

**Testimony of New York City Schools Chancellor Melissa Aviles-Ramos:
FY26 Executive Budget Before the NYC Council Committees on Education and Finance
May 20, 2025**

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph and Members of the Council Committees on Finance and Education. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the Mayor's FY 2026 Executive Budget. I am Melissa Aviles-Ramos, Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, and I am joined by First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg; Deputy Chancellor of Operations and Finance Emma Vadehra; and Chief Financial Officer Seritta Scott.

At New York City Public Schools, our Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget totals approximately \$42.2 billion, which includes \$34.4 billion in operating resources and another \$7.8 billion for education-related pension and debt-service funds. This is nearly a billion dollar increase over the FY2025 budget, and I want to thank the Mayor and this Council for their deep investment in our school communities.

Strategic Priorities

As I mark seven months since assuming the role of Chancellor, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on the progress we've made, both in recent months and over the past few years. I am immensely proud of the work we've done at New York City Public Schools to build bold futures for every child; the school system that our students, staff, and families experience today is dramatically different—and improved—compared to what existed before Mayor Adams took office.

At the start of this administration, we looked closely at the data, and what we saw was unacceptable—large swaths of our children were below grade level in reading and math, and many of our older students were struggling to find a clear purpose and path after high school. We made it our priority to tackle these longstanding challenges, resulting in four strategic, transformative initiatives: NYC Reads, NYC Solves, Student Pathways, and NYCPS Cares.

NYC Reads and Solves are groundbreaking efforts to standardize curricula across New York City and link instruction to evidence-based practices. These programs, I'm proud to say, are supported by both public and philanthropic dollars, demonstrating a deep commitment across stakeholders and ensuring the sustainability and appetite for this work for years to come. We have continued to expand these initiatives to encompass more and more of our 1,600 schools; we already have over 800 elementary schools, 400 high schools, and 100 middle schools on board, and most recently, we grew NYC Reads to include grades 6-8 for the first time. This administration has also committed \$3.4M to establish the Central Brooklyn Literacy Academy (CBLA) for students with dyslexia and language-based disabilities and to expand the IREAD program, delivering targeted literacy support for students with reading disabilities within their community schools. And finally, we've paired our NYC Reads and Solves rollout with extensive professional development and coaching, along with streamlining our approach to Tier 2 and 3 interventions. In a system as large as ours, this work is nothing short of unprecedented.

And we are seeing the results. Visits to over 17,500 classrooms show that the curricula are being consistently implemented, and surveys reveal that over 75 percent of teachers and leaders believe the support they're receiving is effective. We have trained nearly 3,000 parents and family members as NYC Reads Ambassadors, and 97 percent of these families have reported a positive impact on their child's reading.

As our students gain fundamental literacy and math skills, we also need to guide them to a future full of possibilities. Our Student Pathways work reimagines the high school experience to prepare our students for high-demand careers in technology, healthcare, business, education, and more. Our signature FutureReadyNYC program has grown to serve over 15,000 students across 135 schools, partnering with major employers including Google, Northwell Health, Memorial Sloan Kettering, and many others. Our analysis shows that our FutureReady schools, despite having higher than average economic need compared to other schools across the city, have statistically significantly higher rates of attendance and higher GPAs.

We have also increased the number of students getting early college credits with CUNY by 10 percent in the last two years, and we are seeing impressive results among high schoolers on their Advanced Placement participation and performance. In 2024, a record 45 percent of all seniors took at least one AP exam while in high school, and over a quarter of all seniors passed at least one AP exam. The number of students passing these tests increased this year by more than 12 percent, including a 15 percent increase among Black and Hispanic students.

But we are not stopping there. We are launching multiple innovative high school programs in the fall, including the Northwell School of Health Sciences, HBCU Early College Prep, Queens International High School, and the Bronx STEAM Center. These are just a few of the 28 new schools opened in this administration.

And finally, this spring, we announced our newest signature initiative, NYCPS Cares, aligned to my commitments to student safety and wellness, educator support, and family empowerment. Currently, NYCPS Cares includes student-led anti-bullying and anti-vaping campaigns and a new Family Connectors program, empowering our families to share city resources and services with their communities as reliable and trusted messengers. NYCPS Cares reflects our emphasis on supporting the entire school community—that means families, students, and staff.

This initiative feels even more urgent in light of the tragic loss of one of our 16-year-old students just last week, a victim of senseless gun violence. We have so much work to do to ensure our students are physically and emotionally safe, and we are counting on you as our partners in this work. We know that if students are not safe and well, they cannot learn, and we will have more to share in the coming weeks about how we are continuing to roll out and expand NYCPS Cares.

Executive Budget Investments

In addition to these signature initiatives, the Mayor's Executive Budget supports numerous other game-changing investments, including hundreds of millions of dollars in baselined funding to ensure program continuity.

This investment starts with our youngest learners. I'm thrilled and grateful that the city will now invest \$167M in pre-K special education and 3K seats, along with supporting our Head Start programs in a moment of federal funding uncertainty. This represents a tremendous step forward in the long-term sustainability of early childhood education in New York City.

This administration's investment in our children continues as they grow. To ensure compliance with the class size mandate, the city has committed to funding 3,700 new teaching positions as well as over \$20M for teacher recruitment. Additionally, the administration recently announced an increased investment in after-school programming beginning next school year, as well as baselined funding in the arts to ensure student access to music, visual arts, dance, vocal, film, and theater instruction.

In addition, this budget recognizes the importance of health, well-being, and safety, baselining \$194M for school nurses, \$15M for Project Pivot, \$14M for community schools, and \$6M for restorative justice—plus another \$6M in restorative justice funding for this year specifically. These investments will help us continue to reduce chronic absenteeism, improve safety in and around schools, and ensure our students are mentally and physically well. As I mentioned earlier, this work is critically important, and I hope you all feel the same sense of urgency. Although there is still much work to be done, I also want to note steps in the right direction—specifically, our safer access door locking initiative will be 99 percent complete by the end of this summer; this school year we have placed over 300 social work interns in schools and trained 7,000 teachers in mindful breathing; and this school year we have opened 29 school-based mental health clinics.

This budget also backfills—and baselines—expired federal stimulus dollars for key programs such as Civics for All, computer science education, tutoring, and more. And the budget extends another fiscal year of funding for highly successful programs like Summer Rising. Combined, these investments will be instrumental in helping us fully realize our mission: to deliver rigorous academics and real-world learning experiences, to ensure all students graduate with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in their careers and communities.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to thank this Council and Mayor Adams for your ongoing partnership. Especially given the disappointing news on the Foundation Aid formula changes—which will result in \$314M less for our students and families than under the previous formula—support from this body is even more important.

As you know, city tax levy money is our largest source of revenue, projected to be at 59 percent this upcoming fiscal year, and the Council plays a vital role in advocating across all levels of government on behalf of our schools. We rely on your continued collaboration for much-needed resources.

To that end, thank you, Chair Joseph, for being a champion for our children. Thank you, Chair Brannan, for your advocacy for arts education funding. Thank you to Councilmember Dinowitz for always pushing for more equitable access to services and to Councilmember Stevens for

helping build strong partnerships with CBOs. And thank you to the entire Council and Education Committee for your collaboration and support.

Looking back over the past three and a half years of this administration, I want to close with a summary of where we stand and a sampling of what we've achieved:

- We are keeping students—and staff—in school:
 - We stabilized enrollment post-pandemic, welcoming over 50K of our newest New Yorkers
 - Attendance is up 1.5 points and chronic absenteeism is down 5.4 points since the 2021-22 school year
 - Teacher retention is at nearly 95 percent
- We are ensuring students learn:
 - K-2 reading screener scores are up 4 points since spring 2022
 - 3-8 math scores are up 15.5 points over the same time period
 - Summer Rising has shown statistically significant impact on academic outcomes
- We are serving students with diverse needs:
 - We added 1,400 specialized autism program seats since 2022—and ASD Horizon and Nest have a 97 percent graduation rate
 - We added 103 new bilingual programs since 2022
 - Due process complaints are down 30 percent from last school year
- And we are preparing students for bold futures:
 - Postsecondary enrollment increased nearly 5 points in the last two years
 - Our high schoolers have earned \$18M in work-based learning

As the accomplishments and data points shared in this testimony demonstrate, when we invest in our children, students, and families, we see real and impactful results. Please know that I am committed to transparency and meaningful engagement as we work together on behalf of our schools. Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.



3-K & Pre-K Seats by School District

Hello Council Member,

At the end of this packet, you'll find a breakdown of capacity, enrollment, and the percentage of seats filled for 3-K and Pre-k programs in each school district across New York City.

IBO's analysis covers only the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years. IBO does not have insight into planning decisions made by the City for any increase or reduction to seat capacity.



ACCESS THE REPORT

Citywide overall utilization rates for 3-K & pre-K increased between the 2022–2023 & 2023–2024 school years. However, this increase was primarily driven by decreases in capacity for both 3-K and pre-K programs.

- 3-K enrollment rose slightly, while seat capacity decreased.
- Pre-K enrollment declined slightly, and seat capacity decreased, as well.

This figure shows that the fill rates have increased for all 3-K seat types. Pre-K programs fill rates increased in all seat types, except for Half-Day programs. Similar to citywide trends,

Enrollment and Capacity by Seat Type for Each Grade Level							
Grade Level	Seat Type	2022-2023			2023-2024		
		Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled	Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled
3-K	Extended Day And Year	7,433	4,376	58.9%	7,158	4,259	59.5%
	Head Start	2,691	1,864	69.3%	2,644	2,059	77.9%
	School Day	43,312	36,965	85.3%	42,571	37,596	88.3%
	Total	53,436	43,205	80.9%	52,373	43,914	83.8%
Pre-K	Half-Day	1,393	907	65.1%	1,065	651	61.1%
	Extended Day And Year	6,092	2,480	40.7%	5,505	2,738	49.7%
	Head Start	3,098	1,757	56.7%	2,893	1,896	65.5%
	School Day	66,094	55,096	83.4%	64,860	54,556	84.1%
	Total	76,677	60,240	78.6%	74,323	59,841	80.5%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of DOE's Early Childhood Education Count and Capacity Data

NOTE: This figure excludes any programs that had missing program information.

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this increase in fill rate primarily reflects decreases in capacity, rather than an increase in enrollment, although some seat types did increase.

This figure shows that the filled rate has increased for all 3-K program types, except for DOE District Schools. Fill rates within pre-K programs increased for Community Based Organization (CBO) programs, but decreased for Charter, DOE District School and DOE Pre-K

Enrollment and Capacity by Program Type for Each Grade Level							
Grade Level	Program Type	2022-2023			2023-2024		
		Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled	Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled
3-K	CBO	35,374	28,975	81.9%	34,900	29,704	85.1%
	DOE District School	8,146	7,441	91.3%	8,307	7,544	90.8%
	DOE PKC	3,855	3,407	88.4%	3,615	3,214	88.9%
	FCC*	6,061	3,382	55.8%	5,551	3,452	62.2%
	Total	53,436	43,205	80.9%	52,373	43,914	83.8%
Pre-K	CBO	43,055	31,346	72.8%	40,376	31,230	77.3%
	Charter*	1,239	1,102	88.9%	1,487	1,308	88.0%
	DOE District School	27,018	23,433	86.7%	27,134	23,012	84.8%
	DOE PKC	5,365	4,359	81.2%	5,326	4,291	80.6%
	Total	76,677	60,240	78.6%	74,323	59,841	80.5%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of DOE's Early Childhood Education Count and Capacity Data
NOTE: This figure excludes any programs that had missing program information.

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Center (DOE PKC) programs. Similar to citywide trends, 3-K programs that increased in filled rates also decreased in capacity, with minimal increases in enrollment.

District Level Trends

Geographically, 3-K and pre-K program enrollment and capacity varied widely. By and large, the seat utilization rate for both 3-K and pre-K programs increased across districts year-over-year. For 3-K programs, eighteen districts increased in seat utilization, while fourteen decreased. For pre-K programs, twenty-three districts increased in seat utilization and nine decreased.

Conclusion

This analysis found that across most 3-K programs, overall usage rates have increased. The changes are broadly due to decreases in capacity and increases in enrollment, although actual trends vary by seat type, program type, and district. Usage rates within pre-K programs also increased.

The changes are broadly due to decreases in capacity and, unlike 3-K programs, decreases in enrollment. Similar to 3-K programs, actual trends vary by seat and program types, as well as location.

While program and seat types are harder to shift to meet demand, district-level usage rates may offer insight into where the Administration should focus further outreach and seat reallocations.

3-K Capacity and Enrollment by Community School District (without FCCs)

District	School Year					
	2022-2023			2023-2024		
	Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled	Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled
1	564	433	76.8%	576	442	76.7%
2	1,444	1,181	81.8%	1,739	1495	86.0%
3	732	604	82.5%	727	640	88.0%
4	795	564	70.9%	735	564	76.7%
5	727	468	64.4%	659	527	80.0%
6	1,236	963	77.9%	1,134	974	85.9%
7	921	738	80.1%	780	686	87.9%
8	1,106	933	84.4%	1,001	926	92.5%
9	1857	1258	67.7%	1678	1159	69.1%
10	2,000	1,654	82.7%	1,873	1,537	82.1%
11	1,510	1,229	81.4%	1,428	1,307	91.5%
12	735	592	80.5%	690	579	83.9%
13	818	653	79.8%	902	825	91.5%
14	1,090	844	77.4%	1,018	888	87.2%
15	1,492	1,352	90.6%	1,603	1,438	89.7%
16	522	374	71.6%	507	356	70.2%
17	1,436	1,181	82.2%	1,388	1,107	79.8%
18	1,102	855	77.6%	1,095	841	76.8%
19	1,330	1,051	79.0%	1,308	993	75.9%
20	2,800	2,592	92.6%	2,977	2,720	91.4%
21	2,230	2,057	92.2%	2,365	2,149	90.9%
22	2,233	1,999	89.5%	2,291	2,097	91.5%
23	846	464	54.8%	786	481	61.2%
24	2,040	1,875	91.9%	2,078	1,897	91.3%
25	2,335	2,115	90.6%	2,337	2,058	88.1%
26	1,276	1,233	96.6%	1,337	1,261	94.3%
27	2,184	1,749	80.1%	2,113	1,754	83.0%
28	2,172	1,915	88.2%	2,259	1,973	87.3%
29	1,616	1,352	83.7%	1,534	1,352	88.1%
30	1,973	1,898	96.2%	2,059	2,011	97.7%
31	3,247	2,847	87.7%	2,891	2,688	93.0%
32	1,006	800	79.5%	954	737	77.3%
Total	47,375	39,823	84.1%	46,822	40,462	86.4%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of DOE's Early Childhood Education Count and Capacity Data

NOTE: This figure excludes FCCs as well as any programs that had missing program or zip code information.

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Pre-K Capacity and Enrollment by Community School District

District	School Year					
	2022-2023			2023-2024		
	Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled	Capacity	Enrollment	Percent Filled
1	886	559	63.1%	832	549	66.0%
2	3,075	2,121	69.0%	3,116	2,246	72.1%
3	15,28	11,53	75.5%	1,401	1,107	79.0%
4	1106	762	68.9%	1,068	765	71.6%
5	1169	804	68.8%	1,108	809	73.0%
6	1913	1,354	70.8%	1,884	1,501	79.7%
7	1,478	1,133	76.7%	1,366	1,047	76.6%
8	2,227	1,826	82.0%	2,090	1,747	83.6%
9	2,806	1,804	64.3%	2,625	1,898	72.3%
10	3,927	2,805	71.4%	3,657	2,768	75.7%
11	3,136	2,430	77.5%	2,749	2,317	84.3%
12	1,308	1,034	79.1%	1,402	1,078	76.9%
13	1,519	1,182	77.8%	1,495	1,188	79.5%
14	1,785	1,225	68.6%	1,767	11,99	67.9%
15	2,809	2,466	87.8%	2,713	2,274	83.8%
16	727	550	75.7%	709	478	67.4%
17	2,165	1,819	84.0%	2,159	1,554	72.0%
18	1,754	1,230	70.1%	1,654	1,189	71.9%
19	2,033	1,664	81.8%	1,979	1,437	72.6%
20	4,246	3,504	82.5%	3,936	3,525	89.6%
21	3,613	2,953	81.7%	3,485	2,889	82.9%
22	3,232	2,727	84.4%	3,304	2,689	81.4%
23	941	614	65.2%	869	608	70.0%
24	3,856	3,333	86.4%	3,734	3,282	87.9%
25	3,290	2,541	77.2%	3,182	2,696	84.7%
26	1,951	1,614	82.7%	1,907	1,703	89.3%
27	3,295	2,715	82.4%	3,281	2,718	82.8%
28	3,611	2,853	79.0%	3,498	2,939	84.0%
29	2,406	1,929	80.2%	2,547	2,047	80.4%
30	3,456	2,803	81.1%	3,324	2,885	86.8%
31	4,161	3,850	92.5%	4,281	3,766	88.0%
32	1,304	883	67.7%	1,201	943	78.5%
Total	76,677	60,240	78.6%	74,323	59,841	80.5%

SOURCE: IBO analysis of DOE's Early Childhood Education Count and Capacity Data

NOTE: This figure excludes any programs that had missing program or zip code information.

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Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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

Re: FY 2026 Executive Budget - Education

May 20, 2025

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

We are pleased that the Executive Budget restores funding for 3-K and preschool special education classes, community schools, the Mental Health Continuum, restorative justice, immigrant family outreach, and other key programs that had been supported by expiring one-year city funds.

While ensuring that existing initiatives remain funded at their current levels is important, simply maintaining the status quo is not sufficient, given the pressing unmet needs we see on the ground in our work with families every day. We urge the City to keep moving forward and make the following additional investments to address outstanding needs. The City should add:

- \$70M to provide preschoolers with disabilities with the evaluations, services, and classes they need, **as more than 80 organizations recently urged the Mayor to do**, given the thousands of preschoolers with disabilities currently waiting for their mandated services to begin, a challenge highlighted in a recent **City Council statement** and that AFC hears about on a regular basis from New York City families struggling to raise young children with disabilities and get the help they need.
- \$3.75M to enhance services at school-based mental health clinics and better meet students' behavioral needs in school, as recommended in the City Council's preliminary budget response.
- \$3M to expand the immigrant family communications and outreach initiative to help meet the growing need at a time when changes to federal policy make it essential for schools to be able to communicate key information to families.



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Protecting every child's right to learn

- \$17.5M to expand access to one-on-one or small group support for students who need more help learning to read; families should not have to find lawyers to sue for private tutoring because our public schools are not equipped to provide effective reading interventions to students who need them.
- \$450M in capital funding over five years to make more schools accessible, as recommended in the City Council's preliminary budget response, because accessibility benefits everyone, and students, parents, educators, and community members with physical disabilities should not be turned away from any school because they can't get in the building.

We also join with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in urging the City to restore funding for Student Success Centers (\$3.3M), which were left out of the Executive Budget, and to baseline funding for key programs that were restored for FY 2026 only: summer programming (\$80M), Learning to Work (\$31M), restorative justice (\$6M), the Mental Health Continuum (\$5M), early childhood education outreach (\$5M), and immigrant family outreach (\$4M).

More information is in our written testimony.

We are grateful for the strong support of the City Council in sustaining impactful education programs. We look forward to working with you to secure additional needed investments as the budget process moves forward. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK

City Education Budget Priorities for FY 2026

We are pleased that the Executive Budget restores funding for 3-K and preschool special education classes, community schools, the Mental Health Continuum, restorative justice, and other key programs currently supported by expiring one-year city funds. We urge the City to go further and baseline funding for important programs currently restored for FY 2026 only: summer programming (\$80M), Learning to Work (\$31M), Promise NYC (\$25M), restorative justice (\$6M), the Mental Health Continuum (\$5M), early childhood education outreach (\$5M), and immigrant family outreach (\$4M). The City should also extend and baseline funding for Student Success Centers (\$3.3M), which were left out of the Executive Budget entirely and are at risk of being rolled back or eliminated as soon as July.

While ensuring that existing initiatives remain funded at their current levels is important, simply maintaining the status quo is not sufficient, given the pressing unmet needs we see on the ground in our work with families every day. We urge the City to keep moving forward and make the following targeted investments to address outstanding needs:

- Provide preschoolers with disabilities with the evaluations, services, and classes they need (\$70M) and extend enhancements of the recent early childhood labor agreement to staff at preschool special education programs at community-based organizations.
- Expand access to one-on-one or small group support for students who need more help learning to read (\$17.5M).
- Enhance services at school-based mental health clinics (\$3.75M).
- Increase funding for immigrant family communication and outreach to help meet the growing need (an additional \$3M, for a total allocation of \$7M).
- Make more schools accessible to students, parents, educators, and community members with physical disabilities (\$450M in capital funding over five years).

* * *

Provide preschoolers with disabilities with the evaluations, services, and classes they need (\$70M) and extend enhancements of the recent early childhood labor agreement to staff at preschool special education programs at CBOs.

Parents know that the preschool years provide a critical window for addressing developmental delays, but thousands of them hit a wall when trying to secure the most basic services for their children. Forty-five percent of preschoolers with IEPs—more than 14,400 children—ended the 2023–24 school year without ever receiving at least one of the types of services the City was legally required to provide. This year, we have continued to hear from numerous families whose

preschoolers are waiting for their services to begin, as well as families unable to get an appointment for a preschool evaluation in the first place. In fact, as of March 2025, more than 600 children were waiting for seats in their legally mandated preschool special education classes and more than 7,900 preschoolers with IEPs were waiting for at least one of their legally mandated part-time services, like speech therapy or counseling, to begin. More than half of those children—4,500 preschool students—were receiving *none* of their mandated services at all. In addition to the harm to children, we have seen the emotional and financial toll placed on families struggling to remain in the City and get their children the help they need.

We appreciate that the City has baselined \$55M to maintain the new preschool special education classes that opened this year. However, as the City Council noted, this investment “leaves out necessary funding for special education services required by law for children in general and integrated classrooms.” The funding is not sufficient to meet the need for evaluations, services, and classes.

The City must address these legal violations and ensure young children with disabilities and their families are not left waiting for the help they need. The City should invest and baseline at least \$70M to provide preschoolers with evaluations, services, and classes by taking steps such as launching more NYCPS evaluation teams; hiring more Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) staff to help parents with the evaluation and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting process; hiring more NYCPS service providers and teachers; and allocating funding to NYCPS Pre-K Centers and schools with 3-K and Pre-K programs so that young children receive their special education services where they go to preschool.

In addition to this investment, the City should extend the enhanced provisions of the early childhood education labor agreement reached this fall to staff at preschool special education programs at community-based organizations. While AFC has no vested interest in teacher compensation, we are very concerned about the implications of returning to a system where preschool special education teachers are the lowest paid teachers in New York City, despite working with children with some of the most intensive needs—including children with severe autism, serious medical conditions, or significant behavioral needs—and doing so over the twelve-month school year. Continuing to exclude teachers of preschool special education classes from the agreement will likely result in teachers leaving for higher paid jobs, classes closing, and even more children sitting at home in violation of their legal rights.

As recently [recommended by more than 80 organizations](#), the City should invest and baseline at least \$70M to address the systemic failure to provide preschoolers with disabilities with the evaluations, services, and classes they need and should extend the enhancements of the recent early childhood labor agreement to staff at preschool special education programs at CBOs to help address the shortage of preschool special education classes.

Expand access to one-on-one or small group support for students who need more help learning to read (\$17.5M).

Far too many NYC students struggle to become skilled readers: less than half of all students in grades 3–8, including only 37% of Black and Hispanic students and 21% of students with disabilities, are reading proficiently, according to the 2024 State tests. In 2023, the City launched NYC Reads, an ambitious effort to overhaul reading instruction, beginning in grades K–5. This initiative, which has

now rolled out Citywide, requires each community school district to choose one of three pre-approved reading curricula to use in all its elementary schools; in the past, individual schools had free reign to choose their own curricula, resulting in widespread use of ineffective programs. While there is still much work to do to help schools implement new curricula to their maximum effectiveness, including continuing the job-embedded training critical to the initiative's success, NYCPS must also prioritize improving systems of support for struggling readers. Even when core instruction in the early grades is strong, there will always be a subset of students who need more individualized attention and targeted instruction. At AFC, we continue to hear from families of students across grade levels who have dyslexia or other reading difficulties and have been unable to access the help they desperately need. Often, we need to take legal action to help them obtain intensive private tutoring due to difficulties finding effective reading interventions in the public schools.

Building a robust system of intensive intervention and support for students struggling with reading is a necessary piece of the puzzle. While some schools have already started offering evidence-based reading interventions that align with the approved core reading curricula, many others need to buy new materials and train educators in delivering the new programs. In addition, schools must have sufficient staff capacity to provide intervention to all students who need it. While schools receive a yearly allocation for Academic Intervention Services (AIS), these funds are rarely sufficient to hire a full-time staff member and must cover intervention in both reading *and* math. In fact, there are almost 500 schools that each received less than \$15,000 this year for AIS. Increasing that allocation and providing additional money for curricular materials and training would help schools ramp up to address the needs of struggling readers.

The City should invest and baseline at least \$17.5 million to help schools deliver one-on-one or small group intervention to more students who need extra help learning to read.

Enhance services at school-based mental health clinics (\$3.75M).

Children are facing a well-documented mental health crisis. School-based mental health clinics (SBMHCs) provide on-site mental health services to children during the school day, including psychiatry, medication management, family peer support, youth advocacy, and counseling. SBMHC staff work closely with school staff to identify children in need and coordinate services. SBMHCs work to engage the whole family and can serve family members at their community location. SBMHCs provide crisis mental health services, helping to ensure children receive a supportive response when they are in need and reducing the use of suspensions and punitive disciplinary measures.

Currently, most funding for SBMHCs comes from Medicaid, which does not adequately cover the range of supports and services that students and school communities need. Supplemental funding is needed to provide additional services, such as consulting on specific behavioral supports for classrooms, working as part of a school's crisis response team, providing support to the full school staff on behavior support, and being on call to de-escalate crises.

Providing existing school-based mental health clinics with supplemental funding to help fill this gap would allow clinics to better integrate into school communities and better support students with behavioral and mental health challenges. The City should invest and baseline at least \$3.75M, as included in the City Council's response to the Preliminary Budget, to provide the additional resources these SBMHCs need.

Increase funding for multi-faceted immigrant family communication and outreach to help meet the growing need (\$3M).

This initiative strengthens New York City Public Schools' (NYCPS') communication with immigrant families—many of whom would otherwise be left without important information—by using local ethnic media to share school-related updates, sending paper notices to families' homes, reaching families via phone calls and text messages, helping schools bolster their translation and interpretation systems, and collaborating with immigrant-facing community-based organizations to create and launch information campaigns. This work is currently supported by \$4M in one-year city funding, and we are pleased that the Executive Budget extends this funding for FY 2026. However, given the increase in the number of newly arrived immigrant families in New York City, it is critical for this initiative to not only continue but grow stronger, particularly at a time when changes in federal policies could lead families to keep their children out of school or avoid accessing educational services for which they are eligible.

In addition to baselining the current \$4M budget, the *City should invest an additional \$3M (for a total allocation of \$7M) to help meet the growing need for translation and interpretation and to help ensure information—including information about the rights of students with disabilities—reaches families who speak languages other than English via comprehensive information campaigns.*

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

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

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

At a minimum, the City must make the investments necessary to keep pace with the work done over the past five years. The 2025–2029 Capital Plan currently includes \$800 million for school accessibility projects, an amount that represents a *decreased* commitment to improving school accessibility once inflation is taken into account. We thank the Council for calling on the Administration to increase this investment by \$450 million so that more students can fully participate in their school communities.

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



On behalf of our over 190,000 members, the United Federation of Teachers thanks Education Chair Rita Joseph and the Education Committee for granting us this time to present our initiatives. When you fund our programs, your dollars go directly into the classroom to improve learning conditions for students and working conditions for educators.

We are grateful for all your past investments, and we would like to take this time to demonstrate the impact they have had across all five boroughs.

City Council Int. 1261-2025

The UFT asks the City Council to call a hearing on and vote for the passage of the Paraprofessional RESPECT Check legislation (Int. 1261-2025) that was introduced in April.

Paraprofessionals are the backbone of our public schools. They work closely with teachers to provide children — especially those with disabilities — with the education and support they are entitled to.

Despite their crucial role, the city's reliance on pattern bargaining has harmed and continues to harm our paraprofessionals. The starting salary for a paraprofessional is just under \$32,000. This means that a 3% increase for a starting paraprofessional is roughly \$900, while for the highest paid principals it is roughly \$6,500. Over the decades, due to this broken system, the pay gap between the highest-paid principals and the lowest-paid UFT members — our paraprofessionals — has grown far too wide.

Int. 1261-2025 would provide every UFT-represented paraprofessional with a permanent recurring annual payment of \$10,000 or more. This \$10,000 will not be pensionable and will fall outside of pattern bargaining.

Now is the time to pass this bill, as we will face a shortage of 4,000 paraprofessionals this fall, despite aggressive hiring efforts. Our members cannot stay in this position, no matter how much they love it, if they are struggling to care for their own families and children.

For the sake of our students, our paraprofessionals and our public schools, we urge the Council to hold a hearing and then vote to pass the Paraprofessional RESPECT Check legislation.

United Community Schools

The City Council has supported the UFT's United Community Schools' initiative from its start in 2012. You recognized that providing health, mental health, academic enrichment and social emotional services in our schools would have the greatest impact on the lives of our students.

Because of your insight, we now have 32 United Community Schools (UCS) in New York City.

The United Community Schools in New York City collectively provide over 25,000 mental health visits and 32,000 health, dental and wellness visits annually; in addition, UCS feeds over 35,000 families a year. Per a recent UCS survey, 93% of families ate more fruits and vegetables because of the food they received from our food pantries, and 89% said that they spent less money on food this month due to the bags of food UCS pantries gave them.

This level of support translates into better outcomes for our students. Across the UCS schools in New York City, we see students scoring higher on tests, attending school more regularly, earning more high school credits and feeling an increased sense of safety and connection within school communities.

Funding from the City Council also helps support a UCS coordinator in each school and six social workers. The coordinator's job is to bring in the services and academic enrichment that each school wants and needs; our social workers provide crisis intervention and support at-risk students.

Additionally, UCS does not take a cookie-cutter approach. Each UCS school has a unique profile of services and supports. What is consistent across all our schools is that for each dollar you invest, you will see at least a 6:1 return. One dollar in investment yields at least \$6 in programming at UCS schools.

The UFT's United Community Schools' model makes a difference in students' lives, and that is why we are requesting a \$5 million City Council investment in UCS.

Teacher Center

For over 45 years the UFT Teacher Center has provided cutting-edge, high-quality professional development for city educators. Thanks to past support from the City Council, we now have 208 Teacher Centers embedded throughout our city's schools, an 80% increase from 115 sites in the 2020-21 school year.

Each of our sites has an experienced Teacher Center coach who provides professional development and one-on-one support to teachers on topics of their choosing. This allows teachers to constantly hone their craft and to reach their students effectively.

In addition to their onsite work, the Teacher Center holds sold-out seminars in person, online and in hybrid settings. These seminars sell out because they focus on what teachers want to know and are interactive, vibrant and engaging.

Together the UFT Teacher Centers annually provide over 125,000 hours of transformative professional development for over 317,000 educators, principals and parents.

Over the past two years, this work has included playing an integral part in the rollout of the NYC Reads/Reading for All Initiative and the new math curriculum. We have coaches embedded in schools year-round who provide implementation support to teachers as they navigate new curricula. These coaches help educators dig deeper into units, lessons and assessments.

This important work is why we are asking for \$6.5 million in Speaker funds and \$4.12 million in City Council funding. We want to expand this work and continue to ensure that educators are prepared to provide the social and emotional supports their students need to address these challenging times. Many students have experienced trauma or are new arrivals in our city. We will equip educators with a culturally responsive toolkit that enables them to reach all types of students.

Social Emotional Learning Programs

The UFT Member Assistance Program (MAP) and the Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC) provide the vital mental health support and programming that our educators, students and families need. For years, these two initiatives have addressed the growing mental health and wellness crisis in New York City.

UFT launched MAP 16 years ago to fill the void when it became clear that educators had nowhere to go for mental health services. We became the supplemental mental health program for DOE employees, and we still play that role today. Due to your belief in us and our work, we have been able to expand our services as the demand for them has grown exponentially.

In 2019, we served 4,500 members. In 2021, because of the pandemic, close to 32,000 educators asked for our help virtually.

Today, over 40,000 educators seek out our support groups, continuing education courses and wellness workshops each year.

Fifty-two percent of the calls we receive are about needing emotional support due to workplace-related stress and anxiety. Our members are **fearful, worried and expressing a sense of instability and hopelessness**. They fear for their newcomer students and worry that ICE will take them away. They are concerned about the state of the country, climate change and losing their jobs. They are grief-stricken due to issues related to suicide, gang violence, gun violence and subway surfing.

We know this because our school communities and staff tell us. They trust MAP and know it won't take three months to get help.

Mental health affects our students just as much as our educators. That's why we have extended our programming to serve them as well. We created the "Let's Talk About It" field trip for middle school students, which helps students learn to express their emotions in healthy and adaptive ways. Since 2018, over 2,000 middle school students have benefited from this day of mindfulness, music and

other creative modes of expression. This year, over 300 students from District 25 and 200 Title I students from District-9 attended this field trip.

We are asking the City Council to support a trusted program that is already anchored into the lives of the people you represent. By investing in MAP and PLC, you are helping to fill the cracks that the DOE has not. Specifically, your funding and support will help us:

- Expand all our current services.
- Increase the number of educators we can invite to our annual mental health and addiction symposium. This is one of the most popular clinical conferences offered to our school social workers and psychologists. For the last six years, our focus has been on loss and grief, intergenerational trauma, and understanding depressive and anxiety disorders to name a few. We have welcomed over 3,000 mental health clinicians and over 100 exhibitors and sponsors to educate, network and serve our colleagues.
- Produce more than 200 continuing education courses for social workers and psychologists. Currently, the DOE offers the same five courses throughout the school year. As NYS providers for these approved continuing education courses, we want to offer hands-on courses by licensed clinicians who specialize in topics needed in our schools today, including Supporting Healing and Resilience through Trauma-Informed Care, Emotional Eating: Recognizing Patterns and Developing Healthy Coping Strategies, and Addressing Loneliness in a Connected World.

Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE)

The PROSE initiative empowers educators to think outside the box and implement their most innovative ideas to better serve students and families. Schools within PROSE are granted contractual and regulatory flexibility so that they can change how their schools are typically run in key ways, including how their school days are programmed, how their teachers are hired and how their students are assessed.

Within our network, there are over 200 PROSE schools that serve over 80,000 students, making PROSE enrollment larger than all of Boston Public Schools. Many of the schools within PROSE are Consortium and International Network high schools that have an emphasis on project-based learning and serve students who are new arrivals in our city.

PROSE gives its schools a unique ability to respond to what their students and families want and need. For instance, at the Urban Assembly Unison School in Brooklyn, families wanted innovation — and once the school joined PROSE, the staff delivered. This school now offers cooking classes, a hydroponic lab and other valuable enrichment opportunities *during* the school day.

The demand to join the PROSE initiative has grown each year, and we are eager to expand the program. We are also eager to facilitate the sharing of best practices amongst educators at PROSE schools, as well as with educators at non-PROSE schools.

However, there is very little time to share or generate new creative ideas throughout the school day. That is why we are requesting \$300,000 in City Council funds for the 2025–26 school year. These funds will ensure that PROSE schools can come together to discuss what assessment strategies work and what scheduling alterations reduce class size. They will enable the UFT to host events connecting PROSE schools to non-PROSE schools who need support to become more collaborative communities. They will also fund an outside evaluation of PROSE's work to collect quantitative and qualitative data on how the program has affected school, staff and student outcomes since its creation in 2014. The results of this study will be used to analyze how PROSE schools and other city schools can expand the use of effective practices.

Magic happens at PROSE schools every day, and we are eager to find ways to bottle and share that magic with other district schools.

Dial-A-Teacher

The UFT's Dial-A-Teacher homework hotline (212-777-3380) answered over 35,000 calls last school year from students and parents looking for homework help.

Dial-A-Teacher was founded in January of 1980, with five teachers fielding questions from 17 elementary schools in eight districts.

Since then, the program has grown immensely. It now operates Mondays through Thursdays from 4 to 7 p.m., employs 40 teachers and serves students in higher grades. Dial-A-Teacher also offers homework help in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali.

The City Council has supported Dial-A-Teacher from the start. This support has enabled us to purchase additional reference material and textbooks as well as to hire experts in advanced math and science so we can serve older students.

However, for the past 25 years, the funding amount from the city has not increased for this program.

We could do more. We could help more students and families.

We are asking for \$300,000 to hire more teachers so that we can answer 50,000 calls, to upgrade our White Board technology and our remote online platform, and to provide staff with professional development that will enhance our ability to serve students in the modern educational era.

Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice Through Education (BRAVE)

The UFT created the BRAVE hotline as an immediate, compassionate resource for any child experiencing bullying — because every student deserves to feel safe, seen and supported.

The hotline is available from 2 – 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, by phone, chat or text at 917-727-1908. The hotline is staffed by licensed counselors and trained professionals who provide confidential support, guidance and crisis intervention to students and families in need.

Between July 2024 and March 2025, BRAVE supported over 4,000 students, 900 parents and 600 educators — a powerful reminder that bullying affects our entire school community.

BRAVE also delivers anti-bullying workshops each year to hundreds of students, parents and educators and works to ensure that critical anti-bullying resources are visible and accessible in every school.

But we know there is more to be done.

That's why we're asking the City Council for an additional \$300,000 — to expand these life-changing workshops and to create a digital resource hub with multilingual guides to help students, families and school staff navigate bullying, report it safely and access mental health support.

With your continued partnership, we can extend BRAVE's outreach and continue to build safer, more inclusive school communities for every child in our city.



2025 CITY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



Scan this QR code to learn more about the UFT's 2025 city legislative priorities.

PROTECTING OUR SCHOOLS

Protecting New York City's schools is more important than ever as the federal government attacks public education.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- Fully fund New York City's schools.
- Safeguard against harmful executive orders that target our students, particularly our newly arrived and LGBTQ+ students.

CLASS SIZE

Last year's state budget explicitly stated that New York City is financially responsible for funding class-size reduction. The City must uphold this responsibility as schools work to reach full compliance by 2028.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- Appropriately fund the hundreds of schools that applied for class size funding for the 2025-26 school year.
- Update the capital plan so that it creates the new seats we need.

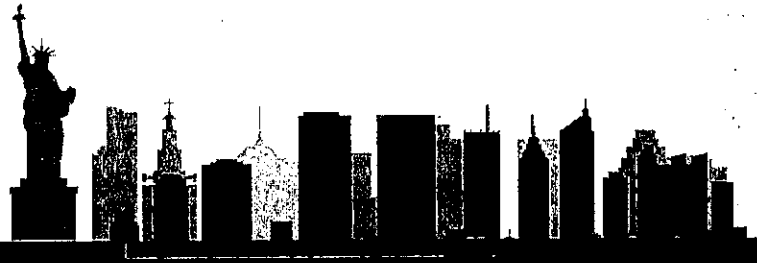
RESPECT FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

Respecting, recruiting and retaining paraprofessionals in New York City is paramount. Paraprofessionals are the backbone of our public schools. Yet the City cannot hire or retain them due to the unfair practice of pattern bargaining, which shortchanges paraprofessionals.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- Pass City Council Int. 1261-2025 to give paraprofessionals an additional \$10,000 or more per year.
- A UFT petition has gained over 103,000 signatures in support of this legislation.

With reserves at a record high, the City has the funding to make this legislation a reality for its dedicated paraprofessionals.



FUND UFT PROGRAMS

UFT TEACHER CENTER

The UFT Teacher Center promotes teacher excellence and student achievement through professional learning that addresses the diverse needs of the whole child.

- ✓ 208 Teacher Center coaches embedded in 177 schools across NYC in 2024-25 – an 80% increase in the number of sites across the city since 2020-21.
- ✓ 28 new Teacher Center sites opened last year – 317,597 participants – educators, principals, and parents – attended Teacher Center seminars in 2023-24.
- ✓ 128,861 hours of transformative professional development in 2023-24.
- ✓ 99% of participating educators report that the professional learning sessions improved their practice.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- \$6.5 million from the City Council Speakers Initiative and \$4.12 million from the City Council's Discretionary Funds to open a site in every district and:
 - Support students with the highest needs and engage all learners.
 - Increase our support for Early Childhood education providers.
 - Support schools in retaining and mentoring new teachers.
 - Support curricula rollout across the city.
 - Keep schools at the forefront of technology.

UNITED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

United Community Schools (UCS) is a teacher-inspired nonprofit improving outcomes for over 19,000 families at the 32 community schools it operates across NYC.

- ✓ Higher test scores
- ✓ Better attendance
- ✓ More credits earned
- ✓ Increased sense of safety
- ✓ 6:1 return on investment
- ✓ 25,000+ health and wellness visits coordinated

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- \$5 million to implement and sustain 32 community schools that provide critical support to children and families.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT

Two proven programs, Member Assistance Program (MAP) and the Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC), are addressing the growing mental health and wellness crisis in NYC through vital support and programming for staff, students and families.

- ✓ The MAP careline has received over 20,000 calls since 2022.
- ✓ Over 1,000 members this school year have attended the weekly support groups.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- \$1,900,000 for the 2025-26 school year, to continue to sustain and expand all these citywide supports.

BRAVE HOTLINE

UFT's BRAVE (Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education) hotline allows students, families and educators dealing with bullying to contact our hotline for immediate help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For FY26, we want to expand our workshops offerings for students, staff, and families, and create a digital resource hub with guides in multiple languages on handling bullying, reporting incidents, and seeking mental health support.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- \$300,000 to help us increase access to this crucial program and to expand the range of services available to our students and families.

TEACHER'S CHOICE

We thank you for your ongoing support of this program.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- Continue the \$20 million baseline funding for Teacher's Choice.

COMMON POINT

Common Point is a social services organization that supports the diverse needs of New Yorkers of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- Support Common Point's programs in the FY 26 budget.

PROGRESSIVE REDESIGN OPPORTUNITY SCHOOLS FOR EXCELLENCE

PROSE amplifies the voices of educators at over 230 schools by enabling them to propose school-level innovations that bolster student excellence. These innovations may include how teachers are hired and evaluated and how students are programmed throughout the day.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- \$300,000 in City Council funds to support schools in continuing these efforts, to expand the program to more school communities around the city, and to facilitate the sharing of best practices between schools around these innovations.

DIAL-A-TEACHER

Dial-A-Teacher began in January 1980 and currently operates Mondays through Thursdays from 4 to 7 p.m., offering homework help in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, and Bengali. Last year, the program received over 35,000 calls, but the funding amount from the City has not increased for at least the past 25 years.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- \$300,000 to increase the number of teachers available to answer calls, continue with technological upgrades and provide staff development that will enhance our ability to service students in the modern educational arena.

ARTS IN EDUCATION

The arts introduce our students to new ways of thinking and expressing themselves.

WHAT WE'RE ASKING:

- Support Broadway Bridges in the FY 26 budget so that high school students can see a Broadway show before they graduate.
- Support arts education in schools.

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TESTIMONY

**NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CHAIR, RITA JOSEPH**

*New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on
The Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026*

**Presented on
Tuesday, May 20, 2025**



**The Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
Henry Rubio, President
Dale Kelly, Executive Vice President
Stamo Karalazarides Rosenberg, First Vice President**

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Good afternoon, Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph, and the distinguished members of the City Council. I am Henry Rubio, the President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). On behalf of over 17,000 in-service and retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Educational Administrators, Supervisors, as well as Directors and Assistant Directors of Early Childhood Centers, thank you for this opportunity to provide our union's input on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.

Funding

We once again thank the city for the proposals announced in the Preliminary Budget in January: continuing support for Summer Rising programming, a \$17.5 million proposed investment to expand the Pathways program to provide career readiness opportunities, and additional support for programs that help young New Yorkers, like Learning to Work and the development of a robust financial literacy curriculum.

Since that Preliminary Budget was released, that city has announced an initial city investment of \$150 million to hire 3700 new teachers and over 100 new APs to help reduce class sizes, and an additional \$331 million for "After-School For All," bringing the total number of students served by universal after-school programming to 184,000. These investments will make a considerable impact in the holistic education of New York City's children.

In our testimony on the Mayor's Preliminary Budget, we urged the city to recommit to additional funding to preserve programs previously supported by expiring federal COVID relief aid, including funding for 3-K, arts education, community schools, and restorative justice. We thank the Council for consistently advocating for this funding, and we commend the Mayor for committing to permanent, annual funding of \$199 million in critical education programs that were once funded by federal pandemic-era stimulus funding.

We applaud the Council for their continual advocacy for education funding, particularly towards early childhood education. In addition to the roughly \$800 million more the council has called for to fund education programs, the Council is also seeking more than \$800 million in education-related capital expenses, including for cafeteria enhancement and accessibility upgrades; as always, we thank them for fighting for New York City families.

The state budget for the 2026 fiscal year provided New York City with an increase of more than \$676 million, including a \$538 million increase in Foundation Aid. Throughout the state negotiations, CSA continued to advocate that the state needed to alter the way they calculated and distributed Foundation Aid to better reflect the current realities our schools face. So, we were pleased to see long overdue changes to the funding formula. However, we were disappointed that the Governor and State Legislature didn't consider all our recommendations. As a result of the changes to the Foundation Aid Formula in the approved budget, New York City's schools will unfortunately receive about \$314 million less than they would have otherwise. This will obviously have a direct impact on New York City students unless the city finds ways to offset the shortfall.

Additionally, the White House has gradually moved forward with its goals to dissolve the Department of Education, and the President has signed executive orders that impact school programs. We will work with all stakeholders to ensure that there is no reduction in federal funding for our schools and that all children have access to an equitable, high-quality education.

Career and Technical Education

CSA supports increased funding to Career and Technical Education programs. Our CTE programs are a game-changer for students, preparing them for in-demand careers while equipping them with real-world skills. School leaders know firsthand the impact of providing students with industry-aligned instruction and relevant work experience. We seek to give all our New York City Public Schools students access to career-connected learning, which must include modern youth apprenticeships and internships in high schools. Unfortunately, these programs remain underfunded and limited in scope, restricting access for many students who would benefit the most. CSA urges the city funding for CTE expansion to ensure that every student has access to a future-ready and future proof education.

Equally important is early exposure to digital fluency and computer science education in K-8 schools. With technology rapidly shaping the job market, students must develop foundational skills in coding, computational thinking, digital literacy, and artificial intelligence from an early age. Expanding access to high-quality computer science programs in elementary and middle schools will ensure that students are equipped to succeed in an increasingly tech-driven world. CSA strongly advocates for dedicated funding, professional development for educators, and equitable access to devices and curriculum resources so that all students—regardless of zip code—can build the digital skills necessary for success in high school, college, and beyond. Our workforce is evolving and so our schools must keep pace.

STEAM Centers—specialized hubs where students gain hands-on experience in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math—play a crucial role in preparing students for emerging industries. These centers expose students to cutting-edge fields such as robotics, coding, and design, providing invaluable skills for the workforce of the future. We urge the city to invest in expanding STEAM Centers across all boroughs and ensure that every student, regardless of neighborhood, has access to these critical learning opportunities.

Community Schools

CSA also support increased investment in Community Schools, which provide essential wraparound services for families in disadvantaged communities. When paired with robust CTE programming, these schools become powerful engines of economic mobility, ensuring that every student regardless of background graduates with a pathway to college or a well-paying career.

Budget Appeal Funds

In addition, as we advocated for last year, the DOE must ensure an adequate budget appeal pool of funds to effectively support schools during the budget appeals process. Finally, the city must also continue to fund the purchase and repair of student devices. Our system's dependence on

these tools escalated with the pandemic and now includes their utilization for testing and more; we must not allow the expense of these tools to become an unfunded mandate for schools.

Funding for Class Size Law Implementation

We believe in smaller class sizes. School leaders know firsthand the positive effects that smaller classes can have on students. Anyone who has stepped foot in a classroom can understand how reducing students in a classroom can result in more individual attention and feedback for each, better connection between teachers and students, and more meaningful participation in lessons.

However, from the inception of the class size law, we have been steadfast that the city must implement the class size law in a responsible manner. We must begin any conversation about this law by acknowledging that, despite best intentions, there are critical challenges to address so that the law's current mandates do not harm school communities more than help them. Many school leaders have shared substantial concerns that the lack of adequate funding for additional teachers and/or the absence of space makes it incredibly challenging for their schools to comply with the class size legislation. We have consistently sounded the alarm that additional funding is not provided to help their schools meet the new class size limits, school leaders may be forced to eliminate existing programs, reduce their enrollment, and/or alter how they utilize spaces.

As we approach the 2025-2026 school year, the law requires 60% of classes to be at or below the new class size caps. Our union collaborated with the DOE and UFT on an application process to make sure that additional funding is being distributed to schools that need support in the coming school year. As a result of that process, the city has committed \$150 million, growing to \$200 million annually, to hire 3700 new teachers and over 100 new APs to help reduce class sizes (with state funding is to be reflected later). About 800 schools submitted applications and about 750 schools will receive funding.

More funding is still needed to successfully phase the law in over the next three school years. The DOE has been transparent from the start that while some schools are well-positioned to comply with the new class size legislation without any complications, there are many schools that have no capacity to expand and no additional space for new construction. Meanwhile, concerns about staffing needs abound. Over the next two years of the phase-in, we will continue to advocate for a proportional increase in supervisory support to maintain effective instruction and professional development for the anticipated influx of teachers. Otherwise, the academic gains from smaller class sizes may be eroded since the law necessitates hiring new teachers who may require more professional development and support due to their lack of experience.

The city's Fair Student Funding Formula is therefore a critical element of this discussion. We have maintained for years that this formula is inherently flawed. It has consistently disadvantaged certain schools, leaving them in a perpetual state of financial appeal simply to secure the resources needed for basic operation. The city obviously constructed the current formula before the law, and the current construct assumes classes made up of thirty students. The city must find new funding streams or increase Fair Student Funding to properly implement the new class size limits, otherwise too many schools may have a financial inability to provide the same level of programming.

When schools enact the new caps, some will be forced to reduce enrollment, which will lessen the FSF funding they receive. After reducing class sizes, the per-student funds may no longer be sufficient. For instance, a school with a third-grade class of thirty students may currently receive enough per-student funding for one teacher; however, when the new law limits third-grade classes to twenty students, the school's budget must suddenly fund two third-grade teachers. We must increase FSF to align with the new caps or too many schools will now become underfunded according to the city's own formula.

School Safety

To teach and learn, teachers and students must feel valued, respected, and safe. The first and most important priority of every school leader is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our students while maintaining a culture that is conducive to learning and respectful to all. CSA has shared our members' growing concerns about school safety for years, advocating for resources allocated to schools to provide safe learning environments and warning about the erosion of school leaders' discretion over decisions that affect the well-being of their communities. Unfortunately, our members are growing more concerned about school safety than they have been in decades. CSA asks the City Council for its continued support as we fight for safety measures that allow our children to learn, our teachers to teach, and our administrators to lead.

Safety Agents

The number of school safety agents has been steadily declining, and our union and its members have increasingly spoken out—both internally and publicly—about the impact this has on school safety. While the city often cites recruitment challenges, it has failed to develop a comprehensive and systematic plan to address these shortages. Recruitment and retention must be prioritized, and the city must explore better incentives, including increased compensation, to ensure an adequate workforce.

The mayor and the chancellor both acknowledge the importance of safety agents, and CSA is committed to collaborating with the administration to secure the necessary personnel. The DOE, in collaboration with the CSA and NYPD, must create a comprehensive framework for the appropriate assignment of safety agents to schools and campuses. Assignments should be based on factors such as school size, campus complexity, and safety needs, ensuring equitable coverage across the city.

Additionally, Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers must receive the same safety protections as traditional K-12 schools. Currently, a 3-K classroom inside a DOE building benefits from a safety agent's presence, but standalone ECE centers do not receive comparable security. We must address this inequity and ensure that all students, regardless of age, are equally protected.

Restorative Practices

School safety is not just about physical protection—it is also about fostering a culture of respect. CSA has long supported restorative justice practices as an essential and necessary complement to appropriate disciplinary measures. Principals must have discretion to make decisions they know are in the best interest of their school communities, and we all know that disciplinary interventions alone will never resolve the underlying conflicts that affect school communities.

To that end, every teacher and administrator should be trained in restorative justice practices by June 2026, and funding should be provided to establish dedicated restorative justice programs in every school. These initiatives will ensure that school leaders have the tools to balance discipline with opportunities for reconciliation and behavioral growth. Restorative justice is particularly effective in addressing interpersonal conflicts, reducing bullying, and strengthening school culture—all of which directly impact student safety.

Counselor Integration

While security personnel and policies are vital, much of what impacts student safety is peer relationships, social dynamics, and school climate. Harassment, bullying, and gang activity remain major concerns across New York City schools. While restorative justice practices help, peer mediation programs and proactive guidance counselor engagement are also necessary to prevent conflict before it escalates.

CSA urges the city to implement uniform programs to address bullying, harassment, and gang-related conflicts with a focus on peer-led mediation and conflict resolution. Guidance counselors should have a structured role in classroom engagement, providing social-emotional learning (SEL) activities that reinforce safety and trust among students. Counselors must be provided the appropriate caseload so that they have the ability to push into classrooms, lead small groups, engage in one-on-one counseling, and foster relationships with students before problems arise.

Mental Health Support

The mental health crisis among students has been escalating for years, exacerbated by unique pressures, including economic insecurity, gang violence, social media, and the long-term impacts of COVID-19. Five years after the pandemic, we still do not fully understand the depth of its psychological effects on students, their families, and even school staff.

Mental health challenges are particularly acute for students in temporary housing, asylum seekers, and those facing systemic barriers to stability. The rise in social media-driven bullying has further compounded anxiety and depression among youth. Without intervention, these stressors contribute to behavioral issues, absenteeism, and even school violence.

To address this, CSA recommends integrating mental health professionals into school safety strategies, ensuring that emotional and behavioral health considerations are integrated into broader safety planning. The city must also create programs that grow greater involvement from our parent partners and provide resources for parents, recognizing that student well-being is deeply connected to family stability.

Security Technology

For years, CSA has advocated for increased investment in school security infrastructure, particularly cameras and buzzer systems. Mayor Adams responded by recently funding these measures after a violent attack at a school highlighted the urgent need for improved security. The DOE has reported that implementation is consistently progressing, despite early setbacks. We believe that we must comprehensively expand surveillance cameras in every school. We hear

from principals on a regular basis regarding this concern, detailing how incidents could have been avoided had a requested camera been installed.

The next step in modernizing school security must include expanding and repairing metal detectors and scanners. While scanners serve a critical purpose in preventing weapons from entering schools, non-functional or insufficient scanning stations create bottlenecks at entry points, leading to unsafe overcrowding. The DOE must ensure that schools have adequate, fully operational scanners to improve safety without creating new vulnerabilities due to long wait times and congested entryways.

Additional Safety Measures and Training

CSA also urges the city to restore proven safety measures from past decades that have since been eliminated or scaled back:

- Restore the position of Youth Officers in each local precinct. These officers worked directly with school communities, building relationships with students and staff while providing targeted support.
- Re-establish the practice of safe corridors to protect students during arrival and dismissal.
- Regularly train school staff and students on updated Respect for All expectations, safety protocols, including lockdowns, active shooter drills, and emergency evacuations.
- Develop actionable plans to address gaps between schools, district, and central communication, ensuring smooth crisis management, consistent protocols, and overall safety operations.

Assistant Principals in Every School

One of the most under-acknowledged but critical components of school safety is leadership continuity. In too many schools across the city, that continuity breaks the moment a principal steps out of the building because there is no assistant principal.

CSA continues to advocate for an assistant principal in every school, not simply as a matter of leadership efficiency but as a core issue of school safety and student well-being. APs are often the first adults on the scene when a student is in distress, an emergency unfolds, or a community incident spills into the school building. They manage crises in real-time, coordinate safety responses, and de-escalate high-tension situations before they spiral. In the absence of an assistant principal, these responsibilities fall unevenly across already stretched staff, often pulling teachers away from instruction or forcing office personnel to juggle urgent safety decisions they are not trained to make.

Assistant principals are not just operational leaders; they are emotional anchors. In a school day filled with unknowns, students and staff alike look to their AP for stability, support, and guidance. APs handle student conflicts, support teachers during moments of crisis, and help families navigate emotionally charged situations with care and discretion. Their presence

strengthens school culture, boosts morale, and ensures that someone is always available to make sound, student-centered decisions in real time.

Moreover, as the city complies with the new class size law, thousands of new teachers will be entering our system. Without a proportional increase in assistant principals (who are responsible for supervising, mentoring, and evaluating those teachers), we are creating a dangerous leadership vacuum. School safety and student success are deeply connected to the strength of adult leadership. Assistant principals ensure that new educators are properly supported, that safety protocols are followed, and that school-wide systems run smoothly regardless of who is in the building that day.

While we have made real progress in increasing the number of assistant principals across the system, dozens of schools still operate without one. This is a structural vulnerability that we cannot afford to overlook. We urge the City Council to prioritize funding and policy changes that ensure every school (regardless of size, borough, or grade level) has a qualified, dedicated assistant principal.

Executive Leadership Institute

One way that we support the educators that we represent is through our professional development affiliate, the Executive Leadership Institute (ELI). In 2002, CSA recognized a significant void and need in professional development, training, and support services for school leaders. We established ELI because we recognize that the success of our faculty, support staff, and most importantly, our students, is dependent on our ability to lead. Thanks to the City Council's financial support ELI has been able to provide critical support to school leaders and administrators for over 20 years.

Throughout its long history, ELI's programming has been designed and delivered to support school leaders more adequately. ELI provides standards-based, results-driven leadership training to help school leaders successfully fulfill their responsibilities as instructional leaders. ELI is an approved CTLE Sponsor (Continuing Teacher and Leader Education) and an approved DASA Provider in NYS (Dignity for All Students Act). ELI maintains five Educational Learning Centers in each of the five boroughs of NYC. At these centers, professional development training workshops are conducted in person and/or on zoom. ELI's programs give school leaders the tools they need to create true learning communities, and New York needs to invest more in this kind of high-level training and support.

As the need for more school leaders grows each year, the demand for a diverse array of programming is also increasing. CSA asks for a \$1,150,000 baselined increase in support for the Executive Leadership Institute to support the following initiatives:

- To expand ELI's professional development services for school leaders. Currently, over 150 single-topic workshops are offered throughout the year to our school leaders.
- To support school leaders in the training and implementation of curricula and instructional practices aligned to the science of reading.
- To provide all school leaders with training in applying restorative practices to reduce suspensions and implementing vital mental health programs.

- To expand mentoring and coaching to first-year principals through one-on-one exchanges as they assume the heavy responsibility of running their schools for the first time.
- To enhance the School Leadership Institute, our three-year educational program that supports newly assigned APs, Education Administrators, and Early Childhood Directors. Currently, ELI mentors over 350 new supervisors who engage in confidential mentoring sessions and professional development workshops throughout the year.
- To provide professional development on how school leaders can best take advantage of emerging AI technology to better serve students.
- To provide professional development on combating chronic absenteeism for all grades.

Similarly, CSA and ELI believe we must expand our Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals (ALPAP), to attract and support school leaders considering becoming a school principal. This is vitally important as we anticipate a high turnover in school leadership in the coming months. Many school leaders delayed their retirement during the pandemic so that they didn't leave their school community stranded at a particularly vulnerable time. Others are departing the system earlier than expected due to burnout from the mental, emotional, and physical toll that the job has taken on them and their families.

ALPAP helps school leaders and administrators develop leadership skills aligned with the NYCDOE School Leadership Competencies and supports them on their path to becoming principals. Components of the program include seminars, action research, in-person field experiences at colleagues' schools, and a mentor who is currently a principal. Throughout the year-long program, participants expand their skill set, develop confidence, and grow a network for support and follow-up. ALPAP provides a path forward for Assistant Principals and Education Administrators who have demonstrated a readiness to become Principals, and every year we foster a new cohort of strong, inspired, and dynamic leaders to help our youth succeed.

There is no entity that has done more to recruit, train, and retain New York City school principals than ELI. As our system faces increasing challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining principals, we ask that you increase the city's investment in ELI and its flagship principal preparation program, ALPAP.

Early Childhood Education

As you know, CSA represents Directors and Assistant Directors of Early Childhood Centers run by Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). The success of the City's Pre-K and 3-K initiatives are dependent on these CBO directors who work tirelessly to serve NYC families. CSA has consistently demonstrated that CBO directors and assistant directors perform substantially equal work under similar working conditions as directors of early education programs operated in public school facilities. This pay-scale inequity threatens to compromise the stability and quality of early childhood education.

Our CBO-based members were without a contract far too long after the previous agreement expired in 2020. However, we are thankful that we came to an agreement with the Day Care Council and the City of New York in February, that at least provides some temporary financial relief that includes pattern raises and retroactivity and supports to strengthen their supplemental

health fund. We thank the Mayor and the Council for their collaborative efforts to add some additional funding and framework toward salary equity above the pattern. Something we don't think has ever been done before.

There is still much more work to do in the coming years. CBOs struggle to recruit and retain staff precisely because their salaries do not match DOE salaries; CBOs consistently lose staff to higher paying positions. Meanwhile, the DOE has asserted the same standards apply in all early childhood programs in New York City. When the city pays CBO Directors on a lower scale, they and the children in their care are stigmatized and branded as less important. We thank you for your continuing support for these incredible educational leaders.

Conclusion

I thank the finance committee for the opportunity to address you and share our feedback and concerns. Thank you all for your continued leadership, partnership, and thoughtful consideration regarding school leaders' concerns as we all look to do our best to improve the lives of our city's most crucial resource – our children.

Sincerely,

Henry D Rubio
CSA President

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION
EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
TO THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING ON EDUCATION
MAY 20, 2024
2:00 PM

Chairwoman Joseph and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Glenys Rivera, 2nd Vice President of Local 372, representing over 24,000 NYC Board of Education employees, including 8,000 School Lunch Workers. I appear before you today to address critical staffing and infrastructure concerns tied to the Mayor's proposed education budget.

School Lunch Workers play a foundational role in student readiness by preparing and serving meals for over 900,000 children across the five boroughs. Last year's \$25 million restoration to school food programs was an important step. However, without sufficient staffing, it is not sustainable.

We respectfully request an allocation of \$10 million to hire 1,000 additional School Lunch Workers. This investment will address current staffing shortages, reduce the burden on existing personnel, and ensure compliance with medical, religious, and dietary protocols. Our members routinely arrive early and stay late without additional compensation just to meet the basic requirements of breakfast and lunch service.

In addition, we urge the Council to prioritize ventilation and air conditioning improvements in school kitchens. Many facilities, particularly those built before 1990, lack proper ventilation, leading to dangerous kitchen conditions that often exceed 130 degrees. These conditions compromise sanitation, safety, and worker health.

We request that the Department of Education and the School Construction Authority conduct a comprehensive evaluation of ventilation needs across all public school kitchens and that funding be designated for remediation.

On behalf of President Shaun D. Francois I and the members of Local 372, I thank the Council for its ongoing support and respectfully urge your favorable consideration of these requests to strengthen school food services and working conditions across our city.



Good afternoon, Chairperson and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Erica Buchanan, and I'm proud to represent All Our Kin and our work in partnership with the Thriving Providers Project (TPP). Together, we support family child care educators across all five boroughs of New York City—educators who are the backbone of our child care system, yet who remain vastly under-resourced.

New York's more than 10,000 family child care programs make up over 30% of licensed child care capacity statewide. In neighborhoods from the Bronx to Brooklyn, family child care offers families culturally responsive, relationship-rich, and high-quality early education in home-based settings that feel safe and familiar.

Yet despite their vital contributions, family child care educators face systemic challenges that jeopardize their sustainability:

Low compensation: Over 50% of providers in NYC live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Delayed access to subsidy payments: Many wait months between licensing approval and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) activation.

Minimal health or retirement benefits: Nearly 1 in 5 providers lack health insurance—a rate more than three times the state average.

Cumbersome licensing and startup costs: Educators shoulder the burden of fees, home upgrades, and paperwork—often without sufficient public support.

At All Our Kin, we believe family child care is essential to a thriving New York. In partnership with TPP, we launched a pilot offering \$1,000 per month in unrestricted cash payments to 50 newly licensed FCC providers across the city. These funds allowed educators to afford food, utilities, classroom materials, and even health care. Most importantly, it allowed them to stay open—to continue caring for our city's children.

Today, we offer three key recommendations based on our learnings and the voices of the providers we serve:

1. Fund Direct Wage Supplements for FCC Providers

We urge the Council to include direct, unconditional cash payments—modeled on TPP—in this year’s budget. These supplements would stabilize businesses and help close the compensation gap between home-based and center-based care.

2. Streamline Licensing and CCAP Enrollment

We recommend embedding CCAP approvals into the licensing process, removing the current months-long delay between license issuance and subsidy payment activation. This would ease the financial burden on both providers and families.

3. Invest in Shared Services & Startup Grants

A \$5,000 startup grant for new FCC programs—paired with access to subsidized software, materials, and health insurance—would lower the barrier to entry for aspiring educators and allow existing ones to thrive long term.

As city leaders, you have the power to protect—and reimagine—family child care in New York. These are not luxury asks; they are the minimum scaffolds required for providers to survive.

Thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of children, families, and the essential educators who make our city possible.

We look forward to working with you toward a stronger, more equitable early childhood system.

Sincerely,

Erica A. Buchanan
Interim Vice President of NY Programs

Testimony for NYC Council Hearing

On behalf of: All Our Kin, Inc.

Good afternoon, Chairperson and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Dr. Lissarette Nisnevich, and I'm proud to represent All Our Kin and our work in partnership with the Thriving Providers Project (TPP). Together, we support family child care educators across all five boroughs of New York City—educators who are the backbone of our child care system, yet who remain vastly under-resourced.

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We look forward to working with you toward a stronger, more equitable early childhood system.



**Testimony of the Alliance for Quality Education
at the NYC Council Hearing on Education
Tuesday May 20th 2025**

As New York City faces an uncertain future with potential federal cuts looming, the Alliance for Quality Education is grateful that our elected leaders recognize the need for consistent and equitable local investment in education. As stakeholders have made clear, baselining essential education programs allows for program managers to plan ahead, and for community members to rely on ongoing services. Dependable funding for these programs will have a positive impact on hundreds of thousands of families.

While we appreciate the significant steps taken in this budget, we also know that our local government can do more. We urge City Council to baseline the following programs:

- Summer programming to provide students with recreational activities, arts, and field trips, in addition to academic enrichment (\$80M);
- Learning to Work programs to provide support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan (\$31M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended (\$6M);
- The Mental Health Continuum to provide mental healthcare to students at 50 schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (\$5M);
- Outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of early childhood programs (\$5M);
- Immigrant family communication and outreach to help ensure families can receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access (\$4M).

And to fund and baseline:

- Student Success Centers, which train and support youth leaders on how to guide their peers through the college admissions process, providing crucial support to students at more than 30 high schools. (\$3.3M)

Additionally, we urge the council to further invest in measures that will improve outcomes for students. Specifically:

- Small class sizes: City Council must hold the School Construction Authority accountable for developing a capital plan that contains a comprehensive and specific roadmap toward expanding facilities capacity in order to increase new seats in compliance with the new class size mandates. In conjunction with this, City Council should call on DOE to more equitably distribute enrollment among nearby schools, which would lessen the



need for new seats. Additionally, we believe that increased oversight is called for to ensure that SCA is adhering to governance guidelines and that their results and timelines are measuring up with substantial taxpayer investment. (Unknown cost due to lack of transparency in capital plans)

- Restorative justice: We again echo the testimonies of students at both this and the previous education hearing who demanded a more substantial investment in restorative justice. Current funding levels provide only for piecemeal trainings and programming, leaving the vast majority of schools with no staff trained in these best practices. (\$80M)
- Further investment in preschool special education: We echo the call by Advocates for Children to provide preschoolers with disabilities with the evaluations, services, and classes they need, as more than 80 organizations recently urged the Mayor to do, given the thousands of preschoolers with disabilities currently waiting for their mandated services to begin, a challenge highlighted in a recent City Council statement (\$70M).

We are grateful that Chair Joseph and the City Council recognize that investment in our students is an investment in our future, and we are confident that you will continue to increase funding to strengthen NYC public schools.

Thank you.



May 20, 2025

Dear Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph, and members of New York City Council. On behalf of the American Heart Association, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of funding for two critically important initiatives.

Each year, more than 356,000 cardiac arrests occur outside of a hospital in the United States, with 70% happening in homes. About 90 percent of people who experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital die. CPR, especially if performed immediately, can double, or triple a person's chance of survival.

Since 2015, New York State law requires that all students in senior high schools be provided instruction in hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) as part of either their physical education or health education curriculum.ⁱ This legislation was passed at the state level with bipartisan support. The efforts to establish this requirement were part of a 15-year grassroots advocacy effort. Unfortunately, we have heard from too many schools and advocates that funding is needed to equitably implement this lifesaving initiative. That is why we ask the New York City Council to dedicate \$500,000 in the FY26 Budget to support CPR in Schools implementation to ensure CPR and AED training for all students. Together we can build a Nation of Lifesavers.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), childhood development is an important determinant of health over a person's lifetime. Early developmental opportunities can provide a foundation for children's academic success, health and general well-being.ⁱⁱ Research by James Heckman reported that high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13 percent per year return on investment. Those significant gains are realized through better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment.ⁱⁱⁱ

The New York City Independent Budget Office's most recent report on 3-K and Pre-K trends in New York City highlighted an increase in utilization and continued lack of available high-quality seats.

The American Heart Association is encouraged that the Mayor's Executive Budget includes \$192 million made permanent for 3-K, \$25 million for extended day programs, and \$5 million for outreach. Families across all 5 boroughs will continue to advocate for the launch of 2-care and the expansion of extended day pilot to serve all 3-K and Pre-K families.



We would like to thank Chair Rita Joseph, Chair Justin Brannan, and other Council Members for being relentless advocates for our children. We are encouraged by the current investments in early childhood care and education funding, and we hope the final budget approved by the City Council builds upon the Mayor's Executive Budget. In addition, we hope that \$500,000 in funding is secured to fully implement CPR in Schools training across all city schools.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jacob Zychick
Community Advocacy Director
Jacob.zychick@heart.org

ⁱ New York State Education Department. 2022. 100.2 General School Requirements. [online] Available at: <<http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/1002-general-school-requirements#InstructionCertainSubjects>> [Accessed 20 March 2022].

ⁱⁱ Heckman JJ; The Heckman Equation Project. Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. 2016. https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Heckman JJ; The Heckman Equation Project. Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. 2016. https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_CBAOnePager_120516.pdf.



www.arisecoalition.org

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

Re: Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget – Education

May 20, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is May DePierro. I am Policy Associate at Advocates for Children of New York and am testifying today on behalf of the ARISE Coalition – a group of over 120 member organizations and individual parents and professionals who have been working together since 2008 to advocate for systemic improvements to support New York City’s students with disabilities. Our mission is to improve day-to-day experiences and long-term outcomes for all youth receiving special education services in New York City.

While we are pushing for improvements in a number of areas, I will focus my limited time today on the need for increased investments in preschool special education and school accessibility.

Add \$70M for Preschool Special Education Evaluations, Staffing, Services, and Classes

First, we are relieved that the Mayor’s Executive Budget maintains funding for the new preschool special education classes opened this year, but are disappointed that the budget does not include any additional resources to address the ongoing shortages of preschool special education evaluations, services, or classes. At a time when hundreds of children are waiting for seats in their legally mandated preschool special education classes and thousands of preschoolers are waiting for their services to begin, the ARISE Coalition joins with dozens of organizations in urging the City to add at least \$70 million for preschool special education evaluations, staffing, services, and classes. We appreciate the City Council’s work to address these challenges.

Add \$450M to the FY 2025-2029 Capital Plan to Make More Schools Accessible

Second, only around one third of New York City schools are fully accessible to students, parents, teachers, and community members with physical disabilities. More than three decades after being signed into law, the Americans with Disabilities Act still exists in name only for the child who cannot attend their neighborhood school because every entrance sits atop a flight of stairs, the parent or grandparent who has to miss every concert because the auditorium cannot accommodate their wheelchair, or the school social worker whose employment opportunities

are constrained by the lack of accessible bathrooms. Students without physical disabilities miss out on the chance to make friends with a student from their neighborhood who uses a walker or to learn from a teacher with heart disease.

The 2025–2029 Capital Plan currently includes \$800 million for school accessibility projects, an amount that represents a *decreased* commitment to improving school accessibility once inflation is taken into account.

We thank the Council for calling to increase this investment by \$450 million and strongly urge the City to include this funding in the adopted budget with the goal of making at least 45% of school buildings fully accessible by 2030.

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



**Testimony of Todd Karlin, Chief Program Officer
Astor Services**

**Submitted to the New York City Council FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
Education Committee
May 20th, 2025**

New York City's school-based mental health clinics are an essential and unique level of services for thousands of students, providing accessible, culturally competent, and timely mental health care directly within the school environment. As the mental health needs of students continue to rise these clinics are more essential than ever. Despite their critical role, school-based clinics are only part of a comprehensive continuum of care that can address the needs of all students within community school settings.

School-based mental health services are now widely recognized as a best practice model in behavioral health. The model allows for increased access to services, reducing the stigma associated with seeking mental health services, and an integrated approach between community-based providers and schools. As a provider, we see the benefits of the model daily. At one of our school satellite locations, we are currently working with a 15-year-old high risk student who has had multiple suicide attempts and hospitalizations and a parent who is managing their own mental health challenges. School attendance can be a struggle; however, the school staff coordinates with the satellite clinician so that we can engage with her when she's present and we supplement treatment with coordinating with her mom and additional providers. That combination of access and integration is what makes the model so successful. The services are embedded in the system where kids spend the bulk of their time and where they are also experiencing mental health challenges.

While services in school-based clinics are provided regardless of a student's ability to pay, insurance billing is the primary vehicle of revenue for community-based providers, and therefore the structure of interventions must be tied to the reimbursement model, impacting flexibility in service delivery. Additionally, there are a variety of behavioral and social-emotional needs in schools which cannot be

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met specifically by a satellite clinic and are often unable to be addressed by DOE staff. Other flexible service can be provided to address these unmet needs, which may include:

- Clinical providers who can respond to clinical crises and provide other short-term interventions.
- Clinicians operating outside satellite prescriptive hours – allowing for supports in after-school enrichment programs and other community school activities.
- Paraprofessional staff with specialization in managing behavioral crises who can also provide capacity building trainings and consultation for teachers and school systems to provide trauma-informed solutions to behavioral management concerns

To truly support the mental health of New York City’s students, we must invest in a comprehensive system of care that includes but is not limited to school-based clinics. This model would ideally offer schools the opportunity to supplement services specific to their unmet needs with existing models and supports at the ready by community-based providers. Utilizing the foundation of existing school clinics as a hub to expand services is the ideal model, given that these schools already have embedded communication systems that allow for coordinated care, and the school clinician/community behavioral health team can effectively coordinate with school leaders on a larger systems model. **A \$3.75 million dollar ask would allow for substantive expansion of services in 50 schools. Considering that many school clinics have been strategically created in some of the highest needs schools throughout the city, there is the opportunity to provide impactful services in this model in high-needs schools and communities.**

As a clinical school psychologist with over 20 years of experience in schools and school-based service delivery models, I can truly say that no other service model can be as impactful to both the academic and social-emotional success of our students.

Todd Karlin, Psy.D.,
Chief Program Officer, Astor Services

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education
Submitted by Jazlyn Sanchez, Program Manager, Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City

Dear Committee Chair and Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Jazlyn Sanchez, and I am a Program Manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City (BBBS of NYC), in our College & Career Success Program. I'm also a lifelong Bronx resident, a proud first-generation college graduate, and a former "Little" in the BBBS of NYC community. I'm writing to share how transformative access to mentoring and long-term support can be—because I've lived it.

My journey with BBBS of NYC began when I was in high school. I was matched with a mentor through the Workplace Mentoring Program at Credit Suisse, and it completely changed my perspective on myself. At the time, I was quiet, shy, and unsure of what I wanted to do after graduation. However, that relationship—and the program's structure—gave me confidence. It helped me speak up, ask questions, and see beyond what I thought was possible. I was exposed to careers I had never heard of before, and more importantly, I saw people who believed in me. That experience helped me realize that mentorship isn't just about academic success—it's about being seen, encouraged, and supported in every part of your growth.

As I transitioned to college, I joined the College & Career Success Program. I stayed connected to my mentors and also gained new ones—professionals who helped me strengthen my resume, practice for interviews, and learn how to network. They helped me understand how to navigate internships, write stronger cover letters, and develop confidence in professional settings. That kind of guidance was invaluable.

Throughout college, I continued my involvement with BBBS of NYC, working as a facilitator and then as a lead intern. I had the opportunity to support the Workplace Mentoring Challenge – virtual summer program – and help lead sessions with students from across the city. It was meaningful to support other young people as they went through the same programs that had shaped me. After graduating, I joined the BBBS of NYC staff full-time, where I now serve as a Program Manager supporting college students on their own journeys.

What makes BBBS of NYC unique is its long-term investment in young people. I've been part of this community for over a decade, and I've seen firsthand how much consistency matters. I've watched Littles turn into mentors themselves. I've seen how students who were once unsure about college now serve as role models for their siblings and peers. We don't just support students for a semester—we walk alongside them through high school, college, and beyond.

Growing up in the Bronx, I was surrounded by culture, resilience, and a strong community. However, I also observed the impact of underinvestment in education and limited college access. Many students in my neighborhood didn't have access to the kind of mentoring and professional exposure I was fortunate to receive. That's why I believe in this work so deeply.

We're filling a gap that too many young people fall through—and we're doing it in a way that centers on their identity, culture, and lived experiences.

When you invest in organizations like BBBS of NYC, you help level the playing field. You're giving students access to people and opportunities that open doors and widen horizons. And you're showing young people across this city that they don't have to figure everything out on their own.

Thank you for your commitment to educational equity and your belief in what's possible when we surround young people with lasting support.

Sincerely,

Jazlyn Sanchez

Program Manager

Big Brothers Big Sisters of New York City



**The New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
May 2025**

The three library systems of NYC (Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library) are founding City's First Readers partners since the initiative's inception in 2014. We have enthusiastically participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, CFR is its only investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its 17 member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

That impact could not be more timely. The recent budget uncertainty surrounding 3K and Pre-K allocations for FY26 has highlighted just how fragile these essential programs remain. In the absence of comprehensive early childhood infrastructure at the federal, state, and city levels, the work of City's First Readers (CFR) is more critical than ever. CFR partners operate in every Council district and in libraries throughout the city, with many programs intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods and support our most vulnerable communities.

Due to the generous support of the Council through the City's First Readers initiative, NYC libraries have been able to expand services and innovate new programs in support of young children, parents, caregivers, and early educators since 2014. Attendance at NYC library programs for young children surpassed 850,000 last year—a 30% increase over the previous fiscal year. The three library systems are on track to build on this milestone this year.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement that will allow us to reach —so we can reach even more families and children in FY26.

Our libraries are the first social and educational experience many young families have, and we want it to be truly literacy-rich. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Submitted by
Rachel Payne
Coordinator, Early Childhood Services
Brooklyn Public Library
718-230-2233, rpayne@bklynlibrary.org





**New York City Council
Committee on Education and Committee on Finance
Re: Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget - Education**

May 20, 2025

Thank you to Finance Chair Justin Brannan, Education Chair Councilmember Rita Joseph, and the Finance and Education Committees for the opportunity to present testimony on education in the 2025-26 Executive Budget. My name Michelle Avila, and I am the Director of Public Policy at Children's Aid.

For over 170 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people, and no limits to their potential. We are leading a comprehensive counterattack on the obstacles that threaten kids' achievements in school and in life. We have constructed a continuum of services, positioned every step of the way throughout childhood that builds well-being and prepares young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life. Today our nearly 2,000 full and part time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth and their families through our citywide child welfare and family services and our network of 40+ locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding. As a member of these networks and alliances, we support their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for several essential education programs that had previously faced the threat of cuts due to expiring city funding. These include:

- \$14 million baselined for Community Schools,



- \$112 million baselined for 3-K,
- \$55 million baselined for preschool special education classes,
- Continued support for extended day 3-K and pre-K seats, arts programming, teacher recruitment, and high-impact tutoring.

We also applaud the administration's commitment to filling potential gaps in federal Head Start funding contracted through New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). Success in early childhood education is not only about preparing children for kindergarten—it is about building the foundation for lifelong learning, emotional resilience, and social well-being. In the face of federal uncertainty, we commend the City for proactively ensuring that our youngest learners continue to thrive.

However, while these long-term investments are commendable, we remain concerned that several programs have received only one additional year of funding. This short-term approach creates instability and uncertainty for the communities and families who rely on these services every day. Without long-term funding, programs struggle to hire and retain qualified staff; families are left unsure whether trusted services will remain available; and students face the risk of disrupted supports critical to their development.

The following programs are at risk of being eliminated in FY2027 unless permanent funding is secured:

- **Summer programming** that offers students access to recreational activities, arts, field trips, and academic enrichment (\$80 million);
- **Learning to Work programs**, which support over-age, under-credited students in earning a high school diploma and developing a post-secondary plan (\$31 million);
- **Restorative justice programs** that help students resolve conflicts and stay in school instead of facing suspension (\$6 million);
- **The Mental Health Continuum**, providing mental health care to students at 50 schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (\$5 million);
- **Early childhood outreach efforts**, ensuring families are aware of available programs (\$5 million); and
- **Immigrant family communication and outreach**, so families receive school information in a language and format they understand (\$4 million).

At this pivotal moment for our city's youth, we urge City leaders to reaffirm their commitment by baselining these programs in the final FY2026 budget. We also join the



Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling for additional investments to meet the needs of students facing the greatest barriers to success.

Transportation for Students in Foster Care

Additionally, we continue to raise urgent concerns regarding the lack of timely, safe, and reliable school transportation for children in foster care.

Although the NYCPS Office for Students in Foster Care has made commendable progress, serious gaps remain. Most notably, children in foster care often wait weeks or even months for bus routes to be assigned. During this period, ride vouchers are not made available until at least 10 days after a route request, and students must be accompanied to school by an adult.

Because many foster parents are working or caring for other children, this responsibility frequently falls to child welfare staff—who already carry heavy caseloads. At Children's Aid, we've seen our team members start their days as early as 4:00 a.m. to drive children to school before beginning their regular duties. This is unsustainable. It leads to staff burnout, diverts attention from case planning and family reunification, and compromises safety.

The cost is also significant. While ACS provides a \$200 daily transportation allowance, actual costs can exceed \$600 per day—excluding staff time. Reimbursement is slow, forcing agencies to carry the financial burden. To meet this need, Children's Aid is hiring transportation-dedicated staff and acquiring more vehicles for staff use.

We respectfully urge the City to take the following actions:

1. **Fund the timely assignment of bus routes** for students in foster care to minimize disruption to their education.
2. **Allow immediate access to ride vouchers** upon school enrollment or placement change—eliminating the unnecessary 10-day wait.
3. **Ensure prompt reimbursement** for actual transportation costs incurred by child welfare agencies.

This is not merely a logistical issue. It is a matter of educational equity, child safety, and family stability. Students in foster care deserve the same access to school as every other child in New York City.

Address Nonprofit Contracting Infrastructure

We commend the City for the recent FY26 Executive Budget announcements that signal progress toward addressing long-standing challenges in the nonprofit contracting system. These include: funding indirect cost rate growth for human services providers contracting with NYC Aging, the Department of Education (NYCPS), and HRA; a \$5 billion investment to provide advance payments for nonprofit providers; and the addition of 20 new positions at the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) to bolster help desk support and implement critical system improvements. These are meaningful steps toward stabilizing the sector, making providers whole, and alleviating the chronic delays that have jeopardized the financial health of community-based organizations for years.

However, these measures must be accompanied by stronger, enforceable accountability across all City agencies. While the City made important progress by clearing a historic \$4 billion backlog in unpaid contracts and amendments, significant delays and outstanding payments persist. Nonprofits are still being asked to operate essential programs without registered contracts or timely reimbursements—forcing many to borrow funds, delay payroll, or reduce critical services.

With respect to the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), we urge the City to take the following actions:

- Immediately process all outstanding contract amendments, invoices, and back payments.
- Continue advance payments in FY 2026 at 75% of the full contract value within relevant NYCPS divisions to address ongoing and severe payment delays.
- Extend the ability for providers to batch and submit multiple months of invoices, and maintain NYCPS rapid response teams dedicated to assisting providers.

The City must ensure that every agency registers contracts promptly, pays invoices without delay, and eliminates the remaining backlog. Accountability and transparency must become the standard—not the exception—in the City's nonprofit contracting process. These changes are essential to protecting services, supporting providers, and delivering on the promises made to New York's communities.



Conclusion

On behalf of Children's Aid, we thank the City Council for your steadfast support of New York City's youth and families. Ensuring that all students—especially the most vulnerable—have access to opportunity is not only the right thing to do, it is essential to the future of our city.

Testimony for the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Education Budget

May 20, 2025

To the Committee on Education:

My name is Molly Senack, and I am the Education and Employment Community Organizer for the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY).

Last year, as New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) faced a funding crisis due to the expiration of federal stimulus dollars, Mayor Adams and the City Council made significant investments to continue essential education programs, staff, and services that were at risk of being rolled back or eliminated entirely. We are pleased to see that the FY26 Executive Budget continued many of these critical investments by including long-term funding for 3-K, preschool special education classes, extended day 3-K and pre-K seats, arts programming, community schools, teacher recruitment, and high-impact tutoring. However, while these programs were baselined in the Executive Budget, others were funded for one year only- meaning they will once again be at risk of cuts in 2026.

Funding programs for a year at a time puts communities in an inherently uncertain position. A program that is only guaranteed for a year is going to have more trouble attracting, hiring, training, and retaining qualified staff. Simultaneously, students and families are asked to rely on the content of programs whose presence they can't depend on. While actual program cuts may or may not be made until 2026, the impact of the uncertainty of how to invest in these programs will be felt immediately.

The programs that are at risk include restorative justice programs (\$6M), the Mental Health Continuum (\$5M), immigrant family communication and outreach (\$4M), Learning to Work (\$31 million), and summer programming (\$80 million). Meanwhile, Student Success Centers (\$3.3M) was excluded from the FY26 Executive Budget entirely, and is facing cuts by July.

These programs were implemented to provide support for the students with the greatest needs. While the loss will be felt by all students in NYC if long-term funding for these programs is not included in the final budget, students with disabilities will be disproportionately impacted. These students are going to be forced to navigate a school system that is actively reducing outreach capacity despite families consistently reporting being unaware of available resources; and a school system that is actively removing stable support for restorative justice and mental healthcare at a time when, according to a 2024 comprehensive report by the NYC Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, 48% of NYC teenagers reported experiencing depressive symptoms, 24% reported wanting or needing mental healthcare within the last 12 months and not getting it, and 9% reported attempting suicide.

We join with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling for the City to baseline funding for these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget. We also join with the coalition in calling on the City to make additional investments that are needed to support students,

especially those with the greatest needs. To that end, CIDNY also supports a \$3.75M baselined investment to expand school-based mental health clinics, and a [\\$70 million dollar baselined investment](#) to provide preschoolers with disabilities the evaluations and services they need and are too often denied (in March of 2025, 4,570 children were not receiving a single one of their mandated services).

Additionally, we would like to see a greater investment made in improving the physical accessibility of NYC schools. According to the 2023 Advocates for Children (AFC) Report, *Access (Still) Denied*, less than one third of public schools in NYC are considered fully accessible. That means that roughly 69% of NYC public schools are exclusionary to students with certain disabilities, who are then severely limited in their school choice and can be denied access to programs that are not offered in the schools they are able to attend. And for the approximately 43% of NYC yellow school bus riders who have a disability, the lack of accessible schools can mean enduring bus rides that exceed the legal time limit of 115 minutes, since there is no guarantee there will be an accessible school close to their homes. However, the impact of this shortage of accessible schools is not limited to students: it also affects the manner in which parents and family members with disabilities can participate in the education process, and it prevents people with certain disabilities from being hired at two-thirds of the public schools in the city, at a time when NYCPS is reporting significant staffing shortages.

The 2025-2029 Capital Plan currently allocates \$800 million to address school accessibility. However, when inflation is taken into account, this amount represents a decreased investment from the \$750 million allocated in the 2020-2024 Capital Plan. We therefore ask that the City allocate an additional \$450 million (a total investment of \$1.25 billion) in school accessibility projects to achieve the goal of making 45% of schools fully accessible by 2030.

We thank you for your time, and ask that you please take this into serious consideration for the final FY 2026 budget.

Sincerely,

Molly Senack (She/Her)
Education and Employment Community Organizer
Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York
Email: msenack@cidny.org Phone: [REDACTED]



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

**Submitted to the New York City Council FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
Education Committee
May 20th, 2025**

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 Joseph and all the members of the New York City Council Education Committee for holding today's important hearing on Education in the FY26 Executive Budget.

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of critical education programs that were at risk of cuts due to expiring funding. In particular, we appreciate that the Executive Budget restores and baselines \$112 million for 3-K seats, as well as \$55 million for preschool special education seats. Announced by the Mayor on April 16th, these restorations are key to achieving stability for programs and ensuring families can access the early care services they need. The budget also baselines \$14 million for Community Schools and \$25 million for extended-day seats, which offer year-round care and care for longer hours for EarlyLearn, 3-K, and Pre-K. Moreover, the Budget provides one-year funding of \$5 million for Early Care and Education (ECE) outreach and \$25 million for PromiseNYC.

However, several important programs remain unfunded or funded for one year only, leaving their future uncertain. Below we uplift where cuts must be restored, as well as where additional investments are needed to support our families, schools and communities.

Funding to Early Care and Education

We know from extensive engagement with and surveying of NYC families and communities that the demand for affordable childcare is enormous across the city, and that open seats are a reflection of barriers in access rather than lack of demand. Based on a citywide survey and focus groups with parents and providers, it is evident that families face significant bureaucratic barriers to entry, lack of knowledge of existing programs, and options that do not match families' needs and work schedules. Additionally, the ECE system faces threats due to the ongoing inequity between NYPS and community-based salaries; the burden of unpaid city contracts; and a host of operational barriers. These issues were chronicled in our report, [The Youngest New Yorkers](#). We appreciate that the City Council and Administration are engaging

in discussions on how to address these barriers and look forward to continued engagement on how to enhance and streamline access to care for children and families.

We greatly appreciate that the Executive Budget restores and baselines \$112 million for 3-K seats, \$55 million for preschool special education seats, and \$25 million for extended-day seats. **However, given the continuing challenges families face understanding and accessing the ECE system, we urge the Council and Administration to baseline \$5 million for ECE Outreach and Education.** Additionally, nearly 8,000 preschoolers continue to wait for legally-mandated services like counseling and speech therapy. **We therefore urge City leaders to invest at least \$70 million in the final budget to ensure preschoolers with disabilities receive the special education evaluations and services they need and are legally entitled to.**

Funding for the K-12 Education System

We are grateful community schools, arts programming, teacher recruitment and high-impact tutoring were funded and baselined in the FY26 Executive Budget. Unfortunately, several other crucial education programs are only funded for one year in this year's Executive Budget and are facing cuts unless they are baselined this year.

Furthermore, the Executive Budget leaves out Student Success Centers entirely, so it is again at risk of being eliminated as soon as July. Student Success Centers help students at more than 30 high schools prepare for college. **We urge City leaders to restore and baseline \$3.3 million for Student Success Centers.**

CCC also urges the City Council and Mayor to ensure the following education programs are baselined in the FY26 Adopted Budget:

- \$4 million Immigrant Family Communications and Outreach
- \$80 million for Summer Programming
- \$31 million for Learning to Work

Support the Behavioral Health Needs of Students

Schools play an essential role in meeting the behavioral health needs of children, yet New York City's approach to addressing the social-emotional needs of students in schools has often been fragmented and insufficient. Far too many students experiencing an emotional crisis are still sent to emergency rooms, subjected to police intervention, or punished with disciplinary practices such as suspension.

Schools need the resources and training necessary to support the mental health of all students, rather than relying on punitive and traumatizing responses to student behavior. We urge City leaders to take the following actions in the budget to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of students.

- **Baseline \$5 million to fully implement and sustain the Mental Health Continuum**, an innovative model that integrates a range of direct services, including expedited mental healthcare, a NYC Well hotline to advise school staff, mobile response teams to respond to students in crisis, training for

school staff in Collaborative Problem Solving, and culturally-responsive family engagement to students with significant mental health challenges. This cross-agency partnership (NYCPS, Health + Hospitals, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene) supports students at 50 high needs. As part of this initiative, the Mayor and H+H announced in April that 16 school-based mental health clinics would be open, serving over 6,000 students across the Bronx and Central Brooklyn. We were glad to see the Executive Budget restore \$5 million in FY26 for the Continuum. However, this funding will be for one year only, and the program is at risk if funding is not baselined in this year's budget (\$787k for NYCPS, \$3.75 million for H+H, and \$472k for DOHMH).

- **Baseline \$12 million for Restorative Justice practices.** Restorative practices address the root causes of behavior, hold students accountable while keeping them in school learning, build and heal relationships, and teach positive behaviors. They also correlate with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships. We appreciate that \$6 million was restored in the FY26 Executive Budget, but urge City leaders to ensure funding for the initiative is fully funded and baselined.
- **Invest \$3.75 million to expand services for up to 50 school-based mental health clinics.** Article 31 School-Based Mental Health clinics provide on-site services to children during the school day, including diagnosis, psychiatry, and individual and family counseling. SBMHC staff work closely with school staff to identify children in need and coordinate services. They work to engage the whole family and can serve family members at their community location. SBMHCs provide crisis mental health services, ensuring children receive a compassionate response when they are in need and reducing the use of suspensions, detentions and punitive measures.

These clinics are primarily funded by billing Medicaid and, when available, private insurance for services provided to students. However, this funding is deeply insufficient. For example, Medicaid does not cover services to children without a diagnosis, and clinics are not reimbursed for services provided to children without health coverage. Other essential supports that clinics can offer schools – such as mental health education and training for staff, de-escalating a child-in-crisis scenario to prevent law enforcement involvement, and consulting on specific behavioral supports for classrooms – are not reimbursable through the Article 31 SBMHC model.

We were grateful to see the City Council uplift the importance of investing in School-Based Mental Health Clinics in their [response to the FY26 Preliminary Budget](#). A \$3.75 million investment would enable up to 50 SMHC to provide the types of comprehensive wraparound services necessary to support the mental and social-emotional needs of students. Flexible funding to meet the specific needs of schools could include hiring an after school social worker for the clinic; hiring a behavioral specialist to consult with clinic staff several times each week; hiring a family/peer support worker; hiring a clinician that specializes in working in schools and advising on behavior supports for students; and numerous other targeted interventions designed to complement the school-based mental health clinic model.

We urge city leaders to invest \$3.75 million to expand school-based mental health clinic services in up to 50 clinics. Ultimately, we recommend a long-term goal in the future of expanding funding to all SMHC's in the city.

Education Access for Students in Temporary Housing

CCC is a steering committee member of the Family Homeless Coalition (FHC), a coalition comprised of 20 organizations representing service and housing providers, children's advocacy organizations, and people with lived experience with family homelessness. We are united by the goal of preventing family homelessness, improving the well-being of children and families in shelter, and supporting the long-term stability of families with children who leave shelter.

Far too many students struggle with housing instability in New York City. A recent report from Advocates for Children highlighted that in the 2023-2024 school year, over 146,000 NYC experienced some form of homelessness. Over 60,000 (41%) spent time living in City shelters; more than 79,000 (54%) were "doubled up," or temporarily sharing the housing of others because of a loss of housing or economic hardship; and the remaining 5% were living in hotels or motels, unsheltered.ⁱ Housing instability has a severe impact on student's education and overall well-being.

We therefore urge the City Council to support the following reforms to enhance housing stability for NYC students currently experiencing some form of homelessness:

- **Increase the percent of families DHS places or re-places in shelter in the same borough as where their children attend school.** In the most recent Mayor's Management Report (MMR), there was small progress made in increasing the number of families DHS placed in shelter in the same borough as the family's youngest school-age child. However, almost 40% of families in shelter continue to be placed in a different borough from where their youngest child goes to school.
- **Stop the implementation of shelter stay limits for new arrival families with children.** With the pace of new arrivals slowing and a frightening federal landscape potentially on the horizon for immigrant families in New York City, we oppose the threat of eviction and re-placements for families with children in shelter. The City should eliminate the requirement that families with children in grades K-6 be forced to move shelters after their initial 60-day placement and should eliminate any shelter moves for families with children in school, no matter the grade level.
- **Implement the recommendations of the Students in Temporary Housing Transportation Taskforce.** This task force created through Local Law 158 developed a set of recommendations that the city should promptly implement to ensure school stability and regular attendance for students in temporary housing.
- **Increase access to Early Childhood Education for children in shelter.** The percentage of age-eligible children in shelter who participated in Pre-K was around 50% in the most recent publicly stated numbers, a 10-percentage point decrease from pre-Covid numbers. The City should make greater efforts to connect age-eligible children in shelter to Pre-K and 3-K by continuing to make

automatic offers for 3-K and Pre-K to families in shelter who did not participate in the application process and ensure that 3-K and Pre-K outreach efforts include a targeted approach to increasing access to and participation in early childhood programs for children in shelter.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

ⁱ Advocates for Children. “Student Homelessness in New York City, 2023-2024”. 2024.
file:///C:/Users/JDIAZ/Downloads/Student%20Homelessness%20in%20NYC,%202023-24.pdf



Class Size Matters
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Class Size Matters Testimony on the Executive FY 26 Department of Education budget and the Five-Year Capital Plan for 2025-2029

May 20, 2025

Thank you, Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph and the members of the Finance and Education Committees for holding these hearings and allowing me to speak today. My name is Leonie Haimson and I'm the Executive Director of Class Size Matters.

In June 2022, an historic class size bill was passed June 2022 by the New York state legislature and in September 2022, the Governor signed it into law, giving the NYC Department of Education an extra planning year before they needed to start phasing in smaller classes. The law requires NYC to develop and implement a five-year plan to cap classes in grades K-3 to twenty students, in grades 4th-8th grade at 23 students, and in high school classes to 25 students. An additional 20% of classes are supposed to comply each year, with 100% required by the fall of 2028.

This law was passed in response to the decision of the state's highest court in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case that smaller classes were not only advisable to allow students to receive sufficient feedback from their teachers, but also required for a sound, basic education under the state's constitution. Class size reduction will also enable teachers to forge a stronger emotional connection with their students and address their emotional and holistic needs.

The class size benchmarks required in the first two years of the phase-in were relatively easy to accomplish, since nearly 40% of classes already met these caps before the law was passed, due to largely to enrollment decline. But the next three years will be considerably more challenging, particularly as regards the critical lack of space in many schools.

In the spring of 2023, Chancellor Banks appointed a Class Size Working Group to come up with proposals on how the law should be implemented. Sadly, very few of these recommendations have been adopted. Instead of developing and implementing an actual multi-year plan to meet the benchmarks, as required by the class size law, each year the DOE has simply focused on achieving the levels required for the following year.¹

¹www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/211-D

Next year, 60% of schools are required to comply with these caps. To achieve this, a voluntary application process was launched last fall, by which schools could apply for class size funds – but only if they already had space for smaller classes. Principals at overcrowded schools were forbidden to even ask for smaller enrollments, even if this was necessary to lower class size and there were underutilized schools sitting nearby.

In early April, with much fanfare, the Mayor and the Chancellor announced that that 746 schools will receive funding for next year to hire an additional 3700 teachers to lower class size.

It was somewhat amazing to see how Mayor Adams, who has fought and criticized the class size law ever since it was passed, now lavished it with praise, saying that he was proud to be the first Mayor to achieve smaller classes, following “a thirty year fight.” He concluded that it “should not have taken 110 mayors before you got a smaller class size.... children are going to become who they should become because ... smaller class sizes will make it happen. “

Yet as of today, DOE has still not yet released the list of schools that will receive these funds, nor the total amount allocated for that purpose. Though 3,700 additional teachers will cost about \$370 million, there’s only \$150 million in the Executive budget specified for class size reduction in FY26, and \$200 million proposed for the following year.

The state budget increases Foundation Aid funding for NYC schools by \$538 million, of which about \$286 million will be incorporated in the Contract for Excellence program, which should be targeted towards class size reduction. Perhaps some or most of these funds will be used to supplement city spending for this purpose. ²

Most crucially, there has been little progress in creating more space for overcrowded schools to attain the class size caps in future years. The percentage of students enrolled in overcrowded schools at over 100% actually increased last year, according to the annual school utilization report known as the Blue Book. ³ Moreover, 495 schools do not have enough space to meet the class size caps, according to DOE’s own estimate. ⁴ These schools enroll nearly half (46%) of non-D75 public school students, according to our analysis. A chart showing the number of schools by school district is below.

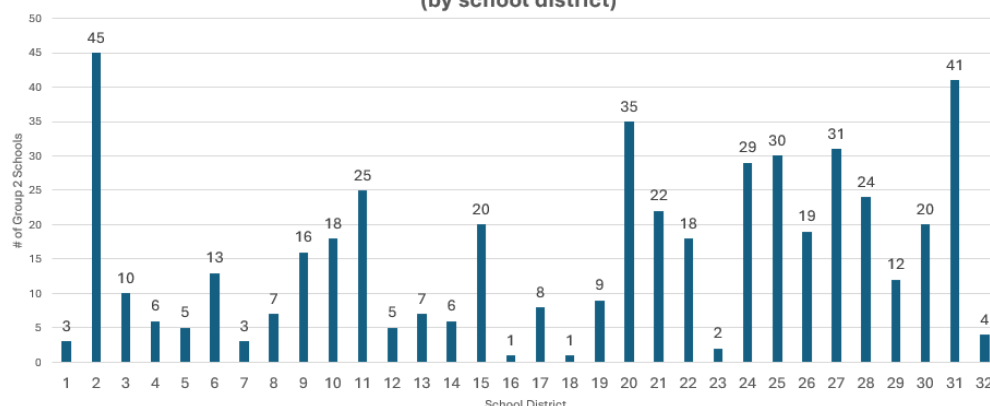
² <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/C4E/25-26-c4e/2025-26-c4e-contract-amounts.xlsx>

³ <http://nycsca.org/Community/Capital-Plan-Reports-Data#Enrollment-Capacity-Utilization-69>

⁴ DOE Class Size Space Analysis 2024-2025 at <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2024-2025-class-size-space-analysis-publish.pdf> Those schools without sufficient space are listed as Group 2.

495 schools have insufficient space to lower class size at current enrollment, according to DOE

(by school district)



*Data Sources: DOE Class Size Space Analysis 2024-2025
Table B: 2024-2025 Unaudited* Register Snapshot as of 10/31/2024*

In the spring of 2023, Chancellor Banks formed a Class Size Working Group to come up with recommendations for how the law should be implemented; I was appointed a member of that group. In December 2023, we released a report that included many practical suggestions on how more space could be acquired in an accelerated and cost-effective manner.⁵ Yet very few of our proposals have been adopted.

One of our recommendations, repeatedly rejected by DOE, would be to balance enrollment and utilization more evenly between nearby schools, which would improve both overcrowded and underutilized schools. This would allow overcrowded schools to offer smaller classes, as well access to the cafeteria and gym at more reasonable times. Students at underutilized schools would be provided with a more substantial budget, and thus offered more extracurricular and advanced courses, as well as other services necessary for a quality education.

Yet DOE officials have consistently refused to cap enrollment at overcrowded schools to allow for smaller classes, even when there are underutilized schools nearby, based upon a claim that would hamper “parent choice.” Yet class size remains one of the top priorities of parents on the DOE school surveys, when asked what changes they would like to see in their children’s schools. Recently, DOE launched a separate survey, in which former NYC public school parents were why they had taken their children out of the NYC public school system. Of those who responded, 82% said that class size was a factor in their decision, and 58% that it contributed “a lot” to their determination to pull their children out of NYC public schools.⁶

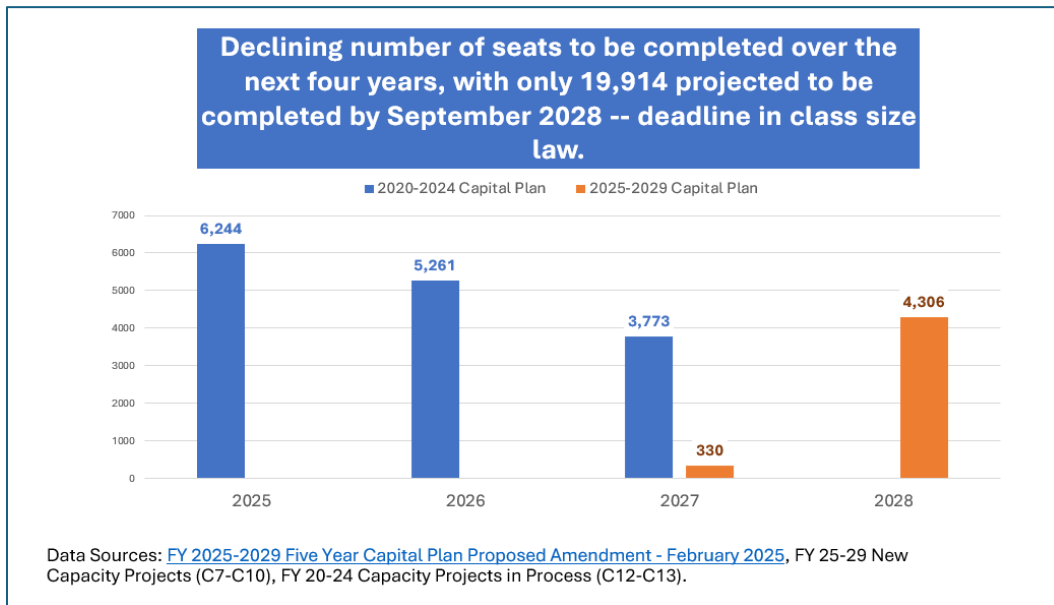
There are 266 elementary schools that, according to the DOE, do not have enough classroom space to meet the class size mandate in the law. Of that figure, more than half (54%) offer PreK and/or 3K programs, many of which could be shifted to nearby CBOs which have thousands of empty seats. Instead, the DOE is threatening to cut funds to any CBO unable to fill at least 95% of their seats, which would be hugely counterproductive, and lead to

⁵ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gSiFUcuLOjJ49PLCMptkroFjXBHow2b_/view.

⁶ <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/enrollment-survey-deck---april-2025---public-deck.pdf>

even more overcrowding in our elementary schools. Moreover, unlike public schools, CBOs are able to offer extended day and year services to eligible parents, and in many cases their programs are rated higher in quality than those provided by our public schools.⁷

Nor does the DOE intend to build enough new schools or annexes to comply. According to the testimony of SCA Director of Operations Cora Liu at the preliminary budget hearing last March, 70,000 additional school seats will be needed to comply with the class size law, but only about 33,000 seats are funded in the five-year capital plan. Of those seats funded, only about 20,000 will come online by the deadline in the law.⁸



Moreover, nearly half of all the new seats funded in the five-year capital plan are still unspecified as to district, subdistrict or grade level. This ignores how the class size law requires DOE to submit an **“annual capital plan for school construction and leasing to show how many classrooms will be added in each year and in which schools and districts to achieve the class size targets”**⁹ The lack of transparency also violates Local Law 167, passed by the Council in 2018, that requires the SCA to explain exactly where seats are needed by district, subdistrict and grade level, as well as the data and methodology these projections are based upon.¹⁰ Yet instead of becoming more transparent after this law were passed, the capital plan became even more opaque.

⁷ See Class Size Matters, Testimony of Class Size Matters on proposed closures of Early Child Care Centers <https://classsizematters.org/why-doe-should-be-moving-more-prek-classes-to-cbos-to-provide-critical-benefits-to-students-and-the-city-as-a-whole/>

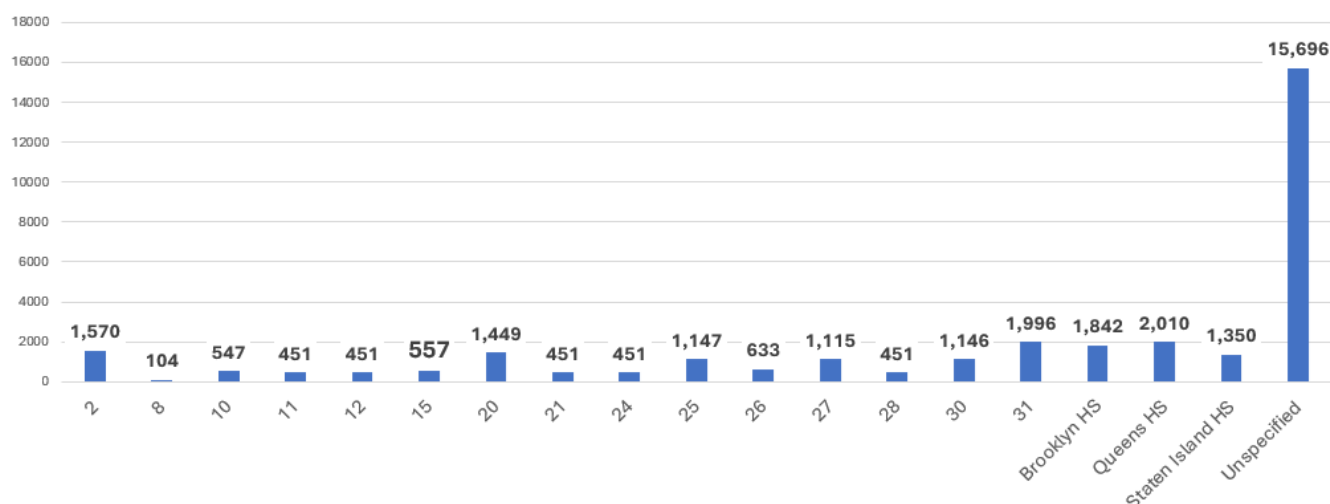
⁸ <https://citymeetings.nyc/meetings/new-york-city-council/2025-03-13-1000-am-committee-on-education/chapter/discussion-on-class-size-reduction-compliance-and-estimated-seats-needed/>

⁹ <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/211-D>

¹⁰ <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6714467&GUID=ED9C486B-ACA7-4D5B-8D56-F2EA0A950976>

33,417 funded school seats in current 2025-2029 Capital Plan

47% unspecified as to district/subdistrict/grade level;
68% un-sited. All seats in D15 sited.



Data Sources: [FY 2025-2029 Five Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment - February 2025](#) (page 17)

The Class Size Working Group proposed many other ideas that could accelerate the acquisition of more space, including re-activating the Educational Construction Fund, incorporating schools in affordable housing proposals as part of the City of Yes, merging co-located schools, and ensuring that any changes in school utilization put forward by District Planning do not prevent existing schools from meeting their class size goals.

Instead, since the Class Size Working Group report was released, District Planning has proposed a number of school closings, grade expansions and co-locations, without any reference to their potential impact on class size. In fact, when CEC members asked District Planning staff why class size is never mentioned in their proposals, they responded that DOE officials had told them to ignore the mandate in the law.

We also have ongoing concerns with the School Construction Authority's lax governance practices.

According to the state law that established the SCA in 1998, the SCA board is supposed to have three members at all times: *"The authority shall be governed by and its powers shall be exercised by a board of trustees consisting of three members....Each appointed member shall continue in office until a successor has been appointed and qualifies."*¹¹ And yet for nearly 18 months, from August 2023 to April 2025, the board was composed of only two members. A new member was appointed only after I spoke up about this at their March meeting, and Chair Joseph wrote a letter to inquire.¹²

¹¹ See the New York City School Construction Authority Act Public Authorities (PBA) CHAPTER 43-A, ARTICLE 8, § 1727. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/PBA/1727>

¹² <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2025/03/my-comments-at-school-construction.html> See also: <https://nypost.com/2024/08/31/us-news/eric-adams-fails-to-name-nyc-trustee-to-oversee-billions-of-dollars-in-school-construction/> and <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2024/09/revelation-that-nycs-school.html>

According to the most recent report of the NY State Authorities Budget Office, the SCA Board still lacks a Governance Committee, a Finance Committee, as well as official policies for salary and compensation, time and attendance. Nor does it have a Whistleblower Protection policy. According to this Office, all of these are required by the NYS Public Authorities Law.¹³

We urge the City Council to press the SCA and the DOE on these failings, and refuse to pass any capital plan that does not specify where sufficient space will be provided by district, subdistrict and grade level, or by other means, so that all NYC students can receive the benefits of smaller classes that they need and deserve, and is their right under the state constitution.

Thank you for the ability to testify to you today.

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<https://abo.ny.gov/annualreports/PARISAnnualReports/FYE2024/Local/ARNewYorkCitySchoolConstructionAuthority2024.pdf>
f According to this report, the SCA also lacks a code of ethics and a compensation policy for employees, which are apparently recommended but not mandated by law.



Coalition for Equitable Education Funding

**Testimony for New York City Council
Committee on Education and Committee on Finance
Re: Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget - Education
May 20, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Edward Sanchez. I am a CUNY political science student at Baruch College, a recent graduate of New York City public schools, and a youth leader at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York and the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding.

I am testifying today on behalf of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, a group of more than 120 organizations advocating for the resources needed to ensure every student receives a high-quality education, with a focus on those who need the most support.

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of important education programs that had been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding including 3-K, preschool special education classes, arts programming, community schools, tutoring, and more.

However, the Executive Budget leaves out Student Success Centers (\$3.3M) entirely, and we want to make sure this program continues. Student Success Centers train and support youth leaders on how to guide their peers through the college admissions process, providing crucial support to students at more than 30 high schools.

Additionally, the Executive Budget leaves several important programs without long-term funding, opting instead to extend their funding for one year only—creating uncertainty for the communities they serve.

Programs that received funding for one more year only and are, therefore, at risk of cuts in 2026, include:

- Summer programming to provide students with recreational activities, arts, and field trips, in addition to academic enrichment (\$80M);
- Learning to Work programs to provide support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan (\$31M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended (\$6M);
- The Mental Health Continuum to provide mental healthcare to students at 50 schools (\$5M);
- Outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of early childhood programs (\$5M);

and

- Immigrant family outreach to help families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access (\$4M).

We call on the City to baseline funding for these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget and make additional investments that are needed to support students, especially those who have the greatest needs.

The coalition thanks the City Council for your strong support in continuing essential education programs.

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



**NYC Council Committee on Education
FY 26 Executive Joint Budget Hearing with Committee on Finance
Tuesday, May 20, 2025**

Testimony Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you, Chair Joseph and Chair Brannon, and the Committees on Finance and Education for offering an opportunity for social service partners and community stakeholders to present testimony on the New York City Public Schools Budget for FY26. We appreciate the collective work on the education budget to sustain and increase funding where possible to high-impact education programming. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF, works in partnership with the city and state to deliver holistically responsive services within schools, early care and learning programs, and the wider communities that we serve across NYC, through and beyond our contracted programs and services. Our continued mission is to combine education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

School-Based Youth Development Programming

Our Youth Development team delivers after-school programming in partnership with three schools in the Bronx and career and college readiness programming to high school juniors and seniors at four schools in Manhattan and the Bronx. During a school year, CHCF's after-school programs have a typical capacity to reach 550 students, and by extension their families. Having delivered afterschool services in Bronx public schools for over 25 years, we have built strong, collaborative relationships with school leaders and are considered an integral part of the school teams. Working in tandem with the day-school curriculum, CHCF offers enhanced interest and exploratory learning in topics such as robotics, esports, and health and fitness – ensuring that students are inspired and equipped with 21st century skills. Above and beyond culturally and linguistically responsive academic instruction, CHCF programs provide comprehensive supports that promote students' mental health and social emotional development and connects students and families with vital resources and community partnerships that strengthen their overall well-being and prospects.

Our Community Empowerment Department further enhances our direct delivery of programs, expanding the reach and impact of our agency services and supports beyond physical program spaces to families and into the surrounding communities, addressing several issues, reflective of the needs of the families and communities (i.e. housing, immigration, food access, healthcare access, etc.).





CHCF demonstrates the value-add of connecting community-based partners with schools to comprehensively meet the unique needs of students and their families. CBO partners, like CHCF, strategically coordinate funding and resources outside of school budgets to serve the holistic needs of students, families, the school and the surrounding community. We continue to attest to the critical importance of sustaining programs that strengthen and grow such partnerships between schools and CBOs that demonstrate positive impact on children, youth, families, and communities.

We were happy to see some of the programs that were funded, baselined, and increased in the Executive Budget; we know how important these programs have been to the school communities and students who have benefited from them. We are particularly pleased that the Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of important education programs that had been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding including, 3-K (\$112M), Early Childhood Education Extended Day, Preschool special education, and Community Schools.

However, the Executive Budget leaves several programs without long-term funding, opting instead to extend their funding for one year only, creating uncertainty for the communities they serve. These high-impact programs include Summer Programming, Learning to Work, Mental Health Continuum, Immigrant Family Communications and Outreach, and Restorative Justice. Long-term funding provides stability for critical programming and the organizations that are delivering the services. Without long-term funding, programs have a harder time hiring and keeping staff, and students and their families are left unsure if programs they rely on will continue to operate. The Executive Budget additionally leaves out other long-term educational supports entirely, such as Student Success Centers, leaving these programs still at risk of being eliminated as soon as July.

Early Care & Education Services

CHCF is deeply engaged in the NYC early care and learning system, both as one of four Child Care Resource & Referral agencies in the NYC CCR&R Consortium, and as an NYCPS DECE contracted Family Child Care Network. Our work as a CCR&R, which is funded by New York State through Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), supports high-quality and culturally responsive care spaces and curriculum to foster healthy development and early learning. Through these funds, CHCF additionally supports families in accessing childcare that is responsive to their family's culture, language, schedule, and particular child needs; and supports their navigation of often complex bureaucratic systems to access free/affordable early care and learning.

CHCF's Family Child Care Network under the DOE has grown to support 40 affiliated providers/programs – most of whom speak Spanish as their primary language – to deliver high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive programming to 193 children. ECE programming supports the healthy development of NYC's children, particularly those who are from communities that have been historically under-resourced; and offers stability to parents who are trying to navigate work and family needs.





The value of ECE programs is widely documented and evidence-based, both in supporting the healthy development of young children, and in the stability that universal access to comprehensive care and early learning provides families. We are happy that the Executive Budget restores and baselines 3-K (\$112M), early childhood education extended day seats (\$25M), and preschool special education classes (\$55M).

As an enrollment support in both our CCR&R and FCCN capacities, we continue to identify and mitigate barriers for families as they try to understand their options and find the least restrictive early care and learning program. While universal 4-K and the expanded investments in 3-K have made steps toward reducing the cost of care for families, the inability to offer extended day/year care has held families out from enrolling in school day/year. We must continue to grow investments toward the care and early learning needs that families across NYC, in all types of work, have. This includes addressing the central enrollment challenges (including MyCity) that fail to optimize all subsidies that families might be eligible for, and still struggle to support families in understanding the various care options (center, family child care, school-based) and connecting to one that can offer the necessary care for that family.

We wish to once again uplift to this committee that the Family Child Care Network contracts are coming to an end in 2026 and will need to be replaced with a new RFP. In addition to the continued investments needed towards extended day/year care delivered through networks, which would support the ability to fully enroll affiliated programs, there are also long-standing inequities in funding and contracting that must be addressed. These inequities disproportionately harm low-income communities of color and immigrant communities, and the childcare workforce, which is predominantly made up of women, people of color, and immigrant women.

- ⇒ There continue to be NYCPS central system malfunctions that are perpetuating confusion of care options for families that increase likelihood that they will not be connected to the least restrictive care option that best meets their need (including hours/days of care reflective of need and program type that would best support family and child need);
- ⇒ These centralized enrollment system issues translate to delayed enrollment or under-enrollment in FCC programs, which jeopardizes the stability of these programs in the long-term. This is especially alarming at a time when we are well aware of the existing and growing childcare deserts across the city and state.
- ⇒ There continues to be inequities across NYCPS childcare contracts (FCCN compared to Birth-to-Five) which maintain instability among our most vulnerable early care and education programs, and the partner organizations who support them which; and
- ⇒ Early learning and care rates through NYCPS fail to reflect the enhanced services that NYCPS is contracting for, going above the base health and safety costs that are covered by the state-set market rate. The inadequate rates translate to under compensation for this highly skilled and valuable workforce.

Family Child Care programs continue to be essential to overwhelmingly low-income communities and communities of color, particularly in communities with large immigrant populations. FCC programs are overwhelmingly staffed by women of color and immigrant women and continue to be disproportionately underfunded, undercompensated, and under-resourced; and, as a result, are facing





disproportionate risk of closure. These disparities in supports and resources to this portion of the field translate to resource inequities for the families and children served in these programs and are the start to the long-term education inequities that students in these communities face throughout the education system.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony; and if there are any questions about our work or what is presented in our testimony, please reach out to Danielle Demeuse, Director of Policy, at: ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) is a non-profit organization with a 43-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.



75 Broad Street, Suite 620 | New York, NY 10004 | (212) 206-1090 | info@chcfinc.org

Testimony to City Council Committee on Education Preliminary Budget Hearing
Submitted to the City Council Committee on Education on May 23, 2025

Prepared by Melinda Wang, Research and Advocacy Manager of Dance/NYC

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, submitted on behalf of Dance/NYC ([Dance.NYC](#)), a service organization that reaches over 6,000 individual dance artists, 1,700 dance entities, and the many for-profit dance businesses based in the metropolitan New York City area. Our areas of service are of special benefit to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color), immigrant, disabled, low-income, and small-budget dance workers. Through action-oriented research and advocacy, Dance/NYC seeks to represent and advance the interests of the dance field. We embed the values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of our operations and make the following requests through this lens.

Dance/NYC joins our fellow advocates in support of the **It Starts with the Arts** coalition — calling on our city to prioritize funding for arts and dance education in NYC schools.

We want to thank the Council for your work towards securing the baselining of \$41 million for arts education with a \$4 million addition. We also call for the following:

- **Require DOE arts funding be spent on the arts (\$12.5M):** Boost the per student arts allocation to \$100 from \$86.67 and require that money be spent on arts education.
- **Ensure Every School Has a Certified Arts Teachers (\$30.5M):** Ensure that all schools have at least one certified arts teacher, closing the equity gap for at least 290 schools. This can be done in part by bolstering the pipeline of certified arts teachers via supplemental certification program (\$4M) or funding a PE Works-inspired improvement plan.
- **Restore and Enhance “Support for Arts Instruction” initiative funding (\$6M):** Build on city’s down payment and boost allocation from \$4M to \$6M to meet city-wide demand.
- **Center Arts and Culture in Youth Development Programs (\$5M):** Allocate funds to better support arts and cultural education opportunities during Summer Rising 2025 and other DYCD programs to support public safety and continued community-building opportunities via the arts.
- **Restore and Increase Baseline Funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs**
- **Improve arts education data transparency** by compelling NYCPS to provide a school-by-school breakdown of the state of arts education in public schools via a Hearing, Legislative Services Request, T&C, and/or Oversight Hearing.

- **Require more school-based arts reporting and goal-setting:** Restore the inclusion of arts programs in all School Quality Snapshots and require arts education to be included in each District Education Plan and each school’s Comprehensive Education Plan.

Arts education is critically under-resourced and under attack.

For years, arts educators have been forced to make do with less for their students. 47% of NYC schools reported that funding for the arts is generally insufficient.¹ 379 NYC public schools—that’s about 1 in 5—lack a certified arts teacher.² Together, this leaves hundreds of thousands of students without the full support needed for a well-rounded education. Dance education, in particular, has been impacted. Dance educators represent just 12.5% of full-time and 7.2% of part-time certified arts teachers in NYC public schools³. This effect worsens through a student’s lifetime: only 76% of public elementary, 44% of middle schools, and 21% of high schools offer dance education.

These outcomes are poised to worsen in the current climate. Federal attacks on public education are escalating, with the Department of Education’s workforce slashed by half in just a few weeks. These cuts will disproportionately harm low-income, disabled, and BIPOC students, as many of the layoffs target staff in the Office of Civil Rights.⁴ Already, schools serving predominantly low-income, Black, and Latinx students are the most impacted by limited access to arts education⁵—despite its proven role in supporting student success. Arts programs are often the first to be cut when resources shrink. As public schools across the nation face this sudden loss of support, it is critical for the city government to intervene.

Arts education is crucial to rise to the moment

Instead of responding to attacks on education by cutting the arts, we have the opportunity to take a different approach—one that recognizes arts education as essential to supporting students and meeting this moment. Arts education is not *just* optional enrichment, it is foundational to a well-rounded education that engages students academically, socially, and emotionally. Its benefits extend beyond the arts classroom, improving engagement and success across all subjects. This is especially true for low-income students, who are among the most vulnerable to today’s educational crises. Research shows that low-income students who participate in the arts are five times less likely to drop out and more than twice as likely to graduate from college. They achieve better test scores and are more likely to participate in civic engagement opportunities,

¹ [NYC Public Schools Arts Reporting, 2023- 2024.](#)

² [Department of Education - Arts Education Report 2024](#)

³ NYC Department of Education Arts Office, [Arts in Schools Report 2022-2023](#)

⁴ Turner, Cory. [“The Education Department is being cut in half. Here’s what’s being lost.”](#) (3/13/2025)

⁵ American Academy of Arts & Sciences, [Art for Life’s Sake: The Case for Arts Education](#) (2021),

like volunteering, student government, and voting in their young adulthood.⁶ In this way, arts education acts as a critical defense against larger disinvestment in low-income students and their families.

Moreover, art education fosters inclusion and belonging. 86% of NYC schools said arts education was a driver of social and emotional learning.⁷ Dance therapy, in particular, supports emotional, cognitive, and physical integration, and has proven especially beneficial for people with chronic conditions. According to the National Dance Education Organization, dance also provides immigrant and non-English speaking students with a non-verbal way to express themselves and maintain aspects of identity not always supported in a new culture or language. Similarly, dance creates meaningful opportunities for cognitive development and inclusion for disabled students⁸.

Fully funding the larger arts ecosystem is key to supporting students

Arts education sits at the juncture of two concurrent issues: disinvestment in education and disinvestment in the larger arts and culture ecosystem. Cultural organizations and workers across the city serve as vital community partners in education. More than 708 arts and cultural organizations partnered with NYC public schools in the 2023-2024 school year. 29% of all reporting schools used external funding provided by these arts and culture organizations.⁷ Findings from Dance/NYC's *State of NYC Dance 2023 Report* reveal that 54% of dancers in NYC are also educators.⁹

Our organizations and workers play a critical role in filling the gaps when educators aren't given the support they need—but we face our own financial challenges. 40% of NYC dance entities report their financial health as weak or very weak, and 58% of dance workers believe they do not earn fair wages.⁹ Resourcing the arts ecosystem by baselining \$75 million for the Department of Cultural Affairs would help sustain the essential role we play in supporting our public education system.

For these reasons, we echo our colleagues across the sector in calling for full funding of arts education for every student across the five boroughs. Our students deserve an education that nurtures their humanity, creativity, and sense of belonging. In times of crisis, arts education is more vital—not less. We look forward to working with the City Council to defend every student's right to learn.

⁶ Americans for the Arts. [Arts Education Navigator: Facts and Figures](#).

⁷ NYC Public Schools Arts in Schools Report 2023-2024.

⁸ National Dance Education Organization. [Evidence: A Report on the Impact of Dance in the K-12 Setting](#) (2013).

⁹ [State of NYC Dance 2023: Findings from the Dance Industry Census](#).



**Testimony of Day Care Council of New York
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Education
Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair
At the FY 2026 Executive Budget Hearing**

**Prepared by Gregory Brender, Chief Policy and Innovation Officer and
Shelby Lohr, Ph.d., Senior Policy Analyst**

May 20th, 2025

Thank you Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Committee on Education for the opportunity to testify. families. DCCNY appreciates the City Council's leadership in efforts to stabilize and expand access to early childhood education.

The Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) is the membership organization of early care and education providers across New York City. DCCNY sees a future where all children have access to quality early childhood education and where early childhood providers and their workforce have the tools and resources necessary to offer the highest quality early childhood education.

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 the early childhood workforce, 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, while a smaller portion work with child care vouchers issued by ACS and HRA, 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.

Baselined Funds in the FY 2026 Budget

DCCNY has long advocated for baselined funding for early childhood education. The annual budget dance where key services such as 3-K and Preschool Special Education were cut in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget and then restored in the Adopted Budget in July had an impact on providers and their workforce.

Programs often had to prepare for closure only to have to hastily make plans to stay open when funding was restored. This created instability for the workforce. We appreciate that many core pieces of funding for early childhood education were baselined or restored in the Executive Budget, including:

Key Baseline Investments:

- \$112 million for 3-K programs (previously slated for cuts)
- \$55 million for Preschool Special Education (previously slated for cuts)
- \$25 million for School Day Plus pilot program (extending hours at centers with School Day/Year contracts)

One-Year Funding Restorations:

- \$5 million for early childhood education outreach
- \$4 million for ECE outreach targeting immigrant families
- \$25 million for Promise NYC

The Staffing Crisis in Community Based Early Childhood Education Programs

DCCNY is proud to have worked with our partners in organized labor to settle collective bargaining agreements that increase salaries for the early childhood workforce in many city-contracted center-based early childhood education programs.

However, the biggest threat to the viability of the early childhood education system remains the inadequate salaries paid to the workforce.

In every type of early childhood education program, the workforce is underpaid and underappreciated. The early childhood workforce is overwhelmingly women and here in New York City, it is overwhelmingly women of color. Yet teachers, staff, directors, and providers continue to earn significantly less than their counterparts in public schools.

This means that people who have the skills, knowledge and education to be great early childhood educators often cannot and do not stay in their roles because they cannot sustain their lives with lower salaries.

This situation presents a significant challenge to community-based early childhood education programs, especially in the upcoming school year. The New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) plans to hire 3,700 additional teachers for the K-12 system to comply with New York State's class size reduction law. This large-scale recruitment effort will likely intensify competition for qualified teaching staff.

It is very likely that intentionally or not, NYCPS will recruit teachers, staff and directors away from the child care centers working under contracts with NYCPS. Child care centers are strictly regulated, and the NYC Department of Health requires that they maintain ratios of adults to children and ensure that qualified staff are on site at all times. Centers will not be able to operate if they are understaffed and may be forced to reduce capacity or even close.

The City must take further action to eliminate the salary and benefit disparities that continue to drive talented educators, directors, and support staff out of early

childhood education programs.

DCCNY urges the City to:

- Expedite the payment of collectively bargained salary increases to child care centers so they can start paying their staff increased salaries
- Identify new resources to increase pay for the early care and education workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take any questions and can be reached at gbrender@dccnyinc.org.



**The New York City Council Committee on Education
Honorable Chair Rita Joseph
City Council Hearing on Education
March 13th, 2025**

**The City Must Expand and Protect Restorative Justice, School-Based Mental Health, and Immigrant Protections
Testimony of the Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY**

Good afternoon, my name is Andrea Ortiz. I am the membership and campaigns director at the Dignity in School Campaign - NY, a New York City coalition working to advance restorative justice and mental health supports in public schools. We seek to foster a preventative culture of school safety based on care, mutual respect, and problem-solving. **The Dignity in Schools Campaign calls on New York City to expand restorative justice by \$80 million, create protections for immigrant students and families, and protect and baseline the mental health continuum (\$5 million), restorative justice (\$12 million), immigrant family communications and outreach (\$4 million), and other critical education programs that need committed, long-term funding.** This is all possible by simply redirecting money currently used for surveillance and policing to the healing-centered responses and staff our community desperately needs.

Under extreme political and community pressure, Mayor Adams' Executive Budget proposal would extend \$6M for restorative justice, \$5M for the Mental Health Continuum, and \$4M for immigrant family communications, for one time only, and baseline an additional \$6M for restorative justice. However, Mayor Adams continues to prioritize school policing and surveillance technologies, instead of baselining all of the critical programs our students rely on and need to thrive. This limits the impact of our advocacy and forces us to have to fight for the same resources year after year. Therefore, this is a critical opportunity for the New York City Council to redirect funding from school policing and policing infrastructure to provide stability for the supportive staff and healing-centered programs our students need.

As national and local forces are building power to push a punitive and hate-filled policy agenda, **we call on NYC's elected officials to adopt a FY2026 budget that fully invests in the public school resources and restorative practices that will protect our most vulnerable communities**, and ensure the dignity and safety of Black, Brown, immigrant, trans, gender non-conforming, queer, and low-income students, and students with disabilities.

We call on NYC's elected officials to:



1. Expand school-based restorative justice and mental health services, including investing \$80 million in hiring school-based Restorative Justice Coordinators in 500 schools. This is possible by reallocating \$90 million saved by freezing hiring on school policing positions, not allowing the city to fill for attrition, and cutting funding for the vacant school cop positions.
2. Protect critical programs currently funded with expiring dollars, including **protecting and baselining the \$12 million for restorative justice, \$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum, and \$4 million for immigrant family communication and outreach..**
3. Redirect money away from school policing, including ceasing all NYPD recruitment, hiring, and training of school police, and stopping funding for surveillance technology. Simply by not hiring any more school police, **NYC could save up to \$90M in one fiscal year and use those funds to hire more community-based positions in schools.**
4. Additionally, NYC must do more to protect immigrant students and families from President Trump's mass detention and deportation plan, including strengthening immigration preparedness policies; offering comprehensive trainings for staff, students, and families; enhancing data privacy and security protections; and **passing Intro 798 to eliminate the NYPD's Gang database.**

Our City has the resources to support young people, their schools, and communities. We must shift funding towards the resources and restorative practices that support youth to learn and grow in schools and away from the police presence and culture that directly disrupts learning and violates the dignity and safety of students. Funding for restorative practices and staff will provide opportunities for young people to develop lifelong skills to resolve disagreements, practice empathy, and take accountability for their actions. This will make schools safer for everyone, reduce the role of police, and create thousands of accessible, positive school-based jobs for New Yorkers.

We're calling on City Council Members to negotiate a budget that moves money away from policing young people and towards the resources that make schools safer for all students. We can have just and safe schools, but only if Council Members use their power to shift funding and power to school communities, not the NYPD.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:

Andrea Ortiz

Membership and Campaign Director

Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY



SASKIA TRAILL
PRESIDENT & CEO EXPANDED SCHOOLS
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE & THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
FISCAL YEAR 2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING: MAY 20, 2025

My name is Saskia Trill and I am the President/CEO of ExpandedED Schools. Thank you to Speaker Adams, Chair Joseph, Chair Brannan, the Committee on Finance, as well as the Committee on Education, for the opportunity to testify here today.

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of important education programs that had been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding including high-impact tutoring.

I would like to take this time to testify about the critical importance of afterschool funding throughout the City. For the past 25 years, ExpandedED has worked to build, refine, and sustain New York City's foundational system of school-community partnership for afterschool programming. We know that afterschool is a place where our city's youth and families turn to for fundamental supports beyond childcare: a space for youth to deepen their skills and interests through extra learning time, connect to their peers and caring adults, and explore new opportunities and innovative programming - none of which could be possible without the foundation of a strong afterschool system.

In FY25, a citywide discretionary award from the City Council enabled ExpandedED to fund programs in 34 Council Districts. These funds directly support approximately 6,100 students in 57 afterschool programs; and 355 educators in professional development events with staff from nearly 100 CBOs. ExpandedED has served more than 1.6 million public school students since its inception, working with more than 130 community partners and 300 schools throughout all five boroughs. The vast majority of our students identify as young people of color (85%) and most live in low-income communities (75%).

We are grateful and proud of what we have been able to do in partnership with the council through our **\$4.0M Afterschool Enrichment Citywide Initiative Award in FY25**. Programs mostly leverage the subgrants we distribute to fill gaps that either enable CBO's to fortify their staffing, serve more students, or engage in other inputs around program quality. At a small number of programs, the subgrant is their primary public funding stream. For that reason, unless requested by our CBO partner, we rarely take funding away from a previously funded site. We know firsthand the impact to families and communities of cutting services. Therefore, to scale our work, we require additional funding.

Our FY26 request for \$6.0M would enable ExpandedED to support community organizations in five boroughs to offer more afterschool slots K-12 and to increase quality. Additional Afterschool Enrichment Initiative funds would enable us to support more young people, more programs, and more districts during this period of extraordinary need for afterschool and positive youth development throughout New York



City. It would also give us greater capacity to serve middle and high school programs where there are newfound gaps and support programs that have diminished funding. We welcome partnership with each council member to identify school partners in need of our support because you know your constituency and districts best.

Additionally, the Executive Budget leaves several important programs without long-term funding, opting instead to extend their funding for one year only—creating uncertainty for the communities they serve. Long-term funding provides stability for critical programming. Without long-term funding, programs have a harder time hiring and keeping staff, and students and their families are left unsure if programs they rely on will continue to operate.

Programs again at risk of cuts in 2026 include:

- Student Success Centers which help students at more than 30 high schools prepare for college (\$3.3M)
- Summer programming to provide students with recreational activities, arts, and field trips, in addition to academic enrichment (\$80M);
- Learning to Work programs to provide support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan (\$31M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended (\$6M);
- The Mental Health Continuum to provide mental healthcare to students at 50 schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (\$5M);
- Outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of early childhood programs (\$5M); and
- Immigrant family communication and outreach to help ensure families can receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access (\$4M).

We join with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling for the City to baseline funding for these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget. We also join the coalition in calling on the City to make additional investments that are needed to support students, especially those who have the greatest needs.

Thank you again to Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, Chair Joseph and the rest of your respective committees for holding this hearing and for all the work that you do for children and families across the City. I look forward to continuing to be a partner to you when it comes to being of service to young people and their communities.

Saskia Traill

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Phone: 212.677.7941



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**Testimony of Christina Karahisarlidis
Mid-Atlantic Program Manager, Generation Citizen**

May 20, 2025

New York City Council

Hello Chair Joseph, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee on Education and City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen ("GC"). My name is Christina Karahisarlidis and I am a Program Manager at Generation Citizen. Through our Community-Based Civics curriculum, middle and high school students apply social studies learning to the real world by studying and advocating on an issue of importance in their communities. Before joining GC, I was a teacher in the NYC DOE for nearly a decade and it's an honor to be able to submit written testimony on issues that matter deeply.

Thank you for fighting for a stronger budget for New York City DOE schools. Increasing the current level of education funding is crucial to preserving critical services to our pre-kindergarten to 12th grade students, especially as we combat learning loss, work to improve the mental health of our young people, and ensure our students are properly prepared for the world they are going to enter when they leave secondary education.

Generation Citizen is thankful for the Council's continued investment this year in our programming and youth civics education through the *Civics Education in New York City Schools Initiative*. The City Council has generously funded this initiative for Generation Citizen since 2017, originally meant to support our programming in 125 classrooms. Since then, our footprint in New York City has more than doubled citywide. In this 2024-2025 school year, we are serving approximately 266 classrooms and over 6,650 students in 44 schools across New York City in all five boroughs. To ensure that we can continue and maintain our growth, Generation Citizen respectfully requests an increase of \$200,000 for the initiative to be funded at \$700,000 in FY26 to support this significant and continued expansion of programming across the City and the ever-increasing demand for our services.

In my previous role as a high school English teacher in Title I schools in the New York City DOE, I saw firsthand the detrimental effect that decreasing school budgets has on our students. My students' emotional and learning needs were not always met because there was not always enough staff at hand. If we see more budget cuts, that could mean that even more students may not be able to meet with a school counselor, students with disabilities and English language acquisition needs may not receive the services they

need, and our immigrant population may not receive a school placement in a proper time frame. At a time when federal funding support is quite uncertain, we need New York City to continue to lead and to ensure that our schools, where our youth spend much of their time, are properly funded and supported.

While we are glad to see the Administration has allocated some resources for financial literacy and professional development skills, civic education is an area that has long been underfunded in fiscal support and understated as a learning priority. How can we expect our young people to effect positive change in society if they don't know how to advocate for the needs of their communities? We at GC believe that public service and civic engagement should be prioritized as cornerstones of the educational curriculum. We believe that more can be done to ensure our youth are as prepared as possible for their adult lives.

Yesterday, we were thrilled to present the work of one of our partners, High School for Health Professions and Human Services in Council Member Rivera's District. Social Studies teacher, Carina Layfield, and high school students, Sama Moustafa, Julius Valderrama, and Samantha Jimenez Bravo, and Taliya Carter, shared issues and concerns that emerged from their implementation of Generation Citizen's Community-Based Civics curriculum this year in relation to the proposed budget cuts.

Since working at Generation Citizen, it has been a privilege seeing our young people advocate for themselves and each other through their Community-Based Civics projects, on issues such as this. Across the City, Generation Citizen students have advocated on a range of issues, including school-based campaigns like ensuring advocating for healthy school lunch options and adding more bathroom stalls in their schools. Others focused on community concerns like addressing the high cost of living, the lack of affordable housing in New York City, the need to close illegal smoke shops, combatting subway surfing, and addressing racism and discrimination in their schools.

Generation Citizen is a 15 year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to engaging youth in our democracy by bringing civics education into the classroom through Community-Based Civics. Community-Based Civics "helps students understand exactly how governments function and how they can make a difference in the system" (generationcitizen.org). It is different from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any "hands-on," project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

Generation Citizen is incredibly thankful for the City Council's renewed funding despite a myriad of challenges and budgetary concerns in the last few years. Generation Citizen hopes to continue partnering with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to continue bringing high quality civics education to our City schools. Thank you for considering this testimony. I can be reached at ckarahisarlidis@generationcitizen.org with any questions or comments.



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**Testimony of Courtne Thomas
Mid-Atlantic Executive Director, Generation Citizen
May 20th, 2025
New York City Council**

Good afternoon Chair Joseph, Chair Brannan, and members of the Committee on Education. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen. My name is Dr. Courtne Thomas and I am the Executive Director for the Mid-Atlantic Region at Generation Citizen. Through our Community-Based Civics curriculum, middle and high school students are engaged in immersive civics education where they take a hands-on approach to identify issues in their school or community. The Generation Citizen curriculum provides a rich learning opportunity for students to conduct research on an issue of importance in their communities, study and advocate on the chosen issue, take action to address it, and reflect on their learning experience. This is problem-based learning and project-based learning. Before joining Generation Citizen, a few of my roles were serving as an elementary principal in the Bronx, Senior Program Director managing a portfolio of after-school programs in the Bronx and Queens, network administrator in Newark, New Jersey and a teacher. I have a heart for children. Issues that concern young people are issues that matter deeply to me.

Thank you for advocating for more funding for New York City Department of Education schools. Increasing the current level of education funding is critical to preserving key programming for our pre-kindergarten to 12th grade students.

Generation Citizen is beyond grateful for the Council's continued investment this year in our programming and youth civics education through the *Civics Education in New York City Schools Initiative*. The City Council has generously funded this initiative for Generation Citizen since 2017, originally meant to support our programming in 125 classrooms. Since then, our footprint in New York City has more than doubled citywide. In this 2024-2025 school year, we are serving approximately 266 classrooms and over 6,650 students in 44 schools across New York City in all five boroughs. To ensure that we maintain our growth and impact, Generation Citizen respectfully requests an increase of \$200,000 for the initiative to be funded at \$700,000 in FY26. More funding would support student learning and continued program expansion across New York City.



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In my previous role as a principal in the Bronx in the New York City Department of Education, I saw firsthand the heart-breaking, adverse impact that budget cuts had on students. My student's academic performance was affected, attendance became a challenge, and social and emotional and learning needs were not always met because the team was short staffed. If budget cuts persist, this could mean even more students may not have a scheduled check in time with the social worker, explore college and career pathways with the guidance counselor, students with disabilities and English language acquisition needs may not receive the services they need, and our immigrant population may not receive the resources they need to be successful. At a time when federal funding support is uncertain, New York City has the unique opportunity to continue to ensure that our schools are adequately funded and supported.

While Generation Citizen stands in recognition of the Administration allocating resources for financial literacy and professional development skills, civic education is an area that has long been underfunded in fiscal support and understated as a learning priority. We at Generation Citizen believe that public service and civic engagement should be prioritized as a mainstay of the educational curriculum. Can't we do more to ensure our youth are as prepared for college and career?

Today, we are thrilled to present the work of one of our partners, High School for Health Professions and Human Services in Council Member Rivera's District. Social Studies teacher, Carina Layfield, and high school students, Sama Moustafa, Julius Valderrama, Samantha Jimenez Bravo, and Taliya Carter will share issues and concerns that emerged from their implementation of Generation Citizen's Community-Based Civics curriculum this year in relation to the proposed budget cuts.

Since working at Generation Citizen, it has been a privilege seeing our young people advocate for themselves and each other through their Community-Based Civics projects, on issues such as this. Across the City, Generation Citizen students have advocated on a range of issues, including school-based campaigns like ensuring advocating for healthy school lunch options and adding more bathroom stalls in their schools. Others focused on community concerns like addressing the high cost of living, the lack of affordable housing in New York City, the need to close illegal smoke shops, combatting subway surfing, and addressing racism and discrimination in their schools.

Generation Citizen is a 15 year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to engaging youth in our democracy by bringing civics education into the classroom through



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Community-Based Civics. Community-Based Civics “helps students understand exactly how governments function and how they can make a difference in the system” (generationcitizen.org). It is different from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any “hands-on,” project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which directly impact their community.

Generation Citizen is incredibly thankful for the New York City Council's renewed funding despite a myriad of challenges and budgetary concerns in the last few years. Generation Citizen hopes to continue partnering with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to continue bringing high quality civics education to our schools in New York City. I can be reached at cthomas@generationcitizen.org with any questions. Thank you for considering this testimony.



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Testimonies of High School Students and Educator from High School for Health Professions and Human Services

May 20, 2025

New York City Council Committee on Education

Testimony of Carina Layfield, Social Studies Teacher:

Good afternoon,

Thank you so much for the work that you do for our city and for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Carina Layfield and I teach 9th and 10th grade global history at the High School for Health Professions in Manhattan. This is my first year teaching and going into teaching I had hoped to find ways to engage my students in civics, especially at the local level. This year, my 9th graders worked with Generation Citizen to complete a civic action project in our school community. Students were interested in bathroom and school cleanliness, school violence prevention, and combating substance abuse.

Students spent weeks researching how to improve bathroom conditions at our school, coming up with solutions like air dryers, providing more trash cans in stalls for menstrual products, and increasing cleaning routines. However, each of these solutions costs money. Increasing funding for janitorial services and cleaning products can increase the quality of students' schooling experiences. Some of my students indicated that they do not feel comfortable using the bathrooms at school because of how gross they are. This is inhumane. Our students deserve better. Small steps like making sure bathrooms are stocked and clean will go a long way toward making students feel safe and comfortable at school.

But our students deserve so much more than just better bathrooms. My school has a student population of almost 1700 kids. How many school counselors do you think is adequate for 1700 students? How many social workers? Our school has six guidance counselors, meaning that each counselor has a caseload of over 300 students. I had a student transfer into my 10th grade global history class halfway through the semester. When I asked her which history class she was coming from, she said none. Her program had not included history. Global history is a graduation requirement, and in 10th grade, students must also take and pass the global history exam. Missing months of instruction in a regents class is unacceptable. Her programming error should never have been made. Our students deserve better and our guidance counselors need reduced caseloads to meet the needs of all students.

I asked you how many social workers were enough for a school of 1700. Our social worker Ms. Cooper is amazing at her job and has a huge impact on our students who she has helped, but Ms. Cooper is our school's only social worker. A school of 1700 students should absolutely have more than 1 social worker. Our students deserve better.

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We need funding for more guidance counselors and social workers, which would also reduce chronic absenteeism, as counselors would have time to follow up with students who are chronically absent, to check in on them, to offer support. Chronic absenteeism is defined as students who miss more than 10 percent of the school year. The city's chronic absentee rate was 35 percent last year. It is unacceptable that 2 in 5 students are absent for more than 10 percent of the school year.

A recent MIT study suggested that if school quality improves, students are more likely to attend. Increasing funding in schools can better the overall student experience and reduce chronic absenteeism. Our students deserve better and what I have witnessed at HPHS is just a microcosm of the rest of the city.

Thank you for all that you have given us and thank you for hearing my testimony today about why additional funding is essential to the vitality of our schools.



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Testimony of Samantha Jimenez Bravo, 10th grade student:

Good afternoon members of the City Council, my name is Samantha Jimenez Bravo. Thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I'm currently a sophomore at the High School for Health Professions and Human Services. I believe New York City schools have the potential to set students up for success, however the budget is one of the biggest things preventing this.

Recently, I found out the total budget for New York City schools is approximately 40 billion dollars, only 6.7% of that money goes to utilities and facilities. This simply isn't enough, I'm currently running for future Junior President. I've come to the realization that the complaints throughout my grade are the same. They want the quality of the school to improve. The school can only afford school trips for two grades, freshman and senior. This makes Sophomores and Juniors get left out of all the fun. No fun events such as trips can make students lose motivation to stop trying in their classes and even attend school overall, since they don't have anything to look forward to. The plans I have for my school, making it a more safe, exciting and welcoming environment, cannot be achieved if the New York City school funding remains so low.

The shortage of ink, printers, calculators and pencils are small details of my school that can really impact a student's school performance. Students have come to me, complaining about the shortage of sports equipment and the little amount of calculators they have in their classroom. They want something to look forward to everyday, even if it's something as small as throwing a football to each other. They want to be able to solve their own equations, without waiting for another calculator to be available.

The budget impact on the school's physical condition speaks for itself. Water fountains that don't even work, laptops that have been broken for months, the gym ceiling has tiles that sometimes fall apart. Food on the stairs, the food we refuse to eat since it's "poor quality" in our eyes. This issue extends to the environment my school is located in. The vulgar graffiti makes me question, why hasn't the school done anything about this? Everyday I walk to school in fear. Fear of the homeless who are under the influence of drugs, fear of random men cat-calling me. Yet, nothing is being done about student safety.

By speaking here today, I'm not only speaking for my school, but for the thousands of schools across New York City. The budget has more of an impact on students than one may think. Although I could go into more detail about it, I fear the amount of time I have to speak here today is not enough. The budget the city provides public schools not only has the potential to open more doors for students with new programs and interests, but it can also change the way students perceive school. School should be viewed as an opportunity to succeed, not a place to worry if your classroom has the supplies it needs. Only the budget New York City provides can change that!



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Testimony of Julius Valderrama, 9th grade student:

Good evening members of the City Council,

My name is Julius Valderrama, and I'm a ninth grader at the High School for Health Professions and Human Services. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today about the city's education budget, not just on my behalf, but for every student in this city who wants to learn, grow, and succeed, but who can't always do that because of how our schools are funded.

This year, I've had the opportunity to be deeply civically engaged. In January, my classmates and I presented a civic project at the New York City Bar Association organized by "Generation Citizen", where we shared our research and proposed solutions to support teens struggling with mental health issues in NYC public schools. More recently, I participated in a Mid-Atlantic virtual youth roundtable also organized by Generation Citizen, where I joined students from across the region to voice our concerns about the lack of mental health support in schools and its wide-ranging impact on our communities.

From personal experience and observation, I can tell you that mental health is not a minor issue—it's a crisis. Many of us are dealing with anxiety, depression, trauma, and family struggles. But there aren't nearly enough social workers or counselors to support the student population. Sometimes, we wait weeks just to speak to someone, and by then, it's often too late. Mental health is deeply connected to everything—academic success, student safety, and overall well-being. When it's ignored, it can lead to substance abuse, violence, and academic failure. I've seen it myself—students hurting, acting out, or giving up, not because they don't care, but because they don't have the support they need.

But it doesn't stop there. I also have to ask: Why don't our schools have stronger safety systems? Other than the \$300 million already spent on school safety agents, where is the rest of the funding to protect students and staff? I've seen houseless drug users camped out beside my school, injecting harmful substances and even attacking members of our school community. Students should never have to walk past danger to get to class. We need better security—not just more guards, but real systems that make us feel safe.

And while we're expected to show up ready to learn, the conditions we walk into send a very different message. Our buildings are crumbling. Ceilings leak. Bathrooms are broken. Classrooms are overcrowded, with barely enough space to think, let alone ask questions or get extra help. When schools look neglected, it sends a message that we, the students, aren't a priority. Building repairs should not be treated as an afterthought. If you were in our shoes for even one day, you'd understand how hard it is to focus on your future when the present feels broken.

All of these issues—mental health, safety, crumbling buildings, overcrowded classrooms—are connected. They shape how we learn, how we feel, and how we act. I've witnessed students

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become violent, disengaged, or isolated because of untreated trauma and unmet needs. I've heard racial slurs and threats in hallways, and seen students shut down completely because they feel unseen and unsupported.

That's why I'm here today—to ask you to pass a budget that treats mental health not as a luxury, but as a necessity. To fund more school counselors and social workers. To invest in school safety that protects us beyond just police presence. To finally prioritize repairs and learning environments that reflect the value of our education. While we can't always change what happens at home, we *can* change what happens at school. If we invest in the right resources, we can break harmful cycles and start a new one—one of care, support, and success.

Thank you for listening. I hope you choose to invest in us!

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Testimony of Taliya Carter, 9th grade student:

Good afternoon,

My name is Taliya Carter, and I'm a 9th grader at the High School for Health Professions and Human Services. I'm here to speak not only for myself, but for my peers, my school, and the many students whose voices often go unheard.

When I learned I had been selected to participate in this hearing, I took the opportunity seriously. I began researching how the education system works and how our city's money is being spent. I was surprised to find out that the education budget for the 2024–2025 school year is approximately \$40 billion. That is a huge amount of money. But when I look at my school and what students face every day, I have to ask, is it *being spent where it's truly needed?*

At HPHS, our environment does not reflect safety or care. Surrounding our school, students regularly witness people under the influence of harmful substances and living in unsafe conditions. School is supposed to be a place where students feel protected. But instead, we often walk through fear to get to class. A portion of that \$40 billion should be used to ensure the areas around schools are clean, safe, and free of harmful and threatening activity.

But it's not just outside our building it's inside, too. Many of our classrooms have mold on the walls and ceilings. Mold that can cause health problems like allergies, respiratory issues, and in extreme cases, even lung cancer. Our school also has a rodent problem. These are the conditions we're expected to learn in. These are the classrooms where we're supposed to prepare for our futures. That's not just unacceptable, it's disrespectful to students who are trying to do the right thing.

Another serious issue I want to highlight is the lack of mental health support. At HPHS, there is only one social worker for approximately 1,667 students. According to the School Social Work Association of America, the recommended ratio is 1 social worker for every 250 students. So we are way beyond the standard. Students are struggling with anxiety, depression, trauma, and other challenges, and we don't have enough support to help us get through it. There's a bill—Senate Bill S4217—that was introduced in the 2019–2020 session to require full-time licensed social workers and psychologists in every school. But where is the action? How can one social worker possibly meet the needs of over 1,667 students? It's unfair to them, and it's unfair to us.

Mental health isn't just a buzzword. It's a life-or-death issue. Suicide is now one of the five leading causes of death among high school students. I don't want any of my classmates or friends to become another statistic. We have to act now—because every day we wait, we lose opportunities to save and support lives.

Today, I ask you: Use your power. Use your budget. You have the opportunity to make our schools more than just buildings. We need safe, clean, and supportive environments where students can

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thrive. The future of New York City starts with its youth, and we are asking for what we need—not for luxury, but for safety, wellness, and equity.

Thank you for listening. I hope you take them seriously because the future is sitting in our classrooms right now, and we are counting on you.

Don't talk about change. **Lead it.**



High School For Health Professions
& Human Services

Testimony of Sama Moustafa, 9th grade student:

Good afternoon, Council Members,

My name is Sama Moustafa, and I'm a 9th grade student at the High School for Health Professions and Human Services in Manhattan.

Today, I'm not just speaking for myself—I'm speaking for the children who get belittled and don't know how to stand up for themselves. I'm speaking for the students who sit quietly in classrooms, not because they have nothing to say, but because they've been shut down too many times. I'm speaking for the ones who hide behind silence, who can't find the words—or the courage, to ask for help. I'm using my voice for the students who don't feel safe enough to use theirs.

Bullying in schools isn't always loud. It's not just fists or insults. It's the stares, the whispers, the exclusion. It's being targeted for your beliefs, identity, race, religion, or the way you look. And it's the silence that follows. The feeling that no matter what you do, you'll never truly belong.

This is real. The CDC reports that over 1 in 5 students in the U.S. are bullied—and they're more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, academic decline, and even suicidal thoughts.

I've seen it. Students who were once full of passion and energy start to doubt themselves, lose focus, and give up—not because they don't care, but because they're hurting. And too often, they stay quiet, because they think no one is listening.

That's why I'm here—to speak up for those who can't. Education isn't just about learning from textbooks; it's about learning in an environment where we feel safe, accepted, and valued.

So how do we create safer, more supportive schools? It starts with real investment—in both people and programs.

1. **Fund more school counselors and social workers.** Students need trusted adults they can turn to—not just in crisis, but for daily support.
2. **Establish peer mentorship programs.** Students who've faced bullying and overcome pain are some of the best guides we have. Let them lead. My school already has something like this—Peer Group Connection, or PGC. But we need funding to keep it going and expand it to more schools.
3. **Require real, ongoing anti-bullying training for students and staff.** A one-time slideshow doesn't build a safe culture. Consistent, effective training requires resources.

Don't talk about change. **Lead it.**



High School For Health Professions
& Human Services

4. **Build anonymous reporting systems that actually work—and protect students.** Technology costs money. But so does silence. We need tools students can trust, and that takes investment.
5. **Create student-led equity and inclusion councils in every school.** We know what our schools need. But we can't lead these initiatives without structure, support, and yes—funding. Give us the tools, and we'll do the work.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. There is no better time to show us that our well-being and voices matter.

We always say “students are the future.” But how can we build tomorrow if we're being broken today?

I'm not asking for perfect schools. I'm asking for safe ones. For schools where kindness is expected, not rare. Where differences are respected. And where every student knows they belong.

Support us—and we will thrive.

Thank you.

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services
Before the New York City Council Committee on Education

Submitted by
Nickesha Francis, Policy and Advocacy Manager
Good Shepherd Services

May 20, 2025

Thank you, Chair Rita Joseph, Chair Brannan and the Members of the Committee on Education and Finance for the opportunity to testify on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

My name is Nickesha Francis, and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at Good Shepherd Services. I am also on the Steering Committee of the Campaign for Children, the Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, the Learning to Work Coalition, the Student Success Centers Coalition and the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEFF).

Good Shepherd operates 94 programs that support over 33,000 children and families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Guided by our values, 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.

Good Shepherd has 31 education programs that support over 7,500 students across the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. Our programs include Learning to Work, Student Success Centers, Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC), Transfer Schools and Community Schools.

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of important education programs that had been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding including 3-K, preschool special education classes, arts programming, community schools, tutoring, and more.

However, the Executive Budget leaves out Student Success Centers (\$3.3M) entirely, so this program is still at risk of being eliminated as soon as July. Student Success Centers train and support youth leaders on how to guide their peers through the college admissions process, providing crucial support to students at more than 30 high schools.

Youth leaders - students themselves - are trained by the College Access: Research and Action (CARA) Institute which is committed to supporting all students to and through college and support youth applying for college and then sign up for the SATS, research which college have majors that align to their interests, help youth who qualify for application waivers, and support with writing a successful college essay. Some of our Youth leaders are college students who return to help their peers.

Good Shepherd Services supports 2 SSCs located at DeWitt Clinton in the Bronx and Randolph in Manhattan where we support over 1,200 students per site. The centers help create a college going culture in schools. This model was born from a need that youth identified and currently NYCPS is using over \$3.3M

annually to support SSCs. **Please note that the meager budget of just \$3.3M for Student Success centers is in no way a reflection of the magnitude of the fundamental support that this program offers to students preparing for college.** This is the only funding to support SSC. When these funds expire, there will be no other funding to sustain work that has been in existence since 2007.

While the adopted budget included one year funding for Student Success Center, 4 SSCs lost funding and had to cease services - I.S. 171 Middle School, Longwood Campus, University Neighborhood Middle School and High School for Hospitality Management- and given the changes in the funding sources (School Allocation Memo and NYCPS Central funding) the full amounts allocated have not reached Community Based Organizations in a timely manner. Programs are concerned that they are not able to sustain services with the current funding sources and distribution plan and have been asking the NYCPS to RFP SSCs to bring about more sustainable and reliable funding. While the NYCPS has committed to self-fund SSCs in Fiscal Year 2026, providers need security and certainty especially now, given funding reductions in the State's Foundation Aid in the amount of \$314M and the threat of Federal funding cuts.

Additionally, the Executive Budget leaves several important programs without long-term funding, opting instead to extend their funding for one year only creating uncertainty for the communities they serve.

During the Council's Preliminary Budget Education hearing, providers learned that the anticipated Request for Proposal for the Learning to Work (LTW) Program will not be released until funding for LTW is baselined. CBO LTW providers have been operating programs with rates that are over 8 years old. The contracts have not adjusted for inflation, the growing needs of students or the providers that support students. Without baseline funding, LTW CBO providers will have to advocate for funding next year creating funding instability for providers but the schools, youth and community they support.

Programs that received funding for one more year only and are, therefore, at risk of cuts in 2026, include:

- Summer programming to provide students with recreational activities, arts, and field trips, in addition to academic enrichment (\$80M);
- Learning to Work programs to provide support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan (\$31M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended (\$6M);
- The Mental Health Continuum to provide mental healthcare to students at 50 schools (\$5M);
- Outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of early childhood programs (\$5M); and
- Immigrant family outreach to help families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access (\$4M).

We urge the Council and the Mayor Adams to negotiate an adopted budget that includes baseline funding for these outstanding programs so that students, families, educators, and providers will have assurance that they can continue relying on these programs in future years and to make additional investments that are needed to support students, with a focus on those who have the greatest needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

TESTIMONY

The New York City Council

Committee on Education & Committee on Finance

Re: Executive Budget

Grand St. Settlement
80 Pitt Street
New York, New York

May 20, 2025



Testimony of Grand St. Settlement
To the New York City Council Committee on Education
Regarding The Executive Budget

May 20, 2025

Aaron M. Sanders, Deputy Director of Government & Community Relations

Thank you, Chair Joseph and Chair Brannan, and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education, for convening this important Executive Budget hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Grand St. Settlement (Grand Street) is a 109-year-old multi-service Settlement House. We serve over 18,000 New Yorkers through vital early childhood, youth, and older adult programs infused with impactful benefits assistance on the Lower East Side, Manhattan, and the Bronx.

We are also a member of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), a policy and social change organization, representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach 800,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life. As a member organization, we work collaboratively to support early childhood education. Additionally, we are a member of the Day Care Council of New York, a membership organization dedicated to the expansion of quality child care and family services.

Today, we commend the city for proposing to restore and baseline \$192 million in funding for early childhood education, however, we are asking the New York City Council and the Adams administration to strengthen and preserve early education programs for families by reversing \$300 million in proposed cuts. Expenditure reductions to the City's early education programs would negatively impact children and families. We are advocating for the following:

City funding supports our network of center-based early childhood education programs throughout Lower Manhattan, Brooklyn, and The Bronx. Grand Street's early childhood education programs serve working families and their children, many of whom live in NYCHA housing and face multiple obstacles to education, health, and economic prosperity. Our network

of child care and educational programs provides families with the opportunity to support their child's short-term and long-term development.

Despite recent progress, child care affordability remains an issue for many working families.. Research indicates that early education is a key social determinant of health that impacts children's futures. Early childhood education programs take a holistic approach to development—cognitively, academically, and socio-emotionally and these programs prepare children for the next stage of life. To make significant progress towards creating high-quality, equitable, affordable child care, we urge the Adams administration to commit to reversing cuts and making additional investments in the sector. All families should have access to high-quality child care options. Baseline funding for the City's education programs would help disrupt systemic inequities that impact low-income working families.

Budget reductions for the city's early childhood education programs would be catastrophic for working families. According to a [report](#) from the New York City Comptroller's Office earlier this year, the childcare sectors face ongoing challenges post-pandemic, including a dearth of child care slots, retention in its workforce, and soaring child care costs. As cited in the report, from 2018 to 2023, New York's average annual child care prices were higher than every other state except for Massachusetts, rising nearly 18% from \$12,422 per child to \$14,621, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. These disruptions not only impact working families, but they also impact the business sector and commercial corridors: a lack of universal child care is projected to reduce revenue by \$384 million, according to the aforementioned report. Investments in the sector will also promote economic growth, as parents in the labor force would be able to balance family and work.

Early childhood education programs are not our only concern: proposed cuts to youth education programs would have a detrimental impact on families. We are also concerned about proposed cuts to youth education programs. A restoration of funding for community schools is an important resource for the youth we serve. By restoring \$14 million in the budget, we can continue to provide youth with key services that are correlated with youth development and long-term success. Cuts to youth programs will have a chilling effect on families and the next generation of leaders. Baselineing \$31 million for the Learning to Work program will provide workforce development opportunities for adolescents and young adults. This program is essential to the professional development and maturation of your youth.

In closing, we urge the City to restore the cuts to youth education programs and commit to a robust increase in funding for education programs from birth through high school graduation.

**New York City Council Oversight Hearing, Education Committee
on FY26 Executive Budget
May 20, 2025**

We would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Education for holding this important oversight hearing on the City's FY2026 Executive Budget. My name is Lori Podvesker, and I am the Director of Policy at INCLUDEnyc. For over 41 years, INCLUDEnyc (formerly known as Resources for Children with Special Needs) has helped hundreds of thousands of NYC families navigate the complex special education service and support systems.

We commend the City for restoring funding to programs that would have expired soon due to one-year-only city funds, such as 3-K, the Mental Health Continuum, restorative justice, and community schools. We also praise the City for continuing to fund the new preschool special education classes that opened last year. However, this is not enough to address the need for the City to invest and baseline additional funds to adequately provide preschoolers with evaluations, special education services, and appropriate classes for all preschoolers with a suspected or known disability.

According to this Council's related report on the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Plan, as of just two months ago, over 600 preschoolers with disabilities were waiting for placements, and 5,887 preschoolers were not receiving all their mandated special education services or receiving any services at all. We recommend that the Department of Education and the City:

- Allocate funding to NYCPS Pre-K Centers and schools with 3-K and Pre-K programs so that young children receive their mandated special education services, where they go to preschool
- Hire more staff to help preschool parents with the evaluation and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting process
- Hire more NYCPS service providers and teachers, with an emphasis on hiring bilingual therapists and classroom teachers

In addition, we applaud the City for investing a historic \$750 million in school accessibility in the last Capital Plan (2020-2024), as it allowed for significant progress to be made, as about a third of schools are now physically accessible. Therefore, the \$800 million allocated for school accessibility projects in the current Capital Plan (2025- 2029) is insufficient for the City to keep up with the work

done over the last five years, as it does not consider inflation. As a result, in tandem with the Council, we urge this administration to increase this investment by allocating an additional \$450 million in the 2025-2029 Capital Plan, for a total investment of \$1.25 billion. So more students can be included and fully participate in their school communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working together and partnering with you to improve equity and access for all young people with disabilities in New York City.

Sincerely,
Lori Podvesker
Director of Disability and Education Policy



Kingsbridge Heights Community Center

3101 Kingsbridge Terrace, Bronx, New York - 10463
Tel: 718.884.0700 | Fax: 718.884.0858 | www.khcc-nyc.org | @khccnyc

May 20, 2025

Greetings Esteemed NYC Council Colleagues,

I am writing to ask for your support of the **Student Success Center network**. The Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC) has led the North West Bronx in postsecondary planning with our signature College Directions Program since the 1990's. Currently, KHCC spearheads 2 Student Success Centers or SSC's on the Walton and JFK Campuses in the Bronx school district 10. Each year, we engage hundreds of high school students in the difficult process of developing a post-secondary plan. We believe that having our staff, youth leaders and bridge coaches on each campus has shifted the culture of these student communities. Young people are learning about their options and taught to envision their life after high school early, as 9th and 10th graders. By the time they reach their junior year, they are eager to explore career pathways, learn about trade programs, consider gap year programs, or explore college. Dozens of our program alumni have gotten their first jobs with our center and given back to their community and their school by working with younger peers and modeling what success looks like.

Restore and Baseline \$3.3 Million to Student Success Centers

Students respond better to support that is consistent and individualized to their circumstances. However, in New York City Public Schools, one guidance counselor serves an average of 221 students. This astounding ratio only tells part of the story as post-secondary planning is just one of responsibilities a school guidance counselor is tasked with. With rising concerns about youth mental health and an influx of newly-arrived young people to NYC's public schools, the demands on guidance counselors' time are greater than ever.

Student Success Centers (SSCs) aim to fill this college counseling gap by pairing the expertise of community-based organizations with youth leadership training. In an SSC, youth leaders are trained as Peer Leaders. Together with CBO staff, Peer Leaders provide workshops, college trips, and one-on-one individualized counseling to help students through the college admissions and financial aid processes. The Student Success Center model is available at 34 high schools citywide. Settlement Houses operate 27 of these programs. It is vital that the City commit to supporting all students navigating postsecondary options and the college admissions systems by restoring this program. UNH urges the City to **restore and baseline \$3.3 million for the Student Success Center program through sustainable funding sources, and baseline this funding for the outyears.**

Additionally, we urge the City to streamline the FY26 funding process to help providers understand earlier how much funding they should expect per site, and how to access this funding. In FY25, SSC providers were made to believe that school partners would allocate all College & Career Advising SAM funding to the SSC. However, school partners were not made aware of this assumption, leading some principals to refuse to allocate the full amount of funding, and reducing the total amount of operating funds available to the SSCs. Increased transparency and accountability for the roles of all stakeholders will improve the planning and implementation of SSCs.

Sincerely,

Sadie Mahoney

Sadie Mahoney, LCSW
CPO of Youth and Family Services
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
(718) 884-0700 x186



Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy

Program in Nutrition

Teachers College, Columbia University

Building a Healthier NYC: Support & Improve Food Education While Ensuring Transparency in Nutrition Access

May 21, 2025

Dear City Council Members,

We, the members of the Food Ed Hub, thank you for your long standing partnership and ask that you restore the City Council's \$250,000 support for the Food Ed Hub in the Fiscal 2026 Budget.

The Food Ed Coalition is a diverse group of more than 300 food and nutrition education advocates, program leaders, and school community members convened by the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University. The coalition is dedicated to ensuring that all NYC students receive high-quality food and nutrition education and have access to sustainably produced, culturally responsive, and healthy school food.

With the support of City Council, the Food Ed Hub has been able to facilitate coordination and collaboration among food ed programs across NYC, promote inclusiveness and equity in food ed and food access, and advocate for policies that support healthy school meals and food ed. The Center also conducts research of nutrition education programming, offers professional development opportunities to educators, and provides nutrition guidance to ensure NYC children receive high quality food education. Without this funding, students would lose access to critical food and education resources that have long standing effects on their future health.

An important function of the Food Ed Hub is to advocate for effective strategies for delivering nutrition education and improving school food and nutrition programs. We have developed a list of budget and policy priorities for Fiscal 2026. Our recommendations fall into three categories:

1. Strengthen NYC Food Education;
2. Improve NYC Nutrition Security; and
3. Expand Food Access and Summer Nutrition.

Our proposals which lay out a recommended roadmap to better food and nutrition education in NYC are detailed in the attached document.



Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy

Program in Nutrition

Teachers College, Columbia University

As a coalition, we have gathered a list of policy priorities for City Council to consider. We have attached our [policy one-pager](#), as a recommended roadmap to better food and nutrition education in NYC. We have also detailed one of the [new initiatives from the policy one-pager here](#).

We, the undersigned, proudly endorse these initiatives and stand alongside the Food Ed Coalition in urging the City Council to continue to prioritize the health and well-being of NYC's students and families. Nutrition education and the many programs and supports offered to NYC children, schools and families by the Food Ed Hub partners are an essential component of the City's safety net. The Council's support of this work is critical.

Thank you for supporting this important advocacy effort. We look forward to a healthier, more equitable future for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy

A to Z Nutrition

Alegria Vegana LLC

Beecher's Foundation

Brighter Bites

Bronx Health REACH/The Institute for Family Health

Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Center for Anti-racism, Social Justice, and Public Health at New York University

Children's Food Lab

Chilis on Wheels

City Growers

City Harvest

Coalition for Healthy School Food

CommonThreads

Community Food Advocates

Danbury Farmers Market Community Collaborative

EH Exchange

FamilyCook Productions

FAN4Kids

Food Bank For New York City

FoodStream Network

Green Beetz

Healthy con Plantas LLC



Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy

Program in Nutrition

Teachers College, Columbia University

iEat Green, LLC

Kindred Bakery BK

New Roots Institute

New York Sun Works

No Kid Hungry New York

Pilot Light

Plant Powered Metro NY

ReBORN FARMS

Seeds in the Middle, Inc.

Slow Food North Shore

SNACC INC.

Teens for Food Justice

The Campaign Against Hunger

The Charlie Cart Project

The Opportunity Hub

The Sylvia Center

The Table Food Pantry at NYU Langone Family Health Centers

Wellness in the Schools

West Harlem Group Assistance Inc

FOOD ED HUB

BUILDING A HEALTHIER NYC:
SUPPORT & IMPROVE FOOD EDUCATION WHILE ENSURING TRANSPARENCY IN NUTRITION ACCESS

Overview:

Access to healthy, nourishing foods is critical to leveling health inequities as hunger and diet-related diseases continue to disproportionately challenge low-income families and communities of color in NYC. To address this challenge, the Food Ed Coalition has identified actions the City Council must take to ensure stronger, safer, and healthier communities. The Food Ed Coalition is a diverse group of over 300 food and nutrition education advocates, program leaders, and school community members convened by the Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University.

The City Council must support these initiatives in budgeting:

Strengthen NYC Food Ed

- Fund the Food Ed Hub & Coalition
- Enhance Food Ed Programs & Partners Support

Improve NYC Nutrition Security

- Understand Food Initiatives, Promote Youth Leadership, Review Food Worker Titles & Capacity
- Develop Inclusive & Transparent Food Ed Standards

Expand Food Access & Summer Nutrition

- Support Summer Rising & Summer Meal with Food Ed Programming
- Increase Health Bucks Funding

Sustain the Food Ed Hub and Coalition

- Renew funding for the Food Ed Hub to strengthen collaboration among food education providers and advocate for policies that expand access to nutrition education for NYC's most vulnerable communities. Sustaining this vital network will ensure more students—especially those from low-income, housing-insecure, and single-parent families—receive the food and nutrition education they need to lead healthier lives (\$250,000).
- Develop a strategic framework with the assistance of an outside consultant to support the coalition's long-term growth. This framework will align with the goals of Food Ed Community Based Organizations (CBOs) while advancing NYC's broader objectives of supporting low-income New Yorkers facing food and housing insecurity. The plan will reduce reliance on NYC City Council funding and focus on improving nutrition security, especially for students in NYC Public Schools (NYCPS) (\$100,000).

Enhance Support for Food Ed Programs & Partners

- Increase funding for Food Ed programming in NYCPS. Food Ed is essential for students' long-term health and academic success. Healthy students perform better across all academic measures, including behavior, cognitive skills, and attitudes (CDC).

Currently, only 190 of the ~1800 NYCPS have access to Food Ed grants. Additional funding will expand programming to 100 more schools, benefiting students and their communities while providing professional development opportunities for educators (\$3 million).

- Establish a Speaker's Initiative to strengthen Food Ed organizations serving NYCPS through targeted funding and capacity-building support. This initiative will provide 100 established CBOs with \$25,000 grants to expand their reach and serve more schools. Unlike other project-based funding, these grants would reduce administrative burdens on smaller organizations while supporting the hiring of qualified staff, purchase essential equipment, and develop new curricula. Investing in a diverse range of organizations will enhance culturally relevant, high-quality food and nutrition education for NYC's most vulnerable communities, ensuring more students have access to these critical programs (\$2.5 million).
- Invest in program evaluation to provide CBOs with a tool to measure the effectiveness and impact of Food Ed programming in NYCPS and their communities. A standardized evaluation method will help assess program value, identify areas for improvement, and ensure continued growth and effectiveness (\$100,000).



FOOD ED HUB

BUILDING A HEALTHIER NYC:
SUPPORT & IMPROVE FOOD EDUCATION WHILE ENSURING TRANSPARENCY IN NUTRITION ACCESS

Strengthen Understanding of Food Initiatives & Investments

- **Protect What Feeds Us: Securing the Future of Food Access in NYC.** Amplify community voices in assessing and improving NYCPS food initiatives (e.g. Plant-powered Fridays) to strengthen food and nutrition security. The Tisch Food Center and CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute will partner with CBOs and families to evaluate NYCPS food programs, ensuring diverse voices shape impact assessments and address gaps in how these initiatives serve residents. CUNY will expand its Food Justice Fellowship, which trains undergraduates to advocate for community-based food initiatives and pairs them with internships at food justice organizations. We will prioritize students nominated by City Council Members and internship sites in their districts. (\$499,878).
- Request the Comptroller's Office to conduct a comprehensive review of NYC food service roles and titles, assessing career pathways, wages, staffing capacity, and professional development opportunities for managers and kitchen staff.

Ensure Transparency & Inclusivity in Food Ed Standards

- Develop culturally responsive, research-based Food Ed standards to guide community partners and educators across NYCPS (\$1.5 million).
- Compensate CBOs for their expertise in co-creating food education standards and developing professional development resources for teachers and schools (\$300,000).
- Include CBOs in training development to ensure culturally relevant, community driven approaches to Food Ed.

Strengthen Food Access Programs in Schools & Communities

- Expand support for Summer Rising and Summer Meal Programs by integrating Food Ed programming. These programs provide students with nutritious meals and hands-on food education when school is out. To maximize impact, require that a meal period is included before dismissal or that students eat first, followed by a structured learning activity. These changes will help ensure that students—especially those from food-insecure families where summer meals may be their only nutritious meal—have consistent access to healthy food and meaningful nutrition education year-round.
- Increase funding for free Health Bucks to expand access to fresh, healthy food for families. This additional funding would supplement—not replace—existing programs run by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). In 2024, the DOHMH received 600 applications for Health Bucks but could not fully fund all requests, leaving many local CBOs underfunded or without funding altogether. Increased funding will:
 - Enable Food Ed CBOs to partner with schools in every council district.
 - Simplify the application process for CBOs.
 - Improve access to affordable, nutritious food for families with children.

A hungry child can't think.

A well-nourished child thinks, learns, and thrives!

"[Food and nutrition education is] important because students will pay the cost for an unhealthy diet and lifestyle in the future."

-NYC Public Schools educator, PD Session 01/29/2024



LAURIE M. TISCH CENTER FOR
FOOD, EDUCATION & POLICY
PROGRAM IN NUTRITION
TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Questions or comments? Contact:
Dr. Jen Cadenhead, Executive Director, (212) 678-3716, jwc2151@tc.columbia.edu
Gitit Bachiry, Research Associate II, (212) 678-7513, gb2864@tc.columbia.edu
Alison Garbarini, Research Associate I, (212) 678-3000 (ext: 3158), ag4415@tc.columbia.edu



Protect What Feeds Us: Securing the Future of Food Access in NYC

Overview

Collaborative effort between The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy (Tisch Food Center) at Teachers College, Columbia University and The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute at the CUNY School of Public Health to maximize the value of City-sponsored food security programs.

Funding Request: \$500,000 (Total project) split between the Tisch Food Center & CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute.

Geographic Area: Citywide

Benefits to NYC

- Demonstrates the impact of food funding
- Elevates constituent voices in your district
- Trains the next generation of food justice leaders

Deliverables

- Citywide Statement of Food Need Findings
- Community District-Specific Stakeholders Recommendations to Council Members
- Data documenting statements of needs and budget recommendations.

Project Summary

The Tisch Food Center and the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute are joining forces to elevate community voices and ensure NYC's food programs meet real needs - to maximize the value of City-sponsored food security programs. By engaging families of school-aged children and training college students to become food justice advocates, this project addresses food insecurity where it starts—at the community level. This collaboration creates a unique feedback loop between families with young children and emerging student leaders—two groups often excluded from formal policy conversations—ensuring that city food programs are shaped by those they're meant to serve.

Food insecurity affects 1.4 million New Yorkers, including one in four children. To address this, NYC invests in food security programming to significantly reduce hunger. With proposed federal cuts threatening food programs such as school meals, SNAP and other feeding programs, NYC City Council food initiatives are indispensable.

Despite the City Council's significant and generous investments in food programs, there are few mechanisms for program users—like, parents of schoolchildren, older adults in meal programs, shelter residents—to provide input on these services. Many NYC residents believe these programs have unaddressed concerns, and as a result do not participate in programs that might bolster their food security. For example, while NYC public school meal participation has gone up slightly since the pandemic, only 43% of NYC students participate, compared to 55-59% in other high-need districts in New York State (NYS DOE, 2024). For each percentage point increase in participation, ~10,000 additional students are fed daily with ~\$8 million in return of federal dollars. As a result, the full value of NYC's investment in food security remains to be realized. This project would increase the impact of every dollar spent by ensuring programs align with community needs.





A Complementary Approach

The Tisch Food Center will focus on school food programs serving nearly one million NYC children. Through its extensive network of relationships developed with the City Council-funded Food Ed Coalition members, the Center will convene families of young children and organizations that serve them to understand their concerns with school meal access and other programming related to food security. With the Council's mandate, the Center will examine community perspectives on initiatives such as plant-powered meals and food education, while analyzing the impact of investments in food service management, including compensation and responsibilities. This work will develop systematic approaches to resolve issues as they arise, ensuring that city investments reflect community priorities.

Simultaneously, the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute will expand its successful Food Justice Fellowship program to train diverse CUNY undergraduate students to advocate for community-based food policies and programs. The fellowship combines workshops at the CUNY School of Public Health with internships at community organizations working to advance food justice, through which students will learn about the needs of specific populations (e.g., older adults, immigrants) and how to advocate for more effective food initiatives. City Council members will have the opportunity to nominate CUNY students from their districts to participate and recommend local non-profit organizations as internship sites. This will create strong bonds between Fellows and their local communities while expanding the program's network of partner organizations.

Community Impact and Expertise

Together, these complementary approaches will ensure City Council food investments efficiently serve constituents, elevate underrepresented voices in food policy discussions, and create pathways for CUNY students to become food justice leaders. The project will strengthen connections between Council districts and community food organizations while developing a cohort of young adults from diverse backgrounds who understand food system inequities.

Our Expertise

The **Tisch Food Center** brings its century-long history of advocating for school food programs as part of the Teachers College, Columbia University, Program in Nutrition (founded in 1919). The Center maintains strong connections with over 600 food education organizations and individuals, serving NYC Public Schools, through the NYC Food Ed Coalition.

The **CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute's** mission is to advance just, healthy, and resilient urban food systems. Since 2015, the Institute has trained CUNY students to advocate for food justice and engaged dozens of community-based food organizations to develop and support equitable food policies. Based at the CUNY School of Public Health, the Institute's work spans all CUNY campuses in all five boroughs.

The Tisch Food Center and CUNY Food Policy Institute collaborated on a multi-year study of NYC's COVID-19 response to food insecurity. Teachers College's deep expertise in school food systems and CUNY's proven model for training food justice leaders are critical to addressing critical food security challenges across NYC.





**Legal Services NYC
Written Testimony Submission for Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Education
May 20, 2025**

Good afternoon. My name is Michaela Shuchman, and I am a Skadden Legal Fellow at Legal Services NYC (“LSNYC”) (<https://www.legalservicesnyc.org/about-us>). Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this budget hearing. LSNYC’s mission is to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New York City residents. Through litigation, advocacy, education, and outreach, LSNYC has advanced the interests of our clients and created systemic changes that strengthen and protect low-income communities. We work to protect the rights of people with disabilities, veterans, immigrants, the LGBTIQ+ community, and other vulnerable constituents. We are deeply appreciative to the City Council for its many years of support for legal services, and for its championship of our mission and our work.

The Education Rights practice at LSNYC assists hundreds of New York City schoolchildren and their families each year to ensure access to quality education through our holistic model of representation. We represent students who are most at-risk and in need of advocacy, including students living with poverty, students with disabilities, students facing exclusionary discipline, English Language Learners (“ELL”s), and other vulnerable student populations and their families. Our attorneys and social workers assist families with a host of education issues including language access, special education services and placement, compensatory educational services, disciplinary proceedings, transportation, and reasonable accommodations, with the goal of supporting vulnerable populations by improving educational outcomes and removing systemic inequities.

In addition to representing individual students and their families, we also seek to address systemic issues impacting the clients we serve. Through litigation, advocacy, education, and collaboration, we seek to eliminate the school to prison pipeline, promote social, emotional, and mental health support in schools, and foster the development of healing centered schools, among other things. Our work advocating directly for individual students and their families directly informs our systemic advocacy effects. Community education and outreach is an important part of our work and is now more important than ever, as we focus on enhancing youth mental health and advocating for healing-centered schools.

Demand Justice.

Bronx Legal Services | 349 East 149th Street, 10th Floor, Bronx, NY 10451
Phone: 718-928-3700 | Fax: 718-292-2857 | www.LegalServicesNYC.org
Maribel Martinez-Gunter, Interim Project Director | **Evette Soto-Maldonado**, Board Chair

LSC | America’s Partner
for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

As an example of systemic advocacy, I have represented many students with disabilities in disciplinary hearings. When a student with a disability is suspended for greater than ten days, the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (“IDEA”) requires school districts to conduct a Manifestation Determination Review, or MDR, before removing them from their classrooms. This critical meeting should determine whether the behavior that led to the suspension stemmed from the student's disability and whether the student was receiving mandated special education services. If either answer is yes, the student must return to class immediately, and the school must then determine the root causes of the behavior and the steps necessary to help the student avoid engaging in the behavior again.

However, in most of my clients’ MDRs, schools were more focused on punishment than support. And the data backs up my experience: New York City public schools issued over 14,000 disciplinary removals of students with disabilities last school year – nearly 40% of total suspensions, despite these students comprising only 22% of the student population. And each suspension represents more than lost classroom time; it often means the denial of crucial special education services and the first step towards school disengagement. Independent MDR monitor reports from 2015-2018 found that only 45-55% of the time was there “effective discussion” of the student’s disability. Furthermore, and not surprisingly, data showed that positive findings that the behavior was related to a disability were found more frequently for white students than for their Black and Latinx peers.

Take the story of a 5th grade client of mine, J.J. J.J. is a student with a disability, with both academic and behavioral needs due to significant trauma in his past. At every IEP meeting over the last three years, his teachers and guardian have raised concerns about J.J. – he struggles to follow the rules, make connections with peers and teachers, and make progress academically. Despite extensive documentation of J.J. fighting with peers and teachers, failing his classes, and keeping to himself while others are playing, the school did nothing to create greater supports for J.J.

In February, J.J. slapped a peer one day after school, after being taunted by him. J.J. was immediately suspended. At the MDR, despite extensive evidence through evaluations and anecdotal observations that J.J. was angry and clinically depressed, and that this manifested in physical altercations with peers, the team refused to find it was a manifestation. They even went so far to say that although they could punish J.J. for his actions off school grounds, they could not find it was a manifestation of his disability because his IEP was “not applicable” there. This is clearly not an effective discussion of a student’s disability. Luckily, Bronx Legal Services continues to work with J.J. and his guardian both to appeal the decision of the MDR and to ensure that J.J. finally starts to receive the supportive services he needs in order to make meaningful progress in school.

Through conversations with our clients, analysis of the data, and discussions as an advocacy community, we have seen the difference it makes to families who have access to advocates who can help them navigate the complex special education and discipline systems and protect their child’s right to a meaningful education. A disciplinary removal represents a critical turning point in a student's education, especially for those with disabilities. With proper advocacy, this moment can become an opportunity to reinvest in our most at-risk students rather than a step toward disengagement and dropout. If families have an advocate by their side during

disciplinary proceedings, relationships can be created between education advocates and families, ensuring that students with disabilities receive guidance and legal support as they move past the school exclusion and resume their educational journey.

LSNYC's education practice – made up of a small but mighty group of attorneys and advocates – handled nearly 600 education cases for New York City residents across the five boroughs over the last year, for students aging from under five to over 20. I personally handled close to 60 exclusionary discipline cases last year, and this school year I am already at 55. And yet, the need for LSNYC's education advocacy services far outstrips our resources.

The potential of legal representation to achieve improved educational outcomes and overcome disparities both in discipline and special education is clear.¹ With the support of the City Council, we can continue this work and expand the number of children and parents who can receive legal advice and advocacy. With additional resources, our impact would be magnified and deepened, as we serve families using our holistic model, linking them to community-based services, advocating for them with the Department of Education, filing impartial hearings, complaints in state and federal court, and taking steps to have greater impact on the system overall. We respectfully request that the City budget provide \$500,000 to support LSNYC's Access to Education Project.

¹ See, e.g., The Intersection of Race, Wealth, and Special Education: The Role of Structural Inequities in the IDEA (https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2153&context=nyls_law_review); How Increased Legal Representation Can Close the Gap in Special Education Discrepancies (<https://digitalcommons.tourolaw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3294&context=lawreview>)



**The New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
May 2025**

Literacy in Community, or LINC, has been the facilitating partner for City's First Readers (CFR) since 2014. We have enthusiastically coordinated and participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, CFR is its only investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its seventeen member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

That impact could not be more timely. The recent budget uncertainty surrounding 3K and Pre-K allocations for FY26 has highlighted just how fragile the funding for these essential programs remains. In the absence of comprehensive early childhood infrastructure at the federal, state, and city levels, the work of City's First Readers is more critical than ever. CFR partners operate in every Council district, with many programs intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods and support our most vulnerable communities.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement so we can reach even more families and children in FY26.

In Community,
Karen Rogel
Director of Strategic Initiatives

[Visit our programs!](http://www.lincnyc.org) | www.lincnyc.org

5030 Broadway, Suite 641
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City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

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212-620-5462 | cfr@lincnyc.org

www.citysfirstreaders.com

The New York City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony May 2025

Literacy Partners has been a City's First Readers (CFR) partner since July 1, 2023. We have enthusiastically participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

La Fuerza de Familias Latinas, launched by Literacy Partners in 2019, is an innovative early literacy program designed to support Latine parents and caregivers. By providing families with essential tools, resources, and support, La Fuerza empowers parents to foster their children's early development while improving their own functional literacy skills. The program's primary goal is to enhance literacy and school readiness for children (0-8) of Spanish-speaking parents, breaking generational cycles of poverty and removing barriers to opportunities for both parents and children.

Small group settings foster individualized attention and active participation and help promote literacy-rich activities with their families. After the workshop series, we ship a 'starter library,' which includes five age and culturally-appropriate bilingual and Spanish books to families.

From July 1, 2024 through March 31, 2025, our City's First Readers Family Engagement Workshops in Spanish enrolled 677 parents and caregivers into our program, 350 of those adults were served, completing the workshop series' requirements, impacting 311 children aged 0-5. These workshop series included five sessions of 90 minutes each focused on Early Literacy or Informal STEM.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement that will allow us to reach —so we can reach even more families and children in FY26.

Submitted by,

Melissa McKillip
Director of Institutional Advancement
Literacy Partners, Inc.
75 Maiden Lane, Suite 1102
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Written Testimony for the NYC Council Committee on Education
Submitted by Dr. Erika Marte, Senior Director of College and Career Pathways – New Settlement

May 20, 2025

Good morning Chair Joseph and members of the City Council Committee on Education,

My name is Dr. Erika Marte, and I serve as the Senior Director of College and Career Pathways at New Settlement, a Bronx-based community organization that operates a Student Success Center (SSC) and works closely with the Learning to Work (LTW) program across multiple public high schools.

I am submitting this written testimony to urge continued investment in and support for CBO-led college and career readiness programs—specifically, the SSC and LTW models that have transformed the postsecondary outcomes for students in the Bronx and across New York City.

At New Settlement, our SSC program serves over 2,000 students across five high schools at the Taft Educational Campus. Our trained youth leaders and full-time college counselors provide one-on-one advising, group workshops, and critical supports to help students navigate complex college and career systems. Similarly, partnership with the LTW program offers work-based learning opportunities, paid internships, and individualized academic and career guidance to reengage overage and under-credited students—many of whom are recent immigrants, multilingual learners, and first-generation college students.

These programs have proven outcomes: increased FAFSA completion rates, higher postsecondary enrollment, and stronger school engagement. However, our impact is continually threatened by unstable funding streams, a lack of clarity in NYCPS-CBO partnerships, and growing student needs that outpace existing resources.

As we look toward FY26, I respectfully urge the City Council to:

- Sustain and expand baseline funding for SSCs and LTW programs across NYCPS high schools;
- Provide clearer NYCPS guidance and accountability structures for principals working with CBO partners;
- Invest in multilingual and immigrant student college/career services, especially in schools with large newcomer populations;
- Prioritize pathways to sustainable careers through paid internships and industry-recognized credentials.

New Settlement stands ready to continue partnering with the City to ensure every NYC student—regardless of zip code—has access to the support and opportunities they need to thrive beyond high school.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony and for your continued advocacy for public education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Erika Marte



newyorkedge.org

**NYC Council FY 26
Executive Budget Hearings –**

**Education Committee
Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair**

**Children & Youth Committee
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Health Committee
Hon. Lynn Schulman Chair**

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

On behalf of the Board and Staff of New York Edge (NYE), I thank you again for the Council's long standing support of our mission of bridging the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities.

With the Council as our partner for over three decades, New York Edge has grown into the LARGEST provider of afterschool and summer programming in New York City, serving 33,000 students across more than 130 schools throughout the five boroughs including 4 Beacon Centers, 21 Community Schols and 4 food pantries in Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. We proudly offer culturally responsive programming rooted in academic enrichment, sports, health & wellness, visual and performing arts, STEM, leadership and college & career readiness – with social emotional learning intentionally woven throughout everything we do.

New York Edge school-based programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods). Council citywide funding under the ***After-School Enrichment Initiative*** enables us to enrich and expand our programming throughout the city and has allowed us to develop and implement unique and engaging programs that allow us to continue to guide students so that they grow up healthy, happy and empowered.

As stated in our Preliminary Budget Hearing testimony, New York Edge's Council Citywide funding has remained at \$1M for the past 15 years despite the fact that we have tripled in size and have significantly increased the number of children served. To continue providing this level of service and to meet the growing demands placed on us, especially as we are often asked to step in to provide programming and services when other organizations are struggling, I ask that that our Council Citywide funding reflect this expansion and that you support our FY 26 funding requests:

- **\$1.2M under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative - an increase of approximately \$200,000 over our FY 25 allocation.**

- **\$250,000 under the Council's Social & Emotional Supports for Students Initiative. We are, as identified by Mosaic by ACT, the largest after-school provider in the nation providing SEL supports.**

We are honored to work with the City of New York, including DYCD and DOE and we deeply value our shared commitment to supporting children and families. We understand that the PASSPort system was created to improve efficiency, but the reality has been very different for not for profit organizations. It is becoming increasingly untenable to navigate the city's contracting process. We employ 1600+ staff each year, and fixed costs like salaries, rent, fringe, indirect rate and supplies must be met regardless of contract delays. **These costs are fixed and non-negotiable and must be paid regardless of the status of our 106 city contracts.**

At New York Edge we had to expand our credit line from 10 million to 15 million dollars just to stay operational. Today, we are carrying a 15 million dollar balance – along with one million in accrued interest and that number continues to grow. **No nonprofit should be forced to into this level of debt simply to deliver services the city has contracted us to provide.**

On behalf of the 33,000 00 students served by New York Edge, I ask for your help as we seek increased funding in the upcoming budget in alignment with our impact and scale. Increased funding will also help mitigate some of the challenges which have occurred as a result of the city's Passport System and the resulting contract registration and payment delays.

Through its partnership and support, the Council is helping young New Yorkers discover their interests, their passions, and their joys, building pathways to careers and trades that will provide financial security throughout their lives – and in the process creating connections to each other, to teachers, mentors, and their communities. **TOGETHER, we are guiding students so that they grow up healthy, happy and empowered. TOGETHER, we are creating the next generation of active and productive community members and problem solvers. TOGETHER, we are creating New York City's next generation of doctors, mechanics, chefs, writers, engineers, entrepreneurs and SO MUCH MORE.**

The proof of our success and impact is in our numbers:

- **98%** of New York Edge parents agree that their child feels a sense of belonging;
- **98%** of New York Edge parents agree that their child feels able to approach program staff for help with academics or social matters;
- **94.4%** of New York Edge parents would recommend New York Edge to other parents;
- **18%** improvement was made in ELA and Math scores after New York Edge tutoring;
- **96.8%** of New York Edge parents agree that New York Edge is helping to prepare their child for future success

It is also found in the voices of the students we serve:

*"I've been part of **New York Edge's** afterschool program for the past three years and have participated in a number of its different activities. One thing they all have in common is that they teach life lessons that will definitely be useful when you least expect it. **New York Edge** is definitely an important part of my life and many students just like me. **Please continue to fund New York Edge for my sake and for the sake of students all over New York City!!**"*

Isabella Navarro
Eugenio Maria de Hostos IS 318

*"**New York Edge** has made a significant impact on my life by offering me valuable opportunities that have shaped my future. They provided post-secondary opportunities like college trips including a trip to the University of Connecticut, which is a school I otherwise would have never been able to visit on my own. And thanks to the trip to UConn, I gained the confidence to apply and was accepted. **I cried when I was accepted because it felt like my hard work was manifesting and was paying off.** **New York Edge** has played a huge role in preparing me for what comes next, and I feel ready to take on the challenges ahead. Even though **New York Edge** has only been a part of my journey for the last two years, their impact has felt longer. **I believe New York Edge deserves all the funding in the world, because they are affording marginalized and low income kids opportunities they would have never had.**"*

Cheikhou Diouf
Community School for Social Justice

*"**New York Edge** is more than just a partner – they are a lifeline for our community. They provide extensive support that touches EVERY aspect of our school life. Given the wide-ranging benefits that **New York Edge** brings to our school community, I truly believe that maintaining and in increasing funding for their programs is absolutely necessary."*

Aaliya Clark
Brownsville Academy High School

*"Afterschool programs are not just extra activities, they are necessary. They give students like me a place to feel safe, stay motivated and discover what we are capable of. One of my proudest moments happened because of my **New York Edge** afterschool program. I know funding isn't always easy, but investing in **New York Edge** afterschool programs means investing in students like me. **We are the future of this city and the support we get now will shape the kind of people we become.**"*

Trinity Williams

Brooklyn Environmental Exploration School

*"Afterschool isn't just a place to go when class is over, it's a space where I've learned, had fun, and made some of my best memories. Being part of **New York Edge** has given me so many opportunities to try new things, meet new people, and discover what I'm really good at. If I had to describe **New York Edge** in one word, I would say "creativity." Whether we're drawing, writing, or working on projects, we always get to express ourselves and share our ideas. **New York Edge** has helped me build confidence and feel proud of what I can do. I know that I'll carry the lessons and memories from **New York Edge** with me as I move on to middle school and beyond."*

Valentina Ragusano

PS 193 Alfred J. Kennedy

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past 33 years of support from the New York City Council. **The time has come, however, where increased funding is VITALLY needed.** Unlike contracts with DYCD and other agencies, Council discretionary contracts are not (and have never been) eligible for COLA increases. This is making it increasingly difficult for New York Edge to attract and maintain quality staff and to continue to offer the wide array of STEM, SEL, Visual & Performing Arts, Sports, Health & Wellness and College & Career Readiness programs that we are known for.

We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 26 citywide funding requests. **These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!**

Thank you.

Committee on Education and Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget - Education

May 20, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the proposed education budget. My name is **Terrence Winston**, and I am an **Education advocate and Chairperson for the NYC Coalition for Community Schools Excellence**

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of important education programs that had been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding including [e.g. 3-K, preschool special education classes, extended day 3-K and pre-K seats, arts programming, community schools, teacher recruitment, and high-impact tutoring.].

However, the Executive Budget leaves out Student Success Centers (\$3.3M) entirely, so this program is still at risk of being eliminated as soon as July. Student Success Centers train and support youth leaders on how to guide their peers through the college admissions process, providing crucial support to students at more than 30 high schools.

Additionally, the Executive Budget leaves several programs without long-term funding, opting instead to extend their funding for one year only—creating uncertainty for the communities they serve. Long-term funding provides stability for critical programming. Without long-term funding, programs have a harder time hiring and keeping staff, and students and their families are left unsure if programs they rely on will continue to operate.

Programs that received funding for one more year only and are, therefore, at risk of cuts in 2026, include:

- Summer programming to provide students with recreational activities, arts, and field trips, in addition to academic enrichment (\$80M);
- Learning to Work programs to provide support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan (\$31M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended (\$6M);
- The Mental Health Continuum to provide mental healthcare to students at 50 schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (\$5M);
- Outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of early childhood programs (\$5M); and
- Immigrant family communication and outreach to help ensure families can receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access (\$4M).

We join with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling for the City to baseline funding for these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget. We also join with the coalition

in calling on the City to make additional investments that are needed to support students, especially those who have the greatest needs.

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

Sincerely,

Terrence Winston
Managing Director



The Coalition for Community Schools Excellence



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Education
FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 20, 2025**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Joseph, as well as members of the Committee on Education for the opportunity to comment.

[NYLCV's annual New York City top priorities](#) include decarbonizing our transportation and building sectors. This is especially important to New York City's school buses and public school buildings, both of which are overwhelmingly fueled by fossil fuels, not only contributing to climate change but to harmful public health impacts such as asthma. For FY26, NYLCV urges the City to prioritize the City's electric school bus law and sustainably retrofit NYC public schools.

Implement and Fund the NYC Zero Emission School Bus Law

According to [the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#), more than 11,000 NYC school buses transport 150,000 students to school each day. These buses run on diesel fuel, generating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to climate change. Electrifying school buses is important not only to help combat climate change, but to combat toxic air pollution, a longstanding environmental justice issue. Many school bus depots are located in EJ areas, and the exhaust from these buses harms schoolchildren. New York City students that take the school bus, many of whom are children with disabilities, face dangerous diesel exhaust exposure, which can lead to serious health implications such as asthma, which is one of the [major causes of chronic absenteeism in NYC public schools](#).

Together with our partners on the New York City Clean School Bus Coalition and Council Members, NYLCV fought for the passage of [Local Law 120 of 2021](#), mandating an all electric school bus (ESB) fleet by 2035 to cut harmful pollutants, improve public health and air quality, and fight climate change.

NYLCV applauds the City for continuing to be [awarded](#) federal and state electric school bus-related grants over the past couple of years. While the City has been awarded a few hundred ESBs as of 2024, few are on the road due to issues ranging from supply chain issues to a lack of citywide charging infrastructure. On top of this, with the uncertainty surrounding the

Trump Administration's pause on federal grants, we urge the City and State to work together to identify funding for ESB purchases, workforce development, and charging infrastructure.

NYLCV urges the City, specifically DOE, to take the lead and fully commit to the timely implementation of Local Law 120 of 2021. New York State law requires all new school bus purchases as of 2027 to be electric, with the entire fleet transitioned to electric by 2035, so it is incumbent on the City to prioritize the rollout of ESBs and charging infrastructure.

The City must work with school bus vendors and utility companies to plan, develop, and fund school bus charging infrastructure throughout the City, especially at school bus depots located in disadvantaged communities, and ESB workforce development programs since bus fleet personnel will require training for driving, properly maintaining EVs, and optimizing charging for electric bus routes, energy needs, and intra-day energy price fluctuations.

As stated in the Adams' Administration's [PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done](#) and [PowerUp NYC](#), DOE should incorporate electrification requirements in the next contract renegotiation with school bus fleet vendors; implement lessons learned from vehicle-to-grid pilots; and launch a training program for ESB operations and maintenance and provide ongoing support. NYLCV appreciates that the City has committed to expanding ESB workforce development opportunities, as stated in the recently-published [Green Economy Action Plan](#), and we hope the City will follow through by devoting funding to the development of these programs.

Additionally, the City must continue taking advantage of grant opportunities at the federal and state level. For instance, in March 2024, [Governor Hochul announced](#) funding available for electric school bus charging infrastructure under the historic \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act and through the New York School Bus Incentive Program. We urge the City to make progress in getting more ESBs on the road and investing in workforce development programs.

Retrofit NYC Schools

The vast majority of NYC's GHG emissions come from our buildings. Making matters worse, many of the City's public schools are in older buildings that still run on fossil fuels, contributing to air pollution and poor indoor air quality. As highlighted in our [2025 NYC Policy Agenda](#), the City must continue implementing Local Law 97, which requires that City-owned buildings reduce emissions by 40 percent by 2025 and 50 percent by 2030, as well as the City's school electrification effort, [Leading the Charge](#), a \$4 billion plan to begin retrofitting 100 schools to all-electric heating and build only electricity-powered new school buildings by 2030. This includes green technology such as solar panels, thermal energy networks, and upgrading current building systems to be more energy efficient to make our schools cleaner and reduce emissions. Moreover, as the Administration stated in [PowerUp NYC](#), the City should consider school retrofit projects as an educational and job training opportunity for students. For instance, placing solar infrastructure on schools provides a unique opportunity to teach students about clean energy and climate change and develop training pathways to well-paying green jobs.

In addition to sustainably retrofitting NYC schools to reduce emissions and improve air quality, the City must retrofit them holistically and take climate resiliency and adaptation into account. According to [data that the City's Comptroller's Office shared with City Limits](#), over a quarter of the city's public school buildings, 28 percent, are currently at risk of extreme stormwater flooding. Indeed, according to the Comptroller's Office, "by 2050, there will be 77 public schools facing a dual threat: at risk of being hit by 'high' intensity stormwater events—defined in the analysis as 3.5 inches of rain per hour—while also located on a floodplain that is vulnerable to coastal flooding."

NYLCV hopes the City will continue to prioritize the Leading the Charge initiative over the next few years, ensure funding is allocated in a timely manner, and go even further with the amount of schools that go fully electric. The City must continue taking advantage of grant opportunities at the federal and state level, such as [NYSERDA's \\$100 million Environmental Bond Act funding for the Clean Green Schools Initiative](#), which will help public schools that traditionally lack resources to invest in infrastructure improvements become healthier, more productive learning environments, such as reducing school energy loads, decarbonizing their building portfolio, improving indoor air quality (IAQ) and providing clean energy educational opportunities.

With the climate crisis regularly reminding us that it is here and not some future threat, NYLCV urges the City to fully commit to electrifying our City's school buses and invest in retrofitting our public schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



**Testimony of Paola Martínez-Boone, MSW-Senior Advocate & Special
Education Coordinator**

**On behalf of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
to the New York City Council's Committee on Education
Oversight: DOE's Provision of Special Education Services**

Honorable Members of the City Council Education Committee,

My name is Paola Martínez-Boone, and I serve as a senior advocate and special education coordinator for the Disability Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). I extend my gratitude to Chairwoman Joseph and the Education Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony. I deeply appreciate Chairwoman Joseph's and this committee's dedication to ensuring students with disabilities in our city receive a meaningful and effective education.

As a social worker deeply engaged in special education advocacy, I work closely with parents of students with disabilities in the New York City public school system. Repeatedly, I hear firsthand the profound struggles these students face due to systemic neglect, lack of proper resources, and the continued failure of the Department of Education (DOE) to meet their needs adequately. The DOE must prioritize these students' mental health and well-being by committing to meaningful reform, targeted investment, and accountability.

NYLPI strongly supports the enactment of recent bills that establish a peer-to-peer support model to promote mental health literacy and strengthen student-led mental health clubs with the involvement of clinical candidates. These measures represent a critical step forward in preventing mental health crises, combating social isolation, and reducing the reliance on emergency rooms as primary mental health care providers. However, these efforts alone are not enough.

The City must take decisive action to support students classified as having emotional disturbance. This population—more than 7,000 students in the NYC public school system—is disproportionately Black and Latino, overwhelmingly male, and largely from



economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2024, NYLPI released a damning report titled “*A Crisis in Special Education: New York City’s Failure to Educate Students Classified with ‘Emotional Disability’*.” The report exposes the DOE’s consistent failure to identify, classify, and adequately serve these students, condemning them to a future of academic struggle, social marginalization, and, too often, failure to graduate.

Without early intervention and specialized support, these students encounter insurmountable barriers to academic and social success. The DOE’s failure to act leaves them without the legally mandated services they need, driving their graduation rate below 60%. Without urgent action, these students will continue to suffer the long-term consequences of systemic neglect.

We demand immediate attention to the following critical concerns:

1. **DOE’s failure to enforce compliance with Education Law** – Schools must provide comprehensive mental health instruction to destigmatize seeking help and ensure students can access the support they need.
2. **Lack of mandatory mental health training for school staff** – For many students, school is the only stable refuge from the hardships they face at home. Yet, without trained personnel to identify and address their mental health struggles, students are left to self-soothe—often through harmful means.
3. **Severe shortage of mental health professionals in schools** – While the recent legislation bolstering student-led mental health clubs is commendable, it is insufficient. DOE must commit to hiring enough trained professionals to address acute emotional needs, including severe depression, suicidal ideation, and behavioral crises.
4. **Lack of a centralized data system to track student mental health needs** – The DOE has no meaningful infrastructure to collect and analyze mental health data, either at the individual or systemic level. Without comprehensive data, there is no way to measure the effectiveness of programs, identify emerging trends, or ensure accountability. Reforming assessment and evaluation protocols must be a top priority, and this requires dedicated funding.
5. **Urgency for governmental oversight and action:** Beyond the remedial measures recommended by the DOE and NYSED, the severity of the deficiencies demands



immediate review and action from other governmental agencies. The New York City Council's Standing Committees on Education, Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, Civil and Human Rights, and Youth Services must investigate, hold hearings, and pursue legislative action to address these critical issues.

The DOE's continued inaction is failing our most vulnerable students. This is not just an education issue—it is a civil rights issue. The City Council must act now to demand systemic change. Students with emotional disturbance deserve more than rhetoric; they deserve real investment, real support, and a real commitment to their future.

NYLPI calls on the Education Committee to take bold and immediate steps to ensure these students receive the resources they are entitled to. Every student deserves the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. The City has an obligation to make that a reality—no more delays, no more excuses.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. Please feel free to contact me at pmartinez-boone@nylpi.org regarding the issues herein.

Paola Martínez-Boone, MSW-Senior Advocate & Special Education Coordinator

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

151 West 30th Street, 11th floor

New York, NY 10001



**The New York City Council
Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony
May 2025**

PlayReadVIP at NYU Grossman School of Medicine (New York University) has been a City's First Readers partner since 2014. We have enthusiastically participated in this collaborative effort to provide New York City children and families from birth through 5 years with the pre-reading stimulation and support they need to be ready for school.

Reaching children during their most critical window of brain development isn't just smart—it's essential. By age 3, 80% of a child's brain is developed; by age 5, it's 90%. Early engagement supports healthy brain growth and helps identify children who may need extra support to meet developmental benchmarks and reach their full potential. Prevention today is far more effective than intervention tomorrow.

Since FY15, the New York City Council has recognized the power of early literacy through its unique initiative: City's First Readers (CFR). While the Council supports multiple initiatives focused on adult literacy, CFR is its only investment dedicated exclusively to early literacy—and it stands out not just for its focus, but for the deep collaboration it fosters.

Unlike other Council-funded efforts, which support organizations working independently on shared issues, CFR is a true partnership. Its 17 member organizations meet quarterly, collaborate through dedicated committees—on topics such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—and regularly co-promote or co-create programming. The Council's vision has enabled a model where each organization's expertise is not only valued but amplified through collective action.

That impact could not be more timely. The recent budget uncertainty surrounding 3K and Pre-K allocations for FY26 has highlighted just how fragile these essential programs remain. In the absence of comprehensive early childhood infrastructure at the federal, state, and city levels, the work of City's First Readers (CFR) is more critical than ever. CFR partners operate in every Council district, with many programs intentionally designed to reach families in high-poverty neighborhoods and support our most vulnerable communities.

As a proud CFR partner, we are deeply grateful for the Council's steadfast commitment to early literacy. We respectfully urge your continued support and consideration for an enhancement that will allow us to reach —so we can reach even more families and children in FY26.

On behalf of PlayReadVIP (formerly Video Interaction Project) and the families we serve, thank you for your unwavering dedication to New York City's youngest learners. We have seen firsthand how the Council's investment in early literacy changes lives - not only preparing children for school, but also strengthening family bonds and laying the foundation for lifelong success. We look forward to continuing this vital work together and urge you to consider a funding enhancement for FY26 so we can reach even more children during their most formative years.

Submitted by
Nicole Kesoglides
Program Manager, PlayReadVIP National Center
NYU Grossman School of Medicine
New York University
Nicole.Kesoglides@nyulangone.org





**ParentChild+ Program Testimony
Committees on Youth Services and Community Development**

**Submitted by ParentChild+
in Partnership with the City's First Readers Initiative**

May 20th, 2025

Good day: My name is Andre Eaton and I am the New York State Director for ParentChild+, formerly The Parent-Child Home Program.

ParentChild+'s unique focus is on providing parents with the skills, knowledge, and materials they need to support school readiness in the home and build home learning environments that support children's language, literacy, numeracy, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. In doing this work, we are also helping parents learn what to look for in a child care setting, how to identify and access their children's next educational steps, and how to support their children's continued academic progress. Our partners in this work in New York City and elsewhere in the state include school districts, public libraries, social service agencies, literacy programs, community health centers, immigrant aid organizations, and community-based organizations. Focusing on school readiness and early literacy supports for families challenged by poverty, isolation, limited education, and language and literacy barriers, ParentChild+ provided over 46,000 home visits and distributed over 23,000 books & educational toys statewide in 2024.

Prior to entering pre-k or kindergarten, many of the children living furthest from opportunity and children from families with home languages other than English are being cared for by family members or in informal settings. These are the families least likely to have access to the information, materials, and activities to build their children's school readiness skills and ensure they have the language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that they need to enter a classroom ready to be successful students. The support provided by the City's First Readers Initiative is critical to preparing children to enter school ready to be in a classroom and to ensuring that they move through school successfully.

ParentChild+ provides critical learning tools, books, and other educational, interaction-stimulating materials, to families with two- and three-year-olds. This is an age group that often has very limited access to literacy supports. The program helps families build literacy-rich environments in their homes. They participate in two visits a week in their homes with an early learning specialist, or home visitor, who introduces the materials to the family, and models for parents reading, conversation, and play activities that support language, social-emotional, and early literacy skills. ParentChild+ staff also connect families to social service, educational, and basic needs supports

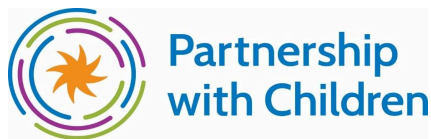
when necessary and assist parents in planning for their children's next educational step, including registering their children for a pre-k or Head Start program. We continue to expand our reach in New York City, expanding our work in East Harlem and supporting our Home-Based Child Care (HBCC) model in the Bronx and in Sunset Park, supporting caregivers in building school readiness-rich care environments for the children they care for during the day. This work enables us to reach families who are not able to be a part of our one-on-one home visiting model, because they work long and often irregular hours. Both the providers and the families receive books through our home-based child-care model, and the ripple effect is powerful as each of the providers will go on to bring these school readiness skills to other children in their care over the coming years.

ParentChild+ continues to be so honored to be part of the City's First Readers Initiative. Working with our partners in this initiative, we were able to provide intensive early literacy support to 150 additional families in communities challenged by poverty, isolation, and language and literacy barriers in communities across the city. We were also able to connect ParentChild+ families with a continuum of other school readiness services and activities in their communities. Working with our City's First Readers partners, we connect families, who might not otherwise have access to literacy and early education supports, to additional resources through their public libraries, special programs in their local schools, and community-based programming offered by organizations like LINC, including story times, parent workshops, school registration information sessions, and book distribution events.

Our work with families significantly increases children's school readiness, decreases their need for special education services as they move through school, and improves their school performance. Our work with HBCC providers improves the quality of the interaction in the care environment, increases reading with parents at home, and decreases home screen time.

With support from the City's First Readers Initiative, ParentChild+ has been able to expand to nine communities, reaching families in South Jamaica, Far Rockaway, Woodside, Astoria, Queens, and Sunset Park and Brownsville, Brooklyn who would otherwise not have access to these supports. Many of these communities have historically had limited early childhood school readiness services available. With additional funding, ParentChild+ could reach more deeply into these communities and expand into additional communities. ParentChild+ could easily reach an additional 200 families across the city in the coming year.

We look forward to working with the City Council to expand this critical continuum of services for young children and their families. Thank you so much for allowing me this time to present ParentChild+'s critical school readiness work as part of the City's First Readers Initiative.



**Presented before the New York City Council
Committees on Finance & Education
Re: Executive Budget Hearing - Education
May 20, 2025**

Thank you Chair Justin Brannan, Chair Rita Joseph and members of the Finance and Education Committees for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Executive Budget.

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. PWC's youth mental health, healing arts, and community-based programming impacts over 22,000 children, families, and community members across 47 NYC public schools. In 2015, PWC began partnering with the Office of Community Schools as a lead community-based organization 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.

Student Mental Health Challenges

While recent citywide data on NYC student wellness is limited, a March 2023 [report](#) released by the Mayor's Office, [highlighted](#) that in 2021 nearly 40% of NYC high school students shared that they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two weeks during that past year. Latinx and Black students were most at risk as in the same survey, 42% of Latinx and 41% of Black students reported feelings of sadness or hopelessness in comparison to 30% of White students. Further, throughout the past decade, rates of youth [suicide ideation](#) has increased by nearly 5%, from 11.6% to 15.6%. Despite this reality, the Department of Education (DOE) reports that about 20% of students who would benefit from mental-health support services do not receive them. Community schools are a key mechanism to address these challenges.

As a lead community-based organization in community schools across the city, we know first hand the positive impact community schools have on children and families. By addressing the social and emotional challenges that undermine achievement, community schools increase attendance, improve academic outcomes, improve student behavior and school climate. In short,



community schools make schools safer and better places to learn so that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Additionally, as a supportive pillar of PWC school-based programming, PWC uses arts to address the trauma that impacts students' lives, while simultaneously strengthening the ecosystem of relationships surrounding them in their school environments. PWC work supports students' abilities to analyze, share, and interpret their experiences, assuring they are active contributors in shaping their communities and futures. Our work serves as an example of how arts education can foster mental wellness and healing.

Recommendations

We are pleased that the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a number of important education programs that had been at risk of cuts due to expiring city funding including arts programming and community schools. Additional funding is needed to bolster efforts to support NYC students. We encourage the Council to:

- Baseline Funding for Restorative Justice Programs: During the first quarter of 2025, NYPD school safety agents [intervened](#) in over 4,000 events involving students. Transformational models that divert youth from punitive measures and foster accountability, self-awareness, empathy, a sense of resilience and autonomy are critical to student success. To that end, we join our coalition partners in urging the city to baseline \$6 million for restorative justice programs in the FY 2026 budget.
- Baseline Funding for the Mental Health Continuum: Ensuring continuity of services is at the forefront of creating a holistic approach to mental health well-being and improving student outcomes. We encourage City leaders to baseline \$5 million for the Mental Health Continuum so this important work can continue.
- Invest in and Protect Community Schools: As a lead community-based organization in community schools across the city, we know firsthand the positive impact community schools have on children and families. By addressing the social and emotional challenges that undermine achievement, community schools increase attendance, improve academic outcomes, improve student behavior and school climate, and provide more effective teaching.
- Support Healing-Based Arts Programming: As a supportive pillar of PWC school-based programming, PWC uses arts to address the trauma that impacts students' lives, while simultaneously strengthening the ecosystem of relationships surrounding them in their



school environments. PWC work supports students' abilities to analyze, share, and interpret their experiences, assuring they are active contributors in shaping their communities and futures. Our work serves as an example of how arts education can foster mental wellness and healing.

Thank you again for your partnership and the opportunity to submit written testimony. Please contact Jerry Hyppolite, Chief of Staff at jhyppolite@partnershipwithchildren.org with any questions regarding this testimony.

Stendahl, Tanja, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY, 11233 [REDACTED]

I am a born and raised New Yorker, trying to keep my family in the city!

I have a toddler entering 3K this September and the recent child care cost and stress of limited coverage, influenced my recent decision to leave my job and career.

It has been proven around the world that access to affordable child care improves outcomes for children, parents, AND communities. Removing access forces parents at home, reduces incomes, and reduces spending ability. The minor investment of this program compared to the enormous social AND economic benefit is unparalleled. If the city wants to truly make NYC a great place to live, then start investing in our future! It has already been universally proven that robust child care coverage helps communities, families, and the economy!

**The New York City Charter School Center
Erik Joerss, Vice President of Advocacy and Government Affairs
Testimony Presented to the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 and the Executive
Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029 for the Education Committee
New York City Council City Council: Committee on Education Executive
Budget Hearing
May 20, 2025**

The New York City Charter School Center (Charter Center) respectfully submits the following testimony and thanks the New York City Council Committees on Finance and Education for the opportunity to comment on behalf of students attending New York City charter schools.

For over twenty years, public charter schools have been an integral part of the public education system in New York City (NYC). In the 2024-25 school year there are 281 public charter schools operating in the five boroughs serving over 149,000 students. This represents 15% of public school students, of which nearly 90% are Black/African American or Latinx. New York's public charter schools are serving primarily low-income NYC families (82% are economically disadvantaged), offering additional high-quality educational options for families.¹

We call your attention to a particular subset of schools in NYC, transfer high schools. Currently, all DOE transfer high schools participate in or are eligible to participate in Learn to Work, a Department of Education (DOE) funded program that provides grants to community-based organizations which allows them to partner with public transfer high schools serving overage/under-credited students. This partnership provides students with critical benefits such as intervention and support, internships, workforce and college preparation, social and emotional counseling, alongside experiential learning and enhancement activities.

The 2,200 charter transfer high school students (distributed among 9 NYC charter schools) have been denied access to these impactful Learn to Work programs. There is no rationale for this exclusion. Charter school transfer high school students, like their counterparts in the district, need career readiness skills and mentorship opportunities, in addition to potential job opportunities. The Learn to Work program has been shown to significantly benefit students by bridging the gap between education and employment. It provides students with the skills, experience and connections needed to succeed in their chosen career path and should be expanded to include charter school students. Given the relatively small number of charter transfer high schools, the expansion of the Learn to Work program to charter schools is expected to cost under \$3 million.

Charter school students remain the lowest funded public-school students in NYC, far from draining resources, these students are educated at a fraction of the cost of their DOE peers. The most recent Independent Budget Office of New York City (IBO) analysis found that NYC charter schools were

¹ Enrollment figures and demographics based on NYSED Preliminary Enrollment Data for 2023-24 School Year.

underfunded between more than a \$1,000 to up to almost \$5,000 per student.² The exclusion from programs such as the Learn to Work program continues to exacerbate the inequities between district and charter students.

In our city, every student should have equal access to resources that empower them to reach their fullest potential. Programs like Learn to Work play a vital role in leveling the playing field by equipping students with practical skills, real-world experiences, and valuable connections to an already challenging workforce. By ensuring that all students, irrespective of their public-school choice can participate in such initiatives, we not only promote equity but also can foster a community where every student in New York City has a chance to succeed and contribute meaningfully to society.

We ask that you expand the Learn to Work program to include students who attend charter transfer high schools.

² The most recent analysis done by the Independent Budget Office of the City of New York (IBO), an arm of New York City's government, found that NYC charter schools were underfunded between more than a thousand dollars to up to \$4,863. See *With State Formula for Charter School Funding Likely to Change, City Costs to Grow More Than Budgeted*, available at <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/with-state-formula-for-charter-school-funding-likely-to-change-city-costs-to-grow-more-than-budgeted-march-2017.pdf>

New York City Council
Committee on Education
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Tuesday, May 20, 2025

1000 Richmond Terrace, Bldg A
Staten Island, New York 10301
StatenIslandMuseum.org

TEL 718 727 1135
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The Staten Island Museum provides interdisciplinary exhibitions, educational programs, and community events annually, working with more than 60 community partner organizations. A major focus is SIM's school programs that serve 13,000 students, 45% of which are from Title 1 schools, through field trips, in-school lessons and CASA programs. SIM's STEAM-based programs provide impactful educational experiences that engage our exhibitions and permanent collections on a deeper, holistic level for ages Pre-K through High School and beyond. All programs - from in-school classes to Museum-based field trips, to camps and special events - highlight the diverse collections at the museum and offer students and teachers interdisciplinary and hands-on learning experiences. SIM's education programs support the NGSS, New York Scope and Sequence, Blueprints for Teaching and Learning in the Arts and Common Core standards. Teacher feedback consistently describes SIM programming as age-appropriate, fun and engaging, and informative.

The Staten Island Museum has a long history of close collaboration and partnership with the NYC Department of Education, including with *STEM Matters NYC* enrichment programs for both Spring Break and Summer camps. Campers get to think like inventors and engineers while participating in workshops focusing on the design process. They identify problems, brainstorm ideas, design solutions, build prototypes, test, evaluate and redesign. Students explore themes of biodiversity, sustainability and environmental resilience to build, invent, and experiment while engaging in team building activities and games that challenge their creativity and spark imagination.

New York City's cultural institutions, including the Staten Island Museum, are key drivers of increasing access to cultural experiences for New York City public schoolchildren, and depend on collaborative support from the NYC Department of Education and New York City Council to strengthen culturally relevant and sustaining education programs.

The Staten Island Museum has been funded in the past by the National Endowment for the Arts and has an outstanding application awaiting notification. With this funding source in jeopardy, more than ever, organizations like the Staten Island Museum will need robust public support from the Department of Education and City Council in order to continue providing critical STEAM education resources to underserved students.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Monger, President & CEO, Staten Island Museum
P: 718.483.7113 JMonger@StatenIslandMuseum.org

**Testimony of David Adams, CEO of The Urban Assembly
NYC Council Education Committee Executive Budget Hearing – Education
May 20, 2025**

Good afternoon Chair Joseph and members of the Education Committee. My name is David Adams, and I am the CEO of The Urban Assembly.

I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to the Council for recognizing the value of the Affinity Network by calling for its funding to be baselined in this year's city budget. And I thank the Administration for ensuring the Executive Budget includes that baseline, reflecting an investment in innovation, equity, and social and economic mobility for New York City's public school students.

As a member of the Affinity Network, The Urban Assembly supports 22 public high schools across the city—providing an unscreened, career-connected education to students who are often furthest from opportunity. We do this while achieving outcomes that consistently exceed citywide averages, particularly for our most vulnerable learners.

Our work is deeply aligned with the city's education goals:

- In 2023, our graduation rate was over 89%, nearly 6 points above the city average.
- For students with disabilities, our schools graduated 83%—a full 19 points higher than the citywide average.
- We've narrowed or closed the racial graduation gaps that persist across the system. In fact, we've reversed the citywide Black-White and Hispanic-White gaps by 4 to 10 percentage points.

This is what equity in action looks like. This is what it looks like to invest in all learners.

The Affinity model works because it leverages trusted, mission-driven partners like Urban Assembly to deliver high-impact, school-based support. Our approach combines social-emotional learning, career and technical education, postsecondary planning, work-based learning, and instructional coaching—while also driving innovation, like the integration of AI into classrooms. We don't just support individual schools; we scale effective practices systemwide.

Baselining Affinity funding affirms the city's belief in this proven model—and unlocks the ability to plan and invest over the long term. The results speak for themselves: new Urban Assembly partner schools have increased graduation rates by an average of 20% over five years.

And the return on investment is undeniable. The DOE supports our 22 schools at just \$60,000 per school—compared to over \$500,000 per specialized high school—yet our outcomes rival or exceed those of more resourced institutions. Every student deserves that level of success. This funding ensures we can sustain it—and grow it.

Our innovations in AI, graduation tracking, Crew, English as a new language, Social and Emotional and portfolio based feedback have produced meaningful effects for the students in New York City Public Schools... and we won't stop there.

Chair Joseph, members of the committee: thank you for your partnership and for your advocacy. Your leadership ensures that equity and excellence remain the standard for all students in this city. Thank you for recognizing the value of this work—and for standing with us to secure its future.



TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair

and

New York City Council Committee on Education

Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair

Submitted by:

Faith Behum, UJA-Federation of New York

May 20, 2025

Thank you, Chairpersons Brannan and Joseph and members of the Committee on Finance and Education, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a Manager of Government and External Relations 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 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 \$185 million each year to combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, counter antisemitism and strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

UJA submits the following recommendations for the FY 2026 budget.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Preschool Special Education

UJA is thankful the Administration committed to investing \$55 million for preschool special education classes in FY 2026. This funding will ensure that the additional preschool special education classes and seats that were created using this money will be maintained through FY 2026. It is important to note, even with the \$55 million investment in preschools special education classes in FY 2025, more than 600 preschoolers with disabilities were waiting for a seat in a preschool special education class or a special class in an integrated setting as of March 2025.

Moreover, the funding added for classes does not address the need for evaluations or the need for services for preschoolers with disabilities participating in general education or integrated 3-K and Pre-K classes. As of March 2025, more than 7,900 preschoolers were waiting for at least one of their legally mandated services to begin, and more than half of those preschoolers (4,570 children) were receiving none of their mandated services at all. The FY 2026 Adopted Budget must invest and baseline at least \$70 million to provide preschoolers with evaluations and mandated services by launching more New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) evaluation teams; hiring additional NYCPS service providers and teachers; and allocating funding to Pre-K Centers and schools with 3-K and Pre-K programs so that children receive their services where they go to preschool.

The Administration must commit to more substantial investments in preschool special education programs or they will continue to struggle to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a timely manner. **UJA requests the Administration and Councilmembers baseline \$70 million to improve access to services and supports for preschoolers with disabilities.**

Pre-K and 3-K programs

UJA is thankful the Administration agreed to baseline \$112 million for 3-K programs and \$25 million for extended day and year seats to children in 3-K and Pre-K programs in the FY 2026 budget. \$5 million of one year funding was added to increase outreach to families across New York City who are eligible for the 3-K and Pre-K program. **UJA requests that the \$5 million for outreach for early childhood and education programs be baselined in the FY 2026 budget.**

A few issues including continued delayed reimbursement from NYCPS, lack of comprehensive pay parity for the workforce, and the inability to directly enroll families continue to threaten the sustainability of the 3-K and Pre-K programs in community-based organizations (CBOs). Since October 2022, NYCPS has slowly improved the timeliness of payments on Birth to Five contracts. While some providers have benefitted from this, others still wait to be compensated. One of the biggest issues nonprofits in UJA's network faces is waiting for approval of students. Students must be approved before a program can invoice and be paid. Students not being approved also delays providers' ability to enter data into the vendor portal about completed developmental screenings, which are required to be done 45 days after a child is enrolled. When providers contact their enrollment specialist and/or operational analyst about these issues they struggle to receive concrete suggestions on what can be done to rectify the problems delaying students to be registered.

No City contracted 3-K and Pre-K programs at CBOs should have to wait months to be compensated for completed work. UJA urges the Administration to address the payment issues facing the 3-K and Pre-K systems by:

- **Paying early care and education service providers on time and complete payments owed immediately.**
- **Fully staff NYCPS divisions responsible for invoicing and payment and make permanent the ability of ECE providers to batch multiple months of invoices.**

Enrollment procedures create additional issues for families and providers. Currently, families enroll their children in 3-K and Pre-K programs located in CBOs through NYCPS. NYCPS enrolling families in CBO 3-K and Pre-K programs creates another unnecessary step in the enrollment process that families would not have to deal with if they could enroll through the CBOs. It also results in CBOs obtaining their list of enrollees from NYCPS meaning they ultimately have control over who is or is not attending CBO programs. CBOs interact directly with families who are interested in attending their 3-K and Pre-K programs and should be given the option to directly enroll them in their programs.

Lack of comprehensive pay parity across the early childhood education workforce continues plagues the sector as well. The 2019 salary parity agreement eventually resulted in all certified CBO teachers in pre-kindergarten programs receiving the same compensation as entry level NYCPS pre-kindergarten teachers. Not included in this agreement were longevity increases which resulted in teachers who worked in CBO Pre-K programs for multiple years making the same amount as a teacher who is a new hire. Directors and educational directors in CBO Pre-K programs were also not included in the 2019 salary parity agreement. As a result, many are compensated less than the teachers they supervise, resulting in directors and educational directors leaving CBOs for higher paying jobs. Additionally, non-teaching staff in CBOs, including assistants, janitors, cooks, and other staff, are being compensated less than their counterparts in New York City Public Schools.

In 2024, labor contract agreements were made between Local 95 (HeadStart providers) and Local 205 (nonprofit child care centers that contract with NYCPS). Local 215 members and those who are not unionized

were not included in these contract agreements. All of the 3-K and Pre-K programs in UJA's network of nonprofits are either members of Local 215 or not unionized. This means these providers are operating on different contract agreements than what was agreed upon for Local 95 and Local 205. These contract agreements are not perfect however Local 205's agreement in particular includes salary increases, longevity payments and retention bonuses, a minimum pay rate of \$18 an hour, funds towards health insurance costs, and additional pay for employees who work in extended day and year programs. All of these are issues that previous labor agreements did not address. Meanwhile the CBOs who are not unionized or are in Local 215 and were not included in the 2024 contract agreement are offering their staff smaller salaries and less benefits due to continuing to work off an outdated salary agreement.

To combat this, UJA urges the City to immediately fund an early childhood education labor contract agreement for staff not covered by the Local 95 and Local 205 agreements. This would include Local 215 and non-unionized CBOs. At a minimum the agreement must match what Local 205 agreed upon in order to allow Local 215 members to receive the same benefits and compensation as their counterparts. Ideally, the agreement would result in equivalent salaries and benefits for equal levels of education and experience between certified and uncertified early childhood educators inside and outside NYCPS programs. This should also account for the differences in school days and longer hours worked by CBO educators as well as include longevity increases. A minimum wage floor of \$25 an hour must also be included for non-teaching staff in CBOs. Lastly, when contracts agreements are achieved, they must be promptly amended to include additional funds for CBOs to have the financial means to compensate their workforce according to those agreements.

UJA's nonprofit partners entered contracts with NYCPS, agreeing to be funded by the City to provide high-quality early childhood education programs to the communities they serve. These nonprofits have kept up their end of that agreement and need the City to address the previously stated issues to maintain a thriving early childhood education system in New York City.

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Since Hamas' October 7th, 2023 attack, Jewish day schools have faced increased security threats. Schools have invested in additional methods (for example increasing security personnel) to provide a secure learning environment for their students. The increased costs of which have largely been placed on the parents of the students who attend the schools. This has been financially taxing on the families who send their children to Jewish day schools.

The Adams' Administration recognized this and changed Local Law 2's student enrollment threshold from 300 to 150 students, making more nonpublic schools eligible to be reimbursed for school security guards through New York City funds. UJA is thankful to the Adams' Administration for changing Local Law 2 and their continued commitment to making sure all children are educated in a safe environment.

Health and Wellness Services for Nonpublic Schools

Section 912 of the NYS Education Law requires school districts to provide nonpublic school students the same health and wellness services provided to public school students. However, there is a wide range of services NYC Public Schools offer in their schools including access to social workers, counselors, and other mental health services. These same services are not offered to many private school students due to their inability to fund similar supports.

Several programs championed by the City Council focused on the health and mental health needs of the children of New York City and we applaud the Administration's focus on meeting the needs of school-aged children. These initiatives include increasing support for peer mental health programs in schools. As the City continues to meet the evolving needs of children and we continue to strive to meet school-aged children's needs and challenges, the Administration must ensure that the health and safety of the non-public school community is not left behind and that all schools are provided with expanded supports for mental health. **UJA urges the City**

to provide services to nonpublic schools in parity to the public school community, including peer mental health support and other subsidized supports.

ADULT LITERACY

There are currently over 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English language proficiency or who do not have a high school diploma. Yet combined city and state funding for adult literacy education is so limited that fewer than 3% of these New Yorkers can access ESOL, adult basic education (ABE), or GED classes in any given year.

The overwhelming majority of the New Yorkers in need of adult literacy classes are poor and working-class immigrants, women, and people of color; and while the need for adult education classes has only grown over the past two years, in FY 2025 the Adams' Administration cut funding for community-based adult literacy programs funded through multiyear contracts with DYCD from \$17 million to \$12 million.

According to January's Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, there were over 18,000 adults served in DYCD-funded adult literacy programs in FY 2024. Yet the \$12 million in funding for FY 2025 is slated to serve only 9,118 students, just half the number of those served last year. Fortunately, the City Council used discretionary funding to restore the Administration's cuts made in FY 2025. But discretionary funding is never guaranteed, and it should not be incumbent upon the City Council to subsidize the Administration's lack of investing in core community needs.

This upcoming fiscal year is looking dire as well. The proposed federal budget for FY 2026 calls for the elimination of funding for adult literacy education. The loss of this funding would cost New York City approximately \$24.6 million and would eliminate seats for over 20,000 adult students.

UJA-Federation calls on the Administration to **double the baseline funding for adult literacy programs funded through DYCD from \$12 million to \$24 million**, restoring the cuts from last year and enabling programs to bolster and stabilize their services in a time of increased need and continuous threats to our communities. In addition, UJA-Federation calls on the Council to **maintain total discretionary funding for adult literacy education at \$16.5 million and to fold City Council Adult Literacy Initiative funding - and the Initiative-funded programs - into the City Council Adult Literacy Pilot Project**, creating one, single funding stream for all City Council adult literacy discretionary dollars.

Adult literacy education provides individuals with greater opportunities, furthers equity, and advances educational justice. For these reasons, UJA urges the Administration and the Council to consider the proposed recommendations.

CONCLUSION

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist New York City's most vulnerable and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions, please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org or 212-836-1338.



**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council**

**FY 2026 Executive Budget Hearing:
Committee on Education
Council Member Rita C. Joseph, Chair**

**Submitted by Paula Inhargue
May 20th, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education for convening today's Executive Budget hearing. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing neighborhood settlement houses that reach over 800,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life at 770 locations. A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

Settlement houses have been community hubs for education for decades, and continue to provide New York City's communities with guidance around academic instruction and enrichment, as well as navigating the Department of Education (DOE) at large. They have also served as sites for DOE programming, and as mediators between communities and the DOE to ensure that schools remain as responsive to the needs of their local communities. Many also contract with the DOE to provide early childhood education in New York City, serving an estimated 12,000 children under the age of 5.

Our testimony will focus on recommendations to support crucial education programs, and preserve access to care for families across the City, including:

- Invest \$350 million to match the State's commitment to ensure families don't lose access to child care assistance vouchers.
- Continue the path toward universal child care in New York City by funding 2 Care to create child care for 2-year olds, starting with a \$25.7 million investment to serve 1,000 children.
- Expand the City's extended-day pilot program to include all kids in the city's universal 3-K and Pre-K programs.
- Restore \$3.3 Million to Student Success Centers;
- Ensure Sustainability of Community Schools;
- Baseline \$31 million for Learning to Work programs;
- Restore funding for the Promise NYC program with a \$25 million annual investment;
- Pilot an alternative summer program model for middle school youth.

New York City's CCAP crisis

New York City is facing a major shortfall in funding for its Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which provides vouchers to help low-income families and families receiving Temporary Assistance (TA) pay for child care.

In light of the FY26 New York State Enacted Budget, there are growing concerns about the City's capacity to meet current and future child care assistance needs. The State allocated \$350 million for New York City under CCAP, but requires the City to match those funds, and we understand this is only part of the funding shortfall. We have many outstanding questions: Is the City committed to fulfill its obligations under the new funding structure? What steps are being taken to address the waitlists and ensure no eligible family is left without child care assistance?

We are in the midst of a rapidly evolving situation, with new details emerging regularly. We know that New York City is facing a major burden in committing the necessary funds to maintain access to child care vouchers. At this time, we urge the Council to monitor this issue closely and keep active communications with the Mayor, ACS, and OMB. Meeting this funding shortfall is crucial to ensure that families do not lose access to the child care they rely on.

The City must be held accountable for protecting access to child care. **The Council should press for clarity and action, and urge the City to prioritize families by guaranteeing that every child who needs care will not be left behind, while working with the State to develop a long-term funding solution to this issue.**

Continue the path toward universal child care in New York City by funding 2 Care to create child care for 2-year olds, starting with a \$25.7 million investment to serve 1,000 children.

Free child care options for 2-year-olds in New York City are extremely limited, despite the fact that families spend an average of \$23,000¹ annually for care at this age. To support families and create a more comprehensive Birth-to-Five system, aging down the City's early childhood education system must be a top priority to ensure families with young children can remain in New York City.

We envision 2 Care as a free, full-day, full-year child care program for all 2-year-olds, with a simple application process mirroring that of Pre-K and 3-K, available centrally through the DOE or on-site at child care providers. We are advocating for a non-means-tested program that guarantees access to care regardless of a family's financial situation. The current system is failing families—80% of children who qualify for voucher programs do not receive benefits, leaving thousands without the care they need. Every child deserves quality care, and no parent should have to prove they deserve it. A truly accessible system must remove these barriers and establish child care as a right, not a privilege.

In FY26, the City could take the first step toward 2 Care by investing \$25.7 million to fund 1,000 seats across the five boroughs. Demographic and income data can help determine where programs should be located to meet the greatest need, while implementation could begin by leveraging existing licensed capacity and incorporating providers such as fee-for-service programs. The infrastructure for expansion already exists—when 3-K launched, existing classrooms were converted to accommodate the program, and many Family Child Care (FCC) providers already serve toddlers, making them a natural fit for this initiative.

¹ Child Care Affordability and the Benefits of Universal Provision
<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/child-care-affordability-and-the-benefits-of-universal-provision/>

Now is the time to act. Parents need these child care options, and with the DOE preparing to rebid its entire early childhood education system, this is a pivotal moment. If the City invests in care for 2-year-olds now, it will not only address an urgent need but also set a strong precedent for the upcoming procurement process.

Expand the City's extended-day pilot program to include all kids in the city's universal 3-K and Pre-K programs

The Mayor's FY26 Executive Budget included important restorations for child care, and while this progress is crucial, it is not enough when families still have no child care for their kids after 2:30 in the afternoon. Every family that needs a full-day seat should have one.

When there aren't enough extended day seats, families pay the price. Parents are forced to choose between keeping their jobs or picking up their children. Too often it's mothers who are pushed out of the workforce or into part-time and unstable jobs. Employers lose experienced, hardworking employees. And most importantly, children lose access to consistent, safe, high-quality care. This is not just about individual families. It's about the strength of our workforce, our economy, and our future as a city.

New York families are doing everything they can. They are working hard, raising children, and contributing to our communities in an increasingly challenging context. They deserve a truly universal child care system that supports them. That is why the City should **expand the School Day Plus extended-day pilot program to include all kids in 3-K and Pre-K programs, and make sure that every working family who needs a seat gets one.**

Restore \$3.3 Million to Student Success Centers

Students respond better to support that is consistent and individualized to their circumstances. However, in New York City Public Schools, one guidance counselor serves an average of 221 students. This astounding ratio only tells part of the story as post-secondary planning is just one of responsibilities a school guidance counselor is tasked with. With rising concerns about youth mental health and an influx of newly-arrived young people to NYC's public schools, the demands on guidance counselors' time are greater than ever.

Student Success Centers (SSCs) aim to fill this college counseling gap by pairing the expertise of community-based organizations with youth leadership training. In an SSC, youth leaders are trained as Peer Leaders. Together with CBO staff, Peer Leaders provide workshops, college trips, and one-on-one individualized counseling to help students through the college admissions and financial aid processes. The Student Success Center model is available at 34 high schools citywide. Settlement Houses operate 27 of these programs.

It is vital that the City commit to supporting all students navigating postsecondary options and the college admissions systems by restoring this program. UNH urges the City to **restore \$3.3 million for the Student Success Center program through sustainable funding sources, and baseline this funding for the outyears.**

Additionally, we urge the City to streamline the FY26 funding process to help providers understand earlier how much funding they should expect per site, and how to access this funding. In FY25, SSC providers were made to believe that school partners would allocate all College & Career Advising SAM funding to the SSC. However, school partners were not made aware of this assumption, leading some principals to refuse to allocate the full amount of funding, and reducing the total amount of operating

funds available to the SSCs. Increased transparency and accountability for the roles of all stakeholders will improve the planning and implementation of SSCs.

Ensure Sustainability of Community Schools

Students learn better when their various physical and socio-emotional needs are met and when they have significant relationships with caring adults. If students are coming to their classes hungry, dealing with the stress of living in temporary housing, receiving inadequate mental or physical health care, or dealing with other social-emotional or economic hardships, it will only be that much harder to focus on academics. Community schools address those barriers by partnering with community based organizations in holistic and innovative ways, and represent a long-term resource coordination strategy to sustainably invest in youth, families, and communities.

Specifically, the success of the community schools is built on the pillars of integrated student supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices. These inextricable elements work together to address socioeconomic and health disparities in schools and communities through a partnership between school staff and community based organizations to deliver wraparound services.

Given their track record of success², the New York State Education Department recommended the community schools model as part of their reopening guidance to school districts,³ and the City committed to using federal stimulus funding to expand the number of NYC community schools from 266 to 406. The community school model is the best strategy for supporting the education spectrum: academic, enrichment, student and family support, engagement/ reengagement, and restorative justice policies and practices, and have also served as community centers of mental health through depression/anxiety screenings, in-house mental health services, and referrals to larger networks of support outside of the school. Community schools are also an investment in conflict mediation, a pliable model for delivering mental health services to young people to meet them where they are, and can be spaces for families to begin the steps of accessing culturally competent care for their children.

Settlement houses within UNH's network operate 33 Community School contracts. UNH recommends smart and sustainable investments from the City in the Community Schools Initiative to support the long-term existence of these crucial services. Consistent and sustainable funding is critical to building community trust and authentic school-community partnerships.

While the \$14M gap in the FY26 Preliminary Budget was closed and funding for Community Schools have been baselined in the out years, there is still uncertainty about the future stability of Community Schools. At least 30 Community Schools are currently funded by federal dollars through the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative. In the budget proposal recently released by President Trump, this initiative would see a dramatic decrease in funding. **To ensure long-term sustainability of the Community School system, the City must develop a contingency plan to ensure funding for schools funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative if this funding is cut by the federal government.**

Finally, the Department of Education's unique procurement process must be examined and reformed to address the lengthy contract registration process, delays in payment and an inconvenient bridge loan process. Community School providers are not reimbursed for provided services in a timely

² The RAND Corporation released a comprehensive report on the impact of NYC community schools [accessible here](#).

³ [Guidance accessible here](#)

manner, making program planning and sustainability difficult. These are barriers to consistently delivering services.

Invest in Learning to Work

The Learning to Work (LTW) model supports students in Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC) as they work towards their high school diploma and the development of a post-secondary plan. Community based organizations (CBOs) are embedded in the fabric of these schools through LTW contracts with the DOE and provide academic and socioemotional support, career and college exploration, skills development, internships, and much more.

The Learning to Work model is available citywide in 46 Transfer Schools and 20 YABCs. Settlement houses operate 27 of these contracts. In the 2019-2020 school year, LTW providers supported 16,446 students and provided 3,006 internships, which amounted to over \$9 million in revenue to students.

According to the 2023 NYC School Survey, students in LTW programs generally felt safer and more supported than non-LTW high schools. Of students in LTW programs, 89% reported that conflicts were resolved fairly at their school, in contrast with 70% at non-LTW schools. Additionally, 93% of LTW students reported that adults at their school helped them plan for the future, in contrast with only 81% of students in non-LTW programs.

Although funding for LTW programs was restored in the FY26 Preliminary Budget, there was no funding secured for the out years in the FY26 Executive Budget. UNH urges the City to **baseline LTW's full \$31 million budget through sustainable funding sources**.

Additionally, the last full LTW procurement was in 2014, making it over 10 years since the program was re-bid and saw an increase in the base funding. Last year, Eskolta's assessment of LTW programs was released, highlighting the need for a reprocurement to update the model for today's population of LTW students, and for increased funding to address staffing shortages. UNH urges DOE to release the Request for Proposals this year.

Restore and Baseline Promise NYC with a \$25 million Annual Investment

Under Promise NYC, four providers, including three settlement houses, have contracted with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to implement a child care voucher program in each of their respective boroughs (NMIC in the Bronx and Manhattan, Center for Family Life in Brooklyn, Chinese-American Planning Council in Queens, and La Colmena in Staten Island). Since the program launched in FY23, providers have been reporting full enrollment and long waitlists, which demonstrates the need and desire from families to have these seats.

Promise NYC was funded at \$25 million in the City's FY 2025 budget, and this increased investment has helped clear waitlists across the program. Although the FY26 Executive Budget includes funding for this program, it is a one-year investment that fails to provide long-term stability, leaving providers once again uncertain about the continuity of funding in 2026. We urge the City to **restore and baseline \$25 million for Promise NYC** in the FY 2026 Adopted budget so that families can continue to access the affordable, subsidized child care they need and providers can have the necessary stability and resources to keep offering these services.

Pilot an Alternative Summer Program Model for Middle School Youth

Despite having completed four years of Summer Rising, the City has still released no data on its efficacy and has not conducted a formal evaluation of the model. In response to questions from settlement houses and their communities about the efficacy of this program, UNH conducted a study of Summer Rising, composed of a digital survey of 700 parents and CBO providers, and 7 focus groups of middle school participants. In November 2024, UNH released [One Size Does Not Fit All: Assessing the Efficacy of the Summer Rising Program in Meeting the Needs of New York City Families](#). Some of our key findings were:

- Many families are dependent on free summer programming provided by the city. 58% of surveyed parents said they did not have a back-up option if Summer Rising was not available, with the percentage rising to 64% for low-income families.
- Middle schoolers expressed frustration with the DOE-led academics. 87% of focus group participants disagreed or felt neutral in regards to the statement “I feel engaged in the morning session” of Summer Rising.”
- Despite recognizing the value of summer academic enrichment, many parents participating in the survey expressed frustration over a lack of communication around the DOE-led academic program. Parents reported being unclear about what curriculum was being used, who their students’ teachers were, and if their child’s learning needs were being met. This was in contrast to reports of regular communication from the CBO staff.
- There are widespread concerns whether students with IEPs and English Language Learners are receiving appropriate accommodations. Over half of CBO staff said that a shortage of paraprofessional support for students with IEPs was one of the most pressing challenges. Additionally, some focus group participants who identify as English Language Learners shared that they were excluded from the DOE-led academic portion and given arts & crafts projects instead.

On March 13, 2025, the Department of Education released the *Summer Rising 2024 Impact Analysis*⁴, which used spring 2024 and fall 2024 standardized academic data to compare the academic performance of young people who participated in Summer Rising to those who did not participate in the program.⁵ From this data, we can see that there were moderate academic gains in the elementary school participants. However, this was not true for middle school students. Even for middle school participants who attended Summer Rising programming for 20+ days, there was no statistically significant impact on Math scores. Furthermore, when compared to other students in the City, middle school Summer Rising participants who attended Summer Rising programming for 20+ days actually fared worse in reading scores than the comparison group. DOE’s own impact analysis supports our findings that Summer Rising is not an appropriate model for all middle school youth.

With funding for future summers already allocated in the budget, **the City should use a portion of the dedicated summer funding to pilot alternative summer programming models for middle school students in 2026.**

The summer months offer young people a break from the traditional school schedule, and allow more time for outside play, postsecondary exploration, field trips, positive peer socialization, and hands-on learning activities. Higher-income families often have the option to pick from different summer options depending on their child’s preference, but most low-income families are reliant on city-funded programs to ensure a safe summer placement. Youth and families should have a voice in deciding what kind of programming is right for them, and, if youth, parents, and staff are reporting frustration with the current model, the City should pivot to alternative models that have the potential to re-engage

⁴https://pwsblobprd.schools.nyc/prd-pws/docs/default-source/default-document-library/summer-rising-2024-impact-analysis-web-deck.pdf?sfvrsn=62dd096a_2

⁵ There is not sufficient information provided to know if the comparison group of young people who did not participate in Summer Rising did participate in alternative summer programming.

them. Allowing for multiple summer programming models⁶ would also provide district-level flexibility to better serve English Language Learners and students with disabilities. In the current model, there is little room for flexibility and limited resources to provide these young people with the proper support.

In addition to investing in multiple program models to meet the needs of more young people, the City must commit to fixing the extensive operational issues:

- Although Summer Rising programming is an add-on to existing contracts, this funding sees huge delays every summer. As of mid-May 2025, providers in the UNH network have only received advances on their Summer Rising contracts, and have not been able to invoice on their contracts for FY25. In fact, several providers revealed that they had only been sent the total amount they will be receiving within the last few weeks. As these providers will need to start hiring Summer 2025 staff soon, this leaves providers floating a huge amount of money for the City in order to make this program happen.
- DYCD intentionally overenrolls programs, leaving providers without guidance on how to staff their programs. DYCD says that this policy is done to account for drop-off over the course of the summer. However, providers are left with the question of whether they should hire staff based on the number of slots they are contracted for, or the number of students who have accepted enrollment into the program. As there is no clear guidance from DYCD as to under what circumstances providers will be compensated for additional enrolled students, providers are forced to balance a lack of funding with unsafe staffing structures.

Thank you for your time. To follow up, you can contact me at pinhargue@unhny.org.

⁶ Examples of alternative summer programming models are provided in our [Recommendations for Summer 2025](#) document.



Testimony on behalf of Volunteers of America-Greater New York
The New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on Finance
Joint Executive Budget Hearing on Education
May 20th, 2025

Introduction and Thanks

My name is Eric Lee, Director of Public Policy for Volunteers of America-Greater New York (VOA-GNY). We are the local affiliate of the national organization, Volunteers of America, Inc. (VOA). I would like to thank Chair Joseph and Chair Brannan and the members of the Education and Finance Committees for the opportunity to submit written testimony for this hearing.

About Us

VOA-GNY is an anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in Greater New York through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, serving more than 12,000 adults and children annually through 70+ programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester and thousands more via our Operation Backpack® initiative. We are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties—with more in the pipeline.

Thank you, Chair Joseph and members of the Council, for your unwavering leadership and support of students in temporary housing. **VOA-GNY greatly appreciates Chair Joseph and the Council's support for Operation Backpack® by inclusion of \$250,000 for it in the Council's Preliminary Budget Response.** It is our signature service campaign which partners with the DOE and our sister organizations to provide grade-specific school supplies to every school-aged child in the shelter system prior to the first day of school. **Given the anticipated need for the coming school year, we welcome the Council's continued leadership in urging the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to resume its donation to Operation Backpack® for FY26 with an allocation of \$500,000 dollars. We are also seeking the support of Council Members throughout the city (Discretionary Request Ref #179272) to offset the rising cost of this campaign as DOE participation remains uncertain** and ensure that we can continue to help homeless kids get their school year off to a strong start in the 2025-26 school year.

In 2024, in response to historic budget pressures, the DOE stopped financial support and in-kind donations for Operation Backpack®. By cobbling together private support to cover this shortfall, **VOA-GNY was able to successfully provide backpacks and school supplies to 19,000 students living in shelter last year** but still shy of the need as the City's family shelter population surged in part due to the influx of recently arrived New Yorkers. Adding to our disappointment that we couldn't reach every child, VOA-GNY later learned that despite the record need, the DOE actually left money on the table for Students in Temporary Housing by the end of the school year for lack of an efficient way to coordinate spending to get those students what they needed. To right that egregious wrong, it is critically important that the DOE partner with us so that we can lend our expertise in coordinating with DHS and HRA at the shelter level before the first day of school, matching supplies to students instead of schools who don't yet know what their actual enrollment of homeless students will look like.



Background on Operation Backpack®

Beginning in 2003 as a small initiative to provide gently-worn backpacks and supplies to children living within our own shelters, it has grown to be one of the largest school drives in the area, helping students in VOA-GNY shelters and more than 200 others across the five boroughs. Operation Backpack® prioritizes respect for the child by ensuring that backpacks and supplies are distributed within shelters prior to the start of the school year to avoid inadvertently being singled out as “in need”. We purchase a variety of backpack brands and designs commonly worn by students today and filled with supplies based on requirement lists from 30+ public schools and adjusted based on feedback from parents, teachers, and of course the students who are at the heart of Operation Backpack®.

Our program works both on the human level – by taking away the stigma and preparing children early – and, on the operational efficiency level – by taking the guesswork out of which schools these children may enroll in on the first day and matching the supplies directly to the student alleviating principals of the burden of projecting need. This approach ensures that every dollar is put to good use and every child has what they need.

With the number of homeless families reaching an all-time high in FY25, the significance of Operation Backpack® has never been greater. **As the Committee well knows, helping children succeed in school is critical to interrupting the cycle of intergenerational poverty.** Ensuring students are well-equipped with school supplies leads to increased rates of homework completion, class participation, and, ultimately, graduation.

VOA-GNY would greatly appreciate the Council’s leadership in urging the Department of Education to re-establish support for Operation Backpack®, and we graciously welcome Council Members to support the work of this critical campaign through our Member Item Request to help students in temporary housing succeed in the coming school year.

Thank you to the Committee on Education and Committee on Finance and the entire Council for your continued leadership and advocacy for students in New York City. Through ensuring that students within our communities have the resources and support they need to achieve, we can continue to build a thriving City for future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Testimony respectfully submitted by Eric Lee.

If you have any questions, please contact me at elee@voa-gny.org.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**New York City Council
Committee on Finance, Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair
Committee on Education, Honorable Rita Joseph, Chair**

**Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York
Submitted by Chelsea Baytemur, Director of Policy and Advocacy**

**New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing
May 20, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to present 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 largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to older adults and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities.

The YMCA is also a proud member of the Campaign for Children (C4C), Coalition for Community School Excellence (CCSE), and the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF). As members of these coalitions, we support their policy and budget agendas.

We thank the City Council, Chair Joseph, and Speaker Adams for their steadfast partnership and advocacy in securing critical investments in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. We are pleased that the Executive Budget includes long-term funding for a few important education programs that were at risk due to expiring city funding, including but not limited to 3-K, preschool special education classes, extended day 3-K and pre-K seats, community schools, and high impact tutoring. These investments ensured the continuation of essential education programs, staff, and services that in tandem support youth and their families.

However, the Executive Budget leaves out Student Success Centers (\$3.3M) entirely, so this program is still at risk of being eliminated as soon as July. Student Success Centers train and support youth leaders on how to guide their peers through the college admissions process, providing crucial support to students at more than 30 high schools.

YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK 5 West 63rd Street New York, NY 10023
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YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK | Where there's a Y, there's a way.

Additionally, the Executive Budget leaves several programs without long-term funding, opting instead to extend their funding for one year only creating uncertainty for the communities they serve. Long-term funding provides stability for critical programming. Without long-term funding, programs have a harder time hiring and keeping staff, and students and their families are left unsure if programs they rely on will continue to operate.

Programs that received funding for one more year only and are, therefore, at risk of cuts in 2026, include:

- Summer programming to provide students with recreational activities, arts, and field trips, in addition to academic enrichment (\$80M);
- Learning to Work programs to provide support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan (\$31M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended (\$6M);
- The Mental Health Continuum to provide mental healthcare to students at 50 schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (\$5M);
- Outreach efforts to help ensure families are aware of early childhood programs (\$5M); and
- Immigrant family communication and outreach to help ensure families can receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access (\$4M).

We join with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling for the city to baseline funding for these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget. We also join with the coalition in calling on the city to make additional investments that are needed to support students, especially those who have the greatest needs.

Budgets reflect our priorities. A budget without stable, sustainable funding for education sends a clear message to students, families, educators, and nonprofit providers that their futures are not a priority. We urge the Administration to act on the Executive Budget, ensuring continued investment in the programs and services that sustain our children's well-being and development. Let us make a commitment to elevating and empowering the next generation of New Yorkers.

If you have any questions, please contact Chelsea Baytemur, Director of Policy and Advocacy, at cbaytemur@ymcanyc.org.

**Testimony for New York City Council
Committee on Education and Committee on Finance**

Re: Fiscal Year 26 Executive Budget - Education

May 22, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the city education budget. My name is Abdoulaye Fofana. I live in the Bronx with my son, Musa, who is three-and-a-half years old and autistic.

Musa missed out on most of this school year because the Department of Education did not have a seat for him in a preschool special education class – and did not even have the services he needed. Waiting for a placement was nerve-wracking. We saw how much progress Musa had made during Early Intervention and worried he would lose it all before a seat became available.

I reached out to the DOE again and again – calling, emailing, and visiting the office, only to be told that no class was available. After four months of asking—and even finding an attorney to help me—the DOE finally found speech and occupational therapy providers to work with Musa. After seven months, in March, Musa was finally placed in a preschool special education class.

When you find out your child has a disability, you want to do everything you can to make sure they get the services they need to succeed. It should not be this hard to get help for your child.

No child should have to wait for a preschool special education class. No child should have to wait for essential services like speech therapy.

These services are not optional—they are crucial and they are a legal right. Yet, as of March 2025, more than 600 children were waiting for seats in preschool special education classes, and more than 7,900 preschoolers were waiting to begin at least one of their services.

The Mayor's budget does not include any funding to add more preschool special education classes or services for the children who are waiting.

This is unacceptable. The City must do more for its children and families. The City must add funding to this year's budget so that every preschooler with a disability can get the classes and services that they need—without months of waiting. No child should have to wait. Not Musa. Not anyone's child.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit testimony.



Good afternoon everyone, my name is Albert Tan, I am a senior at The Brooklyn School for Math and Research and a Youth Leader at Make the Road New York's Student Success Center at Bushwick Campus. I have had the opportunity to work with students from the four schools on our campus. Our Student Success Center has become a safe space to talk about different issues that my peers face. Being a Youth Leader means getting to do what I love: helping people of all kinds, no matter the circumstances. Coming from a first-generation, low-income background, I've experienced what it feels like to want help but not be able to get any. Guiding students one-on-one throughout the college application and financial aid process is a way for me to both learn and grow. Despite receiving YL training this past summer, sometimes I still fail to get every step or piece of information about the college process correct. It's through hands-on work at the Student Success Center that I get to fix my mistakes and improve.

There is a segregation of schools all across New York City. On one hand, there are schools that are flourishing because of the excess amount of funding they receive. On the other hand, however, there are schools like Bushwick Campus that are severely underfunded. This means we don't have enough counselors to meet the needs of my peers and the Student Success Center has played a pivotal role in supporting those needs. The SSC allows people of all kinds to find shelter and information that they otherwise wouldn't be able to access at schools themselves. Peers all across Bushwick Campus visit the SSC every day, and it's not just the same faces. Working here, I see different people come in for academic support, professional development, and wellness support.

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If the SSC failed to exist, finding the same information that advisors here specialize in would get a whole lot harder. There is a bulletin board right at the entrance of the SSC that outlines many different services that people look at daily. Even to me, as someone who received training, the SSC is invaluable in developing my interpersonal skills. Here, I feel safe to socialize, ask questions and have deep conversations with my advisors. The SSC is where I feel I have formed lifelong connections and have been able to pass on knowledge to my peers on things that I have learned about the college process. It is for this reason and so many more that I urge the City Council to ensure continued and expanded funding for Student Success Centers so that students can receive support for their future.

Thank you,

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Allyson Lynch, teaching artist, dancer, singer-songwriter

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Education
Hearing date and time: **Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., with public testimony at 2:00 p.m.**

I have been a teaching artist in schools since 2001. I've worked with a variety of community based organizations including but not limited to Brooklyn Arts Council and Alvin Ailey Arts-in-Education. My arts background is in Hip Hop, street dance, music and vocal performance.

Arts education is a necessity for students. I've been a part of evaluating all of my programs I've worked in and students need the arts to live and thrive in New York City. Arts education has also supported me to live in this city.

Arts education is necessary to make New York City thrive. We must prioritize arts education now more than ever as our nation slips further into authoritarianism.



Urban Youth Collaborative



My name is Ammy. I'm a junior in high school from Brooklyn and a youth leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. Just last week, I was in Albany speaking for the New York for All bill legislation that would protect immigrant New Yorkers, including myself.

With the new administration, New York City must also protect immigrant students by divesting from all forms of school policing and punitive practices. It's time to shift funding away from systems that fuel the school-to-deportation pipeline and instead invest in those that truly support and protect students.

After a long day at school, I am here because I care about real safety, not more police, but more counselors, mental health support, restorative justice, and college access. Schools should be places where students feel safe to learn and grow. There's no evidence that police prevent conflict; if anything, they often make things worse.

In my experience, having police in school is disruptive. Every morning, hundreds of students often show up on time, but the metal detectors and slow scanning process make us late due to long lines. The school police speak to us rudely and pull students aside for extra checks.

It feels like there's no way to win as a student. Despite my best efforts to be on time and do well, I'm not welcome. Instead, I'm targeted. I've seen students pulled from the line and taken to the bathroom by a teacher and a school officer for searches, including under their clothing. One of my friends went through this. After scanning, they suspected something was hidden in her shirt, so she had to lift her shirt for a full search, even though nothing was found. She came out angry and embarrassed, and the delay made the rest of us even later to class.

but on the other hand, I have two amazing teachers, my ELA teacher and my Model UN teacher, who make me feel truly safe at school. They have supported me through tough times and helped me grow as a student. Just seeing them smile when I walk in reminds me that I'm in a place where I'm valued. Now, imagine if every student had supportive staff like them; the impact would be powerful. Instead of being greeted by police yelling at us in the hallways, we would be met with care, respect, and the support we need to succeed.

Even with the education investments Mayor Adams recently announced in the budget, he still continues to fund more school police than counselors, social workers, or restorative justice staff. We are calling on the City Council to choose differently, to fully fund our futures and real safety. True safety means care and community, not police or ICE. Our schools should be spaces of learning and belonging.

We don't need to be criminalized as we enter our school buildings. We need to be treated as students and future leaders. Removing police would improve our school environments. Funding should go toward real safety and support: Counselors, mental health, RJ coordinators and more. It is time to invest in us! Give us Police Free Schools and the resources our schools so desperately need.



Good afternoon everyone, my name is Andrea Alonso Rodriguez and my pronouns are she/her. I'm in 9th grade and a student at a community school in Bushwick with Make the Road New York. I am also a Restorative Justice youth leader at my school! I'm here because I want to let the city know how important restorative justice is in schools and that students want the city to continue to fund Restorative Justice, and divest from school police.

While being an RJ youth leader, I've learned better ways to communicate, how to be accountable for my actions, and how to de-escalate conflict within my peers. I have first hand experience in seeing my community at school grow because RJ has given me more confidence to make new and strengthen old relationships. I've noticed in myself that I want to come to school more and be more involved in my school community. RJ has given me new ways to look at language and how we use it in schools. It is a powerful tool that I am learning to use.

Restorative justice supports students instead of just punishing them. It helps address the root causes of behavior, keeps students engaged, and teaches accountability. RJ builds empathy instead of pushing students behind with suspensions. RJ has given me more direction, I can see how RJ gives my peers tools to succeed and build a better future. I believe that NYC has an opportunity to be a leader in the U.S. by investing in practices that support young people and divesting from practices that criminalize them.

More funding for school safety officers does not make us safer. It is so stressful to walk into my school in the morning, I constantly hear screaming and school security makes me not want to come to school. I am grateful for our RJ Coordinator because I know I can come to her if I have a problem. I urge City Council to fund Restorative Justice programming because students deserve to be seen, heard and understood. Students demand real safety. I have seen that RJ can keep us safe. It keeps students engaged in their education, reduces repeat offenses, and creates a safer, more supportive school environment and by investing in RJ means investing in the future of our youth and our community. Protect funding for

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restorative justice in schools. Move money away from hiring and training school police and stop the funding for surveillance technology. By not hiring any more school police right now, NYC could save up to \$100M in one year and that money could fund community-based, sustainable RJ approaches to safety.

Thank you for your time.

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**NATIONAL
CHILD ID
PROGRAM**

Executive Summary

A missing or runaway child is every parent's worst nightmare.

Each year, roughly 360,000 children are reported missing to the FBI's National Crime Information Center's (NCIC) Missing Persons File across the United States.ⁱ The actual number of runaway and missing children nationally is likely closer to 2 million children. Various federal agencies currently cite a report from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) which estimates between 1.5 million and 2.6 million children and adolescents run away each yearⁱⁱ. The American Association of Pediatrics estimates 1 in 20 youth run away from home annually which equates to 2.3 million children across the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ

Globally, reports indicate human trafficking is up 25%, including a 31% increase in the number of children trafficking victims since 2019.^{iv} Vice President J.D. Vance has cited studies showing an additional 320,000 migrant children, who crossed the border without their parents, are missing in the United States.^v

Minority communities are disproportionately impacted by these issues. African American girls aged 11-21 are four times more likely to go missing than their white counterparts.^{vi} Fifty-nine percent of all missing children are persons of color.^{vii} The reality is we do not know how severe the true minority and missing problem is nationally due to inconsistent demographic data and different reporting standards across the country. Similarly, studies show that media coverage about missing children tend to inaccurately or fail to report the number of minority and missing children across the country.^{viii}

This is even more true for our 574 federally recognized tribal Nations. The missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives' problem is severe and should be a priority for the new Administration. In a report from October 2021, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) stated violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women has reached devastating levels on tribal lands, in Alaska Native villages, and in urban centers; yet this violence continues to experience a lack of comprehensive reporting and prosecution at the federal, state, and local levels.^{ix} Research from Canada indicates Indigenous women are 400% more likely to go missing than other Canadians.^x

At the 2024 National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) National Training Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, we hosted a panel titled "Sounding the Alarm: Bringing Awareness and Understanding to a National Epidemic, Murdered and Missing People of Color," which concluded that the first hours of any search for a missing child are the most important and additional funding is needed on a federal, state, and local level to tackle the runaway and missing child crisis plaguing black and tribal communities. The additional funding must include resources for prevention, training, education, and awareness.

Reports indicate a missing or runaway child is propositioned for exploitation within two to forty-eight hours of going missing.^{xi} Similarly, research indicates up to 40% of runaways end up being sexually trafficked or exploited.^{xii} Missing and runaway children are significantly at-risk for drug, gang, and human trafficking activity.^{xiii} Running away from home in and of itself is not a crime which makes it harder for law enforcement to locate and record these incidents. Typically, it is not until a runaway commits a crime, often out of necessity or while being trafficked, that they come onto the radar of law enforcement.

Preliminary internal research by NOBLE has indicated 13 states represent the largest amount of reported missing children based on raw numbers and per capita statistics. They are California, Texas, Florida, Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Alaska, Washington, Arizona, Michigan, and Nevada. These states are located in all six regions of our organization and provide a broad picture of missing children nationally.

However, despite the disproportionate number of minority and Indigenous children missing, most states do not provide comprehensive data into the age, race, or gender of missing children reports. This lack of standardized demographic information about missing and runaway children in the states provides a hazy picture of just how bad the minority and missing crisis truly is. Oftentimes, within states there are discrepancies in data reporting. In states where missing and runaway children are underreported, these victims are sometimes categorized as offenders with criminal records for prostitution and other crimes associated with running away. It is not a crime to run away, however drugs, gangs, and human trafficking are all the underbelly of a dark criminal world.

For instance, last year, Louisiana's human trafficking report indicates more than 1,400 children human trafficking victims while National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)/NCIC reported 310 missing children in the state. When reviewing all 50 state reports on human trafficking and missing children, states and federal agencies should look to North Carolina's report as a model for comprehensive demographic reporting. The North Carolina Center for Missing Persons has documented 13,851 missing persons cases this year, with 585 remaining active.^{xiv} Conversely, the federal National Missing and Unidentified Persons System lists 627 open missing persons cases with 1,122 resolved cases.^{xv}

The disparity in reporting, awareness, prevention, training, and community policing tools is why NOBLE is a part of a Minority and Missing Initiative coalition designed to bridge the information gap and increase prevention, awareness, and coordination between law enforcement and communities across America. This coalition includes the Safety Blitz Foundation's National Child ID Program, NFL Alumni Association's Caring for Kids Campaign, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, the National Congress of American Indians, FBI-Law Enforcement Executives Development Association (FBI-LEEDA), and National Night Out.

A case study for how communities of color prevent, educate, raise awareness, and properly tackle this problem is found in Hazel Crest, Illinois. Hazel Crest is part of the Chicagoland area and Police Chief Mitchell Davis is currently the Second Vice President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, former President of the Illinois Chiefs of Police Association, and serves on the Board of Directors for the International Association of

Chiefs of Police. Over the past three years, Chief Davis has worked with the Cook County Sheriff, Congresswoman Robyn Kelley, National Night Out, NOBLE, the National Child ID Program, and NFL alumni such as Mike Singletary to tackle this problem.

Chief Davis' success shows how the distribution of child ID kits and tools offered by NOBLE places the right priority on missing children of color and how to overcome unique challenges in reporting, investigative success, and public awareness. Chief Davis was able to bring together national, state, and local support needed. A key part of Chief Davis' success, especially true for most communities of color, is understanding the impact of barriers such as trust, and how to communicate and utilize resource availability such as child id kits which are a helpful conversation starter for parents.

Populations of color are most skeptical of law enforcement fingerprinting or keeping fingerprints of our children. This is why NOBLE uses an inkless Child ID kit which does not enter a database and has been vetted by the FBI and is in use by state and local law enforcement across the country. NOBLE has made significant in-roads to building trust amongst the community through various programs, such as the Youth Leadership Conference.

Additionally, NOBLE is working with its members and partners to identify best practices for education, training, and public awareness with law enforcement agencies, schools, parents, and media outlets. This will include modules for reporting, investigation, and prevention critical to tackling America's minority and missing problem. However, much more work and resources are needed to have a broader impact on the relationship between law enforcement and minority communities.

Reporting Discrepancies

The current reporting system for missing children at the state and federal level does not capture every case of missing, runaway, and exploited children, particularly when it comes to children of color.

In some instances, state reports are over ten times higher than national reports provided to Congress and the Administration. A primary reason for the disparity between national and state data is that reporting to the FBI's National Crime Information Center does not publicly disclose the number of missing persons by state and the Date of Birth for the person is a conditional field, not mandatory, for entry of a missing person. The NamUs database maintained by the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs comprises of both active and archived missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases, whose records fluctuate daily as new cases are entered and older cases are archived (which are no longer viewable or searchable).^{xvi} The REPORT Act only requires NCMEC to publish data regarding child sex trafficking and online enticement of our missing children. Often, NCIC and NCMEC numbers are used as national figures, inadvertently limiting the reality of today's minority and missing problem.

In our review of Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas, state reports show drastically more missing and runaway children than national datasets.

The North Carolina Center for Missing Persons has documented 13,851 missing persons cases this year, with 585 currently active cases.^{xvii} Conversely, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System lists 627 open missing persons cases with 1,122 resolved cases.^{xviii} NamUs' Bi-Annual report from June 2024 notes 624 missing persons cases from North Carolina, ranking tenth highest in the country, while acknowledging "it does not include information on all missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons nationwide."^{xix}

In Louisiana, the state's human trafficking report indicated it had provided services to 1,451 children survivors of human trafficking.^{xx} NCMEC reported 310 missing children from the state^{xxi,xxii};

The Texas Department of Public Safety Missing Persons Clearinghouse shows 35,181 missing children in Texas with 169 actively missing.^{xxiii} NCMEC's 2023 year in review for Texas noted they had received 3,069 reports of missing children from the state.^{xxiv}

In Ohio, a 2023 report issued by Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost documented 17,405 children were reported missing. 9,469 of these cases involved a runaway and 367 are still missing. NamUs lists 417 open cases and 746 resolved cases of missing persons.^{xxv}

On the state level, most published reports vary, sometimes even within the same state. Many states do not publish or link to intrastate data and merely provide links to state Amber alerts, NCMEC, or Facebook pages with missing children's posters.

Minority children, especially Black children, make up a disproportionate number of missing children. Despite making up only 13.6% of the U.S. population, it is reported that 40% of sex trafficking victims in the U.S. are Black. In Louisiana, Black girls account for 49% of sex trafficking cases despite only comprising 19% of the population; in King County, Washington, 84% of child sex trafficking victims are Black girls despite comprising 7% of the population.^{xxvi}

As a law enforcement organization, NOBLE understands the importance of communication and coordination in searching for and locating missing children. Ensuring the reporting infrastructure is modernized and streamlined is crucial to facilitating better communication between law enforcement agencies and the public, who can be an additional asset in the search for a missing child.

To develop a clearer picture of the country's minority and missing crisis, NOBLE is asking each of its Chiefs and Sheriffs to request states publish the race, gender, and age of all missing persons reports, including runaways, in 2025.

NOBLE is working to evaluate the current process for the reporting of missing and runaway children and will publish future findings on how to improve the success rate of locating and recovering missing kids and teens.

Missing Children Cases and Data

More than 350,000 children go missing each year, 1,000 children each day. In 2022, 359,094 missing children were reported to [NCIC](#) – up from 337,195 in 2021. Black, Hispanic, and multiracial children make up 59% of all missing children. As of April 2024, 3.5% of missing persons in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System were identified as American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN).^{xxvii} The percentage of AI/AN as a portion of the United States population was 1.3% in July 2023 estimates.^{xxviii}

The Federal Bureau of Investigation maintains records of all missing persons reports in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). In 2021, 337,195 reports of missing persons, involving youth, were entered into the database. As of December 31, 2021, there were 93,718 active cases with 32 percent of those being youth. The Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has partnered with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for over 30 years, providing training and assistance for efforts to locate missing and exploited children.^{xxix}

Law enforcement agencies from the state, local, and federal levels strive to locate as many missing children as possible. Federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Marshals Service frequently organize multi-agency task forces and operations to locate and recover missing children. For instance, the U.S. Marshals Service’s Operation We Will Find You 2 recovered 200 missing children in May and June of 2024. Of the 200 children found, 123 were involved in dangerous situations and 173 were endangered runaways.^{xxx}

Further, tribal and Indigenous children and adults face elevated rates of violence, missing, and murder compared to other racial groups. The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs estimates there are approximately 4,200 missing and murdered cases involving American Indian and Alaska Native persons that have gone unsolved.^{xxxi} A 2016 study found 83 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native adults had experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. Eighty-five percent of Native children reported to NCMEC were considered endangered runaways.^{xxxii}

However, the data is not always reported in a consistent or timely manner. A March 2023 report from the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that state agencies did not always report children missing from foster care to NCMEC in a timely manner, as required by federal law. Only 33% of the episodes examined by the OIG were reported to NCMEC in a timely manner. The OIG’s report estimates that state agencies did not report 51,115 of the 74,353 missing children episodes in a timely manner as required by law.^{xxxiii}

Now, more than ever, our children spend critical time on devices, the Internet, and apps. In 2015, 73 percent of teens surveyed said they had, or had access to, a smartphone; in 2023, that number rose to 95 percent. Use of Snapchat increased from 41 percent in 2015 to 60 percent in 2023. Sixty-three percent of teens said they used TikTok. In 2023, 59 percent of teens said they use TikTok at least once a day; 47 percent used Instagram at least once a day; and 51 percent said they used Snapchat at least once a day.^{xxxiv}

Technology has provided tremendous value to society, democratizing access to knowledge, culture, and natural wonders while also facilitating connectivity between friends and families across the country and the globe. However, it has also provided another avenue for harassment, violence, and exploitation. Nearly half (46%) of teens surveyed by Pew Research Center in 2022 said they had experienced at least one type of cyberbullying.^{xxxv} According to 2021 data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, there were 354 runaway and homeless victims of human trafficking. The Internet was the location for 65% of victims' recruitment.^{xxxvi}

Online enticement is an avenue utilized to exploit, traffick, or abduct children through communications via the internet, taking place on every platform – social media, messaging apps, and gaming platforms. In 2024, through October 5, NCMEC had received more than 456,000 reports of online enticement. Reports to NCMEC of online enticement increased by more than 300% between 2021 and 2023.^{xxxvii} Victims of online enticement were found to be younger when compared to overall missing peers, 59% involving children 15 or younger.^{xxxviii} A survey by the Polaris Project of human trafficking survivors showed that 26% of participants stated their trafficker exploited them via their own personal social media accounts.^{xxxix}

Online platforms are not only used for recruitment of trafficking victims and survivors, but also for the coordination of trafficking operations and to control their victims. Thirty-four percent of respondents to the Polaris survey had their social media use restricted by their trafficker in some way. Traffickers and exploiters will threaten to share and to distribute non-consensual images of trafficking or “out” them to their friends and family as a means of controlling their behavior. Some traffickers have utilized platforms to present legitimate fronts to an operation and grow their customer base.^{xl}

NCMEC also reported a 12% increase in CyberTipline reports from the previous year in 2023, surpassing 36.2 million reports in total.^{xli} The Montana Department of Justice reported the Division of Criminal Investigation received 2,640 child sexual abuse material (CSAM) tips, a 230% increase compared to 2021.^{xlii}

Safety Game Plan and Community Resources

To provide for the best possible prevention campaign, a multi-faceted approach is needed to increase efforts and resources to address missing children cases. Combining comprehensive information for parents and educators, strengthening communication and reporting dashboards, and improving the capabilities of law enforcement are critical to these efforts.

Education is the cornerstone of prevention and provides the foundation for child safety, whether online or in the physical world. Providing parents with the skills and knowledge to engage in difficult conversations with their children and to recognize risk factors and behaviors are key to keeping their children safe. A family safety game plan can ensure parents and children are on the same page to promote and protect children from exploitation online.

This family safety game plan starts with completing a child ID kit, a simple and easy tool for parents to keep their vital information at home and to be prepared in the event a child becomes lost. Having this kit can save crucial first minutes and hours during the search for a missing

child. A family safety game plan should also include talks with parents and children about critical issues such as stranger danger, emergency contacts, and online safety steps amid the growing threat of human trafficking.

Children spend a significant amount of time at school and can provide an additional opportunity to educate and provide services to students. Similar to the expansive use of Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) programming to combat drug and alcohol use amongst teens, Internet safety education programs in schools can impart the dangers and risks associated with online and phone application activities.

Given the connectivity of the current generation of children and teens, online safety resources and education are vital tools for prevention efforts. A crucial part of any family safety game plan should include a discussion of the risks associated with being online and how children and teens can tailor their activities to remain safe. Parents and guardians should also be aware of the parental controls offered by social media platforms and phone providers and utilize them appropriately.

Online safety resources have been created by government and nonprofit advocacy groups but often lack in deployment to the general public. Federal departments and agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice have developed online safety resources for children and families and NCMEC has created its own curriculum, NetSmartz. Using these and other similar resources in conversations with our communities, NOBLE is committed to sharing online safety and family safety tips.

NOBLE is committed to being at the forefront of providing solutions to law enforcement issues and concerns as well as the ever-changing needs of our communities. Tackling the country's minority and missing crisis and human trafficking will require an all-hands-on-deck approach, partnering law enforcement with the community, public officials, and advocates to pool resources.

A critical part of these resources is the distribution of child ID kits, which allows officers to move quickly in the event of a missing or runaway child. The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs notes the first 48 hours in the disappearance of a child are the most critical to finding and returning a child safely, but it is also the most chaotic. There is no waiting period to enter a missing child into the FBI's Missing Persons file and having a completed child ID kit can help expedite this entry.

Additional resources, such as training and manpower, are also needed to ensure law enforcement are properly prepared to handle missing children's cases. While hiring has rebounded at law enforcement agencies, total sworn officer staffing has dropped nearly 5% between 2019 and 2022.^{xliii} This is at a time when the National Emergency Number Association estimates 240 million calls are made to 9-1-1 in the U.S. each year,^{xliv} often police are dispatched to respond regardless of whether the call has anything to do with crime or violence^{xlv}.

NOBLE is committed to working with the National Child ID Program and other partners, such as FBI-LEEDA, to provide additional training and resources to officers and communities on

responding to and searching for missing children. NOBLE membership is comprised of over 4,800 members from 1,000 communities, providing several outlets to train and educate law enforcement across the country with the tools to increase community policing activity and the handling of missing persons cases. The FBI-LEEDA trains thousands of law enforcement professionals each year, advances the science and art of law enforcement leadership and promotes the exchange of information to improve law enforcement management practices through training, education, and networking among police professionals across the United States and beyond.

This partnership, in part, has developed the Minority and Missing Initiative, which strives to bring awareness to the country's minority and missing crisis. Along with the National Congress of American Indians and its work on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Relatives, the Minority and Missing Initiative strives to advocate for better resources to track missing minority and Indigenous persons and discuss policy solutions to these crises.

The Minority and Missing Initiative has partnered up in the largest prevention education campaign in the lead up to the Super Bowl in 2025 and 2026. Working with NFL alumni from all 32 teams, the Minority and Missing Initiative is sharing prevention tips and child ID kits with families, particularly in the Super Bowl host cities of New Orleans and San Francisco. With hundreds of thousands of visitors to each city for a major human trafficking target, it is imperative that the combined efforts of advocates such as the National Child ID Program, law enforcement officials and organizations, and legendary athletes such as those from the NFL Alumni Association's Caring for Kids Campaign work together to educate families and the public.

"I am grateful for the work of NOBLE, NCAI, and FBI-LEEDA to compile the most comprehensive report on minority, missing, and murdered and missing Indigenous persons, bringing attention to these important crises. "I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure every child is brought home safely to their families," said Kenny Hansmire, Executive Director of the National Child ID Program.

Minority and Missing Initiative Partners:

About NOBLE

The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) is comprised of over 4,800 members and growing across 60 chapters, serving all parts of the country. NOBLE is at the forefront of providing solutions to law enforcement issues and concerns, as well as to the ever-changing needs of our communities. Our commitment to "Justice By Action" serves the demands of law enforcement issues worldwide which makes NOBLE a valuable asset for anyone interested in pursuing the improvement within the administration of justice.

Among the law enforcement and public safety issues on which NOBLE engages, we hope to highlight the current disparities in the reporting of minority and tribal missing and runaway children across the states. We also seek to provide suggestions for policymakers and parents on the needs for community action and the currently available prevention resources.

About the National Child ID Program

The National Child Identification Program is a community service safety initiative dedicated to changing these statistics, by providing parents and guardians with a tool they can use to help protect their children. The ID Kit allows parents to collect specific information by easily recording the physical characteristics, fingerprints, and DNA of their children on identification cards that are then kept at home by the parent or guardian. If ever needed, this ID Kit gives authorities vital information to assist their efforts to locate a missing child.

Since its inception in 1997, the National Child ID Program has distributed over 70 million kits throughout North America. The program has been recognized by Congress and today works with federal, state, and local leaders, coaches, athletes, faith-based organizations, and corporate citizens to increase the safety of children in communities across the country.

About NFL Alumni Association's Caring for Kids Campaign

Founded in 1967 by a small group of successful retired NFL players, the National Football League Alumni is the oldest, most well-known, and well-respected retired player organization in professional sports. Membership includes thousands of retired players, coaches, front office executives, spouses, cheerleaders, and avid fans. A primary mission of NFL Alumni is "Caring for Our Own" as we inform, assist, and serve players in their post-NFL lives. Alumni are offered a diverse package of medical, business, and legal services to help keep them and their families healthy, productive, and connected to the league and their former teammates. NFLA is a non-profit organization.

About the Pro Football Hall of Fame

The Pro Football Hall of Fame works collaboratively with the pro football family: the National Football League, the 32 NFL clubs, and other entities. The cooperative efforts of all of these organizations have contributed greatly to the overall success of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. In turn, the Hall strives to serve as the best historical showplace and repository for the sport of professional football. Today, the Hall of Fame reaches tens of millions of additional football fans each year through broad outreach, such as nationally televised events, an in-depth website, educational and youth programs, social media, traveling exhibits, and special events held around the country.

About the National Congress of American Indians

NCAI, a non-profit organization, advocates for a bright future for generations to come by taking the lead to gain consensus on a constructive and promising vision for Indian Country. The organization's policy issues and initiatives are driven by the consensus of our diverse membership, which consists of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, tribal citizens, individuals, and Native and non-Native organizations.

For nearly seven decades since its founding, NCAI has remained true to the original purpose of the organization: to be the unified voice of tribal nations. As outlined in the NCAI Constitution,

our purpose is to serve as a forum for unified policy development among tribal governments in order to: (1) protect and advance tribal governance and treaty rights; (2) promote the economic development and health and welfare in Indian and Alaska Native communities; and (3) educate the public toward a better understanding of Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

About FBI-LEEDA

FBI-LEEDA, Inc., also known as the Law Enforcement Executive Development Association, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, was formed. Today, FBI-LEEDA's membership includes law enforcement executives throughout the United States, U.S. territories, and foreign countries. The Association holds an annual training conference in the spring to provide members with up-to-date information and exceptional networking opportunities. In 1998, the Association invited a limited number of vendors to display the latest technology and product lines for conference attendees. This addition to the training conference was so successful that it has been continued each year. FBI-LEEDA's tremendously successful Corporate Partnership Program is a result of the exhibitors' continuing support of the Association.

The Mission of FBI-LEEDA, Inc. shall be to advance the science and art of law enforcement leadership and promote the exchange of information to improve law enforcement management practices through training, education, and networking among police professionals across the United States and beyond.

About National Night Out

National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances. The state of Texas and select areas celebrate the first Tuesday in October.

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Written Testimony to the New York City Council

Submitted by: Delores Michelle Ann Mims

Family Child Care Network Director



Date: 5/21/25

Re: Testimony on Behalf of the Unsung Heroes of Early Childhood Education – Family Child Care Network Staff and Providers

Dear Esteemed Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Delores Mims, and I humbly serve as a Family Child Care Network (FCCN) Director. I write to you today not just with facts and figures, but with the lived truth of an entire sector that has long stood in the shadows underfunded, undervalued, yet unwavering in its commitment to children, families, and the neighborhoods we serve.

Our Family Child Care providers opened their homes literally and figuratively when the rest of the city had to close its doors. While fear and uncertainty swept through every block and borough, these caregivers stayed open, holding the hands of essential workers' children while their parents held the city together. But they didn't do this alone. Behind every resilient provider was a tireless network staff member: education coaches, family workers, health and safety monitors, who carried an impossible load, often without acknowledgment or matching compensation.

We were the infrastructure that never buckled. We enrolled families from our living rooms. We comforted providers through illness, grief, and fear. We secured diapers when stores ran out and food when deliveries failed. We didn't just manage programs we showed up as humans for other humans in crisis.

And yet, we were forgotten.

When Workforce Relief Grant relief funds were disbursed to support the early childhood workforce, Network staff were notably excluded. Despite being front line workers in every sense, we didn't see a cent of recognition. We didn't ask for praise we asked for partnership. But silence was our answer.

Today, our staff continue to serve this city's youngest children with passion and purpose, but at subpar pay, without parity, and without the public acknowledgment they deserve. Many are burning out. Many are leaving. Not because they don't believe in the mission, but because belief doesn't keep the lights on and rent paid.

And still we show up.

I am writing today to urge you not just to see us but to stand with us. To ensure that our voices, our labor, and our legacy are part of the larger conversation around early education in this city. Below, I offer critical context and recommendations:

1. COVID Workforce Grant Funds Exclusion

FCC Network staff were excluded from COVID-era workforce compensation and relief funding, despite being the *only agency structure in early childhood education that never closed*. These are the people who ensured continuity of care when the system was fragile. We respectfully request a retroactive investment in the form of back pay or supplemental compensation to honor their work and dedication.

2. Enrollment and Voucher System Challenges

Enrollment struggles within Family Child Care are not due to lack of effort, they are a consequence of a fractured system. The current ACS voucher structure and its complex relationship with NYCPS seats create confusion for families and delays for providers. We see families caught in administrative limbo, unsure of where to turn, often forced to choose between stability and accessibility. A streamlined, transparent transition system is not just a luxury, it is a necessity.

3. Recommendation: Adjust Seat Allocations Based on Demand and Flexibility

We urge the Council to support contract flexibility that reflects the *real, lived rhythms* of family life. Seat allocations should consider the full age range authorized in each borough's contract and allow for open enrollment. Family Child Care is not a center it is a home. Homes must be nimble, adaptive, and responsive. Rigid age caps prevent us from serving the dynamic needs of our communities. A target benchmark of 85–90% enrollment would give us the breathing room to serve families without being penalized for doing what's right.

4. Recommendation: Allow Flexibility Between 3KEDY and 3KSDY

We also urge the Council to support the flexibility to move seats between the 3KEDY and 3KSDY models based on family needs and usage. Our city's children are not spreadsheets. Realignment based on actual demand, not static funding codes, allows us to reduce unfilled seats and ensure that no child is turned away due to technicalities.

In Closing

I ask you what does it mean to truly value a workforce? Is it recognition in a press release, or is it living wages, flexible policies, and a seat at the table? The people I represent are not looking for praise. They're asking for partnership. They're asking for equity. They're asking for the dignity of being seen.

I close this testimony with the faces of the children we serve in mind the ones who took their first steps in a provider's living room, who found safety and joy in the midst of a pandemic, and who learned to trust their world because someone in a network they'll never know stayed up late doing paperwork just to keep their seat secure.

This is the heartbeat of Family Child Care. And we are still beating quietly, steadily but we cannot be ignored any longer.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your willingness to listen.

With deep respect,
Delores Michelle Ann Mims
Family Child Care Network Director



Urban Youth Collaborative



Good afternoon, my name is Diaraye. I am a high school sophomore, and I'm a leader at Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. Council Member Williams represents where I live in Jamaica, and Council Member Julie Menin represents the area where I go to school. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony today.

There are six schools in my building. The majority of students walk through a main entrance where the first people they see every morning are school cops. It feels like I'm walking into jail. Their presence makes me feel like I've done something wrong or that I'm in trouble. I shouldn't have to feel this way. I come to school to learn. I want to feel like I belong there, but having school cops around makes me second-guess. Is this really a school? We know that the communities with the most resources are the safest and that includes our schools. Our schools don't need school police, we need resources for mental health support, restorative justice and student success centers. Having cops inside of my school makes me feel that people that come from where I come from are dangerous and need more surveillance. That's racist.. Black students like me and immigrant students are capable of achieving amazing things, we just need genuine support and resources to grow. Instead of wasting money on school cops, we need to invest money in real school safety, like restorative justice and mental health support. .

This isn't just about money, but about the direct harm caused by school police. School police escalate conflicts and disproportionately punish Black and Latinx students. There is no proof that school police prevent conflict in our schools. Even worse, for immigrant students like me, any interaction with school police can be life-changing. With the increased presence of ICE in our communities and the city's cooperation with immigration authorities, school police are driving the school-to-deportation pipeline. I don't want to worry that any day in school could lead to being separated from my family or derailed from my dreams. But that is the reality I am living. All young people deserve to feel safe in school, regardless of immigration status.

The New York City budget prioritizes funding school police instead of fully funding my education. My school's roof has been falling apart and when it rains we have to use buckets to catch the water. The water from our water fountain is yellow and gross. Fixing these issues should be a priority! New York City has the largest school police force in the country, with a budget of \$450 million. We are calling on Mayor Adams and the City Council to stop recruiting, hiring, and training school cops. Also, you should permanently eliminate school police academy classes. If we stop hiring new school cops and cut the current 675 vacant school cop positions, we could immediately have 100 million dollars! I want to see that money used to protect and expand restorative justice, mental health, and other programs that we need to have real safety and support.

Under the new federal administration, young people and schools are under attack. These threats are really scary, and we need the city to pass a budget that protects young people and our education. In the near future I see myself going to college, going to law school, passing the bar, and becoming an immigration lawyer. Protect me, protect young people! We need police free schools now! Thank you.

Testimony on the Importance of Fully Funding Afterschool Programs

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the urgent need to invest in and protect funding for afterschool programs in New York City. My name is Dontai Nottingham, and I am a Director at a nonprofit organization that operates multiple afterschool programs that provide a critical lifeline for hundreds of students and families. These programs do more than offer academic support and enrichment, they offer stability, safety, and opportunity. Our sites serve as safe havens for students during the hours when they are most vulnerable to violence, or disengagement. For working parents, afterschool programs are often the only way they can maintain employment, knowing their children are in a nurturing environment that supports their development and growth.

Yet, we are facing a crisis. The current funding levels and proposed cuts poses potential challenges for many nonprofits such as reducing staff hours, limiting enrollment, cutting enrichment activities, and in some cases, closing entirely. These funding gaps don't just affect program logistics, but they hurt community members, in real ways.

Just a few weeks ago, I spoke with a mother who told me she was going to have to quit her job if our program wasn't available for young daughter. Without full and sustained investment in afterschool programs, we are not just risking academic loss, but we are deepening cycles of poverty, and instability.

We urge City leaders to not only restore but increase funding to match the growing needs of students and families. Every dollar we invest in afterschool is an investment in safer neighborhoods, stronger families, and a more equitable future. Please don't let budget cuts force us to abandon our students when they need us most.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to our communities.

Sincerely,

Dontai Nottingham

Emily Goldberg-Hall, [REDACTED], Brooklyn, NY 11213 [REDACTED]

We are a year and a half into complex and expensive IVF, but have considered postponing our next attempt so we don't end up with a January baby - who would be over three and a half when eligible to start 3k, instead of still two which would save us thousands in months of daycare tuition. We didn't feel able to wait at my age, and desperately hope it works, but the cost of childcare will make it impossible for us to recover financially from the cost of fertility treatment for years. Our kiddo is in 3k right now and while his aftercare is much more affordable than daycare was, it was so disheartening that a change to my husband's work schedule that added an extra day of it to our budget still prompted some financial stress, even though it was in every other respect far and away the best decision for our family quality time, his health and my mental health.

Re: Fiscal Year 26 Preliminary Budget - Education

May 20th 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the proposed education budget. My name is Emily Van Ingen and I am the Deputy Director at Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation serving the East New York community in Brooklyn.

We appreciate that, last year, Mayor Adams and the City Council made significant investments in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget to continue essential education programs, staff, and services that had been at risk of ending due to expiring temporary federal stimulus dollars and city funds. While the City baselined many of these programs, the City continued other programs for one year only—meaning the funding will expire at the end of June unless extended in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

I am writing on behalf of the Student Success Center Coalition.

Student Success Centers (SSCs), are spaces in public high schools dedicated to supporting students through the postsecondary planning process and run in partnership by students and adult staff, have proliferated across New York City and shifted the post-secondary pathways of scores of low-income students of color. Partnerships between community-based organizations and high schools, SSCs are staffed by school and CBO staff as well as Youth Leaders who receive 70+ hours of training to support younger students and peers in college and career awareness, planning, and application activities. SSCs are distinct spaces within their schools, with “Drop-in Centers” for students to access support from adults. They provide one-on-one support to students, host workshops for students and families, and organize whole school college-going culture events. In short, they expand college advisement and exploration for all students in the schools served.

In 2018, the 7 organizations that partnered with schools across NYC to run SSCs formed the *SSC Coalition* to ensure the city’s investment would be continued. Having had to come together for several years in a row to fight for continued funding from the Department of Education, these CBOs decided to formalize their partnership and collectively fight for the future of SSCs in NYC. Those organizations include: Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), Cypress Hill Local Development Corporation, East Side House Settlement, Good Shepherd Services, Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, Make the Road New York, and New Settlement Apartments.

Unfortunately, the future of SSCs in NYC – and the over 800 Youth Leaders that have implemented the model over the past 16+ years – is threatened. Despite quantitative and qualitative data showing peer-to-peer college access programming to be an effective strategy to address the college guidance gap.

Last fiscal year champions from the City Council rallied to ensure that \$3.3 million dollars in funding was allocated on behalf of the Students Success Centers across NYC. We are asking that the Council again invests in the future of our young people as they navigate life after High School.

I leave you with words from some of our students:

Mia, FDNY Senior:

The SSC not only has helped me through my college process but also with building employment experience. They have guided me step by step in my college process, from writing my college essay to choosing colleges that were a match for me. I have also been able to become a Youth Leader in the SSC, and I am helping other students find and apply to their desired college path. Not only has the SSC helped to build my character for public speaking, time management and research, but it has made me feel proud that I am helping my peers apply to post-secondary education to be what they want to be.

Our school has low ratings of students wanting to go to college, unfortunately. Whether it's because of their financial situations or it's not meant for them, the SSC tries to find ways through those obstacles, whether through scholarships, through programs, or through persuading students that college is an option.

Besides college, the SSC provides different career options, such as trade school, certifications, military, etc., and makes students aware that they can become more. The SSC really has helped us students try to find and apply for different pathways every step of the way.

Jerrell, FDNY Senior:

Being a youth leader has changed me a lot and pushed me to be the best, even at home. I picked up many skills, and habits, including having respectful manners, and learning how to speak to others. And this job helped me work with a ton of my fellow students.

Also, I like being this bridge where I just help my guidance counselors as much as possible. This is an extremely good job and I wish I could have something like this in the future

Xavier -PATHs Senior:

The SSC has provided the most help to not only me, but to my classmates and friends. Even though we may go to school, not everything is shared, especially the help we need from college. From my experience, I've gained the most knowledge and help from the SSC about college and the things I need for college.

With the help of the SSC I was able to apply to colleges both in and outside the state, obtain financial aid and also help others with their college applications and other research. With this, students were able to be more focused in class and get better grades after seeing the requirements for the college they want to pursue.

Camila- Cypress Hills Collegiate Prep HS

So.. through the college process, since I am a YL, I feel like the opportunities at the SSC offers not only helped me help myself, but also helped me help other people which has always been something that I've been very big on. I feel like it makes the process a little bit easier and it also helps me feel a little bit more secure about what I'm saying to colleges and what I'm helping myself achieve. With my school as a whole, it also helps students understand that there's more than just college after High School. There's other options like employment, military, trade school it's more than just College as a whole which I feel is a stereotype. I feel like it also helps other students think a little bit more about what their options are and how to get there.

Lieny - Brooklyn Lab HS

So in my opinion, the Student Success Center has helped me with my college exploration journey in multiple ways. The events they host and the support they give us directly, but also through the amazing environment they provide us with.

I think I speak for all the students that receive help from the SSC when I say it plays a big part in the school Community just because a lot of students rely on the help that the SSC delivers Our counselors, they're always there for us through the process.

On being a YL: In order to be there for other students, you have to be able to connect with people in a kind of a special way so that information can be heard and understood.

Jasmine- Brooklyn Lab HS

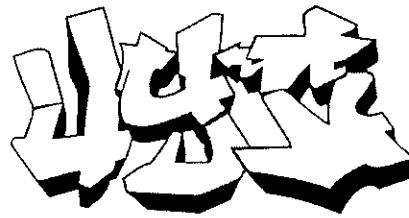
I am a first generation student, I have an older sister, she never helped me out with anything college related, such as the FAFSA application or TAP so the SSC has really helped me. I sat down with one of the counselors for like 2 hours and it was really quick & simple.

My mom also knows that she has someone that she can rely on for any questions. The Counselors are all very helpful and students are always welcomed in the SSC to receive help with anything college, personal, or academic, they are always prepared with computers, printers, water or the counselors themselves.

The SCC is like a whole different place. It feels alive and just very welcoming, and I guess that also helps with the school because through the school it's rare to be offered a spot on a trip and thanks to the SCC I met so many people and got so many opportunities.

Student Success Centers are a lifeline to college, particularly when support in the college process is dwindling across NYC - and the country - and the rates of low income students applying are plummeting. NYC and the Department of Education need to renew their earlier commitment to funding the Student Success Centers and to increasing college going rates for students from low-income communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Urban Youth Collaborative



Erika's Testimony for Executive Education Budget Hearing 5/20

Hello, my name is Erika, my pronouns are she/her, I am a sophomore in high school in Staten Island, and I am a youth leader with Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative. I'm here today because students shouldn't have to go to school with the anxiety of potentially having an encounter with school police. There are many different ways to address a situation and I don't think that getting arrested or hurt by a cop in school should be one of them. Students should be able to talk to a counselor, a social worker, or have access to peer meditation. My school has 11 guidance counselors, which is a privilege compared to other schools, however, I don't have a good relationship with any of my guidance counselors but I do have a good relationship with my Spanish teacher. She is someone that I trust in my school and I have gone to her for support and to share my feelings about what is happening in my life. I believe that school staff should be trained on how to better support students and their needs. Students should have people like my Spanish teacher in their lives, staff that are there to care for us with everything we have to carry.

I've witnessed students at my school get targeted, arrested, and intimidated by school cops. Racial profiling by school cops is one of the reasons why students don't feel safe in schools. I attend a school where students often wear hijabs. In one instance, the school cops were searching for a student, they shared the information with the deans. Shockingly, the deans ended up calling the parents of my friend - who had been sitting right across from me the entire time. Why was she mistaken for the other student? Because both of them wore hijabs.

A few weeks later, my friend made the personal decision to stop wearing her hijabs, and immediately noticed a difference in how she was treated by school staff. Suddenly, she wasn't targeted in the same way. Seeing this made me angry, it hurt to watch someone I care about be misjudged and mistreated simply because of how she chooses to express her identity. This is why I'm calling on the City Council to take action. At this moment, youth deserve to walk into their schools feeling supported, not surveilled..

Immigrant students and their families are already facing so much uncertainty and fear with an increase in the presence of ICE in their communities, and the call for mass deportations. Families are afraid to send their kids to school. Students should not walk into schools feeling the same fear because the first people they see are police.

I have friends and family members that are immigrants. Over the past couple of weeks, we have seen ICE agents and vehicles around schools in Staten Island. There was a lockdown during school one day due to an incident involving a student. A lot of my peers were unaware and assumed the lockdown had to do with ICE, given that they were seen driving by the school earlier that day. As you can imagine, a lot of young people were worried about what would happen and even let each other know that they were seen around the school. When we talk about the impact of ICE we cannot leave school cops out of the conversation, because they both can and have harmed students.

What we truly need is mental health support in schools and restorative justice. We must secure a hiring freeze, cut funding for the vacant school cop positions, and reinvest the money for baseline funding for restorative justice, social workers, guidance counselors, and mental health support. True safety comes from caring for and protecting each other and that doesn't include police nor ICE. Young people deserve to feel safe in schools not discriminated against.



Guadalupe's Testimony for Executive Education Budget Hearing 5/20

Hello, my name is Guadalupe. My pronouns are she/her. I am a junior in high school in Staten Island, and I am a youth leader with Make the Road New York and the Urban Youth Collaborative.

Students deserve to be in supportive and welcoming schools without the worry of being seen as a threat. Mayor Adam's has spoken about adding the "best budget ever" yet it allocates just \$12 million to restorative justice with half of that set to expire by 2026. At the same time, the NYPD and DOE spend over \$450 million dollars on school policing. This budget shows a clear priority: investing in punitive measures over meaningful support like mental health resources and restorative practices that truly benefit students.

In my personal experience, I've been mistreated and stereotyped by a police officer working in my school over a simple misunderstanding. At the time, I was just an elementary school student who had recently arrived in the country and was still adapting to the new language and environment. What I needed and deserved was care and compassion and instead was punished. I believe that all students, no matter the age, deserve to be in schools that feel safe and that respect them. This is why I am here to demand: a hiring freeze on school cops that does not allow to fill for attrition, cutting the funding for the remaining vacant school cop positions as well as using the funding from both these divestments to protect and expand restorative justice and mental health practices that help students thrive and learn.

I believe that restorative justice and mental health support is something that should exist inside of every school. In my school we practice restorative justice and it has allowed many of my peers and myself to be understood and seen beyond our moments of conflict. I was involved in a verbal altercation with another student and it was restorative justice that helped us both get to the root of the problem. We were given the opportunity to express how we felt and how we were impacted. My peer ended up sharing that they were going through some personal things and apologized for lashing out at me. Since then, we haven't had any conflict. With restorative justice, we can freely share our thoughts and receive support and guidance to grow in a calm and caring place instead of being constantly targeted or degraded. Penalizing students over their actions without taking into consideration what they could be going through will only make them feel like they don't have a safe place to share their emotions or worries.

Like many young people here today, I am here to advocate for myself and for those who've had similar experiences like me. We deserve to attend school without fear of being judged or criminalized, we deserve to feel safe and understood inside of our schools. We deserve to have a budget that reflects those needs. Thank you.



Committee on Education Jointly with the Committee on Finance
Josh Melendez Testimony
Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Hello everyone, my name is Josh Melendez. I live in the Bronx, I'm in the 11th grade, and I am a youth leader at Sistas and Brothas United and the Urban Youth Collaborative.

I've been advocating for our school system to invest in the social and emotional support that young people need since I was 12 years old. It's been 5 years since I last testified before this council—and honestly, it feels like I'm repeating myself. Not much has changed, except the need has grown more and more.

When I was younger I was accused of having a gun in my bag, they pulled me to the side and had me wait for hours. I was surrounded by school cops who interrogated me and said I was in the wrong even though I told them I had nothing and they could check. All they had to do was open the bag but they didn't. Instead they made a small situation into something big and kept me from class. After they saw I had nothing on me and days after the school cops continued to treat me like I was a "bad" kid and always made me feel like anything I did was suspicious and that at any moment I could be accused of anything.

Now in high school I still feeling the same oppression I felt years ago, there is no reason why I should walk into a school, "a safe haven" and see 8 school cops and metal detectors that don't work which means we often get scanned with hand wands and if you are late we should expect longer wait time, maybe up to 30 minutes. It feels horrible but on top of that we hear the school cops talking behind our backs, diminishing us while we are not able to say anything back because they can abuse their power with no accountability

At this point all I want is the funding from the school cops to be put into the education system, it is sad that my teachers are having to put their own money for supplies when that should be just given to them. Instead we see them stress out because of potential budget cuts. This budget should not be balanced on the backs of students and teachers.

I'm here with my peers to ask the council to pass a budget that:

1. stops hiring school police officers and doesn't refill any positions that become empty.
2. Eliminate funding for the 675 school police positions that are currently unfilled.
3. Redirect that money which is about \$100 million to invest in restorative justice, mental health support, and other staff and services that help students learn and thrive. Thank You

Good afternoon Chair Joseph and esteemed council members, my name is Long Hui Jiang, and I'm a youth member with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding, and a student at the Brooklyn Latin School, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Brooklyn Latin is one of the smallest specialized public schools in the City, stacked in the Gaynor Campus building with 2 schools above us. At Brooklyn Latin, and several public schools across Brooklyn and the City, we do not have school-based mental health clinics. That is why I am here to advocate baseline funding for the mental health continuum in the FY26 budget, so we can fight to expand it to schools like mine in the future.

It is no secret that our City is in a mental health crisis, and these clinics are where students feel most comfortable — they provide a space in school where students receive counseling, and in this long political darkness we are in, counseling makes me and students alike feel safe. It provides a place where students, like myself, can express their vulnerability. Without these resources, schools often default to calling 911 in a crisis, leading to unnecessary ER visits and hospitalizations. Investing in mental health support means students get the right intervention at the right time—before a crisis escalates.

Everyday, stories are being suppressed, especially under this administration. Chair Joseph and members of the Council: By restoring funding to mental health, we help fulfill our duty — and that duty is to ensure every story, of every child, every student, of every family, is heard. By providing in-school direct access to support and guidance, stories are told. Now is the time to hear them. Please, restore the continuum. Thank you.

Mir, Maeda [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Flushing, NY 11367
[REDACTED]

I'm a single mother to a one year old and will be starting work next month. I will be unable to pay for rent and daycare with my current salary. I really depend on the childcare vouchers to help provide for my son and I. yes I'm a single mother to a one year old and will be starting work next month. I will be unable to pay for rent and daycare with my current salary. I really depend on the childcare vouchers to help provide for my son and I.

From: [Mari Moss](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Hearing on Education 5/20/2025
Date: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 3:56:46 PM
Attachments: [20250520_231640_0000.png](#)
[2025-05-21-130447722.mp4](#)

Testimony of Hon. Mari Moss, MPA
Before the New York City Council
5/20/2025

Good afternoon, my name is Mari Moss, and I am the proud mother of three little Harlem girls—Calia, Sophia, and Anya—who are growing up in New York City public schools. I am a former Chair of the School Leadership Team at PS 175, a former private school teacher, and a social worker who supported programs like Help Me Grow and home visiting nurse services. I currently serve on the Community Action Board for Region 9, which allocates federal funding to nonprofit and after school programs in East and Central Harlem.

Professionally, I've contributed to over \$1 billion in development across New York City, creating more than 5,000 jobs, and last year, I helped direct over \$7 million in federal funding to Harlem to strengthen local programs.

Since 2017, I've come before this Council to testify about parental alienation in domestic violence cases. While pursuing my Master's in Public Administration, I endured escalating abuse from my then-husband. Despite my dedication to building a better life for my children, I was shocked to find that police, courts, and even school staff extended the abuse rather than protecting my rights. Parent liaisons and principals violated my parental rights, causing further harm to me and my daughters.

In the face of these challenges, I want to publicly thank Council Member Rita Joseph for her support in helping me access parent-teacher conferences, despite all I've endured. Her compassion and advocacy meant so much—not just to me as a mother, but as someone who has served and invested in this city and continues to nurture and support my daughters through it all.

Through my initiative, Letter to Legislation, I urge the Council to mandate trauma-informed training for school staff, fund protections against parental alienation, and hold institutions accountable.

Let's safeguard both the public trust and the wellbeing of families like mine.

Thank you.



The Honorable Mari Moss, MPA
Mother of Calia, Sophia and Anya
Community Action Board Region 9
Neighborhood Advisory Board 10 & 11



We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same!

Marielys City Council Testimony

Good afternoon. My name is Marielys Divanne, and I serve as Executive Director of Educators for Excellence—New York, a teacher-led organization representing a network of more than 17,000 educators — 22 percent of the city’s teaching workforce.

Our educators were at the forefront of calling for High Quality, Research Based, Culturally relevant materials, which are now known as NYC Reads and NYC Solves, New York City’s initiatives to improve reading and math achievement.

And I’m here, on behalf of E4E-New York, to urge this Council to use the city budget to sustain and strengthen NYC Reads and NYC Solves moving forward. We are also members of the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding priorities, and lift their asks as well.

I ask you to consider, just for a moment, how essential reading and math are to a student’s success. Reading is the foundation of all learning and impacts all subjects — from science and history to math itself. I know this from my own experience. When I first arrived in this country, I was a 10-year-old monolingual Spanish speaker entering PS 187 in Washington Heights. My parents — like so many others — believed that learning to read and write in English would open doors they had never walked through. Thanks to incredible public school teachers, it did. That foundation changed my life, and it has the power to change the lives of others.

Math is equally vital to everyday life — from cooking and understanding statistics, to managing personal finances and navigating careers in a data-driven world. Yet, researchers estimate that the erosion of math skills among U.S. eighth graders could result in [hundreds of billions of dollars](#) in lost future earnings.

Our educators know this, and that’s why they demanded NYC Reads and NYC Solves. For years, they navigated inconsistent, outdated, and low-quality materials. NYC Reads and NYC Solves were launched to bring coherence, quality, and equity to instruction, and to address gaps that have persisted for far too long.

- Before NYC Reads and Solves, two-thirds of Black and Latino students were behind grade level in reading and math.
- And before these initiatives, students in temporary housing or those changing schools often faced an entirely different curriculum — compounding inequity with instability.

These initiatives take aim at these inequities head-on by providing schools with high-quality instructional materials and accompanied professional learning. And they’re building momentum. Already, teachers are gaining confidence, and students are more engaged. Our newest NYC Solves survey, for example, released today at [NYCLearns.org](https://www.nyclearns.org), shows:

- 69% of NYC Solves teachers say students are responding positively to the new curriculum.

- 70% say they've been effectively supported by the district in implementing these changes.

That kind of progress — in a system as large and complex as New York City's, after just one year — is remarkable.

Let me be clear, we are not declaring victory. Implementation remains uneven. Teachers still need more planning time, stronger Professional Learning, and more support for multilingual learners and students with disabilities. But this is not the moment to retreat. Instead, it's the moment to double down.

We need your help to do so by taking two essential actions to ensure we don't abandon progress, and instead, achieve a brighter future for our students.

We need the City Council to baseline funding for NYC Reads and NYC Solves. These shifts must outlast any one mayor or chancellor. Baseline funding ensures stability, continuous improvement, and long-term equity for students and educators.

Across the country, districts are making similar shifts—investing in high-quality instructional materials and sustained, aligned professional development because we know it works. New York City, to its credit, is at the forefront of leading this national movement.

And with the leadership of the City Council, we need to ensure that this transformation lasts and doesn't go to waste. The cost of walking away—in lost progress, lost trust, and long-term consequences for students—is far too high.

These initiatives were demanded by teachers and designed to correct systemic failure. And now, with your help – by providing baseline funding – we have the opportunity to build a legacy, and show that New York City has the conviction to back what's working, and the leadership to finish what's been started.

Thank you.

Stutzman, Maureen, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] Astoria, NY 11103
[REDACTED]

With the rising cost of rent, it's very hard to make ends meet. We have a daughter in kindergarten and a son in daycare. Daycare costs us \$2200/month. Afterschool for our older child is \$160/month. In the summer, when we have to pay for daycare plus summer camp for our daughter, our combined income does not cover our expenses. Our household is in the red from June-August. We are not saving for the future, we are not saving to buy our own home someday, we are getting by each month and praying our landlord doesn't raise the rent again. It's untenable for families with young children. Our son is going to be two this summer. If there was a free care option for him, it would change our lives and allow us to invest more in our futures and specifically, our future here in NYC. Having access to affordable child care would allow my family to stay in NYC. My son is almost two and having free childcare for him would change our lives. We would worry so much less about making ends meet, which is barely possible now, and get to dream for the future.

From: [Michael Handell](#)
To: [NYC Council Hearings](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony for Education Budget Committee
Date: Friday, May 23, 2025 7:17:57 PM

FY25 Preliminary Budget Hearing City Council Committee on Education

Friday May 23, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to present my written testimony. My name is Michael Handell and my child is in 1st grade at Washington Heights' PS-IS 187 in School District 6. I'm also a member of our schools Class Size working group.

Class size reduction is a top priority of parents at PS 187 according to our DOE surveys. Currently PS-IS 187 is well over capacity. We need a concrete and feasible plan with funds allocated for a class size reduction starting now. Without funds allocated both for additional faculty and staff, building upgrades, annex or co-location for more space and other services our school won't be able to meet the law requirements. If our school reduces the number of new students accepted next year it will be penalized with a smaller budget, since school budgets are based on the number of students enrolled.

PS/IS 187 is the most overcrowded school in District 6 and our community welcomed the class size reduction law. Last December I participated in our school's class size reduction grant application for Contracts for Excellence launched by DOE. The strategies suggested by DOE in that application were detached from the reality of our school with the focus being to utilize all available classroom space. Unfortunately, for our school and countless others, there is no more classroom space. The only realistic solutions are two fold: In the short term, reduce the number of students admitted to the school without sacrificing needed funding. This would require updating the New York State per-pupil Foundation Aid formula that is currently incongruent with motivating schools to lower class sizes. The longer term solution is to expand the schools classroom footprint with an annex or a co-location space but this will take several years.

With this in mind, we asked to implement two meaningful strategies for reducing class size in our December application, which was denied:

We requested that kindergarten enrollment be capped at 80 students. Until this year, our school has consistently started with four kindergarten classes enrolling up to 100 students, while all subsequent grades have only had three classes each. The Department of Education's denial of our request clearly indicates that it does not intend for our school to meet the class size mandate in the foreseeable future.

We asked for funding to hire a dedicated staff member responsible for developing and

implementing our school's class size reduction plan. This role would explore and coordinate innovative strategies such as outdoor learning for younger grades, temporary co-location with a nearby charter school that is not fully enrolled, or use of an annex. While all these approaches have potential, they cannot be effectively designed or piloted by our already overextended teachers and staff, who are managing a full load of responsibilities. If we are permitted to use C4E (Contracts for Excellence) funds to support a position focused solely on class size planning and implementation, we could see immediate and meaningful progress.

The fact that exemptions are being granted proves the disconnect between the state and the DOE in actually executing and making this class size plan a reality. While promises of future annexes are being made, the School Construction Authority has no concrete plans in place—meaning these annexes may not materialize for another decade. This is unacceptable and exemptions just prolong the needed compliance that will benefit these students. This path forward is not only inadequate—it is a disservice to our school communities. Today's parents, students, and even teachers in these overcrowded schools do not want exemptions. They want action. Exempting schools from the mandate sends the message that overcrowding is acceptable in schools that perform well on paper, while ignoring the very real daily toll it takes on learning, teaching, and school climate.

The class size law is vital to improving public education across New York City's school system. This is an opportunity to critically strengthen the education and learning environment our children receive and ensure students stay in these schools and parents trust them to provide high quality education going forward. We must act now to ensure going forward our schools perform at their highest levels while educating our children.

Sincerely,

Michael Handell - District 6 Parent

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

de Vera, Michelle, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Jackson Heights, NY 11372
[REDACTED]

My husband and I are having conversations about what our family looks like in the future and the cost of childcare is a huge factor. We both can't quit our jobs, but having universal 2-Care and expansion of 3-K would give us a huge sigh of relief financially if we decide to have more kids. So I can be a working mom and afford to have more than one child. My husband and I both work, and I will be a first time mom in August of this year. Knowing how much childcare is going to cost us, I have some second thoughts about having 2nd kid in 2-3 years because we can't afford to have 2 kids in daycare at over \$2K a month each. I want to expand my family, but the financial burden is scary and anxiety-inducing. There is a daycare near us that has a private 3K program. It would be so easy to require anyone who offers care for 3-year olds to make it mandatory to have them be part of the city's 3K program especially if they're already participating in the pre-K programs! We need more seats for growing families. It should not cost more than rent or a mortgage to have your child cared for. We don't have sufficient paid maternity leave, so this is the least we can do to help support growing families!

Michelle Noris, PE

Owner Norfast Engineering PLLC – 29 years WBE engineer for existing structures in NYC

Parent to Melissa, Abey and Izzy – Abey Weitzman Wheelchair User

The ADA was passed in 1990. In 2018 only 18% of schools were accessible. I testified here 5 years ago that we needed \$1 billion every 5 years to reach full accessibility by 2043. Thanks to your support and the great work of the New York City Public Schools, the Capital Budget for Accessibility in 2020-2024 was raised to \$750 million and we are now at 31% accessible. The proposed allocation of \$800 million for 2025-2029 sounds like an increase, but with construction inflation of 25% over the last 5 years, it represents a decreased commitment. 69% of our schools are inaccessible to people with mobility related disabilities. We need \$1.25 billion to be allocated to reach full accessibility by 2045. I just gave you a lot of construction facts. Now let me explain to you why, using my family as an example.

My son, Abey, grew up across the street from our local elementary school, which still isn't accessible. Instead of rolling to school in his wheelchair, Abey was bused an hour plus, each way to Nassau County. He missed out on making friends in our neighborhood. He missed out on playing with his classmates at the local playground. Abey missed out on after school programs, because busing does not extend to after school. He wasted thousands of hours of his life staring out the bus window.

While Abey was in Nassau County, my younger son, Izzy, was in Astoria, Queens in a still inaccessible building. Every event required that I go begging for special accommodations. Could someone open the side door so I could pull Abey's wheelchair up the 7 steps to enter the cafeteria for Student of the Month? Could I carry Abey up 3 flights to the auditorium, leave Izzy holding him, while I lugged the wheelchair up, so we could watch Izzy perform the turkey tango in the school concert.

Abey is in college now. He will be graduating next year. Where will he work? The NYC Schools employ 80,000 New Yorkers. Maybe Abey could be one of them. He will be at an unfair disadvantage since he can only work at a school in an accessible building. Imagine being restricted to applying to only 31% of the jobs that you are qualified for. That is the result of 69% of our school buildings lacking the basic accessibility features like elevators and bathrooms.

I urge you to support increasing the 2025-2029 capital budget for accessibility to \$1.25 billion dollars. Your fellow New Yorkers – students, families, prospective teachers, guidance counselors and principals are counting on you.

Written Testimony

Miriam Franco, Parent Advocate

May 23, 2025

As a parent and professional, I welcome Mayor Adams' April 16th announcement to continue funding for 3K and preschool special education classes next year and beyond. This is a step in the right direction, especially after this critical funding was initially left out of the proposed budget.

But we cannot mistake this for a complete solution. As of March 2025, more than 600 children were still waiting for seats in preschool special education classes, and over 7,900 preschoolers were waiting for at least one of their legally mandated part time services such as speech therapy or counseling to even begin.

These are not just numbers. These are real children with real needs who are being asked to wait for support that the law says they should already have. And as any parent or educator knows, these early years are not a time we can afford to lose. Delays in services mean delays in development, missed opportunities for inclusion, and increased stress on families.

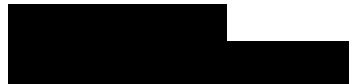
We need more than promises. We need real investment.

I urge city leaders to add at least 70 million dollars to the budget to give preschoolers with disabilities the evaluations, services, and classroom seats they are legally entitled to. No child should be denied a fair start simply because the funding was not there.

One child waiting is one too many. Now is the time to act.

Thank you,

Miriam Franco





Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ngawang. I am a senior at the Brooklyn School for Math & Research and a Youth Leader with Make the Road New York's Student Success Center at Bushwick Campus. I am here today because I would like to share my experience as a Youth Leader and the importance of investing in Student Success Centers to ensure students like me have the support to get to college.

As a student and a Youth Leader, I have personally experienced how the Student Success Center has changed lives. I've worked with my peers, guiding them through the college application process, helping them land internships, gain access to financial aid, and showing what it means to be in community with each other. Our SSC services are a godsend, especially for low-income students like myself who cannot access these resources at home.

The Student Success Center has been a lifeline for academics and students struggling with mental health, family challenges, and the overwhelming college application process. Many students at my school are first-generation college applicants. I know how intimidating that journey can be because I have been in their shoes, unsure of where to start. Through the SSC, I received the guidance I needed: help choosing colleges, writing applications, securing financial aid, and preparing for interviews. More than that, I gained leadership, communication, time management, and teamwork skills that will serve me well beyond high school.

The impact of the Student Success Center cannot be overstated. Without it, students would lose critical resources and personalized support that traditional guidance counselors, often overwhelmed with high caseloads, cannot provide. If Student Success Centers disappear, many students will fall through the cracks without the tools or guidance to navigate their futures.

That is why I urge the City Council to ensure and expand funding for Student Success Centers. This is not just about today; it's about the future of our communities. Investing in SSCs means investing in students, equity, and a system that ensures every student has a fair chance to succeed.

Thank you,

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FY26 Executive Budget Hearings
City Council Committee on Finance and Education
Monday, May 20th, 2025
By Olympia Kazi

Chairs, Brannan and Joseph, thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and thank you for your thoughtful questioning of the Department of Education. My name is Olympia Kazi, I'm the parent of a 2nd grader and a 4th grader at **PS-IS 187 in Washington Heights, School District 6**. I'm co-VP of my kids' school's PTA and I chair our school's Class Size Reduction Workgroup.

Today I'm bringing my perspective from the trenches of a school that is currently at **18% in compliance with the class size mandate**. Year after year, class size has been listed as a major concern both by parents and teachers in our school. Our community welcomed the passage of the class size law and expected that since our school is the most overcrowded school in Manhattan's District 6, we would be immediately given support, resources, and guidance on how to reduce class size in the short and long term.

Unfortunately, the class size law has repeatedly been portrayed by the DOE as an unfunded state mandate. As a result, our already understaffed school has been tasked with developing a class size reduction plan without any external support or resources.

This lack of guidance and funding has understandably led our teachers and administration to view potential class size strategies as yet another burden. At the same time, our parent community has responded with skepticism, further complicating efforts. The reality is that our overcrowded school is operating under intense pressure, which continues to foster confusion and even tension among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Last December I participated in our school's class size reduction grant application for Contracts for Excellence launched by DOE. The strategies suggested by DOE in that application were unimaginative and detached from the reality of our school. They mainly focused on making sure that all available space in school premises that can be used as classrooms are outfitted for that purpose and that all teachers "are more fully utilized as teachers."

The grant had a single and very limited scope: to fund additional teachers for schools that have available classroom space but cannot afford to hire more teachers to meet the class size mandate. This is because current school budgets are tightly tied to enrollment figures and, as you know, the New York State per-pupil Foundation Aid formula has not yet been updated to reflect the teacher-to-student ratios required by the new class size mandate.

This spring our school has been awarded funding for one additional teacher for 1st grade, but that means that we'll be giving up our Art classroom and next year our students will be getting Arts on Cart. Current enrollment at our school is 743 students, and we'd need **10 more classrooms and at least 10 more teachers to meet the class size mandate**. As a pre-k through 8th school that has run out of space, there are many creative and meaningful steps we could take to improve our compliance immediately as well as in the long term. With this in mind, we asked

funding to implement two other critically meaningful strategies for reducing class size in our December application, which was denied:

We requested that kindergarten enrollment be capped at 80 students. Until this year, our school has consistently started with four kindergarten classes enrolling up to 100 students, while all subsequent grades have only had three classes each. The Department of Education's denial of our request clearly indicates that it does not intend for our school to meet the class size mandate in the foreseeable future.

We asked for funding to hire a dedicated staff member responsible for developing and implementing our school's class size reduction plan. This role would explore and coordinate innovative strategies such as outdoor learning for younger grades, temporary co-location with a nearby charter school, use of an annex, split-grade classrooms, and multi-session scheduling for upper middle school grades. While all these approaches have potential, they cannot be effectively designed or piloted by our already overextended teachers and staff, who are managing a full load of responsibilities. If we are permitted to use C4E (Contracts for Excellence) funds to support a position focused solely on class size planning and implementation, we could see immediate and meaningful progress.

Moreover, it is counterproductive to expect overcrowded schools to develop class size reduction plans in isolation. **The DOE should fund district-based Class Size Implementation Officers** who can support and coordinate planning efforts across schools. These officers would be better positioned to identify which schools are overcrowded, which have available seats, and how those schools align in terms of services and enrichment programs.

With a broader district-level perspective, these officers could also explore strategic solutions—such as revising school zones or other policies—that not only address overcrowding but also present opportunities to improve other challenges faced by local public schools.

In short, if we approach the class size mandate as a positive reform with the potential to benefit all students and teachers, we can also leverage it to invest in solutions to other longstanding challenges within the public school system.

Unfortunately, instead of embracing this opportunity to improve our schools, the DOE appears to be pursuing an agreement with the UFT that would exempt so-called “high-performing” schools like ours from complying with the mandate. While promises of future annexes are being made, the School Construction Authority has no concrete plans in place—meaning these annexes may not materialize for another decade. This is unacceptable.

This path forward is not only inadequate—it is a disservice to our school communities. Today's parents, students, and even teachers in these overcrowded schools do not want exemptions. They want action. Exempting schools from the mandate sends the message that overcrowding is acceptable in schools that perform well on paper, while ignoring the very real daily toll it takes on learning, teaching, and school climate.

Finally, I want to highlight how inadequate classroom conditions—especially the overreliance on technology, reduced recess time, and understaffing—are contributing to the growing youth mental health crisis.

In our second grade, class sizes have reached 28, 28 and 29 students. These are 7- and 8-year-olds who get just 20 minutes of outdoor time per day—*only if* the weather allows. When recess is cut short and classroom support is lacking, screens are often used to occupy students while the sole teacher in the room attends to a distressed child or tries to help those who need extra academic support.

This is not what a healthy learning environment looks like. Young children need movement, social interaction, and adult attention—not more screen time in overcrowded rooms. These conditions are not just failing our kids academically; they are taking a toll on their emotional well-being.

Addressing class size isn't a bureaucratic challenge—it's a necessary step toward giving our students the care and support they need to thrive.

It's also important to acknowledge that public school parents are exhausted and increasingly desperate. Many feel unheard, unsupported, and disillusioned. As a result, we are witnessing an exodus—not just to other states, but also to charter schools, gifted and talented programs, and private schools.

This is not because families don't believe in public education. It's because they no longer feel confident that the system will meet their children's basic needs—smaller classes, safe environments, mental health support, and equitable access to resources.

If we want to stop this exodus and rebuild trust in our public schools, we must treat the class size mandate not as a burden to evade, but as a foundational opportunity to create better, healthier schools for all children.

Good afternoon. My name is Parker Ramirez and I am a freelance dance worker based in Manhattan and Westchester County.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

As a freelance dancer and recent college graduate, I'm asking to **Add and baseline \$75M to the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) and Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)** to return the city's culture spending to its historical average of a quarter of a percent of the budget

As a freelance dancer and certified body-care practitioner in assisted stretching, I help folks young and old in their flexibility and wellness goals every day. I'm an artist first and foremost and at 23, I know that my skills can be applied to teaching physical health and wellness through dance. The NYC arts education roundtable advocates for every school to have certified arts teachers and I'm also advocating policy wise that arts and music education be codified in public education law with the Every Student Succeeds Act. Dance contributes about 300 million to the city's economy — not including for-profits + individuals, enlivening public areas and digital spaces, engaging millions of people each year. The creative industry is a [major economic driver](#) for NYC generating thousands of jobs and contributing as much as 13% to the city's total economic output or GDP. [Social impact](#) of culture and the arts, include improved outcomes in mental health, education, youth involvement in the criminal justice system, safety, and other dimensions of social well-being of a community. As the NEA cuts funding for many dance and arts education resources, now is the time to increase the budget of CDF and CIG to a baseline 75 Million Dollars. Equity must be at the center of all budget allocations by the City. The City government must invest back its fair share in the Arts and Culture sector that more equitably reflects the sector's role in the City's economy and impact on the quality of life of all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your leadership and this opportunity to speak with you today.

Thank you for the opportunity to send written testimony. I am a **parent of a District 6/PS 187 kindergartner**, and a member of the class size working group at our school. Our school is the **most overcrowded in the district, and is at 18% compliance with the new class size mandate**. The class size law was put in place because studies show strong evidence that smaller class sizes have a direct impact on the quality of education for our students, not to mention difference it makes in a teacher's success and happiness in their job—which of course, is teaching our children. This is good news!

But unfortunately, implementing this law is not easy, and we haven't received the help and guidance we need to be able to meet our goals. I'm proud that we've made a small but meaningful move forward with the approval by the DOE of part of our application for a **Contract of Excellence, and that our school will receive funding for an additional first grade teacher**. This will be a significant improvement at a crucial stage of foundational literacy and numeracy, but is just a **stop-gap for our school as a whole**. This will come at the expense of our children having an art room (which was already repurposed from a library, which our school does not have).

The ideal scenario for our school, which will now be maxed out on space, is to make kindergarten 3 classes, like the rest of the grades, capping each class at 20 students. That would mean that as subsequent grades moved up, each incoming grade would add to the compliant grades. But of course, because of the way that funding is calculated per pupil, this would deeply cut into our school's budget, making us unable to provide even for the teachers we currently have and need in order to maintain the mandated class size levels. It's a catch-22, but one that needs a real solution. There are other possible solutions to explore, but with overburdened administration and teachers, there isn't the time and bandwidth to move forward with them. And while keeping current enrollment but constructing an annex is another solution, conversations have not yet even begun, which means this isn't something that would come to fruition for a decade at least.

We do not want an exemption—to me, that would mean that we are giving up and failing our kids. We need real solutions, and financial support to back those up. **We need to cap our classes**—not excluding kids who are already enrolled, but not accepting more children, particularly from out of zone, and finding an equally suitable school that meets their service needs. **It would make sense to have someone looking at this issue District-wide**, who can assess the needs and opportunities across the schools in this area.

We need to cap our incoming Kindergarten, as well as our incoming first grade, to maintain those as compliant grades, and need real solutions to meet the class size mandate, not to evade it.

Thank you for your time and attention, as well as your support as we move forward.

Testimony Submitted by Samantha Smith for New York City Council

Committee on Education and Committee on Finance

Re: FY 26 Executive Budget – Education – Preschool Special Education

May 20, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about the education budget. My name is Samantha Smith, and I live in Brooklyn. I am the parent of Saint Hendrix Peters, a 4-year-old preschooler with a neurological disability and multiple diagnoses, including TICS, ADHD, and Severe Emotional Dysregulation.

I am asking the City to add at least \$70M to the budget for preschool special education evaluations, services, and classes that young children like my son need to thrive.

When Saint transitioned from Early Intervention into preschool special education, he was approved for speech and occupational therapy through his IEP. Unfortunately, we have been waiting over a year for these legally mandated services to begin. Despite my constant follow-ups, phone calls, and emails with the DOE and the CPSE, we have not been able to secure a provider for him. In the meantime, I've been doing everything I can to support Saint at home, creating daily routines, practicing speech exercises, and working with him on fine motor skills. Still, as a parent, I cannot replace the professional, specialized services he is entitled to by law.

This gap in services has had a significant impact on Saint's development. He struggles with communication and regulating his emotions, which has led to challenges in social situations and increased frustration. We are working hard to help him catch up to his peers, but having access to speech and occupational therapy earlier would have helped bridge these delays—especially given his medical and developmental needs.

It's hard enough raising a young child with special needs in New York City. It should not be this difficult to access legally required services that are meant to support our children's growth and potential. My son is just one of the thousands of children left waiting, and the system's delays are failing our most vulnerable kids.

I urge the City to add at least \$70M to the budget for preschool special education evaluations, services, and classes and to ensure that every preschooler with a disability gets the support they need.

Thank you,
Samantha Smith

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Erika Perez Estrella

Address: _____

I represent: Make the Road / Urban Youth

Address: Collaborative

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Josh Melendez

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Youth Collaborative

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Guadalupe Tenantitla

Address: _____

I represent: Make the Road NY, Urban Youth

Address: Collaborative

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

Urban Youth
Collaborative

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yeray Castano

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ammy Heredia

Address: _____

I represent: Make the Road / Urban Youth

Address: Collaborative

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Diaraye Fatumta Bah

Address: _____

I represent: Make the Road NY / Urban Youth

Address: Collaborative

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle Norris

Address: [REDACTED] Astoria, NY,

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Amber Taylor

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carlin

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Student

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Josh Melendez

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC)

Address: _____

Urban Youth
Collaborative

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Veray Costano

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 05/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bahima Kolani

Address: _____

I represent: Self / Brotherhood Sister Sol

Address: 512 W 143 Street, New York, NY

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paula H. Healy

Address: _____

I represent: CEFF

Address: 22 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edward Sanchez

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY 11209

I represent: Citizens Committee for Children - Coalition for Equitable Education Funding

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Avery Severe

Address: _____

I represent: New York Performance Standards Consortium

Address: an Affinity Partner

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-20-25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Alonso Rodriguez

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20th, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Albert Tan

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 05/20/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ngawang Shurpa

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Zaid Quinones

Address: _____

I represent: Urban Dave Student

Address: 185 Prospect Ave

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kyle Mowatt

Address: _____

I represent: Student

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Javier Vazquez

Address: _____

I represent: Student

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAOLA MARTINEZ - BOONE

Address: _____

I represent: NEW YORK LAWYERS FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Address: 151 W 30th St. NY, NY 10001

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Vanderk

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mark Rampersad

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

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

Appearance Card

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

Name: Flavia Pucella Paredano

Address: _____

I represent: NYPD

Address: _____

Appearance Card

☐ in favor ☐ in oppositionDate: 5/20

Name: Walter, Esq. Pate

Address: _____

I represent: LYOPS

Address: _____

Appearance Card

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/1/00

Name: Kiefer, Palm

Address: _____

I represent: MALP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robin Davila

Address: _____

I represent: NYCP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paul Thompson

Address: _____

I represent: NYCP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Trevardo Kelly

Address: _____

I represent: NYCP

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Leorip Harrison

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Class Size Matter

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Solomon Ullrich

Address: _____

I represent: The Early College HS of Manhattan

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory Cooper

Address: _____

I represent: Echem

Address: _____

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Martin R. Rios

Address: _____

I represent: Early college high school at Manhattan

Address: _____

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maya Contreras

Address: _____

I represent: The Early College H.S. for En. Medicine

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Hearn

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aaron Barnett

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daniel Harris

Address: _____

I represent: NYPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 20. 5. 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lee Seon-hui

Address: South of Korea

I represent: Just hearing for council

Address: Chungnam

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eteban Ozuna

Address: _____

I represent: Student

Address: Urban Dove

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JH NARDA

Address: [REDACTED] NY 11101

I represent: URBAN DOVE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Taliya Carter (student) #6 on GC panel

Address: _____

I represent: Generation Citizen + High School for Human Professions

Address: + Human Services

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eiman GAD

Address: _____

I represent: Girls For Gender Equity

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

89

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexandra Rathmann Noonan

Address: _____

I represent: New York Performance Standards Consortium

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Adams

Address: 90 Broad

I represent: Urban Assembly

Address: 90 Broad

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sheree Gibson

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn 11213

I represent: parents and education advocates

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sajida Mitchell

Address: [REDACTED] Bronx 10457

I represent: PARENT ACTION COMMITTEE / Dining in Schools

Address: 1512 TOWNSEND AVE BX NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tanisha Grant

Address: 448 W 163 St NY NY 10032

I represent: Parents Supporting Parents NY

Address: 448 W 163 St NY NY 10032

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

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kiva Healy

Address: _____

I represent: DSC - NY

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

82

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: OLYMPIA KAZI

Address: [REDACTED] NY NY 10032

I represent: MYSELF

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAULA INHARQUE

Address: _____

I represent: UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES

Address: _____

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

81

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5-20-25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Aulisio

Address: _____

I represent: SEIU Local 32 BT

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

80

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lataasha Wright

Address: _____

I represent: Buobus

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Manelys Diverne

Address: _____

I represent: Educators for Excellence

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michaela Schuchman

Address: _____

I represent: Legal Services NYC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: (#5) Samantha Simons Brava (STUDENT)

Address: GC Panel

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: (#4) Julius Valderama (STUDENT)

Address: GC Panel

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: _____

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

75

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/76

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Suma Mustara - STUDENT

Address: GC Panel

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: GC Panel

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/76

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cohen, Layfield - teacher

Address: GC panel

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/76

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Courtne Thomas - GC panel

Address: _____

I represent: Generation Citizen

Address: _____

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

72

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Glenys Rivera

Address: 125 Barclay Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Local 372, DC 37

Address: _____

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nature Watkins

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Amalia

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Willnahe Prevallon

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/75

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Molly Serock

Address: [REDACTED], Brooklyn, NY 11215

I represent: Center for Independence of the Disabled NY

Address: 1016 6th Ave, NY 10016

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Malaysia (May) DePierro

Address: _____

I represent: ARISE coalition

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Randi Levine

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates for Children of New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

65

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory Brender

Address: _____

I represent: Day Care Council of New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Student

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Long Hui Jiang

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

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

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lamisha Tasnim

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Janice Chang

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ibel Nunez

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

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

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

60

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hadia Ali

Address: _____

I represent: DSC - NY

Address: _____

Parent

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Esperanza Vazquez

Address: _____

I represent: DSC - NY

Address: _____

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eward Sanchez

Address: _____

I represent: DSC - NY

Address: _____

Student
**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Destiny Jimenez

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student
**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Amin Jallow

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY Youth

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

55

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexis Vazquez

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY Advocate

Address: _____

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

Parent

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Amy Ts

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Victoria Jian

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tatyanna Castello

Address: _____

I represent: DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Nuha Chowdhery (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: DSC - NY

Address: _____

Student

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

50

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Mariam Jallow (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: DSE - NY

Address: _____

Advocate

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Chauncey Yong (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: DSC - NY

Address: _____

Advocate

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eman Gad

Address: _____

I represent: GGE & DSC-NY

Address: _____

Student

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexandra Rodriguez

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexander Rosario

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

45
**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mari Moss

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: DYCD CEC, Community Action Board Region 9

Address: 2 Lafayette Street 19th Fl. NY, NY 10007

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aaron Sanders

Address: _____

I represent: Grand Street Settlement

Address: 175 Delancey, NY, NY 1002

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HANA IRA (STUDENT)

Address: _____

I represent: CACE ASAP

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ELLA WANG (STUDENT)

Address: _____

I represent: CACE ASAP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Seaver Chen (Student)

Address: _____

I represent: CACE - ASAP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ashwyn Lu-Heda (Student)

Address: _____

I represent: CACE ASAP

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

39

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mary Vaccaro, VP UFT/Exec

Address: Teacher Center

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Alford, Vice President/Exec.

Address: Director UCS

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sally-ann Bongiovanni-Famularo

Address: Director Proxe

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tina Puccio, PLC/SEL/MAP

Address: Director

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

35

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Priscilla Castro Chapter Chair

Address: Para Professionals

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maria Morales, Bravc.

Address: _____

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Roseanne Kneubuhl

Address: Dial A Teacher

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chancellor Ailes Ramas

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

30

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Moran

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melanie Barry Logan

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melanie Mac

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jane Danting

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPD

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Hammer

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

25

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Simon P. Hawkins

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christy Mendez

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christina Tati

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Danika Ruy

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Serita Scott

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPD

Address: _____

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

20
**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emma Vadhara

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dan Weissberg

Address: _____

I represent: NYCPS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Flavia Puello Perdomo

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Public Schools

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 20, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Address:

I represent:

Address:

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Address:

I represent:

Address:

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

15

Appearance Card

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

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name:

Address:

I represent:

Address:

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/22/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sangy Canton

Address: 52 Chambers St. NY NY

I represent: Citywide Council on Special Education

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Moran

Address: 52 Chambers Street

I represent: NYC Public Schools

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 20.5.2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Agon Jr

Address: South Korea

I represent: Test hearing for hungchunnam-do Council

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 20.5.25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Moon Hyun Seon

Address: South of Korea

I represent: Just hearing for Chungcheung

Address: namdo council

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

10

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 20.5.2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PARK MYUNG

Address: SOUTH OF KOREA

I represent: Just hearing. Son council

Address: Chungnam

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Roseanne Kneubuhl

Address: Dial a Teacher

I represent: UFT

Address: 52 Broadway

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