a backlog of client documents which need to be “indexed” to their respective applications for benefits and rebudgets.
  - a) Voucher holders and landlords are being asked by HRA to resubmit updated paystubs and leases for CityFHEPS packets even when the delay is due to an HRA backlog for reviewing the documents. The onus should not be on applicants to redo and resubmit paperwork because City government cannot manage its workload in a timely manner.
- 5) Insufficient staffing for on-demand Cash Assistance telephone interviews are causing delays for Cash Assistance and CityFHEPS and FHEPS vouchers.
  - a) Providers shared that applicants are normally forced to wait on hold for hours before anyone picks up, if at all. Some applicants have had to call back multiple days to be able to be interviewed, and the callback function is not without its own challenges.
    - i) The option to join a virtual queue and receive a callback is only offered within the first few minutes on hold. Anyone who wants to opt for the virtual queue after the initial chance would need to call back, losing their current spot in the queue. Additionally, people who call in the afternoon may not receive a callback within the same business day (if at all) because there are not enough interviewers to quickly work through the queue.
    - ii) While the on-demand call function is an improvement over being forced to wait by their phones for days for HRA to possibly call, the limited capacity of the number of interviewers means applicants must take hours and days out of their busy lives in order to try to contact HRA, and the inability to successfully reach someone within in time will result in their CA case closing, a denial for a One-Shot Deal, or the inability to apply for CityFHEPS or FHEPS rental assistance.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Homeless Services United’s members touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

The City’s homeless services safety net is being tested by record levels of need for public benefits, rental arrears assistance and emergency shelter, and typical interventions like overtime and staff redeployments with the Department will be insufficient to meet the need. HSU urges OMB to **increase, not cut, funding for the Department of Social Services to allow DHS and HRA to expand staff capacity and avoid further budget cuts to homeless service providers.** Investing in the homeless services safety net protects the well-being of New York City’s most vulnerable and is fiscally responsible policy. HSU stands ready to work with the administration and City Council to ensure timely access to public benefits,

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rental assistance, and shelter to keep New Yorkers safe and stably housed and quicken exits from shelter to permanent housing. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and if you have any questions, please contact me at [elee@hsunited.org](mailto:elee@hsunited.org) .

**CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING  
DECEMBER 11, 2023, AT 10:00 AM  
HOUSING AND SERVICES, INC. WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit Housing and Services Inc.'s ("HSI") written testimony.

HSI is a member of the Supportive Housing Network of New York ("the Network") (the statewide advocacy organization for the New York State supportive housing community) and fully supports the Network's oral and written testimony.

The Network's advocacy points are appended to this written testimony.

By way of background, HSI has over 38 years of experience as a permanent supportive housing developer and provider. We have 625 tenant households residing in four congregate projects in Manhattan and the Bronx and 100 households on an HRA/HASA contracted scattered sites contract, in private housing units situated in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx. Our congregate projects have two HRA/DHS SRO Supportive Services contracts, two DOHMH services contracts and three HRA/HASA housing and services contracts. All HSI's congregate projects have significant HPD capital funding.

HSI opposes the proposed hiring freeze and the remaining 10% of the 15% PEGS for HPD, HRA/DHS, HRA/HASA, DOHMH and DOB for the following reasons:

- The proposed budget cuts will not produce cost savings and will increase City costs.
- Due to past austerities, supportive housing providers and their funding agencies are already at breaking point. Further cuts will have a disastrous impact.

**SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IS COST EFFECTIVE AND SAVES NYC MONEY**

Supportive housing is the time-proven most cost-effective way and most compassionate way to end chronic homelessness. Budget cuts to the stable permanent supportive housing costs of NYC agencies and providers do not save money but increase volatile unpredictable costs for what would be unnecessary EMS calls, hospitalizations, and incarcerations. It has been reported recently by Corporation for Supportive Housing that an unsheltered single adult living on the street's costs NYC approximately \$40,000 in such services annually.

Past austerities by funding agencies have already created shortages in experienced agency staff, producing unintended cost increases to the city and creating serious cash flow problems and programmatic challenges for providers. Here are some examples:

**UNDERFUNDED CITY AGENCIES EQUAL INCREASED HOMELESSNESS**

In winter 2022, the pandemic beleaguered and underfunded HRA housing placement process slowed down, creating an unprecedented average 10% vacancy rate in city-wide permanent supportive housing. For every vacant unit, a homeless person languishes in the shelter system at an estimated monthly cost of \$4,080 (based on the recent City Comptroller's report). Using an estimated number of 30,000 total NYC supportive housing units, the additional and unnecessary cost to NYC for one month's vacancy of 2,500 units (assuming approximately 500 of 3,000 units were not ready for occupancy) amounts to an astounding \$10.2 million. Should one prefer to measure the cost by the number of street homeless single adults who could not be placed in shelter because current shelter stayers could not move into permanent supportive housing, the 10% vacancy cost approximately \$8.3 million.

In addition, HSI's two projects dependent upon DHS referrals suffered vacancy losses amounting to at least \$100,000.

### **UNDERSTAFFED CITY AGENCIES THREATEN THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Due to what HSI believes are shortages in experienced HRA/HASA fiscal staff, HSI has experienced long delays in getting fiscal contract budgets and monthly invoices approved for its four HASA contracts. One FY 23 contract budget was not approved until July 2023, one month after the contract's fiscal year end, resulting in HSI being out of pocket for \$342,000 for an entire year.

Currently, HSI is still owed \$1,243,000 on final invoices on its four HASA contracts as follows: FY 18 \$19,000, FY 19 \$230,000, FY 20 \$161,000, FY 21 \$493,000, and FY 22 \$340,000. It is challenging enough to work with contracts that do not fully cover program costs. It is becoming unsustainable to wait years to be fully paid on contracts that do not fully cover all program costs.

HPD's website indicates that, due to limited staff capacity and a significant backlog of projects, the following housing programs have waiting periods of up to one year for a project manager to be assigned:

- Green Energy Preservation
- Housing Preservation Opportunities
- HUD Assisted Multifamily
- Multifamily Housing Rehabilitation Loan
- Participation Loan
- Neighborhood Pillars
- LIHTC Preservation (Year 15)

Amid a city-wide housing crisis, lack of staffing for those programs will only create more costs for all New Yorkers.

Past austerities have already pushed permanent supportive housing providers to the brink due to lack of meaningful contract increases to fund program staff salaries and wages.

As an example, HSI's two HRA/DHS SRO Supportive Services contracts have seen no meaningful increases in over 20 years even though the contracts bind HSI to 20-year-old service commitments. These contracts fund case management and front desk staff's salaries, wages, and benefits.

At HSI we struggle to match consumer price index increases for our staff so that they do not actually lose purchasing power by working for HSI. Most of our COLAs are not funded by our contracts, Instead, our COLAs are funded by rents that should be funding building maintenance. This puts our buildings' infrastructure at risk and is unsustainable. It also makes it impossible to build sufficient building reserves for our first-generation SRO housing which is facing intensive capital needs to comply with the requirements of Local Law 97.

The lack of COLAs signals to our staff that their work is not valued by New York City.

Our deepest concerns are for our lowest compensated staff- the building maintenance and front staff workers who toil tirelessly 24/7/365. Our services are a non-starter if our buildings are not clean and safe. The pandemic highlighted the courage, wisdom and compassion of our front-line staff who were there every day to protect and assist our often elderly and medically fragile formerly homeless tenants.

As a permanent supportive housing provider, HSI is a de facto social justice organization. However, we are compromised because we cannot pay just wages due to lack of adequate contract funding. As a result, some of our workers are one rung away from homelessness.

#### **MORE FUNDING NOT LESS**

Past austerities have also created a shortage of OMH licensed mental health facilities, compelling HRA to refer to HSI's unlicensed programs persons with intensive needs not originally contemplated in HSI's social service contracts.

HSI is blessed with over 16 years of continuity in its senior social services management. It can provide a long-term view of trends in HRA/DHS general population and HRA/HASA referrals. Even before the pandemic, there has been a growing trend of referrals with increasing severe psychiatric disorders that 16 years ago were considered inappropriate for unlicensed supportive housing programs. We understand that this trend is the result of shortages in NYS OMH-licensed community residences and other OMH-licensed programs, and of the chronic underfunding of NYS psychiatric hospitals that cannot meet the greater needs of the severely mentally ill. We also note that the most prevalent characteristic of chronically homeless HRA/DHS referrals is undiagnosed mental illness.

HSI and other unlicensed supportive housing providers have accepted the challenges of serving referrals with ever-intensifying needs but need additional resources to effectively provide intensive services to support these residents and keep them housed. Due to past austerities, only limited resources are available in many of HSI's contracts to meet this need. This is particularly crucial given the context of a nation-wide failure to address mental illness and the shortage within NYC of even very short-term hospital facilities for individuals in severe crisis.

We understand that Mayor Adams' efforts to force the most vulnerable individuals, who call the streets their home, into hospitals have had little impact due to insufficient supply of beds. These persons return to the streets, with no improvement in their well-being. We in supportive housing have similar experiences. Recently, a tenant presented a severe safety risk by displaying an open switchblade knife in one of our social services offices. NYPD escorted him to the hospital with the goal of receiving psychiatric care, but the tenant was discharged within hours, with no referrals or services in place. This occurred despite sharing our serious safety concerns and clinical recommendations with the emergency room staff.

We note that, for the safety of its tenants and staff, HSI has mandatory de-escalation training for all site staff. Currently, most service contract funding is insufficient to fund these costs. De-escalation training is a life safety issue. This training cost is funded by rents, which should more appropriately be reserved for building operations.

#### **DYSTOPIA**

In summary, the proposed PEGS cuts and hiring freezes will not produce cost savings. On top of past austerities, they will push permanent supportive housing providers and their NYC funding agencies into further serious and costly dysfunction.

**City Council Finance Committee Hearing**  
**Monday, November 11th at 10AM**  
**Testimony Talking Points**

**Oppose Mayor Adam's proposed 15% PEGS**

- If these cuts are instituted, they will have a disastrous impact on the city's supportive housing system and the already strained agencies charged with overseeing mental health and housing programs and projects, delaying development timelines and putting housing opportunities and services for New Yorkers in need out of reach.
- Critical housing and homelessness-related agencies on which New Yorkers across the five boroughs – including HPD, DHS, HRA, DOB, DCP, and DOHMH – are already dangerously under-staffed and under-resourced, creating delays in building and filling desperately needed housing. This cannot continue. They must be insulated from the Mayor's fiscal austerity measures. Failing to do so will unnecessarily put individuals in desperate need of safe, reliable housing coupled with on-site voluntary services at risk – especially as the mounting migrant crisis has added strain on the homeless services system.
- Mayor's Adam's PEGS pointed to increased costs to serve the newest New Yorkers and insufficient federal and state aid as justifications. The agency and sector -wide cuts represent a \$9.6 billion reduction in the current fiscal year, rising to \$10.4 billion by fiscal year 2027. Analyses by Fiscal Policy Institute, Independent Budget Office and Nonprofit New York indicate that the PEGS far outstrip the cost of welcoming and supporting the newest New Yorkers. The City's request for 15% cuts across all agencies amounts to a \$10 billion reduction in one year. We join the City in calling for additional federal relief, but warn that these cuts are counterproductive to addressing the homelessness crisis.
- The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

**Testimony of Housing Works**  
Before  
**The New York City Council Committee on Finance**  
Regarding  
**Oversight: Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
December 11, 2023

Thank you, Chairperson Brannan, and Members of the Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Anthony Feliciano, and I am the Vice President of Community Mobilization for Housing Works, a healing community founded in 1990 with a mission to end the dual crises of homelessness and AIDS. 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.

Housing Works is also a founding member of the *End AIDS NY Community Coalition* (EtE Coalition), a group of over ninety health care centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations that are fully committed to ending AIDS as an epidemic in all New York communities and populations. Working closely with DOHMH, 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, we have much left to do as stark and unacceptable disparities persist in HIV’s impact on Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities.

Housing Works and the EtE Community Coalition, on behalf of the marginalized New Yorkers we serve and represent, implore the City Council to reject the Mayor’s devastating and regressive cuts to the essential services that sustain and support our most vulnerable citizens and the non-profit agencies that work on the front lines of poverty and homelessness to meet critical needs.

Additionally, it is cruel and unnecessarily devastating to New Yorkers. Libraries, housing, CUNY, pre-K, food programs, sanitation, healthcare, and other areas being slashed by the November budget plan are crucial community safety infrastructure that helps keep New Yorkers healthy and safe and should not be facing yet another round of cuts. Our leaders must remove the arbitrary 15% budget cut directive, adjust the budget based on actual need and provide a transparent analysis for the public to fully understand the impact of any budget cuts.

Specifically, we implore the City Council and the Administration to exempt the Department of Social Services, the Department of Homeless Services, DOHMH, and the community-based providers they fund, from any Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) or other cost cutting plans. Given the serious and overlapping humanitarian and public health crises facing New Yorkers, agencies responsible for managing these emergencies must be exempt from any citywide program of systemic funding cuts. We are seeing firsthand the devastating impact on client services and health outcomes resulting from understaffing and lack of resources needed to meet basic needs.

Staffing shortages across NYC agencies have already disrupted City services, and essential agencies simply cannot sustain further erosion. The NYC Department of Social Services (DSS) administers essential benefits and services for vulnerable New Yorkers, including the lifesaving housing assistance and benefits provided through its HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA). The

Department of Homeless Services (DHS) is responsible for providing basic survival services for the growing number of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. HASA is chronically understaffed and under-resourced, and both DSS and DHS face new challenges posed by the increasing number of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, primarily from low-income Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) is charged with protecting the public health, including managing ongoing epidemics of communicable diseases that include COVID-19, HIV, viral hepatitis, TB, STIs, and most recently, Mpox. To maintain essential services, DSS, DHS, and DOHMH must be exempted from any citywide savings plan.

At the very least, it is critical to exempt City-contracted nonprofit agencies providing housing, homelessness prevention, homeless services, and other essential assistance from further budget cuts so as not to worsen existing staffing shortages and increase already untenable caseloads.

As just one example, organizations funded through the *NYC Council Ending the Epidemic Initiative* provide community-based, culturally competent HIV prevention and care services that are critical to ensure continued and equitable progress towards the City's ETE goals. The proposed cuts to DOHMH administered contracts threaten to undermine this vital Council initiative and our efforts to equitably end AIDS.

Mayor Adams's threatened 15% PEG is a blatant attack on Black, brown, and low-income families. The Mayor continued scapegoating of asylum seekers to justify his administration's mismanagement and drastic budget cuts is shameful and untrue, with independent government watchdog groups asserting that the administration has overstated migrant costs and given the Administration's reliance on expensive emergency contracts with for-profit companies that cost the City billions of dollars rather non-profit organizations with more expertise and commitment to the long-term public interest of the city. These are individuals who are seeking safety and deserve a right to shelter.

It is even more shameful when we know that the city spends more than \$500,000 per year to detain one person at Rikers, which is only getting worse under this Mayor, and the jail population has skyrocketed by nearly a thousand since he took office, costing the city hundreds of millions. Meanwhile, despite claims to the contrary, NYPD and DOC are escaping the brunt of the Mayor's cuts once again, with the Mayor committing that these agencies will not be subject to the next round of cuts, and the Governor promising to fund future academy classes that were postponed or cut in the NYPD.

To address the NYPD overspending every year by more than \$5 billion without consequential commitments, we must:

- Require the NYPD to cut its bloated budget by at least 7% so those funds can be used to protect and invest in housing, mental health, education, and other critical non-police safety solutions.
- Remove police from social services, including end NYPD involvement in mental health issues and dismantle NYPD Mental Health Co-Response Teams; cut the growing "homeless police" in the Dept of Homeless Services; and remove police from youth services & youth engagement and redirect that money to community-led, youth-serving and youth organizing

programs. This includes getting police out of New York City schools, dismantling "Youth Coordination Officers" and related youth programs that should not be run by police.

- Cut funding and shut down notoriously abusive NYPD units that make us less safe, like: Strategic Response Group (SRG) and VICE.
- Cut at least \$45.8 million from the NYPD budget as a way of holding the NYPD accountable for failing to fire officers that kill, brutalize and/or sexually assault New Yorkers.
- Cut the budget of the NYPD's outsized 36-person public relation has been only a mechanism for regularly spreading disinformation.

Finally, we are dismayed that the Administration continues to ignore calls to address budget shortfalls by increasing revenues. The City Comptroller has proposed modest changes to taxation for the wealthiest New Yorkers that, taken together, could provide more than \$1 billion dollars a year in additional revenue to invest in programs that help all New Yorkers thrive.

We certainly agree support the Mayor's call for Albany and Washington to do more to mitigate the impact of the current humanitarian crisis on the city's coffers. But we have weathered crises in the past without painful spending cuts borne by New Yorkers least able to shoulder the burden. These are shortsighted and fiscally irresponsible measures that will compound the already dire circumstances of many New Yorkers in the short term, and undermine the ability of all residents of our City to thrive for years to come.

Thank you for your time.



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### Homeless Services United's testimony before

#### The NYC Council Finance Committee on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 on the November Plan

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing, homeless prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency, and transitional housing, outreach, and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

HSU is extremely grateful to Speaker Adams, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, and members of the City Council for your steadfast leadership and commitment to preserving the human services safety net ensuring that New Yorkers in need can access public benefits, emergency housing assistance, and shelter when in crisis.

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and Department of Social Services the Human Resources Administration (HRA) are currently at a critical juncture. With record numbers of individuals and families applying for benefits and seeking shelter, it is counterproductive to impose cuts on these already strained agencies. The City rightly has the moral and legal obligation to shelter everyone in need, and while a confluence of factors including the reduction in Federal pandemic assistance contributed to a budget shortfall, the City cannot seek to balance its budget on the backs of those most in need.

we urge the City to exempt DHS/DSS/HRA from the 5% PEG in the November Plan as well as additional 5% PEGs in both the forthcoming FY25 Preliminary and Executive Budgets. DHS/DSS/HRA must also be exempt from the hiring freeze and the 1-out-1-in requirement to backfill critically understaffed positions necessary to eliminate backlogs within their fiscal departments and rental assistance and public benefits units.

#### DHS and HRA contracted homeless and eviction prevention providers must be held harmless from further cuts in FY24 and FY25.

DHS contracted non-profit providers *already* slashed their personnel budgets by 2.5% for FY24 and onwards. DHS' guidance to providers was to eliminate vacancies and condense staff lines to achieve it, and in doing so entrenched unsustainably high caseloads within the program budgets for remaining staff, diminishing the level of services for clients. Providers tried wherever possible to blunt the impact of the previous cut, but as a result their program budgets are now extremely lean. Further cuts to providers WILL negatively impact homeless services, reducing shelter staffing and service quality and increasing average lengths of stay in shelter at a time when our city can least afford it.

While the DHS shelter system's vacancy rate is virtually zero, DHS and HRA contracted programs are stuck in a vicious cycle of burnout and turnover, as the entire human services sector has not received a meaningful Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in years, leaving programs unable to fill vacancies for low-paying and highly demanding work. Our providers report average vacancies of 20% across programs,



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with record-high turnover rates due to unreasonably high caseloads and stagnant wages. Further cuts to DHS/DSS/HRA risks undoing investments in specialized services and treatment models in favor of maintaining barebones shelter capacity sans the wraparound care which makes programs successful. The City's homeless services and eviction prevention safety net is at a crossroads- whether to divest in services and have shelters return to grim days of simply warehousing people or invest in the services and staff within DHS and HRA programs, increasing stagnant low-wages to fill vacancies and enabling providers to help New Yorkers access and preserve permanent housing.

### **Staffing Deficiencies within DHS are weakening the fiscal health of non-profits:**

DHS/DSS/HRA must be exempted from the City's hiring freeze and 1-out-1-in hiring requirements to rectify understaffing within the agency which is likely contributing to delays for multiple critical areas, including public benefits and rental assistance, as well as contract and amendment registrations, subcontractor Form 65A approvals, and invoice reimbursements. As we previously testified at the September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 General Welfare Hearing, households applying for public assistance benefits, one-shot deals, and rental assistance are unable to get timely access to the help they need because HRA does not have enough staff to handle the immense caseloads. Similarly, more CityFHEPS applications of DHS shelter residents will churn through the application process, as DHS recently halved the amount of time shelter providers have to update pending CityFHEPS applications from 48 to 24 hours, citing staffing constraints of DHS packet evaluators. **Simply put, without robust staff at DHS, shelter service providers will not be able to quickly place people into permanent housing as they need their government partners to process necessary paperwork and approvals.**

Compounding budget cut concerns, non-profit homeless services providers are reeling from widespread fiscal delays within DHS and DSS, including late contract registrations and budget amendments, subcontractor approvals, and invoice reimbursements. **The Administration must move with all due urgency to enable DHS to eliminate the backlog and promptly pay contracted providers, including fully staffing up DSS and DHS fiscal teams, assembling rapid response teams to assist providers with invoicing, allow for the ability to batch multiple months of invoices, and commit to a payment floor of 75% of the contract value.** Contracting and payment delays are effectively strangling cashflow for nonprofit providers to the point that some providers are resorting to private loans to cover payroll and program costs. **One provider is paying \$17,000 in interest every month for private loans to cover the City's reimbursement delays.** Without the ability to reliably predict when the City will register contracts and pay invoices, experienced non-profit providers are deciding not to answer DHS' call to open new programs as they cannot take on additional financial risk from doing business with the City.

The slow roll out of promised fiscal relief has left providers literally waiting years for essential funding for programs, affecting not only the non-profits but also their staff and clients who rely on their services. Some provider contracts are still waiting for **Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) adjustments for budgets dating back to FY21** to better reflect overhead costs for programs. Wages for DHS-contracted non-profit staff have continued to stagnate despite efforts by the Council to provide relief, as some providers are still awaiting **FY22 amendments for prevailing wage**, and many are still waiting for DHS to implement **Workforce Enhancement Initiative (WEI) funding for FY23 and FY24**. It is extremely challenging work



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under the best circumstances, but when the City cannot make good on timely wage increases for non-profit staff after years without a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), it is no wonder that our workforce is experiencing record high turnover and 20% average vacancy rates across programs.

**The Form 65A subcontractor approval process is fraught with delays.** Providers are seeking vendor approvals from the Department of Social Services (DSS) for ~~requests dating back to FY21 and earlier~~ DSS is working through a backlog of between four and five hundred pending requests, but providers cannot afford to wait years. Until approval is granted, providers cannot draw down funds from their contracts to pay their vendors, and these delays are **damaging relationships with reputable vendors.**

**Even with Form 65A approvals, providers' cashflow for their programs are being interrupted by chronic invoice processing delays with DHS.** Providers are resubmitting the same invoices multiple times and requesting guidance how to proceed, but despite best efforts to collaborate with DHS, providers are not seeing improvements in reimbursement delays. Bold steps must be taken by DHS to break the log jam in invoice reimbursements, including **assembling Rapid Response Teams to assist providers with invoicing, and bolstering resources for DHS' Fiscal department to accommodate processing multiple-month batch invoicing to allow providers to submit invoices more efficiently.** It is critically important for programs to be able to predict and maintain regular cashflow to manage workforce needs and ensure smooth provision of services and resources for clients.

### **Staffing Deficiencies within DSS/HRA are hurting New Yorkers in need of assistance:**

Positions responsible for the application and administering of public benefits and rental assistance should be exempt from City hiring freezes and 1-out-1-in backfill requirements. Specifically, staff that determine eligibility, and processing applications, renewals, and "indexing" documents for public benefits, SNAP, Cash Assistance, One Shot Deals, CityFHEPS and FHEPS, as well as staff that conduct Cash Assistance interviews and rebudgets. As the number of people within NYC shelters continues to reach new record highs, this is exactly the worst time to divest in the homeless services safety-net.

**HRA should backfill vacancies and expand headcount until they have sufficient capacity to eliminate backlogs and attain a 30-day processing time for not only public assistance and SNAP benefits, but also One-Shot Deals, CityFHEPS and FHEPS vouchers.** As the administration testified, they are seeing record numbers of households applying for One-Shot Deals and public benefits, and as such, **HRA should expand beyond pre-pandemic headcounts to keep pace with the growing need. The Agency cannot continue to rely on stop-gap measures like voluntary overtime and redeploying staff within the agency to address backlogs and meet the current need, as it burns out staff and creates new delays within the units the staff are pulled from, as all units are overtaxed.**

**In addition to staffing up to meet the current demand for benefits and rental assistance, HRA must ramp up capacity *in advance* of implementing the CityFHEPS bill package which will take effect this winter, widening eligibility to more households at risk of eviction or currently experiencing homelessness. In addition to expanding headcount with the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) which**



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processes and approves CityFHEPS applications and the Landlord Ombudsman Services Unit (LOSU) which cuts checks for the voucher, HRA must expand capacity within the Family Independence Administration (FIA) to process public assistance applications, interviews, rebudgets, as this is a required step for applying for CityFHEPS. Additional staff are also required to manually “index” submitted documentation for applicants’ cases for benefits, one-shots, rental assistance, as delays with indexing have lead to denials for assistance. While HRA implemented on-demand phone interviews for Cash Assistance, there are simply not enough HRA staff to answer the phones, with holds of 4 hours or more being commonplace. HRA must also expand capacity with the Rental Assistance Unit (RAU) to approve One-Shot Deal requests and Centralized Rent Processing Unit (CRPU) to cut checks for One-Shots and public benefits.

### **Impacts of delays at HRA:**

- 1) Homebase providers have become the de facto front door for HRA without being adequately resourced to fulfill that role.
  - a) HRA Benefits Access Centers are unable to keep up with the number of households coming to them for assistance and are routinely referring tenants to Homebase without indicating specific reasons for the referral, or for things which the Center staff are responsible for resolving/addressing such as CityFHEPS renewals or modifications and FHEPS applications, renewals, and modifications.
- 2) One-Shot Deals are being denied for households in arrears, necessitating multiple applications to get approved and risking eviction if unable to do so within the timeframe of the housing court proceeding.
  - a) Insufficient staffing levels at RAU and FIA Benefits Access Centers can't keep up with the number of applications being submitted. FIA staff must manually “index” submitted documentation to a One-Shot Deal packet for RAU to review. If a packet does not include all the supporting documentation necessary, RAU cannot issue a decision to approve, and given there is a limited determination period. OSDs will be denied if RAU can't see/review the documents in time. We're hearing that RAU is trying their best to approve as many requests as possible but are overwhelmed by the number of applications while suffering from a number of vacancies. Those that remain are working nights and weekends to approve cases which is commendable but unsustainable.
- 3) Due to HRA paperwork processing delays, households currently living in housing with a CityFHEPS vouchers are seeing their voucher either end at annual renewal or get auto-renewed without the requested rent increase, causing households to needlessly fall into arrears. Tenants and landlords are submitting requested documents well in advance of the renewal date, but due to the backlog in indexing documents, un-indexed documents will not be viewable within a person's case/application, and make it seem like the person did not submit everything necessary, even if they did. Tenants are needlessly falling into arrears because HRA does not have enough hands to process their paperwork, risking their housing stability and taking away precious capacity from Homebase programs to resolve what should be a perfunctory government function.
- 4) People are unable to exit shelter in a timely manner due to delays within RAU processing CityFHEPS applications and delays at FIA Benefits Access Centers receiving a Cash Assistance interview and

rebudget, and a backlog of client documents which need to be "indexed" to their respective applications for benefits and rebudgets.

- a) Voucher holders and landlords are being asked by HRA to resubmit updated paystubs and leases for CityFHEPS packets even when the delay is due to an HRA backlog for reviewing the documents. The onus should not be on applicants to redo and resubmit paperwork because City government cannot manage its workload in a timely manner.
- 5) Insufficient staffing for on-demand Cash Assistance telephone interviews are causing delays for Cash Assistance and CityFHEPS and FHEPS vouchers.
  - a) Providers shared that applicants are normally forced to wait on hold for hours before anyone picks up, if at all. Some applicants have had to call back multiple days to be able to be interviewed, and the callback function is not without its own challenges.
    - i) The option to join a virtual queue and receive a callback is only offered within the first few minutes on hold. Anyone who wants to opt for the virtual queue after the initial chance would need to call back, losing their current spot in the queue. Additionally, people who call in the afternoon may not receive a callback within the same business day (if at all) because there are not enough interviewers to quickly work through the queue.
    - ii) While the on-demand call function is an improvement over being forced to wait by their phones for days for HRA to possibly call, the limited capacity of the number of interviewers means applicants must take hours and days out of their busy lives in order to try to contact HRA, and the inability to successfully reach someone within in time will result in their CA case closing, a denial for a One-Shot deal, or the inability to apply for CityFHEPS or FHEPS rental assistance.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Homeless Services United's members touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

The City's homeless services safety net is being tested by record levels of need for public benefits, rental arrears assistance and emergency shelter, and typical interventions like overtime and staff redeployments with the Department will be insufficient to meet the need. HSU urges OMB to increase, **not cut, funding for the Department of Social Services to allow DHS and HRA to expand staff capacity and avoid further budget cuts to homeless service providers.** Investing in the homeless services safety net protects the well-being of New York City's most vulnerable and is fiscally responsible policy. HSU stands ready to work with the administration and City Council to ensure timely access to public benefits, rental assistance, and shelter to keep New Yorkers safe and stably housed and quicken exits from shelter to permanent housing. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and if you have any questions, please contact me at [elee@hsunited.org](mailto:elee@hsunited.org).



## TESTIMONY

New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Oversight: Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

Submitted by:  
Marianel Diaz  
Campaign and Policy Manager  
Human Services Council of New York

### **Introduction**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Brannan, and members of the New York City Council Finance Committee. My name is Marianela Diaz, and I am the Campaign and Poland Policy Manager Manager of the Human Services Council, a membership organization representing over 170 human services providers in New York City. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and an intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so our members can focus on running their organizations and providing 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.

Nonprofit human services organizations have played a critical and longstanding role in building and supporting the wellbeing of New Yorkers. They train and help keep workers in good jobs, help with insurance and benefits enrollment, provide transportation for those with mobility issues, shelter people experiencing homelessness, among many other community services. The collective services provided by human services nonprofits make the difference between success and failure for countless individuals and families. However, nonprofits operate on shoestring budgets and are often expected to offer more than they are reimbursed for.

### **No More Cuts to Human Services**

The November Plan directs every City agency to implement a 5 percent reduction in each year of the financial plan through PEGs, which totals 15 percent in cuts, which independent entities have stated overexaggerates budget shortfalls and is not in line with projected revenue. Blaming asylum seekers for these budget shortfalls, while some of these projections preceded their arrival, leads to unnecessary fearmongering and harmful cuts to vital programs. These cuts have a detrimental effect on human services organizations, who are already struggling with underinvestment in the sector, to continue to provide services such as home delivered meals, homeless services, and youth programs to all New Yorkers, no matter when they arrived to the City. With these PEGs, human services providers will have no choice but to cut lifesaving services to individuals and families as they will not have the funding to provide high-quality programs. The lack of transparency in the decision-making process of these PEGs and the lack of collaboration with the sector will have a damaging impact on not only the nonprofits providing services, but also the communities dependent on their support.

The Mayor continues to shift the City's financial woes on asylum seekers while also failing to invest in the human services infrastructure that will assist asylum seekers as well as New Yorkers, while also being integral to the economy. In fact, funding for asylum seekers could and should have gone predominately to nonprofits with expertise while also building infrastructure that can continue to serve all New Yorkers, but instead a large share of publicly releases funding went to private companies like DocGo, which did not have the expertise in providing social services in New York. Instead of cuts to human services, the City should be investing more in the organizations who are embedded in communities and are a lifeline to millions of New Yorkers.

Although the Mayor stated that there would be "minimal disruptions to services," any cuts will come with a reduction in services to New Yorkers, which is fiscally irresponsible as these programs that are being cut are the pathways out of poverty, that support working families, and contribute to New York's economy.

### **Human Services Are Essential**

According to the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget, NYPD, FDNY, and DSNY are exempted from the January PEG "out of concern that additional budget cuts at this time could impact public safety, health and cleanliness." However, the City must acknowledge that human services are essential to the health and well-being of millions of New Yorkers and has stretched to meet community needs, despite the chronic delays in payment, underfunding, and a lack of sincere collaboration to create meaningful and lasting interventions, which strips away at limited resources. The lack of transparency from the Administration on how the PEGs were determined and how certain agencies are exempted creates confusion and concerns for the human services sector as we don't know how to prepare for the impact of the PEGs. As government expects

human services organizations to continue to provide services at the same level with limited funding, government has forced nonprofit human services providers into financial and programmatic precarity that threatens the availability of high-quality services for New Yorkers, especially when they need them most.

We are gravely concerned about the impact of these cuts on the human services infrastructure in the City. New Yorkers are still recovering from the aftermath of the pandemic and face rising inflation. More individuals and families depend on human services programs for benefits assistance, housing, food, job training, childcare, and mental health services. More PEGS mean program closures, plain and simple. We are reaching out to voice the reality of what is happening in communities throughout the City and to counteract the assumption that nonprofit contracted human service providers will keep up program levels regardless of how severely they are drained of resources.

### **Conclusion:**

Nonprofits provide a myriad of services on behalf of the government, many of them mandated, and the sector is able to leverage private and philanthropic dollars and funding from the City, State, and federal government, to create dynamic programs at a bargain. The sector will not be pitted against our newest neighbors and will stand by our mission of serving all those in need of services. By initiating PEGs across City agencies and accusing people seeking asylum of removing limited resources, the Mayor is setting our newest neighbors against the very nonprofits that provide services to them and to all New Yorkers. Nonprofits are the vehicle to get New Yorkers to success, instead, government perpetuates scarcity, constraining the resiliency of the sector and the communities that they serve. The sector is at a breaking point. Every day, providers are asked to make an impossible choice between providing needed services with inadequate funding that puts their organizations in jeopardy and perpetuates wage gaps or turning down that work at the expense of communities – often communities of color. These PEGs continue the systematic underinvestment of the human services sector and demonstrate that the City does not appreciate nor value the services that human services organizations provide.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why HSC joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and we look forward to collaborating with the Council on permanent solutions and adequate investment to support the human services sector.

Marianela Diaz, Campaign and Policy Manager  
Human Services Council of NY  
212-584-3386 [diazm@humanservicescouncil.org](mailto:diazm@humanservicescouncil.org)



## TESTIMONY

### New York City Council Committee on Finance Oversight Hearing on the Mayor's Financial Plan

Delivered by:

Sierra Kraft, Executive Director, ICARE Coalition

December 11th, 2023

Good afternoon, it's a pleasure to be here today. I want to express my gratitude to Chairperson Brannan, Speaker Adams, and the Committee on Finance for extending this opportunity for testimony. My name is Sierra Kraft, and I serve as the Executive Director at Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE). ICARE is a non-profit coalition of legal services organizations committed to providing vital and free representation to immigrant children facing deportation in New York City. Our ultimate goal is to ensure universal access to counsel, ensuring that every immigrant child in need has access to high-quality legal representation.

I address you today on the critical issue of Mayor Adams' Financial Plan, featuring a 15% cut to nonprofit organizations. This decision poses severe implications for nonprofits like ICARE, affecting life-changing legal services for NYC's most vulnerable, unaccompanied immigrant children. As we navigate these cuts, it's crucial to question their impact on organizations safeguarding the rights and futures of young immigrants.



ICARE has been a vital provider of legal services to unaccompanied immigrant children in NYC since 2014. With City Council support through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative, we've stood with over 12,000 young immigrants, defending them from deportation and empowering them for the future.

Access to an immigration attorney is life-changing for these children fleeing violence and trauma. Without ICARE's representation, they face a mere 15% chance of winning their case, risking deportation to life-threatening situations.

These cuts jeopardize our ability to continue this crucial work, leaving vulnerable individuals without the representation they urgently need. Children and families are now more vulnerable than ever. The potential consequences for unaccompanied immigrant children, already facing complex challenges, are severe.

We join hundreds of other human service organizations in urging the NYC Council to thoroughly examine the implications of these cuts on essential services provided by organizations like ICARE.

We request the City to:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary.
- Be transparent about upcoming program and service reductions.
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits.

We implore you to denounce these cuts and advocate for the restoration of funding for critical services. Unaccompanied immigrant children rely on organizations like ICARE for legal representation. The Council's support is vital in ensuring these young individuals are not left defenseless in the face of the immigration system.



Thank you for your tireless efforts to support all New York City residents, especially for continuing to champion children and providing lifesaving support so they can thrive. We look forward to our continued partnership with you in ensuring we live our values as a sanctuary city.

In Community,

Sierra Kraft

Executive Director,

ICARE Coalition

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**NYC Council Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

Dear Chair Brannan and Members of the Finance Committee:

I am Michael Presser, the Founder and President of Inside Broadway. Please accept the following written testimony on behalf of our organization.

Inside Broadway has just celebrated its 40th anniversary season of bringing live theatre to New York City's public-school students. Our programs offer children the opportunity to attend Equity touring productions of classic Broadway shows in their own school auditoriums, participate in theatrical productions directed by our team of teaching artists, and attend our Creating the Magic seminar program held in a Broadway theatre that demonstrates the production elements and careers involved in a major Broadway musical. We have programs in all five boroughs of New York City, and nearly 100 schools and 70,000 students participate in our programs each year.

We would not be where we are today without the generous support we have received from Department of Education through the Project Arts program, which funds not only our organization, but many other arts organizations who operate directly in our city's schools. Arts education has demonstrated time and time again to be fundamental to children's social and emotional development. Because of this, we believe that the Project Arts budget should be expanded, and that a dedicated arts education budget line should be added to the Department of Education budget to allow for arts education programming such as ours to reach even more New York City public schools. We join with the It Starts with Art coalition in urging the city to prioritize arts funding in the upcoming budget.

Budget cuts of \$17.3 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs, and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools, threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and, most importantly, students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support students' academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

With more cuts on the horizon, the additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these arts and community programs. That's

why Inside Broadway joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions – not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Arts education has been proven time and time again to be essential in children's social and emotional development. For many New York public school students, the only access they have to the performing arts is through programs like Inside Broadway, which are funded under the Council's CASA and Cultural Immigrant Initiatives. We believe that these programs should not only be preserved, but also expanded, so that we can bring these life-changing programs to more New York City schools.

Thank you for the Council's longstanding support of Inside Broadway and its sustained commitment to arts education.



**Leonard Jacobs**  
*Executive Director*

**Courtney Ffrench**  
*Artistic Director*

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December 11, 2023

To the Committee on Finance:

I represent the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning (JCAL). Founded in 1972, we operate in Queens, where 2.4 million African-American, Caribbean-American, Indo-Asian, African, Latinx, Caucasian, Native American, and Indigenous artists and audiences live, work, and play. Our mission is to offer quality visual, performing, and literary arts, and to provide accessible education programs to encourage participation in the arts. JCAL was created during the same era as Studio Museum, PS1, Bronx Museum, and the Queens Museum, when activists, artists, and allies demanded and forged alternatives to the systemic racism and inequities of the City's cultural scene. These issues, of course, persist today.

JCAL operates the Jamaica Arts Center (JAC), a 45,000-square-foot headquarters with two galleries, six dance studios, four studio spaces, a 99-seat theater, and offices. JCAL also operates the Jamaica Performing Arts Center (JPAC), a state-of-the-art 400-seat theater. As the only CIG in South Queens, we are a proud cultural anchor. In our budget range, we are only CIG to operate more than a single building.

In FY 2024, JCAL has been blessed to receive major discretionary support from the Council. Not only has it enabled special projects, like our Hip Hop 50 events at York College and King Manor Museum, it has sustained many visual and performing arts programs (including 17 CASA and SU-CASA designations) that allowed our institution to serve over 52,000 New Yorkers last year.

DCLA, meanwhile, began FY 2024 by applying a \$100K cut to JCAL's funding. Losing these funds—which come through a complex, opaque arrangement with the Metropolitan Museum of Art—damaged JCAL deeply.

Under the arrangement, the Met secured City permission to charge a mandatory admission fee for all but NY state residents. In exchange, the City was to claw back \$2M+ a year in general operating support to the Met, and distribute it to those CIGs with a Baseline of \$600K or less.

Like most CIGs in communities of color, JCAL's Baseline is not at least \$600K. Indeed, even as the largest CIGs reap millions in annual City support, JCAL's Baseline has remained \$499K since FY 2012.

And now, here come three PEGs. DCLA did set the first PEG for JCAL at 3.5%—better than the Mayor's announced cut, but nonetheless a wound. Last week, DCLA Commissioner Cumbo told the 34 CIG members that the next two PEGs will be 5%. For JCAL, this means DCLA's total FY 2024 cut will be over \$200K. With our young people and families bearing the brunt of these cuts, it's clear that the November Plan is a blunt-force trauma to JCAL, Queens, and our City.



Due to these cuts and PEGs, JCAL is reducing FY2024 expenditures by at least \$139K (our annual budget is about \$3M). There will be severe cuts in maintenance, in venue staff, in technical staff, in front desk staff, and in all areas of programming, community service, and operations. Effective Jan. 1, 2024, JCAL's two buildings will be closed at least two days a week. Critical maintenance will be stopped. Many programs will move to FY25 or else be delayed indefinitely.

It is also worth noting that DCLA's cost-cutting plans fit a decades-long pattern of disenfranchising Southeast Queens especially. I should know—I served as Director of Cultural Institutions at DCLA, under Commissioner Levin as well as Commissioner Finkelpearl, from 2011 to 2018. Below is the story of JCAL since literally the dawn of the 21st century:

- In FY 2001, JCAL managed one building (Jamaica Arts Center) with a \$769K baseline.
- In FY 2008, JCAL began managing two buildings (with JPAC) with a \$641K baseline.
- In FY 2012, JCAL's baseline was cut to \$499K, where it has stayed for 13 fiscal years.

So, while this hearing is to respond specifically to the November Plan, I submit that it is equally key to situate this moment within a broader historical picture—especially as the administration signals more FY 2024 cuts, then more cuts in FY 2025, then more cuts in FY 2026 and then beyond.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like JCAL, as you have seen, touch every vital aspect of daily life—from public education to health and human services, from cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions—not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Sincerely,

Leonard Jacobs

Public Safety Council Committee,

Dear Speaker, Council Finance Chair, Committee Chair & staff. I am submitting written testimony for public record. I am a New Yorker who supports #CareNotCuts and a #PeoplesBudget, and I oppose the deep cuts proposed by Mayor Adams in the November Financial Plan. I ask NYC Council to put to a vote, and vote down, any budget modification that contains these drastic cuts to essential services.

I, like many New Yorkers, am deeply concerned about these fifth round of cuts that cut about \$1.4 billion and 2,000 jobs from essential services in FY24; services that were already starved to begin with.

These drastic cuts are not only extremely harmful to New Yorkers who are struggling to afford basics and many of whom are being forced to leave the city due to lack of affordability; they are also completely unnecessary.

The Mayor's budget cuts are unacceptable for a city that is home to the most billionaires in the world. They are also unacceptable when the city has no budget gaps in its current fiscal year, and in the past, NYC has bridged comparable budget gaps to the ones in future years.

Governmental and independent budget watchdogs have pointed to a number of strategies for managing the city's fiscal issues without requiring such severe cuts, including curtailing uniformed overtime, undoing the hiring freeze at revenue generating agencies, better planning and spending on humanely support newly arriving immigrants, and using some of the city's \$8B reserve fund.

We have already seen an impact of previous cuts on crucial city services that New Yorkers rely on. Performance and Management Reports released in September show that essential services are already downgraded; from fire and emergency response to SNAP and housing assistance.

Due to the latest Mayor's cuts, essential composting programs are shutting their doors, libraries are cutting their hours, people are losing their jobs, education is being slashed, CUNY ASAP is being gutted, childcare seats are being cut, thousands of housing and service agency positions are being eliminated, and New Yorkers and our children are the ones paying the price.

Meanwhile, NYPD and DOC are escaping the brunt of the Mayor's cuts once again, despite large wasteful spending in their overtime and uniformed budgets.

New Yorkers need a functioning, well-run city government and city services and social safety net now more than ever. Members of the NYC Council, we especially need you to stand up against this in upcoming budget modification negotiations.

We ask you to bring the budget modification to vote, and vote it down unless the Mayor rolls back cuts to essential services and such drastic budget changes are halted until the normal FY25 budget process where there will be more transparency and accountability.

Thank you.

Jashua Calderon  
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Brooklyn , New York 11249

# KATAL

**CENTER FOR EQUITY, HEALTH, & JUSTICE**

## Testimony

Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.

Yonah Zeitz, Director of Advocacy  
[yonah@katalcenter.org](mailto:yonah@katalcenter.org)

for

Committee on Finance

Monday, December 11, 2023 -- 10:00 AM  
New York, NY

Thank you, Chair Justin Brannan, for holding this hearing and inviting our testimony. My name is Yonah Zeitz, I'm the director of advocacy at the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. We're based in Brooklyn, and our members come from across the city and state. Our members include people who have been incarcerated in city jails and state prisons, family members of currently and formerly incarcerated people, working class residents, and more.

Katal opposes Mayor Adams's proposed 5% cuts as outlined in the November Financial Plan. This fifth round of austerity cuts, if approved, would slash the budgets of essential services by \$1.4 billion and cut 2,000 much-needed city jobs. Under Mayor Adams, our city is already losing essential services -- libraries are cutting their hours, people are losing their jobs, education is being slashed, CUNY ASAP is being gutted, childcare seats are being cut, thousands of housing and service agency positions are being eliminated.

While essential services have faced five rounds of major austerity cuts under this Mayor, the New York Police Department and the Department of Correction have been given preferential treatment. Despite their bloated budgets and large wasteful spending in their overtime and uniformed budgets, the NYPD and the DOC continue to be richly funded while our libraries and other essential services face drastic cuts.

NYC is one of the wealthiest cities in the world and it is outrageous for the mayor to make drastic cuts to essential services while the city is holding \$9 billion in reserves.

Our city is facing a leadership crisis, not a budget crisis. There are numerous solutions laid out by government and independent watchdogs to manage the city's fiscal issues without such severe cuts to essential services. But this mayor, beset by a growing number of scandals, ignores those options, and instead seeks to dismantle the infrastructure and programs that help keep New Yorkers safe and healthy.

For an alarming example of this, we don't have to look any farther than the mayor's handling of dumpster fire that is the Riker Island Jail Complex.

**As this committee knows, the conditions at New York City's massive jail complex are horrific and life-threatening for human beings – the people incarcerated and those who work there.<sup>i</sup> Violence is rampant.<sup>ii</sup> Racism and other types of bias are deeply entrenched.<sup>iii</sup> And though Black and Latinx people constitute about half of the city's population, they represent almost 90 percent of jail admissions.<sup>iv</sup>**

**Under Mayor Eric Adams, conditions at Rikers have gotten worse.** Violence at Rikers is out of control. At least 28 people have died in the city jail system since Adams became mayor in

2022.<sup>v</sup> But the actual number of deaths is unknown, because under this administration, the Department of Correction (DOC) has become less transparent and at one point even declared that they would stop reporting deaths to the public.<sup>vi</sup> Under Mayor Eric Adams, the levels of violence and dysfunction at Rikers are so egregious that in April 2023, federal prosecutors from the Southern District of New York wrote, “Incarcerated people and corrections staff continue to face an imminent risk of harm on a daily basis.”<sup>vii</sup>

**Incarceration at Rikers is extremely costly.** In fiscal year 2023, the DOC budget cost city taxpayers \$1.36 billion. According to the City Comptroller, the cost of incarceration at Rikers is \$556,539 a person per year, which is *\$1,525 a day*.<sup>viii</sup> Why are libraries and educational programs and other essential services being cut when we know alternatives to incarceration work, they are much cheaper, and diversion options are available *right now* to reduce the jail population?

Indeed, evidence and research have long shown that mental health programming is *dramatically* cheaper than incarceration, yet Rikers has become the city’s largest mental health facility. More than 50 percent of people incarcerated there have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, yet they have little or no access to meaningful care while they are locked up.<sup>ix</sup>

**Under Mayor Adams, the jail population is going up when it should be decreasing, costing New York City *hundreds of millions of dollars*.** For more than two decades, the population at Rikers was, generally, on a downward trend along with crime rates in our city—we showed that, reducing incarceration and reducing crime went hand in hand. But since his first day in office, Mayor Adams has worked to reverse that trend. There were about 5,000 people in city jails when Adams became mayor. Today, there are more than 6,000 people in city jails,<sup>x</sup> and they’re not done: last December, the DOC Commissioner told the Council that they are planning for the city’s jail population to go beyond 7000.<sup>xi</sup>

**The “jails-first” approach preferred by Mayor Adams is costing taxpayers *hundreds of millions of dollars* while threatening the closure of Rikers Island.** In 2017, under pressure from community groups, the City finally committed to closing Rikers Island. In 2019, the city council passed a legislative package to make closure a reality by 2027. Reports by the Independent Commission on NYC Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform and the Institute for State and Local Governance have found that the closure of Rikers will save city taxpayers \$1.3 billion *annually* – even after accounting for costs of implementing the plan. Yet Mayor Adams has simply ignored the legal and process benchmarks of the 2019 plan. Or worse, the mayor has worked to undermine core tenets of the 2019 plan, particularly with regard to the jail population – instead of working to reduce the jail population, the mayor has focused on sending *more* Black, Brown, and low-income New Yorkers to jail.

**The mayor's jails-first approach not only costs New Yorkers more in the immediate term, but also threatens substantial savings in the long term.** This is outrageous, irresponsible, and clearly untenable.

**We urge members of the NYC Council to reject the mayor's budget modifications that will drastically cut essential services.** Instead, we urge this council to focus on three things: **first**, cut the budgets used for caging people – the NYPD and DOC budgets are bloated, wasteful, and must be cut. **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. Budget modifications made by the council should maintain a focus on how such choices will advance efforts to shutter the notorious jail complex once and for all.

**Third**, we must maintain investments in things that produces real public safety: housing, healthcare, education, jobs. The mayor has it exactly backwards – he wants to cut these core services while maintaining the budgets used for caging people. This council must reject that approach.

**Finally, with regards to Rikers and the human beings detained there and working there, there is one more thing this council can do now – pass Resolution 669, which calls for a federal receiver.** This week, federal judge Laura T. Swain is set to hold an important hearing with regards Rikers. Katal and other community organizations have worked for years to shut down Rikers and hold Adams accountable while demanding action by the city, state, and federal government to save lives. After years of foot-dragging by the courts, this summer, Judge Swain finally opened the door to the possibility of appointing a federal receiver, acknowledging that “people incarcerated at Rikers are at a grave risk of immediate harm” and that “the current state of affairs is tragic and unacceptable.”<sup>xxii</sup> Calls for a federal receiver have grown over this year -- today, more than 50 community, advocacy, and faith-based organizations have joined the call for a federal receiver to take over at Rikers. And as of today, the Legal Aid Society, the U.S Attorney for the SDNY, and NY Attorney General Leticia James have all filed motions in federal court formally calling for the appointment of an independent federal receiver.

While the council continues its work on fighting for a budget that will allow all New Yorkers to thrive, we urge the council to take immediate action to relieve suffering at Rikers by passing Resolution 669. Nearly 20 council members have now co-sponsored resolution 669. Passing Resolution 669 is a concrete step this council can take *right now* to address the crisis at Rikers. Until Rikers is shut down, there must be immediate action to improve conditions and save lives and invest in alternatives to incarceration and other non-carceral solutions that are proven to increase public safety. Thank you.

<sup>i</sup> Erica Bryant. “[It’s] a Torture Chamber: Stories from Rikers Island.” Vera Institute of Justice. February 2022. [vera.org/its-a-torture-chamber](http://vera.org/its-a-torture-chamber).

<sup>ii</sup> Jonah E. Bromwich and Jan Ransom. “Rikers Still ‘Unstable and Unsafe’ Under New Jails Chief, Watchdog Says.” *The New York Times*. March 16, 2022. [nytimes.com/2022/03/16/nyregion/rikers-jail-violence-report.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/16/nyregion/rikers-jail-violence-report.html).

<sup>iii</sup> Black and Latino people are far more likely to be incarcerated at Rikers than white people facing similar charges. Young, LGBQT, and gender nonconforming people face higher rates of violence. Concerns about young people and about transgender, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, and intersex (TGNCNBI) people on Rikers Island and in other jails and prisons have long warranted attention. To read more about issues for young people in the city’s jails, see “Case: Nunez and United States v. City of New York.” *Nunez and United States v. City of New York* 1:11-Cv-05845 (S.D.N.Y.), Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse, July 10, 2023. [clearinghouse.net/case/12072](https://clearinghouse.net/case/12072). To read more about issues for TGNCNBI people in the city’s jails, see New York City Board of Correction. “Task Force on Issues Faced by TGNCNBI People in Custody.” Updated 2023. [www1.nyc.gov/site/boc/jail-regulations/task-force-on-issues-faced-by-tgncri.page](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/boc/jail-regulations/task-force-on-issues-faced-by-tgncri.page)

<sup>iv</sup> United States Census Bureau. “Quick Facts: New York City, New York.” July 1, 2021. [census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork](https://census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork)

Bruce Western, Jaclyn Davis, Flavien Ganter, and Natalie Smith. “The Cumulative Risk of Jail Incarceration.” *PNAS* 118, No. 16. (2021). [pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2023429118](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023429118); Reuven Blau. “Racial Gap in City Jails Has Only Gotten Worse, John Jay Study Finds.” *The City*. March 2, 2023. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/3/2/23621862/racial-gap-nyc-jails-got-worse>

<sup>v</sup> Jan Ransom and Jonah E. Bromwich. “Tracking the Deaths in New York City’s Jail System.” *The New York Times*. February 4, 2023. [www.nytimes.com/article/rikers-deaths-jail.html](https://www.nytimes.com/article/rikers-deaths-jail.html)

<sup>vi</sup> Reuven Blau. “City Jails No Longer Announcing Deaths Behind Bars, Angering Watchdogs.” *The City*. May 31, 2023. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/5/31/23744666/correction-jails-not-announcing-deaths-rikers>

<sup>vii</sup> Steve J. Martin, Kelly Dedel, Anna E. Friedberg, Dennis O. Gonzalez, Patrick Hurley, Alycia M. Karlovich, Emmitt Sparkman, and Christina Bucci Vanderveer. *Status Report on DOC’s Action Plan by the Nunez Independent Monitor*. April 24, 2023. 27. <https://tillidgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-04-24-Status-Report-of-Action-Plan.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> New York City Comptroller. “Comptroller Stringer: Cost of Incarceration per Person in New York City Skyrockets to All-Time High.” December 6, 2021. [comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-cost-of-incarceration-per-person-in-new-york-city-skyrockets-to-all-time-high-2)

<sup>ix</sup> Jan Ransom and Jonah E. Bromwich. “‘I Just Want to Be Normal’: A Mentally Ill Man’s Death at Rikers.” *The New York Times*. September 27, 2021. [nytimes.com/2021/09/27/nyregion/rikers-island-esias-johnson.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/27/nyregion/rikers-island-esias-johnson.html), citing Anthony Shorris and Mindy Tarlow. *Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report*, February 2016. 62. [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2016/2016\\_pmmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2016/2016_pmmr.pdf)

<sup>x</sup> For the 2023 data, see Vera Institute for Justice. “JailVizNYC.” November 28, 2023. <https://greaterjusticeny.vera.org/nycjail>.

<sup>xi</sup> Courtney Gross. “Rikers closure plan not on track, commissioner says”. Spectrum News 1. 2023. Retrieved from <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2022/12/14/rikers-closure-plan-not-on-track--commissioner-says>

<sup>xii</sup> Reuven Blau. “Judge Says ‘Transformative Change’ Needed, Laying Groundwork for a Possible Rikers Takeover.” *The City*. August 10, 2023. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/8/10/23827946/rikers-takeover-judge-receiver>

# Tracking Support for an Independent Federal Receiver at Rikers

*List compiled by the Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice*

For years, community groups, advocates, and service providers have worked to reduce the city's jail populations and shut down Rikers. That work continues. Now, as the crisis in city jails worsens and the death toll rises, calls are growing for the federal courts to order an independent receiver to take control of Rikers.

As the Brennan Center for Justice has described:

“When a local or state government proves unable or unwilling to improve a distressed public institution that has long defied federal law, a federal court can take the troubled entity out of the government’s hands and appoint a ‘receiver’ – a nonpartisan expert – to assume direct control, with an eye towards reform.”

A federal receiver is not a panacea but could improve conditions for people incarcerated and employed there until Rikers is shut down once and for all.

The following list includes current and former government and corrections officials and community and advocacy groups who publicly support a federal receiver taking over at Rikers. *This list of stakeholders does not represent a coalition.* But it does reflect a growing consensus across the political spectrum that federal intervention at Rikers is needed to save lives and improve conditions for the people who are detained there or work there.

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## Officials and Groups in Support of Appointing an Independent Federal Receiver to Take Over at Rikers

*Updated December 4, 2023, 2:00p.m. ET.*

*This list does not reflect any endorsement of or participation in any particular coalition or campaign. Unless otherwise noted, all names and groups are listed alphabetically.*

### Federal Prosecutors

- Damian Williams, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York<sup>1</sup>

### State Attorney Generals

- Letitia James, Attorney General of New York<sup>2</sup>

### New York City Officials

- New York City Comptroller Brad Lander<sup>3</sup>

- New York City Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams<sup>4</sup>

### **New York City Council Members**

*An asterisk signifies that the council member has cosponsored Resolution 669, which calls for a federal receiver of New York City jails.*

- Alexa Avilés, District 38\*
- Charles Barron, District 42\*
- Erik Bottcher, District 3\*
- Tiffany Cabán, District 22\*
- Carmen De La Rosa, District 10\*
- Amanda Farías, District 18\*
- Jennifer Gutiérrez, District 34\*
- Shahana K. Hanif, District 39\*
- Crystal Hudson, District 35\*
- Rita C. Joseph, District 40\*
- Shekar Krishnan, District 25\*
- Mercedes Narcisse, District 46\*
- Sandy Nurse, District 37\*
- Chi Ossé, District 36\*
- Majority Leader Keith Powers, District 4\*
- Lincoln Restler, District 33<sup>5</sup>
- Kristin Richardson Jordan, District 9\*
- Pierina Ana Sanchez, District 14<sup>6</sup>
- Nantasha Williams, District 27\*
- Julie Won, District 26\*

### **New York State Legislators and Former Legislators**

- Senator Jabari Brisport, District 25<sup>7</sup>
- Senator Cordell Cleare, District 30<sup>8</sup>
- Senator Kristen Gonzalez, District 59<sup>9</sup>
- Senator Peter Harckham, District 40<sup>10</sup>
- Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, District 47<sup>11</sup>
- Senator Robert Jackson, District 31<sup>12</sup>
- Senator Liz Krueger, District 28<sup>13</sup>
- Senator Shelley Mayer, District 37<sup>14</sup>
- Senator Jessica Ramos, District 13<sup>15</sup>
- Senator Gustavo Rivera, District 33<sup>16</sup>
- Senator Julia Salazar, District 57<sup>17</sup>
- Senator José Serrano, District 29<sup>18</sup>
- Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, District 11<sup>19</sup>

- Assemblymember Robert Carroll, District 44<sup>20</sup>
- Assemblymember Taylor Darling, District 18<sup>21</sup>
- Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, District 74<sup>22</sup>
- Assemblymember Emily Gallagher, District 50<sup>23</sup>
- Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, District 34<sup>24</sup>
- Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre, District 11<sup>25</sup>
- Assemblymember Dana Levenberg, District 95<sup>26</sup>
- Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani, District 36<sup>27</sup>
- Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes, District 51<sup>28</sup>
- Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, District 67<sup>29</sup>
- Assemblymember Amanda Septimo, District 84<sup>30</sup>
- Assemblymember Tony Simone, District 75<sup>31</sup>
- Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest, District 57<sup>32</sup>
- Former New York State Senator Alessandra Biaggi, District 34<sup>33</sup>

#### **Former Public Safety & Correctional Officials**

- Zachary Carter, former corporation counsel at the New York City Law Department and former U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York<sup>34</sup>
- Elizabeth Glazer, former director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice under Mayor Bill de Blasio, former deputy secretary for public safety under Governor Andrew Cuomo, and founder of Vital City<sup>35</sup>
- Michael Jacobson, former commissioner of the Department of Correction under Mayor Rudy Giuliani; currently the executive director of the CUNY Institute for State & Local Governance<sup>36</sup>
- Vincent Schiraldi, former commissioner of the Department of Correction under Mayor de Blasio and former commissioner of Probation under Mayor Mike Bloomberg; currently the secretary of juvenile services in Maryland<sup>37</sup>
- Sarena Townsend, former deputy commissioner of the Intelligence, Investigation & Trials Division at the New York City Department of Correction under Mayor Bill de Blasio<sup>38</sup>

#### **Editorial Pages & Journals**

- *New York Daily News*<sup>39</sup>
- *New York Post*<sup>40</sup>
- *Vital City*<sup>41</sup>

#### **Advocacy and Community Groups**

1. A Little Piece of Light<sup>42</sup>
2. Amplifying Activists Together<sup>43</sup>
3. Birth from the Earth<sup>44</sup>
4. Brennan Center for Justice<sup>45</sup>

5. Bronx Climate Justice North<sup>46</sup>
6. Bronx Defenders<sup>47</sup>
7. Brooklyn Defender Services<sup>48</sup>
8. Brotherhood Sister Sol<sup>49</sup>
9. Brooklyn for Peace<sup>50</sup>
10. Bronx Defenders<sup>51</sup>
11. Campaign Zero<sup>52</sup>
12. Center for the Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)<sup>53</sup>
13. Citizen Action of New York<sup>54</sup>
14. Citizens Union<sup>55</sup>
15. Community Access<sup>56</sup>
16. Correctional Association of New York<sup>57</sup>
17. Corporation for Supportive Housing<sup>58</sup>
18. Families for Freedom<sup>59</sup>
19. Families and Friends of the Wrongfully Convicted<sup>60</sup>
20. Fled Collective<sup>61</sup>
21. Fortune Society<sup>62</sup>
22. The Gathering for Justice<sup>63</sup>
23. Housing Works<sup>64</sup>
24. Hour Children<sup>65</sup>
25. Incarcerated Nation Network<sup>66</sup>
26. JustLeadershipUSA<sup>67</sup>
27. Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice<sup>68</sup>
28. KAVI- Kings Against Violence Initiative<sup>69</sup>
29. Latino Justice<sup>70</sup>
30. Legal Aid Society<sup>71</sup>
31. National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City, Inc. (NAMI-NYC)<sup>72</sup>
32. National Action Network NYC Chapter Second Chance Committee<sup>73</sup>
33. Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem<sup>74</sup>
34. New Hour for Women & Children – Long Island<sup>75</sup>
35. New Pride Agenda<sup>76</sup>
36. North Bronx Racial Justice<sup>77</sup>
37. NYC Brown Berets<sup>78</sup>
38. New York Civil Liberties Union<sup>79</sup>
39. New York City Bar Association<sup>80</sup>
40. New York Communities for Change<sup>81</sup>
41. New York County Defender Services<sup>82</sup>
42. New York Jewish Agenda<sup>83</sup>
43. NY Renews<sup>84</sup>
44. New York State Defenders Association<sup>85</sup>
45. Nurses for Social Justice<sup>86</sup>
46. Prison Families Alliance<sup>87</sup>
47. Providence House, Inc.<sup>88</sup>
48. Queens Defenders<sup>89</sup>
49. Raging Grannies<sup>90</sup>

50. Strategy for Black Lives<sup>91</sup>
51. Unchained<sup>92</sup>
52. Youth Represent<sup>93</sup>
53. Vera Institute of Justice<sup>94</sup>

*If you or your group supports the call for a federal receiver – or if you have any questions or clarifications – please email Yonah Zeitz, Director of Advocacy at Katal:  
[yonah@katalcenter.org](mailto:yonah@katalcenter.org).*

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<sup>1</sup> United States Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York. "Statement Of U.S. Attorney Damian Williams on Intention to File for Contempt and Seek a Court-Appointed Receiver to Address Conditions on Rikers Island." July 17, 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/statement-us-attorney-damian-williams-intention-file-contempt-and-seek-court-appointed>

<sup>2</sup> Graham Rayman "NY Attorney General Letitia James backs federal court takeover of Rikers Island, other NYC jails." NY Daily News. December 1, 2024. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/12/01/ny-attorney-general-letitia-james-backs-federal-court-takeover-of-rikers-island-other-nyc-jails/>

<sup>3</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller. "Comptroller Lander Calls for Federal Receiver at Rikers Island, Citing Rising Violence and Deaths." October 13, 2022. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/citing-rising-violence-and-deaths-comptroller-lander-calls-for-federal-receiver-at-rikers-island>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the New York City Public Advocate. "NYC Public Advocate Introduces Bills to Reform City Jails, Resolution Calling for Rikers Receivership." June 8, 2023. <https://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/press/nyc-public-advocate-introduces-bills-reform-city-jails-resolution-calling-rikers-receivership>

<sup>5</sup> Tandy Lau. "Correcting Corrections: Federal Judge Plans to Hear Out Rikers Receivership Arguments." *Amsterdam News*. August 16, 2023. <https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2023/08/16/federal-judge-plans-hear-out-rikers-receivership-arguments>

<sup>6</sup> Lincoln Restler, Shekar Krishnan, Crystal Hudson, Chi Ossé, Mercedes Narcisse, Keith Powers, Carmen De La Rosa, Amanda Fariás, Erik Bottcher, and Pierina Sanchez. Letter to U.S. District Court Chief Judge Laura Taylor Swain. November 16, 2022. <https://twitter.com/LincolnRestler/status/1592894111279087619/photo/1>

<sup>7</sup> Alessandra Biaggi, Julia Salazar, Jabari Brisport, Brad Hoylman, Jessica Ramos, and Gustavo Rivera. Letter to U.S. District Court Chief Judge Laura Taylor Swain. May 23, 2022. <https://twitter.com/SenatorBiaggi/status/1529230052151410689/photo/1>

<sup>8</sup> Julia Salazar, Phara Souffrant Forrest, Jabari Brisport, et al. Letter to U.S. District Court Chief Judge Laura Taylor Swain. August 8, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Biaggi et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Biaggi et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Biaggi et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Biaggi et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

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<sup>27</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

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<sup>32</sup> Salazar et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Biaggi et al., Letter to Judge Swain, 2022.

<sup>34</sup> *The Crime Report*. “Reformers Call for Federal Takeover of New York’s Rikers Jail.” May 20, 2022. <https://thecrimereport.org/2022/05/20/reformers-call-for-federal-takeover-of-new-yorks-rikers-jail>

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Glazer and Michael Jacobson. “How We Can Rescue Rikers Island Without Waiting.” April 12, 2022. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2022/04/12/how-we-can-rescue-rikers-island-without-waiting>; Elizabeth Glazer. “The Rule of Law Applies on Rikers, Too.” Vital City. June 12, 2023. <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/rikers-hearing-june-2023>

<sup>36</sup> Glazer and Jacobson, “How We Can Rescue Rikers Island,” 2022. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2022/04/12/how-we-can-rescue-rikers-island-without-waiting>

<sup>37</sup> Vincent Schiraldi. “I Spent Over 40 Years Working in Corrections. I Wasn’t Ready for Rikers.” The Marshall Project. October 28, 2022. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2022/10/28/i-spent-over-40-years-working-in-corrections-i-wasn-t-ready-for-rikers>

<sup>38</sup> JB Nicholas. “Former Rikers Watchdog: ‘This Whole F---ing Thing Is a Racket.’ Hell Gate. May 3, 2022. <https://hellgatenyc.com/nycs-former-jails-investigator-identifies-top-problem-on-rikers-corruption>

<sup>39</sup> *New York Daily News* Editorial Board. “Ask and You Shall Receive: City’s Latest Failure Highlights Need for Rikers Receiver.” July 11, 2023. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/07/11/ask-and-you-shall-receive-city-s-latest-failure-highlights-need-for-rikers-receiver>

<sup>40</sup> *New York Post* Editorial Board. “Federal Takeover of Rikers Isn’t a Bitter Pill – Adams Should Welcome It.” April 21, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/04/21/federal-takeover-of-rikers-island-isnt-a-bitter-pill>; “Why Eric Adams Should Hand Rikers Island Over to the Feds.” May 14, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/05/14/why-rikers-island-jail-should-be-handed-over-to-the-feds>; “Fed Prosecutor’s Right: It’s Time for a Receiver to Take Over Rikers.” July 19, 2023. <https://nypost.com/2023/07/19/fed-prosecutors-right-its-time-for-a-receiver-to-take-over-rikers>

<sup>41</sup> Glazer, “The Rule of Law Applies on Rikers, Too,” 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. “As Federal Court Holds Major Hearing to Determine Control of Rikers, Community Groups and Elected Officials Hold Protest to Demand Immediate Action.” Press release. August 10, 2023. <https://katalcenter.org/as-federal-court-holds-major-hearing-to-determine-control-of-rikers-community-groups-and-elected-officials-hold-protest-to-demand-immediate-action>

<sup>43</sup> Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. “People Impacted by Rikers, with Elected Officials and Community Groups, Rally Outside of the Courthouse in Support of the Federal Takeover and Demand Closure of Rikers Island.” Press release. November 17, 2022. <https://katalcenter.org/press-release-rikers-is-in-crisis-rally-11-17-22>

<sup>44</sup> Birth from the Earth signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>45</sup> Hernandez D. Stroud. “The Only Way Forward for Rikers Island: A Federal Judge Should Put the Place into Receivership.” December 27, 2021. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2021/12/27/the-only-way-forward-for-rikers-island-a-federal-judge-should-put-the-place-into-receivership>

<sup>46</sup> Bronx Climate Justice North signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>47</sup> New York County Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and Queens Defenders. “New York City Public Defenders’ Joint Statement on the Crisis on Rikers and the Need for Receivership.” Press release. August 10, 2023. <https://bds.org/assets/images/Joint-Defender-Statement-on-Rikers-Receiptership.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> New York County Defender Services et al., “New York City Public Defenders’ Joint Statement,” 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Brotherhood Sister Sol signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>50</sup> Brooklyn for Peace signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>51</sup> New York County Defender Services et al., “New York City Public Defenders’ Joint Statement,” 2023.

<sup>52</sup> Campaign Zero. “On Eve of Adams Administration’s Rikers Plan, Activists Demand Department of Justice Intervene to Confront Humanitarian Crisis at Jails.” Press release. May 16, 2022. <https://rikersisland.org/files/rikers-campaign-release.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Center for the Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>54</sup> Citizen Action of New York signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>55</sup> Betsy Gotbaum and Alan Rothstein. Letter to U.S. District Court Chief Judge Laura Taylor Swain. July 31, 2023. <https://citizensunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Citizens-Union-Letter-Support-for-the-Appointment-of-Federal-Receiptership-Over-New-York-City-Jails-Nunez-2023.pdf>

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<sup>56</sup> Community Access signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>57</sup> Correctional Association of New York signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>58</sup> Corporation for Supportive Housing signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>59</sup> Families for Freedom signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>60</sup> Families and Friends of the Wrongfully Convicted Inc. signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>61</sup> The Fled Collective signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>62</sup> The Fortune Society. "Statement on the Federal Court Hearing in Nunez and Receivership." August 10, 2023. [https://fortunesociety.org/media\\_center/statement-on-the-federal-court-hearing-in-nunez-and-receivership](https://fortunesociety.org/media_center/statement-on-the-federal-court-hearing-in-nunez-and-receivership)

<sup>63</sup> The Gathering Justice signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>64</sup> Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. "As Federal Court Holds Hearing on Crises at Rikers, Community Groups and Elected Officials Hold Protest to Demand Immediate Action." Press release. June 13, 2023. <https://katalcenter.org/receivership-action-june-13>

<sup>65</sup> Hour Children signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>66</sup> Incarcerated Nation Network signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>67</sup> JustLeadershipUSA. "Deanna Hoskins and Others Call for Rikers to Be Placed into Federal Receivership." August 9, 2023. <https://jlusa.org/2023/08/09/deanna-hoskins-and-others-call-for-rikers-to-be-placed-into-federal-receivership>

<sup>68</sup> gabriel sayegh. "Eric Adams Has Failed. It's time for a Federal Receiver to Take Over at Rikers." July 28, 2023. <https://www.cityandstateny.com/opinion/2023/07/opinion-eric-adams-has-failed-its-time-federal-receiver-take-over-rikers/388948>

<sup>69</sup> KAVI signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>70</sup> Latino Justice signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>71</sup> The Legal Aid Society. "Judge Will Consider Outside Control of Rikers." August 15, 2023. <https://legalaidnyc.org/news/judge-consider-outside-control-rikers-island>

<sup>72</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City, Inc. (NAMI-NYC) signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>73</sup> National Action Network NYC Chapter Second Chance Committee signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>74</sup> New York County Defender Services et al., "New York City Public Defenders' Joint Statement," 2023.

<sup>75</sup> Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. "People Impacted by Rikers, with Elected Officials and Community Groups, Rally Outside of the Courthouse in Support of a Federal Receiver and to Demand Closure of Rikers Island." Press release. April 27, 2023. <https://katalcenter.org/release-people-impacted-by-rikers-rally-at-foley-square>

<sup>76</sup> New Pride Agenda signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>77</sup> North Bronx Racial Justice signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>78</sup> Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice. "People Impacted by Rikers." November 17, 2022.

<sup>79</sup> Molly Biklen and Christopher Dunn. "NYCLU AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF: NUNEZ ET AL. V. CITY OF NY." Filed by the New York Civil Liberties Union. December 1, 2023. <https://www.nyclu.org/en/cases/nyclu-amicus-curiae-brief-nunez-et-al-v-city-ny>

<sup>80</sup> New York Bar Association and Vera Institute for Justice. "City Bar and Vera Institute Submit Amicus Brief Urging Federal Receiver for Rikers." Press Release. December 4, 2023. <https://www.vera.org/newsroom/city-bar-and-vera-institute-submit-amicus-brief-urging-federal-receiver-for-rikers?emci=71d68d16-568d-ee11-8924-6045bdd47111&emdi=574a89f2-ce92-ee11-8925-002248223f36&ccid=42345>

<sup>81</sup> New York Communities for Change signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>82</sup> New York County Defender Services et al., "New York City Public Defenders' Joint Statement," 2023.

<sup>83</sup> New York Jewish Agenda signed onto Katal's receivership support list.

<sup>84</sup> NY Renews signed onto Katal's receivership support list.

<sup>85</sup> On August 20, 2023 Susan Bryant from the New York State Defenders Association signed a letter on behalf of the organization, supporting federal receivership of Rikers Island. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>86</sup> Nurses for Social Justice signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>87</sup> Prison Families Alliance, signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>88</sup> Providence House, Inc., signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>89</sup> New York County Defender Services et al., "New York City Public Defenders' Joint Statement," 2023.

<sup>90</sup> Raging Grannies signed onto Katal's receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

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<sup>91</sup> Strategy for Black Lives signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>92</sup> Unchained signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>93</sup> Youth Represent signed onto Katal’s receivership support list. <https://katal.info/receiversupport>

<sup>94</sup> Vera Institute of Justice. “Vera Institute of Justice on Rikers Island Federal Receivership.” Press release. November 17, 2022. <https://www.vera.org/newsroom/vera-institute-of-justice-on-rikers-island-federal-receivership>



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Justin Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I am writing to ask that, amid challenging circumstances, our city continue to prioritize funding for arts in NYC communities and schools. My name is Kate Sheeran and I am the Executive Director of Kaufman Music Center, which is home to a concert hall (Merkin Hall), community arts school (Lucy Moses School), and K-12 public school (Special Music School). Here at the Center, we believe that arts are essential to the human spirit and a vital component of education for all.

From our home at the Abraham Goodman House (located at 129 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street) we bring music and arts education and performances to approximately 50,000 community members each year, including 3,000 students of all ages, who benefit from our free and accessible concerts, classes, and lessons. Funding from the City's Department of Cultural Affairs has always made a significant impact on our capacity to support our students and audiences through these free and deeply discounted offerings, which ensure that individuals from all walks of life can meaningfully engage with music and the arts.

The proposed budget cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs and NYC Public Schools threaten the success of these programs and the well-being of our students, and, when combined with the expiration of COVID-19 relief funds, hinder our capacity to reach audiences who have long been left out of New York City's cultural community. Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our community, and we hope you will continue to prioritize investment in arts and arts education throughout this trying year.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,



Kate Sheeran  
Executive Director



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Justin Brannan  
Committee on Finance  
250 Broadway, Suite 1825  
New York, New York 10007

**RE: Mayor's November Financial Plan – UPK Program Funding Cuts**

Dear Chair Brannan:

KinderCare Learning Companies, operating 19 centers and eight before/after school programs, serving over 2,000 children, and employing over 550 people across New York, seven of which operate within New York City (NYC), strongly opposes the city's proposed funding cuts to preschool for three and four-year-olds.

Since its implementation, the NYC Universal Preschool Program (UPK) has expanded opportunities for nearly 90,000 families – providing enriching early learning environments for children and allowing more families to participate in the workforce. The program has been transformational for the families it serves, and the proposed cuts undermine the city's trailblazing efforts around PreK and will add significant burden on NYC families. As designed, the program significantly lowers the cost of early childhood education (ECE) for eligible families, provides options for working parents' unique schedules, and offers families with options for high-quality care programs throughout the city.

KinderCare is proud to operate city-funded UPK programs in three of our seven locations with 130 dedicated slots and the capacity to support additional slots in other centers. The impending funding cuts will cause significant disruption to working families, children, and ECE professionals. Without maintained funding and opportunity, ECE providers cannot continue to serve these eligible families.

Even without the impending budget cuts, there have been challenges to participating in and serving families through the UPK program. These issues include provider reimbursement payment processes, the complexity of navigating licensing and regulatory approvals, and prolonged approved clearances of qualified teachers to support classrooms. The city should identify efficiencies in cost spending instead of cutting critical services. For example, efficiencies could be achieved by allowing for the portability of background checks and not using valuable city resources to screen a teacher who has moved from one classroom to another or has relocated to a center a few blocks away, as presented in Int. 1189. As presented in Int. 1160, additional efficiencies could be achieved through transparency and utilization of resources between various departments to avoid duplicative background checks and clearances. These are just a few ways to streamline costs and processes and save the city money.

The communities we serve depend on affordable, high-quality ECE programming. We have seen firsthand the disruptions that delayed and closed classrooms have caused to families and children due to inefficiencies. These impacts are evident even before the proposed systemwide budget cut, which will disrupt the lives of thousands of families. The effect will be immediate: parents who cannot find affordable, quality ECE programming will drop out of the workforce all



together, having ripple effects on NYC's broader economy. This reality will disproportionately impact women, and primarily women and families of color who make up most of the ECE workforce and participate in the UPK program.

We seek the City Council's support in opposing the proposed \$120 million funding cut to the city's essential universal preschool program. Our youngest children, families, and employers all depend on this program and the success of our youngest learners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rylie Shewbridge".

Rylie Shewbridge  
Government Relations Representative  
KinderCare Learning Companies

**Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Discretionary Budget Hearing - Finance  
December 11, 2023**

**Testimony of Jane Jang, Grants and Advocacy Coordinator  
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)**

Thank you, Council Members, for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jane Jang. I am a Grants and Advocacy Coordinator from the Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). Founded in 1973, KCS is the oldest and largest Korean nonprofit organization assisting underserved communities across the New York City area.

To help maintain the health and wellbeing of underserved older adults across AAPI communities subject to high rates of Limited English Proficiency and poverty, KCS Older Adult Centers have been providing aging services such as case assistance, information and referral, educational/recreational activities, telephone reassurance and friendly visits, health promotion, and meal services. We currently provide 550 service units in addition to our meal services, with our case assistance staff taking on 15 to 20 cases daily. Despite this overutilization of our services, we have continued to successfully meet each of our clients' needs through our dedicated staff.

Challenges exist in this process, however, due to limited funding which reduces our ability to hire and retain bilingual, culturally competent and certified staff, and our ability to sustain rising operational and programmatic costs in response to the increased Cost of Living. The upcoming 15% budget cuts across citywide agencies will exacerbate these challenges in maintaining our programs and critical staffing, and therefore diminish our capacity to address the different and changing needs of our clients. Tending to the needs of migrants and asylum seekers is undoubtedly important. However, this priority should not be addressed at the expense of the wellbeing of other immigrant community members across the city.

With these concerns in mind, we ask the City to please take a firm stance against any potential funding cuts to programs serving underserved community members. Your support in retaining funding for our Older Adult Centers will be critical to securing healthier lives for older adults in NYC's most vulnerable communities. Thank you.



## KCS Testimony for City Council Committee on Finance

Date: 12.11.2023  
Objective: Testify in Opposition to Proposed Mayor Adams Budget Cuts  
Location: Testifying via Zoom  
Organization: Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)

### Testimony:

Hello Committee Members. My name is Josh Bentley and I am a Grants and Advocacy Coordinator at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). For over 50 years, our organization has served the Korean immigrant, Korean American, and broader minority communities across the New York City metropolitan area.

As a nonprofit organization, our services depend largely on government funding and assistance to best serve the needs of the diverse, vibrant and, at times, vulnerable communities we assist. Our programs include outreach, education, linkage, and screening efforts in the areas of public health, education, mental health, workforce development, immigration and legal services, and older adult care. These services are utilized by countless community members on a daily basis, and serve pivotal roles in our clients' lives – providing them stability, a sense of belonging, and equipping them with the tools to maintain their independence, health, and wellbeing.

HEADQUARTERS (ADULT DAYCARE EDUCATION   HIR IMMIGRATION   PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER   WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT)	OLDER ADULT CENTER	PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER	WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC
203-05 32nd Ave, Bayside, NY 11361 Tel: 718-939-6137	42-15 166th St, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-886-8203	315 5th Ave, #705, New York, NY 10016 Tel: 212-463-9685	325 West 38th St, #1107, New York, NY 10018 Tel: 929-300-8630, 929-341-8302	42-16 162nd St, 2FL, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-366-9540



What worries us is the recent reports of Mayor Adams' plans to cut the budgets of many key institutions across New York City. These budget cuts are not only directed at nonprofits like KCS, but pivotal institutions that are a part of the very fabric of our city, like libraries and our schools.

One of our most in-demand services as an organization is our older adult care programs. These include home-delivered meals, care centers, and physical and mental wellbeing courses. As we understand it, certain pillars of older adult care may be spared in these proposed cuts. But the grave reality is that any cuts to Aging services means organizations like ours cannot offer the competent services to the often under-served older adult population.

KCS and other Older Adult Centers across the city are already fighting an uphill battle with respect to our older adult services. Past and current funding cuts have meant that we cannot afford to offer better wages, pay instructors competently, and serve our meals to older adults at a net loss. In fact, our Older Adult Centers are some of the only OACs that are being over-utilized. We continue to provide these services, however, because they are so vital to our community members..

We understand that the economy ebbs and flows – and that downturns in finances are inevitable. But we ask the Council to take a firm stance against these cuts. Ultimately, we ask that you continue to work with New York City's countless CBOs who are dedicated to serving communities, to see how to best weather the storm of a weaker economic fiscal year, to maintain crucial services, and to sustain support for this growing area of need into the future.

HEADQUARTERS (ADULT DAYCARE EDUCATION   HIR IMMIGRATION   PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER   WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT)	OLDER ADULT CENTER	PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER	WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC
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I want to close by reiterating that these proposed budget cuts will not only hurt CBOs, but everyday, ordinary, working class New Yorkers. These budget cuts are dangerous to the wellbeing of all NYC residents, and while they may balance budgetary numbers, they represent real people who are most in need of our support. We ask the City Council to continue fighting to better the lives of New Yorkers, not further hinder the necessary services that we depend on.

HEADQUARTERS (ADULT DAYCARE EDUCATION   HR IMMIGRATION   PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER   WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT)	OLDER ADULT CENTER	PUBLIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTER	WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC
203-05 32nd Ave, Bayside, NY 11361 Tel: 718-939-6137	42-15 166th St, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-886-8203	315 5th Ave, #705, New York, NY 10016 Tel: 212-463-9685	325 West 38th St, #1107, New York, NY 10018 Tel: 929-300-8630, 929-341-8302	42-16 162nd St, 2FL, Flushing, NY 11358 Tel: 718-366-9540

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the City Council's Finance Committee:

My name is Mary Fulham and I am the Managing Director of La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club. We have been in existence since 1961 and have been supporting artists and the creation of new work since then.

I am testifying today to ask that the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) be exempted from future budget reductions in the Preliminary and Executive Budgets. The Mayor has held each agency to a 5% Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) reduction in the November Financial Plan. I am under the assumption that the Administration was attempting to spread the pain of the cuts equally amongst agencies. While equal cuts may seem like an equitable way to distribute reductions I assure you it is not.

Unlike many other agencies, the majority of DCLA's budget passes through the agency directly to the cultural organizations that make this city such a vibrant place to live and visit. Cuts to DCLA have an outsized impact on all of the city's cultural organizations. Many city agencies can reduce their level of vacancies with minimal impact on operations. DCLA's PEG's are felt directly and in full by cultural groups like my own.

At a time when the City is still recovering from the economic damage that the pandemic caused, hamstringing the City's cultural organizations with more funding cuts is counterproductive. The revenue generated by increased tourism, to which cultural organizations contribute to mightily, will more than pay for foregone cuts to DCLA.

Culturals and the arts are not only an economic engine of the city, but they can help build bridges between different communities. La MaMa recently undertook the Space Bridge project that included Russian refugee children between the ages of 10-14 who are living in shelters and going to schools in the city. The Russian children were in workshops with other American children in their age group exploring what their future could look like. For example, they designed an ideal school and town to promote a sense of belonging and created imaginative tools to address feelings of alienation between Russia and the United States. It is programs like this one, that demonstrate the community building potential of the arts, that are at risk from these budget cuts.

I urge you to exclude DCLA from reductions in the upcoming Preliminary Budget as you have done with the Police, Fire and Sanitation Departments. Thank you for your time and attention.

Mary Fulham,

Managing Director

La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,  
Hon. Just Brannan, Chair  
Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023

12/7/23

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Laura Craft, and I work at Learning Through An Expanded Arts Program (LEAP) with public schools across the five boroughs.

LEAP partners with school communities to offer creative arts programs that encourage New York City youth to pursue their passions, develop their strengths, and amplify their voices. We envision a city where education is equitable, and the arts are accessible for youth in communities that are rich in culture and capability and have been intentionally and unintentionally excluded and under-resourced. Youth in our communities will be the next generation of lifelong learners, creative problem solvers, and collaborative leaders.

Education and arts funding budget cuts will highly affect community based organizations like LEAP and the thousands of underserved NYC youth we serve. Without ample funding, our schools cannot bring in arts partners like LEAP – students therefore will lose out on vital SEL development opportunities and access to the arts. In addition employees at LEAP will lose out on work. Our 200+ LEAP Teaching Artists will lose work opportunities due to the school cuts – making the career as a whole disappear. The impacts to these cuts run very deep in our City.

We cannot underestimate the power of the arts. Over the past few years, LEAP has delivered arts programming to thousands of NYC youth both in school and after school through City and State grants that fund arts education. Each year, we hear from Principals and directly from the youth we serve, that our work has changed lives and opened doors to their futures. LEAP works almost exclusively with schools and youth that are historically intentionally and unintentionally under-resourced. In addition, our schools are now also serving larger than ever before new immigrant student populations – with learning needs that are impossible for the schools to manage without arts partners like LEAP. The arts can make learning more accessible to all multi-language learners because they create new avenues for learning. To cut this access would be incomprehensible.

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of

our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Laura Craft

# KEY TALKING POINTS

Specifically, we believe it would be helpful for the Council to hear:

- Talk about the impact of city funding on your ability to reach students and engage with new/returning partner schools (and that this level of funding should be continued).
- Specific results and examples of successfully providing arts and cultural education this year will be the most impactful for continuing to let the City Council know that Arts Education is Essential (i.e. trends they saw in learning, outcomes that tell the story of how arts ed can reach students in important ways);
- Specific examples of how you are currently experiencing or anticipate seeing the negative impact of budget cuts on your organization and students (to help create urgency to prioritize funding these areas).
- Stress the well-documented research showing that kids engaged in vibrant arts programs have markedly better academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- Thank the City Council for their investment and commitment to arts, culture, and arts education (this is the floor not the ceiling, when it comes to funding the arts in schools!)
- Universal access to arts education is an issue of equity in education; we still have a long way to go and these cuts stand to set us back considerably to reaching a point where all students have access to arts education.
- We encourage you to uplift messages of other coalitions as it relates to you and your work! Here is some additional written testimony language from other advocates:

**Nonprofit New York:** The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why **[YOUR INSTITUTION HERE]** joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

**Advocates for Children:** In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

**New Yorkers for Culture & Art:** Check out [NY4CA's one-pager](#) for information about their talking points and how to testify.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,

Hon. Just Brannan, Chair

Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

December 8, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Madison Hoyos, and I work at Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP), an arts-based creative youth development organization that works across NYC's five boroughs.

LEAP partners with school communities to offer creative arts programs that encourage New York City youth to pursue their passions, develop their strengths, and amplify their voices. We envision a city where education is equitable, and the arts are accessible for youth in communities that are rich in culture and capability and have been intentionally and unintentionally excluded and under-resourced. Youth in our communities will be the next generation of lifelong learners, creative problem solvers, and collaborative leaders. Each year, LEAP reaches more than 20,000 K-12 students in over 140 schools through in-and-after school programs, and partnering with schools to offer family engagement experiences. LEAP's diverse cohort of youth is 50% Hispanic, 29% African American, 9% Asian, 10% Caucasian, and 2% another ethnicity; 18% are English language learners, and at least 21% have special needs.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would greatly impact LEAP's school partnerships and our ability to deliver arts programs to youth in the five boroughs. DOE schools rely on their budgets to partner with LEAP and further cuts will result in a significant decrease in the level of access thousands of students across the city have to arts experiences. This will deeply impact the migrant students and Multilanguage Learners that LEAP works with through our partnerships, as the arts provide elevated accessibility to and equity in language acquisition and social-emotional learning. The cuts will also result in a loss of artist employment, as LEAP employs over 200 NYC professional artists to lead our programs.

Arts education is essential to students' success in a multitude of ways, including social and emotional learning (SEL). The arts provide a powerful vehicle to teach SEL skills, which lay the foundation for success in school, careers, and life. Last school year, LEAP completed year-long program evaluations, with surveys measuring the extent to which students demonstrated growth in four core SEL skills: Self-management, Mastery orientation, Social skills, and Academic self-efficacy. Of those who completed the post-program survey, overall, 95% of LEAP students grew in one or more SEL skills. One in eight LEAP students in our residency and signature theater programs grew in all SEL capacities.

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief

funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Madison Hoyos  
Manager, Development and Partnership Operations  
[madison@leapnyc.org](mailto:madison@leapnyc.org)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Madison Hoyos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Madison" on the top line and "Hoyos" on the bottom line.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance,

Hon. Just Brannan, Chair

Hearing: Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

December 8, 2023

Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for your support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. I'm writing to support the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities. My name is Richard Souto and I'm the Executive Director of Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LEAP), a creative youth development organization that works across NYC's five boroughs.

LEAP partners with school communities to offer creative arts programs that encourage New York City youth to pursue their passions, develop their strengths, and amplify their voices. We envision a city where education is equitable, and the arts are accessible for youth in communities that are rich in culture and capability and have been intentionally and unintentionally excluded and under-resourced. Youth in our communities will be the next generation of lifelong learners, creative problem solvers, and collaborative leaders. Each year, LEAP reaches more than 20,000 K-12 students in over 140 schools through in-and-after school programs, and partnering with schools to offer family engagement experiences. LEAP's diverse cohort of youth is 50% Hispanic, 29% African American, 9% Asian, 10% Caucasian, and 2% another ethnicity; 18% are English language learners, and at least 21% have special needs.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would greatly impact LEAP's school partnerships and our ability to deliver arts programs to youth in the five boroughs. DOE schools rely on their budgets to partner with LEAP and further cuts will result in a significant decrease in the level of access thousands of students across the city have to arts experiences. This will deeply impact the migrant students and Multilanguage Learners that LEAP works with through our partnerships, as the arts provide elevated accessibility to and equity in language acquisition and social-emotional learning.

Many of our arts programs are also delivered in comprehensive after school and summer program settings. Reduction in these critical programs would make it impossible for many hard working families to continue employment due to the loss of affordable child care. For example, one change that has been threatened is to reduce after school or summer programs by one day per week by closing Friday programming. This would mean the reduction of potential household earnings by 20% due to the loss of child care one day per work week. These cuts will also result in a loss of employment for many working artists, as LEAP employs over 200 NYC professional artists to lead our programs throughout the week and year.

Arts education is essential to students' success in a multitude of ways, including social and emotional learning (SEL). The arts provide a powerful vehicle to teach SEL skills, which lay the foundation for success in school, careers, and life. Last school year, LEAP completed year-long program evaluations, with surveys measuring the extent to which students demonstrated growth in four core SEL skills: Self-management, Mastery orientation, Social skills, and Academic self-efficacy. Of those who completed the post-program survey, overall,

95% of LEAP students grew in one or more SEL skills. One in eight LEAP students in our residency and signature theater programs grew in all SEL capacities.

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs and more than \$1B to NYC Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies spell disaster for arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The damaging cuts laid out in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which has funded considerable arts education programming to support student's academic recovery and social-emotional wellbeing over the past three school years.

Let us not take it out on our students or their future. And let us not make New York – where culture is a major economic sector with over 400,000 jobs – a place that disregards culture and community as an integral part of our lived experiences. Programs that foster student engagement, mental health, tourism, and community rejuvenation should be the last cut, not the first.

Our city's young people represent the future cultural and economic vitality of our city. Please prioritize investment in arts education and in NYC's future because success **starts with the arts**.

Thank you for your attention and consideration,

Richard Souto  
Executive Director  
[rich@leapnyc.org](mailto:rich@leapnyc.org)



## **TESTIMONY**

The New York City Council  
Committee on Finance

Re: Harmful November Budget Modification  
Cuts That Reinforce NYPD Exceptionalism

Legal Defense Fund  
40 Rector Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10006

December 11, 2023

Speaker Adams, Chairperson Brannan, and Councilmembers of the Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Legal Defense Fund (LDF),<sup>1</sup> we thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding New York City's November budget modifications. We call on the Council to ensure adequate funding for services that improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, and end the pattern of exceptionalism that protects the NYPD budget at the expense of other crucial public resources.

Mayor Adams' proposed budget modifications threaten the resources that are most vital for Black, Brown and Queer communities.<sup>2</sup> They call for historic five percent cuts to city services to fill a \$7.1 billion budget deficit,<sup>3</sup> including \$547 million in proposed cuts to the Department of Education<sup>4</sup> and \$32 million in proposed cuts to the Department of Sanitation.<sup>5</sup> Although it was initially announced that the City's law enforcement agencies would face a hiring freeze under the proposed modifications, recent reporting indicates that the City intends to hire an additional 120 school safety agents.<sup>6</sup> Further, the NYPD is one of the few agencies that is expected to be exempt from the next round of budget cuts in January 2024,<sup>7</sup> and Governor Hochul has publicly announced her intent to offset any proposed budget cuts to the NYPD with state funding, while failing to make the same promise for other essential city agencies.<sup>8</sup>

Aggressive policing does not make our communities safer. Since the mayor took office and reinstated police initiatives like Neighborhood Safety Teams, the NYPD is making more arrests, mostly for non-violent offenses.<sup>9</sup> Most of this policing is highly concentrated in Black and Brown communities with lower socioeconomic standing<sup>10</sup> and relies on specialized crime-suppression

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<sup>1</sup> LDF is the nation's first and foremost civil rights and human rights law organization. Since its founding over eighty years ago, LDF has worked at the national, state, and local levels to pursue racial justice and eliminate structural barriers for the Black community in the areas of criminal justice, economic justice, education, and political participation. As part of that work, LDF has also forged longstanding partnerships with local advocates, activists, and attorneys to challenge and reform unlawful and discriminatory policing in New York City.

<sup>2</sup> *Statement by New York City Comptroller Brad Lander on FY 2024 Modified Budget*, NYC Comptroller Brad Lander (Nov. 16, 2023), [www.comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/statement-by-new-york-city-comptroller-brad-lander-on-fy-2024-modified-budget/](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/statement-by-new-york-city-comptroller-brad-lander-on-fy-2024-modified-budget/).

<sup>3</sup> *Mayor Adams Releases November 2023 Financial Plan Update*, Office of the Mayor, [www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/875-23/mayor-adams-releases-november-2023-financial-plan-update](http://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/875-23/mayor-adams-releases-november-2023-financial-plan-update).

<sup>4</sup> Emma G. Fitzsimmons, *Eric Adams Slashes Budgets for Police, Libraries and Schools*, N.Y. Times (Nov. 16, 2023), [www.nytimes.com/2023/11/16/nyregion/nyc-budget-cuts-schools-police-trash.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/16/nyregion/nyc-budget-cuts-schools-police-trash.html).

<sup>5</sup> Allie Griffin & Craig McCarthy, *NYPD, FDNY and DSNY Spared From Next Round of NYC Budget Cuts Over 'Public Safety, Health' Concerns*, N.Y. Post (Nov. 21, 2023), [www.nypost.com/2023/11/21/metro/nypd-fdny-and-dsny-spared-from-next-round-of-nyc-budget-cuts-over-public-safety-health-concerns/](http://www.nypost.com/2023/11/21/metro/nypd-fdny-and-dsny-spared-from-next-round-of-nyc-budget-cuts-over-public-safety-health-concerns/).

<sup>6</sup> Chris Sommerfeldt, *Adams Admin Set to Hire 120 NYC School Safety Agents Weeks After Canceling Class of 250: Sources*, N.Y. Daily News (Dec. 6, 2023), <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/12/06/adams-admin-set-to-hire-120-new-nyc-school-safety-agents-weeks-after-cancelling-class-of-250-sources-exclusive/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Michael Gartland, *Hochul Vows to Help Mayor Adams Tackle Public Safety as NYC Faces Deep Budget Cuts*, N.Y. Daily News (Nov. 20, 2023), [www.nydailynews.com/2023/11/20/hochul-vows-to-help-mayor-adams-tackle-public-safety-as-nyc-faces-deep-budget-cuts/](http://www.nydailynews.com/2023/11/20/hochul-vows-to-help-mayor-adams-tackle-public-safety-as-nyc-faces-deep-budget-cuts/).

<sup>9</sup> Chip Brownlee, *The 'Clearances Paradox': Could Less Policing Actually Reduce Gun Violence in New York?*, The Guardian (June 22, 2022), [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/22/nypd-fewer-arrests-reduce-crime-new-york](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/22/nypd-fewer-arrests-reduce-crime-new-york).

<sup>10</sup> Mylan Denerstein, *Nineteenth Report of the Independent Monitor: Monitor's Audit of Neighborhood Safety Teams*, 23 (June 5, 2023), [www.nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NST-Report.pdf](http://www.nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/NST-Report.pdf) (finding in a survey that 97 percent of people confronted by Neighborhood Safety Teams were Black or Hispanic).

units and hyper-surveillance, which have disproportionately harmed those same communities.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the City should make substantial investments to enable impacted communities to direct and determine the resources necessary to ensure the safety and prosperity of their own neighborhoods. To achieve true safety in our communities, and to truly support our fellow Black, Brown and Queer residents, we must prioritize investments in mental health resources, education, housing, workforce development and employment opportunities.

Unfortunately, these are the very services that are being devalued in the proposed budget. The Department of Education,<sup>12</sup> the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene,<sup>13</sup> our public library system,<sup>14</sup> and many other vital agencies have experienced striking hiring freezes and budget cuts in recent years. Cuts to food programs, sanitation, healthcare, and other programs that are crucial components of community safety infrastructure will make our communities less safe. The already massive proposed cuts to the Department of Education could increase to \$2.1 billion if the City proceeds with the additional five percent cuts planned for January and April 2024,<sup>15</sup> jeopardizing key programs like universal pre-k, 3-k, and community schools.<sup>16</sup> This will disproportionately affect Black and Brown communities by stifling resources to an already underfunded and segregated school system.<sup>17</sup> Slashing access to public spaces and services like libraries and parks will decrease public safety by providing fewer recreational spaces for young people. The cuts to libraries, which many within our communities rely on as havens and resource centers, will be especially damaging.<sup>18</sup> The \$5.5 million cut to the Department of Sanitation will result in less garbage collection primarily in the outer boroughs,<sup>19</sup> resulting in worse service for Black and Brown residents and potentially unhealthy conditions surrounding NYCHA housing. City housing agencies—NYCHA, the Human Resources Administration (HRA), and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS)—have faced chronic under-investment as well.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., *Ban the Scan*, Amnesty International, [www.banthescan.amnesty.org/decode/](http://www.banthescan.amnesty.org/decode/) (“[A]nalysis [shows] that the higher the proportion of non-white residents, the higher the concentration of facial recognition compatible CCTV cameras.”).

<sup>12</sup> Cayla Bamberger, *Adams' Budget Cuts Could Trigger a "Massive Step Backward" in NYC Public Schools*, N.Y. Post (Sep. 11, 2023), [www.nydailynews.com/2023/09/11/adams-budget-cuts-migrant-crisis-massive-step-backwards-nyc-public-schools/](http://www.nydailynews.com/2023/09/11/adams-budget-cuts-migrant-crisis-massive-step-backwards-nyc-public-schools/).

<sup>13</sup> Yoav Gonen, *One in Five Jobs Unfilled at Health and Buildings Departments, City Council Finds*, The City (Sep. 6, 2022), [www.thecity.nyc/2022/09/06/health-housing-buildings-public-sector-unemployment-rate-high/](http://www.thecity.nyc/2022/09/06/health-housing-buildings-public-sector-unemployment-rate-high/).

<sup>14</sup> Katie Honan, *Budget Cuts Hit Preschools, Cops, Libraries as Mayor Blames Migrants*, The City (Nov. 16, 2023), [www.thecity.nyc/2023/11/16/budget-cuts-hit-city-hall-blames-migrant-crisis/](http://www.thecity.nyc/2023/11/16/budget-cuts-hit-city-hall-blames-migrant-crisis/).

<sup>15</sup> Michael Elsen-Rooney & Alex Zimmerman, *Eric Adams Axes \$547 Million from NYC Education Department Budget, More Cuts on the Way*, Chalkbeat NY (Nov. 16, 2023), [www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/11/16/nyc-education-department-loses-547-million-in-eric-adams-cuts/](http://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/11/16/nyc-education-department-loses-547-million-in-eric-adams-cuts/).

<sup>16</sup> Jessica Gould, *Department of Education Budget is Set to Shrink by Nearly \$1B Under Mayor's Proposal*, Gothamist (Apr. 28, 2023), [www.gothamist.com/news/nyc-schools-will-lose-1b-under-mayor-adams-proposed-cuts/](http://www.gothamist.com/news/nyc-schools-will-lose-1b-under-mayor-adams-proposed-cuts/).

<sup>17</sup> Jessica Gould, *New York's Schools Are Still the Most Segregated in the Nation: Report*, Gothamist (June 11, 2021), [www.gothamist.com/news/new-yorks-schools-are-still-the-most-segregated-in-the-nation-report](http://www.gothamist.com/news/new-yorks-schools-are-still-the-most-segregated-in-the-nation-report).

<sup>18</sup> Josephine Stratman, *NYC Public Libraries to Shut Down Sundays, Slash Services Following Mayor Adams' Budget Cuts*, N.Y. Daily News (Nov. 17, 2023), [www.nydailynews.com/2023/11/16/nyc-public-libraries-to-slash-services-following-mayor-adams-updated-budget/](http://www.nydailynews.com/2023/11/16/nyc-public-libraries-to-slash-services-following-mayor-adams-updated-budget/).

<sup>19</sup> Craig McCarthy, *Adams Pleads with NYC's Richest Residents to Help Pick Up Slack for Cash-Strapped City: 'All Hands on Deck'*, N.Y. Post (Nov. 17, 2023), [www.nypost.com/2023/11/17/metro/adams-pleads-with-nycs-richest-residents-to-help-pick-up-slack-for-cash-strapped-city-all-hands-on-deck/](http://www.nypost.com/2023/11/17/metro/adams-pleads-with-nycs-richest-residents-to-help-pick-up-slack-for-cash-strapped-city-all-hands-on-deck/).

<sup>20</sup> *How The Other Half Lives in Public Housing*, Office of the Public Advocate (Sep. 2022), [www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/static/assets/nyc\\_housing\\_report.pdf](http://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/static/assets/nyc_housing_report.pdf).

Meanwhile, NYCHA residents and unhoused New Yorkers are often the ones who experience aggressive policing and NYPD surveillance most acutely.<sup>21</sup> This is a devastating recipe for increased poverty and instability in our neighborhoods, which we fear the administration will later use to justify more increases in spending for criminalization and policing.

We must end the NYPD's budget exceptionalism, which has historically held law enforcement to a different standard for budget cuts and modifications. The NYPD has one of the highest per capita uniformed police forces in the nation.<sup>22</sup> The City has a police budget of \$11 billion per year for the largest police department in the world—a budget that is greater than the next 14 largest municipal police budgets combined.<sup>23</sup> The proposed NYPD vacancy reduction will do nothing to address our massive spending on policing,<sup>24</sup> particularly for a department that has already shown an inability to meet their Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) goals from the previous fiscal year.<sup>25</sup> All of this excessive spending has not made New York City safer. Instead, it has paved the way for historic budgetary plundering from crucial community services and resources, which will inevitably lead to Black, Brown, and Queer communities suffering most. These communities already deal with underinvestment in housing and healthcare, and the Mayor's proposal will only harm them further.

The Mayor's misplaced blame of asylum seekers for the City's financial concerns is unjust and potentially dangerous, greenlighting xenophobia while hate motivated violence is already high.<sup>26</sup> Rather than taking accountability for a preventable crisis, the mayor seeks to cut the services New Yorkers rely on most, touting any potential cuts to the NYPD as being the most damaging, while ignoring the costly, counterproductive effects of the policing strategies that he has enacted since he took office. The NYPD should not continue to be given preferential treatment for the current fiscal year; it should face cuts that are cumulatively equivalent to what other agencies have faced during this administration. Criminalization and policing compound harm and lead to dangerous encounters in our communities while depleting funds that would be better spent

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<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., Seventeenth Report of the Independent Monitor: The Deployment of Body Worn Cameras on NYPD Housing Bureau Officers Assigned to Police Service Areas at 34, *Floyd v. City of New York*, No. 1:08-cv-01034-AT, (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 17, 2022), [www.nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022.10.17-Dkt.-894-Seventeenth-Report-of-the-Independent-Monitor.pdf](http://www.nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022.10.17-Dkt.-894-Seventeenth-Report-of-the-Independent-Monitor.pdf) (finding in a sample of 350 stops that 33 percent of stops in NYCHA buildings were unlawful and 71 percent of people stopped were Black); An Investigation into the NYPD Criminal Group Database at 46, NYC Office of the Inspector-General for the NYPD, (Apr. 2023), [www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2023/16CGDRpt.Release04.18.2023.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/reports/pdf/2023/16CGDRpt.Release04.18.2023.pdf) (finding that some NYCHA properties in their entirety were classified as "gang locations" for purposes of Criminal Group Database criteria.).

<sup>22</sup> *What Policing Costs: A Look at Spending in America's Biggest Cities*, Vera Institute of Justice, [www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities](http://www.vera.org/publications/what-policing-costs-in-americas-biggest-cities).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* (New York City's annual police budget is \$11.04 billion, while the combined budget of the next 14 largest municipal police budgets is \$10.72 billion.)

<sup>24</sup> Crystal Lewis, *Thousands of Vacant Positions Axed as Part of City Spending Cuts*, The Chief (Nov. 21, 2023), [www.thechiefleader.com/stories/thousands-of-vacant-positions-axed-as-part-of-city-spending-cuts.51473](http://www.thechiefleader.com/stories/thousands-of-vacant-positions-axed-as-part-of-city-spending-cuts.51473).

<sup>25</sup> Chris Sommerfeldt, *NYPD Keeps Budget Flat Despite Not Meeting Savings Targets*, N.Y. Daily News (Jan. 13, 2023), [www.nydailynews.com/2023/01/13/nypd-keeps-budget-flat-in-mayor-adams-latest-plan-despite-not-meeting-savings-targets/](http://www.nydailynews.com/2023/01/13/nypd-keeps-budget-flat-in-mayor-adams-latest-plan-despite-not-meeting-savings-targets/).

<sup>26</sup> *Amid Deepening Asylum Seeker Crisis, Mayor Adams Announces New Steps to Stabilize City's Budget as Required by Law* (Sep. 9, 2023), [www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/650-23/amid-deepening-asylum-seeker-crisis-mayor-adams-new-steps-stabilize-city-s-budget-as](http://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/650-23/amid-deepening-asylum-seeker-crisis-mayor-adams-new-steps-stabilize-city-s-budget-as); Weihua Li & Jamiles Lartey, *New FBI Data Shows More Hate Crimes. These Groups Saw the Sharpest Rise.*, The Marshall Project (Mar. 25, 2023), [www.themarshallproject.org/2023/03/25/asian-hate-crime-fbi-black-lgbtq](http://www.themarshallproject.org/2023/03/25/asian-hate-crime-fbi-black-lgbtq).

on community-oriented solutions. We call on the City Council to invest in the services that will lead to true safety and well-being, while ending the NYPD's budget exceptionalism.

Respectfully submitted,

Obi Afriyie, Community Organizer  
David Moss, Legal Fellow  
NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.  
40 Rector Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10006



December 11, 2023

**Oversight Hearing—Mayor’s November Financial Plan**

Chair Justin Brannan and Members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony about the impact of the Mayor’s PEG cuts to the non-profit sector. My name is Christine Clarke, I am the Chief of Litigation and Advocacy at Legal Services NYC.

For over 50 years, Legal Services NYC has fought for the racial, social, and economic rights of low-income New Yorkers. Through our network of community-based offices, we provide free, high-quality legal representation to over 100,000 low-income New Yorkers every year across the five boroughs, helping families fight evictions and avoid homelessness, ensuring that children obtain the quality education they deserve, helping obtain life-saving public benefits, saving family homes from foreclosure, providing representation in immigration matters, and more.

Our clients rely heavily on non-profit organizations around the City and the social services they provide. Those programs and services have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% cuts proposed in January would be disastrous, and will have serious negative consequences for New York City’s most vulnerable families. For example, especially with winter coming on, public libraries provide some of the only free indoor space in New York City for toddlers and infants to play and socialize. When it is too cold to take young children to playgrounds, low-income parents who may live in crowded apartments have few options for warm, safe spaces to allow their children to socialize. If budget cuts force libraries to close on Sundays or otherwise reduce hours, not only will low-income parents have fewer places to go, but their children will also miss out on much of the amazing programming that the city’s public libraries provide, from storytime to classes to puppet shows, all free of charge. Similarly, our public libraries provide a safe place where low-income people of all ages can access the internet – a crucial need in today’s age (whether for homework or public benefits applications). This is but a small example of the kinds of services that our clients rely on that are potentially imperiled by the proposed budget cuts.

We would also like to take this opportunity to mention how much our clients rely on Legal Services NYC and our many partner organizations around the city that provide free legal services to low-income people in need. Any future cuts to funding for such services will prevent New York City’s most vulnerable people from being able to access

the vital services they rely on to stabilize their homes, obtain public benefits, maintain employment, obtain quality education for their children, and so much more.

We thank the City Council and the Speaker for their leadership on this issue and for their continued support of the important work of the non-profit and social services sectors that are so crucial for low-income New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Christine Clarke  
Chief of Litigation & Advocacy



# Literacy in Community

**Testimony on November Budget Plan  
December 11, 2023 Oversight Hearing  
New York City Council**

I begin my testimony by acknowledging the necessity of realigning our municipal budget to accommodate revenue realities. Reductions in income are painful - whether personal, organizational, city, state or federal level.

I speak as the Executive Director of LINC - Literacy in Community. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, LINC lost its primary funding, a NY State grant. The board debated the merits of closing. We shuttered the office and tightened our belt. Deliberately and intentionally, we came back..... Strong.

Thousands of families and children benefited from our programs because we kept going. Children who acquired a lifelong love of reading. Children who have grown up to become social workers, community organizers, and the next generation of educators, like Melanie Sanchez whose family joined our programs when she was a child. Now, Melanie is pursuing a Masters in Early Education.

Melanie's mother, Rocio, came to New York from Mexico as a young adult. She connected with LINC programs in Inwood, took our Very Involved Parent volunteer training, and provided weekly read-alouds at the local NYPL branch for many years. Rocio read in Spanish and Melanie, starting as a 5th grader, would read alongside her mother in English. Today Rocio is a LINC staff member providing programming across Northern Manhattan and Melanie prepping for a career in education.

If LINC had closed, this story, and many others like it, could not be told. Today LINC serves families with children under 6 in all five boroughs with a combination of in person and online programming. All free. In the last fiscal year LINC provided 577 programs - multi session workshops, volunteer training and community reading events like Roccio and Melanie delivered. LINC supported 2,767 unique families on their literacy journey, an increase of 72% from FY22. Home libraries were enhanced by the 12,299 books



@literacyinc



@linc\_nyc



@lincnyc



Literacy Inc.



Literacy Inc.

distributed at programs and an additional 3,516 provided at mini-libraries we maintain in our eight neighborhoods of focus.

LINC's early literacy programming addresses the disparity in pre-reading stimulation between children living in poverty and children from more economically secure circumstances. Early literacy helps children be ready to read when they encounter formal instruction in a classroom. But what happens when children are not ready to read, when they fail to acquire literacy in time to keep up in school? They fall behind, measurably and persistently. If we have learned nothing else from the COVID pandemic, we have learned that once you fall behind it is very difficult, if not impossible, to catch up.

Protecting early education preserves an equitable future for New York City. This is why LINC joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget.

- The city cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City as well as jeopardize the future of our most vulnerable children.
- The city cannot provide essential human services without the nonprofit sector. Given our expertise, why are we not being consulted about solutions and in dialogue about where service reductions do the least damage?

Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. Organizations like LINC are essential. Early literacy is essential. Our investment in children cannot be reduced and must be protected.

In community,



Shari Levine  
Executive Director



@literacyinc



@linc\_nyc



@lincnyc



Literacy Inc.



Literacy Inc.



Making New York a better place to age

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Finance**

**Chair Brannan**

**December 11th, 2023**

Thank you Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance for hosting this important hearing and the opportunity to testify.

My name is Allison Nickerson and I am the Executive Director of LiveOn NY, a membership organization representing aging home and community based service providers. LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide hundreds of core service programs which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, such as older adult centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, NORCs, and home care.

### **Background**

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

-The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why LiveOn NY joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.-

**There's no fat left to cut in Aging.** NYC Aging's total budget is \$466.7 million dollars, less than one half of one percent of the city budget, and covers services for the almost 1.4 million New Yorkers aged 65 and older. Aging service staff are *already* some of the lowest paid workers in the city. Older Adult Centers are *already* not given funding to maintain their physical spaces and go without HVAC and other critical infrastructure needs. This system has *already* been cut to the bone, and there is no more to lose before the system itself starts to fall apart. With such a small budget these additional cuts would save the



Making New York a better place to age

mayor pennies, but they will cost New Yorkers their community, their food security, and their health and safety.

Based on these factors, we would offer the following recommendations:

### **Recommendations**

**Hold Aging Services Harmless in the FY25 Budget.** Aging services are already underfunded. Despite this and many other examples, Older Adults Centers and other services still work to multiply the dollars the city invests and pull in services the community needs that are not funded by the city. Our members have become vaccination clinics, housing clinics, intergenerational community spaces, food pantries, transportation providers, and refuges for folks who have nowhere else to go. Cutting this funding not only threatens the city funded programming and food, but threatens to collapse an already precarious service network with an impact far larger than the pennies the city will save through these cuts.

**We also join our nonprofit colleagues in asking that the city the City:**

**Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary**

**Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions**

**Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the council to protect these services that are vital to the well being of so many New Yorkers.

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*Testimony provided by Allison Nickerson, Executive Director LiveOn NY. For additional questions, please reach out to [Anickerson@liveon-ny.org](mailto:Anickerson@liveon-ny.org)*

*LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 110 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.*

*LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help*



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*them age well in their communities.*



Lower East Side Ecology Center  
Testimony to New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
December 10, 2023

The Lower East Side Ecology Center started its programs in 1987 by offering community based recycling opportunities for paper, bottles and cans by creating community based drop off programs in the Lower East Side. We have been running community-based composting programs since 1990 and we have been working in partnership with the Department of Sanitation since 2005 to bring compost education, support to community gardens, food scrap composting, free compost and more to New Yorkers. Community composting is in our DNA as an organization, and we've seen how powerful collective community composting can be in achieving a more just and sustainable city.

**We are testifying to urge the City to restore the \$3 million to continue running community composting programs for the remainder of FY24 and restore the \$6 million annual budget for outer years.**

**We are also requesting that the \$2.1 million allocated to the Ecology Center for its compost site relocation be restored. These funds were promised to the Ecology Center by the City when we left East River Park as a result of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project.**

Community composting demonstrates how climate-friendly action can take place right in your neighborhood. It demonstrates that your food scraps don't necessarily need to be sent to far away places, burning additional fossil fuels in the process, but that food scraps can be managed by the community and create a product that benefits the community.

At the Ecology Center we've donated tons of compost to urban farms and gardens to help them grow healthy food for their community. We've applied hundreds of cubic yards of compost to parkland and street trees, which increases the soil capacity to retain stormwater and prevent flooding. These are just a few of the direct benefits that come from our programs to create healthy and resilient communities.

Composting to create soil amendments is the highest and best use of food scraps and organic waste materials. The Ecology Center is committed to composting as a way to recover and recycle resources and restore soil health across the city. It is through Community Composting efforts where truly efficient circular waste systems can be achieved.

Even with the roll out of universal curbside collection, the role of and importance of community composting programs does not diminish but rather supports the success of a curbside compost collection through hands on engagement and learning opportunities.

The Ecology Center is not alone in providing community composting programs. Working together with GrowNYC, Big Reuse, Earth Matter NY, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical

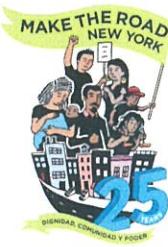


Garden we all bring community composting programs to all 5 Boroughs. Collectively we achieve the following on an annual basis:

- **10s of thousands of New Yorkers educated annually** on responsible management of food waste, community greening best practices and rodent mitigation via the Master Composter Certificate, pop-up education centers at food scrap drop-offs, school workshops, and events
- **Over 11,000 hours of volunteer work directed annually** in the collection and processing of residential compostable waste, street and park cleanups, and community beautification events
- **Over 8 million pounds of food waste collected at 155 Food Scrap Drop-Off & Education Sites** in partnership with non-profit organizations and volunteer groups. All waste collected skips the curbside and is brought to local composting sites modeling the highest standards for cleanliness and community engagement
- **Nearly 1.5 million pounds of finished, professional-grade compost distributed annually** to city residents, schools, community gardens, urban farms and parks for use in community revitalization projects, food growing, and stormwater infrastructure improvement
- **7 professionally-run, community-facing non-profit Compost Sites throughout the city.** Sites welcome members of the community to participate in food waste recycling, finished compost distribution, and public engagement on the importance of proper waste management

Thank you for creating the opportunity to share our thoughts. We look forward to working with the City to restore community composting and create opportunities for community composting to continue to play a role in the City's sustainability efforts.

Sincerely,  
Renée Crowley  
Deputy Director  
Lower East Side Ecology Center



## Make the Road New York Testimony to Finance Committee - 12/11/23

Good morning. My name is Rebecca Telzak, Deputy Director at Make the Road New York. I am here to testify about how the Mayor's sweeping cuts, including to education, legal, health, housing, and adult literacy services, will have a devastating impact on the most vulnerable New Yorkers, who simply cannot withstand a 15% cut to the City budget.

Make the Road New York is an organization of 27,000 members that has been serving New York's immigrant and working class communities of color for 25 years. We provide city-funded legal, health, adult education, and youth services to up to 30,000 people per year. Working-class communities depend on these city-funded services to keep immigrant families together, recover stolen wages, learn English to get better jobs, access health benefits/services, and more. They will face long-term impacts from these short-sighted budget cuts.

Let me share some examples.

**1) First:** Our legal services programs are at risk of substantial budget cuts that will constrain our ability to serve those needing housing and benefits, workplace justice and immigration legal services. Our Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, a partnership with NYLAG and Unlocal, fills a critical gap in immigration legal services: it focuses on helping individuals who are literally on the verge of deportation. We are a key referral source for other providers—especially the city's Asylum Navigation Centers, who are sending us increased referrals in recent months, *while* the Mayor cuts RRLC's funding to handle those cases. Because our cases can take years to resolve, cutting legal services can leave people high and dry in the middle of their cases and do irreversible harm.

Also, with over \$2 million in cuts so far to DCWP, further cuts would decimate their ability to enforce key worker and consumer protections such as Paid Sick Leave and the new minimum pay rule for delivery workers.

**2) Second:** All children and families in our communities deserve safe, supportive, well-resourced schools and a high quality education. Slashing the education budget by \$1 billion over the next two years will be incredibly detrimental. So will cutting \$18 million to Community Schools, which are a proven strategy to provide wraparound services to ensure all students have the support they need. We know firsthand from our Bushwick Campus Community School the transformative impact of this model and the harm these cuts will cause.

not eligible for health insurance and have limited options of places to go to get care. These individuals rely heavily on Health + Hospitals to meet their healthcare needs.

This is a moment for the City to truly invest in our communities, not focus on short-sighted cuts that will further impoverish the most vulnerable New Yorkers and weaken the city as a whole. We will continue to demand that the administration reverses course, and we urge the Council to use every tool at its disposal to ensure that happens.

Testimony to Finance Committee  
Oversight Hearing of December 11, 2023

This is to submit testimony in support of continuing to support NYC community composting initiatives.

My name is Jacquie Ottman. I am immediate past chair of the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board. I am the author of two Guides aimed at encouraging resident participation in recycling and organics collection in NYC multifamily buildings. These include: "Engaging Residents of NYC Multifamily Buildings in Organics Collection", downloadable at this Link:  
<https://www.manhattanswab.org/residential-recycling-guides>

I am also a former instructor of Commercial and Residential Recycling at the Local 32BJ Building workers union. Finally, I am head of the Green Committee at my Upper East Side coop, where we run a state of the organics collection and recycling program. In fact, we are so convinced of the benefits of organics collection, that we have been paying a commercial carter to collect our organics ever since the voluntary DSNY collection program was paused during Covid.

I understand firsthand the challenges of motivating NYC residents to participate in composting. And heartily believe that the community composting program needs to be viewed ***as an educational and outreach initiative necessary to the success of the mandatory organics roll-out***, now in progress.

Few New Yorkers understand the value to the planet and soil of collecting organics, nor do they understand that it can be done without fear of attracting insects or vermin. With an understanding of the value of organics collection, I have found that individuals are more receptive to experimenting with organics collection at home; and when this happens, they are surprised at how easy and clean it can be. And how good they feel when they do it.

If community composting is de-funded, what will replace its ability to reach out to city residents, to give them a firsthand feel for the value of collecting organics (whether that be to creating soil amendment or helping to generate energy), to help with the outreach that will be vital to the success of mandatory organics roll-out?

The budget for community composting, leveraged by hundreds of volunteers, is a small price to pay for what could help us successfully divert the 34% of the waste stream that represents organics today.

Jacquelyn Ottman  
Submitted via website  
December 12, 2023



**Written Testimony regarding cuts to DSNY budget  
Pursuant to City Council finance committee hearing 12-12-23  
December 13, 2023**

[Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board](#) (approved 12/13/23)  
Chair, Maggie Clarke, Ph.D. [maggie@maggieclarke.com](mailto:maggie@maggieclarke.com)

We are the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board, an entity created by the City Council in Local Law 19 of 1989 to advise the government with a goal of improving education relating to recycling and other zero waste initiatives.

The recent budget cuts to the zero waste programs at DSNY have not been evenly allocated amongst the different programs at DSNY. The City has disproportionately damaged the zero waste programs and created needless environmental damage reducing our composting infrastructure:

\$15 M entirely zeroes out the Community Composting programs  
\$4.1 M cut in Education and Outreach Programs (much of the E&O budget)  
\$4.4 M reduction in Curbside Organics collection delaying 3 boroughs' programs  
Total = \$24 Million which constitutes 42% of the zero waste budget

\$24 Million is only 5% of the Export budget. As far as we know none of the cuts are applied to the huge \$478 Million export budget. And this money is being misallocated since all of what is exported is either incinerated or landfilled despite 60% of it being compostable or recyclable. This is not only a waste of money but also resources, and comes with environmental costs (climate, air and water pollution).

Please see our attached [2 page fact sheet](#) describing exactly how DSNY has been misallocating City money over time and our [2 page footnotes document](#). The data show that underfunding recycling, organics, reuse and prevention over the years has not surprisingly resulted in almost no change in diversion from export. Diversion from export sits stubbornly at about 18%. Cutting \$4.1 M from education and outreach, which is most of the budget for that program, as well as the composting programs are cutting our best chance to increase the success of the zero waste programs. Our capture rate has held steady at an average of about 50%, reflecting a similar participation rate. Studies have shown public

confusion and lack of motivation, so educational dollars are critical to these programs' success. It is important to note that we have spent about 86 cents / capita / year on education (prior to the cuts), whereas Seattle and San Francisco each spend over \$3/capita/year for education and outreach and achieve far greater outcomes.

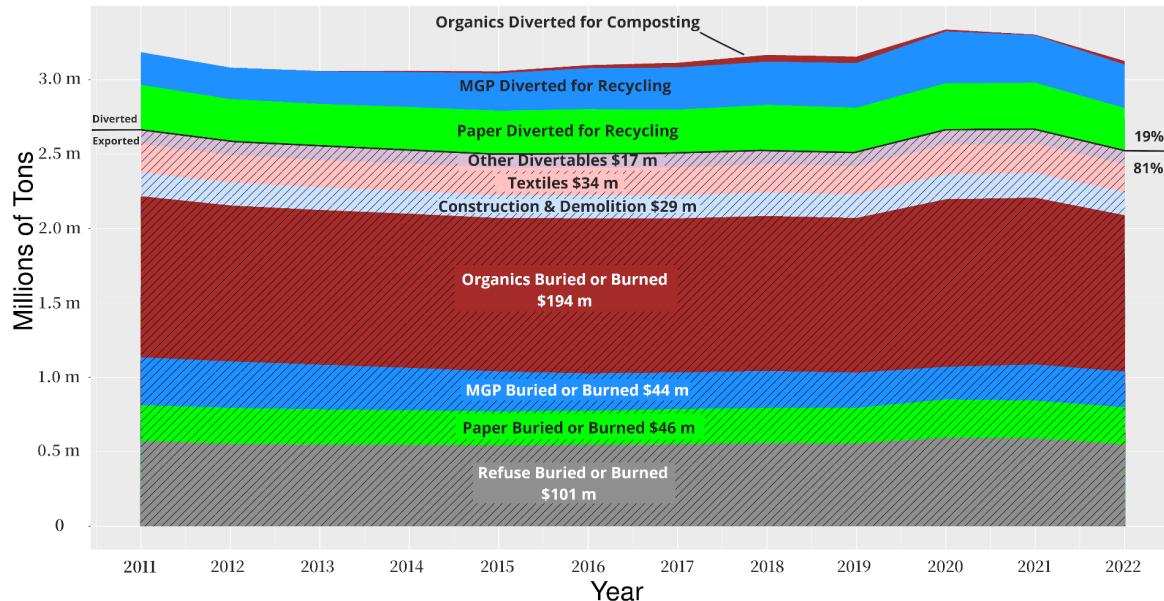
All this export flies in the face of the recently passed Zero Waste laws as well as the NYS Climate law. The MSWAB Long Range Planning Committee drafted a 120 page [zero waste within 10 years plan](#) with goals and action items in response to NYS DEC's draft plan. 44 other groups signed on to it. We added new action items and even sections that had been left out, and framed all the items to be implemented within about 10 years. This kind of approach would satisfy both laws and reduce impact on climate and hope that the City can implement the programs and legislation we have recommended. It is heartening to know that SIMS, our recycling processing facility, says that they have capacity for all our metal, glass, and plastic; Pratt says the same about capacity in our Staten Island paper plant, so what we really need is universal access to curbside organics, superior and well-funded education and outreach to convince those who don't participate to start.

New York City is a leader in offering recycling collection in all apartment buildings. The City has great potential to become a national leader in moving to zero waste. We know what needs to be done. We urge the City Council to reallocate the \$24 million cut over all the programs at DSNY in fairness and because it makes fiscal and environmental sense.



# New York City Has Not Made a Long Term Commitment to Zero Waste

## How The City Wastes Our Tax Dollars Incinerating and Landfilling Resources <sup>1a, 1b</sup>



### New York City Wastes Valuable Resources

In 2015, the City of New York announced a plan to send zero waste to landfill and incinerators by 2030 (0x30). But since then, the City has inadequately funded zero waste solutions and has been steadily exporting over 80% of discards rich in recyclables, organics and reusables to landfills and incinerators far and wide. In 2019 the majority of the City's exports were recyclable.<sup>1a, 1b</sup>

42% of the exports were organic material <sup>2</sup> costing \$194 million in 2022.<sup>3</sup>

19.3% of the exports were paper, metal, glass, and plastic costing <sup>4</sup> \$90 million in 2022 for disposal.<sup>5</sup>

When the City redirects the export funds to composting and reuse infrastructure, more effective educational programs, and more waste prevention initiatives it would create jobs and reduce pollution and climate impacts. The City would also benefit by selling recyclable resources, and reducing environmental costs of air and water pollution and carbon emissions.

### The City Abandoned its Last Solid Waste Management Plan and 0x30

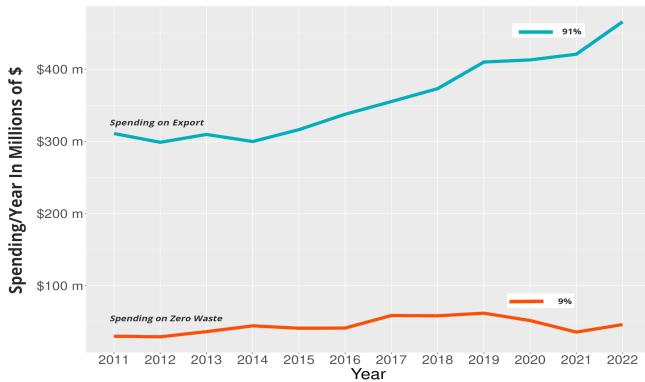
The opening statement of the 2006 NYC Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) says: "this SWMP addresses:... Waste Prevention and Recycling, Long Term Export and Commercial Waste." But instead of funding Waste Prevention and Recycling initiatives that would have supported the 0x30 goal, the City's funds have gone to Long Term Export and Commercial Waste. In fact, the City spends almost **10 times as many taxpayer dollars** for export to disposal vs. zero waste initiatives. The upward trend of City spending on Waste Export and bupkis for zero waste spending shows <sup>6</sup>:

\$465.9 million for Waste Export and \$46.1 million for zero waste in FY2022
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91% of spending: Export to disposal	9% for zero waste
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More is spent on export, and less on zero waste solutions than when the City committed to zero waste and the disparity is increasing <sup>7</sup> (see graph below). Instead of appropriately funding zero waste programs, on Earth Day 2019 the City abandoned the 0x30 plan <sup>8</sup> while inadequately funding targeted educational and motivational outreach.

## Budgetary Commitment to 0x30<sup>9</sup>



### Long Term Waste Export

The graph below illustrates the duration, in years, and aggregate budgetary commitment of the largest Long Term Waste Export contracts with three vendors. The total remaining commitment from 2020 to 2037 could be in excess of \$6.8 billion.<sup>10</sup> Imagine if even half of this money went to establish reuse and composting infrastructure, motivating education and outreach to maximize participation, enforcement, and other zero waste solutions?

### Largest NYC Long Term Contracts<sup>11</sup>

Waste Management (landfill) ~\$5.5 Billion from ~2008 - 2036
Covanta (Incineration) ~\$3 Billion from ~2013 - 2035
Allied Waste (landfill) ~\$0.5 Billion from ~2006 - 2026

### Export Costs Grow While Zero Waste Plummets

Alarmingly, since 2015, export costs have grown 64%, even though generation rates have been constant, with most of the increase due to inflation and other factors.<sup>12</sup> In the same period, zero waste costs have remained relatively flat between \$41 and 58 million / year, a tenth of export costs.<sup>13</sup>

NYC IBO calculated that if the City captures and processes all 1 million tons of organic waste produced annually, as much as half of it could be composted. Based on the price of \$10 per cubic yard that DSNY currently charges for compost for use in landscaping and farming, this would be worth an estimated \$12.5 million/year revenue.<sup>14</sup>

When the City announced 0x30 in 2015, it had already tied up \$305.40 million/yr in binding export contracts (lasting up to 30 years), money that could have been directed to zero waste programs.<sup>15</sup> The waste export contracts are now \$478.22M /FY24.<sup>16</sup>

In 2023, the City Council passed zero waste laws<sup>17</sup> which require keeping resources here for reuse, recycling and composting. The State's Climate Act<sup>18</sup> requires reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. EPA data shows that zero waste solutions can address almost 50% of carbon emissions.<sup>19</sup>

To comply with the zero waste laws, the City must spend much more on zero waste initiatives. But in 2023 the Mayor cut funding to all community composting initiatives (\$15 million), collection and composting of curbside organics (\$4.8 million)<sup>20</sup> and cut \$4.1 million from education & outreach.<sup>21</sup> This \$24 million cut represents 42% of the FY24 budget for waste prevention, reuse, and recycling, but only 5% of the FY24 export budget.<sup>22</sup>

### Recommendations to Transition From Long Term Waste Export to 90% diversion by 10 years

The City must comply with the new zero waste laws and achieve 90% diversion in 10 years (90 x 10) by taking the following actions:

- Do not sign "Put or Pay" export/ disposal contracts that penalize the City for maximizing Zero Waste solutions.
- Create long-term contracts for organics processing and find easily accessed markets for anaerobic biogas and agricultural uses.
- Ban organics to landfills, and annually measure organics going to landfills and methane emissions from landfills and co-digesters used by NYC.
- Legislate a requirement that all export disposal contracts be flexible, to enable the City to withhold (without penalty) tonnage to allow for extraction of reusable, recyclable and organic materials to maximize progress towards zero waste.
- City Council and Comptroller must review existing contracts annually for compliance with the above flexibility requirement and ensure that the contract would provide sufficient progress towards the timely transition to 90% by 10 years before DSNY renews or renegotiates them.

# Long Term Contract Waste Export Footnotes for Export Doc 2023

By MSWAB Long Term Planning Committee

Maggie Clarke, Ph.D., Chair. [maggie@maggieclarke.com](mailto:maggie@maggieclarke.com)

1a.  [LTC\\_Waste\\_Flows\\_Data\\_Set](#)

1b. [DSNY Monthly Tonnage Data](#)

2. [2017 NYC Residential, School, and NYCHA Waste Characterization Study | DSNY](#)

3.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#)

4. [2017 NYC Residential, School, and NYCHA Waste Characterization Study | DSNY](#)

5.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#)

6.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#)

7.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#)

8. [Action on Global Warming: NYC's Green New Deal | City of New York](#)

9.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#)

10. Export Contract Amounts remaining to be spent

11. [Duration of top DSNY Export Contracts](#)

12.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#) and [FY2015 Waste Export Contracts](#) and [DSNY FY2024 Waste Export Contracts](#)

13.  [DSNY\\_BUDGET\\_ANALYSIS](#)

14. [How Much Potential Revenue Are New Yorkers Wasting by Trashing Organics?](#)

15. [FY2015 Waste Export Contracts](#)

and

[DSNY FY2023 and FY2024 Top 10 Contracts By Disbursement Amount](#)

16. [DSNY FY2024 Waste Export Contracts](#)

17. [Council Votes on Legislative Package to Create Citywide Residential Curbside Organics Collection Program, Advance NYC's Zero Waste Efforts - Press](#)

18. [Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act](#)
19. [Opportunities to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Materials and Land Management Practices](#)
20. [Program to Eliminate the Gap \(PEG\) - November 2023](#) and [Eric Adams Just Cut the Only NYC Compost Programs That Ever Worked - Heatmap News](#)
21. [Proposed NYC budget cuts 'devastating' for community composters | Waste Dive](#)
22. [Impact of \\$24 million on zero waste vs. export budgets](#)



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**Testimony on behalf of the Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx Solid Waste Advisory Boards  
before the New York City Council  
In Opposition of the Mayor's Proposed PEG Budget Cuts**  
December 11, 2023

Good morning Chair Brennan and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am representing the four SWABs of Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. The recent budget cuts announced by the administration will serve as a giant step backwards toward much of the progress made around climate change mitigation in New York City.

The specific program to eliminate the budget gap (PEG) initiative produces outcomes that increase municipal solid waste, produce few if any substantive fiscal savings, and create negative social impacts. The four SWABs stand with the People's Plan in advocating for Care Not Cuts.

### **Background**

#### ***PEG Cuts to DSNY's budget will eliminate funding for the the New York City Community Compost Project***

The PEG initiatives were implemented to reduce New York City's budget deficits from FY 24 to FY 27 which are projected to be over ten billion dollars in each of those fiscal years. A substantial portion of the deficits are attributed to the influx of asylum seekers requiring housing and other support services and the remainder a result of increased City spending overall and a cessation of Federal aid associated with the COVID pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Sanitation, the City department that provides funding for the New York City Community Compost Project, has identified PEG initiatives to reduce its departmental budget: \$37 million in FY 24, \$62 million in FY 25, \$59 million in FY 26 and \$58 million in FY 27. The New York City Compost Project's funding elimination is part of this departmental initiative.

Categorized as an "expense savings from scaling back programs resulting in a decrease of services provided to the public"<sup>2</sup> for a Service Reduction PEG Initiative, this funding elimination removes City funding for the compost operations of the 'Seven Sisters' organizations that comprise the New York City Community Compost Project and span all five boroughs and the food scrap collection operations of GrowNYC. The Seven Sisters include Big Reuse in Brooklyn and Queens, the Lower East Side Ecology Center in Manhattan and planned for Brooklyn, Earth Matter on Governors Island, Snug Harbor in Staten Island, and the Queens, New York, and Brooklyn Botanical Gardens.

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<sup>1</sup> Citizens Budget Committee: [What to Look for in the New York City November 2023 Financial Plan | CBCNY](#)

<sup>2</sup> NYC's [Program to Eliminate the Gap \(PEG\) - November 2023](#)

## Solid Waste impacts of Defunding the New York City Community Compost Project

**Composting and compost is the best use of our residential organics and landfill, incineration and co-digestion is not.**

In 2022 New York City residents produced a total estimated 1.1 million tons of organics. New York City Community Compost Project processed 4,000 tons of this material including food scraps collected from voluntary dropoff sites throughout the City. The City collected 23,000 tons of residential organics from curbside collection, schools and the new orange "Smart Bins" with the word "compost" printed on each side.<sup>3</sup>

There are four methods of disposal after collection for our City's residential organics: landfill (burying in the ground), incineration (burning), co-digestion (mixing residential organics with human, household, and commercial wastewater) and lastly, composting. Landfill, incineration, and co-digestion without beneficial use for the resulting digestate/biosolids, (the remaining solid waste after all the methane gas has been extracted) are least preferable for our residential organics, as illustrated in this chart from the United States Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>4</sup>

In this chart *Landfill, Incinerate and Send Down the Drain* all with or without energy recovery are to be avoided. *Anaerobic Digestion with disposal of digestate or biosolids* and using unprocessed organics for *land application* are both less preferable than *Composting*. And finally *Compost* or *Anaerobic Digestion* with "beneficial use" of the digestate/biosolids are the best choice after food has been processed for consumption.

EPA's placement of *Compost* and *Anaerobic Digestion* on the same level with *beneficial use of digestate or biosolids*' assumes there to be a "beneficial use" for digestate/biosolids. Beneficial uses for digestate/biosolids present challenges such as contamination with up to 739 chemicals,<sup>5</sup> heavy metals and microplastics and require special handling and disposal methods. The four Solid Waste Advisory Boards have issued a brief on this specific topic, recommending prioritizing processing the City's organics waste stream as compost over co-digestion.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>3</sup> [MSWAB calculations from NYC OPEN DATA Tab: Tonnages as of 2022](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Wasted Food Scale | US EPA](#)

<sup>5</sup> [US EPA LIST: Chemicals in biosolids \(2022\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [All-SWAB statement on PlaNYC's proposed co-digestion solutions for organics processing.pdf](#)

Currently in New York City, the vast majority of approximately 1.1 million tons per year of our residential organic material is sent to landfill or incineration, or co-digested with human and household wastewater. All are equally bad disposal methods as most of our biosolids from co-digestion are used in landfills as cover. Only 4,000 tons of residential organics is sent to be composted through the New York City Community Compost Project.

To mismanage our solid waste is bad solid waste management policy. How we dispose of the majority of our organics today are three of the worst choices out of four, with the best being underutilized and now slated for elimination.

### **Fiscal Impacts of Defunding the New York City Community Compost Project**

***New York City spends \$196 million per year to landfill and incinerate almost 1.1 million tons of valuable organics and another \$94.6 million to collect. Co-digestion is not the best use for our City's organics and is on par with landfill and incineration. We are obligated to spend our \$196 million dollars for the best use of our organics.***<sup>7</sup>

The most fiscally efficient solutions are often not the best fiscal solutions. New York City spends \$466 million, as of 2022, a year to export its 2.5 million tons of residential municipal solid waste for disposal. Costs associated with collection are not included in this \$466 million – this number includes only solid waste that is exported for disposal outside of New York City in landfills and incinerators around and in New York State and beyond.

Included in the 2.5 million tons of residential municipal solid waste exported for disposal is the almost 1.1 million tons of organics not processed for compost or co-digestion. Because residential organics is approximately 41% of the exported waste by weight, organics is also 41% of the \$466 million in export costs. One hundred and ninety six million dollars of NYC's waste export cost is associated with the almost <sup>8</sup>1.1 million tons of organics. That is, NYC spends \$196 million a year to bury and burn our residential organics. Added to the export cost is the cost of collection, which according to the IBO was, in 2019, \$86 per ton or \$94.6 million, bringing the grand total budget to waste organics material to \$291,000,000.<sup>9</sup>

No matter what this City does with its organics, as with all the City's waste, there will be associated costs. It is very likely to expect an expenditure approaching \$196 million to process residential organics, whether we compost, landfill, or co-digest it.

Collection costs on a per-ton basis is based on how full organics collection trucks are at the end of the route. Given that each route has a fixed cost the more organics material collected per truck the

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<sup>7</sup> [Estimated numbers based on the DSNY's 2017 Waste Characterization Study.](#)

<sup>8</sup> NYC IBO Report: [Going Green: How Can The Organics Collection Program Be Fiscally & Environmentally Sustainable?](#)

<sup>9</sup> NYC IBO Report: [Going Green: How Can The Organics Collection Program Be Fiscally & Environmentally Sustainable?](#)

lower cost per ton. Key to filling trucks is resident participation in source separation of their organics for collection.

In previous iterations of New York City's organics collection and processing programs it has been the collection, not the processing costs that have hampered success. In 2019, for example, for organics not exported as refuse to landfill or incineration, organics processing cost the City \$132 per ton. During the same year the cost to process waste through export cost \$129 per ton. Collection costs were much higher for organics at approximately \$602 per ton in 2019 versus collection costs of \$86 per ton to collect refuse bound for export.

It is the all-SWAB belief that NYC should spend our \$200 million on the best solid waste solution associated with the best solid waste policy that produces the least harm and the greatest benefit to New York City residents. That solution should be first and foremost, composting. The New York City Community Compost Project represents a 30-year accumulation of institutional knowledge of best practices that will allow the City to efficiently and productively create compost from our residential organic waste. The previous total projected budgets to continue this institutional knowledge and practice was only \$5.1 million in FY 24, \$5 million in FY 25, and \$3.5 each in FY 26 and FY 27. This budget is small enough that it would be represented by a rounding error on the \$196 million organics waste export budget per year. Our City's cutting of these programs makes no fiscal sense.

### **Social and Health Impacts of Defunding the New York City Community Compost Project**

***Compost is a product with economic and social value. PEG cuts to the New York City Community Compost Project leaves New York City residents with no voice or choice for their method of organics disposal, depriving them of the opportunity to build and support their communities through their waste disposal choice.***

The New York City Community Compost Project organizations provide social connection and build a strong urban immune system. Composting is a vital if underappreciated part of New York City's social fabric. Every week, each Seven Sister organization touches hundreds of community volunteers, who help to build and maintain compost piles, and turn, sift, and bag compost for distribution.

Without the New York City Community Compost Project, last year, 4,000 tons of food scraps would have found their way to landfill or incinerator, or to produce energy through anaerobic co-digestion, all of which create methane gas and CO<sub>2</sub>, contributing to global climate change.

These organizations create jobs, employing 115 people, most of whom live within New York City.

These organizations offer the roughly 68,000<sup>10</sup> New York households who voluntarily participate in an environmentally responsible method of disposing of their food scraps.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.grownyc.org/petition>

These organizations process these 4,000 tons of organics into compost, a biologically-active soil amendment. Over the last year alone, these 4,000 tons, or 8.3 million pounds of compostable waste that the New York City Community Compost Project diverted from the landfill equates to almost 1 pound per New York City resident.

These organizations distribute compost and compost amendments to New York City parks, the Botanical Gardens, 325 community groups, street tree care events, and thousands of individuals, community and school gardens to facilitate their own on-site composting at no additional cost to the City or to the users.

These organizations provide community gardens with necessary protection for local families and children by remediating the soils from the harm caused by heavy-metal contamination and other toxins that plague the City's soils, adding needed biological agents and nutrients that provide enrichment to local produce in these gardens.<sup>11</sup>

Elimination of the New York City Community Compost Project will severely impact the efficacy of the City's curbside organics collection program. The Project serves as a major tool for engagement by providing motivation, and reason for, and pride in diverting their food scraps from landfill or incinerator.

### **Conclusion**

Often considered a waste product, compost is a product with economic and social value. PEG cuts to the New York City Community Compost Project leave New York City residents with no voice and no choice for their method of organics disposal, depriving them of the opportunity to build and support their communities through their waste disposal choice. Eliminating the opportunity to engage with and learn from fellow New Yorkers who work and volunteer for the New York City Community Compost Project, eliminates neighbor-to neighbor influence around the importance of organics diversion to community, health, and climate. Given the post-pandemic and current economic and social stresses, New York City residents need every community-building social program possible. At a time when urban communities are in desperate need to be built up and maintained, community-building social programs like the New York City Community Compost Project – that also save costs for soil amendment, waste management and the environment – are essential.

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<sup>11</sup> [Should I worry about heavy metals in my garden soil? | Oregon State University Extension Service](https://oregonstate.edu/extension/should-worry-about-heavy-metals-my-garden-soil)



New York City Council Committee on Finance

*Monday, December 11, 2023*

**Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.**

**Maria Carro D’Alessandro, Marine Park Alliance**

Good afternoon, **my name is Maria Carro D’Alessandro, Founder & Chair of Marine Park Alliance.** We are a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 450 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting us to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

**The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities,** endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, impacting the well-being, and quality of life of countless individuals. **Parks are invaluable resources** that foster physical and mental health, provide spaces for social interaction, and mitigate the climate crisis.

**Here are just some of our concerns** about the impact of these budget cuts:

- Citywide parks will lose a total of 1.3 million hours a year of cleaning, care and maintenance.
- Many parks will not be regularly cleaned and serviced, limiting many areas to just 1 to 3 times a week.
- Rats will continue to spike in our parks as 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage.
- During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on city parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks.
- Our sports facilities like baseball fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and recreational users.
- In this housing crisis, our park workers deserve job security, ensuring their work environments prioritize safety, prevent overwhelming conditions, and provide career advancement opportunities like the framework established by the POP program.
- The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will severely disable the Parks Department’s ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to public pools.

- Our beaches will open with reduced staff and will not have the manpower to fully clean and maintain these spaces for 15 million annual visitors.
- Syringe collection will be impacted by the next round of budget cuts. Many in our community have raised safety concerns about user needles in parks where children and pets play.
- For many New Yorkers, parks are our backyards necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.
- **We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony. Marine Park has been an essential part of my life since childhood.



New York City Committee on Finance

Oversight – Mayor's November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023, 10am

**TESTIMONY**

**Juliana Cope, Assistant Executive Director for Development and External Affairs, [Jcope@mind-builders.org](mailto:Jcope@mind-builders.org), 718-652-6256**

**Thank you all – you, dedicated public officials for your service and for this opportunity to share the work of Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center and other community-based organizations who train the next generation of New York City civic leaders and cultural contributors and on behalf of the youth, families, and neighborhoods we are honored to serve.**

**Founded in 1978, Mind-Builders began with a grassroots mission to inspire the growth of local youth and families in the Northeast Bronx by providing low-cost, high-quality arts education. Since then we have grown to become a cultural anchor for our community – more than just an arts center, we bring together best practices in arts education, youth development and community engagement in the belief that a healthy community is a vital ingredient in the healthy development of a child.**

**For 45 years, Mind-Builders has offered hundreds of music, dance, theater, visual art, folk art, and martial arts programs serving over 650 young people every week. Programs center on building skills and knowledge on the contributions of artists and culture bearers in our midst. Our public performances include an annual Street Festival, Kwanzaa Celebration and Heroes Day serving thousands of New Yorkers.**

**Intrinsic to our purpose is the community we serve, which is predominantly lower-income; our children and families identify as West African, Black, Latino, and/or Caribbean, with a growing population of families from Yemen and Morocco. Participants come from every zip code in the Bronx, but predominantly from neighborhoods local to our facility – Olinville, Wakefield, Williamsbridge, and Norwood, which have historically had fewer safety nets than their peers, despite greater need. Mind-Builders employs 53 dedicated staff coming from the five boroughs: professional teaching artists, pre-kindergarten instructors, support and admin staff, reflective of the communities we serve. Our work is woven into the fabric of our neighborhood and our staff continue to make transformation in the lives of our young people possible.**

**Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center is a grateful recipient of funding through the Department of Cultural Affairs Cultural Development Fund, Speaker Initiatives, City Council Member Expense Fundin, Coalition of Theaters of Color and Cultural Immigrant Initiative. Artistic productions and cultural organizations like ours are vital engines in our communities – for jobs, mental health, activism, education, youth development, empowering messages, and access to other local services. Our communities need us and your support is vital.**

**Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.**



My name is Stephanie Johnson-Cunningham, I am the Executive Director of Museum Hue, an arts organization dedicated to the advancement of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and all People of Color throughout the arts field. We are a membership and community based organization collectively advocating for greater racial equity in arts funding and offerings for art professionals of color through our HueArts New York initiative. I join my colleagues working across creative disciplines throughout the state in thanking the Committee for your leadership.

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

Arts and culture workers are important to New York city's economy. Arts and culture-related industries, also known as "creative industries," provide direct economic benefits to the state and communities: creating jobs, attracting investments, generating tax revenues, and stimulating local economies. In addition, because they enhance quality of life, the arts and culture are an important complement to community and economic development, enriching local amenities and attracting young professionals to an area.

The arts play an essential role in creative and social lifeways across New York. The arts sector generates \$110 billion in economic activity according to the Comptroller's Report on the Creative Economy, or one in every eight dollars churning through the City's economy; it highlights the vastness of the cultural sector with over 400,000 jobs. Due to Covid 19, Arts venues were forced to close and cancel programs. So in order for the vibrancy that is New York's arts and culture to be revived we need the support of the New York state government.

Black, Indigenous, and people of color arts organizations have been disproportionately funded and impacted way before the Covid -19 pandemic. Our arts and culture ecosystem needs vital funding to ensure survival. Museum Hue has identified over 500 of these arts entities and believe an implementation and deployment of a new \$100 million funding model over 5 years will help accomplish the following objectives:

1. Regrant equitable funding to BIPOC arts entities across New York State/City;
2. Provide professional development opportunities to strengthen BIPOC arts entities;
3. Advocate for city/state policies and practices to provide support for BIPOC arts;
4. Assist BIPOC arts entities in gaining long-term spaces to operate.



The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Museum Hue joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

As a lifelong New Yorker and art professional, I know firsthand the impact of the arts field. Especially the arts entities in communities of color, they deserve a commitment to their survival from our government, elected officials, communities, philanthropists, and businesses. They greatly contribute to the vibrant portrait of New York's cultural landscape. These arts leaders have also proven to be resourceful and resilient in the face of a long history of chronic underinvestment and limited financial support. The HueArts initiative offers an opportunity for them to thrive so they can best serve the communities they represent across New York.

To date, Museum Hue has received over \$1 million in support of this new racial equity initiative. This includes diverse funding from New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York Community Trust, Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. These grants were used to conduct in depth research about New York's arts landscape and establish the basis for the HueArts initiative. We have thus far developed a comprehensive map, directory, and report highlighting the impact of BIPOC arts entities and inequities they face, which collectively will serve as a roadmap for making meaningful change in the NY arts sector.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

This initiative complements CreateNYC, New York City's first cultural plan developed in 2017 (<https://createnyc.cityofnewyork.us>). HueArts aims to increase funding for arts organizations in historically underserved neighborhoods, while driving up employment, increased payroll contributions and sales tax from patrons. We ask for your support in not reducing support to Arts & Culture. Thank you for your consideration.

# MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE A LIVING MEMORIAL TO THE HOLOCAUST



Edmond J. Safra Plaza | 36 Battery Place  
New York, NY 10280  
646.437.4202 | [mjhny.org](http://mjhny.org)

December 11, 2023  
Committee on Finance

Dear Chair Brannan and Members of the Committee on Finance:

My name is Elizabeth Venditto. I am submitting this testimony on the Mayor's November Financial Plan on behalf of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

The Museum educates visitors of all backgrounds about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust. We teach New Yorkers about what unchecked hate and bigotry can do. Our exhibitions and education programs examine the richness of Jewish cultures and history. This past October, we opened our first exhibition for children ages 9-12, expanding our impact in elementary schools. Our work builds bridges between the city's communities and creates mutual respect and understanding.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like the Museum of Jewish Heritage touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Reducing operating support for the Museum of Jewish is particularly problematic at this time because of our increased security needs. Like many of the city's Jewish institutions, we maintain strong security measures, which we have had to increase since the 10/7 attacks. The safety of all our visitors – students and adults alike – is our primary concern. Now, when New York City students and families need our education programs more than ever, we have a responsibility to both expand access to the Museum and to keep them safe. Nonprofits need more, not less, City support.

**Elizabeth Venditto**  
Director of Institutional Giving  
[evenditto@mjhny.org](mailto:evenditto@mjhny.org)



## WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK HEARING OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

New York City Council, New York, New York

December 11, 2023

On behalf of the Museum of the City of New York, I am pleased to submit this written testimony to the New York City Council and the Committee on Finance.

The Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), located in District 8 in the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, is a beacon for arts, culture, and community at the top of Museum Mile. At the Museum, we engage hundreds of thousands of visitors including K-12 students and teachers, national and international visitors, and New Yorkers from across the five boroughs each year through our exhibitions, education and public programs, and more to celebrate, document, and interpret the city's past, present, and future.

For the past 100 years, the Museum has served as the city's storyteller, uncovering hidden voices and reflecting the diverse and multifaceted communities of our great city—with the goal of building shared identity for New Yorkers. The Museum strives to develop programming built to serve and create space for New Yorkers of all backgrounds to engage with our content and scholarship onsite at MCNY and across our digital channels.

In FY24, the Museum, along with many other cultural organizations and nonprofits across the city, is facing budget constraints as a result of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts in the November Plan which will have immediate and lasting impacts on our ability to offer vital programming for our audiences.

MCNY has already eliminated most of our CTLE-credit professional development programs for New York City educators. With the exception of Chancellor's Day programs, the Museum is not providing this essential service to teachers and the full-time Manager of Professional Learning position has been cut. Programs for New York City youth are also at risk—MCNY has significantly reduced nearly all youth and teen programming and does not anticipate providing any additional teen programming in the coming year.

Additional proposed PEG cuts will continue to reduce the Museum's capacity to offer critical services to our audiences. MCNY had hoped to expand Museum hours in FY24 and FY25, including increasing days of service and weekend hours, which have remained

reduced from our pre-pandemic schedule. The Museum also hoped to hire 3-5 new Museum Educators across FY24 and FY25 in order to increase the number of students served by our Frederick A.O. Schwarz Education Center from 25,000 annually to up to 40,000 annually. Any additional funding cuts will delay this expansion, including the launch of new field trip content connected with the first major New York City exhibition about Shirley Chisholm opening in 2024.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs.

Organizations like the Museum of the City of New York touch every vital aspect of daily life—from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions—not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will undermine public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

I want to thank the Council for receiving this testimony and for your leadership in these uncertain times. At the Museum of the City of New York, we are committed to fulfilling our mission and will continue to share the stories of the contributions and resilience of all the city's communities as we document the past, present, and future of all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Hill Wilchfort

*Ronay Menschel Director and President*

# MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

My name is Austin Smith, and I work as the Special Assistant at Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, Queens. Thank you to chairman Brannan and members of the committee for holding this important hearing. It has been mandated that city find an additional 5% in PEG cuts to this fiscal year's budget, but I am here today to discuss the real, human harm that they present to us all.

it has never been more important that we equip people from all walks of life with the tools to navigate the increasingly complex digital and media landscape. We take immense pride in the fact that our institution inspires the next generation of creators and helps bring people from all walks of life closer to the media that now floods every facet of our lives. MoMI does just that with 70,000 students and 250,000 visitors every year.

The proposed cuts would not only cripple one of the few institutions in New York City truly equipped to educate on matters of digital and media literacy, but also deepen the troublesome position that we already find ourselves in alongside our peer institutions.

Museum visitorship has not fully recovered to pre-COVID numbers. MoMI was additionally put in a precarious position due to a pause in donations that our traditional benefactors put in place due to the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. The already present setbacks, in conjunction with the increasingly aggressive budget cuts, would be a dangerous step backward. Our staff, still lean from struggles associated with the pandemic, face furlough and outright layoffs. Our programming and exhibition work, respected the world over and a major tourist draw for Northwestern Queens, would be severely dampened. Our space, which we envision as a hub for Astoria community programming, would be further shuttered.

The proposed cuts would constitute an unacceptable setback for not only one of the few cultural institutions in Western Queens, but to our community as a whole. Cuts now are simply a cut at the wrong time. We ask that the committee and members of the administration to carefully and fully consider the human impact of 5%.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Museum of the Moving Image touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.



**New York City Council**  
**Oversight Hearing: Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
**Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

**Testimony By: Emily Walker, Natural Areas Conservancy, Senior Manager of External Affairs**

My name is Emily Walker, and I am the Senior Manager of External Affairs at the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC). Thank you to Chair Brannan and the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to speak today.

We are here today as a member of the Play Fair Coalition to express our profound dismay at the budget cuts impacting NYC Parks. For an agency whose budget has consistently come in at little more than 0.6% of the entire city operating budget, the impacts of these cuts are being felt acutely by our colleagues at the agency.

In this era of climate instability, it is well documented that our parks, and in particular our natural areas, play a tremendous role in protecting and fostering a more resilient city. Research consistently shows that access to quality green spaces and parks have a multitude of benefits for residents of cities, and that well-maintained forests and wetlands have significantly more benefits than degraded forests and wetlands at cooling, carbon capture, and storm mitigation.

As a result of the November plan budget cuts, we have seen the loss of 26 permanent positions intended to unlock access to over 10,000 acres of natural areas through the formalization and management of the 300-mile network of nature trails in NYC Parks. This funding was announced by the Mayor on Earth Day as a signature initiative of the 2023 PlaNYC report, and was the result of years of advocacy. We are deeply disappointed that this funding has been cut, and are alarmed by the administration countering its own stated resiliency and sustainability goals by cutting this funding, among other similar programs such as community composting.

As a member organization of the Forest for All NYC Coalition, we are also alarmed that the current and proposed budget cuts will imperil the successful implementation of Intro. 1065, which recently became law. With a new legislative mandate to increase the canopy coverage of NYC to a target goal of 30%, we do not believe that the city will be able to meet this goal if there is not appropriate and meaningful funding for the care, conservation, and expansion of our urban forest.

Our parks and natural areas benefit the lives of every New Yorker, from longtime residents to our most recent arrivals. While we understand that moments of crisis demand hard choices from our elected officials, we also believe that these choices shouldn't come at the expense of the shared resources that make our city more resilient and livable, and that provide pathways to good, green jobs amid the worsening climate crisis. We call on our elected officials from every level of New York City's government to work together to restore the 5% budget cuts, and prevent additional cuts to services that make our city stronger. Thank you.



Written Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
Oversight - Mayor's November Financial Plan  
Monday, December 11, 2023

Submitted by Ann Shalof  
Chief Executive Officer  
Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, Inc.

Committee Chair Council Member Brannan and Committee members:

I am submitting testimony as Chief Executive Officer of Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, Inc. (NCS), a nonprofit organization providing housing and supportive services to unhoused New Yorkers and New Yorkers at risk of homelessness.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of human services and other community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, Inc. joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City. At a time when our City is faced with a staggering number of unhoused people in need of shelter and housing, as well as an epidemic of mental illness and substance misuse, combined with growing public concern about these issues, cuts in these areas would be particularly devastating.

We urge the Council to:

- Do everything it can to spare human services – and the people we serve - from a further devastating impact of these planned cuts.
- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you for your consideration.



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**new destiny  
housing**

## **TESTIMONY OF NEW DESTINY HOUSING TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**Gabriela Sandoval Requena, Director of Policy and Communications**

**December 11, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the City Council Finance Committee for holding this oversight hearing on the Mayor's November Financial Plan program and the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Founded in 1994, New Destiny's mission is to end the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness for low-income families and individuals by developing and connecting them to safe, permanent, affordable housing and services. We build and manage supportive housing, and, through our innovative programs, we assist survivors in finding permanent housing and remaining stably housed.

New Destiny is the only organization in New York City solely dedicated to the solution of permanent housing for survivors and a leading advocate in the effort to obtain the resources needed to end family homelessness. To learn more about our policy priorities, [see our 2023 Policy Platform](#). New Destiny is also a co-convenor of the [Family Homelessness Coalition \(FHC\)](#), a collective of formerly homeless mothers and organizations committed to tackling homelessness among families in our city.

We are grateful to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and members of the Council for holding the Adams's administration accountable. The Mayor's 15% budget cuts and hiring freeze at city agencies will not only hinder survivor's ability to secure safe, permanent housing, but it will also put their lives, and the lives of their children, in serious jeopardy.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS**

While domestic violence is considered one of the most under-reported crimes, in 2022 the NYPD still filed, on average, 1 domestic violence incident report every 2 minutes.<sup>1</sup> Access to safe and affordable housing is one of survivors' biggest, most urgent concerns and it often determines whether they leave their abuser.

Domestic violence is the main driver of family homelessness in New York City. In 2022, more than 10,600 adults and children entered the Human Resources Administration (HRA) domestic violence shelter system, 96% of them were families. Meanwhile, 39% of families using the NYC Department of Homeless Services shelter system identify domestic violence as the reason for their homelessness. Evictions rank second.<sup>2</sup> With so few housing resources for survivors, once in shelter, they are far more likely to remain in shelter rather than to move to an apartment. More than 50% of survivors who left HRA emergency domestic violence shelter went to another shelter instead of moving to an apartment, upon reaching the state-mandated 6-month limit.

<sup>1</sup> NYC Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. (2022 October 2). New York City Announces its Annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month Campaign. <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/ocdv/downloads/pdf/DVAM-Press-Release-2023-10-02.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> New Destiny. (March 2023). NYC Policy Priorities. <https://newdestinyhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-NYC-Policy-Priorities-final.pdf>

**That is more than 1 in 2 families that left shelter for shelter.** The Mayor's push to reduce investment in social services and affordable housing will only prolong shelter stay – or worse, Mayor Adams will push countless survivors back to their perpetrators.

## THE MAYOR'S BUDGET CUTS IS PUTTING SURVIVORS IN DANGER

The first 5% cut in the November Financial Plan has already reduced programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to vital services for survivors, and it would decrease affordable housing production and housing placements. As the New York Housing Conference mentioned in their [letter](#) to you, which was signed by 60 organizations, the cuts are posed to reverse recent gains at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

We are also concerned about staffing shortages in HRA, which has an ongoing backlog of public benefits applications. In FY 2022, the agency reported that the cash assistance application timeliness rate declined by 13 percentage points, and in FY 2023, when the Adams's administration implemented its first program to eliminate the gap, timeline rates decreased by 53.5 to 28.8%. Similarly, only 40% of applications for Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, were processed within a month, the legally mandated timeframe. What's worse, the SNAP payment error rate was 14% – the rate of mistakes in payments has more than double compared to before the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> HRA identified that having fewer staff has contributed to the slowdown and the increase in payment mistakes. Limited capacity has significantly delayed check processing times, slowed moves from shelter to permanent housing, and impacted the success of rental assistance programs.

We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions – not hinder us further. For instance, there are at least three budget-neutral, administrative solutions that will improve timely access to affordable housing, and would not cost the city anything:

- Allow families in ALL shelters, including survivors in HRA shelters, access to HPD homeless set aside units, as the Mayor promised in the Housing our Neighbors Blueprint.
- Reduce steps and streamline the process to fill vacant affordable housing units made available through Housing Connect to meaningfully reduce lease up timetables.
- Open-up city-funded supportive housing to domestic violence survivors and their children, who are not currently eligible for NYC 15/15 units.

The city cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the much-needed development of affordable housing, public safety, and cleanliness of New York City, while risking the lives of survivors of domestic violence.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. New Destiny looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council. We welcome any questions you may have.

Gabriela Sandoval Requena

Director of Policy and Communications  
[grequena@newdestinyhousing.org](mailto:grequena@newdestinyhousing.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2023. (2023). Retrieved from: [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023\\_mmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023_mmr.pdf)



New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
December 11, 2023

Title: OVERSIGHT - MAYOR'S NOVEMBER FINANCIAL PLAN

Chairman Brannan, Cultural Chair Ossé, distinguished members of the Finance committee, and honorable City Council representatives. On behalf of the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI), thank you for accepting my testimony.

Today, I appear before you to express our deep concerns regarding the potential budget cuts facing the New York Hall of Science, Cultural Institutions Group (CIGs), and cultural organizations in light of the mandated 15% reduction in the budget for all City agencies for the remainder of the fiscal year.

NYSCI's mission is to nurture passionate learners, critical thinkers, and active citizens through an approach called Design, Make, Play. Located in Queens, NY— one of the most multicultural and diverse communities in New York City, NYSCI is committed to creating a world where diversity unlocks innovation, and where people learn to use science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to tackle complex 21st century challenges. We are proud members of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)—a collection of 34 diverse cultural institutions that operate on City-owned property. As such, we are tasked with stewarding a unique historical and environmental asset for the City, a mission that we believe is crucial to public health, public life and public benefit.

As an educational and cultural institution in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, NYSCI embraces our responsibility to be responsive to the needs of Corona/Elmhurst. Inspired by the community's diversity, NYSCI develops programs for children, students, families, and educators that builds on and expands access to STEM opportunities that will nurture curiosity for lifelong learning. As well, we offer our youth pathways to STEM Careers through the Alan J. Friedman Center for the Development of Young Scientists. The Science Career Ladder (SCL) is NYSCI's signature youth and workforce development initiative with a mission to address the challenges brought on by the educational and economic inequities facing New York City's minority high school and college students from under-resourced neighborhoods.

New Yorkers rely on various cultural institutions, non-profit organizations, programs, and resources to strengthen engagement and learning opportunities. Organizations such as NYSCI touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. NYSCI's mission and programming extend beyond every visitor and are seen through the work we do to make STEM exciting, appealing, and inviting to everyone.





DESIGN  
MAKE  
PLAY



As you know, programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January and again in April would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs.

Compounding these challenges, our institutions are contending with the impact of inflation, as is the case with many organizations. The cumulative effect of these factors raises significant concerns about our ability to fulfill our mission and maintain the high-quality programming that our communities have come to rely on.

It is crucial to recognize that our institutions play a pivotal role in aiding and driving the City's economic activity in small and outer-borough communities. Furthermore, we make substantial contributions to the City's workforce, collectively employing over 11,000 full and part-time staff, including more than 5,000 union members.

Beyond the economic contributions, our work is integral to maintaining the social wealth of the City. Studies have consistently demonstrated a direct correlation between access to culture and reduced violence and crime. As stewards of City assets and providers of quality programming to millions of people annually, CIGs bear significant responsibility in shaping the vibrant cultural landscape that New York is known for. The return on your investment in our institutions has been outstanding, and with your help, we hope to be able to continue strengthening the public health, public life, and public benefit of the City as a whole.

In conclusion, we call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and explore alternative solutions that safeguard the cultural vitality and economic contributions that our institutions provide to the City - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City. I am more than willing to engage in further dialogue to find mutually beneficial solutions that address the fiscal challenges while preserving the invaluable cultural fabric of New York.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to any questions you may have and the opportunity to collaborate on effective strategies to navigate these unprecedented challenges.

Respectfully submitted by:

Frances Escano  
Director of Government Affairs  
New York Hall of Science  
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[NYSCI.org](http://NYSCI.org) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#)



**Statement of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**

**to the Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency, and Waterfronts of the New York City Council**

**December 11, 2023**

**Regarding The City's Obligation to Reduce Carbon Emissions from Government Operations**

Thank you, Chair Gennaro and members of the committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this critical topic.

New York City's operations have a huge impact on climate emission and local pollution emissions within communities. Our government operations employ 370,000 people, with a budget of \$107 billion this year. Last year, the City reported that direct emissions from government operations including buildings, city-owned vehicles, and wastewater treatment plants have returned about 2.9 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> – roughly the same annual pollution as 2018 and 2019, when the City Council passed a number of landmark climate laws intended to address the root causes of a spiraling climate crisis while creating thousands of good, green jobs and addressing the unequal health impacts of pollution on low-income communities and communities of color.

Local laws intended to sharply reduce major sources of emissions from both City government operations and from the City's economy as a whole include:

**Local Law 97 of 2019**, which requires a 40% decrease in emissions from City government operations by 2025, and a 50% reduction by 2030;

**The Renewable Rikers Act of 2021**, which requires the transfer of land from the Department of Corrections to DCAS and requires the consideration of using this land for sustainability and resiliency;

**Local Law 120 of 2021**, requiring the City to replace diesel and gas-burning school buses with zero-emissions electric school buses by 2035;

**Local Law 140 of 2022**, requiring the City to purchase only zero-emissions light-duty and medium-duty vehicles beginning in 2025, and zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles beginning in 2028; and

**Local Law 199 of 2019**, which will require designated commercial waste haulers to offer organics and recycling services, including commercial buildings leased for City operations;

These critical climate laws will not sufficiently reduce emissions if they are not fully implemented and vigorously enforced, and it is deeply disappointing that the City is not on track to meet the target of a 40% reduction in emissions by 2025. We are also deeply concerned that budget cuts and understaffing will negatively impact various City agencies charged with regulating pollution, improving public health, and effecting a rapid transition to sustainable City government operations, especially in the communities most burdened by fossil fuel infrastructure and combustion.

We stress to members of the Council that fossil fuel and real estate industries' must not be allowed to delay or avoid necessary investments in efficiency and electrification by adopting false solutions such as carbon capture and storage, biofuels, and so-called "green" hydrogen.<sup>1</sup>

These expensive, inefficient, and distracting technologies threaten to undermine our climate mandates, and prolong the City's reliance on outdated, expensive, and fundamentally harmful fossil fuel infrastructure concentrated in low-income communities and communities of color.

We also emphasize that New York City's potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions goes far beyond the relatively narrow scope of emissions tracked by the annual greenhouse gas inventory. For example:

Overall transportation emissions can be sharply reduced by ensuring that hundreds of thousands of City employees have reliable and sustainable transit options to travel to and from work;

Sustainable waste management practices in City schools and buildings can and should be part of a comprehensive zero-waste campaign promoting waste reduction, composting, and recycling across the residential and commercial sectors; and

The City's goal of developing 500MW of solar generation citywide and 100MW on City-owned properties by 2025 is only a fraction of the 2.8 Gigawatts of solar generation that the PEAK coalition has estimated is necessary to replace the City's polluting and expensive fossil fuel peaker plants.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see "False Solutions," NY Renews, 2021:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58ae35fddb29d6acd5d7f35c/t/60351d79b4a58450d1f9dd8b/1614093694407/False+Solutions+Report+-+FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See "The Fossil Fuel End Game," PEAK Coalition, 2021: <https://www.cleaneigroup.org/wp-content/uploads/Fossil-Fuel-End-Game.pdf>

We therefore urge DCAS and other city agencies to think expansively about the potential for properties including rooftops, parking lots, Rikers Island, and landfills as sites for renewable energy generation, storage, and sustainable waste management infrastructure.

Finally, the City can also leverage the huge purchasing power it has for vehicles, equipment, food, and other goods and products to reduce the emissions embedded in these materials, and to create markets for low- and zero-emissions infrastructure.

In short, New York City has the potential to lead the way to a sustainable economy provided that we make immediate investments in infrastructure, staff, and public education.

We look forward to continued work with City Council to ensure that DCAS, Buildings, Education, Sanitation, and Environmental Protection are fully staffed and sufficiently funded in this year's budget and going forward to make the large-scale investments necessary to reduce emissions operations across the City's operations, and to lay the groundwork for an economy-wide transition away from fossil fuels.

**Justin Wood, Director of Policy**  
**New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**  
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*For more than 45 years, NYLPI has fought to protect civil rights and achieve lived equality for communities in need. NYLPI combines the power of law, organizing, and the private bar to make lasting change where it's needed most. Our Environmental Justice program fights environmental racism, works to eliminate the unfair burden of environmental hazards borne by low-income communities and communities of color, and seeks to create a more equitable and sustainable city. For more information visit [www.nylpi.org](http://www.nylpi.org)*



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lynn Bodnar Kelly

## New York Restoration Project

### Testimony before New York City Council, Committee on Finance NYC's Climate Resiliency Efforts 12/11/2023

Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Bodnar Kelly, and I am the Executive Director of the New York Restoration Project (NYRP). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this afternoon Chair Brannan. NYRP is a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition, a coalition of over 400 organizations across the city advocating for the city's park system. NYRP is also a member of Forest For All NYC and a founding member of Parks and Open Space Partners. We are here today in opposition to the recently implemented budget cuts of 5% and the additional proposed cuts of 5-15% in 2024.

The 5% cuts implemented by the city resulted in a hiring freeze, the loss of staff, and the delay of critical park programs. In total, Parks has lost an additional 1,450 workers representing 47% of the cleaning workforce responsible for maintaining our city's nearly 2,000 parks. These positions are essential and include maintenance workers who keep our parks well maintained and clean. These cuts also mean less PEP officers who keep our parks safe. At the start of the pandemic in 2020, the Parks Department saw similar cuts leading to the worst parks condition in over 20 years. We saw overflowing trash bins and poorly maintained or outright closed bathrooms. In short, disinvestment in the parks system lead to parks that are less clean, safe, and secure.

These cuts will eliminate community composting programs across the city by January. These programs are critical to keeping NYC green, diverting more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year, turning it into rich soil that is used in our parks, gardens, and playgrounds. NYRP relies on these programs for technical assistance, compost education, and food scrap hauling services.

The additional reductions proposed in 2024 will devastate the already overworked workforce responsible for maintaining these vital spaces.



NEW YORK  
RESTORATION  
PROJECT

We are looking at a delay in activation of water and cooling stations across 5,000 parks and playgrounds, including 3,400 drinking fountains and 850 sprinklers. These cooling stations save lives, especially as each year we see new record-breaking heatwaves.

We should not be cutting services and programs that make our city more resilient and livable. We must invest now so we can protect all New Yorkers from the devastating impact of climate change. We call on city government to not just restore the budget cuts, but to invest in green infrastructure. Nature is a fundamental right of every New Yorker.

Thank you.

**New York City Council - Committee on Finance  
Oversight Hearing – Mayor’s November 2023 Financial Plan  
Monday, December 11, 2023**

**Written Testimony of the New York State Nurses Association**

The New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) represents more than 42,000 registered nurses across New York State, including more than 8,000 nurses employed by New York City Health + Hospitals. NYSNA is a leading advocate for protecting equal access to health care regardless of ability to pay, addressing social and racial inequities in healthcare and health outcomes. NYSNA opposes cuts in City funding for healthcare programs while also recognizing the importance of funding to address housing, education, environmental, and other social determinants of health.

The November Financial Plan substantially increases the City’s projected deficit for FY2024 from \$5.079 billion in the June Financial Plan to \$7.11 billion in the updated plan. The upward revision of the budget gap is largely based on escalating estimates of the costs of providing healthcare, housing, and other services to more than 100,000 asylum seekers who have moved to New York City since the summer of 2022.

In response to the influx of asylum seekers, the City has announced drastic mid-year budget cuts that will reduce funding for a wide range of vital programs by \$1.7 billion.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed PEGs in the November update are to be followed by two additional 5% across the board rounds of further budget cuts ahead of the FY2025 budget. If fully implemented, the proposed cuts will amount to about a \$10 billion reduction in existing funding over FY2024 and FY2025.

Though we agree that the influx of asylum seekers presents a fiscal challenge to the City, we do not accept the City’s assertion that we are facing an imminent financial crisis requiring such drastic spending cuts.

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<sup>1</sup>The November Financial Plan includes the following specific PEG reductions: \$25.5 million in support for NYC Health + Hospitals (though it should be noted It should be noted that the modifications also include a \$110.7 million increase in funding for collective bargaining settlements and \$1.44 billion in additional funding for asylum seeker services that are being run by NYCHH pursuant to an MOU); \$72 million from DOHMH health programs; \$24 million from City libraries; \$547 million from DOE school funding; \$23 million from CUNY; \$300 million from police, fire, corrections, and sanitation services; \$42 million from ACS for children’s services; \$321 million from DSS for public welfare programs; \$16 million from DFTA senior programs; \$48 million from DYCD for youth programs; and \$20 million from HPD for housing enforcement and development.

The City can respond to the needs of asylum seekers through better management of its assistance efforts, the use of available fiscal reserves, assistance from the State and Federal government, and, if necessary, through increased tax revenues. Gutting healthcare, education, housing assistance, and other vital social programs to assist asylum seekers is unnecessary and harmful to New Yorkers.

### **The City routinely underestimates future revenues and overstates out-year deficit deficits**

OMB has a long history of undercounting projected revenues, leading to artificially high out-year budget gap projections.<sup>2</sup> This approach may have certain advantages when it comes to handling City funds in a prudent manner, but it should not be used to justify budget cuts that will impact vital City services and negatively affect the health and wellbeing of New Yorkers.

The November Financial Plan continues this pattern, with OMB revenue projections failing to account for updated economic data since the adoption of the budget in June. The City Council staff notes in its own economic analysis, for example, that City tax revenues will be \$1.2 billion higher than the \$592 million projected by OMB for FY2024, \$295 million higher in FY2025, \$1.36 billion higher in FY2026 and \$2.4 billion higher in FY2027.

The routine underestimation of City revenues necessarily results in a tendency to exaggerate out-year budget deficit projections. Over the last 20 years the City has consistently projected out-year budget gaps that have historically ranged from \$3 billion to \$5 billion a year.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the consistent projection of future budget deficits, however, the City budget is not structurally unbalanced. If that were the case, City spending could not have doubled in the last 20 years and those projected out-year projected deficits could not have been closed without massive reductions in year-on-year city spending.

Notwithstanding chronic deficit projections, The City budget has become increasingly sustainable and stable when compared to the underlying revenue base and the growth of the City economy. The City's spending, measured as a percentage of NY City's economy, has declined from more than 9% of GDP in 2014 to less than 7.5% of GDP in FY2024. This indicates that the City's fiscal position has steadily improved since 2014, and that City spending is not disproportionate to the size of the

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<sup>2</sup> A review of November and June financial plan documents from FY2018 to FY2023, for example, shows that actual City revenues were consistently underestimated by the City and subsequently revised upwards: November 2018 +\$471 million; June 2019 +\$491 million; November 2019 +\$639 million; June 2020 -\$1.2 billion (COVID onset, subsequently covered by federal funds); November 2020 +\$613 million; June 2021 +\$2.07 billion; November 2021 +\$895 million; June 2022 +\$2.82 billion; November 2022 no change; June 2023 +\$2.05 billion; November 2023 +\$776 million.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the **FY2020** budget projected a \$3.5 billion gap in FY2021, \$2.9 billion in FY2022, and \$3.1 billion in FY2023; the **FY2021** budget projected a \$4.2 billion gap in FY2022, \$3 billion in FY2023, and \$3.2 billion in FY2024; the **FY2022** budget projected a \$4 billion gap in FY2023, \$3.8 billion in FY2024 and \$4 billion in FY2025; the **FY2023** budget projected a \$4.2 billion gap in FY2024, \$3.7 billion in FY2025 and \$4 billion in FY2026.

local economy and its tax base.<sup>4</sup> This also implies that the City has fiscal room, if necessary, to increase tax revenues to address asylum seeker needs without gutting other services or creating structural imbalances in its budgets.

### **The City estimates of the costs asylum seeker services are too high**

The City's estimates of the costs of assisting asylum seekers have varied wildly, with the latest administration estimate asserting that "the city has the potential to spend upwards of \$12 billion over three fiscal years (FY2023, FY2024, and FY2025)." The City claims that it spent \$1.45 billion in FY2023, leaving an estimated cost of more than \$10 billion for this year and FY2025.<sup>5</sup>

We believe that the administration estimates of the cost of assisting asylum seekers are consistent with the City pattern of assuming the worst-case scenario in the name of cautious budgeting. We also believe that the administration may be using these high estimates and the threat of draconian budget cuts to create pressure on the State and Federal governments to increase their assistance to the City.

First, it should be noted that per diem costs per migrant household are quite high and have not been reduced in the City's budget projections. According to the NYC Comptroller's office, based on data through May 2023, the average per diem cost per migrant household was \$385.<sup>6</sup> In August the City estimated the per diem cost of services for asylum seekers was \$383 per household. The November plan does not appear to have changed this assumption.<sup>7</sup> The City should be actively attempting to lower this high per household cost by improving the efficiency of migrant services. A \$100 decrease in per diem costs, for example, would generate budgetary savings of about \$2.5 billion in both FY2024 and FY2025.

Second, the City budget assumes a trend of unabated increases in the numbers of asylum seekers that may not come to pass. We can expect that the numbers of new asylum seekers arriving in New York will plateau and then taper off as the Federal government takes measures to restrict the flow of refugees. In addition, the Federal approval of work permits for migrants from Venezuela or other designated areas will reduce costs as those households are able to find jobs and transition away from city financial support.

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<sup>4</sup>See: Fiscal Policy Institute, Low Expectations: Understanding the NYC Budget Gap: City Budget Gaps Reflect Conservative Budgeting, Not Structural Deficits (May 2023), available at [https://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Low-Expectations\\_-Understanding-the-NYC-Budget-Gap-1.pdf](https://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Low-Expectations_-Understanding-the-NYC-Budget-Gap-1.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See: Mayor's Office, August 9, 2023 press release, available at <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/583-23/as-city-nears-arrival-100-000-asylum-seekers-since-last-spring-mayor-adams-lays-out-updated#/0>.

<sup>6</sup> See: NYC Comptroller's Office, Accounting for Asylum Seeker Services, available at <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/services/for-the-public/accounting-for-asylum-seeker-services/fiscal-impacts/>.

<sup>7</sup> See: Fiscal Policy Institute Brief: Breaking Down the Fiscal Impact of City Aid to Migrants (September 12, 2023), available at <https://fiscalpolicy.org/breaking-down-the-fiscal-impact-of-city-aid-to-migrants>.

Finally, we believe that the City will spend significantly less if it ends its current reliance on private, for-profit providers that charge exorbitant rates. City workers and non-profit entities will provide better services at significantly lower costs to the city.<sup>8</sup>

**The City Council should work with the City to address asylum seeker costs without gutting vital services**

New York is, as the Mayor has noted, a city built by immigrants, and this is reflected in the diversity of its people and neighborhoods. We have a collective responsibility to provide assistance to the thousands of vulnerable refugees who have chosen to make New York their home.

Though the costs of helping asylum seekers will be substantial, the City's strong financial condition and its underlying economy have the capacity to address their needs without gutting the rest of the City budget and slashing funding for schools, healthcare, and other vital services that are relied upon by all New Yorkers.

We urge the City Council to reject the proposed budget cuts and work with the administration to address this crisis with as little disruption as possible.

Such an approach would include the following elements:

1. The City must conduct a thorough assessment of migrant needs and arrive at an accurate accounting of the amount of funding needed to provide effective assistance.
2. The migrant crisis is not a long-term structural threat to the City's finances. The influx will eventually ease and the migrants currently needing assistance will be integrated into our communities. The crisis, accordingly, should be approached as a short-term problem that can be addressed without restructuring or abandoning current policy priorities.
3. Because the migrant crisis is a short-term, external shock to the budget, it should be addressed through a recalculation of projected revenues and out-year budget gaps to accurately identify the extent of the fiscal shortfall to be addressed.
4. Before the City considers budget cuts to address the actual shortfall, it should consider the use of its more than \$8.2 billion in reserves to cover the short-term costs and avoid disrupting the entire budget. This is, after all, the purpose of holding fiscal reserves – to address unanticipated or urgent needs that might arise without destabilizing our finances.
5. The City must bring down the current exorbitant costs of providing services to migrants by shifting its response away from emergency measures and reduce its reliance on for-profit subcontractors whose primary interest is to generate more revenue. The City should be

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., issues of overbilling and poor services related to the City's \$432 million contract with DocGo, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/18/nyregion/docgo-lander-audit-contract.html>. See also, NYC Comptroller's Office, Rescinding Emergency Contracting Powers of NYC

relying on established non-profit providers and existing city service providers and should prioritize reducing the too high per diem costs per household.

We believe that the actual costs of providing needed services is substantially less than the \$12 billion cost estimated by the administration, that the actual out-year deficits are much lower than projected in the November plan, and that the City has the ability to address the bulk of those reduced actual costs by applying part of its available fiscal reserves. We urge the City Council to work with the administration to effectively address current migrant needs without cutting city services.

For further information contact:  
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December 11, 2023  
RE: City Council Finance Oversight hearing

To Whom It May Concern,

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like New Yorkers For Children touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Yu".

Alan Yu  
Executive Director

Lucy Sexton

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

City Council Committee on Finance hearing on the November Plan Dec 11, 2023

Thank you Chair Brannan and members of the City Council for hearing my testimony. My name is Lucy Sexton and I am with the cultural advocacy coalition New Yorkers for Culture & Arts.

In addressing the city's budget crisis, we are too often talking about what we can cut. Let's talk about invigorating small businesses and local economies, increasing the tax base, generating tourism dollars. What keeps families in NY? what draws workers back to offices? what drives traffic to local businesses? what brings visitors to our city? Culture and arts do.

Last month's cut of \$12M from the Department of Cultural Affairs will do next to nothing to solve the city's budget needs.

Yet it is already causing enormous damage to our cultural organizations who depend on those grants---grants of \$10 and \$20 and \$50 thousand, not million. We are already seeing theaters closing, and reduced programming at dance studios, museums, music and art centers.

In the words of the Hospitality Alliance's Andrew Rigue, "Our city's economy is an interdependent ecosystem, and there are few connections as strong as those between culture and hospitality."

**Randy Peers of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce**, adds, "A budget that slashes cultural funds will be devastating for shops and restaurants still struggling to recover from the pandemic." ([Business Leaders sign on to support culture](#))

While the city rightly celebrates 50 years of hip hop, remember that NY did not respond to the emerging art form by investing in music and dance studios in the Bronx. Artists left and the

Bronx's economy and communities suffered. Instead of images of a vibrant music scene, the world saw images of a city in decay.

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The same can be said of the neighborhood health and vibrancy that the myriad of services provided by the entire nonprofit sector bring to our city. Nonprofits support vital aspects of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. I stand with my colleagues and call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. Any additional cuts to nonprofits will undermine the public safety, mental health, and economic well being of New York City.

Good afternoon, my name is Chai Jindasurat-Yasui and I am Vice President of Policy at Nonprofit New York. Nonprofit New York is a membership organization representing 1,100 nonprofit organizations across New York City. We champion nonprofits through capacity building and advocacy to cultivate a unified, just, and powerful sector.

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Based on our initial analysis of the November Plan, crucial programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations will bear a disproportionate brunt of immediate budget cuts this fiscal year - from language access, to after-school programs to our arts and cultural institutions.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Nonprofit New York joins over 250 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for why a 15 percent cut is necessary
- Include and work with nonprofits toward financially sustainable solutions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you,

Chai Jindasurat-Yasui



**New York City Council Finance Committee Hearing  
Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan  
Honorable Justin L. Brannan, Chair**

**December 11, 2023**

**Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition**

Bonjou tout moun. My name is Taina Wagnac and I am the Senior Manager of State and Local Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella policy and advocacy organization that works statewide with over 200 immigrant-serving member organizations. Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and the members of the City Council for convening this hearing and allowing us the opportunity to testify.

We are deeply disappointed to see that once again, this administration has presented New Yorkers with budget decisions that target, and will most negatively affect, Black, Brown, immigrant and LGBTQI communities. These proposed budget cuts completely disregard the challenges everyday New Yorkers face and pit communities against each other while using scarcity as an excuse to instill hatred towards immigrants and asylum seekers. This has been a common practice of this administration which, over the past 20 months, has used the arrival of asylum seekers as a way to abdicate responsibility for running and funding NYC’s most crucial services and agencies.

These proposed cuts are gut wrenching. They will eliminate much needed CUNY support programs, early education seats, funding for community schools, Sunday library hours and



more. Many, if not most, of the proposed cuts to agencies will directly result in decreasing access to the kinds of services that provide the most upward mobility for New York families by increasing free and affordable educational opportunities from early childhood through higher education, increasing access to technology, and providing language access to our newest residents.

The NYIC strongly opposes these proposed cuts, and urges the city council to stand in solidarity with their communities to fight back against them. We must:

- Fully restore funding to 3k and pre-k programs, which are the only free early childhood education and care available to many immigrant families, and are linked to higher academic outcomes, less engagement with the criminal justice system, and higher ultimate financial stability for children who go through these programs.
- Invest \$10M in outreach and enrollment through the NYIC's Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood Education (LIFE) Project, which provides hands-on, one-on-one outreach and enrollment support to limited English proficient and digitally disconnected families. The LIFE project has helped over 650 families to apply and enroll in these programs and notably, 4 out of 5 of these families have stated they would have been unable to apply to Pre-K and 3-K programs without additional assistance.
- Expand the Promise NYC child care voucher program to at least \$20M, to continue providing child care to the youngest immigrant children who are not eligible for other forms of child care vouchers.



- Fully invest in New York Public Schools and CUNY, including protecting and expanding investments in the six new English Language Learner transfer schools outside of Manhattan that support newcomers and asylum seeker students where they live and work.
- Fight back against the Mayor's 60-day shelter rule by allocating adequate funding in the budget to expand the CityFHEPS voucher program. Long-time New Yorkers have been dealing with the NYC shelter system's broken policies long before asylum seekers started arriving in 2022. This administration has been stubbornly resistant to the comprehensive housing solutions recently passed by the City Council, which ultimately are more cost-effective and humane, and which recognize the need to transition people into permanent housing using CityFHEPS vouchers. A housing voucher [costs just \\$50 to \\$72 per night](#) for families living in a 2-bedroom apartment, depending on the program. Meanwhile, New York City is spending on average \$383 – or five times the amount of a housing voucher – to shelter households in emergency hotels.
- Invest \$5M in funding to maintain the City's Language Access Worker Cooperatives, which connect trained, professional interpreters to city agencies and city-run providers, while supporting immigrant New Yorkers to pursue careers as language services professionals.
- Restore funding for professional development and technical assistance for DYCD-funded adult literacy programs that was decoupled from the funding for the programs themselves in FY24. This change has resulted in the field's technical assistance provider, the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), losing \$334K in Expansion



funding, which represented over 60% of its DYCD funding dedicated to supporting community-based adult literacy programs. In the November PEG, the LAC lost another 35% of its remaining FY24 DYCD funding, further undermining its ability to support programs and eroding a vital part of the infrastructure that strengthens and sustains adult literacy education in NYC.

New York City has long prided itself on being a city of vibrancy, diversity, and endless opportunity. Cutting costs without considering the long term effects these cuts will have not just on current New Yorkers, but on the future of our city, is irresponsible at best and a dereliction of duty at worst. Now is the time to ensure that our investments are protected, our people are taken care of, and that we maintain the services that allow all New Yorkers to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:  
Taina B. Wagnac  
Sr. Manager of State and Local Policy  
New York Immigration Coalition

# NYBG

**New York City Council  
FY24 November Plan Oversight Hearing  
December 11, 2023**

Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, Finance Chair Justin Brannan, Council Finance Committee, and members of the Bronx Delegation:

Thank you for requesting testimony from The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) identifying the impacts of the Mayor's FY24, 15% mid-year cuts to the non-profit cultural sector.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations like NYBG were already impacted by the November modification. The additional 5% planned cuts in January will be detrimental to the continued running of community programs throughout the City and the Bronx in particular. NYBG and the non-profit community touch every vital aspect of daily life—from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to access to nature. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions, using a more surgical and strategic approach to agency reductions. The City cannot withstand a 15% across the board cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

Cuts to three City agencies are of notable concern to NYBG and the communities we serve:

**Department of Cultural Affairs:** City funding to DCLA represents *less than a quarter of one percent* of the City's adopted, FY24 budget, and totaled about \$241 million. DCLA's budget has not grown proportionately to the City's budget growth over the past decade, yet the agency must now bear the same cuts as the agencies that experienced growth. Both the City Council and the Mayor's office affirm that cultural anchors are economic engines and revenue generators—and for good reasons; consider the economic impact of just the 34 members of the Cultural Institution Group (CIG):

- The CIG generates \$8 in city-wide economic activity for every \$1 of investment by the City of NY. The \$9M cut made in November jeopardizes up to \$72M in economic activity.
- The CIGs currently spend nearly \$500M with vendors, many of them local small businesses. Contracts with small businesses that rely on CIG business are likely to be cut by organizations as they reduce budgets.
- CIG members provide 15,000 jobs to the City. Many hundreds of layoffs connected with these cuts are likely to materialize, affecting cultural workers and their families throughout NYC.

As a direct result of the City's FY24 operating reductions to date and the opaqueness of announced cuts in January and March, NYBG enacted a hiring freeze for the remainder of FY24. Approximately 55 positions will remain unfilled, resulting in impacts like: postponement of new public programming, reduced scope of community programming and education, delays in critical plant research addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, and slowdown in the care of our living collections for our spring season.

**Given the CIGs economic impacts to the City's revenue and the NYBG impacts of a hiring freeze, I join my colleagues in the Cultural Institutions Group, and the entire cultural sector, and ask that DCLA be spared from the next two rounds of the Administration's PEG cuts so that we may continue to serve all New Yorkers at a level everyone deserves.**

**Department of Parks and Recreation:** NYBG maintains 250 acres of NYC parkland, including the 50 acre Thain Family Forest. This is the largest uncut expanse of New York's original wooded landscape. The Forest remains a magnificent reminder of the beauty and resilience of nature in the face of complex human-caused disturbances. To preserve the Forest for future generations the Garden manages invasive species, plants native plants, and performs research.

Tree canopy, vegetation cover, and green space are crucial for the health, safety, and livability of NYC, and heat-related illness and death continue to impact communities of color and lower-income communities disproportionately. As our city faces significant increases in the number and intensity of heat waves and extreme precipitation events in the coming decades, forests, green spaces, and bioswales, when adequately maintained, offer critical nature-based solutions that mitigate the urban heat island effect and stormwater flooding. Achieving 30 percent needs a budget commitment alongside plans and laws.

The recently implemented budget cuts, and the additional proposed cuts for 2024 affect these planned investments. Coupled with the immediate agency hiring freeze, this initial 5% cut has serious impacts on personnel and reverses important progress we have just started to make on workforce development – elimination of the Parks Opportunity Program, in the urban forest sector. We are disappointed that this funding, including funds for tree risk management which is a public safety matter, has now been cut from the budget. FY24 cuts delay the bigger picture of achieving 30 percent canopy cover, a City commitment that is vital to public health and equity.

**Department of Sanitation:** The Mayor's November budget cuts also eliminated DSNY funding for the NYC Compost Project, including the program hosted by NYBG. This \$3 million cut is devastating to people across the city who participate in local processing, free compost distribution, compost education such as the Master Composter Certification Course, and more. Community composting is critical to building waste equity and environmental justice in the Bronx and across NYC, and these programs need to be restored if we are to work towards a truly sustainable City.

Each year, community composting organizations including GrowNYC, Big Reuse, LES Ecology Center, Earth Matter NY, The New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, collectively:

- Divert more than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year.
- Produce and distribute hundreds of thousands of pounds of compost to over 325 community groups, parks, 85 street tree care events, and thousands of individuals each year.
- Engage over 1,000 yearly participants in Master Composter activities through food, farming, and composting opportunities across the city.
- Provide compost outreach and education to over 600,000 New Yorkers annually, making them aware of food waste's contributions to the climate crisis while providing the opportunity to address this critical issue.

In conclusion, we applaud The New York City Council for raising the alarm about the Mayor's 15% across-the-board reductions to City agencies and for expressing their sincere concerns about impacts on our non-profit community and organizations like NYBG. We look forward to working with you to mitigate or eliminate future rounds of mid-year cuts. Thank you Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and members of the Bronx Council Delegation. You have always supported the work of NYBG and our work in the Bronx, NYC, New York State and the world.

Respectfully submitted by: Aaron T. Bouska, Vice President for Government and Community Relations, The New York Botanical Garden. [abouska@nybg.org](mailto:abouska@nybg.org); 718.817.8542

# NYBG

## **New York Botanical Garden testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations Oversight: Arts and Cultural Organizations' Outreach into New York City Communities**

**December 13, 2023**

Good afternoon Chair Ossé and Members of the Committee. My name is Angel Hernandez, Director of Government Relations for the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG.) We are part of the Cultural Institutions Group, the CIG – a New York City coalition of 34 fine cultural institutions located in all five boroughs. Chair Ossé, thank you for letting me speak today and for your ongoing support in our city's cultural community. I also want to thank Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, and your colleagues in the council for their supportive efforts as well.

With over 130 years of serving the people of New York, our institution has created programs to address the needs of our city's everchanging communities. NYBG has always played a major role in The Bronx as a cultural anchor where not only our scientific collections and exhibitions should be deemed as our main strength. In fact, we are also a major community partner where we create and promote educational and economic opportunities for local residents, while maintaining open access.

For example:

- Our Bronx Green-Up program, which celebrates 35 years, continues to be one of our main outreach programs where we provide horticultural education, training, and technical assistance to Bronx residents, community gardeners, urban farmers, local schools, and community organizations. With over 300 Bronx community gardens the program has had a major role in creating, we celebrate our latest partnership at Karol's Urban Community Farm, located at NYCHA's Castle Hill Houses. There, Bronx Green-up will hire a farm coordinator, pilot youth programs for 4-6-year old's, continuing to build out the farm with more raised beds, lead community workdays, offer free educational and cooking workshops, manage food distributions for the community and more.

- Addressing Food Insecurity in The Bronx, Bronx Green-up also coordinates the work of dozens of community gardens into six Bronx Farm Hubs to donate over 25,000 seedling plants to Bronx community gardens and donating nearly 20,000 pounds of fresh produce to public schools and other charitable organizations.
- We also launched the Bronx Neighbors initiative during the first summer of quarantine back in 2020, where over 120,000 Bronx residents came at no cost to experience our engaging exhibitions and landscape ever since. Our Community Partner evenings is another initiative where we work with elected officials to offer exclusive free all-access passes to their constituents.
- NYBG provides over 500 full-time positions, in which half are Bronx residents and 175 are DC37 union jobs. Sustaining middle-class jobs – the average annual salary and benefits for Bronx staff at the Garden is \$68,000. We also provide career pipelines, like the high school Explainers program, where Bronx students work as mentors and educators for younger visitors in pursuit of careers in science and education. Last year we served 178 Bronx high schoolers.
- Taking part in the economic development efforts around the Rezoning of Webster Avenue, a busy commercial corridor that runs near NYBG, we built an intergenerational affordable housing complex on Webster Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard to address the ongoing need of affordable housing in the area. All senior residents there have been given a year's membership.

Cultural organizations depend on City funding to provide the sort of quality, community-centered programming we have described today. I join my colleagues in the Cultural Institutions Group, and the entire cultural sector, and ask that DCLA be spared from the next two rounds of the Administration's PEG cuts so that we can continue to serve all New Yorkers.

Thank you.

Angel Hernandez  
Director of Government Relations  
The New York Botanical Garden  
[ahernandez@nybg.org](mailto:ahernandez@nybg.org)



12/11/2023

Hi,

I'm Suzette Simon from NYLaughs. We produce free comedy programming in the city's public spaces.

I would first like to ask the City: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

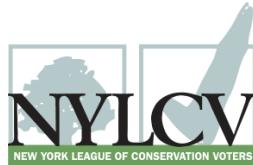
The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why NYLaughs joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,  
Suzette Simon  
Founder and Artistic Director  
nylaughs.org  
917-727-5233



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
City Council Committee on Finance  
Oversight Hearing — Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters. Thank you, Chair Brannan, as well as members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to comment on the City's recent budget cuts.

NYLCV was deeply disappointed in the budget cuts announced in the Mayor's November Financial Plan. This announcement cut over 1,000 Parks positions, eliminates city funding for community composting programs, cancels a temporary build-out site for the LES Ecology Center's composting operation, delays the expansion of the citywide residential organics program to Staten Island and the Bronx—a borough too often neglected—and more. Although we understand the fiscal challenges facing our City today, with the climate crisis growing more urgent by the day, this is no time for New York City to cut funding for vital services, such as parks and community composting, and other environmental programs.

As a co-founder of the Play Fair for Parks Campaign and member of Forest for All NYC, NYLCV stands with our partners demanding the Adams Administration reverse the cuts to our City's Parks department. The Mayor's November Financial Plan cut approximately 350 Parks positions through attrition, institutes one year delays for the Tree Risk Management and Trail Formalization Programs, and, even more devastating, [cut over 1,000 positions](#) that placed workers in the Parks system through a NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) job training program called the Parks Opportunity Program. This program, which is supported with funding from HRA to Parks, will be fully cut by the end of Fiscal 2024. The total impact to the Parks budget as a result of the POP elimination will be roughly \$60 million in Fiscal 2025 and each of the outyears. This combined loss of staffing and resources further harms an agency with a 13.5% vacancy rate as of October 2023. It will dismantle an already-burdened workforce, devastate an agency which has historically received less than its fair share of funding, and make it impossible for the agency to ensure that our parks are safe and clean for New Yorkers, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.

On top of this, as advocates of zero waste policies, NYLCV urges the Adams Administration to restore funding for community composting programs. With the recently-passed zero waste by 2030 legislation, New York City must do everything in its power to comprehensively reduce our food waste, curb emissions, and improve our quality of life. The Community Composting Program is a strong tool for keeping our communities clean. In FY24, the program diverted more

than 8.3 million pounds of organic waste—not just from residential buildings. It has been an asset to the NYC Department of Sanitation, conducting outreach, community education, and volunteer programs around the curbside composting program, rat mitigation, street tree care events, and soil remediation work. The success of the City's mandatory curbside organics program hinges on a well-funded Community Composting program by bolstering community support and participation.

Beyond the programs outlined above, going forward, the City must ensure adequate funding for staffing at key agencies such as DOB for Local Law 97 implementation, funding for the electric school bus law implementation, citywide curbside organics, and more. With all the environmental and climate laws that have been adopted in the last several years, we cannot underscore enough how important it is to allocate the requisite funding, prioritize agency hiring and retention, and improve long-term capital planning in order to implement these laws. We urge Mayor Adams to restore funding for vital services such as parks and community composting and, in the long run, not lose sight of important climate deadlines and goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**TESTIMONY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP  
BEFORE THE JOINT HEARING OF THE  
SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION & ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONSERVATION COMMITTEES  
REGARDING THE EXAMINATION OF LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS TO INCREASE  
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOTTLE BILL**

**October 23, 2023**

**Albany, N.Y.**

Good afternoon. My name is Blair Horner, and I am executive director of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). NYPIRG is a non-partisan, not-for-profit research and advocacy organization. Consumer protection, environmental preservation, public health, healthcare quality, higher education affordability, and governmental reforms are our principal areas of concern. We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding your legislative review of New York State's 40-year-old Bottle Deposit Law and the need to increase the program's effectiveness.

There can be no doubt that a modernized Bottle Deposit System is needed. New York is facing an increasingly serious solid waste disposal problem and programs designed to reduce the amount of solid waste generated as well as stimulate recycling are important components of a proper response.

New York has known for years that those approaches should be central to its strategies.

In 1988, the Solid Waste Management Act<sup>1</sup> established in law the *preferred hierarchy of solid waste management*. The hierarchy established the following priorities to guide the programs and decisions of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and other state and local agencies:

- First, to reduce the amount of solid waste generated.
- Second, to reuse material for the purpose for which it was originally intended or to recycle the material that cannot be reused.
- Third, to recover, in an environmentally acceptable manner, energy from solid waste that cannot be economically and technically reused or recycled.
- Fourth, to dispose of solid waste that is not being reused or recycled, or from which energy is not being recovered, by land burial or other methods approved by DEC.

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Environmental Conservation Law §27-0106.

As seen in the graphic<sup>2</sup> below, source reduction and reuse are the first step in a solid waste strategy:



Recent developments in global waste policy heighten the need for the state (and the nation) to bolster solid waste reduction measures. China, which had been accepting massive amounts of the nation's waste, stopped accepting such imports in 2018, increasing the pressure on state and local governments to reinvigorate their solid waste programs.<sup>3</sup> Municipal recycling systems have not been equipped to deal with the high amounts of waste that have flooded their systems. The state had been made aware by their own agencies that New York needed further waste diversion tactics.

Moreover, even as the state has developed its response to the rising existential threat posed by a rapidly heating planet, it has understood that its approach to solid waste needed to be reimaged.

The Climate Action Council's (CAC) report recommended comprehensive action to reduce the state's generation of solid waste citing its role in the generation of greenhouse gases. The Plan states, "GHG emissions from the waste sector represent about 12% of statewide emissions, including landfills (78%), waste combustion (7%), and wastewater treatment (15%).

Waste accounts for 12% of statewide emissions, most of which comes from landfills that will continue to release significant amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas on steroids, for the next three decades.<sup>4</sup> Methane is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide when it comes to global warming.<sup>5</sup> Methane levels in the atmosphere have doubled over the last 200 years as a result of

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. EPA,  
<https://www.epa.gov/smm/sustainable-materials-management-non-hazardous-materials-and-waste-management-hierarchy>.

<sup>3</sup> Quinn, Megan, "National Sword kicked off a wave of MRF investments. 5 years later, tech and funding continue to advance." *Waste Dive*, Sept. 14, 2022. <https://www.wastedive.com/news/national-sword-five-years-mrf-robotics-recycling-investment/630731/>.

<sup>4</sup> New York Climate Action Council, "Draft Scoping Plan," December 2022.  
<https://climate.ny.gov/-/media/project/climate/files/NYS-Climate-Action-Council-Final-Scoping-Plan-2022.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. EPA, "Importance of Methane,"  
<https://www.epa.gov/gmi/importance-methane#:~:text=Methane%20is%20more%20than%2025,due%20to%20human%2Drelated%20activities>.

industrialization.<sup>6</sup> Reducing this pollutant rapidly would have a tremendous and immediate impact on mitigating the worst effects of climate change. It's more potent than carbon dioxide, but its lifespan is shorter – only about 12 years compared to centuries.<sup>7</sup> To reduce methane, the Plan requires robust composting. For other waste streams, effective recycling programs are recommended along with placing the responsibility on the producers for electronic waste and packaging. The Plan recommended the following set of ambitious – but necessary – solid waste goals based on its long-standing statute.

- “*Vision for 2030*. For solid waste management and WRRFs [water resource recovery facility], the major contributors to emissions are associated with landfill emissions, though sources are also found at WRRFs and other facilities. To reduce emissions to achieve the required 2030 GHG emission reductions, significant increased diversion from landfills as well as emissions monitoring and leak reduction will be needed. A circular economy approach to materials management is understood and employed.
- *Vision for 2050*. The Climate Act requires a more dramatic decrease in GHG emissions by 2050, achieving at least an 85% reduction (compared with 1990 levels). For solid waste and WRRFs, this necessitates a dramatic shift in the way waste is managed, to the point that landfills and combustors are only used sparingly for specific waste streams, and *reduction and recycling are robust and ubiquitous*. In addition, methods to monitor leaks and emissions are well developed and implemented, and those emissions are significantly reduced. The circular economy approach for materials management is fully implemented and embraced...”<sup>8</sup>

Specifically, the final CAC report recommends that “The State should enact legislation to implement expanded deposit container programs where feasible and needed.”<sup>9</sup>

While the state is working to develop a product stewardship program (and we applaud your decision to conduct a public hearing on that issue as well), the notion that producers of packaging bear a significant responsibility in managing the waste they generate is a hallmark of the Bottle Deposit System.

2023 is the 40th anniversary of initial implementation of the state’s Returnable Container Act, affectionately called the “*Bottle Bill*.” Enacted in 1982, the ‘Bottle Bill’ requires a 5-cent refundable deposit on eligible beverage containers to encourage their return to avoid litter and waste and reduce the costs for local solid waste collection systems.

New York’s Bottle Bill has been the state’s most effective recycling and litter prevention program. According to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the Bottle Bill reduces roadside container litter by 70%, and in 2020, 5.5 billion containers were recycled.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> NASA, “Methane.”

[https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/methane/#:~:text=The%20concentration%20of%20methane%20in,\(which%20begun%20in%201750\).](https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/methane/#:~:text=The%20concentration%20of%20methane%20in,(which%20begun%20in%201750).)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> New York State Climate Action Council Final Scoping Plan, p.319.

<sup>9</sup> New York State Climate Action Council Final Scoping Plan, p.326.

<sup>10</sup> New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, “New York’s Bottle Bill,” <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8500.html>.

Like any other program, a review is appropriate. There are improvements that can be made. Furthermore, given the scale of the solid waste and climate change issues facing the state, a comprehensive package of improvements should be the legislative goal. While some of the following recommendations can be made on an *à la carte* basis, the greatest impact would be to do so within the context of a *comprehensive* plan.

After its four-decades of success, we believe that the Bottle Bill should be modernized by expanding the law to include popular non-carbonated beverages, wine, spirits, and hard cider and increasing the redeemable deposit value to 10-cents to increase the rate of recovery.

#### *Expand the containers covered by the law*

Municipal recycling programs are particularly struggling with glass contaminating their recycling streams. When glass breaks in curbside containers it contaminates the rest of the materials and renders much of it unrecyclable for the municipality. The expansion of the Bottle Bill to include wine, spirits, and non-carbonated beverages, with a deposit increase from a nickel to a dime, will take a significant number of containers out of municipal recycling programs. The costs of recycling many of the containers that are not covered under the state's Bottle Law are too high for many municipalities. For example, the costs associated with collecting and processing PET plastic bottles and glass per ton are higher than revenues per ton for scrap material.<sup>11</sup> Expanding the Bottle Bill would eliminate these costs for municipal programs by creating a financial incentive (the deposit) for consumers to return and an obligation (the law) for retailers to accept these containers, relieving the burden on local government recycling programs.

#### *Increase the handling fee*

Redemption centers play an important role in helping to redeem containers covered by the Bottle Bill. *The handling fee has not been increased since 2009.* As costs have risen, the expenses connected to handling returnables have as well. A straight CPI adjustment would raise the handling fee to more than five cents.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Increase the deposit to a dime, use additional revenues to modernize the program's administration and enforcement*

Modernization of the 40-year-old Bottle Bill will further enhance litter control (most notably in underserved lower income communities), help stimulate recycling efforts, encourage the use of refillable containers, and is a matter of economic justice that will provide badly needed funding for communities that face low redemption rates due to inadequate access to retailers and redemption centers. States with bottle deposit laws have a beverage container recycling rate of around 60%, while non-deposit states only reach about 24%.<sup>13</sup> *The national group stated in a 2022 report that the bottle bill's expansion and deposit increase to a dime would likely result in a 90% recycling redemption rate.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Container Recycling Institute, "Cost of Curbside Recycling for Beverage Containers," May 31, 2018, <http://www.container-recycling.org/index.php/publication>.

<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI calculator, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

<sup>13</sup> Container Recycling Institute, Bottle Bills, <https://www.container-recycling.org/index.php/issues/bottle-bills>.

<sup>14</sup> Reloop, "Reimagining the Bottle Bill," <https://bottlebillreimagined.org/>.

If the law is modernized, an expansion of the Bottle Bill would result in increased economic opportunities for New Yorkers. New Yorkers can expect 4,145 new jobs to be created.<sup>15</sup> Many low-income New Yorkers, often within immigrant, elderly, or homeless communities, rely upon the practice of “canning” to supplement income. According to *Sure We Can*, an estimated 10,000 New Yorkers are part of New York City’s canning community.<sup>16</sup> Increasing New York State’s deposit will bring new money into canning communities across the state. The canning community should be recognized as an important, informal part of the state’s solid waste collection system.

Expanding the Bottle Bill would be a major financial benefit both for New York’s municipalities and the state as a whole. While recycling an additional 5.5 billion containers, *Reloop* estimates that expanding the law would save New York municipalities \$70.9 million dollars annually through waste diversion.<sup>17</sup> Not only would municipalities save financially, but diversion on this scale would save an estimated 331,900 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, the equivalent of removing 32,000 cars every year.<sup>18</sup> The unclaimed bottle deposits are a revenue generator to the state’s General Fund that brings in millions of dollars to support environmental programs statewide. According to an estimate by *Reloop*, New York State’s revenues from an expanded bottle deposit law coupled with an increase in the deposit to a dime would result in an increase in of \$40 million to \$200 million to the state’s budget.<sup>19</sup> In 2022, the state received \$129 million from unclaimed bottle deposits.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Ensure redemption compliance*

There have been media reports over time that have identified serious instances in which the Bottle Deposit Law has been ignored.<sup>21</sup> In addition, an audit of the Department of Taxation and Finance’s oversight of the collections generated from the Bottle Deposit System, the state Comptroller in 2017<sup>22</sup> identified weaknesses. The report made a series of recommendations on how to strengthen the DEC’s compliance program. We have not yet seen a more recent audit but believe that a program that is vigorously enforced is one that is most likely to meet its objective. Given that roughly one-third of covered containers are not redeemed, this is an area in which the

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<sup>15</sup> Eunomia, “Employment and Economic Impact of Container Deposits- New York,” March 6th, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> “Hard-working Canners Talk About Their Haul and What Keeps Them Going,” *The Indypendent*, Issue 281, <https://indypendent.org/2023/08/hard-working-canners-talk-about-their-long-haul-and-what-keeps-them-going/>.

<sup>17</sup> Reloop, “Reimagining the Bottle Bill,” June, 2022,

<https://bottlebillreimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Reimagining-the-Bottle-Bill-FINAL-JUNE-2022.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Reloop, “Reimaging the Bottle Bill,

<https://bottlebillreimagined.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Reimagining-the-Bottle-Bill-FINAL-JUNE-2022.pdf>

Reloop estimates that an enhanced program would generate \$171m – \$349m available for state investment, p. 33. In order to be conservative, we subtracted the \$129m currently generated from the program. Thus, our estimate of \$40m to \$200m.

<sup>20</sup> New York State Department of Taxation & Finance, “Fiscal year tax collections: 2021-2022

Annual statistical report of New York State tax collections statistical summaries and historical tables fiscal year 2021-2022,”

[https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/collections/fy\\_collections\\_stat\\_report/2021-2022-annual-statistical-reports.htm](https://www.tax.ny.gov/research/collections/fy_collections_stat_report/2021-2022-annual-statistical-reports.htm).

<sup>21</sup> For example, “NY Bottle Bill violator receives \$500,000 penalty,” Recycling Today,

<https://www.recyclingtoday.com/news/new-york-can-bottle-bill-recycling-penalty/>

<sup>22</sup> New York Office of the State Comptroller, “Controls Over Unclaimed Bottle Deposits Department of Taxation and Finance,” 2017.

Legislature should, as part of its oversight responsibilities, hold ongoing public hearings on whether the program is being adequately monitored and regulated.

*Bolster the DEC's grant program*

As you know, the beverage container assistance program was created in 2009. At that time, it was intended to enhance the public's availability of redemption options as well as increase the use of new technologies. However, it has been reported that the program lacks sufficient resources, or worse does not use its existing resources, necessary to meet its mandate.

The state must do all it can to tackle the twin crises posed by growing solid waste pressures and the threat of a climate catastrophe. We urge you to ensure that the DEC is doing all it can to make this program work and if additional resources are needed, that you provide them.

A *comprehensive* approach is what is needed: an approach that modernizes the program, enhances its efficiency, and improves the oversight by the DEC.

A *comprehensive* approach has broad public support as demonstrated in a recent Siena College Research Institute poll, looking at the popularity of modernizing New York's Bottle Bill. *The poll found that 71 percent of respondents favor expanding the recycling program to include bottles and cans for beverages including teas, sports drinks, juices, wine and liquor.*<sup>23</sup> The poll amplified the call from community, civic, and environmental organizations to Governor Hochul to modernize the state's Bottle Bill as part of her Executive Budget. The poll found that a strong majority of New Yorkers are supportive of the program, believe it reduced litter in the state, and support raising the deposit on beverage containers from a nickel to a dime.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. NYPIRG looks forward to working with you to ensure that New York continues its march toward its goal of a circular economy.

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<sup>23</sup> Barnes, Steve, *Poll: New Yorkers favor expanded recycling, 10¢ deposit*, Albany Times-Union, January 29, 2023, <https://www.timesunion.com/environment/article/poll-new-yorkers-favor-expanded-recycling-10-17748223.php>.



**Presented before the  
New York City Council  
City Council's Finance Committee  
Oversight Hearing: The Mayor's November Financial Plan  
December 12, 2023**

Thank you Chair Justin Brannan and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding The Mayor's November Financial Plan. We would like to share our appreciation for the Council's support of arts, culture, and arts education across New York City. We are writing to support the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on New York City to prioritize funding for arts in NYC schools and communities.

Since 1908, Partnership with Children (PWC) has strengthened the emotional, social, and cognitive skills of children in New York City to succeed in school, society, and life. We place licensed clinical social workers and teaching artists in schools to provide young people growing up in poverty with trauma-informed mental health counseling, community-based programming, and healing-based arts education. Through this approach, our students build the skills necessary to break cycles of poverty and become advocates for their communities. Last school year, PWC's youth mental health, healing arts, and community-based programming impacted over 27,000 children, families, and community members across 48 NYC public schools. In 2015, PWC began partnering with the Office of Community Schools (OCS) as a lead CBO in community schools across the city.

We would like to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and the members of the City Council for their continued support of our services to support New York City students.

**PWC's Healing Based Arts Education**

The Arts in Education Department at Partnership with Children works to infuse healing arts into PWC's work with children across New York City by providing high-quality, culturally responsive, community-based arts instruction to foster the holistic development of children in our schools. As a supportive pillar of PWC school-based programming, we use arts to address the trauma that impacts students' lives, while simultaneously strengthening the ecosystem of relationships surrounding them in their school environments. Our work supports students' abilities to analyze, share, and interpret their experiences, assuring they are active contributors in shaping their communities and futures.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, PWC provided healing-based arts education in 37 different schools across all five boroughs, reaching over 2,384 students. PWC's healing-based arts education is integrated into NYC public schools, and can be delivered in-school, after-school,



and during summer programming, supporting artistic pathways from kindergarten through college and career.

Arts education is instrumental to student learning. [Research](#) shows that students who experienced increased arts education also experienced improvements in their writing, emotional and cognitive empathy, school engagement, and aspirations for post-secondary education. At PWC, we know from experience that healing-based arts education positively impacts student learning and mental wellness. Through healing-based arts education, students can learn life skill-building activities that are beneficial to them as learners and also community members. With the benefits offered by arts education coupled with the impact and traumas associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are concerned about the proposed budget cuts to the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Education.

### **Proposed Budget Cuts to DCLA and DOE**

Budget cuts of \$16.4 million to DCLA and more than \$1B to New York City Public Schools threaten our city's creative spirit, economic prosperity, and our students. Cuts to these agencies will harm arts education and the cultural community that is part of the fabric of this city. The proposed cuts included in the November Financial Plan are further compounded by the expiration of temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds, which have funded considerable arts education programming to support students' academic recovery and social-emotional well-being over the past three school years.

Our city's young people are still feeling the impact of the traumas associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Arts education provides a remarkable form of healing for New York City students. Please prioritize investment in arts education.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. Please contact Wesner Pierre at [wpierre@partnershipwithchildren.org](mailto:wpierre@partnershipwithchildren.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.



## Executive Budget Hearing: Finance Committee

**To:** Councilmember Justin Brannan  
**From:** Mino Lora, Executive Artistic Director  
**Date:** December 11, 2023

Dear Councilmember Brannan and committee members,

Thank you for your advocacy and leadership on behalf of arts and culture and nonprofits in NYC. I write on behalf of **People's Theatre Project (PTP)**, the largest performing arts organization in Manhattan north of Harlem, member organization for the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) and steering committee member for the Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LXNY). We, at PTP, create theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more just and equitable world. As an immigrant and Latina-led organization, our neighbors of all ages, backgrounds, and immigration status in Washington Heights, Inwood, and the Bronx trust and rely upon us.

At PTP, theatre is our tool in the work of social justice, amplifying and humanizing the stories of NYC immigrants: we create and produce **original theatre by immigrant artists of color**. Through our multi-year **PTP Academy for Leadership, Theatre, & Activism** and our **PTP Partnerships** with schools and CBOs, we serve over 1,000 Multilingual Learners (MLLs) every year. Free of charge to all families, our programs guide these young people through a unique curriculum that guides them through a journey of self-discovery and celebration of their cultures.

We are grateful for the support that we receive from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs every year—this funding is essential for us to consistently serve thousands of audiences, young people, and families! Because of this, the 15% cut announced last month concerns us greatly, as does the lack of transparency about where programming and services will be cut. In particular, cuts to arts and culture funding will be devastating to our immigrant community in Washington Heights and Inwood, severely impacting our ability and capacity to provide service to our Title 1 and Title 3 school partners.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of our programs. PTP, as well as many of our Uptown arts and social service partners, touch every vital aspect of daily life—from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment

to language access. That's why People's Theatre Project joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions—not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City:

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions

Consider that the impact of City Council funds will go *so much further* if invested in the nonprofits who are the direct connections and service providers to your constituents. We create safe and inclusive spaces for ALL New Yorkers: City funding is essential and transformative.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mino Lora".

Mino Lora  
Executive Artistic Director



Empowering LGBTQ and Feminist artists and communities  
Pioneering dance, arts and education for social change

Written Testimony – Pioneers Go East Collective

Dec 13, 2023

**Subject line: Supporting the arts and cultural sector to uplift communities.**

Dear Finance Committee,

On behalf of Pioneers Go East Collective, a grassroots arts and culture nonprofit championing LGBTQIA+ BIPOC and immigrant artists, we join our colleagues throughout the arts sector in urging the City not to make any budget cuts at this time. Our arts sector is deeply committed to our community. It is imperative we continue to execute programming since we have long-term commitments with partners, artists, and low-income communities who benefit from our free cultural and arts programs.

Any budget cut will negatively affect cultural organizers, artists, teaching artists and administrators as they continue to work to support our communities in all five boroughs. Especially for many small-scale arts and cultural organizations like ours, supporting the next generation of art-makers and social practitioners and providing free and accessible services and programs to underserved communities, the proposed cuts undermine the cultural vibrancy of New York City for years to come.

Ultimately, we recognize how additional resources to the arts and cultural sector could positively impact artists and communities alike. As communities in all five boroughs face so many challenges - it's crucial to continue to build positive intergenerational dialogues. We recognize the potential to build more vital cultural programming in safe spaces and expand community outreach throughout the 5 boroughs.

With thanks for all you do to supporting the arts and culture in New York City.

Sincerely,  
Gian Marco Riccardo Lo Forte (he/they)  
Artistic Founding Director  
Pioneers Go East Collective

**Board of Directors:** Margaret Browne | Jean Carbain | Daniel Anabella Lenzu | Barry | Barry Ghirija Ranganathan  
**Board Advisory:** Nicky Paraiso, Annina Nosei, Joyce Isabelle

Pioneers Go East Collective, Inc. earned a 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition offered by GuideStar, the world's largest source for nonprofit.

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Pioneers Go East Collective, Inc. - 7 East 3<sup>rd</sup> street, # 10 – New York City, New York, 10003  
[www.pioneersgoeast.org](http://www.pioneersgoeast.org) / [pioneersgoeast@gmail.com](mailto:pioneersgoeast@gmail.com) / 646-246-8797

# PORT RICHMOND North Shore Alliance

Dedicated to the revitalization and healthy development of our family-oriented communities through Quality of Life issues.

128 Port Richmond Avenue Suite 2-G Staten Island, NY 10302  
PortRichmondStrong.com FaceBook: Port Richmond Strong  
PortRichmondStrong@gmail.com

New York City Council

December 8, 2023

## A Plea from Staten Island, The Borough of Parks NO MORE CUTS TO PARKS

Currently, the Island has a little over 10,000 acres of park land, including city parks, state parks like Clay Pit Ponds State Preserve, and federal parks, like parts of the Gateway National Recreation Area. That puts Staten Island's total area of parkland over 30%. When complete, Freshkills Park will add another 2,200 acres to the Island's total park space, making it second only to Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx for the largest in the city.

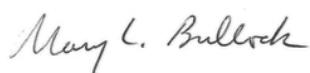
More than 90% of New York City Parks local staff lives here on Staten Island, so not only are they caring for the parks, but they're the users of the parks.

The dark side of this rosy picture is that, here on the North Shore, especially in Port Richmond -- which is a Federal Environmental Justice neighborhood and home to the most diverse low income, immigrant, and ethnic community -- our parks are vital to a population who use them regularly and depend on them for physical, emotional and mental health. Many of our residents do not have cars. We have a large percentage of children. Their health over their lifetimes -- even their lifespan -- can be profoundly impacted by how much time they spend in healthy outdoor recreation. Whatever you may save by these cuts will be spent many times over to deal with the human results.

Then there is the matter of crime -- a 1979 Federal DOJ Study found that the most profound effect on crime rates was not policing, not availability of social services, but the appearance of the local area. Poorly maintained parks tell everyone it is open season on this neighborhood. Through a lot of hard work and community involvement, our 121<sup>st</sup> Precinct currently has the lowest crime rate on Staten Island.

We urge you NO MORE CUTS TO PARKS.

Urgently Submitted,



Mary Bullock  
Founder/President



Mario Buonviaggio  
Vice President



TESTIMONY OF DR. JAMES DAVIS, PRESIDENT  
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY  
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
DECEMBER 11, 2023

OVERSIGHT - MAYOR'S NOVEMBER FINANCIAL PLAN

Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. I am James Davis, President of the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing 30,000 faculty and professional staff at CUNY. We are grateful to the committee for holding this important hearing and for its ongoing support for resources for CUNY students.

As the country's largest public, urban higher education system, CUNY is an economic engine for New York State and a community where 250,000 students receive instruction, advising, and mentorship from our members. Over 80 percent of CUNY undergraduates are New York City high school graduates - your constituents - and the majority stay in the City after graduation. Together they contribute over \$4 billion annually to the state economy.<sup>1</sup> Some become the needed teachers and nurses our city so badly needs. Some even become legislators. With applications for the fall 2024 semester up a whopping 386% thanks to recent efforts by the University and Governor Hochul, CUNY's enrollment will continue to rebound and its prominence will only grow.<sup>2</sup>

PSC appreciates the opportunity to remind this council of CUNY's economic and cultural impact on our city. But this body understands this. Thanks to your efforts to restore \$32.4 million, CUNY's community colleges were shielded from the worst of the Mayor's cuts in FY24.<sup>3</sup> So it concerns us that the Mayoral Administration is using a midyear budget

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<sup>1</sup> [Comptroller Stringer Analysis: CUNY Graduates Earn Combined \\$57 Billion Annually, Highlighting CUNY's Significant Contributions to Local and State Economies](#), March 2021

<sup>2</sup> [CUNY Applications More Than Quadruple in October – CUNY Newswire](#) November 2023

<sup>3</sup> Statement from PSC/CUNY, [Eight for Full City Funding of CUNY FY2024 - PSC CUNY \(psc-cuny.org\)](#)

modification as a political tool to hurt his alma mater with a proposed cut of \$23 million through the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG).

CUNY students, as you know, are not typical college students: Nearly half are first generation college students; half come from households with annual incomes below \$30,000; 36% have reported food insecurity; 35% are foreign-born; 80% are people of color. The city should be focused on supporting these students, not defunding them.

While it is unclear how CUNY would implement the proposed cuts, the PEG report cites reductions related to the ASAP program.<sup>4</sup> ASAP is a nationally recognized, landmark program providing 1-1 guidance and financial support to participating community college students. To jeopardize any part of this program is both cruel and shortsighted. We do not have an enrollment crisis at CUNY, we have a retention crisis. The Mayoral Administration should prioritize programs with a demonstrated record of retaining students through to graduation. Additional line items for CUNY include savings restoration of \$5.9 million and a \$16.3 million reduction in fringe benefits. Which begs the question, “whose fringe”?

As we speak, the CUNY administration is cannibalizing its own colleges to cover operating costs, to the tune of nearly \$128 million over the last two fiscal years.<sup>5</sup> My campus, Brooklyn College, has been asked to find an additional \$3.5 million in savings in this fiscal year and another \$4.5 million next fiscal year after having over \$6.6 million in savings demanded by the university administration in the current fiscal year. There is a hiring freeze, and 62 fewer full-time faculty members are teaching this fall semester than in 2019, before the pandemic hit.<sup>6</sup> These are unsustainable trends that will drive students away.

At a time when progress has been made at the state level toward a New Deal for CUNY and a fundamental shift in funding public higher education, it is dismaying to see the Mayor inflict cuts that are unnecessary and injurious.<sup>7</sup> After decades of disinvestment, Governor Hochul pledged \$1.5 billion for SUNY and CUNY over five years in her first budget; expanded the Tuition Assistance Program to part-time students; and streamlined the loan

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<sup>4</sup> [Program to Eliminate the Gap \(PEG\) - November 2023 \(nyc.gov\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> FY2023 savings targets totaled \$41,487,000. FY2024 savings targets totaled an additional \$86,380,000, for a two-year combined total of \$127,867,000 savings sought from the colleges.

<sup>6</sup> According to CUNY, there were 420 full-time faculty teaching at Brooklyn College in Fall 2023, compared to 482 in Fall 2019.

<sup>7</sup> To learn more about New Deal for CUNY (S2146/A4425) please visit [Fight for Full State Funding of CUNY FY 2024 - PSC CUNY \(psc-cuny.org\)](#)

*Testimony of Dr. James Davis, President  
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

*Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance  
December 11, 2023 Oversight - Mayor's November Financial Plan*

forgiveness program<sup>8</sup> We will continue to advocate for the state resources our students deserve, but the city's proposed across-the-board cuts to CUNY will inflict unquestionable damage on our campuses, especially the community colleges, and make our advocacy at the state level far more difficult.

It is unconscionable that PSC members and students face austerity in a variety of services, not just CUNY. Libraries are expected to cut hours; Parks Department will cut maintenance staff; composting programs and associated jobs will be lost<sup>9</sup>; a hiring freeze for teachers at DOE; slots eliminated from Universal Pre-K programs next year<sup>10</sup>. If there is a problem with recruiting and retaining a workforce in a vibrant New York City, these cuts will exacerbate it.

The middle class is the backbone of this city. Yet, the proposed PEG cuts directly target us. PSC members, students and all New Yorkers benefit from robust social programs and well managed city-services. Essential services like those mentioned above benefit all New Yorkers; cutting them is shortsighted and will have a lasting impact on our communities. We deserve better than what the Mayor has proposed.

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<sup>8</sup>[Governor Hochul Signs Legislation to Expand Public Servants' Access to Student Loan Forgiveness | Department of Financial Services \(ny.gov\)](#) September 15, 2022

<sup>9</sup>[New York City will eliminate community composting programs when budget cuts go into effect \(msn.com\)](#) December 1, 2023

<sup>10</sup>[NYC Education Department cuts \\$547 million to comply with Eric Adams order - Chalkbeat](#) November 16, 2023

*Testimony of Dr. James Davis, President  
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

*Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance  
December 11, 2023 Oversight - Mayor's November Financial Plan*



# PROJECT GUARDIANSHIP

Changing the way we care for people.

## Testimony for the NYC Council

### NY CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Justin Brannan, Chair**

**December 11, 2023**

**Kimberly George, President and CEO, Project Guardianship**

Thank you, Chair Brannan, and Committee Members, for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Kimberly George, and I am President and CEO of Project Guardianship, a spinoff program of the Vera Institute of Justice and a non-profit organization providing comprehensive, person-centered, court appointed adult guardianship services to hundreds of limited capacity New Yorkers citywide. Our clients are living with disability, dementia, serious mental illness, substance misuse, Traumatic Brain Injury, and other conditions that negatively impact their ability to manage their affairs. We serve clients regardless of their ability to pay and provide services for some of the most compelling and complex cases in the city. We also share research and policy recommendations for a better guardianship system and advocate for more equitable service provision for people in need of surrogate decision-making supports or protective arrangements.

I submit this testimony in opposition to proposed further cuts to the citywide budget. Critical services New Yorkers rely on, like the ones we provide daily at Project Guardianship in partnership with other nonprofits across the city, will bear the brunt of budget cuts this year. Nonprofit clients, their families, and broader communities will suffer harm as a result.

We are particularly concerned about proposed cuts to NYC Aging, the Dept of Health & Mental Hygiene, NYCHA, the HRA, and Health & Hospitals - all agencies our clients routinely rely on and interface with. Likewise, we are also very concerned about cuts to the numerous nonprofit organizations these and other city agencies contract and subcontract with to provide direct services to New Yorkers.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Project Guardianship touch every vital aspect of our clients' daily life - from public benefits, health and human services to stable and affordable housing. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us



# PROJECT GUARDIANSHIP

Changing the way we care for people.

further. The city cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public health and safety of New York City.

We ask that the City reconsider these cuts and find alternative solutions to the city's fiscal issues. Cutting vital supports and services for the city's most underserved populations is not the answer. The city should consider its reserves and request additional funding from the state and/or the federal government before proposing such dramatic cuts to services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at [KGeorge@nycourts.gov](mailto:KGeorge@nycourts.gov).



Testimony before the New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
December 11, 2023

Eric Rosenbaum, President & CEO  
Project Renewal

*Project Renewal's mission is to end the cycle of homelessness by empowering individuals and families to renew their lives with health, homes, and jobs.*

[www.projectrenewal.org](http://www.projectrenewal.org)

My name is Eric Rosenbaum and I am the President and CEO of Project Renewal, a New York City homeless services nonprofit agency. Thank you to Chair Brannan and the City Council for calling this important hearing.

For over 55 years, Project Renewal has provided shelter, housing, health care, and employment services to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. We are grateful to the entire City Council for your support of our programs.

Project Renewal has partnered with the city to address some of our biggest challenges. Through our programs, we especially focus on New Yorkers affected by mental illness, substance use, and criminal justice involvement. Investments in services like ours—not cuts—are needed to continue this impactful work:

- Our quality, specialized shelters; transitional housing; and permanent supportive housing programs help to address the growing homelessness crisis, serving over 3,700 people each year. Support provided across our continuum of housing programs leads to lasting stability: 99% of our shelter clients placed into homes remained out of the shelter system for at least a year.
- We are helping people with histories of homelessness, unemployment, and under-employment get back to work. In FY2023, we placed nearly 400 New Yorkers—including veterans—from our culinary and homeless services sector-based training programs into jobs.
- Over 8,000 people receive substance use disorder treatment, medical care, or psychiatric services through our robust health programs. Amid the overdose and mental health crises, these services are essential.
- We also fill a critical gap in the city's ecosystem through our innovative programs, like the city's first Support and Connection Center (SCC), which we operate in partnership with DOHMH. We offer services for people experiencing homelessness and acute mental health and/or substance use crises who would otherwise fall through the cracks. The SCC provides a safe space for guests to access services and then connects them to longer term support.

Even before any budget cuts, providers like us are already operating under challenging circumstances. Our impact is only possible because of the dedicated human services workers who show up every day to work on the front lines of our city's homelessness crisis—yet it is difficult to recruit and retain talent due to low pay.

Despite doing some of the most important and difficult work, our frontline employees—like the rest of the human services workforce—are some of the lowest paid workers in our city's economy. Unfortunately, the hands of human services nonprofits like us are tied.

The government contracts we rely on either *directly* set low salary levels, or do so *indirectly* by establishing low rates for services along with required staffing levels on a contract. And salaries are often stagnant because these contracts last at least five years. Investments in the human services workforce are absolutely essential in order to address these challenges.

We call on the City Council to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions—not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any

additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the well-being of all New Yorkers. We stand ready to continue this dialogue about solutions to ensure our sector can continue to deliver services that are needed now, more than ever.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

**Testimony of Morgan Monaco, President, Prospect Park Alliance**  
**NYC Council Oversight Hearing: Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
**December 11, 2023**

I am Morgan Monaco, the President of Prospect Park Alliance, a non-profit organization responsible for operating Prospect Park in partnership with the City. Today, I am here to emphasize the gravity of the budget cuts to parks and the significant impact they will have on our communities. As members of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which comprises over 450 organizations across the five boroughs, we appreciate the opportunity to address the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan, and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan regarding the mayor's November Financial Plan and its impact on parks.

Prospect Park, as Brooklyn's flagship park, is an indispensable green space for our community, which has the least amount of green space per capita among all New York City boroughs, welcoming over 10 million visitors annually. Operating within a public-private partnership, we depend on the City for basic maintenance, trash management, tree services, enforcement, and more.

NYC Parks has long operated under an austerity budget, facing chronic underfunding for the past 40 years. Only 0.6% of the city budget is allocated to parks, despite parks comprising 14% of all city land. In contrast, other major U.S. cities invest anywhere from 1-5% in their parks. The November cuts, including a reduction in staff by approximately 350 positions, the elimination of critical programs such as the tree risk assessment program, and the loss of preventive tree care, will have enduring consequences for our parks. Sanitation Program cuts will eliminate trash pick-up along park perimeters, adding a burden to NYC Parks. Most significantly, the Human Resources Administration's cut to the Parks Opportunity Program (POP) has reduced the frontline cleaning workforce responsible for maintaining our city's nearly 2,000 parks by 47%, resulting in an expected loss of 1.3 million hours a year for cleaning, care, and maintenance of our parks. This reduction means that many parks will now be serviced only 1 to 3 times a week, significantly impacting their cleanliness, safety, and overall appeal as vital community spaces.

At the onset of the pandemic, the NYC Parks budget faced similar cuts, resulting in the worst park conditions in 20 years within months by the agency's own metrics. Parks were inundated with trash, lawns went unmaintained, restrooms were closed or in poor condition, and programming was curtailed. Without intervention, there's a risk of reverting to these adverse conditions or experiencing even worse outcomes if we don't prevent this cut.

Our parks are vital to our community, as demonstrated during the Covid pandemic when they served as the heart of our city. They are critical infrastructure in the climate crisis, mitigating the heat island effect, and absorbing carbon dioxide and stormwater when the city faces record heat and flooding. On any given day, parks are the landscape of our shared humanity. On any given day, parks are the landscape of our shared humanity. Cutting our parks system is not a luxury; it is crucial to the health and well-being of our city.

Testimony for NYC Council Finance Committee on PEG cuts  
Submitted by Evie Hantzopoulos, Executive Director, Queens Botanical Garden

December 11, 2023

My name is Evie Hantzopoulos and I am the Executive Director of Queens Botanical Garden, a 39-acre urban oasis located in downtown Flushing. Like other members of the Cultural Institutions Group, a diverse coalition of 34 nonprofit museums, performing arts centers, historical societies, zoos, and botanical gardens located in New York City, Queens Botanical Garden is charged with caring for, programming, and maintaining a critical public space for our City. We have a unique mission centering environmental sustainability and being a place where people, plants, and cultures meet.

Every day that we are open we see hundreds of seniors practicing Tai Chi in an accessible and safe space that benefits their health; we see school children explore our botanical collections and learn about climate change, ecosystems, and how to be stewards of the environment; we see thousands come for free public programming that celebrates the diverse heritages of New York City and the role that we play in an interdependent world; we take in over 200 tons of organic material and transform what would have been sent to landfill into rich, 100% organic compost for public use; we grow 8,000 lbs of produce that we donate to community partners who address food insecurity.

The November cuts to Queens Botanical Garden are twofold; first we were shocked to see the complete elimination of the highly successful and popular 30 year-old community composting project from Department of Sanitation. Second, we have been hit with a cut to our baseline funding – the very funding that the City gives us to care for the Garden and that has remained the same for over a decade while our costs have gone up.

We are now forced to layoff of our NYC Compost staff who do such critical work, as well as furlough all full-time staff for three months which will reduce their hours by 20% so we can retain jobs while we face this uncertainty. Our part-time staff will also see reduced hours, and we will need to assess whether we must close the Garden to the public an additional day each week. There are other steps we need to take – cutting back on free programming, maintenance and pruning of our trees, and more, should these cuts continue.

Many non-profits and institutions still have not recovered from the impact of COVID; the residents of our City are also in need of the services so many of us provide. Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Queens Botanical Garden touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services,

cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We are an ecosystem, and we need each other to ensure a resilient and sustainable future for NYC. Austerity cuts do not create a thriving and safe city and they must be stopped.

Thank you.

Queens Museum  
New York City Building  
Flushing Meadows Corona Park  
Queens, NY 11368

**Committee on Finance**  
**Written Testimony Submitted by:**  
**Sally Tallant, President and Executive Director, Queens Museum**  
**December 11, 2023**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony. I am Sally Tallant, the President and Executive Director of Queens Museum (QM).

QM is dedicated to presenting the highest quality visual arts and educational programming for the people of New York, and in particular, the residents of Queens. QM is a community museum, welcoming individuals of all ages, abilities, linguistic preferences, and socio-economic backgrounds to engage with the diverse resources we offer. We fulfill our mission through exhibitions, public programs, and education experiences that promote the appreciation and enjoyment of art, uplift artists, and enhance quality of life through interpreting, collecting, and presenting art.

Today, the Museum serves an annual audience of 250,000 individuals that participate in our exhibitions, educational initiatives, and public programs. Based on our belief that the work we do is strengthened by the range of people participating and contributing, diversity is at the core of our programming. Our audiences reflect the demographics of Queens, the most diverse and international community in the country.

Our Education programs include in-school residencies, after school programs, and school tours and serve 5,000 preK-12 grade students in 140 New York City schools each year. These programs are highly adaptable and can emphasize arts objectives, be incorporated into project-based or service learning projects, and can reach students broadly or target specific groups. All school programs provide open and welcome spaces that encourage creativity, inquiry, and collaboration through hands-on instruction and interaction. For example, during our Panorama: Suspension Bridges school tour, students work in teams to construct a three-dimensional suspension bridge as they learn about transportation flow and the structural components used in the building of bridges and key architectural terminology. These programs allow QM to positively impact the lives of students from across the city.

Queens Museum is scheduled to break ground on the second and final phase of our capital project in Winter 2025. This second phase will provide for many improvements that will better enable the Museum to fulfill its mission and improve accessibility for students and visitors. The renovation will transform 15,000 sq ft of undeveloped shell space overlooking Flushing Meadows Corona Park into the borough's first and only children's museum's for creativity and play. We will also have additional classrooms and enhanced educational space which will distinctly improve the learning experience of the thousands of constituents who participate in our programs annually.

In advance of the additional classrooms and enhanced educational spaces and significant increase to our visitorship created by the Children's Museum, this is a critical time for us to

continue to expand, enhance, and study our education programming. In order to make the most of all of these new spaces and meet the needs of a larger audience, we are engaging in several capacity building exercises in advance of the Children's Museum including staffing and research. Our goal is to provide educational programming for our community: from our youngest visitors to seniors in advance of and continuing through to the opening of the Museum.

We need every single penny of our current baseline funding and much more to ensure that the Museum is successful as we double in size and expand the breadth of our programming. Due to the November cut, we are realizing an over \$43,000 cut to our bottom line. We have already reduced our programs and services as a result of this cut and plan to make similar adjustments in the new year. The additional 5% planned cuts in January will be devastating to the operations of our Museum.

We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We stand with the entire cultural community and all non profit organizations from across every sector when we respectfully request that the City refrain from further hindering the social services we are providing to all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time.



# City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

December 8, 2023

Dear Esteemed Council Members,

**Reach Out and Read of Greater New York (ROR GNY)** submits this testimony on behalf of **City's First Readers (CFR)**.

The literacy crisis existed long before the pandemic. Today, as a result of COVID-19, our children are even more at risk of not being able to get a healthy and fair start. In NYC, over half of public-school 3rd graders read below grade level, especially in communities of concentrated poverty, where one age-appropriate book exists for every 300 children.

The correlations between poverty, the failure to read proficiently, and failure to graduate high school have been quantified and reinforced by research time and time again. Children not reading proficiently by 3rd grade are 4x more likely to drop out and not graduate high school, re-enforcing generational cycles of socio-economic inequity. Literacy is an indisputable factor of future success in the lives of our children— those who read well most likely also live well and thrive.

Thankfully, literacy is learned, with access to resources and encouragement. **ROR GNY and CFR** are doing just that --- closing opportunity gaps for NYC's youngest learners, ensuring a brighter future for New York City's next generation of leaders.

**We urge your continued support and investment in our children. The entire human services sector will be compromised by the Mayor's anticipated budget cuts, reducing essential services at a time of great need. Our city cannot begin to provide the wide range of services one and needs critical support from nonprofit organizations to meet the needs of New York City's most vulnerable children.**

**CFR is the City Council's only early literacy initiative, reaching nearly 1 million families across all 51 council districts.** Through a network of community-driven support from nearly 20 partner organizations, the CFR early childhood programs, resources, and services are free, of high-quality, and have adapted to the changing environment –crucial for building resilient and empowered families.

ROR GNY has been a proud partner of CFR since its very first days and the impact has been incredible. **Annually, ROR GNY reaches over 250,000 children and families through 230+ sites across all five**

**boroughs.** We are proudly the only organization in the CFR cohort providing early literacy guidance to families through their trusted medical professionals in pediatric care. **Through our partnership with CFR, we are able to reach a quarter of a million children every year.** Our network of over 3,000 pediatricians and medical professionals distributes a new book and early literacy guidance to families at every checkup.

Early literacy prepares our children to enter school with a strong foundation and prevents learning and social-emotional gaps in later grades. When families read together, they form trusting relationships that can protect children from the impact of trauma and build a foundation of essential early literacy skills so vital for a brighter future.

Through CFR, our families have more opportunities to access early literacy support in and outside of their homes, from their local library to other fantastic community programs. The cohort focuses on working together to provide literacy support for children and families at every stage of the pipeline – home, school, community, and healthcare – to create a continuum of literacy in children’s lives. Our clinics, just like our public schools, have experienced an influx of new families, and we need to continue to meet the needs of New York City’s most vulnerable children... not just for their sake, but for the sake of New York City’s future.

The City Council has historically recognized the severity of the literacy crisis and demonstrated its generous commitment to addressing it year after year. With the City’s Council’s support, CFR and ROR GNY can continue giving parents the tools they need for their children to thrive, both academically and beyond school.

Thank you, Council Members, for your dedicated service, leadership, and support of City’s First Readers. We advocate for your continued support of CFR and all its stakeholders, as we work together on behalf of the children of NYC.

Yours in Service,



Emily Marchese  
Executive Director, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York  
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P.O. Box 310482  
Brooklyn, NY 11231

**New York City Council Committee on Finance**

**Monday, December 11, 2023**

**Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.**

**Red Hook Conservancy**

Good afternoon, my name is Marlene Pantin, and I am the Executive Director of Red Hook Conservancy. Our organization is a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 450 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting us to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

The current parks budget cuts jeopardize the very heart of our communities, endangering crucial green spaces and recreational areas that serve as sanctuaries for New Yorkers. Their impact extends far beyond dollar amounts, targeting the well-being, and quality of life of countless residents in Red Hook and those who visit our parks, ballfields and recreational center.

In Red Hook, our CB6 Maintenance and Operations (M&O) staff are experiencing a significant loss of staff which has impacted their ability to maintain the 52 sites they manage. As a result, they have had to reduce staffing levels and cleaning services at public restrooms in parks they manage due to ongoing cuts. The initial round of 5% cuts to NYC Parks already resulted in a loss of staff and the delay of critical parks programs. On top of this, from a high of 30 workers, Red Hook M&O now have been left with only 4 workers on their team who were employed through the Human Resources Administration — a large percentage of the frontline cleaning workforce responsible for maintaining those many parks in our Brooklyn CB6 district. Additionally, proposed 5-10% cuts to NYC Parks threaten to drastically reduce seasonal staffing, making it impossible for the local staff to ensure our parks are safe and clean. Our 8 community sports facilities like baseball and soccer fields that park workers should be preparing for the upcoming season will not be groomed and maintained for our youth sport leagues and visitors.

The additional impact of the next round of budget cuts will also severely disable the Parks Department’s ability to provide essential services to the public by affecting staff levels and limiting access to our local public pool at the Red Hook Recreation Center. During the pandemic we saw the impact of budget cuts on our parks. The cleanliness rating decreased by 10%. Council Members and other elected officials remember the phone calls and complaints to their office from constituent outcry of the declining conditions of our parks. Let’s not do this again. We demand no more cuts to parks. NYC Parks must be shielded from the next round of budget cuts as these essential services and green spaces constitute critical infrastructure, especially in the face of the ongoing climate crisis.



Dr. Guy Schaffer  
Department of Science and Technology Studies  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
110 8<sup>th</sup> St  
Troy, NY 12180

December 11, 2023

Dear Finance Committee,

My name is Guy Schaffer, I'm the author of the recent book, *Composting Utopia: Experimental Infrastructures for Organics Recycling in New York City*, which chronicles the work of community composters as they've built local waste systems across NYC. I also serve on the board of directors of BK ROT, a youth-powered nonprofit compost service in Bushwick, built around the principles of environmental justice. I am submitting this testimony in support of restoring funding to community composting.

Over the last decade, I've watched the rollout, cancellation, and reinstatement of curbside composting and the resilience of community composters and microhaulers in the face of policy changes and COVID. I've seen community composters do the work of caring for the city's garbage, protecting New Yorkers from polluted soil, nourishing urban gardens, and caring for their neighborhoods. I've seen community composters come together time and again to fight for the space and support to keep doing this vital, dirty work that benefits the city in so many different ways. I've watched mayors and sanitation commissioners waffle on their support for composting, creating unstable ground on which to build the sustainable city we need to be building.

I'm still trying to understand why community compost has been targeted. The dominant story that I see is that community composting is unnecessary because curbside composting is on its way. However, I think this misses the huge impacts of community composting in NYC and beyond.

A lot of community compost supporters have pointed out that *community compost supports curbside compost*. I think this alone should be reason enough to walk back on these budget cuts. City planners would be hard-pressed to imagine a more effective education system than the NYC Compost Project, which uses a combination of paid and volunteer work to create a functional composting infrastructure that provides education, training, and demonstration projects. DSNY's decision to support these programs—to recognize that community composting can help create a "culture of composting in NYC" is one of the cleverest ways that the city has pursued sustainability. Sanitation realized that composting was already happening in the city's communities, and worked with them to build a meaningful compost system for everyone. I want to believe that curbside

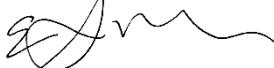
compost can work on its own, but without a dedicated corps of Compost Project staff and volunteers, it will be a difficult struggle.

There's also a more fundamental issue with these cuts, though: *community compost does stuff that curbside compost will never do*. To say that curbside composting is a substitute for community composting seems to presume that the function of composting is simply to divert food scraps from the waste stream. This is a great reason to compost—it's how I initially got interested in composting. But it's just a tiny part of the picture of what community compost does. Earth Matter leads volunteer days where regular people have an opportunity to learn from master composters, and spend time on an urban farm. Big Reuse accepts extra food scraps from community composters and microhaulers, such as BK ROT, which allows these smaller systems to meet the enormous disposal needs of New Yorkers. The Master Composter Certification Courses train composters across the city, and have become a gold standard for compost education. And smaller neighborhood projects serve as hubs in their communities, offering ad hoc daycare services and meeting spaces, in addition to diverting food scraps and creating compost. And these impacts resonate beyond NYC—I used the farmer's market dropoff model developed in NYC as a framework to start a community composting program in Troy, NY, where I live. Across the country there are community composters who were inspired by NYC community composters. Community composters are innovators, developing composting systems to meet their local needs, and coming up with new ideas that can support composting everywhere.

I don't know how many of you have spent time in any of these systems, but they are beautiful. When you hang out there, you see so many more possibilities for what a sustainable city can be. There is nothing more New York than the city's community composters, doing their own thing their own way in every neighborhood of the city, but still working to create this beautiful patchwork culture of composting. Cutting funding to the NYC Compost Project will be a huge blow to the composting culture they have created, and send a clear message that the city is unwilling to invest in its neighborhoods.

So I urge you to reinstate funding for the NYC Compost Project, and support the New Yorkers who are already building a sustainable city together.

Sincerely,



Guy Schaffer

Lecturer, Department of Science and Technology Studies  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

**New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Monday, December 11, 2023  
Oversight Hearing – Mayor’s November Financial Plan  
Testimony of Riverside Park Conservancy**

Good afternoon, my name is Merritt Birnbaum, and I am the President and CEO of Riverside Park Conservancy. We are one of over 450 organizations that belong to the Play Fair Coalition. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the Mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it will impact just ONE of our City’s 1,942 public parks.

Riverside Park Conservancy works through a maintenance and operations agreement with NYC Parks to help the City care for 450 acres spread across five parks, along 6 miles of waterfront in upper Manhattan from West 59<sup>th</sup> Street to West 181<sup>st</sup> Street.

We are fortunate to have built a 35-year history that leverages thousands of hours of volunteer time and financial resources to supplement the City’s dwindling workforce. We recognize that the vast majority of public parks in our city do not have the benefit of Conservancy groups. Our situation only underscores how dire the current round of cuts – and any future cuts – will be for parks in our most vulnerable communities.

In addition to its own cuts, the Parks Department is the victim as other agencies strive meet their PEG mandates. HRA is saving \$59 million from its own budget by cutting the Parks Opportunities Program, a jobs program that has existed for three decades and currently employs 1,400 essential parks workers.

To put details on the magnitude of the crisis: Today in Riverside Park, over HALF of our frontline maintenance positions are filled by this program. Cutting this workforce will decimate basic services that keep the Park clean and safe. It will effectively eliminate:

- 50% of trash pick-ups
- 50% of lawn mowing
- 50% of graffiti removal, and
- 50% of bathroom cleanings.

In smaller parks around the City, a cut of this magnitude is akin taking away these services altogether.

To eliminate seasonal positions from an agency that has relied on this workforce for decades is to cripple an already broken system. City Hall says there are no lay-offs, but by not filling thousands of necessary jobs, you are not only keeping more New Yorkers unemployed, you are actively harming the remaining Parks workers who can’t possibly fill the gaps of their absent colleagues.

We know what this looks like. During the pandemic, our parks also suffered. When summer 2024 arrives, we can look forward to rotting trash, scurrying rats, discarded needles, overflowing toilets, and graffiti-covered playgrounds.

Our parks are a direct reflection of our City's commitment to the health and happiness of its residents. A revered Parks advocate once called public parks the "lungs of the city." Well, our City is on life support. Don't cut off the oxygen. We adamantly oppose any further cuts to Parks.



**We refuse to be invisible®**

**TESTIMONY**

New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Oversight Hearing on the Mayor's November Financial Plan.  
Monday, December 11, 2023

Delivered by:

MJ Okma

Senior Manager of Advocacy and Government Relations

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan and members of the NYC Council Committee on Finance. Thank you for your leadership and the work of your staff and the committee staff for bringing together this important oversight hearing.

SAGE is the country's first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) and HIV-affected older people. We have been serving LGBTQ+ elders and HIV-affected older New Yorkers for over four decades. With the support of the New York City Council, we provide comprehensive social services and community-building programs through our network of six LGBTQ+ older adult centers along with extensive virtual programming, and services for homebound LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV. SAGE also made history for our city in 2020 and 2021 when, together with our developer partners, we opened New York's first LGBTQ+ welcoming elder housing developments: Stonewall House in Brooklyn and Crotona Pride House in the Bronx.

Just last month on November 17, 2023, the NYC Council held an important oversight hearing on the currently unmet needs of New Yorkers age 50+ aging with HIV, who are projected to be 70% of New Yorkers with HIV by 2030. A similar hearing on the housing and social services needs of LGBTQ+ elders was held on June 21, 2022. The message out of these oversight hearings were clear: LGBTQ+ elders of color, older New Yorkers living with HIV, and transgender elders have unique and compounding needs that have been ignored due to systemic discrimination and exclusion. **The needs of these communities cannot withstand a 15% cut to the budget when they are already not being fully met under current funding levels, as outlined the testimony of LGBTQ+ elders, older New Yorkers living with HIV, and service providers who support them during these hearings.**

Services for older New Yorkers are more crucial than ever as the population of New Yorkers age 60 and older is growing five times faster than those under 18, with LGBTQ+ elders making up a significant part of this rapidly growing older population.<sup>i</sup> However, LGBTQ+ elders are often

invisible, disconnected from services, and severely isolated as they are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving.<sup>ii</sup>

Because of these thin support networks, LGBTQ+ older people need to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age. Yet, they're often distrustful of government and other institutions based on historical and current discrimination and mistreatment.<sup>iii</sup> New York State ranks among the top 10 states in terms of the percentage of its population that identifies as LGBTQ+. Of the estimated 800,000 LGBTQ+ adults in New York State, nearly one third (28%) are over the age of 50.<sup>iv</sup> And the population of LGBTQ+ older New Yorkers is only expected to grow as the population ages: by 2030, one in five New Yorkers will be over the age of 60.<sup>v</sup>

Additionally, older adults living with HIV make up the majority of New Yorkers living with HIV, and it is estimated that by 2030, over 70% of New Yorkers living with HIV will be over the age of 50.<sup>vi</sup> This growing population is the result of medical advances and the overall aging of our city, but it is also fueled by new HIV diagnoses. Data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 2021 HIV Surveillance Annual Reports shows that over 17% of new HIV diagnoses were of New Yorkers aged 50+.<sup>vii</sup>

**Ageism and sigma combined with a lifetime of compounding discrimination already prevent many LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV from accessing services. In the face of compounding cuts, we must ask ourselves what communities are most likely to fall through the cracks and how we can fight for an equitable budget.** Support for programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. We join our fellow nonprofits calling on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further.

**The needs of the communities SAGE serves cannot withstand a 15% cut to the budget. NYCAging's total budget is \$466.7 million dollars, less than one half of one percent of the city budget. How can we support the unique needs of LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV by slashing NYC Aging's already bare-bone budget?** Any cuts to aging services will have determinantal impacts and LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV who are already facing systematic erasure and discrimination.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning and for the work of the NYC Council combating these cuts. SAGE looks forward to continuing our partnership with the council as we fight to preserve and grow services to support LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV.

*MJ Okma, Senior Manager for Advocacy and Government Relations, SAGE*  
[mokma@sageusa.org](mailto:mokma@sageusa.org)

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<sup>i</sup> LiveOn NY, "Aging is Everyone's Business: Policies for Building a New York for All Ages," August 2021  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/562a3197e4b0493d4ffd3105/t/6113ce58c3617a75b357ad4c/1628687962789/Aging+is+Everyones+Business+FINAL+FINAL-min.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> AARP NY, "Disrupting Disparities: Solutions for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers 50+," January 2021 <https://aarp-states.brightspotcdn.com/ca/eb/c2353b1e45b3a7fa0f15991c47a6/disparities-lgbtq-full-final-spread-v4.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Movement Advancement Project, "LGBT Older People & COVID-19," May 2020  
<https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/2020%20LGBTQ%20Older%20Adults%20COVID.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> AARP NY, "Disrupting Disparities: Solutions for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers 50+," January 2021 <https://aarp-states.brightspotcdn.com/ca/eb/c2353b1e45b3a7fa0f15991c47a6/disparities-lgbtq-full-final-spread-v4.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> LiveOn NY and Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, Aging is Everyone's Business: Policies for Building a New York for All Ages, 2021  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/562a3197e4b0493d4ffd3105/t/6113ce58c3617a75b357ad4c/1628687962789/Aging+is+Everyones+Business+FINAL+FINAL-min.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Gilead Sciences, "HIV Age Positively® 2021 Progress Report, "November 2021 <https://www.gilead.com/-/media/files/pdfs/other/gilead-agepositively-boardreport.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, "HIV Surveillance Annual Report," 2021  
<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/dires/hiv-surveillance-annualreport-2021.pdf>



**Testimony for NYC Council Finance Committee**  
**December 11, 2023**

I am Michelle DeMott, and I am the Vice President of External Affairs at Samaritan Daytop Village. I first want to thank you for your continued support during these challenging times. For more than 60 years, Samaritan Daytop Village (SDV) has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for New Yorkers facing adversity. With its humble beginnings as a Queens counseling center, SDV has evolved into a nationally recognized human services organization, doing more good than ever imagined. Today, SDV provides comprehensive health and human services to over 33,000 people each year through a network of more than 60 facilities located throughout New York City, Long Island, and the lower Hudson Valley, and we continue to grow. SDV provides a rich array of services including substance use treatment, mental health and primary health care, specialized programs for military veterans, vocational and employment services, shelter and transitional housing, and services for adolescents, families, and seniors. We believe that Good resides in each of our clients – men and women, veterans and families, mothers and babies, adolescents, and seniors, the unhoused, and the many in recovery. With our dedicated staff and partners in the community, we roll up our sleeves and find the good within the people we serve.

I would first like to ask the city: Why 15? And why are we not being consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut?

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations are already being affected as a result of the cuts announced in November.

Substance use and mental health disorders are pervasive issues that affect millions of individuals worldwide. Fortunately, the field of addiction and mental health treatment has evolved significantly, offering a range of effective interventions to support individuals on their path to recovery. Tragically, the opioid epidemic has ravaged communities, cutting across demographic lines, and left countless lives in its wake. In 2022, 3,026 New Yorkers died of a drug overdose, a 12% increase from 2021 (2,696 deaths), and the highest number since reporting began in 2000. A combination of factors impacts overdose risk, including social and structural conditions that affect overall health and well-being; access to quality healthcare, treatment, and services; the

type of substances used; and the setting of use. Mental health is also a driver of overdose risk. The rate of overdose death increased to 43.3 per 100,000 NYC residents in 2022, from 38.5 per 100,000 in 2021. Black New Yorkers had the highest rate of overdose death, and the largest absolute increase in rate from 2021 to 2022 (52.0 to 62.0 per 100,000 residents). Residents of the Bronx had the highest rate of overdose death in 2022 (73.6 per 100,000 residents), an increase from 2021 (70.1 per 100,000). Fentanyl was the most common substance involved, present in 81% of overdose deaths in 2022. See:

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief137.pdf>

Nonprofits provide a myriad of services on behalf of the government, many of them mandated. The sector is successful at leveraging private and philanthropic dollars to augment funding from the city, state, and federal government, to create even more robust programs. With a critical work force issue in the human services sector, largely due to low pay, coupled with an increased need for services, we need your help. The city must invest in the services that our most vulnerable New Yorkers depend on.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of our programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment, to language access. That's why Samaritan Daytop Village joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. Vulnerable New Yorkers cannot withstand a 15% cut to the city's safety net budget. Any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the safety, behavioral health, and housing needs of our clients.

With the anticipated budget cuts, our Transitional Housing programs, which house approximately 6,000 adults and children daily, will be forced to decrease the number of security guards, compromising the safety of both staff and clients. A 15% budget cut will force us to leave positions vacant, and potentially even lay off employees, risking the services the already marginalized communities we serve so desperately need.

Samaritan Daytop Village is grateful for your continued support. I thank you, on behalf of our agency and our clients. We look forward to continuing to be on the front lines in partnership with you and your communities serving the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

New York City Council Committee on Finance

**Monday, December 11, 2023**

Oversight Hearing – Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan.

Name, and/or small business/organization/community group)

LINK to submit written testimony: <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/>

**Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition’s testimony to NYC Council New York City Council Committee on Finance:**

Good afternoon, my name is K Webster, and I am the current President of the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition. We have been an active all-volunteer organization in this park for about four decades.

We are members of the PlayFair Coalition which includes over 450 organizations from across the five boroughs.

I’m a 70-year-old woman who builds gardens, most recently in the Broome to Delancey area – as do the elders of the Hua Mei Bird Garden. Other volunteers care for the M’Finda Kalunga garden and gardens throughout the Park. We try to treat everyone with respect no matter who they are. We challenge all of us to try to do the same, and we won’t accept harm to others from any source.

We thank the City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for inviting us to speak about the mayor’s November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks.

**Why the Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition opposes further budget cuts to Parks.**

The impact of abandoning our parks is too well known to those of us who have volunteered in parks for decades. Those whose parks have never fully recovered from the last austerity budgets from the late 70’s and early 80’s despite all efforts by our garden volunteers, our Coalition members and advocates, our elected officials, and our Parks workers.

We don’t give up on our park nor our communities.

Nor do we blame an underfunded and hardworking Parks Department. Parks is our long-time partner, along with many partners, who have been working to improve this park, which is in a challenging Environmental Justice Zone (and an area who some feel has been a ‘sacrifice zone’ for generations).

We have worked closely with the police who were part of the community policing effort – so they knew us, and the people who are in and around the park.

Our park gets media attention for some acts of violence and murder committed here or close by, but only for a few minutes and then victims are forgotten or used as “talking points”. With no real lasting movement to change what is generating the violence. Every death and act of violence matters to us. All are heartbreaking, infuriating, and senseless. We created a ribbon memorial in the South Delancey area and a Homeless memorial on the North Delancey on behalf of all the deaths and violence here.

The pitting of people against each other is a large part of what we've stood against since our beginnings in the late 70's - as long as we've been here. It doesn't mean we always agree – it does mean we come to the table, learn why we hold our positions, work out what we can and continue with our common efforts.

\*\*\*\*

All of our communities need a public park system that is safe and vibrant and green and clean and welcoming to all New Yorkers. A Park system that is financed well enough so that no park *requires* funding from private sources to succeed as the essential resources they are. Though we are grateful that some neighborhoods have the connections or the communities that can achieve such funding, too many will not. Understanding the fundamental role parks play as a public good ensures we don't have to.

Our public Park's staff need a park system that values their work, pays decent wages, offers job security and tangible respect, and has enough staff to do the work required.

But our parks system infrastructure is yet again headed for more crisis - even in the midst of a climate crisis. And we already have a crisis of demoralized park workers.

\*\*\*\*

### **Details and Impacts**

Our mayor has already cut the NYC Parks budget by 5%, resulting in a hiring freeze, the loss of staff, and the delay of critical parks programs. On top of this, Parks has lost an additional 1,450 workers who were employed through the Human Resources Administration. These workers represented 47% of the cleaning workforce responsible for maintaining our city's nearly 2,000 parks. The situation for New Yorkers is dire. Parks which were once cleaned five times a week will now be cleaned once a week. 17,000 trash cans will be overflowing with garbage. Bathrooms, if open, will be virtually unusable.

And more cuts are now proposed: additional 5-10% cut to the Parks Department, while many other agencies are exempt. The plan for these cuts is being drawn up as we speak, necessitating urgent action. We know that they will include drastic reductions to seasonal staffing, making it impossible for the agency to ensure that our parks are safe and clean for New Yorkers. This combined loss of staffing and resources will devastate an agency which has historically received more than its fair share of budget cuts.

These reductions will dismantle the already burdened workforce responsible for maintaining these vital spaces. Additional cuts will delay activation of water and cooling features across 5,000 parks and playgrounds, including 3,400 drinking fountains and 850 sprinklers, critical for residents in the city heat. The agency will be unable to deliver essential services: unable to pick up trash, care for the hundreds of ball fields, maintain and operate the city's beaches and pools, or safely discard the tens of thousands of hypodermic needles it collects annually.

With thanks,

K Webster

The Sara Roosevelt Park Community Coalition



**New York City Council  
Committee on Finance  
Chair Brannan  
December 11th, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance for hosting this important hearing and the opportunity to testify.

My name is Joseph Dibenedetto, and I am the Project Manager at Search and Care. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Executive Director, Aaron Rooney, and Search and Care.

Search and Care is a nonprofit aging service provider that serves older adults in the communities of the Upper East Side, Upper West Side, and East Harlem. We provide an array of fee-free in-home care services to ensure our clients can remain in their communities and homes safely and with dignity. Our services include care management, cognitive support, financial management, medical escorting, nutrition counseling, pet support, socialization programming, technology support, etc. However, despite our array of services, we at Search and Care recognize that it takes a village to ensure our clients are well cared for. As a result, we regularly collaborate and interface with a network of other community-based service providers to help our clients age in place. While our agency is over 80% privately funded many of our partner agencies are much more heavily reliant on public monies. We worry that cuts to NYC Aging, which already holds one of the smallest city budgets (less than half of 1% which is not at all proportional to the population of older adults) will significantly impact their ability to deliver quality effective services. However, this in turn will likely impact not only those agencies heavily reliant on those monies but also agencies like ours that collaborate with them. With this in mind, we worry that further cuts to NYC Aging will drastically impact and perhaps permanently damage the ability to deliver services and that the aging services network safety net may rupture.

**There's no fat left to cut in Aging.** NYCAging's total budget is \$466.7 million dollars, less than one half of one percent of the city budget, and covers services for the almost 1.4 million New Yorkers aged 65 and older. Aging service staff are *already* some of the lowest-paid workers in the city. Older Adult Centers are *already* not given funding to maintain their physical spaces and go without HVAC and other critical infrastructure needs. This system has *already* been cut to the bone, and there is no more to lose before the system itself starts to fall apart. As alluded to earlier, with such a small budget these additional cuts would save the mayor pennies, but they will cost New Yorkers their community, their food security, and their health and safety.

**With this in mind, we join LiveOn NY and over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the**



**nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.**

Based on these factors, we would offer the following recommendations:

**Recommendations**

**Hold Aging Services Harmless in the FY25 Budget.** Aging services are already underfunded. Despite this, Older Adults Centers and other services still work to multiply the dollars the city invests and pull in services the community needs that are not funded by the city. Aging service providers have become vaccination clinics, housing clinics, intergenerational community spaces, food pantries, transportation providers, and refuges for folks who have nowhere else to go. Cutting this funding not only threatens the city funded programming and food, but threatens to collapse an already precarious service network with an impact far larger than the pennies the city will save through these cuts.

**We also join our nonprofit colleagues in asking that the city the City:**

**Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary**

**Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions**

**Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning, and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the council to protect these services that are vital to the well being of so many New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Joseph Dibenedetto, Project Manager, Search and Care

Aaron Rooney, Executive Director, Search and Care



**Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.**  
520 Eighth Avenue  
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[www.selfhelp.net](http://www.selfhelp.net)

**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services  
New York City Council  
Committee on Finance, Chair Brannan  
December 11th, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance, for hosting this important hearing and the opportunity to submit testimony.

For 87 years Selfhelp has been serving the most vulnerable among us. Through home care, affordable housing, and social services, we serve over 25,000 New Yorkers each year including more than 5,000 Holocaust survivors and 5,000 Chinese Elders. Our overarching goal is to help our community age with dignity and independence.

We are grateful for the Council's long-standing and ongoing support for so many important senior programs and for emphasizing the needs of older adults in policy decisions and budget allocations. With strong community-based programs, we are confident that older New Yorkers will be able to access the care and support they deserve and need to be able to age in their own homes and communities.

**Background**

Selfhelp joins our nonprofit colleagues in asking Why 15? As a sector, we want to be consulted and informed about where programming and services will be cut. Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of cuts announced in November.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of many community programs. Selfhelp provides vital services that impact the health and wellbeing of thousands of our vulnerable older neighbors. That's why we join over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

**No Cuts to NYC Aging**

We are also advocating against any cuts to NYC Aging. NYC Aging's total budget is \$466.7 million dollars, less than one half of one percent of the city budget and covers services for the almost 1.4 million New Yorkers aged 65 and older. Cuts to NYC Aging programs, including Older Adult Centers will cost New Yorkers their community, food security, health, and safety.

**We support the following recommendations:**

- No cuts to NYC Aging Programs
- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

On behalf of more than 25,000 clients served by Selfhelp, thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony.

*About Selfhelp Community Services*

*Our services include specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; 17 affordable senior housing buildings; 4 NORC programs; 3 intensive case management programs; 5 Older Adult Centers; home health care; the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; Adult Protective Services, the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP) Social Adult Day Program; and New York Connects in Queens. With over 25,000 clients each year, Selfhelp enables New Yorkers to age with independence and dignity. [www.selfhelp.net](http://www.selfhelp.net)*



TESTIMONY OF JESSICA BAKER VODOOR  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER & BOTANICAL GARDEN

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FY24**  
**Oversight Hearing of the Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

As President & CEO of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, I am pleased to submit this written testimony to Speaker Adams, Finance Chair Brannan and the entire New York City Council. Snug Harbor is a nonprofit organization located in CD 49 on Staten Island's North Shore, one of the most diverse areas of New York City. I thank you for this opportunity to express our concern over the November Budget Plan and additional proposed cuts as part of the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG).

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is Staten Island's largest cultural organization, welcoming 480,000 visitors to explore our galleries, gardens and grounds, and experience the breadth of history, architecture, culture and the natural environment that we manage across our 83 acres. We are open daily, year-round, from dawn to dusk and our grounds are free to explore. We offer a robust green education and workforce development program, serving thousands of emerging adults from our under-served community each year. We are a property manager, overseeing a historical campus and serving more than 40 tenant organizations. Since 1993, we have been a host site for the NYC Compost Project, which is also targeted for elimination. We are a unique culture park in New York City.

Snug Harbor is a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) -- a collection of 34 cultural organizations that operate on City-owned property. We are tasked by the Department of Cultural Affairs with stewarding a unique historical and environmental asset for the City, a mission that we believe is crucial to public health, public life and public benefit. Three CIGs are located on our site: Snug Harbor, the Staten Island Museum and the Staten Island Children's Museum. A cut to one of us is a cut to all of us.

The CIGs have already absorbed a \$5 million reduction at adoption. Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continuing operation of these community programs. Organizations such as Snug Harbor touch every vital aspect of daily life, from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access.

For Snug Harbor, the impact of the proposed cuts will be devastating. Options we are currently examining:

- Elimination of three full-time staff positions and partial furloughs of remaining staff
- Reduction of security presence across Snug Harbor campus

- Full-day site closures during inclement winter weather
- Elimination of Snug Harbor's participation in the Summer Youth Employment Program
- Reduction and/or elimination of space usage subsidies for community partners and culture creators, including cancellation of support to our Juneteenth celebration and access discounts for marginalized community groups
- Reduction of staff hours dedicated to campus lawn maintenance and garbage collection of our 83-acre campus
- Closure of the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art visual art exhibition program

The elimination of the NYC Compost Project hosted at Snug Harbor means additional impact:

- Elimination of compost collection, processing and distribution (90 tons in 2023) to the Staten Island community
- Elimination of a staff position
- Severe impairment of Snug Harbor's ability to provide technical support, services and workforce development to hundreds of Staten Island community partners and thousands of Staten Island youth

The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget. Any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will undermine the public safety, health and cleanliness of New York City, and jeopardize the tourism industry, which is only now recovering from the pandemic. Snug Harbor calls on the City to partner **WITH** the nonprofit sector to work toward creative solutions – not to hinder us. Together, we can productively address the systemic financial challenges that the City is facing. The proposed PEG will further decimate the life of the City with negative impact on tourism and therefore tax dollars.

Snug Harbor, the Staten Island Museum, the Staten Island Children's Museum and the other cultural organizations, small businesses and resident artists that call our campus home, are essential community partners and resources to our under-served community. Snug Harbor respectfully urges the City to reconsider the proposed cuts, which will decimate the nonprofit sector to the detriment of all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time.



JESSICA BAKER VODOOR

President & CEO

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## **Testimony: Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan**

Committee On Finance, Monday, December 11, 2023

Good morning, Chair Justin L. Brannan, and distinguished members of the Committee on Finance. A special acknowledgement to Council Members Carr, Borelli, and Hanks, your tireless dedication to our Staten Island and your unwavering support for the Staten Island Children’s Museum (SICM) and your advocacy for the enrichment of cultural and educational initiatives within our borough have not gone unnoticed.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the importance of sustaining SICM services. As we reflect on our vital role in fostering education, cultural enrichment, and community engagement, I must emphasize the critical impact that any potential budget cuts would have on our operations.

However, any proposed budget cuts that restrict our financial resources will inevitably lead us back to that Covid-era level of service. Our situation is compounded by an unexpected closure of the Museum, for 6 months for a DDC capital project. This includes reverting to a schedule where the Museum is only open on weekends summer 2024, followed by a full closure until Feb 2025, reducing the accessibility of our exhibits, educational programs, and cultural offerings by a significant margin.

Moreover, a projected 60% reduction in our part-time staff, affecting 24 positions, and a 20% decrease in our full-time workforce will directly impact our ability to deliver diverse, engaging, and inclusive programs. These programs have been instrumental in reaching over 24,000 students (about the seating capacity of Madison Square Garden) annually through our school initiatives and engaging an added 25,000 students at the Museum itself.

The Museum's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is underscored by our efforts to collaborate with the Department of Education (DOE) and local schools. Our focus on supplying arts instruction, particularly for students from kindergarten to 5th grade, has been an integral part of our community outreach. We can continue to offer arts instruction in the schools, however in museum programs would be severely impacted.

Furthermore, testimonies from educators have highlighted the disparity between the engaging art activities lead by the Museum and the lack thereof within their own school settings. The need for our programs is clear and resonates deeply within our community.

Moreover, our commitment to inclusivity and support for migrant families has been highlighted by a program specifically tailored for English language acquisition among

ESL and migrant children. This initiative, led by SICM, has been an exceptional catalyst for these children's integration, complementing their educational journey in a new environment.

One of our newer program's focusing on art as a catalyst for English language acquisition among ESL and migrant children, conducted at PS 18, highlights the immense potential for meaningful community impact through our initiatives.

In 2023, we saw an extraordinary 50% increase in audience engagement, reaching 108,000 individuals. Our programs include free community music and STEAM performances staged on our 2-acre front lawn, supplying enrichment to 11,000 people annually. These have been instrumental in enriching cultural experiences and fostering creativity among children from diverse backgrounds.

Moreover, these cuts imperil our ability to keep free admissions for families holding SNAP/EBT cards, Cool Culture cardholders from Title 1 schools, and military families, affecting over 5,500 children and families who rely on our accessible educational experiences.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The other 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like SICM touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The city cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any other cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City. As we navigate potential budget constraints, it is imperative to recognize the far-reaching consequences of reduced funding on our ability to serve the community effectively. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and explore solutions to sustain our vital role within our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dina Rosenthal

Executive Director

Staten Island Children's Museum

1000 Richmond Terrace

Staten Island NY 10301

**Testimony by Staten Island Museum  
Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan**  
Committee On Finance, Monday, December 11, 2023



Good morning, Chair Justin L. Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance. The Staten Island Museum provides exhibitions, education and public programs in art, science and history since 1881. The Staten Island Museum weathered the pandemic as best possible and has been proud to bring back our STEAM education programs at the museum and in schools to exceed pre-pandemic levels, serving nearly 11,000 NYC school children, 45% from Title 1 schools. SIM serves 30,000 visitors for our exhibitions and programs, and we host many community group events and meetings at the museum such that these groups rely on our venue. We actively work with 60 wide-ranging community partners, including BIPOC-led organizations and those serving special needs, and individual artists.

The Staten Island Museum and my fellow cultural organizations contribute to the recovery of NYC by offering programs that help close learning gaps; opportunities for mental wellness and healing; and contributing to tourism. Reductions in the budget at this time are resulting in significant setbacks to the progress that has been made to get our organizations back on track as community resources that contribute to quality of life and well-being for New Yorkers and visitors.

The impact of 15% cuts to our budget will necessitate dramatic reduction in services and employment loss, through furlough and layoff of positions for New Yorkers who depend on these jobs. SIM is already down in workforce by 1 FT and 3PT staff members. Should the entirety of these budget cuts be enacted, SIM expects to reduce core staff by 25-30% when we only have a full-time staff of 15 with many one-person departments to run a \$2M museum responsible for maintaining three types of collections (art, science, history).

Severe cuts will limit our ability to serve school groups which would be devastating to schools who have been so grateful to be able to return to the museum post-pandemic to resume these programs, and we would be unable to subsidize programs for Title 1 schools as we regularly do. SIM would be forced to reduce public operating hours at a time when we have invested in presenting a major exhibition about the Black Angels, a story of national import, and an economic driver in itself to the Staten Island and New York City cultural sector at large. SIM participates in many free admission programs including Culture Pass, IDNYC, Cool Culture and others that we would be challenged to sustain. At a time when the Staten Island Museum and cultural organizations are working hard to ensure access for all to arts and science programs, we would be forced to limit those very offerings. These setbacks result in years of rebuilding, and these cuts will have a ripple effect for the artists and smaller organizations that we help support with our programs partnerships and venue.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The other 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like the Staten Island Museum touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The city cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any other cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and civic wellness of New York City.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Asian American Pacific Islanders for a Fair Budget

## New York City Council Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget Hearings Committee on Finance, Mar 6, 2023

### The 18% and Growing Campaign Opposes Mayor Adam's Economically Negligent November Plan

My name is Clifford Robin Temprosa and I am the Budget Policy Coordinator at CACF, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.

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, and Pacific Island regions.

CACF is testifying on behalf of our 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 as *"We Are Building A Community Too Powerful To Ignore."*

A community where 1 in 5 AAPIs do not have to live in poverty. 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. And a community that will not tolerate a society where the people's pain is the people's profit.



Asian American Pacific Islanders for a Fair Budget

The November Plan announced by Mayor Adams perpetuates the conditions of poverty and socioeconomic stagnancy amongst our communities. The budget slashes essential care programs and services in education, housing, mental health, public health, and youth services.

The administration has repeatedly deflected the fault of the fiscal deficit to the waves of asylum seekers entering the city in parallel to the expected expiration of the federal COVID-19 stimulus. Our coalition stands against the malign rhetoric that is being used by the administration that faults asylum seekers to further justify unjust and economically negligent deductions to the New York City Budget. We must be clear in that asylum seekers did not create nor attribute to the conditions of a broken system and inhumane fiscal reality, but like many people who call New York City home, are victims to decades of mismanagement and the choice of people and institutions in power to not prioritize the creation of a human-centered care economy and value-indoctrinated fiscal ecosystem.

In addition to the cuts explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are on top of the cuts laid out in the November Plan.

We urge the City Council to confront the harmful November Plan head on and advocate for the restoration and progression of a New York City Budget that does not exploit and fail low income and working class families. A budget that saves lives and not takes lives.

Thank you very much for your time.

Thursday, December 7, 2023

To: The City Council Finance Committee

Re: Budget Cuts to the Arts

My name is Arturo O'Farrill, founder and artistic director of The Afro Latin Jazz Alliance/ Belongó and the 8 time Grammy award winning Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. I am also a Professor and the Bill Evans fellow at The New School for Jazz and the Mannes School of Music.

Budget cuts which affect Arts funding are devastating to my work in the communities I serve which are mostly lower income. Our future home, Casa Belongó is to be constructed in El Barrio also known as East Harlem.

We have 47 teaching artists in 21 New York City Public School Districts and a preprofessional training program. We also serve community centers, retirement centers and the incarcerated population.

Much of our funding for these incredibly important partnerships comes from City Council funding for which we are truly grateful.

We've seen literally tens of thousands of young New Yorkers find a path in life through their association with music making. We've saved the lives of young New Yorkers by keeping them off the streets and interested in learning and performing on instruments.

Some of our students have come to us having never touched an instrument through our in school residencies, become good enough to join our by audition FatCat program and even secure full scholarships to major institutions like Juilliard, The Manhattan School of Music and The New School.

In particular, one young man stands out from Hunts Point. He had no training when we met him through our residency at The Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists. This young man gained proficiency on the guitar. Entered our elite training programs and progressed to the point of being offered a full music scholarship to Wheaton College in Massachusetts. He came from a violent background and could've had a very different life if he had not had a chance to become a musician.

We've seen stories like this time and time again. What the city council funding allows us to do is to literally save lives and empower generations of young people with self esteem and focus.

The Community we serve includes teaching artists, musicians, retirees, human beings across every ethnicity, religion, gender, age group and more, building community and solidarity along the way. I can literally say the Afro Latin Jazz Alliance with the help of Public and Private funding is making New York a better place to live daily for many who live outside the corridors of privilege.

I urge you to prioritize Arts funding and help us continue to change the course of life for thousands of New Yorkers.

12/11/23

Nadia Swanson, LCSW

They/Them

The Ali Forney Center

Director of Technical Assistance and Advocacy

[nswanson@aliforneycenter.org](mailto:nswanson@aliforneycenter.org)

Testimony: Budget Cuts

Hello,

Thank you to the committees for hearing our testimony today. My name is Nadia Swanson, I am the Director of Technical Assistance and Advocacy at The Ali Forney Center.

AFC is the largest and most comprehensive service for LGBTQ+ youth ages 16-24 experiencing homelessness. Over 2200 youth a year access our 24/7 drop in, clinical services and housing programs. It is estimated that there are over 5700 youth a year that are unhoused or in the shelter system.

It is unconscionable that at a time when the Runaway and Homeless Youth system is already under funded and not able to meet the growing need of youth in NYC that the Mayor is cutting DYCD and DSS funding while the rich continue to thrive. If you want to save money Invest in our youth. How is it possible that with a \$2B reserve, youth are still homeless? This budget modification is telling youth in crisis they don't matter; whether that be after being kicked out of their home because of their identity or seeking asylum that they don't matter.

The cuts would have long lasting and devastating effects to LGBTQ+ youth and all youth experiencing homelessness. At AFC we serve some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. Some are already waiting 6 months for a crisis bed or 2 years for a supportive housing unit. Without the resources to house, educate, provide support during a crisis, connect to public benefits and learn job and life skills, it will be near impossible for youth to permanently exit homelessness and not need to rely on public assistance. Because of the full wrap-around services at AFC, 80% of our youth graduate from our program and do not return back to homelessness as a youth. That is the opposite of the national stat of 20% not returning.

For the first time in my 8 years with AFC the waitlist for 21+ is under 100 people long. That is because youth now have access to more EHV and FHEPS vouchers. The funding of housing navigators that was just restored I fear will be one of the first things cut and again causing the ripple effect of extending thousands of youths' time in homelessness due to long waitlists. When RHY resources are cut it is truly life or death. Between 2010-2020 , we personally know of 8 youth who died while accessing RHY services. When covid forced us to close our drop in center and limit our support services we lost 13 young people from 2020 through 2022.

With the resources we already have and unaffordable rent prices, how does the city expect a new arrival youth to navigate an adult system that is incredibly confusing in only 30 days. The mismanagement of the support for asylum seekers have completely left out unaccompanied youth and the need for developmentally appropriate , safe and affirming housing. Every day the RHY continuum of care scrambles to find and trade resources to place migrant youth at any available and appropriate service, and spreading our resources even thinner. As it gets colder all of the youth drop in centers fear having to return to the days when we would have to turn youth away because we are at capacity .

We demand :

- That the Mayor fully fund DYCD, housing, homelessness services, education and DSS services and reduce the NYPD and DOC's bloated budgets.
- We demand that the council vote NO on the modification and
- Support the Peoples Plan and Progressive Caucus Strategies
  - Factor in the \$1.5 Billion of projected revenue in the assessment of the next fiscal year
  - Make a one-time transfer of \$2B from City reserves to cover temporary budget gap due to higher than expected spending on asylum seekers.
  - Push for more progressive taxation in Albany to make sure the wealthiest among us are paying their fair share.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions



Nadia Swanson,LCSW  
They/Them  
Director of Technical Assistance and Advocacy

My name is Glennis Aquino-Gil, I am the Chief Administrative Officer and community liaison at The Armory Foundation.

The Sports training and role-models for success citywide girls initiative, better known as STARS CGI, has been generously funded by the New York City Council for 10 years now. The Armory Foundation has been a part of this fantastic initiative for the last 8 years and I want to be sure to thank the Council for their tremendous support of STARS CGI and to ask for your continued support – by ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY 24 budget.

One of the reasons The Armory is able to provide our ongoing youth athletic and educational programming is because of the funding received through STARS CGI.

The last three years have been a time of upheaval for our planet, and especially for the young woman and gender non-conforming youth of color we serve. As a collective, we have shared our talented teams, our programming, and ideas to create very strong STARS programming.

Some background on The Armory and what we do:

**WHO:** Thousands of NYC high school track athletes call The Armory home for both training and competition. For the past 30 years, on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon from mid November through the end of March, we will have up to 1,500 athletes that come to train with their coaches and teams from close to 100 NYC public, independent and parochial schools. More than 100 track meets happen during these months, with some of our larger high school meets involving up to 6000 athletes.

**WHAT:** Track & Field accommodates all body types and temperaments, and running is not only the basis of many sports, but is also a sport many can do for the rest of their lives with only a pair of sneakers. Track & field also opens doors for non-runners, those who prefer the high jump, long jump or pole vault, and those who would rather throw the shot put or weight throw. Through it we are able to touch so many lives in a meaningful way from among the more than 300,000 visits each year to The Armory.

**COMMUNITY:** In 2017 we piloted Little Feet, a no-cost program that welcomes elementary school children from Washington Heights, Inwood and Harlem to run, jump, throw and giggle, twice a week from October through the middle of May. In 2018 it continued and expanded to now include children in grades 2 through 5. In addition to the sport programming, we punctuate the year with some “special days”. One of those days is Real Heroes Day. So often children meet the people we would consider Real Heroes (firefighters, police officers, EMTs) in situations that are scary. Every year we invite our local real heroes

to interact with our children in a safe and fun setting. In addition to Little Feet, we have a long running program for middle school children. The CityTrack program has been offered at The Armory for 25 years, imparting the joy of moving and promoting healthy habits for children in grades 6-8. Both CityTrack and Little Feet are offered at no cost to all the families of our participants. With more than 500 children registered this year, and the complete return to in person programming, most sessions drew close to two hundred and fifty children who are all closely coached by our coaches.

**ARMORY COLLEGE PREP:** So you do not get the idea that all we do is fun and games - we also work with our track & field athletes to help them gain access to great high schools and four-year colleges, with the funding to make a college degree a reality. Armory College Prep is a dynamic after-school college success program that puts students in grades 4-12 on track for lifelong success by helping them to and through college. College choice exploration, test prep, college visits, personal statement creation, financial aid counseling, application and testing fees are all covered by our sponsors of Armory College Prep. For the last seven years 100% of our seniors were admitted to 4-year colleges. Williams, Amherst, Cornell, Haverford, and Dickenson are just a few of the colleges attended by the students of Armory College Prep.

We would like to stress to the Council that our track record of excellent, high impact programming will continue and we ask the Council to help make that possible.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like STARS CGI touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by continuing our City Council funding in FY24.

Thank you, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Steven Payne, and I am Director of The Bronx County Historical Society, a member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your ongoing advocacy for investment in the arts and culture sector in New York City.

Today, I want to share the impacts of the Mayor's November Financial Plan on The Bronx County Historical Society, fitting the Plan into the larger context of what has already happened this fiscal year.

Because of the City Council's strong advocacy, the Department of Cultural Affairs was mostly spared from the Mayor's proposed cuts at budget adoption this fiscal year. It is important to note, however, that BCHS and other members of CIG were still cut, as this Committee should be aware. \$5 million were shifted from CIG institutions to CDF-funded cultural institutions by DCLA. For BCHS, this meant an \$80,000 cut at adoption, partially off-set by a member item added by Council Member Dinowitz to equal a \$62,000 cut, a 20% decrease from our adopted budget from DCLA last fiscal year.

Now, with the Mayor's November Financial Plan, the budget for the Department of Cultural Affairs (and every other City Department) has been cut by 5%. This is purportedly translating to a 3.5% cut across-the-board for CIG institutions. While this may seem like the CIG is being spared, in the context of the \$5 million cut at adoption, this is simply an additional cut on top of an already large one. For BCHS, this most recent 3.5% cut, combined with our cut at adoption, means that our budget has now been cut around 23% from where it was last fiscal year. Because of these cuts, we have had to eliminate 1 full-time position and 3 part-time positions, all of which were focused on making our collections and programming more accessible through extended hours, transcription for the hearing impaired, and audio recording for the visually impaired. We have also had to reduce our programming budget this year by 42%, to ensure that we are still able to pay the full-time staff of 5 we have who care for 3 city-owned buildings (1 of which is a national landmark historic house) and 1 BCHS-owned building (which is another national landmark historic house).

A 5% cut in January, as the Mayor has proposed, will entail a 28% cut in our budget compared to last fiscal year. If it is carried through, we will likely have to eliminate another full-time position and reduce our programming budget by 70% of where it was last year during March–June. These months traditionally have been an incredibly busy time for afterschool programming and bring a large uptick in tourism at our two national landmark historic house museums. With a January cut, it is highly unlikely that we will have adequate staff capacity during this busy season, further reducing not only our own revenue but tourism revenue in general in the neighborhoods of our historic house museums.

As a professional historian, I cannot help but point out that across-the-board austerity measures in New York City have always had the most detrimental and long-lasting effects on working-class communities, especially working-class communities of color. The austerity measures of the 1970s decimated neighborhoods in the South Bronx and similar communities

across the City. In many respects, we are still recovering from the deleterious effects of this criminal public policy. As my testimony today illustrates, the across-the-board cuts instituted by this Administration—both the advertised one in November and the unadvertised one to CIG at adoption—are hitting us incredibly hard already. As an institution devoted to documenting, preserving, and sharing the histories of our working-class communities of color in The Bronx, it is clear that the histories and cultures we painstakingly steward are expendable to this Administration.

This is why we turn to you, our friends and advocates on this Committee and the Council at large, to do whatever you can to stave off the further erosion of our budget and workforces, both at BCHS and the many other cultural institutions that so greatly enrich our City. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your leadership at this time.



**New York City Council, Committee on Finance  
Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023 | The Climate Museum**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Mayor’s November Financial Plan.

The Climate Museum is the first museum in the United States dedicated to climate change, mobilizing the power of arts and humanities programming on climate to create an inclusive public space for justice-centered dialogue and civic action on the climate crisis. We are proud to offer accessible pathways into immersive cultural programming on climate change to the New York City community. Cultural work like ours supports the advancement of strong climate policy in the public and private sectors alike, inviting community members across the five boroughs of New York City, students of all ages, and decision makers to act on their climate agency.

Nonprofits such as the Climate Museum operate at remarkable intersections of our city’s strengths, providing City inhabitants with essential services that create opportunities for educational enrichment, drive civic engagement, and build community resilience. This work is made possible through the crucial support of City funds from the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Department of Cultural Affairs, but is at risk under the Mayor’s current financial plan.

In this time of tremendous turmoil, City inhabitants need the support of the City nonprofit sector more than ever. Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the budget cuts announced in November—the additional 5% planned cuts in January would be even more detrimental. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and vibrancy of New York City.

Our work at the Climate Museum, and that of the wider NYC nonprofit sector, meets the appetite for programming that imbues City inhabitants with a sense of agency and possibility, empowering them to ensure that their climate priorities are reflected in the City at large. Investment in cultural work on climate is therefore a vital step towards realizing the climate safe and just future that New Yorkers deserve. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions that prioritize sustained operational support for the very organizations that lend the City its vibrancy.



**New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Oversight Hearing on the Mayor's November Financial Plan  
Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)**

Thank you to Speaker Adams and Chair Brannan for holding this oversight hearing and for the opportunity to offer testimony. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, is a non-profit organization with a 41-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

CHCF delivers wrap-around, holistic services through and beyond our state and city contracted programs and services. We know that access to high quality, equitably resourced, and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning spaces is critical from birth, through school-age and post-secondary education; and that a child's development, academic growth, and long-term life outcomes are impacted by so many intersecting circumstances that go beyond what occurs in care and educational spaces. We continue to uplift and reflect the critical role that community-based organizations, like CHCF, play in strategically supplementing the capacity of schools and ECE programs, working in community with school leaders and educators to identify the unique needs of students and families, coordinating resources to address their comprehensive needs, and advocating with city and state leaders to ensure critical programming is appropriately funded and managed so that we may better address the needs of all in our school and ECE communities.

**Our services**

CHCF's Youth Development team delivers after school programming in partnership with three schools in the Bronx, serving over 500 students and their families. We additionally partner with 3 high schools in the Bronx and Manhattan for our Opening Doors to the Future internship program, which coordinates Work, Learn, Grow (WLG) programming and additional supplemental supports for 22 junior and senior students as they prepare for their path beyond high school. Above and beyond the academic supports we offer in our youth development 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.

CHCF holds a DOE affiliated Family Childcare Network in the Bronx, currently with 39 affiliated providers, serving 180 children and their families through extended day infant and toddler seats, extended day/year 3K, and school day/year 3K seats. Our network focus is on uplifting high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining early care programs. Our bilingual staff offer our affiliated providers linguistically accessible professional development, as well as educational, mental health, and health and safety support to ensure delivery of quality, responsive care for children and families. Our FCC Network team additionally supports families in navigating eligibility and access to care options.

CHCF Early Care and Education team supports New York City's broader early care and education sector through our state contracted work as part of the NYC Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R)



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Consortium. Through our work as a CCR&R, CHCF serves providers across all five boroughs, predominantly (but not exclusively) delivering supports to childcare providers in residential settings (Group Family and Family Day Care), both DOE-affiliated providers and those who remain independent and serving NYC's children and families. Most providers that we support speak Spanish as their primary language and serve Black, brown and immigrant communities. Through our CCR&R work, we also support families in accessing childcare that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule, and particular child needs; and we further support navigation of often complex bureaucratic systems to access affordable care and understand different options of ECE. Parents/guardians can be connected to CHCF or any of the CCR&Rs through 311 if they are looking for care, birth through school age, and if they need support in determining potential eligibility for subsidy/vouchers and in navigating city agency systems.

CHCF additionally holds a contract to deliver social service support at a Long Island City hotel that is housing recently arrived asylum seeking families. The hotel that we support serves 110 families; in total there are 186 adults and 174 children under the age of 18. Families housed in the hotel represent 9 different nationalities, including Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Honduras, Haiti, Jamaica, Uzbekistan, and Russia; and 7 different languages. Our services center culturally and linguistically responsiveness focused on the holistic well-being of the families and children. Our on-site team offers one-on-one support in navigating school enrollment, food and housing access, and identifying and mitigating barriers to employment opportunities.

#### **Regarding the administration's proposed cuts**

As is apparent through the many testimonies you have heard from the public, CBOs like CHCF care deeply for the communities we serve in partnership with the city and cannot stay silent when the programs that are so deeply needed in our communities are at risk of being reduced or eliminated. We appreciate the many union representatives and city council members who have challenged the proposed cuts to critical central staff and, alarmingly, to programs in the middle of the contract year. As was named by many outside of the administration, these cuts seem largely unnecessary and will have detrimental effects on children, families, and the support structures in place to minimize longstanding and ongoing instability and inequity.

To speak to a few of the programs that CHCF has worked directly with, we continue to underscore the importance of 3K, Summer Rising, and Community Schools. We continue to be frustrated by the ongoing desire to strengthen the New York City and New York State economy, while largely neglecting the essential support needs of families who ensure a thriving economy. As many families and advocates have implored the city time and time again, parents and guardians need affordable, consistent childcare to fully engage in the workforce. This is a universal need. This is a need that should not be categorically withheld from any families who need it. With the expansion of universal 4K and movement towards universal 3K, NYC was establishing itself as a national leader on what the whole of the U.S. needs. While not perfect – namely in the limit to universal school day/year rather than more expansive extended day/year, the inequitable engagement of diverse program settings to deliver contracted seats, and the challenges with supporting families in receiving the programs that best meet their needs – these programs greatly reduced the financial burden that childcare places on families, even if only partially so. With the shift towards de-prioritizing universal Pre-K under the current administration, city leaders are knowingly harming families, children, and the economy.





We join others in rejecting the narrative that there are simply 37,000 unused slots. Adding the evidence-based context that perpetuates unused slots, we know that effective and equitable outreach efforts to connect families to programs that they are eligible for have greatly declined under this administration. Although advocates have repeatedly asked that the administration incorporate community-based enrollment through providers and organizations who are the trusted point of contact for families and are experts in childcare eligibility and enrollment, the city continues to rely on a centralized system while they are imposing staffing shortages and hiring freezes. We further know, as was presented by the UFT, that slots have not been adjusted or moved to meet the need across communities. This includes the movement of unused seats to districts with waitlists, as well as insufficient reallocation of school day/year slots to extended day/year slots to reflect the realistic needs of families with 3- and 4-year-olds. To actively work against successfully filling the available seats, and then point to the unfilled seats as proof of a lacking need and justification for making cuts is a great injustice. Childcare advocates, providers and other stakeholders stand ready to support the city in connecting families to care and offer recommendations for improving the outreach and eligibility process.

We cannot set aside the importance of all out-of-school-time care and extended learning programming. While the pandemic certainly exacerbated educational inequities, the longstanding lack of access to summer learning and enrichment opportunities for historically underserved students has demonstrable impacts on academic outcomes. With Summer Rising, we saw a glimpse of the true need for these programs; not only for those students who were academically recovering from the pandemic, but for families who have struggled to access and afford care during the summer months. Citywide, we saw significant cuts to the program between summer 2021 and summer 2023, with 45,000 more applications than slots in the summer of 2023. The city must consider Summer Rising as part of the larger childcare need for families, as well as an evidence-based, effective means of addressing persistent gaps in academic outcomes and inequities in accessing educational and enrichment opportunities.

CHCF is also a part of the Coalition for Community Schools Excellence and was previously a CBO partner in a Bronx community school for five years. We continue to uplift the proven impact of the Community School model in NYC schools. The importance of these strong school partnerships with a community-based organization supports effective coordination of critical resources for students and families and were particularly essential during the pandemic for students and families in those school communities. We thank Chair Joseph on uplifting the need for New York City to safeguard community schools and join our partners in the Coalition for Community School Excellence<sup>1</sup> in calling on city leaders to keep an eye toward expanding this model, not cutting whole community schools or reducing the funding for programs.

Finally, as has been mentioned by many others, it is necessary to mention the harm of central staffing cuts. Despite longstanding contracting practices that don't truly reflect the talent and dedication of those delivering services for the city through CBOs, we are committed to our partnerships with the city to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively to our communities. Especially given the city agency staffing shortages and hiring freezes, CBOs have worked tirelessly with remaining program

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<sup>1</sup> [Overview of the Coalition for Community School Excellence](#)





management teams to identify program challenges and offer responsive solutions to ensure program integrity. We do this to stem the impact of understaffed agency management teams and minimize negative impacts to those we serve. As many have testified year after year, and as many of our champions on the council know, CBOs can only do so much with the significant underfunding that they continuously face. The harm of city agency staffing shortages is felt deeply by those of us delivering programs in partnership with the city. It is further felt by the parents and children who are so greatly impacted by the programs we deliver and who deserve effective management and delivery by the city.

In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more.<sup>2</sup> While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are *on top of* the cuts laid out in the November Plan. Please do not let these programs end on your watch.

On a final note, like many who were heard from in the hearing, we remain alarmed by narratives that identify asylum seeking families as the primary cause of a deficit and the subsequent cuts proposed by the administration. New York City leaders can do better and should act more responsibly with their bully pulpit. With the recent and historical existence of xenophobia in our city, state and nation, introducing such extreme and unnecessary cuts and placing blame on migrants is alarming and dangerous. We thank you for the opportunity to present testimony, we continue to appreciate the work of the council to avoid these cuts. 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](mailto:ddemeuse@chcfinc.org) or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

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<sup>2</sup> [Call to Action to Sustain Education Programs Funded with Expiring Federal COVID-19 Relief \(September 2023\)](#).





**NYC Council Committee on Finance  
Public Hearing: Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan  
December 11, 2023**

**Background**

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) is grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance. CHCANYS is the statewide primary care association representing New York’s 70+ federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), also known as community health centers (CHCs).

Located in medically underserved communities across NYC, CHCs provide high quality primary care to everyone, regardless of ability to pay, insurance coverage, or immigration status. NYC’s CHCs serve more than 1.2 million patients at 490 sites across the city. Community health centers are a vital safety net for quality affordable healthcare services for many New Yorkers who otherwise wouldn’t have access to healthcare. CHCs serve populations that, historically, the traditional healthcare system has failed. The majority of NYC CHC patients are extremely low-income – 93% live below 200% of the Federal poverty level. Further, among NYC CHC patients, 83% are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), 30% speak limited or no English, 12% are uninsured, and 5% are unhoused. Nearly 71% of our NYC CHCs’ patients are enrolled in Medicaid, CHIP, or are dually enrolled in Medicare and Medicaid. All CHCs provide robust enrollment assistance to patients and, although CHCs do not collect information on immigration status, it is likely that the vast majority of uninsured patients are not eligible for insurance coverage due to immigration status.

For communities throughout NYC, CHCs are a crucial safety net, working tirelessly to provide healthcare and social services for people who experience poverty, racism, and discrimination inhibiting their health, well-being, and ability to survive. We encourage the NYC Council to continue to fund and sustain programs that support CHCs’ work.

**I. Primary care funding is vital to ensure a healthy NYC**

Community health centers are the primary care safety net for NYC’s most underserved populations and are the key to expanding and strengthening access to comprehensive, high quality, and culturally effective care. CHCs deliver a full spectrum of comprehensive primary and preventive services, including addressing social needs such as housing, transportation, and food insecurity. CHCANYS appreciates that the Mayor’s November Plan did not reduce or eliminate vital primary care funding for CHCs, especially given that CHCs are currently facing significant financial challenges.

For far too long, CHC reimbursement rates have not grown commensurate to the increased role of primary care in solving health and social needs. Rising operating costs far exceed reimbursement rates. Costs today for personnel, benefits, equipment, medical supplies, and office space are significantly higher than they were decades ago and have risen exponentially since the pandemic. Consequently, CHCs need all the funding they can get to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality, affordable care to the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

**To ensure that communities across NYC can continue to access primary care, CHCANYS requests the New York City Council direct funding to community health centers.**



## **II. Support CHCs' ability to respond to the increased arrivals of asylum seekers**

CHCs were among the first community partners to begin collaborating with NYC government to ensure asylum seekers were connected to comprehensive primary care upon arrival to NYC. CHCs continue to work to connect asylum seekers to medical care they need, including by conducting initial assessments to identify needs, providing mental health services, providing school-mandated vaccinations, and addressing their social care needs.

However, CHCs require additional resources to support the uncompensated care they are providing to asylum seekers. CHCs are facing additional cost burdens for the care and services they are providing to asylum seekers as the majority of these health care visits and services are uncompensated. While some asylum seekers qualify for temporary protected status (TPS) or have filed the appropriate legal paperwork to allow them to be enrolled in the NYS Essential Plan, many asylum seekers are missing the appropriate documentation that would verify their eligibility for public insurance programs. According to a CHCANYS survey of CHCs throughout the state conducted in September 2023, CHCs reported that 52.3% of asylum seeker visits were unbillable or will not be claimed for reimbursement and that only 39.9% of asylum seeker visits would be claimed to Medicaid. This discrepancy in reimbursement will continue to grow larger as more care services are provided to the ever-increasing number of asylum seekers arriving in New York. This additional financial stress on CHCs can threaten the stability of the safety-net care they provide, as they are already operating on thin margins and outdated reimbursement rates.

CHCANYS appreciates that the Mayor's November Plan sustained the NYC Care program which is helping to address the health care needs of asylum seekers. However, the NYC Care program currently does not support care provided by CHCs. The NYC Council passed and enacted legislation (INT.1668-A) on October 10, 2021, that would have enrolled CHCs into the NYC Care program, but it has not been implemented yet. Implementing the expansion of the NYC Care program eligibility to include CHCs would allow for NYC Care program funding to flow to CHCs and thereby support their ability to provide care to the increased arrivals of asylum seekers and serve their communities.

**CHCANYS requests the New York City Council to support CHCs' ability to provide care to increasing numbers of asylum seekers by enrolling them in the NYC Care program and providing funding to support uncompensated care.**

## **III. Bolster the healthcare workforce**

Patient demand for CHC services is growing, however, CHCs are experiencing difficulties in maintaining delivery of services due to health workforce shortages. Workforce shortages are felt across the board, and CHCs report increasing difficulty in recruiting medical assistants, nurses of all levels, behavioral health clinicians, dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants. The ability to recruit providers and staff with multiple language proficiencies is even more difficult, even as needs are rising, especially given that CHCs have been working with NYC government to provide care for asylum seekers.

CHCANYS thanks the NYC Council for their continued efforts to address the healthcare workforce shortage and appreciates that the Mayor's November Plan did not eliminate critical healthcare



COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State

workforce funding. However, sustained funding and significant investment in the healthcare workforce are required to ensure that CHCs can continue to provide high quality, affordable healthcare services for underserved communities and respond to rising challenges facing NYC. Workforce investments could include funding for existing workforce programs, developing new loan repayment programs for nursing and behavioral health staff, especially in communities of color, expanding loan repayment programs for individuals living in medically underserved communities, and increasing workforce development opportunities in medically underserved communities and communities of color.

**CHCANYS requests the New York City Council to bolster the healthcare workforce in medically underserved communities and communities of color by providing resources to increase and improve recruitment and retention in those communities.**

**Conclusion**

CHCANYS is grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony to highlight the importance of primary care funding and the acute healthcare workforce shortage needs faced by community health centers. For questions or follow up, please contact Marie Mongeon, Vice President of Policy, [mmongeon@chcanys.org](mailto:mmongeon@chcanys.org).



## The Doe Fund

345 E 102nd St #305  
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[www.doe.org](http://www.doe.org)



### Written Testimony for the New York City Council Oversight: Mayor's November Financial Plan December 11, 2023

Dear Members of the New York City Council,

On behalf of The Doe Fund, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We've advanced proven solutions to homelessness for over 30 years in New York City. With a track record of empowering 30,000 individuals and reducing the chance of recidivism by half, we hope to partner with the City to address our spiraling homelessness crisis once and for all.

That will simply not be possible if Mayor Adams's proposed budget cuts take effect. The impact will devastate the city's supportive housing system, the homeless services workforce, and ultimately people experiencing homelessness themselves. It makes no sense to defund providers at a time when homelessness is perhaps *the* premier concern of New Yorkers. The City simply cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget. With the 5% PEG that has already been factored into city agencies/services any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York.

The 2.5% PEG cuts The Doe Fund was forced to adopt in September have already had detrimental effects, requiring us to cut vital positions and services that the individuals in our programs rely on. Some of those positions included Job Coaches to place people experiencing homelessness into employment, Housing Specialists to place them into apartments of their own, and Maintenance Custodial Workers to keep our residences clean and safe.

These teams have helped empower thousands of men who have overcome addiction, homelessness, and justice-involvement through our *Ready, Willing & Able* program. Men like Mike, who came to *Ready, Willing & Able* last year after spending half of his life trapped in the cycle of addiction and incarceration.

Thanks to *Ready, Willing & Able* Housing Specialists, Mike was placed into permanent housing. Thanks to its addiction recovery services, Mike is clean for the first time in years. Thanks to its



**Ready  
Willing  
& Able**

## The Doe Fund

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workforce development staff, Mike found employment as a Peer Specialist in supportive housing. And thanks to its Case Managers, Mike rebuilt his relationship with his children.

“When I first entered the program, my kids weren’t talking to me. Now, things are great with all three of them,” he told me. “There’s hope out here. I just thought that I was a lost soul at first, but The Doe Fund gave me my integrity back. I’m married, I’m a family man now. Life is great.”

Success stories like Mike’s are made possible by investment in human services. That’s why The Doe Fund joins over 225 providers in the #WHY15 campaign to demand **transparency and inclusion in the City’s budget**. We also join organizations including the Supportive Housing Network of New York, Human Services Council, Homeless Services United, Nonprofit New York, and New York Housing Conference in urging the City Council to **oppose Mayor Adams’ hiring freeze and his 15% PEGs**. In addition, we urge you to invest in empowering New York’s most marginalized by **fully funding the Supportive Housing Loan Program** and the **supportive housing workforce**.

These are the people who provide critical services to tenants across our portfolio of **616 permanent supportive units**. Each one serves someone at high risk: veterans; people with severe physical disabilities and mental illnesses; HIV/AIDS; histories of addiction, homelessness and justice-involvement.

People like Latanya, who for years struggled with addiction, homelessness, and a family history of severe mental illness. When a Housing Specialist at Latanya’s shelter told her that a Doe Fund supportive unit was available, she knew it was her best hope; her brother is a *Ready, Willing & Able* graduate who is now 20-years sober.

Thanks to permanent housing and a team dedicated to her success, Latanya received the support she needed to stabilize and thrive. “I’ve progressed a lot in the two years I’ve lived here, and for once, someone has listened to me and understood me. Someone has seen the positive in me,” she told me. Now, her life is transformed: Latanya is sober, employed as a cleaner, and saving money for the first time in her life.

The Doe Fund employs 110 staff members to provide case management, addiction recovery, and other transformative services for people like Latanya. What happens when providers can no longer fund these roles? The supportive housing workforce and homeless services providers are



## The Doe Fund

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already in a labor crisis, thanks to low wages and insufficient reimbursement of services from the City. The Mayor's proposed cuts will exacerbate this, leading to more homelessness. We call on the City Council to **increase wages and incentives for the supportive housing workforce and providers of homeless services**, including **an annual COLA**.

Beyond budget cuts and a drastic labor shortage of staff, human services organizations like ours struggle with shortfalls due to sluggish reimbursement by city agencies. We join nonprofit providers across NYC in urging the City to finally **pay out WEI and ICR for previous years**, to **work through backlogs in invoicing and subcontractor approvals**, and to **ensure timely reimbursement by city agencies** moving forward.

Thank you for your time. For Mike, Latanya, and the thousands of others who rely on the City's investment, we hope you will make the right decision and oppose the Mayor's budget cuts.

Regards,

Felipe Vargas  
Senior Vice President of Programs  
The Doe Fund



## **STATE CAMPAIGN URGES MAYOR TO FULLY FUND EARLY LEARNING AND CARE FOR NYC'S CHILDREN**

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care opposes any cuts to the New York City budget that negatively impact the well-being and stability of children and families. New York's families cannot afford an erosion of the programs they count on. We call on Mayor Adams to fully fund the early learning, after school, summer, and other expanded learning programs that young New Yorkers and their parents rely on, and support the educators who provide these important services to families across the city.



*New York City Council Committee on Finance  
Monday, December 11, 2023  
Oversight Hearing  
Mayor's November Financial Plan.*

**Testimony of The Forest Park Trust, Inc**

My name is Josephine Scalia, a board member of The Forest Park Trust, Inc. I am sending this testimony on behalf of The Forest Park Trust and President Michael Palermo. Thank you City Council Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan and Parks Chair Shekar Krishnan for your leadership and for your review of our testimony of the mayor's November Financial Plan and how it impacts parks and the well-being of all New Yorkers.

The Forest Park Trust is a non-profit organization founded in 1997. We work in partnership with NYC Parks to assist the Forest and Highland Park administration, in its effort to secure funding for both parks. The Trust supports the improvements to the landscaped and recreational areas; provides free family and youth programs and events; and finances seasonal staff to oversee free fitness classes, maintain our natural areas and community garden.

As a former Parks employee, working for Forest and Highland Parks, and now a board member, I have firsthand experience how yearly budget cuts reduced the Departments efforts to make Parks safe and inviting for your constituents and their patrons.

When funds are cut to field staff, cultural and recreational programs, Capital Projects, tree health and our natural areas, there is a direct impact on our neighborhoods, especially our low-income communities. Garbage accumulates; crime in parks increase; less free programming and events; fewer public pools and beach sections open are; more homeless; improvements to infrastructure halted and our natural areas become less sustainable to help us fight the impact of natural disasters and heightened heat indexes caused by climate change. Instead of "taking two steps forward", Parks has been asked so many times to take "three steps back", never able to catch up, and are expected to maintain the same high standards the Department works so hard to keep.

We ask the committees for no more cuts to Parks and to shield the Department from the next round of budget cuts. For many New Yorkers, parks are their backyards necessitating cleanliness, consistent maintenance, and safety measures to ensure they remain secure havens for children and families to enjoy together.

We want to especially thank City Councilwoman Joann Ariola, Councilwoman Lynn Schulman, Councilwoman Sandy Nurse and Councilman Robert F. Holden for their generosity and attention to Forest & Highland Parks.

Thank you all again for your leadership and commitment to NYC Parks.



# THE JAZZ GALLERY

*...where the future is present*

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Randy Weston  
George Wein

New York City Council  
Finance Committee  
Council Chambers – City Hall  
Monday December 11, 2023 10:00 AM

City funding is essential for The Jazz Gallery. We have been providing world-class jazz for New York City audiences since 1995. We present over 400 programs a year. We pay hundreds of artists annually. Our in-person and virtual programming reaches over 77K audience members annually, here and around the world.

Organizations like The Jazz Gallery touch vital aspects of daily life in New York - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access.

For decades, we have gratefully received support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA). We are now facing a fifteen percent cut in this funding, which is unprecedented in our history.

In very real terms, this means less staffing, less programming, fewer commissions for artists and fewer opportunities to perform.

We cannot pay less rent. We cannot pay less for utilities, transportation, insurance or licensing. **These cuts will come from our people - our staff and our artists.**

We have still not received notification from DCLA of any FY24 award. But we still must craft budgets for the year. Our Board must approve them. We still have end -of-year appeals to make. Besides the potentially devastating nature of the cuts, we are trying to plan operations and programming for our next fiscal year with little information.

There has been a lack of transparency in how these decisions were made at the City level and how they will be implemented. Arts and culture, the entire nonprofit sector, has had no voice in these discussions, no seat at the table.



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We have been in urgent discussion with foundations and our individual donors. Foundations are sympathetic, but since all nonprofits in the City are facing these cuts, they are deluged with appeals from their grantees. Foundations who have yet to support us are not accepting new grantees. Individual donors must make hard decisions on which organizations they can still support, when all need help.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

**The additional 5% planned cuts in January and again in March would be devastating to the continued running of these programs.**

- We ask that the City provide analysis for why a 15% percent cut is necessary.
- We call on the City to partner with the sector and work toward creative solutions. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, quality of life and cleanliness of New York City.

## Organizational Background

**The Jazz Gallery (TJG)** is America's premier performance venue for artists who challenge convention, take creative risks, and lead their field as performers, composers, and thinkers. Through residencies, workshops, and exhibitions, we provide both a platform for emerging artists to discover their voices and a home for established musicians to continue to experiment and grow. At TJG, artists and audiences come together to explore new ideas, collaborate, and celebrate jazz as a dynamic art form that reflects our ever-changing world.

The Jazz Gallery was founded in 1995 by trumpeter Roy Hargrove, vocalist Lezlie Harrison, and cultural anthropologist Dale Fitzgerald. Winner of multiple CMA/ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming, TJG has been hailed as "the most imaginatively booked jazz club in New York" (NYTimes).

The Gallery is a three-time winner of the CMA/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, with diversity and quality being two defining elements. Every season, audiences look forward to concerts of unparalleled quality and breadth, which represent the spectrum of cultural musical idioms that inform today's jazz and improvised music.

Among our alumni artists to whom we gave their first gig and whose careers we help nurture in NYC are 6 MacArthur Fellows, 18 Monk Competition finalists, numerous Doris Duke Artist Award recipients, GRAMMY Award-nominees, and many others who are now headlining international jazz festivals and topping annual "best-of" lists.

MacArthur winner Tyshawn Sorey made his debut on our stage in 2004, and recently released a 3-disc live set recorded at TJG in 2022, to rapturous reviews.

The Jazz Gallery is open 4+ nights/wk, 48 wks/yr, presenting 400+ events to an annual audience of 17K+. We livestream nearly all concerts, reaching 66K virtual attendees from 50+ countries and throughout the United States.

**New York City Council, Committee on Finance**  
**November Financial Plan Hearing**  
**December 11, 2023**  
**Testimony of The Legal Aid Society**

The Legal Aid Society and our fellow public defender and civil legal services organizations provide critical constitutionally and legally mandated services to millions of low-income New Yorkers each year.

We defend people against incarceration, deportation, and eviction. We connect people to lifesaving benefits, housing, food, job training, and substance and mental health support. The Legal Aid Society provides a direct lifeline on more than 215,000 individual legal matters for low-income New Yorkers, and in combination with impact litigation and advocacy, we impacted more than 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers last year.

We are long-term providers of vital public services, and we share a joint commitment with the Council to ensuring that all New Yorkers have equitable access to justice. The City funds we receive, including through baseline and discretionary contracts, the Indirect Cost Rate initiative, and the recent Workforce Enhancement Initiative, are essential for us to continue to deliver these vital services. Without these funds, we will not be able to hire the attorneys, paralegals, investigators, social workers, and other staff critical to meeting that commitment.

Funding from the City of New York supports our civil legal services for low-income New Yorkers in all five boroughs. Through this work, we address a broad range of civil legal issues that threaten the stability of low-income New Yorkers and, if unaddressed, can keep families locked in cycles of poverty. In FY23, the City's vital support enabled the Civil Practice to work on over 50,000 individual cases and legal matters, benefiting nearly 110,000 clients and household members citywide. City funding also sustains our community legal education, hotlines, and other outreach activities, as well as our specialized programs for domestic violence survivors, immigrants, the elderly, low-wage workers, people experiencing homelessness, people with serious and chronic health conditions including HIV/AIDs, and people with disabilities, among other vulnerable groups.

Funding from the City of New York also supports our Criminal Defense Practice's trial, appellate, and post-conviction representation as the citywide public defender for New Yorkers. In FY 23, Criminal Defense Practice handled over 115,000 trial, appeal, and parole matters. In addition, the financial support for the City allowed us to field close to 10,000 hotline calls from people incarcerated at Rikers and over 7,600 services by our team for the Crisis Management System community organizational partners.

As you know, our operations face significant risk. While City agencies, including the City Law Department and district attorneys, receive additional funding for collective bargaining, fringe benefit, and utility and space cost increases, the Legal Aid Society does not. This means that every year, our costs increase while baseline contracts remain flat, effectively cutting our funding each year.

In addition, critical contracting shortfalls threaten the ability of providers like us to serve the New Yorkers who need us most. The contracting crisis is multifaceted and touches every point along the timeline from the issuance of the procurement to registration and payment. The delays create unsustainable instability in our organizations making it extremely difficult to plan and forcing us to scramble to make payroll.

The allowance clause amendments and multi-year discretionary contracting reforms are absolutely steps in the right direction, but fundamental issues with registration and payment remain.

Delays in contract registration create major cash flow challenges that delay or preclude us not only from hiring staff, but also from purchasing critical services and paying rent and other vendors, which in turn result in late fees and higher vendor prices and disqualify us from lines of credit. When the City forces us to front costs before a contract is registered, the provider makes what is, in effect, an interest-free loan to the city.

Once the contracts are registered and we can begin invoicing for payment, the invoicing process itself is extremely onerous and inflexible. It involves detailed line-item reviews that require pages of information and record keeping to meet extremely detailed and often shifting requirements. Invoicing is further delayed by the budget modification process, which can delay payments by weeks as costs and needs shift throughout the year. And, when the City fails to pay us on time and we therefore can't spend all the funds in a single year, the City then keeps whatever we don't spend, effectively cutting our funding and reducing the services we can provide.

We are grateful to the City Council for championing and prioritizing the needs of non-profits like us that form an essential part of the public sector.

# THE CENTER

**Committee on Finance**  
*Oversight Hearing -*  
*November Plan Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG)*  
December 11, 2023

**Testimony of**  
**The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center**  
**New York, NY**

**THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &  
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER**  
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[gaycenter.org](http://gaycenter.org)

# THE CENTER

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Mayor Adams' November Financial Plan for FY2025.

## **On Proposed Plan to Eliminate the Gap**

New York City's LGBT community formed The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (The Center) in 1983, in response to the AIDS epidemic, ensuring a place for LGBTQ people to access information, care and support they were not receiving elsewhere. Now the largest LGBT multi service organization on the East Coast, The Center sees more than 6,000 weekly visitors and hosts over 400 community group meetings each month. The Center has a solid track record of working for and with the community to increase access to a diverse range of high-quality services and resources, including our substance use recovery programming for adults and youth; HIV/AIDS programming; youth programs; and our families and opportunities work.

The Center is deeply concerned about the Mayor's November Financial plan which includes an overbroad, 15 percent cut to city agency budgets across the board by Spring of 2024. As has been demonstrated by independent observers, nonprofit organizations, and by the City Council's own measure, the proposed cuts would "disproportionately impact everyday New Yorkers," particularly compounding on the stresses of low-income residents that rely on essential City services to support their day-to-day lives.

LGBT + New Yorkers are particularly vulnerable at this moment. As national headlines continue to demonize and put our communities at risk, organizations like The Center continue to step up to fill in the gaps, and guide people toward resources and hope. The Mayor's proposed cuts would significantly jeopardize our ability to do that work.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like The Center touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We also oppose recent rhetoric that seeks to pit New Yorker against New Yorker. Newly arrived asylum seekers are part of the fabric of our City, and our communities, and we have served many at The Center. Reducing resources at this time would mean less resources to support more people – a counterproductive approach to addressing the many crises faced by our city.

We call on the Mayor to reconsider this PEG plan, and for the City Council push back against it in support of all New Yorkers.

**THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &  
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER  
208 W 13 ST NEW YORK, NY 10011**

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[gaycenter.org](http://gaycenter.org)

# THE CENTER

## **The Center's services**

The Center fosters a welcoming environment where everyone is celebrated for who they are. We offer the LGBTQ communities of NYC advocacy, health and wellness programs; arts, entertainment, and cultural events; recovery, parenthood, and family support services. In addition, The Center has made racial equity a keystone element of our approach to community building.

- **Counseling and support groups:** The Center provides short-term individual counseling and referral services, as well as hosts a range of support groups for our transgender and gender nonconforming communities. Both individual counseling and groups offer support around a variety of topics, including gender identity and expression, emotional challenges, substance use and recovery, and aim to build peer support networks.
- **Employment support:** Despite legal protections in New York State, the effects of discrimination continue to place trans and gender nonconforming communities at extremely high rates of poverty, unemployment, underemployment and homelessness. The Center provides services to directly combat this inequality, including individual career coaching support, case management, events focused on career exploration, legal workshops and networking opportunities.
- **Health insurance enrollment and linkage to care:** The Center is a designated navigator agency for the NY State of Health, the health insurance marketplace for New York through the Affordable Care Act. We provide information and education on the options available, and help individuals, families, small businesses and their employees enroll in New York State Medicaid, The NY Essential Plan, Child Health Plus and Qualified Health plans. We also help connect individuals to TGNCNB affirming medical and behavioral healthcare as needed.
- **HIV prevention, testing, and linkage to care:** We offer counseling for individuals, groups, couples and families, plus a variety of events, speakers and informal social gatherings for positive people and their loved ones. This includes HIV & AIDS education, anonymous testing, counseling and support, partner notification, and linkage to medical treatment including PEP, PrEP, and antiretroviral medications.
- **Legal services:** The Center partners with community-based legal providers to provide TGNCNB community members with drop-in assistance around gender-affirming access to healthcare, insurance, employment issues, housing, name and gender marker changes, public benefits and more.

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Testimony from The Lower Eastside Girls Club on behalf of STARS CGI:

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like STARS CGI touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

About The Lower Eastside Girls Club:

Since 1996, the Lower Eastside Girls Club has supported young women and gender-expansive youth of color throughout New York City in leveraging their inner power to shape a better future for themselves, their community, and the world. Through free, year-round, innovative programming we connect young people with their passions, celebrate their curiosity, and channel their creative energy. In 2022, we expanded our mission and service population with the Center for Wellbeing and Happiness, which provides free, full-spectrum wellness services for all generations and genders on the Lower East Side.

*"Coming to Girls Club has impacted me in the biggest way imaginable. It's helped me become the young independent woman that I am, and it really brought the love that I have for the career that I want to do for the rest of my life, which is audio production and music tech." - Amerique, Girls Club Alum*

*"Girls Club teaches you how to be yourself, how to be comfortable in your own skin, how to just love who you are, love your planet, care about your neighborhood, your people, your voice, and so many things." - Jibeh, Girls Club Alum*

*"To grow up in Girls Club is so positive. Not only do you grow as a person in Girls Club, you also see the people around you grow. When you come to Girls Club you always know that there are going to be people here to support you and listen to you and understand you. It's really like a home away from home." - Xzeria, Girls Club Member*

*"I feel a real sense of community and support from the teachers who work here. It's always coming in here, seeing a smiling face, and being able to relax and learn something new." - Emily*

**Testimony for the NYC City Council Committee on Finance**  
**December 11, 2023**

My name is Tami Lin-Moges, and I am the Interim Director of The Nature Conservancy's Cities Program in New York. The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization, and our more than 400 scientists conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We impact conservation in 76 countries and territories, directly and with partners. We have 90,000 members across New York, 35,000 of whom are in New York City. The Nature Conservancy advances strategies that create a healthy, resilient, and sustainable urban environment and is committed to improving New York City's air, land, and water to sustain and support the people and nature of this great city.

In New York City, we convene [Forest for All NYC](#), a coalition of 130 organizations, we are leading practitioners on the science and policy of the urban forest and of green roofs, and we collaborate with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to advance a tree inventory across their campuses. In 2021, we authored and released the [State of the Urban Forest in NYC](#), a comprehensive assessment of the urban forest in NYC. We also oversaw the collaborative development by over 50 organizations of the [NYC Urban Forest Agenda](#), a strategic roadmap that provides detailed recommendations to meaningfully protect, maintain, expand, research, and promote the New York City urban forest to benefit all New Yorkers in a way that is just and equitable.

I submit this testimony on behalf of The Nature Conservancy, as a leading member of Forest for All NYC, and as a proud member of the Play Fair Coalition, regarding the Mayor's November Financial Plan and specifically to express support for fully restoring and protecting the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) urban forestry budget.

Tree canopy, vegetation cover, and green space are crucial for the health, safety, and livability of NYC, and heat-related illness and death continue to impact Black New Yorkers, communities of color, and lower-income communities disproportionately. As our city faces [significant increases in the number and intensity of heat waves](#) and extreme precipitation events in the coming decades, trees, green spaces, and bioswales, when adequately maintained, offer critical nature-based solutions that mitigate the urban heat island effect and stormwater flooding. Trees and parks cool neighborhoods, clean air, and improve quality of life. Our urban forest, and its care, is a matter of environmental and social justice.

The key goal of Forest for All NYC is to achieve at least 30% tree canopy cover citywide by 2035 in an equitable way (up from 22% cover as of 2017). The Nature Conservancy recently produced [tree canopy factsheets](#) that show the opportunities for increasing tree canopy in every neighborhood in the city -- it is possible to realize the 30x35 goal with diligence and investment. I commend the Mayor and City Council, for establishing a goal of achieving 30 percent tree canopy cover citywide to address extreme heat. This goal is now codified in [Local Law 148 of 2023](#) and is committed to in PlaNYC 2023.

We continue to call for a timebound goal of 30 percent canopy cover citywide by 2035 in an equitable manner (30x35), given the urgent need to make the city adaptive to the extreme weather events and to protect the most climate-vulnerable New Yorkers. Local Law 148's mandate to create the city's first ever

Urban Forest Plan by July 31, 2025, that puts the city on a path to reach 30% canopy cover, is a critical step. Unfortunately, there is not yet dedicated funding to develop the Urban Forest Plan. Instead, the recently implemented budget cuts, and the proposed additional cuts in the remainder of Fiscal Year 2024, critically threaten the NYC urban forest in the short and long term.

This past April, we, along with members of Forest for All NYC, celebrated the City's investment of \$2.4 million in baselined funding to formalize the city's 300-mile nature trail system, a stated goal in PlaNYC, as well as broader urban forest investments. We are disappointed that this funding, including additional funds for tree risk management, which is a critical public safety matter, has now been cut from the budget. We are also disappointed by the elimination of the Parks Opportunity Program, a decades-old job training program that employs low-income New Yorkers in roles that clean and green parks throughout NYC. Cutting this program negatively impacts the cleanliness and accessibility of our parks, but also means that fewer low-income New Yorkers will be given access to paid work experience, on-the-job training, and certifications to prepare them for a green career.

The benefits of the urban forest cannot be fully realized without sufficient commitment to DPR operations and maintenance as well as ongoing capital investments in planting and restoration. Despite the laudable efforts of this committee and hundreds of advocacy groups across the city, DPR is chronically underfunded. Despite managing, caring for, and programming approximately 14% of NYC's land, DPR received an average of 0.34% of the total city budget for Other Than Personnel Services (OTPS), between FY18-22; DPR's Forestry OTPS budget was just 0.04%. Failing to adequately care for the urban forest could have far-reaching consequences and cost us more in the long run. This asset has suffered a chronic and disproportionate lack of investment, so further cuts to it only serve to exacerbate existing inequities and can undermine public confidence in the recent commitments to the urban forest and a healthy city.

Beyond DPR, other agencies, such as the Department of Transportation and Department of Education would benefit from dedicated urban forest funds, which would support ongoing maintenance contracts, tree planting, and vegetation management. Additionally, we are concerned about the planned cuts to the Department of Sanitation's community composting program, which could set back the progress towards local wood salvage, a key activity that has sustainability and economic benefits for the city.

Looking ahead, we remain concerned about how the potential additional rounds of cuts will impact the NYC urban forest and parks. Further reductions in DPR's budget may have devastating effects on the basic functions of the agency, which could pose additional threats to public safety. We hope these cuts will be avoided and request details on the intended plans for current and any subsequent cuts. Clear information regarding the predicted and actualized impacts of these budget cuts is necessary in order to successfully prepare for the FY25 budget and also can help the broader community understand potential ways to bolster the urban forest, and its benefits to our city, in this tough fiscal climate.

Maintaining and investing in the NYC urban forest and parks not only increases the quality of life for New Yorkers, but also makes the city more welcoming for tourists, which helps to drive the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. The environmental, social, and public health harms of delaying efforts to equitably expand it are real. Now is the time to invest in the urban forest.



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We respectfully request that the Department of Parks and Recreation's urban forest budget be fully restored and protected, and further request that City Council provide full funding for the NYC urban forest as they begin to work on the FY25 budget. We again echo our call for one percent of the total budget be allocated to DPR. The urban forest is critical public infrastructure that requires sustained investment to equitably serve all New Yorkers.

Thank you to the Committee on Finance for holding a hearing about the Mayor's November Financial Plan and for the opportunity to submit testimony. The Nature Conservancy is pleased to make ourselves available to advance this important discussion.

**Contact:**

Tami Lin-Moges  
Interim Director, Cities Program | The Nature Conservancy  
[tami.lin@tnc.org](mailto:tami.lin@tnc.org)

**The Public Theater's Testimony Oversight – Mayor's November Financial Plan**

**Monday, December 11, 2023**

**Good afternoon, Committee Chair Brannan, present council members and staff. I am here to testify on the impact of the Mayor's Financial Plan on the City of New York and to request your continued advocacy and support specifically for the arts and culture sector. The Council's support is paramount in ensuring the survival of free and accessible programs throughout New York City. The implementation of all three looming budgetary PEGs in the next fiscal year poses a significant threat to the entire non-profit sector, pushing it towards an unsustainable financial future.**

**Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced because of the cuts announced in November. The proposed additional 5% cut to take place in January would be detrimental to The Public and other nonprofits in their efforts to continue providing free and low-cost services and programming to New Yorkers. Organizations like The Public Theater touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.**

The information presented below illustrates the critical situation faced by Cultural Institutions Groups (CIGs) and Cultural Development Fund recipients (CDFs) in NYC, including The Public Theater. It is not an understatement to say the economic and physical well-being of all New Yorkers is tied to the ability of Cultural Organizations to carry out their missions and provide accessible programming for all. The current and future forecast cuts put into question the viability of The Public's operations and that of our fellow Cultural Organizations.

During our 2022-2023 Season, The Public Theater hosted a full season of productions and artistic programming both onsite on its venues in Manhattan and in locations throughout the five boroughs, attracting hundreds of thousands of artists and audience members. Notably, our Free Shakespeare in the Park, made possible by the NYC government, drew approximately 79,203 attendees reaching audiences across all five boroughs through various distribution channels and partnerships all of whom attended for free.

Our mainstage programming at 425 Lafayette Street featured a diverse lineup of new plays, musicals, and classics, contributing significantly to the cultural landscape of the city. Beyond the work in our season, **The Public Theater has also served as an incubator for new work that moves to Broadway and further strengthens the local economy generating revenue through ticket sales, tourism, hotel and restaurant visits and more. Three shows originally produced by The Public are being featured in this Broadway season (Hell's Kitchen, Suffs, and Here Lies Love).**

**However, without necessary funding from the city budget, we will be unable to maintain the level of new work development and free and accessible programming that nurtures New Yorkers and generates economic activity that benefits the entire economy. The Public Theater, like many live performing arts organizations, is in a particularly precarious position given the ways in which the**

pandemic has uniquely harmed our industry. **Over the summer, The Public took proactive and extremely painful steps to achieve a sustainable financial model, laying off almost 20% of full-time employees, and the proposed cuts threaten to upset the careful balance we have found and force additional layoffs or reduction in programming.**

**The current plans to move forward with three rounds of PEGs would result in an approximately \$250,000 operating funding cut to The Public Theater, exacerbating the financial challenges we already face.** Every cent is crucial to protecting jobs and providing free and accessible programming, which is vital for the cultural vibrancy of the city.

We are imploring you to understand the significant harm these cuts would have on The Public and our ability to operate on behalf of the City which in turn would negatively impact the local economy and to use this knowledge to advocate for the Administration to reconsider the proposed budget cuts.

**Please let us know how we can contribute to advancing this mission, and feel free to reach out to my directly with any questions you may have on this testimony. Thank you for your time and dedication to the people of New York City.**

Kate Madigan  
Government Affairs Coordinator for The Public Theater  
[kmadigan@publictheater.org](mailto:kmadigan@publictheater.org)



IN THE KEY OF *love*

**Young People's Chorus of New York City®**

**Francisco J. Núñez, Founder/Artistic Director**

37 West 65th Street, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10023

T: 212.289.7779 | F: 212.289.6918 | [www.ypc.org](http://www.ypc.org)

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## Committee on Finance

### Testimony Submitted by:

**Maureen McNeil, Government Grant Writer**

**December 11, 2023**

The Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC), founded by Artistic Director Francisco J. Núñez, provides children of all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds with a unique program of music education and choral performance that seeks to fulfill each child's potential, while creating a model of artistic excellence and diversity that reflects, and enriches, the community.

Núñez experienced stark segregation and inequities among NYC's communities. His firsthand experiences formed the beliefs upon which YPC was founded: that settings that bring together children of diverse backgrounds are critical to young peoples' ability to broaden their perspectives and succeed as members of an inclusive society; and that music has the power to build bridges of understanding across differences. YPC not only provides unparalleled musical training, performance, and pathways to higher education, it also creates a space where young people feel safe and supported as they develop talent, skills, and life-long friendships.

YPC annually serves over 2,000 NYC children, ages 8 to 18, through a proprietary music education curriculum that combines rigorous training, methodical practice, and public performance with a focus on developing children's social-emotional capacities. YPC has three core programs:

- **Performance Choruses:** Children and teens participate in YPC's core after-school program, learning age-appropriate vocal and music-reading techniques, as well as performance and choreography skills. Performing throughout the year on some of the world's most prestigious stages, these ensembles are also regularly invited for special TV appearances, and to participate in national and international choral competitions and festivals. They will also receive up to 100 hours of academic and life-skills training in our College Bound program, including SAT/ACT prep, financial literacy, and career/college readiness. To date, 100% of YPC's senior choristers have graduated from high school and been accepted to college, compared to 81% citywide.
- **Community Choruses:** Children in YPC's Community Choruses attend after-school rehearsals in their neighborhood hosted by YPC community partners and perform concerts throughout the year in their communities and across New York City.

- School Choruses: Through its partnerships with New York City's public schools, YPC brings its nationally recognized music education and choral performance program to children in 18 schools. We have partnerships in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx and Queens. Through YPC's curriculum, they will learn compositions and repertoire in a range of languages and styles, as they develop perseverance, confidence, and the determination to succeed. Performing songs from a variety of cultures and traditions sparks their curiosity about diversity and promotes a deeper understanding and respect for one another's differences.

Because our conductors are employed full time, our students have the same teachers and mentors throughout their time with YPC, which for many can begin in the first grade and culminate when they graduate high school. These long-lasting relationships engender a close-knit, nurturing environment for all of our students. In turn, the achievements that our young people gain through diligent effort – learning music, winning awards, and earning audience applause – build their confidence and reinforce their drive to succeed.

City funding, and particularly our CDF Funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs, allows YPC to provide all of these programs. We are concerned about the cuts being realized across all city agencies. Last year, we were one of the unfortunate BIPOC-led organizations that saw a significant cut in our funding due to the CDF reform process. Without warning, we received a \$34,570 cut in CDF funding (down to 118,680), which includes \$41,190 in safety net funding that we were told was a one-time measure. If that safety net funding is not available this year and we face an additional 15% reduction in our funding, we will be facing a catastrophic cut.

Decreases in funding will inhibit our ability to provide scholarships and discounts to our students and limit our ability to provide onsite tutoring. Recent city cuts to public school's budgets mean more and more of our partner schools will now be relying on the subsidies we offer to cover the cost of our in-school arts programming. We have some exciting plans for expanding to new Council districts in 2024-2025 and creating a New Arrivals chorus to serve recently arrived asylum seekers with desperately needed after school programs. Those plans would need to be put on the backburner until we can try and cover this reduction through private fundraising efforts. We urge the Mayor to reconsider its cuts to DCLA and we urge DCLA to hold harmless those program groups that saw significant cuts in the CDF process last year. We cannot withstand another drastic cut to our program funding.

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

12/11/2024

Dear Chair Brannan and Council Members,

My name is Rabbi Emily Cohen, and I am co-chair of Tirdof: New York City Jewish Clergy for Justice. I'm a proud Brooklyn resident, and I'm writing today because of my concern about the Mayor's slashing of our City budget, and particularly the effects of these cuts on housing in the City. As a rabbi, as a New Yorker, and as a human being in this great city, I'm extremely concerned that the Mayor continues to prioritize corporate interests and the ultra-wealthy rather than the immediate needs of our poor and working class. I'm particularly worried about the impact of these cuts on housing for the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

If not blocked by the City Council, this will be the fifth round of budget cuts enacted by the Mayor. The mayor's focus on corporate interests harms everyone except the most wealthy New Yorkers, and it is clear that huge numbers of New York City residents, already feeling pressed by budget cuts to this point, cannot take more cuts to services.

In this current budget (Financial Year 2024), Mayor Adams is cutting \$15.5 million from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, \$11 million and 117 city jobs from the Department of Buildings (DOB) budget, and \$8.4 million from the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget.

Previous cuts by this administration have left DSS underfunded and understaffed. The agency has needed a court order to process a large backlog of SNAP benefits. This means more hungry New Yorkers—including many parents with children, and senior citizens—waiting longer for food stamps. Alongside this, I'm deeply troubled by the proposed 20% cut to spending in support of asylum seekers in New York City. The discourse that seeks to pit our newest neighbors against historically housing insecure and homeless New Yorkers is not only a false binary, but a cowardly attempt to pit those who have little and those who have none against one another, rather than taking responsibility for the welfare of all New Yorkers in need—needs that the city is both obligated to meet, and that we are actually able to afford. Immigrants and refugees have always entered this city and made it their home. That shouldn't stop now just because Mayor Adams is seeking a scapegoat for his own mismanagement.

Particularly during this holiday season, I ask that this committee and the wider Council make full use of their charter-appointed powers to make sure that a budget modification does not pass unless these cruel cuts are rolled back, and that essential services for New Yorkers are funded, OR to halt PEGs until the normal yearly budget process moves forward, where New Yorkers can have more transparency and accountability for the way their city funds services. I believe in the power of New Yorkers, and I believe that we can and must do more for our city.

I appreciate your time, and your dedication to New York City.



12/11/2024

Dear Chair Brannan and Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Rabbi Margo Hughes-Robinson, and I am a member and organizer with Tirdof: New York City Jewish Clergy for Justice. I'm a proud Brooklyn resident, parent, and I'm present today because of my deep concern about the Mayor's slashing of our City budget, and particularly the effects of these cuts on housing in the City and what it means for my neighbors. As a faith leader, I'm extremely concerned that the Mayor continues to prioritize corporate interests and the ultra-wealthy rather than the immediate needs of New York's poor and working class.

If not blocked by the City Council, this will be the fifth round of budget cuts enacted by the Mayor. Frankly, this model of mis-management is not leadership, it is unnecessary cruelty. Governmental and independent budget experts have pointed to a number of strategies for managing the city's fiscal issues without requiring such severe cuts, including: curtailing uniformed overtime, undoing the hiring freeze at revenue generating agencies, better planning and spending on humanely support newly arriving immigrants, and using some of the city's \$9 billion reserve fund.

In this current budget (Financial Year 2024), Mayor Adams is cutting **\$15.5 million from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development**. He is additionally cutting **\$11 million and 117 city jobs from the Department of Buildings (DOB) budget, and \$8.4 million from the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget**.

Previous cuts by this administration have left DSS underfunded and understaffed. The agency has needed a court order to process a large backlog of SNAP benefits. This means more hungry New Yorkers waiting longer for food stamps. Alongside this, I'm deeply troubled by the proposed 20% cut to spending in support of asylum seekers in New York City. The discourse that seeks to pit our newest neighbors against historically housing insecure and homeless New Yorkers is not only a false binary, but a cowardly attempt to pit those who have little and those who have none against one another, rather than taking responsibility for the welfare of all New Yorkers in need—needs that the city is both **obligated** to meet, and that we are actually able to afford.

Particularly during this holiday season, I must request that this committee and the wider Council make full use of their charter-appointed powers to make sure that a budget modification does not pass unless these cruel cuts are rolled back, and that essential services for New Yorkers are funded, OR to halt PEGs until the normal yearly budget process moves forward, where New Yorkers can have more transparency and accountability for the way their city funds services.

I appreciate your time, and your dedication to New York City.



• UA3, Inc. • 384 Grand Street, 1A, New York, NY 10002 • [www.ua3now.org](http://www.ua3now.org) •

Dear NYC Council Finance Chair and Committee members:

My name is Chi Loek, and I am the Executive Director of UA3 and its Community First Food Pantry. Many of you know about our special food distribution and PPEs events, our efforts to build solidarity across neighborhoods and the community cultural exchanges we foster, as well as our commitment to combating anti-Asian hate across vulnerable NYC communities. We are the largest Lower East Side Food Pantry in the Borough and have a network of 100 CBOs in the outer boroughs who count on our partnership to feed their communities.

The Community First Food Pantry is in the heart of Manhattan's AAPI community in Chinatown and serves 5,000 economically vulnerable New Yorkers every month. Older adults, low-income families burdened with high rent, people with limited English skills, the unemployed, the homeless, and shelter residents rely on the healthy, fresh produce we distribute to fight hunger which raises its head morning, noon and night.

People experiencing food insecurity look to us to provide nutritious and culturally familiar food to prepare for themselves and their families. We are able to provide this service largely due to City Council funding and CFC (Community Food Connection) allocations. The Mayor's proposed cuts will harm the health of vulnerable New Yorkers who depend on this essential nutritional service and increase the mental fragility of those who live on the margins.

UA3 also assists seniors in navigating the City's social services such as benefits and low income housing. In addition, we provide youth with leadership skills and mental wellness programs to counter the residual effects of the pandemic which disproportionately affected the AAPI seniors and youth. Any cuts to the City's budget in the social service sector will have devastating consequences for New Yorkers at large.

UA3 has been a long term partner in the 18% and Growing Campaign and we vigorously oppose any cuts to essential services and to funding many programs the public counts on, particularly in light of the recent increases in food, transportation and housing. I am asking and counting on your support!

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

### **Oversight-Mayor's November Financial Plan**

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

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

**December 11, 2023**

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

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

UJA-Federation of New York's nonprofits contract with the city to provide vital services and supports to their communities including but not exclusive to afterschool and summer programs for youth and children, early childhood education programs, adult literacy programs, legal services, food pantries, and older adult centers. These programs provide the infrastructure many families and individuals need to live and thrive in New York City. For this reason, we find the 5% cuts included in the November Plan to be troubling. Furthermore, the additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to these community programs.

For example, the November Plan cuts \$120 million from early childhood education programs in FY25 and beyond. This could translate to up to 10,000 seats being cut from the system. Early childhood education programs like 3-K and Pre-K offer children a safe, nurturing and educational environment to learn allowing their parents or guardians to work or pursue their own educational endeavors. Toddler care, including the cost of private 3-K and Pre-K, is a major expense for families. In a recent report<sup>1</sup> released by the Citizens' Committee for Children, it was found that 80% of families cannot afford care for infants, toddlers, 3-K and Pre-K, and school-age youth. Reducing seats for city funded 3-K and Pre-K will result in many children missing out on this valuable educational program and parents scrambling to find affordable care options for their children.

The November Plan cited unused seats in early childhood education programs as the reason for reducing its capacity. There are a number of reasons why seats are not used in an early childhood education program, one being that the number of seats were not properly matched to the need in the community. Some areas of the city

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<sup>1</sup> [From Birth to Age 12: The \(Un\)Affordability of Child Care and Out-of-School Care in New York City | CCC New York](https://www.cccnewyork.org/reports-and-publications/reports/child-care/child-care-affordability-report)

have an oversaturation of programs while others have waitlists to get into their programs. One 3-K program in the UJA network currently has 75 kids on their waitlist while other programs are struggling to fill their seats. Some programs do not have enough staff to serve children, which impacts seat capacity. Low wages for early childhood education staff at community-based organizations (CBOs) when compared to their DOE counterparts has plagued the sector for years making it difficult for CBO programs to find and retain teachers and assistant teachers. And when CBOs locate promising employees, it is difficult to get these individuals hired quickly due to the slowness to get through the comprehensive background check process at DOHMH. There are complex reasons for unused seats in the early childhood education system, however they are not a true indicator that this service is needed less across the city.

The November Plan also cuts funding for COMPASS by \$1.5 million in FY24 and \$6.9 million in FY25 and beyond, resulting in a loss of 3,538 COMPASS slots. As youth and families try to rebuild from the pandemic, our city's young people require opportunities to grow and connect with peers, in ways that advance their social emotional and physical development and academic preparedness and success. Programs like COMPASS offer youth crucial support, mentorship, and educational opportunities. The November Plan also reduces programming hours for middle school students in the Summer Rising program. Summer programming combats learning loss and provides a nurturing environment for youth. Reductions in both COMPASS and Summer Rising programs would disproportionately impact low-income youth and families who rely on these services to work.

Any reduction in services will impact the citizens of New York City and weaken the nonprofit sector. UJA calls on the city to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder the sector further. The city cannot withstand a 5% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety of New York City.

In addition to the millions in cuts listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs at risk of losing financial resources in the approaching months. Over the last few years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has been using around \$1 billion per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary before the pandemic and will continue to be critical. These investments include (but are not exclusive to)<sup>2</sup>, money to sustain and expand 3-K, funds that were used to increase salaries for preschool special education teachers, and funding for the academic portion of Summer Rising. While the federal funding will run out in June 2024, the need for these supports will continue. Each of these programs are at risk of being cut—in addition to the cuts laid out in the November Plan.

Lastly, there were significant cuts made to the technical assistance arm focused on providing support for adult literacy providers across the city. In FY24, funding for professional development and technical assistance for DYCD-funded adult literacy programs was decoupled from the funding for the programs themselves. This resulted in the field's technical assistance provider, the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), losing \$334K in Expansion funding, which represented over 60% of its DYCD funding dedicated to supporting community-based adult literacy programs. In the November PEG, the LAC lost another 35% of its remaining FY24 DYCD funding, further undermining its ability to support programs and eroding a vital part of the infrastructure that strengthens and sustains adult literacy education in NYC.

## **Conclusion**

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration of the impact the cuts in the November Financial Plan will have on nonprofits and the people they serve and ask for your continued support of these programs. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions, please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org.

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<sup>2</sup> The entire list of education programs and services funded by COVID-19 relief funds can be seen [here](#).



New York City Council Hearing on November Plan Budget Cuts  
Monday, December 11, 2023 - 10:00 AM

Testimony Submitted by Elizabeth Angeles, Vice President of Advocacy  
United Way of New York City

United Way of New York City works with hundreds of organizations that provide services to New Yorkers including but not limited to food distribution, benefits access, education support, health information, and family functional therapy across New York City. One of our longstanding services has been providing funding, capacity building, and technical and operational support to hundreds of food and benefits access providers across New York City.

With the cost of living in New York rapidly rising, and an unprecedented number of New Yorkers relying on social services and direct service providers, **we are particularly concerned about budget cuts that will impact New York City Department of Social Services and result in the delayed and inefficient processing of critical benefits like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**. SNAP allows families to spend on food in a timely, relevant, and dignified way, while also supporting the economy. SNAP helps supplement the income of many low-wage workers, enabling them to afford food that meets their dietary, religious, and cultural needs, requirements, and preferences. Delays and inefficiencies in processing access to SNAP will force families to choose between food and other essential expenses. **Based on the [New York City True Cost of Living Report](#) we released in partnership with Fund for the City of New York and supported by various partners, we know that without assistance, 50% of working-age households in New York City cannot make ends meet.**

Reduced staffing and processing delays caused by budget cuts would:

- **Increase wait times for SNAP applications:** This could leave eligible families waiting for weeks or even months to receive vital food assistance, exacerbating hunger and food insecurity and increasing demand at our local emergency food providers.
- **Increase errors and ineligibility determinations:** With fewer staff available to review applications thoroughly, more eligible families could be wrongly denied benefits due to processing errors or backlogs.
- **Reduce outreach and support services:** SNAP programs often provide nutrition education and other support services to participants. Cuts will limit access to these crucial services, hindering families' ability to manage their food budgets and make healthy choices.

The impact of this will be felt throughout New York City community-based organizations (CBOs). Since 2011, UWNYC has run the Food Support Connections (FSC) Program, a dynamic partnership involving CBOs that provide top-notch SNAP outreach and application support services. These CBOs specialize in screening, processing applications, and assisting families and individuals in all five boroughs of New York City. Over the past year, we have heard from our CBOs **that there are already persistent technological issues related to the Access HRA website and Mobile App**. These issues result in **recurrent system outages that hinder partners from effectively assisting clients in the application process**. Consequently, clients faced frustration, needing to make multiple visits to our partners to successfully submit their applications. **These budget cuts will exacerbate the delays and processing support needed from providers on the ground.**



The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of critical community programs that fill the gap for our community members. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. United Way of New York City joins over 225 organizations in the [#WHY15 campaign](#) to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We ask that the City

- Provide analysis for #WHY15 percent cut is necessary
- Be transparent about the upcoming program and service reductions
- Establish a City Council Committee on Nonprofits

We thank New York City Council's commitment to supporting service providers, encouraging transparency and protecting New Yorkers. The City has the infrastructure within the human services and nonprofit sector to fully address the needs of all residents, but this can only happen when the human services sector is seen as an equal partner and is funded as one by every level of government.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Angeles  
Vice President, Advocacy  
United Way of New York City

# Testimony of University Settlement before the New York City Council

## Oversight Hearing: The Mayor's November Plan

Committee on Finance, Chair Justin Brannan

Submitted by Veronica Wong,  
Advocacy Director, University  
Settlement

December 12, 2023

Chair Brannan and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Veronica Wong, and I'm the Advocacy Director at University Settlement.

Every year, University Settlement partners with 40,000 New Yorkers in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn through programming for all ages, serving our very youngest through early childhood programs, after school programs; our families through tenant eviction prevention programs and community centers; and our oldest through older adults centers. We also provide mental health support for all ages.

The Mayor's proposed cuts will undermine the ability of community-based organizations like University Settlement to continue providing high-quality programs and services to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers every day.

We would like to address two of the administration's main talking points regarding these cuts.

First, the administration argues that it can cut senior centers, early childhood, after school and preventive service because of lower enrollment. This doesn't take into account the massive societal comeback from the pandemic that we are still experiencing. Using lower than normal enrollment in the last two years is using a faulty benchmark; the human services sector is not the only sector in NYC that has yet to rebound to pre-pandemic numbers, and our sector faces unique challenges as we seek to be responsive to the communities we serve.

Many of our participants, such as our older adults, continue to be hesitant to participate in in-person activities for health and safety reasons. The communities and families we serve, many of whom are immigrant, working class New Yorkers and New Yorkers of color, have faced rapid inflation, high housing costs, linguistic and bureaucratic barriers, and other potential environmental changes or stressors. As a settlement house with deep roots in our neighborhoods, we are uniquely situated to do the outreach and connect

with families who need our essential services, but this type of outreach takes time and commitment.

Second, the administration has blamed programmatic and service cuts in our sector on the incoming asylum seekers. We reject this framework. Our services and programs should not be pitted against these needs. As New Yorkers, we refuse to scapegoat our newest neighbors.

In fact, we know that strengthening our sector strengthens the ability of the city to meet this moment. Instead, we have seen years of divestment from our sector and disrespect for our workers, including a lack of any COLA for our staff, many of whom qualify for the very services they provide due to their low, city-contracted wages. Shame on the City for now threatening these cuts to programs and their jobs.

Nonprofits like ours already operate our high-quality programs on lean budgets, and we cannot absorb a 15% cut in our contracts without reducing our services. For University Settlement, this means thousands of New Yorkers will no longer be able to access our programs, New Yorkers who depend on us so they can go to work, feed themselves and their families, and receive mental health support.

For just our programs, a 15% cut means at minimum:

- Almost 500 young people will no longer be able to receive after school services, impacting hundreds of working families
- Almost 400 young people will no longer be able to receive summer camp services, impacting hundreds of working families
- Almost 9,500 homebound meals per year will no longer be served for older New Yorkers and fewer seniors in senior centers

Additionally, these cuts threaten community schools, which engage and support students and their families by prioritizing access to social supports, mental healthcare, and the arts. They could potentially lead to a reduction of upwards of 10,000 early childhood slots in the city, something that NYC families cannot afford to lose in a city where childcare is increasingly unaffordable to all but the very wealthiest. While the administration states that there is under enrollment of early childhood slots, we know that there is a mismatch: what is currently available often does not match what type of slots families need and where families need childcare, such as infant care and full-year and true full day care for working families. And we also know that families are not always aware of the childcare options that are available to them, and that the DOE has full control over the enrollment process, which undercuts community-based early childhood programs from directly enrolling families. We urge the administration to conduct outreach and work with CBOs to ensure all families can access childcare instead of eliminating these slots altogether.

This is not the time to undercut the working New Yorkers and the community-based organizations that help our city thrive. This is the time to invest in our young people and children, to show that NYC cares for our elders and most vulnerable, and to strengthen our families and our neighborhoods.



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University Settlement joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

I am happy to answer questions. You can reach me at:  
[awong@universitysettlement.org](mailto:awong@universitysettlement.org)

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Community Immigration  
Legal Services & Education

## Testimony before the New York City Council

Committee on Finance - Chair Justin Brannan

By

Tania Mattos, Interim Executive Director at UnLocal

December 11, 2023

Good afternoon, esteemed members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Tania Mattos, and I currently serve as the Interim Executive Director of UnLocal, a steadfast immigration legal organization dedicated to assisting people with immigration relief applications and fighting against deportations, among other essential services.

Today, I address you regarding the profound impact of the Mayor's announced budget cut on the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative (RRLC), a collaborative in which UnLocal collaborates with Make the Road and New York Legal Assistance Group. Initiated during the administration of President Trump, the RRLC was designed to assemble a team of highly skilled attorneys capable of swiftly addressing and stopping deportation orders free of cost for long-standing residents with their families, and serving as a vital referral source for other providers, including the city's Asylum Navigation Centers.

Regrettably, the Mayor's proposed budget plan entails a severe reduction of \$306,000 in city funding for the RRLC in the upcoming fiscal year, beginning in July. This follows an earlier cut of \$183,000 earlier this year. I am here today to highlight the alarming consequences these cuts will impose on immigrant New Yorkers, their families, and the broader communities we serve. These reductions not only jeopardize the very fabric of our society but also rob individuals of precious years of their lives.

To underscore the urgency, the RRLC has experienced an alarming surge in referrals, receiving twice as many in October compared to the same month last year, and in

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Community Immigration  
Legal Services & Education

November, handling an average of 10 to 15 referrals each day. Our clients have shared distressing stories of receiving deportation orders due to issues such as not receiving critical mail containing immigration court hearing notices or receiving it too late to attend their scheduled hearings in the shelter system.

In this critical moment, we ask the City to collaborate with the nonprofit sector, fostering creative solutions rather than hindering our collective efforts. We urge you to reconsider these debilitating cuts and recognize the vital role the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative plays in preserving the rights and livelihoods of our fellow New Yorkers.

Please join us in safeguarding the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative. The future of countless lives depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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**Testimony**  
**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Finance**  
**Oversight Hearing on Mayor's November Financial Plan**  
**Monday, December 11, 2023 | 10:00 AM**

Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the Committee. My name is Nicole McVinua, and I am the Director of Policy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for holding this oversight hearing on the Mayor's November Financial Plan and for the opportunity to testify.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,000 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residents, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of our clients, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy Programs. We hold contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA and have rental subsidies through HPD.

We are deeply concerned by the Mayor's 15% PEG and the disastrous impact that the remaining 10% cut will have on the nonprofit human services and social programming that the our communities rely on. Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November.

At a time when homeless services, housing, and community services are needed more than ever, these cuts pose a serious threat to our social safety net.

**Nonprofit organizations cannot do the same amount of work with less funding. If 10% cuts are passed down to city-contracted nonprofit providers, Urban Pathways will be forced to reduce services, resulting in serving fewer people, and will be at risk of having to close the doors to a program altogether.**

**After decades of underfunding, nonprofit human services are already at the brink of collapse, with understaffing and high turnover that negatively impacts our workforce and**

**the people we serve. We provide essential services on behalf of the City and we cannot shoulder anymore of the burden, on top of the 2.5% cuts that were absorbed by all DHS contracted providers in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget.**

There are over 140,000 people in the City's shelter system today, including recent arrivals. The Mayor's Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness committed to expanding the capacity of Safe Havens and Stabilization Beds to 4,000 by next year, and to accelerate the expansion and access to supportive and affordable housing units. Forcing nonprofit providers to reduce services will directly oppose these commitments. **The grave reality is that if we are forced to reduce our services, we will serve fewer people, which will mean turning away people sleeping on the streets from safe havens, stabilization beds, and drop-in services. If we are forced to close a residential program, this would displace upwards of 60 current clients. If providers across the city are forced to shutter programs, hundreds, if not thousands, of New Yorkers will be left without shelter, creating further chaos in an already overstretched system.** The City must be doing everything possible to alleviate the current pressures on the shelter system, not adding to it.

We are also concerned about the potential worsening in contract registration and delayed payments that nonprofits have long experienced. These delays further add to financial burdens placed on nonprofits by the City.

**Additionally, the dangerous understaffing of city agencies- including HRA, DHS, DOHMH, HPD, and DOB- has caused a critical backlog of processing benefits, reviewing CityFHEPS applications, and building and filling placements in desperately needed housing.**

This cannot continue. **City agencies fulfilling benefits, housing placements, and other essential social services must be fully waived from the hiring freeze and allowed to fill all vacant positions, not just on a one-to-one basis.** Failing to do so will continue to unnecessarily put individuals at-risk whose benefits are delayed, and who are waiting to move into housing. At a September 27<sup>th</sup> hearing on benefits delays, the Administration testified that they had over 1,500 overdue SNAP cases and over 30,000 overdue Case Assistance cases, as of August 31<sup>st</sup>. This understaffing has real life consequences for those who cannot eat or access basic necessities due to delays in benefits administration and who spend anywhere from 4 to 8 hours on hold on the HRA benefits helpline only for their case to remain unresolved.

While Mayor Adams' PEG pointed to increased costs to serve the newest New Yorkers and insufficient federal and state aid as justifications, analyses by Fiscal Policy Institute and the Independent Budget Office indicate that the PEG far exceeds the cost of welcoming and supporting the newest New Yorkers. The City's request for 15% cuts across all agencies amounts to a \$10 billion reduction in one year. We join the City in calling for additional state and federal relief, but warn that these cuts are counterproductive to addressing the homelessness crisis. The

Administration must consider the long-term impact on the health and safety of our City and its residents if they continue to cut essential services, and we call on the City to conduct a cost-benefit analysis on this long-term impact.

The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of essential community programs. Nonprofit organizations touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. That's why Urban Pathways joins over 225 organizations in the #WHY15 campaign to ask for transparency and inclusion in the City's budget. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the public safety, health, and cleanliness of New York City.

We look forward to working with the City Council to ensure New York City's nonprofits have the resources needed to continue providing essential services to those in need. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today.

**For questions or more information, please contact:**

Nicole McVinua, Director of Policy  
[nmcvinua@urbanpathways.org](mailto:nmcvinua@urbanpathways.org)  
212-736-7385, Ext: 233



December 11, 2023

Chair Brannan and members of the City Council,

My name is Alex Malescio and I am the senior director of government relations at Urban Upbound, a nonprofit that breaks cycles of poverty for lower-income New Yorkers through a comprehensive suite of direct services.

Today, I will bring attention to the importance of programs that are designed specifically to empower residents of public housing communities, and the risks these communities face should such programs be cut. Programs that provide public housing residents with viable pathways for overcoming the systemic barriers to career, personal, and financial growth must always remain a priority in our City, because trust, continuity, and reliability are key determinants of the success of such programs.

Every day throughout our City, nonprofits that are accessibly located within public housing developments serve the residents of these communities. At Urban Upbound, for instance, we serve residents through workforce development, financial counseling & inclusion, youth development, education access, small business development, tax preparation, and mental health services.

However, it takes more than a conveniently located service center to make a real impact in public housing communities. Just as important, is the trust that is built through in-depth outreach, and the consistent reliability of services.

At Urban Upbound, we rely on our historical place within a larger network of resident association leaders, community organizers, faith leaders, and fellow nonprofits to share recent program offerings and success stories with the community. We rely on our outreach and program staff, who often reside in the same communities we serve, to foster motivational and effective relationships with clients. And finally, we rely on the continual availability of our programming, so that community members know that our doors will be open to them, regardless of whether their career, financial, or personal growth journey takes five days or five years.



It is for these reasons I urge the City Council to consider the long-term consequences of potential budget cuts on our City's most vulnerable members. As responsible stewards of public funds, it is crucial to recognize that investment in public housing communities yield significant returns in terms of improved educational outcomes, reduced crime rates, and enhanced community well-being. Any reduction of social services for NYCHA residents will diminish the strength of our comprehensive model and leave thousands of people without the vital support systems they need to succeed.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today, and I look forward to a continued partnership with the City Council.

Alex Malescio  
Senior Director, Government Relations  
Urban Upbound

## Testimony of Urban Resource Institute before the New York City Council on Finance on the November Financial Plan

December 11, 2023

Good morning. My name is Lauren Schuster. I am the Vice President of Government Affairs at Urban Resource Institute (URI). I would like to thank the Chair, Council Member Brannan, the esteemed members of the Committee on Finance and the Council Speaker for the opportunity to present testimony on the November Financial Plan today.

Urban Resource Institute is the largest provider of domestic violence shelter services in the country, in addition to being a leading provider of transitional housing to families experiencing homelessness. URI is committed to ending cycles of violence and homelessness by providing trauma-informed and client-centered support to the families in our care. In addition to transitional housing, URI helps families to achieve economic wellness, we work with youth and in communities to interrupt cycles of violence and we are committed to engaging people who have caused harm in the solutions to end that violence.

On any given night, URI provides temporary housing to approximately 3,000 people in the safety of one of our temporary homes. Each year, we provide services to approximately 12,000 people who have experienced homelessness or violence. Like our partners in the nonprofit sector, our work is critical to the health and safety of the families we serve.

Together with our partners, we in the nonprofit sector serve humanities' most fundamental needs by providing food, clothing, and housing. And then do more: we provide job training and educational opportunities, childcare and legal support, advocacy and trauma-counseling, literacy education and physical and mental wellness and substance use counseling, restorative justice and cultural enrichment practices, and we endeavor always to leave the communities in which we live and work better than when we found them.

And we do all this not because we are motivated by great profit, but instead because we are committed to lifting the people who need help the most.

Together, we create the infrastructure that makes this city run: the human infrastructure. And we are on the precipice of a crisis. URI is part of the #WHY15 campaign, which is a coalition of more than 225 organizations that specialize in human infrastructure. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will jeopardize public safety and health. We are making short-term budgeting decisions that will have long-term consequences on the wellbeing of our city and the people who live in it, disproportionately impacting the most marginalized communities.

As a result of the 2.5% Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) that was implemented in the New York City FY 23 Budget and passed down to transitional housing providers in the form of an "efficiency measure," URI lost 20 full-time staff positions. URI prioritizes paying our staff a living wage; the vacancies that exist within human services organizations do not represent superfluous positions, but instead are a direct result of City-subsidized poverty wages for our workforce, which is more than 80% women of color.

**Transforming the lives of domestic violence survivors and homeless families.**

The July PEG institutionalizes existing vacancies. Inflation has increased the cost of everything, yet our staff have not had a meaningful COLA in many years and many of our contracts have remained flat. This places an inordinate burden on remaining staff to do more work with less money, leading to high rates of staff burnout and turnover, which in turn leads to vacancies and perpetuates a dangerous cycle that has the potential to jeopardize service delivery if not abated.

The city agencies that support our work are already operating at a deficit as a result of headcount reductions and hiring freezes. For the human services sector, this means that our families wait longer to move out of shelter and into homes, they wait longer to access vouchers and public assistance benefits and other sources of critical support, like food and childcare. And it means that the remaining staff at these agencies are woefully overtaxed.

Instead of throwing our sector a lifeline at a time of unprecedented strain, when the rates of homelessness and domestic violence are steadily increasing, we now face an additional round of cuts. This is simply unsustainable. There is no more left to cut.

Until now, we have been able to avoid cuts to existing personnel by trimming our OTPS lines. A 5% cut would touch supplies for staff and clients, along with our budget for food. A 10% cut on top of that would be disastrous.

We see the strain that newly arrived asylum seekers have had on the City in the absence of adequate federal or state support; we are standing next to you shouldering the weight and providing culturally sensitive care to anyone who needs it. And we agree wholeheartedly that this is a federal problem that demands federal solutions and resources.

We do not agree, however, that the arrival of people seeking asylum is the sole cause of the City's budget crisis. And, we do not agree that across-the-board cuts to the city's nonprofit sector are the best or only way out of this crisis, especially when the contracts of private sector vendors providing substantially similar or related services are not also on the chopping block. If cuts are indeed the only answer (and of course, they are not), then they must be borne evenly by all.

Like our partners across the nonprofit sector, we believe that there are creative solutions to our problems that have yet to be explored. A [recent report](#)<sup>1</sup> released by the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) demonstrated that despite changes to the state's income tax structure, high income earning New Yorkers have not left the City in droves. In fact, New York City has experienced a net gain of 15,100 millionaires since the pandemic. And the wealthy people who did leave abandoned New York for other high tax states, such as Connecticut, New Jersey and California.

What's more, the FPI report found that Black and Latino New Yorkers earning between \$32,000 and \$65,000 a year followed by those making \$104,000 to \$172,000 were leaving at the fastest rates.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FPI-Who-is-Leaving-Full-Report-Dec-2023.pdf>

Identifying opportunities to raise revenue, via a progressive wealth tax, ending preferential tax treatment for pieds-a-terre and eliminating corporate and other tax breaks that serve little purpose, to name just a few, while approaching savings with surgical-like precision could spare the nonprofit sector and stem the exodus of New York City's middle and lower-income earners, who are fleeing the high cost of living and currently unhospitable environs.

This approach is supported by the data and the public: a recent [Quinnipiac poll](#)<sup>2</sup> found that 83% of New Yorkers are very or somewhat worried about the looming budget cuts and 65% support raising taxes on the wealthy to close the budget gap.

The nonprofit sector is essential to the functioning of our city. It keeps our streets clean, our people safe, our children educated and so much more. Our work together prevents vulnerable families from falling off the cliff. And it is among the reasons that New York City continues to be regarded the world over as one of the most beautiful places in which to live and work.

Let's work together to identify alternative solutions to this crisis that do not involve dismantling the human infrastructure that so many people rely on to meet their most basic needs.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3886>

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Peggy M. Shepard

**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
to the New York City Council on December 11, 2023 regarding Long  
Term Investment in Climate Resilience**

Dear Committee on Finance:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. We recognize and fight to remedy the negative cumulative impacts of unjust policies that have plagued communities of color for decades.

**WE ACT urges the City Council to align our budget with its resilience and infrastructure commitments. It is vital that the City Council preserve funding for urban forestry workforce development pipelines, maintenance of natural areas, and hazard mitigation against wildfire smoke, extreme heat, and flooding.**

In the wake of a prolonged and oppressive summer, it is clear that New York City residents suffer disastrous consequences of delayed climate action. Global temperatures reached record highs this year as New York endured 63 days over 80 degrees and 10 days over 90 degrees between June and September. As climate impacts continue to layer, so do the consequences. New Yorkers were faced with the terrifying choice of deciding whether they would inhale millions of toxic particles or risk heat-related illness during the weeks Canadian wildfire smoke descended on the City.

Investment in the urban canopy is a key resilience strategy to mitigating the public health impacts of a variety of climate disasters. WE ACT joined Forest For all NYC, which includes over 125 organizations, in advocating for the passage of the Urban Forest Plan. However, its adoption is hollow without adequate budget allocation. While we are appreciative of this Council's commitment to reaching 30% urban canopy, it is essential the Department of Parks and Recreation's urban forestry budget be fully restored and protected in order for this Council and Mayoral administration to honor that commitment.

Recent and proposed cuts to the fiscal year 2024 budget represent:

- backtracking on job creation in the urban forest sector
- haphazard tree risk management (this includes diseased or infested trees that can fall on homes, public right of ways, or residents)
- delayed formalization of 300 miles of nature trails

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- and tree loss (both saplings and mature trees that cannot be sufficiently protected and maintained without proper funding).

[Local Law 135](#) requires that trees be treated as vital infrastructure in long term planning, and the way we budget now will have generational impact. Climate vulnerable New Yorkers can not afford for this law to be undermined.

Trees and plants [lower surface and air temperatures](#) by providing shade and through evapotranspiration. Trees in cities also [prevent approximately 1,200 heat-related deaths](#) and countless heat-related illnesses each year. They also clean our air and act as a carbon sink, fighting climate change and filtering out harmful pollutants by [removing an estimated 711,000 metric tons of air pollution annually and absorbing more than 90 million metric tons of carbon](#).

Black and Latinx neighborhoods have largely lost out on the many services trees have to offer, and have the most to gain from a justly funded Department of Parks and Recreation. Residents in neighborhoods like East Harlem, Mott-Haven, and East Flatbush suffer the consequences of targeted proliferation of highways, parking lots and industrial facilities and must be prioritized on our way to fulfilling [Local Law 148 of 2023](#). Communities of color across U.S. cities live in neighborhoods that can be anywhere from [five to twenty degrees hotter](#) than the citywide average. New York City must strive to break this trend.

Overall, We are concerned that further cuts to the parks system are not fiscally responsible. [Every dollar spent on hazard mitigation](#) saves \$6 in the long term. In NYC, this looks like forested natural areas [soaking up as much stormwater as \\$580M worth](#) of new Green Stormwater Infrastructure. We know the future of this city means living with more water. Rising ocean temperatures result in [heightened risk](#) for flash flood events like the one that brought life in the city to a crawl in September. We cannot depend on future administrations to spend more on climate mitigation and disaster recovery to correct underfunding parks now. The equitable, sustainable, and financially prudent thing to do are all the same thing: reverse and avoid cuts to the Department of Parks and Recreation. Nature-based solutions cannot be the first on the chopping block any longer.

Sincerely,

**Caleb Smith**

Resiliency Coordinator

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Peggy M. Shepard

December 12, 2023

**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice  
to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on December 11,  
2023 regarding the Mayor's November Financial Plan**

Dear Committee on Finance:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. We recognize and fight to remedy the negative cumulative impacts of unjust policies that have plagued communities of color for decades.

**WE ACT for Environmental Justice is disappointed in the budget cuts announced by Mayor Adams on November 16, 2023. These sweeping cuts impact many dimensions of environmental justice and will impact New York City's most vulnerable.**

**Deep cuts to the Department of Sanitation (DSNY)** which includes the devastating elimination of funding to community composting organizations that collectively operate 6 community composting sites – providing the most sustainable and equitable form of organic waste management – diverting 8.3 million pounds of organic waste from landfills each year.

These cuts will result in 115 New Yorkers losing their jobs. Also, the budget cuts delay the start of residential curbside organics collection in the Bronx – a borough that has consistently neglected when it comes to investments in climate and environmental justice. Cuts to community composting, delays in curbside organics collection along with reduction in litter basket service will undo any progress made to reduce the rat population in New York City.

**Cuts to New York Public Libraries** will force libraries to reduce their operating hours – reducing cooling center availability in summer months for communities with high heat vulnerability and utility burden. Additionally, libraries in low-income communities serve as vital community space that functions as a primary resource hub.

**Over 1,000 positions were eliminated from the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).** Parks are some of our city's most valuable resources.

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Green space improves mental, physical and emotional health, cleans our air, and makes our city more resilient to extreme heat and flooding. In order to realize these full benefits and ensure safety for park goers – parks must be fully funded at 1% of the total budget. A promise that Mayor Adams made while campaigning.

**The Department of Buildings (DOB) is set to lose over 100 positions** through vacancy reductions, greatly impacting the equitable implementation of Local Law 97 – New York City's groundbreaking buildings emission reduction law.

**Elimination of funding for the Interim Flood Protection Measures Program**, which is designed to minimize damage to property from coastal flooding caused by a hurricane.

The City Council must stand in solidarity with New Yorkers and reject these cuts. Mayor Adams should look at revenue based solutions to fix budget gaps instead of making broad, unnecessary cuts that are vital to the health, quality of life and safety of New Yorkers. The New York City Council finance team has shown a positive new tax and economic forecast – forecasting about \$1.2 billion more in fiscal year 2024 revenue than the Office of Management and Budget has predicted.

We are in the midst of a worsening climate crisis and the City must do everything it can to reduce emissions, decarbonize our buildings, invest in resilience and more; all with environmental and climate justice as the foundation of this work. New York City cannot afford austerity.

**Lonnie J. Portis**  
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**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**New York City Council  
Honorable Adrienne Adams, Speaker  
Committee on Finance, Honorable Justin L. Brannan, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York  
Submitted by Chelsea Baytemur, Director of Policy and Advocacy**

**Oversight Hearing – Mayor’s November Financial Plan**

**December 11, 2023**

I respectfully submit the following testimony on behalf of the YMCA of Greater New York.

The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. With 24 YMCA branches and more than 100 community sites across New York City, the YMCA is among the City's largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to older adult — and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in our communities.

The YMCA is also a proud member of the Coalition for Community School Excellence, the Campaign for Children, the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, and the Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs. As a member of these networks and coalitions we support their policy agendas as they relate to this hearing.

We stand with the Council on opposing these devastating budget cuts to the education and youth service systems that are proposed in the Fiscal 2024 November Budget Modification and question the Administrations reasoning and justification for such arbitrary and capricious cuts. We are deeply concerned with the 5 percent reduction in city tax levy dollars to New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and every agency whose work supports the human services sector and serves as a lifeline to all New Yorkers.

New York City's education and youth services systems are facing budget reductions of historic magnitude that will decimate access to invaluable services that support child and youth development, social and emotional wellbeing, school readiness, and adult literacy, and are

central to families re-engaging the workforce. and economic recovery. Furthermore, the Administration has announced that agencies like DYCD and NYCPS face an additional 10% cut to take effect in the Preliminary and Executive Financial Plans. We reject the notion that these budget cuts do not and will not impact essential programs and services, many of which serve as a lifeline to our families and their children. These cuts are in addition to reductions made in the last budget cycle, as well as the anticipated loss of approximately \$1 billion in federal COVID-19 relief funds that have been used to support critical programs such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, Community Schools, and community coordinators working in homeless shelters, amongst others.

Cuts to essential services ultimately disrupt the advancement of the communities we serve, and it is also completely irresponsible of the Administration to implement draconian level cuts at a time when the City, our children especially, have just started to see progress in post-pandemic recovery. Ultimately, these cuts lead to the shrinking of the human services sector, specifically youth services, early childhood education, and adult literacy, all of which are slated for new and updated RFPs. Furthermore, as we welcome asylum seekers, the Administration should look to collaborate with agencies and non-profit providers to support our newest New Yorkers by helping them integrate and prepare them to enter the workforce, rather than using anti-immigrant rhetoric as an excuse to gut critical services.

Proposed budget cuts include a \$25 million cut to early childhood education staffing in the current fiscal year and a \$120 million cut to early childhood education in the outyears, a \$19.6 million cut to Summer Rising, a \$10 million cut to the 167 city-funded Community Schools, a \$1.5 million cut in the current fiscal year and a \$6.9 million cut in the outyears to COMPASS after school programs, and a cut to adult literacy technical assistance programs.

### **Community Schools**

New York City has one of the largest portfolios of community schools in the country and serves as a leader in upholding and implementing the model. A cut of this magnitude undermines the incredible progress of Community Schools; progress in boosting and sustaining student attendance, supporting the social and emotional well-being of students, and bridging the gap between our families and resources such as food and/or health care. The YMCA has ten community schools across the city, each of which works in getting our kids on the path to success by developing essential life, community building, and leadership skills. Community School providers also deliver real time support and solutions to families as unprecedented challenges transpire. For example, many Community School providers were the first responders during the onset of the pandemic, connecting families with essentials such as food and clothing, translation services, and even delivery of electronic devices for remote learning. Community Schools also provided aid to families during the Bronx Fire tragedy and work to support students who are asylum seekers as they navigate the school system and our classrooms. Community Schools have shown us to be an essential part of the communities we work for, beyond the walls of a

classroom. The proposed cut stands to be the largest divestment to the Community Schools Initiative since its inception in 2014. A \$10 million reduction in city tax levy dollars directly impacts 167 Community Schools. Coupled with a \$55 million federal stimulus fiscal cliff, and the loss of a \$14 million one-time investment made in Fiscal 2024, all 421 Community Schools face a loss of over \$79 million in Fiscal 2025, which would have devastating consequences for communities that rely on this supportive model. Any divestment of community schools would ultimately lead to a void in the community and foster a distrust of the City and providers.

### **Early Childhood Education**

The November plan cuts \$120 million for early childhood education programs in Fiscal 2025 and beyond, citing efficiencies including unused seat reductions. This could translate into 10,000 seats being cut from the system, leaving as many children as possible without Pre-K and 3-K. We counter that narrative by emphasizing that “underutilization” is not an issue, but rather there are barriers to access and support on the agency level. Community-based organizations like ours are the backbone of the City’s plan for early childhood education, so we are concerned by the impact these cuts will have on the New Yorkers who rely most on our services to make sure their children begin their educational journeys in safe environments.

The YMCA’s early childhood programs serve nearly 1,000 children. The need for early childhood education continues to increase across the City, with the YMCA having a waitlist at more than half of our program sites. Early childhood education is a vital part of New York City’s ecosystem, as it allows parents and guardians to go to work, supports the development and enrichment of children, and enhances the quality of life for some of our most vulnerable communities. In order to sustain this ecosystem, as well as meet the growing need for youth programs and early childhood education, community-based organizations like the YMCA need seamless support from our agency partners. This means fully staffed divisions, clear and timely communication, and designated points of contact. This way we can ensure a smooth process in hiring and onboarding staff, and in turn have the support we need to maximize our enrollment. None of which can occur with direct cuts to Pre-K and 3-K, central support, and an agency wide hiring freeze which further exasperates bureaucratic hurdles to the delivery of childcare early childhood education.

Additionally, to ensure equity and access, NYCPS needs to enable non-profit providers of early childhood education to directly enroll children and youth onsite, as well as continue to convert school-day, school-year early childhood education seats to full-day, year-round seats. We stand with the City Council in opposing these cuts and we support the Council’s efforts on holding the administration accountable to strengthen our city’s early childhood system, by protecting Pre-K and 3-K, expanding access to full day/year-round programs for all children, especially infants and toddlers, and achieving salary parity for early childhood educators.

## Youth Services

The November plan cuts funding for COMPASS by \$1.5 million in Fiscal 2024 and \$6.9 million in Fiscal 2025 and beyond, resulting in a loss of 3,538 COMPASS slots. As youth and families try to rebuild from the pandemic, our city's young people require opportunities to grow and connect with peers in ways that advance their social emotional learning, physical development, academic preparedness, and overall opportunities for success. Programs like COMPASS are vital lifelines for countless children, offering crucial support, mentorship, educational opportunities, and a safe space for personal growth and development. Reductions in these programs would disproportionately impact low-income youth and families who rely on these services for their children's growth and safety and as vital resources for working caregivers. We urge the City to protect afterschool access and work to strengthen the system in the future.

The YMCA Afterschool program, which includes six Beacon, eight SONYC, 26 COMPASS, six Community Schools, and one Cornerstone site, empowers nearly 8,000 children and teens each day. The YMCA helps young people expand on the academic knowledge they acquire during school hours, develop their social and emotional learning, build rapport with their peers, and increase confidence, all of which empower our youth to excel both inside and outside of our program sites. We also are concerned about the reduction of hours for Summer Rising programming for middle school students. Having access to safe, supportive summer programming is crucial for all youth; undermining that will have negative impacts on children and families. In line with our partners, we stand with the Council on opposing these harmful cuts and call on the City to release a new COMPASS RFP that reflects today's reality of the rising need for affordable childcare with an expansion, rather than this proposed constriction. Additionally, we call on the City to establish a year-round, 12-month youth service contracting model and shift to a K-8 summer program model that draws on best practice.

## Adult Literacy Technical Assistance

In Fiscal 2024, funding for professional development and technical assistance for DYCD-funded adult literacy programs was decoupled from the funding for the programs themselves. This resulted in the field's technical assistance provider, the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), losing \$334K in Expansion funding, which represented over 60% of its DYCD funding dedicated to supporting community-based adult literacy programs. In the November PEG, the LAC lost another 35% of its remaining Fiscal 2024 DYCD funding, further undermining its ability to support programs and eroding a vital part of the infrastructure that strengthens and sustains adult literacy education in NYC. As a provider of adult literacy across the City, the YMCA stands with NYCCAL and urges the Administration to restore the TA funding, as well as hold adult literacy funding harmless in the upcoming Financial Plans. With a massive influx of asylum seekers now we should be investing more in adult literacy and career ready training, not cutting technical assistance.

## **Educational fiscal cliff due to expiring COVID-19 Relief Funds**

In addition to the \$600 million in cuts to education explicitly listed in the November Financial Plan, there is a slew of additional education programs on the chopping block. Over the last few years, NYCPS has been using around \$1B per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funds for important long-term programs that were necessary long before the pandemic and will continue to be critical long after, such as 3-K, preschool special education, Summer Rising, 450 school social workers, community schools, school nurses, restorative justice, 60 school psychologists, 75 coordinators working in homeless shelters, bilingual staff, translation and interpretation, dyslexia and literacy initiatives, and more. While the federal funding will run out in June, the need for these supports will continue. Unless elected officials act, we are at risk of seeing cuts to each of these programs—cuts that are on top of the cuts laid out in the November plan. We call on the City Council to ensure these programs do not suffer losses.

The reductions in the November Financial Plan jeopardize access to quality early childhood education, community schools, youth services, and adult literacy, impacting children's foundational years as well as families' economic well-being. **We must reject cuts that harm and destabilize the education and youth services systems.**

We urge the Council to look carefully at these cuts and to fight to protect key services for young children, youth, and families across the city. We appreciate your support, leadership, and partnership in helping deliver quality services, and helping more youth learn, grow, and thrive. Thank you so much for fighting for children, families, teachers, and non-profit providers across New York City.

If you have any questions, please contact Chelsea Baytemur, Director of Policy and Advocacy, at [cbaytemur@ymcanyc.org](mailto:cbaytemur@ymcanyc.org)

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Finance**

**Oversight – Mayor’s November Financial Plan**

**Written Comments of Kate Rubin, Director of Policy, Youth Represent**

**December 11, 2023**

Youth Represent is dedicated to improving the lives and futures of young people affected by the criminal legal system. We provide criminal and civil reentry legal representation to young people age 16-26, assisting them with everything from rap sheet review to school suspensions to employment discrimination and any other legal needs they identify. We also engage in policy advocacy and youth leadership development through our City Dreamers Advocacy Camp and by leading the statewide campaign for the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act, legislation that would transform New York’s youth justice system by expanding alternatives to incarceration and immediate record sealing for adolescents and emerging adults up to age 25. Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, members, and staff for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Mayor’s November Financial Plan and Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG).

**The Mayor’s Budget Priorities Are Harming Young People and Families.**

In FY 2023, there were 1,775 admissions of young people to secure detention, a nearly 100% increase from FY 2021, when there were 987 admissions.<sup>1</sup> The average daily population in Crossroads and Horizon, the City’s secure detention centers, was 233 in FY 2023, requiring the City to request an extremely rare temporary waiver from the Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) allowing them to house children in “dormitory style” housing, bypassing state law that requires that every young person in detention gets a single bed in their own room.<sup>2</sup> Over the past months there have been reports of young people sleeping in hallways, classrooms, and even counsel interview rooms.

While multiple factors have driven this increase, including a citywide increase in shootings among adults *and* youth in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>3</sup> **the current levels of detention and overcrowding were avoidable, and are a result of specific budget and policy decisions made by the Adams administration.** These include:

- Ending the contract for Esperanza to provide individual and family therapy and intensive case management as an alternative to detention for youth age 18 and under, and failing to transfer that contract to another organization.
- Cutting funds to the Next STEPS program, which provided credible messenger mentoring to over 200 young people in NYCHA developments. In independent evaluations, credible messenger mentoring for youth has been shown to reduce felony re-conviction rates by 57% after 2 years.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2023 Mayor’s Management Report (Sept. 2023), p. 232.

([https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023\\_mmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/2023_mmr.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> Bahar Ostdan and Jessy Edwards (Nov 6, 2023). *Teens in NYC detention centers are sleeping on the ground due to overcrowding, staff say.* Gothamist. <https://gothamist.com/news/teens-in-nyc-detention-centers-are-sleeping-on-the-ground-due-to-overcrowding-staff-say>

<sup>3</sup> Butts, Jeffrey A., Sheyla A. Delgado, and Richard A. Espinobarros (2023). Minor Role: Youth Under Age 18 and New York City Violence. [JohnJayREC DataBit 2023-1]. New York, NY: Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Lynch, et. al., Urban Institute Justice Policy Center (Research Report), *Arches Transformative Mentoring Program: An Implementation and Impact Evaluation in New York City.* February 2018. Available: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/arches-transformative-mentoring-program>.

- Ramping up racially biased quality of life policing, with the NYPD issuing more than double the number of criminal summonses in 2022 than they did in 2019,<sup>5</sup> and making more stops in 2022 than they had since 2015.<sup>6</sup>

Further cuts to core services, including libraries and daycare, proposed by the Mayor's budget office in November – and the two more rounds of cuts projected – reflect a continuation of these misguided priorities and a profound failure to serve and protect children and families. We appreciate the Council's allyship pushing back on these harmful cuts and affirming that it is the duty of New York City's government to provide essential public services.

While life-saving non-police services have faced five rounds of cuts under this Mayor, the NYPD has been given preferential treatment and it has already been reported that NYPD will likely be spared from additional cuts in January. Even with the latest round of cuts, the NYPD budget is still projected to increase in the current fiscal year by close to \$135M (at least 2.3%). While the administration has tried to scare New Yorkers by claiming that any decrease in the police budget will increase violence in communities, there is no evidence that increasing an already bloated police force will decrease safety – while there is significant research and evidence that safety requires deep investments in core infrastructure and services like affordable housing, childcare, healthcare, public transportation and youth programs. The safest communities are communities where basic needs are met and where young people and families are resourced to thrive – not where there are more police.

Programming and services provided by nonprofit organizations have already been reduced as a result of the cuts announced in November. The additional 5% planned cuts in January would be detrimental to the continued running of these community programs. Organizations like Youth Represent touch every vital aspect of daily life - from public education, health and human services, cultural enrichment to language access. We call on the City to partner with the nonprofit sector and work toward creative solutions - not hinder us further. The City cannot withstand a 15% cut to its budget, and any additional cuts to the nonprofit sector will only undermine the health and public safety of New York City.

### **New York City Must Invest in Young People's Futures, Not Their Criminalization**

The city must divest from systems that surveil, police, arrest, and incarcerate young people. Instead, we must make sustained investments in the things that are the foundation of genuine safety: housing, education, green spaces, healthcare, accessible transportation, and living wage employment opportunities.

*This is not only good policy, but also extremely cost effective during a difficult budget year.* While we do not have the exact costs of detaining a young person at Crossroads or Horizon, we know that the cost to detain one person at Rikers Island is \$556,539<sup>7</sup> and that the cost to incarcerate a young person in a New York State juvenile detention center was \$892,206 in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bhat, Suhail (Sept. 12, 2023). *NYPD Quality-of-Life Crackdown Sends Thousands to Criminal Court, Undoing Landmark Reforms.* The City. <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/09/12/nypd-quality-of-life-crackdown-enforcement-skyrockets-criminal-court/>.

<sup>6</sup> New York Civil Liberties Union Stop and Frisk Data (<https://www.nyclu.org/en/stop-and-frisk-data>).

<sup>7</sup> For FY2021. "NYC Department of Correction, FYs 2011-21 Operating Expenditures." *New York City Comptroller's Office, Budget Bureau.* December 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Justice Policy Institute, *Sticker Shock 2020: The Cost of Youth Incarceration.* July 2020. Available: <https://justicepolicy.org/research/policy-brief-2020-sticker-shock-the-cost-of-youth-incarceration/>

Rather than continue to pour money into stops, criminal summonses, arrests, and detention of young people, we must expand programs that take a public health approach to gun violence, including violence intervention programs. While New York State has led the nation by investing in these programs, the resources they receive remain a tiny fraction of those received by traditional law enforcement. Violence intervention programs must be funded to expand catchment areas, hire more staff, and create robust intake systems to serve more participants city and statewide.

We must also invest in health, mental health, and well-being for youth and families and in education and economic mobility. This includes:

- Restoring funds for alternative to incarceration programs that include individual and family therapy as well as intensive case management and crisis response capacity.
- Restoring funds for Next STEPS and increasing – not cutting – credible messenger mentoring.
- Investing strategically in education and youth employment training programs that will help place young people and emerging adults in living wage jobs.

Within this ecosystem of services and supports, legal services play a key role – helping young people overcome barriers to employment and education and maintain stable housing and family connections.

#### *Youth Represent: Critical Legal Services for Youth*

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for our services has increasingly grown as many of our clients experienced compounding barriers to their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing on top of experiencing the effects of the pandemic.

With your support, through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, we've been able to meet these complex needs of our clients, by providing immediate and direct legal services for those who need it most. Last year, we were able to deliver 80 legal Know Your Rights workshops to 1,205 participants and provided full legal services to 471 young people. This year, the need for our services has grown by over 20%. With your support we will be able to respond to this expansion in demand for our services as we work towards our vision of a world where the racist legal system has been dismantled and youth of color have the freedom and power to live their full lives.

#### **Conclusion**

Mayor Adams has said that “The goal is not to wait to young people fall in the river of despair and then spend countless number of dollars and hours and missed opportunities, but to go upstream and provide them the services that they deserve.” Yet his budget priorities – and further proposed cuts – do exactly the opposite, cutting effective and relatively inexpensive programs that provide essential supports for young people and families while allowing youth detention to soar. **We thank the Council for your continued partnership** ensuring investment, not criminalization, of young people.



## Testimony Opposing Cuts to NYC's Community Compost Organizations

City Council Finance Committee Meeting

December 11, 2023

My name is Jane Selden, and I co-chair a committee on waste reduction at the climate activist organization, 350NYC. As a group committed to promoting just and equitable solutions to the climate crisis, we recognize the vital role NYC's Community Composting programs play in educating New Yorkers and inspiring them to become actively engaged in addressing the climate crisis, and **we urge Mayor Adams to restore funding for these programs without delay.**

Composting plays a key role in helping NYC reach its greenhouse gas reduction goals. One-third of the City's waste-stream is organic material. When organic waste ends up in landfill, it emits methane, a greenhouse gas 80X more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over a twenty-year period. Landfills are the largest source of anthropogenic methane emissions in the United States. When organic material is sent to incinerators, the process of burning material with so much moisture is very energy intensive, resulting in high levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Organic material shouldn't really be viewed as waste at all, but rather as a valuable resource. It doesn't belong in the huge plastic trash bags crowding our sidewalks, where it's a magnet for rats. Instead of nourishing rats, it can be used to nourish the depleted soil of local parks, community gardens, and street trees. And, as the city faces rising sea levels and more frequent torrential downpours, compost can play a vital role in flood mitigation because of its ability to retain up to 20 times its weight in water. The City has invested millions of dollars in green infrastructure, including the creation of 12,000 rain gardens; the application of compost-enriched soil will enhance the effectiveness of these climate resiliency measures.

In addition, instead of transporting 1/3 of the waste stream to City's transfer stations, located primarily in low-income communities and communities of color, where exhaust from heavy truck traffic endangers the health of residents, it can be processed locally, providing good, green jobs for young people in underserved communities.

What is the most effective way to inform people of the numerous benefits of composting, especially as the City rolls out its curbside organics collection program? It's through educational outreach, one of the essential services provided by community compost organizations that is now being eliminated. As a retired educator, I know how important it is not just to relay information, but to listen to questions and allay concerns. Posters, flyers, and PSAs on social media are no substitute for one-to-one conversations.

The Adams Administration asserts that eliminating Community Composting is necessary because the City is facing a budget crisis. However, we would like to point out that all the City's

waste is now being exported at a cost of over \$430 million dollars. Since one-third of this waste is organic material that can be recycled locally as compost, it makes fiscal sense to continue to fund programs that play such a key role in diverting this waste from landfill.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge the Mayor to continue to fund Community Composting programs without delay.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jane Selden  
Co-Chair, WasteNot/350NYC