Long Island City Business Improvement District

New York City Council FY2026 Budget Hearing

RE: OneLIC Rezoning Commitments

June 10, 2026

Submitted by: Angel Hart, Senior Director of BID and Economic Development

The LIC Partnership submits this testimony urging the New York City Council to restore full funding for all commitments made under the OneLIC rezoning agreements. These commitments were made to Long Island City residents, workers, and businesses as part of a negotiated community benefits agreement tied to significant upzoning in the neighborhood. The Executive Budget falls short by omitting critical items entirely and delaying others by years. We ask the Council to hold the administration accountable to the community's expectations.

Transportation

Missing from Executive Budget:

- Court Square Public Toilet — no funding included
- **Lighting Study in the Industrial Business Zone (IBZ) — no funding included**
- Feasibility Study of Public Realm Improvements Under the Queensboro Bridge (QBB) Ramps — no funding included

Timeline Delays:

- Queens Waterfront Greenway — delayed to 2029 and 2032
- 21st Street Intermodal Hub — delayed to 2029 and 2032
- 44th Drive Corridor Improvements — delayed to 2029 and 2032

Economic Development

Timeline Delays:

- LIC YMCA and New Community Center — not funded until 2033, but was committed to be completed by 2026

Parks

Timeline Delays:

- Waterfront Esplanade and New Open Space — not funded until 2031 per Exec budget, but was supposed to be completed by 2031 (no design or construction funding in earlier years)
- Queensbridge Baby Park — funding pushed to 2032–2033, but parks are supposed to be completed by 2031
- Renew Queensbridge Park — funding not until 2032, but design was supposed to start in 2028

Education / School Construction Authority (SCA)

Missing from Executive Budget:

- The Executive Budget contains no confirmation of the $519 million committed to fund 3 new schools promised to the community as part of the OneLIC agreement

We urge the City Council to restore all items omitted from the Executive Budget across Transportation, Education, Parks, and Economic Development, and to reinstate the original timelines for every delayed project. The OneLIC rezoning agreement was a negotiated exchange: Long Island City accepted significant upzoning that will bring thousands of new residents, workers, and visitors into the neighborhood. To delay or defund these agreements now, as the population grows and the strain on existing systems intensifies, is to leave the existing and future community in LIC at a major disadvantage.

Of particular concern to us is the complete absence of the Lighting Study in the Industrial Business Zone. Omitting this study entirely sends the wrong signal about the City's commitment to the businesses and workers who have anchored this neighborhood for generations. The IBZ is the economic backbone of Long Island City, home to small businesses, manufacturers, and the workers who depend on them — and as rezoning accelerates residential and commercial growth around it, ensuring safe, well-lit streets and public spaces in that corridor is not optional.

The Long Island City community accepted the OneLIC rezoning based on these commitments. The City must deliver on its promises.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY

Making New York a better place to age

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
Chair Lee
June 10th 2026
Exec Budget Hearing

My name is Kevin Kiprovski and I am the Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services under the NYCAging portfolio and many other home and community based services in our city.

Background

The aging services system is not prepared for the current needs in our city and we see no major plans to upgrade services to meet the clear upcoming increase in needs that was revealed through multiple reports published over the past few years. Additionally we have heard that the end of federal Section 8 funding will prevent the city from investing in new 100% Senior Affordable housing (SARA housing) for 4-5 years, which would mean no new buildings for nearly 10 years.

We must invest in a multi year campaign to fully fund our current aging services system and build in new programs to meet new needs. Below is only a short list of the $2.3 billion in new investment we are recommending as part of the AgeStrong NYC Campaign.

Recommendations

- **Guarantee 100% Senior Affordable Housing:** We must find city and state funding alternatives that do not end the city's SARA senior housing program. Additionally if there will be more multigeneration housing, there must be intentional programs and services for the specific needs of older residents.

- **$30 million for 7 day Home Delivered Meals:** The current HDM program does not guarantee weekend and emergency meals through city contracts with providers. The city must take full responsibility for the program to allow providers to get full payment for each meal served.

- **Commit to New SCRIE Income Limits**: The state passed a new law increasing SCRIE income limits from $50,000 to $75,000 and the city must commit to both honoring that increase and notifying eligible residents that they can apply for this benefit. Currently less than half of eligible tenants receive this benefit and not having it puts many older adults in rent regulated housing at risk of food insecurity, medical crisis, or homelessness.

LiveOn NY

Making New York a better place to age

- **Expand Aging Services to Meet the Clear Growing Need**: Older adults are the fastest growing demographic in NYC and we are not reflecting that in public discourse around city services, nor in the budget or policy landscape. We must begin to rethink how our service network works to account for the growing population instead of ignoring the reality we face. Reasonable investments and a shift in focus can create a city where all generations can live and thrive and we do not view older people as a burden. Older new yorkers deserve the resources they need to participate in our city and as we age we have so much value we can give back, if we don't we're knowingly pushing our most experienced neighbors out of their communities and out of our lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For questions, please email Kevin Kiprovski, Director of Public Policy at LiveOn NY, kkiprovski@liveon-ny.org

LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.

LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
FY2027 NEW YORK CITY EXECUTIVE BUDGET
SUBMITTED TO
THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
JUNE 10, 2026
9:30 AM

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

The thousands of workers Local 372 represents perform essential support services to help the 946,747 public school children of New York City to be learning-ready. Our School Crossing Guards make sure the children cross the streets safely in their morning and afternoon commutes. Our School Lunch Workers unload, prepare, and serve food each day, including during the summer, and continue to feed both students and members of the community on an essential basis during times of crisis. Our Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists ("SAPIS") work with students in mental health, needed now more than ever, and the prevention of substance abuse, gun violence, and bullying, as well as gang prevention and mediation.

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

I first want to commend the Mayor, the Chair, the members of the Education Committee, and the City Council for recognizing the importance of investing in New York City's public schools and employees. The future that an education provides for a child is one of the most important obligations we must fulfill.

School Crossing Guards

Local 372 represents approximately 2,600 Level-I and 80 Level-II School Crossing Guards ("SCGs"), 90% of which are women. SCGs often make the hourly minimum wage, earning approximately $20,000 per year. These workers are often the first line of defense to improve the safety for students who walk, bicycle, or take transit to school. However, under current staffing levels, there still remains thousand of school children crossing main intersections without any

supervision from NYPD school crossing guards, parental, or adult guidance. Student-pedestrians often face major safety traffic hazards everyday caused by double-and-triple parked cars at bus stops sited in close proximities to school buildings, and School Crossing Guards are often the first line of defense in ensuring the safety of these students. These workers have risked their own health, safety and lives to perform these vital services to the community, and as the number of School Crossing Guards continue to decline, thousands of school children cross main intersections without any supervision, putting our children's safety in jeopardy.

The need for increased protections for our student pedestrians and members of our communities make it essential that the City of New York allocate funding for the additional hiring of School Crossing Guards. In 2023, former Mayor Eric Adams authorized the elimination of almost 500 open school crossing guard positions, completely eliminating the hiring of additional School Crossing Guards. Since then, there have been a number of casualties. For example, in March 2024 an 8-year-old boy died in Queens after being struck just five blocks from school.[1] And February this year, an 11-year-old girl was killed while crossing the street in Brooklyn.[2] By eliminating these open positions and not hiring additional School Crossing Guards, it sends a dangerous message: the safety of NYC school children is not the City's priority. Local 372 respectfully requests that the City restore the 500 open positions, and hire additional School Crossing Guards providing our school children with heightened protections as they travel to and from school.

School Lunch Workers

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

This is demanding work; School Lunch Workers, perform essential support services to help the 946,747 public school children of New York City to be learning-ready. School Lunch Workers unload, prepare, and serve food each day, including the summer. While current practices meet the Department of Education's Office of SchoolFood staffing standards, these current guidelines spread school lunch employees too thin between the "Breakfast in the Classroom" program, including medical or religious restrictions, and preparing for lunch, it puts additional strain on an

[1] https://abc7ny.com/post/school-bus-struck-killed-teenage-girl-hit-run-bath-beach-brooklyn/18549142/
[2] Gothamist: "Queens parents struggle to gets crossing guards after 2 students killed in traffic," Sept. 27, 2024, https://gothamist.com/news/queens-parents-struggle-to-get-crossing-guards-after-2-students-killed-in-traffic

understaffed workforce. Local 372 is extremely supportive of the breakfast program, as well as universal lunch – every child deserves to come to class with a full stomach.

However, in order for the school food programs to be successful and efficient, we need an additional 1,000 school lunch workers to make this possible and alleviate the strain they are already experiencing. With the current inadequate staffing levels, it makes it extremely difficulty for School Lunch Workers meet these requirements within work hours. To comply with these standards, school lunch workers have to come to work earlier and stay later without extra compensation to simply make sure food is ready to feed all 946,747 children when that bell rings.

With the State providing funding for the Universal Free School Meals program, it is important that there is sufficient kitchen staff to service the restored menu. Local 372 respectfully requests that the City allocate **$10 million towards hiring an additional 1,000 School Lunch Workers**, bringing the total number in service up to 9,000. This will help reduce the strain on the current workforce while still continuing to fulfill the breakfast and lunch initiatives set by the previous and current administrations, including implementing more cooking from scratch, and continuing to feed the children of New York City. In addition, this would allow the City to work quickly in replacing our members who are retiring and leaving their jobs.

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

A 2017 report titled "Too Hot to Learn," detailed the significant lack of air conditioning. Former Mayor Bill de Blasio and other City officials rallied their support to install air conditioning in teaching spaces. That same energy and leadership is needed to support the health and safety of thousands of School Lunch Workers. We thank former Council Members Treyger, Kallos, and current member Yeger for recognizing this fact and introducing Resolution 1145-2019, calling on the Department to install air conditioning or cooling systems in New York City public school kitchens. Local 372 requests that the DOE and the SCA to comprehensively evaluate the school system's outstanding kitchen ventilation needs throughout all five boroughs, and we request more funding be allocated towards a remediation plan pursuant to that evaluation.

SAPIS

Since 1971, SAPIS workers have provided a range of mental health and intervention services to the largest school district in the Nation, through teaching social-emotional strategies, and offering all behavioral support available so that our children are ready to learn. In group and individual settings, SAPIS use evidence-based programs approved by the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services ("OASAS") as positive alternatives for New York City public school students in need. SAPIS service grades K-12 throughout all of New York City's 32 school districts, including special education.

SAPIS have always been proactive in providing students and their families with the tools to navigate the myriad of social, personal, and peer pressures that can derail healthy academic, social, and individual development. SAPIS are also responsible for monitoring behavior and offering resources and services to support students where they struggle to improve, including individual work plans each year that are specially tailored to the needs of the students in the schools. Not only do SAPIS help students dealing with substance abuse, they also help navigate students through LGBTQ+ issues, their relationships with themselves and others, and any other life events that may impact their education. All of these stressors are interconnected, so in order to tackle these issues at an early age,the intervention of a SAPIS prevents the destructive cycle from continuing. For many years, the SAPIS program was funded through a combination of federal and state funding that passed through OASAS and, in previous budgets, the State Legislature and the City were constant champions for our students through funding the SAPIS program.

Local 372 has long testified to this panel about the devastating effects of cuts to the SAPIS program and the loss of over 200 SAPIS counselors since 2006. Now more than ever, there are simply not enough SAPIS today to address the needs of all of our at-risk children and their families. The students of New York City Public Schools reside in the City's most underserved regions experiencing trauma daily, and continue to be influenced by the lingering effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the explosion of illicit cannabis shops near City schools, leading to a dramatic expansion of illegal access to cannabis. New York City School administrators and staff can affirm that the spike in student disciplinary incidents demonstrate the continued emotional difficulties students have experienced since undergoing the stresses of the pandemic. According to the 2024 school survey results, more New York City students than at any point in the past five years say that kids in their schools regularly bully each other.[3] More than half of the roughly 355,000 middle and high school students who responded to the city school system's annual survey earlier last year said their classmates are bullied, harassed, or work to intimidate each other – a rise from the reported 44% in 2019. The rise in student reports of bullying comes as city schools continue to confront a swirl of old and new social challenges, such as family and financial losses experienced due to the pandemic, intense cyberbullying, exposure to pressures via social media, and more. This continues to prove that there is a need for more SAPIS in schools.

[3] Chalkbeat New York, "More bullying, teachers dissatisfaction with the chancellor: 5 takeaways from NYC's 2024 school survey," August 30, 2024, NYC students report more bullying in schools, 2024 survey shows - Chalkbeat

This is not acceptable in the current environment, and that is why New York City cannot afford to neglect this important work as the number of SAPIS positions continues to remain well below peak numbers. Two hundred thirty-six SAPIS are currently employed to provide programming and services to the City's 946,747 public school students. An individual SAPIS can effectively reach approximately 500 students in need. Not only are there not enough SAPIS to place one in every public school, there are not even enough SAPIS to station one in every public-school campus (which can comprise more than five schools). Our SAPIS are instead moved to different campuses based on an evaluation as to who needs a SAPIS more. That should not be the system used to determine the needs of our children. Having to pick and choose which campus needs a SAPIS the most, leads to a reduction of additional support to our students, inevitably resulting in negative impacts, to students who need the support most. That is why Local 372 requests that the City of New York maintains its **dollar-for-dollar match of $2 million dollars for SAPIS with the State Legislature in this year's budget.**

Conclusion

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

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

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

LOISAIDA, INC.
Arts, Culture, Education & Community Development Since 1978

710 East 9th Street
New York, NY 10009
loisaida.org

Written Testimony of Alejandro Epifanio Torres

Subject: FY27 Executive Budget Testimony - Restore and Baseline $30M for the Department of Cultural Affairs

Submitted by: Alejandro Epifanio Torres, Executive & Artistic Director, Loisaida, Inc.

Organization: Loisaida, Inc., 710 East 9th Street, New York, NY 10009

Submitted to: New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations and Committee on Finance

Re: Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget - Department of Cultural Affairs

Date: [Insert Hearing Date]

Contact: [Insert Email] | [Insert Phone]

Good afternoon Chair, members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, members of the Committee on Finance, and members of the New York City Council.

My name is Alejandro Epifanio Torres, and I serve as Executive & Artistic Director of Loisaida, Inc., a Puerto Rican/Latinx arts, culture, education, and community development organization based on the Lower East Side. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of restoring and baselining the full $30 million increase for the Department of Cultural Affairs in the Fiscal Year 2027 Adopted Budget.

The FY27 Executive Budget's $10 million baselined increase for arts and culture is an important step forward. But it is not enough. Each year, the cultural sector is forced to wait anxiously for what is often treated as a last-minute restoration. This annual uncertainty makes it difficult for organizations to plan responsibly, retain staff, pay artists fairly, maintain facilities, and deliver consistent programming to New Yorkers.

We respectfully urge the Council and Administration to restore and baseline an additional $20 million in the Adopted Budget, bringing the total recurring increase to $30 million. This should not be temporary funding. It should be part of the City's ongoing baseline commitment to the Department of Cultural Affairs.

For organizations like Loisaida, culture is not a luxury. It is neighborhood infrastructure.

At Loisaida, we serve children, families, seniors, artists, immigrants, public school students, NYCHA residents, and working-class communities who rely on cultural spaces as places of belonging, learning, healing, celebration, and civic life. Our programs include free and low-cost arts education, intergenerational cultural programming, media and technology training, environmental justice initiatives, senior arts programs, artist residencies, community festivals, and neighborhood-based public programming rooted in Puerto Rican, Latinx, Caribbean, immigrant, and Lower East Side histories.

Our annual Loisaida Festival alone brings thousands of New Yorkers together on Avenue C / Loisaida Avenue, supporting local artists, vendors, small businesses, community partners, families, and cultural workers. But the Festival is only one visible example of a much larger cultural ecosystem that exists year-round and depends on reliable public investment.

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When cultural funding is unstable, communities feel it immediately. Programs are reduced. Teaching artists lose work. Small organizations delay hiring. Partnerships with schools and senior centers become harder to sustain. Capital needs are postponed. Free public programming becomes more difficult to offer. The burden falls hardest on community-based organizations serving working-class neighborhoods and historically under-resourced communities of color.

Baseline funding changes that reality.

A true $30 million baselined increase would allow cultural organizations to plan beyond one fiscal year, stabilize staffing, invest in artists and cultural workers, strengthen neighborhood partnerships, and maintain accessible programming for New Yorkers who cannot afford commercial cultural experiences. It would also recognize the enormous value that arts and culture contribute to the city's economy and civic health. New York City's creative economy employs nearly 300,000 people and generates approximately $110 billion in economic activity. Yet the cultural sector's impact cannot be measured by economic activity alone. Cultural organizations make neighborhoods safer, more connected, more vibrant, and more humane.

We also urge the City to create a comprehensive cultural capital infrastructure plan. Many cultural organizations are operating in aging buildings with urgent needs related to accessibility, energy efficiency, climate resilience, HVAC systems, technology, public safety, and code compliance. Capital projects are often delayed by complex processes that small and mid-sized organizations are not adequately resourced to navigate. A citywide cultural capital plan would help streamline project delivery, reduce delays, and enable institutions to modernize and maintain their facilities more efficiently.

This is especially important for neighborhood-based cultural centers that function as community anchors. Cultural infrastructure is public infrastructure. When a cultural center can repair its building, upgrade its systems, improve accessibility, or modernize its facilities, the benefit extends far beyond the organization itself. It benefits students, seniors, artists, small businesses, local residents, and future generations.

We also support increased funding for key cultural initiatives, including the Coalition of Theaters of Color, CASA, SU-CASA, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Support for Arts Instruction, and new initiatives that reflect Council priorities. These programs reach communities directly. They bring artists into schools, senior centers, neighborhoods, and community spaces. They support culturally specific organizations and immigrant communities. They help ensure that public dollars reach the New Yorkers who need them most.

At this moment, New York City should not retreat from culture. It should lead with culture.

Arts and culture help New Yorkers make meaning, build community, preserve memory, educate young people, support local economies, and imagine a more just future. In neighborhoods like Loisaida, culture has always been a form of survival, resilience, and self-determination. Public investment in culture is an investment in the people and places that make New York City extraordinary.

I respectfully urge the City Council to:

- Restore and baseline the full $30 million increase for the Department of Cultural Affairs in the FY27 Adopted Budget;
- Ensure that this funding is recurring and not treated as a one-time, last-minute allocation;

- Create and implement a comprehensive cultural capital infrastructure plan; and
- Increase support for cultural initiatives that serve schools, seniors, immigrant communities, communities of color, artists, and neighborhood-based organizations.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to New York City's cultural life. I urge you to make the full $30 million a permanent baseline investment in the Department of Cultural Affairs and in the communities that keep this city alive.

Respectfully submitted,

Alejandro Epifanio Torres
Executive & Artistic Director
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[Insert Email] | [Insert Phone]

LES Ecology Center

Lower East Side Ecology Center
Testimony to New York City Council
Committee on Finance
FY27 Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

The Lower East Side Ecology Center has pioneered community-based models in urban sustainability since 1987. Today, we steward green spaces across the Lower East Side and East Village, including parks, community gardens, and street tree beds. We are part of Forest for All NYC, a coalition with over 215 member organizations, which seeks to justly and equitably protect, maintain, expand, and promote the NYC urban forest as a key green infrastructure.

We are submitting this testimony to advocate for the urban forest in the Lower East Side and across the City. We ask that Council and the Administration work together to deliver on Mayor Mamdani's campaign commitment to double the NYC Parks budget, and ensure full funding for the staff and programs that are critical to the protection, maintenance, and planting efforts that will enable the City to reach its 30% tree canopy goal, starting with i**nvesting $150 million in FY27 to kickstart the implementation of the NYC Urban Forest Plan**.

The urban forest is one of the most powerful tools we have to mitigate the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, and build long-term climate resilience. Our neighborhood is on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Many of the streets we serve are located within environmental justice areas and are designated by the City as Heat Vulnerability Index level 4 or 5, the highest-risk category, where residents, particularly from disadvantaged communities, face an elevated risk of heat-related illness and death. At the same time, our urban forest is in urgent need of care: hundreds of mature trees have been lost in recent years, and hundreds of young trees are struggling to survive.

We applaud the Mayor for releasing this past April NYC's first ever Urban Forest Plan, mandated by Local Law 148 of 2023. The plan, whose creation we are proud to have supported, charts a path for NYC to equitably expand tree canopy cover to 30% citywide by 2040. Implementing this Plan will require resources. To ensure the plan is successful, the City will need to plant additional trees, support tree nurseries, tree health research and monitoring, and wood salvage efforts, and expand the workforce that protects and maintains trees.

NYC Parks is responsible for the care of more than half of all tree canopy in NYC, including street trees alongside park trees, but the Parks staff and programs that support the urban forest have continued to be cut. We are grateful to see $15M for baselined positions in the Executive Budget - this is a step in the right direction. Still, to ensure the City can live up to the commitments of the NYC Urban Forest Plan, we call for the full ask of $150M in FY27 to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, including baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff positions and funding to support other City agencies, such as NYCHA, that will expand tree canopy under their jurisdiction.

In particular, we call for the Budget to include approximately **$150 million** for:

LES Ecology Center

- Restoration, expansion, and baselining of NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) staff and programs to support ongoing operations and to grow the urban forest:
    - **Increase the number of tree planting staff** (via Capital funded Interfund Agreement) to increase the number of street trees planted from just under 18,000 in FY25 to at least 25,000 per year, with the aim of shortening the 9-year Neighborhood Tree Planting Program.
    - **Expand NYC Park's staffing for tree risk management and inspections,** including increasing and baselining the number of staff (climbers and pruners, foresters, and related management) and contract funding that are critical for caring for and managing the existing tree canopy across NYC.
    - In addition to baselining $15M for 161 staff previously funded by Mayoral one-shots, **baseline the remaining NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts** that were not included in the Executive Budget (approximately 115 positions including Parks Enforcement Patrol and GreenThumb staff) to limit turnover and sustain the operational efficiency that come from retaining a stable workforce.
    - **Provide $16M in baselined annual funding to fully implement the Forest Management Framework for forested natural areas**, including capital funding for large scale restoration and contract work, baselined expense funding for in-house staff to conduct maintenance and for materials and operating costs, and baselined expense funding to provide one trails crew per borough supporting the formalization and maintenance of NYC's nature trail network.
    - Increase funding for the trees and sidewalks program, to increase the City's capacity to respond to damage to sidewalks caused by tree roots.
- **$1M for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice** to support non-NYC Parks agencies tasked with heightened management and expansion of trees in their jurisdictions (such as NYC Housing Authority, the School Construction Authority, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, etc.) in implementing initial actions of the NYC Urban Forest Plan. This includes funding for an updated citywide Lidar remote sensing data capture and analysis to monitor the canopy coverage of the urban forest and measure the growth or loss of tree canopy coverage and track progress towards the 30% goal, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed every 5 years.

The future of New York City's urban forest is interlinked with the City's climate resilience and equity goals. However, without urgent investment in forestry capacity, the City cannot maintain, let alone grow, its tree canopy. It is critical that the vision that propelled the NYC Urban Forest Plan be matched with the resources needed to make it a reality on the Lower East Side and across all five boroughs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City to protect, sustain, and grow New York City's urban forest.

Sincerely,
NAME

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ROLE
Lower East Side Ecology Center

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Lower East Side Ecology Center
Testimony to New York City Council
Committee on Finance
FY27 Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

The Lower East Side Ecology Center has pioneered community-based urban sustainability since 1987. As a founding member of the NYC Community Compost Network, we work alongside partners across the five boroughs to build local composting systems that create green jobs, strengthen communities, and advance New York City's climate goals.

We urge the City Council to **fully fund community composting in the FY27 budget** by allocating **$9,075,000** for the NYC Community Compost Network, including **$6,775,000 for program support** and **$2,300,000 for compost site infrastructure**.

Community composting is a critical complement to curbside service. It provides neighborhood-based solutions that increase organics diversion, expand access where curbside is limited, and deliver direct environmental and social benefits at the local level.

This funding will support:

- Outreach & Education – Culturally relevant, multilingual programming that increases participation in composting across communities
- Master Composter Certificate Program – Trains New Yorkers as educators, leaders, and composting stewards
- Technical Assistance & Infrastructure – Provides tools, training, and support to build and sustain local composting systems
- Food Scrap Collection – Accessible neighborhood drop-off sites, especially for residents without reliable curbside access
- Local Composting & Processing – Transforms food scraps and horticultural waste into compost locally, keeping resources in NYC and acting as demonstration sites for education.
- Compost Distribution – Provides free compost to community gardens, urban farms, and residents
- Soil & Green Infrastructure Support – Improves soils in parks, street tree beds, and public spaces, strengthening climate resilience

Why this funding is essential now:

- Essential to NYC's zero waste goals – Increases organics diversion and complements curbside collection
- Ensures equitable access – Expands composting opportunities to underserved communities where there lacks curbside services
- Builds community and leadership – Strengthens neighborhood networks and creates a citywide culture of stewardship

- Creates green jobs and workforce pathways – Supports internships, training, and employment in the green economy
- Improves climate resilience – Healthy soils absorb stormwater, reduce flooding, and support urban ecosystems
- Creates a local circular economy – Food scraps are turned into compost and returned to the same communities—reducing reliance on export-based systems

The Lower East Side Ecology Center's decades of experience demonstrate that community composting is not only effective—it is essential. Through our work and through the Network, we have built a scalable, community-rooted model that is ready to grow.

We respectfully urge the Council to invest in this infrastructure and ensure that community composting remains a permanent, fully funded part of New York City's waste and climate strategy.

NYC Community Compost Network members include:
Astoria Pug, Big Reuse, BK Rot, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, The Brotherhood Sister Sol, Cafeteria Culture, Compost Power, Earth Matter, East New York Farms!, GreenFeen Organix, Lower East Side Ecology Center, NYBG Bronx Green-Up, Queens Botanical Garden, Red Hook Initiative, and Snug Harbor.

Sincerely,
Renée Crowley
Deputy Director
Lower East Side Ecology Center

THE LOWER EASTSIDE GIRLS CLUB
CENTER FOR WELLBEING & HAPPINESS
Joy. Power. Possibility.
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Testimony from the Lower Eastside Girls Club
City Council FY 26 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Lee and members of the Finance Committee. My name is Jenny Dembrow, and I am the Executive Director of the Lower Eastside Girls Club (LESGC) and have been with the organization since our founding in 1996

I. Who We Are

Since 1996, the Lower Eastside Girls Club has served as a free, year-round anchor institution on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. LESGC creates a safe space of "Joy, Power, Possibility" where young people and their families can dream big, discover their passions, and connect with peers and careers. Our 40,000-square-foot Center for Community is one of the most comprehensive free youth and family facilities in New York City, housing a Planetarium, Sound Studios, Robotics and Maker Shop, Environmental Education Lab, Design Studio, Culinary Center, Rooftop Garden, and Movement Space.

In 2022, LESGC launched the Center for Wellbeing & Happiness (CWBH), extending our mission to provide healing-centered wellness services for all ages and genders across the Lower East Side. We believe that thriving communities are built when everyone, from the youngest child to the eldest neighbor, has the support to flourish. Every program, every space, and every resource we offer is available at no cost, year-round, to every New Yorker we serve.

II. Who We Serve

LESGC annually serves more than 5,000 individuals across the full arc of community life. Our youth programming reaches over 1,300 young people ages 10–23 from all five boroughs and 27 zip codes. Seventy-two percent have African diaspora heritage, 42% identify as Latine, and 33% embrace multi-racial identities. Members speak 16 languages at home, and the majority face systemic barriers to higher education and career advancement that LESGC directly addresses.

Through our Center for Wellbeing & Happiness, we enroll more than 350 adults in monthly wellness programming and serve over 2,200 families through our Weekly Community Food Pantry reaching more than 5,000 individuals each year. Our CWBH membership reflects the neighborhood we serve: 44% Latine, 26% Black, 9% Asian, 10% White, and 11% other or unknown identities.

III. Our Programming

A. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

LESGC's youth development programming is organized across eight interconnected areas, each of which is free, year-round, and deeply rooted in the needs and strengths of the Lower East Side community.

"Girls Club is so much more than it seems, it's a family, it's a pact, it's a place for girls to feel safe to grow, develop, learn, and have fun!" Kiyanna, Youth Member, Testimony at City Hall 2026

Education Equity & STEAM Access: Members do not simply learn about science and technology, they practice it, build with it, and make it their own. Through our East Village Planetarium, Robotics and Maker Shop, Environmental Education Lab, and Rooftop Garden, we offer more than 300 free youth courses annually. 95% of our members demonstrate measurable gains in key social-emotional capacities, outcomes that research consistently links to long-term health and well-being. Over 1000 NYC DOE school students visited our planetarium in 2025 Free of Charge to the schools.

Arts & Creative Expression Creativity at LESGC builds voice, identity, and confidence. Our arts programming includes visual arts, performance, design, culinary arts, and digital media production. Members work with industry-standard equipment to tell their stories and build careers from them.

College & Career Pathways: Four interconnected programs guide young people from age 10 through 23 and beyond: a long-term Mentoring Program spanning middle school through career; Grown-ish Career Exploration, which connects students with professionals across industries; College Preparation, offering essay workshops, FAFSA guidance, and campus visits; and Alumna Engagement for ongoing career mentorship and networking. Ninety-five percent of our youth members graduate high school, and 90% pursue higher education.

Leadership & Civic Engagement: New York City's future leaders are already here. Through New Girl City, our six-month citywide civic leadership initiative for female-identified youth ages 14 to 19 and the STARS Coalition, LESGC builds a pipeline of young advocates who can see themselves as leaders and have the tools to act. In our most recent New Girl City cohort, 100% of participants reported a likelihood to vote and 95% reported increased interest in civics and activism.

B. FOOD JUSTICE & NUTRITION SECURITY

Our Weekly Community Food Pantry serves more than 2,200 individuals each month, including 755 older adults and 400 children in a neighborhood with profoundly limited grocery access. Flexible walk-in options are specifically designed for community members facing mobility challenges or lacking the technology to schedule appointments. We also offer subsidized CSA farm shares with Norwich Meadow Farms for SNAP recipients, a daily Food Farmacy, and

culinary programming that addresses chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension through culturally relevant food education.

C. CENTER FOR WELLBEING & HAPPINESS

The Center for Wellbeing & Happiness represents a significant and deliberate expansion of LESGC's mission to serve the whole community. Launched in 2022, CWBH has enrolled 1,731 members in its first three years and now offers more than 100 free wellness courses annually. On average, 350 adults visit CWBH every month, with hundreds more attending community events. Adults ages 62 and older represent our single largest age group, with more than 260 participants in this cohort, joined by 210 participants ages 50–61.

What distinguishes our model is not any single service, but the depth and continuity of an integrated ecosystem of support. CWBH meets people where they are, across every stage of life, and remains a rare institution in this neighborhood offering this breadth of programming at no cost.

Movement & Physical Wellness: Chair Yoga, Tai Chi, Zumba, Salsa, and Aerobics classes build physical strength, balance, and connection among participants.

Arts & Creative Programming: The Grandparents Story Lab, Creative Writing, Batik, Jewelry Making, and Podcasting offer avenues for expression, memory, and intergenerational exchange. Our weekly Knitting Group, led by "Knitting Mama" Maureen, helps participants manage stress and depression while cultivating deep friendships.

Nutrition & Culinary Education: Classes address chronic health conditions through culturally relevant food traditions, empowering older adults to take ownership of their health.

Community Support Groups: Groups for grief, caregiving, parenting, and mental health provide structured, peer-supported spaces for community members navigating complex life challenges — including grandparents supporting loved ones through mental health crises and substance use issues while managing limited incomes and housing instability.

Crisis and Rapid-Response Support: CWBH has served as an essential anchor for older adults facing acute need, including housing insecurity. We have partnered with NYCHA Tenant Association Representatives and GOLES to host community meetings and serve as a rapid-response space for residents in crisis.

The community members we serve describe what CWBH means to them in terms no data point can fully capture:

> *"There's something here for everyone's soul — either food or learning. It touches the needs of the community. For older adults on the Lower East Side, this place is a lifeline."* **— Sabura Rashid, CWBH Member, Testimony at City Hall 2026**

> *"You get the Girls Club experience as an adult. I have learned so much coming here — about my body, about what I'm eating. It's just an amazing space."* **— Crystal, CWBH Member**

V. Organizational Context and Fiscal Stewardship

This year, LESGC celebrates our 30th anniversary. We do so with deep pride in what this community has built and with full transparency about the environment in which we operate. Contract delays, reductions in corporate philanthropic giving, profound economic uncertainty, and federal cuts to food assistance programs have all placed significant pressure on our operations.

Through disciplined budgeting, strategic decision-making, and careful stewardship throughout Fiscal Year 2025, The Lower Eastside Girls Club has stabilized our finances and are projected to close Fiscal Year 2026 with a balanced budget. This turnaround reflects both our organizational resilience and our unwavering commitment to the people we serve.

Community-based organizations like LESGC are not a supplement to the city's social safety net. We are foundational to it. Sustaining this forward momentum and building toward the next 30 years requires consistent and meaningful public investment.

VI. FY27 Funding Request: $1,090,000

LESGC respectfully requests a total of $1,090,000 in Fiscal Year 2027 City Council funding, allocated as follows:

$750,000 — General Operations (Speaker Request, Restoration): Restoration of $250,000 allocated at adoption for FY25 and $500,000 allocated in FY26. These funds sustain the full breadth of LESGC's free programming and operations, including youth development, intergenerational wellness, food access, and organizational infrastructure.

$125,000 — New Girl City / Civic Engagement (Speaker Request, Restoration): New Girl City is LESGC's flagship six-month civic leadership initiative for female-identified youth ages 14 to 19. With 100% of recent participants reporting a likelihood to vote and 95% reporting increased civic interest, this program is a direct investment in the democratic future of New York City.

$150,000 — STARS: Sports Training as Rolemodels for Success (Speaker Request, Restoration + Enhancement): Restoration of $100,000 plus a $50,000 enhancement. Active citywide since 2015, STARS supports robust teen leadership programming, including career development, mentoring, and student-led civic events across nine partner organizations.

$25,000 — Community Food Pantry (Manhattan Delegation, Restoration + Enhancement): Restoration of $10,000 plus an enhancement. Our pantry serves over 2,200 individuals each month and currently maintains a waitlist of approximately 100 families. At a time of expanding federal cuts to food assistance, this funding is urgently needed.

$25,000 — Older Adult Programming (Council Member Epstein, New Item): The Center for Wellbeing & Happiness offers free intergenerational wellness programming to over 350 adults

monthly, with adults 62 and older as our largest age group. This new line item will support expansion of CWBH offerings and reduce a growing waitlist for seniors seeking connection, wellness services, and emergency food access.

$15,000 — General Operating Support (Council Member Items)

VII. Conclusion

For 30 years, the Lower Eastside Girls Club has been a constant in a neighborhood defined by change, free, welcoming, and fully rooted in the people we serve. Our 75% BIPOC staff, many of whom are alumni who grew up in these programs and now give back to the next generation, show up every day because we believe in this community.

We respectfully and urgently urge the Committee's support for the full $1,090,000 in FY27 funding for the Lower Eastside Girls Club. This investment will sustain life-changing youth development, expand critical intergenerational wellness services across generations, and ensure that our Community Food Pantry can continue meeting the growing needs of Lower East Side families.

MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

Written Testimony on the Executive Budget Hearings - Finance

June 10, 2026 | City Hall | 11:00 AM

Good morning, council members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is **Bianey Garcia**, and I am the Trans Immigrant Justice Project Organizer at Make the Road New York. I'm here to share our organizational concerns with the budget and its impact, particularly on TGNC New Yorkers.

Our trans and gender-expansive communities are facing escalating threats from the federal government, including attempts to roll back healthcare protections, attacks on gender-affirming care, and efforts to undermine our civil rights. These policies are putting our lives at risk, and it's Black and brown, migrant, low-income, and young people who are experiencing the brunt of these attacks. That is why today we're here urging the City Council to stand with us and make bold, meaningful investments in our community's health, housing, and safety.

We ask the Council to use every available tool to expand and preserve programs that increase services and vital protections for Trans-GNCIQ+ people:

1. **Fully fund the Trans Equity Fund at $10 million and prioritize trans-led groups.**
   The Trans Equity Fund was created to address deep disparities in health, housing, and employment for our communities. Raising the fund from $6.5 million to $10 million is not just necessary – **it is urgent.** This funding must go directly to trans-led organizations that are best equipped to reach, support, and heal our people.
2. **Invest $15 million to protect TGNCIQ+ healthcare providers under attack by federal policy.**
   As the White House and Department of Justice move to strip away healthcare protections, New York City must step up. Trans people rely on providers offering gender-affirming, culturally competent care. These providers – many of them clinics and small community-based health centers – are at risk of losing federal support. The City must allocate $15 million to ensure they remain open and accessible.
3. **Allocate $10 million to the Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Fund.**

The current funding level of $3.5 million allocated to this fund is not sufficient to sustain the harm reduction, health access, and outreach services that communities involved in the sex trades rely on. It is essential that the City Council increase this funding to ensure culturally competent, nonjudgmental support through community-based organizations that understand the realities faced by people involved in the sex trades.

4. **Allocate $15M for a NEW LGBTQIA+ Immigrant Fund**
   As Make the Road New York, we see firsthand how LGBTQIA+ immigrants face unique barriers to accessing immigration legal services, particularly those seeking asylum, U visas, T visas, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), deportation defense, and other complex forms of immigration relief. No one should be left behind because of their immigration status, gender identity, or sexual orientation; therefore, we need the city to commit 15 million to support and protect LGBTQIA migrants.

This budget is a moral document, and it reflects what this City values and whether it is serious about equity, inclusion, and care. Trans and gender diverse people, especially trans immigrants, have been told for too long to wait, and we cannot wait anymore.

New York City has a debt with our people and this is why we ask this Council to act now – boldly, unapologetically, and with equity at the center.

Thank you and si se puede!

Make the Road New York

Testimony to City Council Committee on Finance

Critical Funding for Make the Road New York's Legal and Wraparound Services

June 10, 2026

Good morning. My name is Corinna Svarlien, Workplace Justice Staff Attorney at Make the Road New York (MRNY). Make the Road New York is the largest immigrant member organization in the state, and we serve 30,000 immigrant and working-class New Yorkers per year, the majority of them in NYC. Thank you Chair Lee and the City Council for supporting our legal, health, and educational services and programs. Based out of welcoming community centers in Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, we support New Yorkers to keep their families together, know their rights, fight landlord harassment, win back stolen wages, access healthcare and education, and more.

These services have never been more urgent. Immigrant New Yorkers are being profiled and arrested without warning as they walk down the street. Many are separated from their families and shipped to detention facilities hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

But New Yorkers are not facing this alone. As a core member of the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, MRNY was among the first to take ICE to court to win our clients' freedom from detention. That work has not slowed as demand has skyrocketed. Our attorneys are working around the clock, including by filing habeas petitions to free New Yorkers who are unlawfully detained. We are meeting people at their most vulnerable moments and fighting to keep families together. We are grateful for the Council's powerful support of our immigration legal services and request the following:

- **The City must increase and baseline funding for the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative at $4.5M** to support deportation defense services of MRNY, NYLAG and UnLocal.
    - **We ask the Council to contribute $1.8M to support this expansion to meet the massive need.**
- **The City must also invest $39.6M in funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)** to serve detainees in removal cases.

As working families struggle to afford our city, the immigrant workers I represent have faced increased harassment from employers, including threats to call ICE. NYC must maintain strong worker protections and adequately fund the city agencies and CBOs that guarantee them:

- **Renew and expand the Low Wage Worker Support (LWWS) Initiative to $3M, including $362,750 for MRNY.** This funding enables legal service providers and CBOs to represent hundreds of workers on wage theft, discrimination, and other claims. Groups also conduct multilingual outreach and education programs.
- **Renew the Legal Services for Low-Income and Working-Class New Yorkers initiative (formerly Legal Services for the Working Poor), including $165,900** in funding for MRNY's free civil legal services in a range of areas.
- **Renew funding for the Job Training and Placement Initiative, including $5,255,000 for the Consortium for Worker Education "Jobs to Build On" program, $2,700,000 for Worker Service Centers, and $200,000 for MRNY.** This program supports classes for members of unions, CBOs, and providers serving immigrants.
- **Fully fund the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) at $4.3M for workers' rights enforcement.** Worker protection agencies need the staff and resources to meaningfully enforce basic protections, especially for the most vulnerable workers.
- **Fully fund the New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR) at $25M,** especially as civil rights and anti-discrimination enforcement are being gutted at the federal level.
- **Support families on the waitlist for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) by investing $500M** in that program, and provide a **$170M fund for Family Child Care (FCC)** providers to supplement their average effective wage of $6 per hour.

We thank the Council for its support of **implementing the expansion of CityFHEPS.** The expansion is a critical, cost-effective lifeline that will help thousands of New Yorkers avoid the trauma of homelessness and help thousands more leave shelter for good. Our community members who are in the shelter system or at risk of losing their apartments cannot wait for this expansion.

Finally, MRNY requests an **increase to $300,000 under the Speaker's Initiative** for our wraparound legal, health access, educational, TGNCIQ, and Know Your Rights services.

Thank you to the Council and the City for your support of these vital services for immigrant and working-class New Yorkers.

Make the Road NY
NYC Council Testimony: Committee on Finance
Vital Funding for Health Access and Adult Literacy Services
June 10, 2026

Good Morning. My name is Maiber Solarte, Director of Adult Literacy at Make the Road New York. On behalf of our 30,000 members, I thank Chair Lee and the Committee for the chance to share about our health access and adult literacy services for immigrant and working class New Yorkers. From our welcoming community centers in Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, Make the Road supports 30,000 New Yorkers per year to keep their families together, know their rights, fight landlord harassment, and access healthcare and education.

Immigrant New Yorkers are facing unprecedented federal attacks, including new restrictions on access to healthcare. It is so important for the Council to keep supporting health access and adult education initiatives that help bridge deep health and economic disparities in our City. Make the Road's health services are helping immigrant New Yorkers navigate the loss of health insurance and other benefits due to HR1. In addition to health insurance and SNAP outreach, enrollment, navigation, we provide referrals to wraparound services, Community Health Worker training and TGNCIQ health access services.

We ask the Council to:

- **Enhance the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million, with $110,000 for Make the Road.** This funding has helped us reach thousands of uninsured and under-insured people in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island with peer-to-peer outreach and public education about options for health care access. We also connect people to resources and train future Community Health Workers who come from the communities we serve, which has a lasting impact. Enhancing Access Health to $4.5 million would help us meet the need for further outreach and referrals as care and coverage options rapidly change.
- **Maintain the MCCAP program at $2 million and Make the Road's funding at $82,000.** With last year's increase, Make the Road has been able to help more low-income and immigrant New Yorkers navigate the complexity of their insurance and access benefits, from prescription drugs to dentist visits.

- **Renew $74,219 for Make the Road under the HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care initiative**. With this funding, Make the Road reaches out to hundreds of vulnerable New Yorkers about HIV medication, condoms, and preventive measures. We also reach out to TGNCIQ+ sex workers with free HIV self-testing kits and follow-up.
- **Maintain Immigrant Health initiative funding**, which supports our health insurance enrollment assistance, community health worker visits, and SNAP referrals. These services help overcome the worsening fear and hesitation among immigrants that is related to public charge and more.

Immigrant New Yorkers are also relying on our adult literacy classes to weather this storm, advance their careers, pass the citizenship exam, and more. We ask the Council to:

- **Expand the Adult Literacy Forward Initiative to $18M (including a $3.5M increase to the Adult Literacy Forward budget) and consolidate all Council Discretionary funding under the Adult Literacy Forward initiative. This includes maintaining $449,637 for MRNY in the Adult Literacy Forward Initiative.** Adult Literacy Forward is a nationally recognized, innovative model of funding. Since its inception as a City Council pilot project in FY22, it has consistently demonstrated that greater levels of investment in services, along with greater flexibility to meet community needs, yield greater outcomes and impacts for adult literacy students and their families.

And we ask the city to:

- **Create a new $20M adult education funding stream, Education for Integration and Equity, as proposed by the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL).** This funding would provide new seats and unfettered access to English language, basic education, digital literacy, high school equivalency, and civics education classes for immigrant New Yorkers regardless of their status. The new funding is urgent given the potential loss of services that would result from the federal administration's proposed cuts and changes to the federal adult literacy funding.

Finally, we request $300,000 under the Speaker's Initiative for our wraparound services (legal, health, educational and Know Your Rights), which allow us to meet multiple needs of our community members.

Thank you for your support of these vital services.

MANHATTAN YOUTH

Manhattan Youth Written Testimony | City Council Hearing Juen 10,2026

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Bob Townley. I am a native New Yorker and the founder and Executive Director of Manhattan Youth, a non-profit organization that cares for thousands of New Yorkers daily. For almost forty years, it has been my life's greatest joy to service New Yorkers of all ages, to create after-school programs when there were none, and to grow this community each year.

We have built amazing things together, and in the past two decades we have led the charge in after-school care in Middle Schools across this borough. We have grown from a handful of schools to 23 in the last decade, and during this time our staff has created the first Middle School Athletic League (MSAL) that offers 14 sports to over 200 schools across the city. This after-school community means everything to us, and it is now in jeopardy. We are a vibrant organization running elementary after school programs. After September 11 we built lower Manhattan's first community center on warren Street . We are founders of Hudson River Park and operate in parks througStreet. city.

On May 14th, we received the news from DYCD that 13 of our contracts with 23 schools were terminated. This isn't just a loss of more than half of our contracts, but half of the staff and community we have spent years caring for. This is not only about Manhattan Youth but about the principals, DOE teachers who now must figure out what to do. Parents and children who thought they selected an after school program now learn it has changed.

Since we received this news, parents and administrators within our schools have reached out to DYCD and city officials to show their support for Manhattan Youth. Simply because Manhattan Youth isn't just an after-school program, it is deeply woven into the daily life of the students we serve, providing support, enrichment, athletics, social-emotional development, and safe environments for kids during critical after-school hours.

As DYCD rolls out these new COMPASS contracts, our schools and many other CBOs are left in limbo during this transition. I am deeply worried about the programs we have built and the long-lasting disruptions this could have for middle-schoolers throughout the city. As a result of the selection process, Manhattan Youth has filed protest appeals and freedom of information requests with the DYCD office, Commissioner, and Comptroller. I know we are not the only CBO in this position.

We have learned that the rfp process itself and its subsequent debriefing has many errors. The process disregarded past performance and community participation. The method in which DYCD reviewed community participation was inaccurate. also what is very clear from many agencies is mistakes were made on their budget reviews.

I ask what the city can do to rectify these troubling situations ?
Sincerely,
Bob Townley, Executive Director
Manhattan Youth

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Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.
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New York City Council Committee on General Welfare Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2027

Chair Hudson, and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Thank you for holding this hearing on the New York City FY27 Executive Budget. We are writing testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) to join other providers across the City in expressing our support for the proposed restoration of $2.6 million funding for Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP) and calling on the Council to increase access to Domestic Violence shelters that meet the needs of survivors. Met Council's clients receiving family violence services rely on a robust network of city services, and a well-funded Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV) in order to stay safe, housed, and find stability.

For over 50 years Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments ranging from 100 percent affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust Survivor assistance, geriatrics programs, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher and halal emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually.

Met Council is a leader in addressing the needs of survivors of family violence in NYC. We offer comprehensive case management services, trauma-informed psychotherapy, financial assistance, and food assistance under one roof. Each client is given individualized care and assessed for a full range of social services including legal advocacy, emergency shelter and relocation, employment assistance, financial assistance, emergency food, entitlement counseling, short-term trauma informed therapy, and information and referral services. The Social Workers on our Family Violence Prevention team work with all New Yorkers regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation and have specific competency in working with Jewish communities throughout New York.

In 2024, NYPD reported more than 110,000 domestic or intimate partner violence complaints.[i] The true number of incidents is likely much higher, as nearly 50 percent of domestic violence incidents go unreported.[ii] Survivors who do come forward are often met with systems that are under resourced and unprepared to offer the timely, trauma-informed, and dignified support that recovery requires.

Met Council strongly supports the proposed restoration of $2.6 million for CVAP. This funding was previously discontinued by the prior Mayoral administration, severely destabilizing the program. CVAP embeds Victim Advocates in every NYPD precinct, where they provide trauma-informed, client-centered support to survivors of domestic violence and other crimes, including but not limited to housing transfers, home visits, and legal advocacy. Restoring this funding is essential to keeping the program intact, ensuring Advocates are fairly compensated, and maintaining the staffing levels necessary to meet the city's significant need.

Met Council also urges the Council to significantly expand domestic violence shelter access citywide. For survivors deciding to leave an abusive relationship, access to housing is the number one reported concern, and too often, the system fails to provide it.[iii] Met Council's Family Violence Prevention Social Workers work daily with survivors who are ready to leave but have nowhere safe to go.

The shortage is in part structural. Shelters operating near capacity are heavily incentivized to prioritize families, since the additional beds filled by children generate additional reimbursement. Ensuring that families can access safe shelter is essential, as more families with children enter shelters due to domestic violence than they do due to evictions.[iii] However, this dynamic routinely leaves single individuals without options. Single women face serious capacity constraints; single men face something closer to a complete absence of services. There are virtually no domestic violence shelters in New York City that will accept a single man. This forces our Social Workers to refer clients to shelters outside the city, severing survivors from their support networks and compounding the disruption they are already experiencing. The Council must act to close these gaps and ensure that all survivors, regardless of family status or gender, have access to the safe, accessible shelter they deserve.

By restoring $2.6 million in funding for CVAP and expanding access domestic violence shelters, this Committee and the Council can meaningfully strengthen the city's response to domestic violence and help ensure that no survivor is left without a safe place to turn.

We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the New York City Council to meet the needs of all New Yorkers

Thank you,



Dickran Jebejian

Director of Policy

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

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[i] New York City Police Department. "Domestic Violence Complaints by Precinct Pursuant to Administrative Code 14-150(e): 01/01/24–12/31/24." New York: NYPD Analysis and Planning Division, 2024. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/domestic-violence/dv_complaints_2024.pdf.

[ii] Connections for Abused Women and Their Children (CAWC). "Stigma and Domestic Violence." February 27, 2023. Accessed March 19, 2026. https://www.cawc.org/news/stigma-and-domestic-violence/.

[iii] New Destiny Housing. A Crisis Compounded: The Dual Crises of Domestic Violence and Homelessness. New York: New Destiny Housing, 2024. https://newdestinyhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/DV-Report-1.pdf.

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New York City Council Committee on Aging Executive Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2027

Chair Zhuang, and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on Aging,

Thank you for holding this hearing on the New York City FY27 Executive Budget. We are writing testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) to join other providers across the City in calling for improved access to affordable housing through older adults across the city, as well as increased mental health and legal supports. The Department for the Aging (DFTA) provides essential support to Met Council's Geriatrics programs, which promote healthy aging among New York City's aging population.

For over 50 years Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments ranging from 100 percent affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program to comprehensive Holocaust Survivor assistance, geriatrics programs, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually.

Our Geriatrics Team provides critical support to more than 3,000 older adults across four programs: Elder Abuse Prevention, Caregiver Support, Holocaust Survivor Services, and Senior Repair. For older adults living in our inclusionary buildings, we also provide direct case assistance and food pantry coordination, ensuring that aging in place is not just possible, but safe and dignified.

Our team maintains active partnerships with DFTA-funded Older Adult Centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), Home-Delivered Meals providers, and Case Management programs, so that when an older adult needs a service, we can connect them to it quickly.

Nowhere is that coordination more urgent than in our Elder Abuse Prevention Program. For isolated older adults who are actively experiencing abuse, an Older Adult Center can be a lifeline. Acting as a safe, familiar place to seek refuge, rebuild connection, and access the support network they need to stay protected.

Approximately 21 percent of New Yorkers are older adults, yet only 0.5 percent of the City's budget is allocated to older adult services.[i] Older adults are also disproportionately impacted by poverty. In 2023, over **21 percent of New York City seniors lived in poverty, and over 61 percent[ii].** The older adult population is growing rapidly, and the support needed to age in place, maintain healthy bodies and minds, and protect themselves from abuse, remain insufficient. It is essential that the City Council invest in the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of older adults from all walks of life.

We join other providers and advocates in older adult services in requesting that the City Council **commit $250 million for expanding and improving the Senior Rental Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program**. Many older adults live on fixed incomes, and rising housing costs often leave them vulnerable to eviction, homelessness, or unsafe living conditions. Currently, the SCRIE program provides valuable support to housing-insecure seniors, but more needs to be done.

In recent years, our Geriatrics Team has seen increases in housing insecurity with their clients, impacting their ability to age in place and causing greater strain on those who care for them. This insecurity is known to have adverse impacts on other aspects of an individual's life, including increased stress levels, poorer overall health status, reduced access to health care, and negative effects on mental well-being, including higher rates of depression and anxiety.[iii] The SCRIE income eligibility limit of $50,000 annually has been stagnant for over a decade and is not reflective of the cost of living in New York City. It is essential that SCRIE income eligibility caps increase to reflect the annual Social Security Cost of Living Increases. Currently, modest annual Social Security increases can result in disqualification for older adults, putting their housing in jeopardy. We support the Governor's proposal to increase the eligibility limit to $75,000 to better meet the needs of the Older Adults in the program trying to make ends meet. Expanding housing support programs and modernizing income requirements would lift thousands of seniors out of housing insecurity, support aging in place, and improve health outcomes.

Elder abuse and its consequences remain critically underexamined in conversations about the well-being of older New Yorkers. Nearly 15 percent of older New Yorkers reported being a victim of elder abuse, yet the systems meant to protect them remain inadequate.[iv] **Met Council's Geriatrics Team routinely works with clients who are in an unsafe housing situation caused by abuse at the hands of a relative or caregiver.** These clients are frequently homeowners but face a legal dilemma: they cannot evict their abusers, who continue to live with them, because existing tenant protections offer limited mechanisms for doing so. Additionally, many victims have fixed incomes or have suffered financial abuse that strips them of resources they might otherwise use to seek help. The result is an aging population with no legal recourse, no safe path forward, and no meaningful support from the City. It is vital that City Council prioritizes targeted investment in legal assistance and other wrap around services that allow older adults to remain safely in their homes without sacrificing the tenant protections that all New Yorkers depend on.

Older New Yorkers are also particularly vulnerable to cognitive decline and growing negative mental health issues. It is estimated that more than 20 percent of older adults experience some variety of mental health conditions, with the most common being anxiety and depression. Social isolation, chronic health conditions, and decreased cognitive functioning all contribute to the regularity of mental health conditions in older adults. As New York City continues to age, it is vital that systems are in place to both provide and enable older adults to access the appropriate mental health services. Older Adult Centers provide critical support for the general well-being of older adults, including mental health care. Across the city, older adult centers are in desperate need of repairs to both maintain services and improve accessibility. **We request that this committee commit $5 million to continue the Council's funding for improvements to older adult centers across the city.** This funding is essential to keep these centers operating and to support the communities of older adults that rely on them.

We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the New York City Council to meet the needs of older New Yorkers.

Thank you,



Lillian Wu, LMSW

Director of Geriatrics Programs

Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

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[i] LiveOn NY, "Age Strong NYC & NYS," LiveOn NY, accessed March 11, 2026, https://www.liveon-ny.org/age-strong.

[ii] Thomas P. DiNapoli, "DiNapoli: More Older Adults Calling NYC Home Than Ever Before, Comptroller's Report Finds," Office of the New York State Comptroller, January 16, 2025, https://www.osc.ny.gov/press/releases/2025/01/dinapoli-more-older-adults-calling-nyc-home-ever-comptrollers-report-finds.

[iii] Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, "Housing Instability," Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed March 11, 2026, https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/housing-instability.

[iv] NYC Department for the Aging, The State of Older New Yorkers: Building an Age-Inclusive Future (New York: NYC Department for the Aging, 2025), https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dfta/downloads/pdf/news-reports/the-state-of-older-new-yorkers-2025-v2.pdf.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON

EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

PRESENTED BY:

TIFFANY LISTON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE, INC.

HEARING DATE:

June 10, 2026

Mobilization for Justice (MFJ) submits this written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance, to increase the overall legal services funding to provide additional representation to low-income New Yorkers seeking such services in New York City.

MFJ's mission is to achieve justice for all. For over 60 years, MFJ has provided free civil legal services to New Yorkers who are low-income, disenfranchised, or have disabilities. We also conduct community education, advocate for policy, and bring impact litigation. Every year, we handle approximately 14,000 cases from across New York City in the broad areas of Housing, Disability and Aging Rights, Economic Justice, and Children's Rights.

Through our services we prevent homelessness, help seniors and people with disabilities live independently, stabilize families, support immigrants and children with mental health disabilities, and address racial disparities.

Today we are in the midst of several crises: surging homelessness, skyrocketing cost of living, marginalization of the vulnerable, and a city struggling to meet the needs of its existing residents, let alone those of our newest neighbors who come here seeking safety, stability, and opportunity. And we're tackling these issues in the face of a federal administration openly hostile to the ideals of public service and the public good. The nonprofit community in New York City has also faced severe delays in contract payments and hiring obstacles amidst the challenges of pay parity for public service work. It has been a tough couple of years – especially for our clients.

Like all institutions, adjudication systems are imperfect. But courts and administrative hearings are where New Yorkers must defend their rights and assert their claims. People end up in court facing unfair evictions, foreclosures, or debt collection cases or to seek unpaid wages and overtime; they must attend administrative hearings to fight for disability benefits or to ensure that their struggling child's Individualized Education Plan meets their needs; and those escaping violence and persecution must bravely appear in immigration court.

No one wants to find themselves embroiled in a complex system that requires a lawyer they simply cannot afford – yet far too many do. At Mobilization for Justice, we seek to be their advocate and their ally. But doing so requires resources, and I strongly urge the Council to build and buttress those resources as much as possible so New York City can stand as a bulwark against callous federal policy.

Need for Comprehensive Resources and Support

We respectfully ask you to ensure the following Initiatives are fully funded and enhanced: Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers; Legal Services for Family Advocacy & Guardianship; Immigrant Opportunity Initiative; AAPI Community Support; and Community Housing Preservation Strategies.

Now is the time to make deep and comprehensive investments in these initiatives. This critical moment requires collaboration between the City and our nonprofit community to ensure that the

most vulnerable among us have the opportunity to thrive. This critical moment requires a commitment to providing access to justice for underserved communities whose rights and supports are being stripped away – from Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, to supports for children with disabilities in our public schools, and our newest neighbors seeking asylum.

Mobilization for Justice relies on City Council funding to protect and enforce these rights. For some of our most critical programs – such as our immigration practice, workplace justice, and our Kinship Caregiver Law Project – Council funding is *the* major source of support, without which we could not continue to provide robust services. For Kinship Care in particular, this is particularly crucial as we are the *only* New York City provider of free legal services for the grandparents, aunts, uncles and other kin caring for many of our children outside the foster care system.

And as New Yorkers, we know that immigrants are who make our neighborhoods the vibrant communities we all love. Now is the time to demonstrate that the Council will stand with all of our neighbors, providing legal pathways to permanency, citizenship, and the safety and stability promised by our highest ideals.

We know there is plenty of work to do in the years ahead. Mobilization for Justice stands ready to leverage our 60 years of expertise, experience in the community, and grit to serve New Yorkers. We respectfully ask that you favorably consider our funding requests.

For any questions about this testimony, please feel free to contact Tiffany Liston, Executive Director of Mobilization for Justice, at tliston@mfjlegal.org or 212-417-3739.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE:

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

AT THE:

CITY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING: CITY FISCAL YEAR 2027

REGARDING:

LEGAL SERVICES FOR LOW INCOME NEW YORKERS AND WORKING CLASS NEW YORKERS

June 10, 2026

BY:

Carolyn E. Coffey (ccoffey@mfjlegal.org/212-417-3701)

Mobilization for Justice
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Thank you Chair Lee, Committee on Finance and the New York City Council at large for the long-standing support of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition through the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers initiative (the "Working Poor Initiative"). Mobilization for Justice (MFJ) is one of the five members of this Coalition that also includes CAMBA Legal Services, Housing Conservation Coordinators, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and TakeRoot Justice.

The mission of MFJ is to achieve justice for all. MFJ prioritizes the needs of people with low incomes, who are disenfranchised, and those who have disabilities as they struggle to overcome the effects of social injustice and systemic racism. We provide the highest-quality free, direct civil legal assistance, conduct community education and build partnerships, engage in policy advocacy, and bring impact litigation.

The Coalition was created with support from the City Council over 20 years ago to address the civil legal needs of working poor and other low-income New Yorkers whose income is slightly higher than the poorest New Yorkers, thus rendering them ineligible for free civil legal services. LSWP's services are critical to allow working New Yorkers to maintain financial independence and preserving economic stability in communities across New York City.

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers initiative was funded at $9,255,000from the City Council, with each of the five Coalition members receiving $455,000. In FY 27, Mobilization for Justice and the other members of the LSWP Coalition are each requesting a $600,000 allocation from the City Council, which includes a full restoration of the $455,000 allocated in FY 26. A $600,000 allocation to each of the five Coalition partners would support critical legal services and allow providers to deepen their impact in the practice areas of immigration, consumer, worker's rights,

and benefits law. Additionally, the impacts of cuts and actions on the Federal level significantly threaten the social safety net for working poor New Yorkers. We call on the City Council to make critical investments into legal services in FY 27, including the Working Poor Initiative. Additional resources are needed to safeguard against misaligned Federal policy.

We continue to see that working poor New Yorkers, who can barely make ends meet, face catastrophic consequences as a result of a civil legal problem. Common problems include not being paid for their work or not being paid overtime; identity theft; a restrained bank account as a result of a collection lawsuit they were never notified about; or being denied benefits to which they are entitled. The consequences of these problems can lead to other problems, including increased risk of eviction or foreclosure. Without access to lawyers to assist them, these working New Yorkers can end up spiraling downward to join the ranks of the poor. Our legal services organizations represent these New Yorkers in all five boroughs in consumer, worker's rights, foreclosure, immigration, benefits, and housing matters in state, appellate, and federal courts, and various administrative agencies.

A good example of the critical nature of this work is LSWP client S.A., 56, who is Latino, and who worked as a non-unionized porter for a building complex in Queens for 12 years. When his employer terminated him, he not only lost his only source of income, but his housing as well. He sought help from an LSWP Coalition organization to understand his rights regarding his termination. While the casehandlers who evaluated his case determined the termination was lawful, they also determined that the employer had violated several wage and hour laws during his employment, including not paying S.A. minimum wage and not paying him for 28 hours of overtime each week. Because of funding through the Working Poor initiative, the legal services organization was able to negotiate an equitable settlement on behalf of S.A., which

included obtaining a substantial amount of back wages and extending the time he could continue to live in his apartment while he looked for another job and made other housing arrangements. Because of Working Poor Initiative funding, S.A. was able to avoid homelessness and get back on his feet.

Conclusion

This Council's funding for Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers is the only funding that specifically targets the civil legal needs of working people to ensure continued self-sufficiency for families struggling to survive in New York City. It is *vitally* important that the City Council not only continue to support this flexible funding stream but increase its funding so that the legal service organizations are able to meet the needs of their clients by providing a diverse array of civil legal services to working poor New Yorkers. We urge the Council to fully invest in civil legal service initiatives overall and for the Legal Services for Low Income New Yorkers and Working Class New Yorkers allocation in particular. In FY 27, the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition is respectfully asking the City Council to enhance the allocation of each of the five Coalition partners from $455,000 to $600,000. Thank you.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON

EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

PRESENTED BY:

ERNIE COLLETTE
SUPERVISING ATTORNEY
IMMIGRATION LAW PROJECT
MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE, INC.

HEARING DATE:

June 10, 2026

Mobilization for Justice (MFJ) submits this written testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance, to increase the overall legal services funding to provide additional representation to immigrant clients seeking such services in New York City.

MFJ's mission is to achieve justice for all. MFJ prioritizes the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised, or have disabilities as they struggle to overcome the effects of social injustice and systemic racism. We provide the highest-quality free, direct civil legal assistance, conduct community education, build partnerships, engage in policy advocacy, and bring impact litigation. We assist more than 14,000 New Yorkers each year, benefiting over 24,000.

MFJ's Immigration Law Project (ILP) provides free legal advice, assistance and representation to low-income immigrant New Yorkers and their families. We work directly with community-based organizations to develop clinics that meet the needs of low-income immigrant communities to provide family- and humanitarian-based immigration assistance. Our services include assisting Special Immigrant Juvenile Status children obtain Special Findings Orders in Family Court, representing individuals and families in both affirmative and defensive litigation to obtain Adjustment of Status, Citizenship, Green Card Replacement, U-visa, T-visa, Temporary Protected Status, and Asylum. We provide application assistance and interview advocacy for immigrant families and children at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offices and represent families in affirmative and defensive matters in New York Immigration Courts (EOIR).

MFJ applauds the prior commitments by the Council to assist migrants in New York City, particularly when responding to the prior demand for immediate, short-term pro-se application assistance; work which, despite reduced numbers, is still needed.

Notwithstanding, MFJ is urging the City Council to make deep investments into the City's immigrant legal services community, specifically with enhancements to initiatives that include IOI, Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants, Low Wage Workers and "Protect NYC Families."

Specifically, we now must increase funding to non-profit organizations that will provide access to assistance on what is unprecedented demand for both Writ of Mandamus petitions and Writ of Habeas Corpus petitions due to recent decisions made by the current presidential administration and the appellate courts to circumvent the rule of law and deny many individuals a right to due process in immigration court.

1) Recent Immigration Law/Decisions

A recent Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) decision, *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, effectively eliminated Immigration Judge (IJ) discretion to determine bond for immigrant applicants seeking

relief in Immigration Court.[1],[2] This decision is further compounded by a February 6, 2026, decision issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, *Buenrostro-Mendez v. Bondi*, which takes a minority viewpoint interpreting § 235(b)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to mean that anyone who entered the United States without inspection is subject to mandatory detention without bond, no matter the amount of time residing in the United States.[3]

Additionally, increased requests by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for client check-ins at their local field offices are leading to higher rates of arrest and mandatory detention.[4] ICE agents have broad discretion in reviewing client cases for compliance with court and ICE orders. As a result of increased ICE enforcement practices resulting in mandatory detention and Federal Court decisions resulting in the removal of bond as a remedy to release clients from detention, as of February 10, 2026, more than 18,000 Habeas Corpus petitions were filed in Federal District courts throughout the United States to argue unlawful detention and request immediate release from detention.[5]

Furthermore, with adjudication of Asylum petitions reaching periods of over 10 years or more from date of filing to interview, more individuals are seeking Mandamus relief in Federal Court to compel the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to swiftly provide interviews for pending asylum claims.[6]

Finally, on February 6, 2026, the Department of Justice (DOJ) proposed an Interim Final Rule (IFR) that would amend its own regulations to streamline administrative appellate review by the BIA of IJ decisions.[7] Review of decisions on the merits would be discretionary; appropriate

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[1] *BIA Decision Strips Immigration Judges of Bond Authority, All but Guaranteeing Mandatory Detention for Undocumented Immigrants - American Immigration Council*. (2025, September 12). American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/bia-ruling-immigration-judges-bond-mandatory-detention-undocumented-immigrants/

[2] On February 18, 2026, in *Lazaro Maldonado Bautista et al. v. Ernesto Santacruz Jr et al.* (--- F.Supp.3d ----, 2025 WL 3713987), U.S. District Court for Central California, vacated *Matter of Yajure Hurtado*, ordering the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to allow petitioners to file and receive decisions for bond determination hearings in Immigration Court. On March 6, 2026, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit granted the federal government's request for an administrative stay while the court considers the government's broader motion for a stay pending appeal laying out two key points, the first being that the District Court's December 18, 2025 Declaratory Judgment is temporarily stayed outside the Central District of California, remaining only in effect within the Central District of California, while the Ninth Circuit considers the government's motion, and the second being that the February 18, 2026 Enforcement Order that vacated *Matter of Yajure Hurtado* has been temporarily stayed pending a full decision from the Ninth Circuit on the government's emergency stay motion.

[3] *Trump's Radical Mandatory Immigration Detention Policy Upheld by US Appeals Court - American Immigration Council*. (2026, February 10). American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/trump-mandatory-immigration-detention-upheld/

[4] *New Report Details ICE's Expanding and Increasingly Unaccountable Detention System - American Immigration Council*. (2026, January 23). American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-expanding-detention-system/

[5] *Immigrants Who Say Their Detention Is Illegal Have Filed More Than 18,000 Cases. It's a Historic High.* (2026, February 10). ProPublica. https://www.propublica.org/article/habeas-petitions-immigrant-detentions-trump

[6] *Delay Actions In The Asylum Context: Avoiding Dismissal And Proving The Case - American Immigration Council*. (2025, July 18). American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/practice-advisory/delay-actions-asylum-context-avoiding-dismissal-and-proving-case/

[7] On March 9, 2026, the Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, Brooklyn Defender Services, Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project, HIAS, the American Immigration Council, and the National Immigrant Justice Center filed

times for briefing would be set; and other aspects of the appellate process would ensure timely adjudications to avoid adding to the already sizeable backlog at the Board.

This proposed rule would in fact make summary dismissal now the default for any immigration cases subject to appeal to the BIA. For appeals of IJ decisions issued 30 days after publication, the BIA will summarily dismiss every appeal unless a majority of permanent Board members vote *en banc* to accept the case. If no vote happens within 10 days, the appeal is automatically dismissed. All dismissals will be issued within 15 days of filing. The IJ's decision is adopted as the Board's and becomes the basis for judicial review. Other changes will include cutting the appeal deadline from 30 to 10 days for cases subject to Asylum Cooperative Agreements; simultaneous 20-day briefing for the rare case accepted for review; no reply briefs; extensions only for "exceptional circumstances" under INA § 240(e)(1), and eliminating the possibility of reviewing the IJ transcript which serves as the basis for determining errors of fact or law.[8]

Footnote 8 of the IFR cites that between October 2023 and September 2025, the BIA sustained only 123 out of 55,065 case appeals on the merits, a review rate of just .2%, a number of cases so negligible that, if the IFR is implemented on March 9, 2026, with no injunctive relief filed to prevent the rule from going into effect, this rule will serve to effectively rubber stamp all remaining IJ decisions, requiring applicants who wish to have their appeal heard to petition for review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

2) Implications for Clients

With clients facing increased risk of mandatory detention without the possibility for bond granted with the immigration court, requiring Habeas Relief in Federal Courts, many prospective and future clients risk the possibility of remaining in detention for years throughout the pendency of their hearing and any subsequent appeal. If the IFR goes into effect, it will require an appeal to the 2nd Circuit as the BIA will no longer be a possible avenue for credible appeal.

Treatment of detainees and services provided in detention centers are well below minimum standards for U.S. jails and prisons, with detained clients facing medical neglect, physical and sexual abuse, in some cases, death.[9] Detainees are also held in detention for violations of civil law, preventing clients from receiving court-appointed legal assistance, and requiring detainees to retain a lawyer at their own expense.[10] Increased detention also will not only exacerbate

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a lawsuit, *Amica Center for Immigrants Rights et. al. v. Executive Office for Immigration Review et. al.,* and Motion for Preliminary Relief to block the abovementioned interim final rule that would effectively eliminate meaningful appellate review at the BIA. As of this writing, both the lawsuit and Motion for Preliminary Relief are pending adjudication.

[8] *Immigration Appeals Updates Understanding New BIA Procedures When Does the Rule Start?* (n.d.). Retrieved February 18, 2026, from https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Practice-Advisory_BIA-Rule-Updates_Feb-2026.pdf

[9] Das, A. (2025, March 10). *The Law and Lawlessness of U.S. Immigration Detention - Harvard Law Review*. Harvard Law Review. https://harvardlawreview.org/print/vol-138/the-law-and-lawlessness-of-u-s-immigration-detention/

[10] French, D. (2026, February 12). A Very Dangerous Ruling in New Orleans. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/12/opinion/mass-detention-immigration-court-ruling.html

family separation for mixed-status households, but also for undocumented family members, including minor children, who will be separated into different detention centers.[11]

Mandatory detention and increased appellate work will require non-profit legal service providers to potentially transform their current representation models to meet the increased demands of Habeas, Mandamus, and appellate work for current and future clients.

3) Increased Financial Request Support

In anticipation of the elimination of appellate review at the BIA, and the continuation of current policies and judicial decisions leading to prolonged detention of clients, and excessive adjudication periods, we ask the City Council to not only increase funding to initiatives that include IOI, Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants, Low Wage Workers and "Protect NYC Families," but also to fund legal services efforts that will support filing Habeas Corpus Petitions, Mandamus Petitions, and 2nd Circuit appeals.

Our office is receiving requests from prospective clients and clinic partners who are concerned that any future check-in by ICE will result in mandatory detention, regardless of whether the client has any prior incidents or activities that would make them subject to such detention. Many individuals are in removal proceedings and require counsel for complex immigration matters, but with removal and detention now becoming the default for most immigration court cases, and with the continued rhetoric and actions taken by the Federal Government against migrants and the immigrant community, funding current immigrant legal services while pivoting and creating new funding for Habeas Corpus Petitions, Mandamus Petitions, and 2nd Circuit appeals remains critical now more than ever.

As many migrants who received short-term pro-se application assistance get jobs, rent apartments, attend school, pay taxes, and contribute to our local economy, many worry as to how the lack of representation and mandatory detention will impact their future to remain; not only causing their new lives and positive contributions to our communities and our city to be upended, but also the benefits that we've received from their contributions within our communities.

While we can be proud of the assistance already provided, the job is far from complete. Even though priorities may have shifted, the need remains the same.

Proactive support by the Council to increase funding for increased representation, as the demand for these services will remain, is necessary if we wish to combat those who seek to separate immigrant families, while living up to our history as a city that seeks to support all regardless of immigration status.

For any questions about this testimony, please feel free to contact Ernie Collette at ecollette@mfjlegal.org or 212-417-3824.

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[11] *Divided by Detention: Asylum-Seeking Families' Experiences of Separation - American Immigration Council*. (2025, March 27). American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/divided-by-detention-asylum-seeking-families-experience-of-separation/

MOORE JACKSON | COMMUNITY GARDEN

Testimony Provided by
Eilzabeth O'Connor, Cofounder/Treasurer, Moore Jackson Community Garden
For the Committee on Parks and Recreation Preliminary Hearing
on the FY27 NYC Budget
May 27, 2026

My name is Elizabeth O'Connor, and I am a founding member of Moore Jackson Community Garden, located in **Woodside, Queens**. Our garden is entering into its ninth growing season and we've been fortunate to be able to offer this vibrant community green space to our neighbors who seek out nature, a place to teach their children about where food comes from, a site to drop off food scraps and see it become a soil amendment rather than methane gas, and a neighborhood hub for free herbalism workshops, Zumba classes, and creative arts programming.

As a Steering Committee member of the **Green Guerillas' Council of Gardeners**, I want to focus on the continuity of investment in A Greener NYC which empowers local organizations to provide youth with green jobs, infrastructure, and advocacy opportunities. I have seen the benefits of this initiative firsthand as we had paid Youth Interns from Green Guerillas at our garden during the summer and these young people learned a ton about farming, the environment, composting, and food equity. One youth, Travis, went on to continue working with Green Guerillas, and every time I see him at events, he tells me how pivotal that internship was for him and his path forward.

Community gardeners have been left to make ends meet on their own for decades. It's time for the city to invest in these incredibly **vibrant neighborhood spaces** and spotlight the **educational and mental health benefits** community gardens contribute to their neighborhood's success. We've had multiple garden volunteers tell us that, especially during COVID (and beyond as well), the garden literally saved their lives. We can't let places like these become a budget line item that gets slashed because it's deemed non-essential. We are VITAL to this city's 'Greener' success! Please give Thank you.

Elizabeth O'Connor
Moore Jackson Community Garden

MUSEUM OF
JEWISH HERITAGE
A LIVING MEMORIAL
TO THE HOLOCAUST

Edmond J. Safra Plaza | 36 Battery Place
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Good afternoon, City Council Finance Chair Linda Lee; Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Relations Chair Dr. Nantasha Williams; Council Members Virginia Maloney, Lincoln Restler, and Gale Brewer; and NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Diya Vij. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

My name is Jilian Cahan Gersten, and I am the Chief Development Officer at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. Our institution is a proud member of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) – a coalition of 39 museums, zoos, gardens, and performing arts organizations located across all five boroughs.

I would like to thank the Council for prioritizing culture and for its advocacy in securing a $10 million baseline increase in the FY27 Executive Budget. This is an important step forward for our sector, and the Museum sincerely appreciates these investments. They not only affirm New York City's leadership in arts and culture worldwide but also expand opportunities for every New Yorker to experience the extraordinary breadth of our cultural resources.

However, the Museum strongly urges the Council to restore and baseline an additional $20 million in the Adopted Budget to ensure sustained support for cultural institutions. Arts and culture organizations give voice to New York City's communities and embody their diversity and unique spirit. Since 1997, the Museum of Jewish Heritage has been a vital part of the city's cultural ecosystem, serving over 100,000 visitors annually—including nearly 33,000 schoolchildren—through exhibitions, educational programs, public dialogue, and the collection of 46,000 unique historical artifacts. As a Holocaust education institution that reaches audiences well beyond the Jewish community, we have seen firsthand that cultural engagement is a powerful force for uniting people, reducing fear, confronting bias, fostering empathy, and building allyship across communities. Like our fellow CIG institutions, we do far more than preserve history or present artwork – we strengthen the social cohesion that underpins a healthy democracy. For these reasons, sustained cultural investment is both a necessity and a powerful affirmation of the values that define our city.

Second, we urge the Council to invest in the cultural sector not only sustainably but also in a way that responds to rising costs and evolving community needs. To that end, we ask the Council to establish year-over-year funding adjustments that account for increasing operating expenses and the wages of the cultural workforce.

Third, we encourage the Council to prioritize the capital needs of cultural organizations by implementing a cultural capital plan that improves transparency, reduces delays, and helps institutions maintain safe, modern, and accessible spaces. For the Museum of

Jewish Heritage, this need is especially urgent. As Holocaust education is required for every eighth- and tenth-grade student in New York State, we serve as a critical partner for schools across the city, especially those in under-resourced communities where teachers may not have the training or capacity to lead these conversations on their own. We provide free, age-appropriate guided tours; transportation assistance when needed; and classroom materials to support educators, yet our limited space constrains how many students we can reach. As our organization prepares to embark on significant capital work with the City, we deeply appreciate the Council's support of our sector's efforts to enhance and modernize cultural spaces to better serve our guests.

Finally, as a proud member of CIG, we also support our partner institutions' request that the Council increase funding for programs including Theaters of Color, CASA, SU-CASA, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and Support for Arts Infrastructure, while also creating new initiatives aligned with Council priorities and responsive to a broader range of organizations.

We are grateful for the Council's partnership and look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that arts and culture remain a vital, affordable, and accessible part of life for every New Yorker.

New York City Council
Oversight: FY27 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Testimony By: Oded Holzinger, Natural Areas Conservancy, Executive Director

My name is Oded Holzinger, and I am the executive director of the Natural Areas Conservancy (NAC). Thank you to Chair Lee and the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Fiscal Year (FY27) executive budget.

I want to start by acknowledging and thanking the Mamdani administration for baselining $15 million in funding for NYC Parks in the FY27 executive budget. This investment represents a step toward more fully funding our parks system, and finally ends the years-long budget dance that impacted many critical positions at NYC Parks. The NAC is particularly grateful that this baselined funding will allow the Natural Resources Group (NRG) to permanently retain 32 staff who support critical forest management and stewardship in our natural areas. This funding also makes permanent 50 Urban Park Ranger positions, which will help support increased programming and visitation in natural areas across the five boroughs.

Despite this win, however, the NAC stands with our colleagues in the Play Fair and Forest For All NYC coalitions in asking for increased funding for NYC Parks in the FY27 adopted budget. We remain concerned that funding for 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) and 15 GreenThumb staff has not been restored, and ask the Council and the administration to work together to baseline the funding for these positions in the FY27 adopted budget.

After many years of a hiring freeze and cuts to the NYC Parks budget, we urgently ask the City Council to add $23 million in one-shot funding to help increase the headcount for the agency. This funding would support 50 additional staff to support forestry work citywide, and would also fund 100 additional PEP officers, 100 City Park Workers, and 26 Playground Associates. By making this investment, the Council can build on the administration's commitment and move New York City closer to the long-standing goal of dedicating 1% of the City budget to parks, recognizing parks and natural areas as critical infrastructure in addressing both the affordability and climate crises.

We also ask that the City Council and the administration commit at least $1 million for other non-park agencies to support the implementation of the recently released Urban Forest Plan. The NAC was proud to have worked on the plan with many of our coalition partners as well as the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, but we are concerned that critical funding to put the recommendations into action remains unallocated going into the next fiscal year. We strongly support the City’s ability to meet its 30% canopy target by 2040, but we believe that dedicated City funding is essential to making that vision a reality. Beyond the planting of new trees, achieving the 30% target by 2040 requires investment in the prevention of canopy loss by protecting and caring for the forests and trees that already exist.

Natural Areas Conservancy

Our natural areas aren't a luxury—they are a thriving component of our natural green infrastructure, provide invaluable habitat, and are free and accessible places for New Yorkers to connect with nature in ways that strengthen communities and public health.

We believe funding parks and natural areas is a critical strategy for advancing the Mayor's affordability agenda, and we look forward to working closely with the City Council to help ensure that our forests and wetlands receive the level of care they need in the FY27 budget, and beyond.

Thank you.

NHSNYC
BRIDGING THE GAP
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New York City Council Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing on 6.10.2026

Good afternoon, Chair Lee and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lucy Raimes. I am the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Resource Development at Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City.

I am joined today by leaders from NHS of Brooklyn and Bronx NHS. Together with Brooklyn Neighborhood Services and NHS of Queens, our organizations have spent decades helping homeowners remain stably housed, preserve their homes, and strengthen neighborhoods across New York City.

We are here today to request $1 million for a citywide Property Management Pilot Program. This program is about preserving affordable homeownership, and the naturally occurring affordable rental housing that low-income homeowners typically support.

Across the city, low-income homeowners—particularly seniors and people with disabilities—are struggling to maintain aging homes amidst rising costs. For many homeowners, routine tasks such as snow removal, landscaping, and trash management have become physically difficult or financially out of reach.

At the same time, they are managing tenant issues, navigating home repairs as well as code compliance requirements, and being faced with scams such as deed theft.

We know from our work with vulnerable homeowners that small problems can quickly become larger ones—financial distress, violations, housing instability, and, ultimately, the risk of losing one's home. This pilot is designed to intervene before that happens.

As the applicant for this funding, NYC of NYC would serve as the lead organization, providing coordination, training, technical assistance, quality control, and outcome tracking. Our NHS partners would deliver services directly within their communities through the trusted relationships they have built over decades of service.

In its first year, the pilot is expected to assist at least 30 homeowners for a total of about 95 housing units, with that number growing in future years.

This is a holistic, community-based approach that is a cost-effective investment in preserving affordable housing. We respectfully ask for your support of this $1 million initiative. Thank you.

NEW IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

NICE in Action: Real Impact, Real Change



30% of our members have children



233 NICE Pre-Apprenticeship Graduates



More than 200 ESOL completed the course

NICE Pre-Apprenticeship for Life & Work (PreAPLW)

This program aims to inspire and empower immigrants with the life and workforce skills needed to thrive and succeed in New York City.

Pre-Apprenticeship for Life

Life Skills:

- Includes building legal identity through IDNYC or a New York State ID, as well as financial literacy, healthcare navigation, accessing the New York City housing market, and transportation.

Pre-Apprenticeship for Work

Work Skills:

- Provide comprehensive workforce programming—including professional licensing and industry certification, job readiness, ESOL, and job placement services—to help participants enter and thrive in the New York City job market.

From Legal to Labor

Immigration & Labor Legal Services

- Provide immigration and labor legal services to immigrants across NYC. Conduct Know Your Rights (KYR) workshops to inform and empower individuals about their rights and how to navigate the legal system.

Digital Skills & Technology Access

Tech and Digital Skills:

- Provide digital literacy skills that support both everyday life and professional work, preparing individuals for success in 21st-century society.

www.nynice.org **72-19 Roosevelt Ave., 4 Fl, Jackson Heights, NY 11372**

NEW IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Why City Council Support Matters

With support from the New York City Council, NICE advances equity and opportunity by equipping immigrant New Yorkers to grow, lead, and help drive a stronger, more inclusive city.

Investing in NICE is a direct investment in New York City's people and future—expanding access to skills, guidance, and opportunities that power the workforce, fuel economic growth, and strengthen neighborhoods.

With your support, NICE delivers proven and measurable impact:

- Since 1999, NICE has served as a trusted bridge, transforming public investment into tangible outcomes for NYC communities.
- Grow the workforce: Prepare immigrant workers with in-demand technical, digital, and professional skills aligned with today's labor market.
- Expand economic mobility: Build pathways to stable lives and careers, higher wages, and long-term financial security for immigrant families.

FY27 - NICE City Council Discretionary Funding Applications

APPLICATION ID	INITIATIVE	REQUESTED FUNDING	DESCRIPTION	AGENCY
2242963	Day Laborer Workforce Initiative	$1.22M	Supports day laborers through life and workforce training, job readiness, referrals, and legal services while creating dignified spaces for employment access.	SBS
2255634	Construction Site Safety Training	$163K	Promotes safe working conditions through safety training and workforce development opportunities for immigrant construction workers.	SBS
2256431	Support for Immigrant & Women Workers	$78K	Advances economic mobility for immigrant women through empowerment and workforce skills development.	SBS
2257679	Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants	$65K	Provides critical legal representation and advocacy to help immigrant New Yorkers navigate the immigration system and secure lawful status.	DSS/HRA
2258367	Immigrant Rights Workshops	$65K	Immigrant workers receive information and limited-scope legal services, such as workplace protections, and assistance with potential cases.	DSS/HRA
2257492	Low Wage Worker Support	$54K	Protects vulnerable workers by providing limited-scope legal services, education, and advocacy for individuals facing workplace violations such as wage theft.	DSS/HRA

NEW IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Why City Council Support Matters

APPLICATION ID	INITIATIVE	REQUESTED FUNDING	DESCRIPTION	AGENCY
2252906	Adult Literacy Forward	$65K	Expands adult literacy life and workforce readiness through contextualized ESOL instruction, digital literacy training, and comprehensive support services for immigrant workers.	DYCD
2253168	Community Interpreter Bank	$130K	Expands access to essential services by increasing the availability of trained interpreters for immigrant communities across New York City.	DYCD
2258168	Digital Inclusion & Literacy	$50K	Bridges the digital divide by providing technology training, internet access, and computer-based learning opportunities for underserved immigrant communities.	DYCD
2256087	A Greener NYC - NICE Green Gateway	$30K	Fund the first NICE Pre-Apprenticeship in the green economy for immigrant workers. This program aims to open the door for immigrant workers to pursue careers in the green economy.	DYCD
2257342	Food Pantry	$30K	Ensures immigrant households have access to nutritious food and essential supplies through community-based food distribution networks.	DYCD
2254435	Welcome NYC	$65K	Supports immigrant integration and community services.	DYCD
2257175	Artificial Intelligence Community Engagement (AICE)	$40K	Provides accessible education on emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to immigrant communities.	DYCD
2255883	Speaker's Initiative - Creating Pathways to Success	$65K	Investing in the NICE Pre-Apprenticeship Life and Work program to empower immigrants of all ages and genders, advancing equity and economic growth.	DYCD
2256377	Speaker's Initiative - Support Services NICE Centro	$163K	Investing in the NICE Pre-Apprenticeship Life and Work program to empower immigrants while advancing equity, opportunity, and economic growth.	DYCD
2255984	Speaker's Initiative - Newly Arrived/Wage Theft	$98K	Funding to help NICE sustain and expand programs that support immigrant workers, asylum seekers, and newly arrived families.	DYCD

Chair, members of the committee — thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Mark Dunetz, and I am the President of New Visions for Public Schools. I am here to ask this committee to restore $8.9 million in funding for the New Visions Portal in the FY27 budget. If this cut stands, it will undo more than a decade of work, funded by both NYC and philanthropy, to give educators and their partners the modern, responsive technology they need to do their work on behalf of the students of New York City.

I have spent my entire career in NYC public education. I started in the classroom, as an ESL teacher and a social studies teacher. I went on to open a career and technical education high school, where I served as principal. And today I lead New Visions — a trusted, 37-year-old NYC-based nonprofit, staffed in large part by people who made the same choice I did: to spend their working lives in service of public school students. We are not a technology company that wandered into education. We are educators. That is the lens we bring to everything we build.

We built the Portal for a straightforward reason. The people doing this work did not have the basic tools they needed to do their jobs. As a teacher and as a principal, I lived this myself — the information you needed to actually help a student was scattered across systems that didn't talk to each other, and much of the time it wasn't available at all. So we set out to build the tool we wished we'd had. And we didn't build it in a conference room. We built it with deep input from thousands of educators, counselors, social workers, and others who spend their days with young people. They told us what they needed to do right by their students, and we responded with well-designed, reliable technology that continues to rapidly improve in response to their feedback.

The Portal is a comprehensive planning, case-management, and data infrastructure platform available to every one of New York City's public schools. It is used voluntarily by more than 18,000 NYC educators every month. Superintendents, principals, counselors, social workers, and teachers use it to build individualized plans for students, identify those falling off track before it's too late, and coordinate supports across partners. It aggregates attendance, academic performance, graduation progress, postsecondary planning, and program participation into a single real-time view — and critically, it allows staff to act on what they see without leaving the tool. It also gives superintendents and district offices one place to manage citywide initiatives across all of their schools — from rollout to monitoring to follow-through.

The Portal is also the infrastructure through which this city is, for the first time, connecting schools to the agencies and organizations serving the same children and families. Data sharing agreements with CUNY and DHS are already in place. Integrations with ACS and DYCD are actively underway. Foster care agencies will soon be able to access student data for the 6,000 children in their care who have never had that visibility before. Every Child and Family is Known — a program the FY27 budget proposes to expand — runs entirely on the Portal, with over 50,000 check-ins logged by Caring Adults this school year alone.

This city's $8.9 million in funding supports access for every school, every district office, and every partner agency. Each year, it is complemented by more than $5 million in philanthropy, which funds ambitious new data integrations and features that then become available to every public school in New York City at no additional cost. Cut the contract and you also lose that philanthropic co-investment — it will not be redirected to a for-profit vendor or an internal project. And there is no cheaper path to what the Portal provides. For-profit vendors have a poor track record building enterprise technology for NYC educators, and would charge many times this contract for the same thing. The Department of Education has no precedent for successfully building software this complex in-house. But an integrated planning, management, and analytics tool like this is essential to making progress in a system this large.

This administration has pledged to root out waste and to demand that every dollar the city spends can be defended. I agree with that standard. But cutting the Portal does not meet it. It simply shifts the burden back onto school and district staff to piece together their own solutions in the absence of a viable, centrally provided tool. And when district leaders can no longer manage how their major initiatives are actually being implemented — who is receiving which services, whether they are reaching the students they were designed for, and how any of it connects to outcomes — those initiatives become far less effective, and the city gets less for every dollar it spends on them. The retreat from cross-agency data infrastructure compounds the problem, making it harder to coordinate social services with schools — sacrificing exactly the kind of efficiency that gets more value from every dollar.

I am asking this committee to fully restore the $8.9 million and protect infrastructure this city has already built, already relies on, and cannot easily replace.

Thank you.

NEW YORK ALLIANCE FOR
NY4ECP
EARLY COLLEGE PATHWAYS

11 June 2026

Hon. Linda Lee, Chair
250 Broadway, Suite 1744
New York, NY 10007

Re: Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Finance in Regard to the Hearing Held on June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members:

On behalf of the New York Alliance for Early College Pathways (NY4ECP), I write to express deep concern regarding the proposal to eliminate all funding for the New Visions Portal in the FY27 Budget. I respectfully urge you to restore this critical funding in the final enacted budget.

The New York Alliance for Early College Pathways (NY4ECP) is a cross-sector coalition of non-profits, advocacy organizations, community-based organizations, K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, and industry dedicated to expanding access to high-quality early college pathways for New York students. Early college pathways are a well-researched strategy that have been shown to significantly improve both high school and postsecondary outcomes for students, especially students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Specifically, early college pathways improve high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and completion rates, reduce the cost and time to a degree or workforce credential, and strengthen workforce readiness in high-demand sectors. New York students have demonstrated that when given access to rigorous college-level coursework in high school, they rise to the challenge. These programs not only generate substantial cost savings for families, but also build academic confidence, momentum, and clear pathways to career success.

Across New York City, over 33,000 high school students are enrolled in CUNY college courses through College Now and other college in high school initiatives. The New Visions Portal is a critical component of this access. The Portal is a planning, case-management, and interagency operations platform providing school teams, district staff, shelters, and partner organizations real-time visibility into student progress, college and career readiness milestones, program participation, and postsecondary planning. As the only tool for cross-agency data sharing between DOE, CUNY, and community-based partners, the New Visions Portal serves as the connective tissue that allows early college programs to track whether students are actually earning credit, completing milestones, and reaching postsecondary goals. Furthermore, the Portal was built in deep collaboration with users across schools, district offices, and partner organizations for more than a decade, and its features reflect how practitioners actually work.

At a time when college affordability is top of mind for families, the State is phasing in the Portrait of a Graduate, and demand for college in high school opportunities is growing, eliminating funding for the New Visions Portal could hinder NYCPS students' ability to access dual enrollment and administrators' ability to track their progress. We respectfully urge you to restore funding for the Portal and ensure its full inclusion in the final FY27 City Budget.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued leadership and dedication to the students and families of New York City.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Wilcox
Deputy Director
New York Alliance for Early College Pathways (NY4ECP)

Testimony of Rose Khan
Senior Policy Analyst
New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault
Before the City Council Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rose Khan (she/her) and I am the Senior Policy Analyst at the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (henceforth referred to as "The Alliance"). The Alliance's mission is to prevent sexual violence and reduce the harm it causes through public education, prevention programming, advocacy for survivors, and the pursuit of legal and policy changes. The Alliance works to disrupt systems and institutions that can retraumatize survivors when they most need support services. The Alliance is a member of the Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI), a citywide coalition through which the City Council supports survivor services through trainings, programming, and advocacy. On behalf of the SAI, I submit this testimony to **request an increase in funding from the current amount of $2.075 million to $2.5 million, to meet the increased demand for services and trainings**.

Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI)

The Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI) is composed of five New York City based sexual violence intervention programs: The Alliance, Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC), Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), Mount Sinai's Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI), and North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence. Together, we served over 5,000 survivors across all five boroughs in 2025.

SAI focuses on implementing primary and secondary prevention efforts to decrease how often sexual violence occurs and to advocate for systemic change to ensure survivor support services are: survivor-centered, trauma informed, and holistic. In 2025, SAI provided: over 22,000 free counseling sessions; and support for SAFE exams in hospitals and legal advocacy, approximately 77,000 times. These are only two of the over eight services SAI offers survivors.

Sexual violence affects New Yorkers of all ages, genders, ethnicities, religions, abilities, and socioeconomic and citizenship statuses, with marginalized communities disproportionately impacted. The demand for SAI's services remains high and has continued to increase over the past year, resulting in the need for additional resources.

With increased funding, we will have the capacity to expand therapy and hospital services, increase stipends for SAFEs and Volunteer Advocates, and expand our trainings into more communities and hospitals.

Sexual Assault Examiner Training Institute

SAI's funding supports The Alliance's Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Training Institute (SAFETI), one of the largest NYS Department of Health-certified training programs for emergency department and medical professionals in the state. SAFETI trains doctors, nurses, and physician assistants to provide competent, compassionate, and prompt care to survivors, and to conduct sexual assault forensic evidence collection and preservation. The training regarding the unique needs of survivors is not part of standard medical education, leaving many survivors without access to an adequately trained medical professional. Of the 49 emergency rooms across the five boroughs, only 22 are SAFE-designated, with the likelihood of a survivor being treated by a SAFE-trained medical professional decreasing the further away they are from Manhattan. Additionally, very few SAFE examiners being trained for pediatric survivors.

SAFETI seeks to remedy the lack of access to trained SAFE examiners. In 2025, SAFETI courses brought together a multidisciplinary team of experts to provide comprehensive training in injury identification, trauma-informed practices, evidence collection, and culturally competent care to over 70 healthcare professionals through the 40-hour course, as well as additional professional development. Our goal is to increase the SAFETI capacity in New York hospitals to ensure that all survivors have equal access to the highest standards of care.

Training for Human Service Professionals in Best Practices in Responding to Sexual Assault

The Alliance's General Training Program builds the capacity for anyone in NYC who interacts with survivors to respond in a trauma-informed way. Survivors do not always report harm immediately; in fact, many disclose within their close circles, such as trusted family members, friends, and staff at community-based organizations. Once they do disclose, survivors interact with many people who often don't receive comprehensive training on working with survivors.

Last year, hundreds were trained through The Alliance's General Training Program. City Council funding enables us to provide free, accessible, and customized programming to New Yorkers who see survivors daily; these advocates have expressed their appreciation

for the support and resources The Alliance provides. Across interdisciplinary trainings, we have equipped participants with the tools they need to have supportive conversations with survivors and to direct them to free and confidential resources across the city. Many community-level organizations have faced severe funding cuts, resulting in shutdowns and leaving communities without access to these crucial, impactful resources. Investing in The Alliance's General Training Program ensures these trainings and resources are available and accessible to all survivors in New York City.

OutSmartNYC

OutSmartNYC is a collaborative effort between The Alliance, the Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC), hospital partners, and nightlife workers to reach nightlife and party spaces across the city with sexual violence prevention training and support. The Alliance partners with nightlife professionals and other nonprofits to provide training, advocacy, community organizing, and referrals to nightlight community members. OutSmart has tremendous potential to impact high rates of violence faced by nightlife staff and participants.

From 2017 to 2025, we have trained a total of 5,548 people through OutSmart. We've trained business staff and supported their leadership to protect patrons from sexual violence. City Council's financial support will allow us to scale this program citywide, to shift the culture of nightlife, and make our city safer from sexual violence. Nightlife locations are strategic sites for sexual violence prevention efforts because they can host various risk factors in their settings (e.g., drug and alcohol use, overcrowding). According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately half of all sexual assault cases involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, victim, or both.

While we know, respect, and often work with other organizations and individuals across New York City who focus on the nightlife space, our OutSmart model is unique for several reasons. OutSmart stands out by: 1) not charging for our services to reduce potential barriers for owners and managers to invite us in; 2) bringing our training and support to the establishments rather than expecting them to come to us, which allows our facilitators to better tailor training to the context; 3) facilitating a flexible curriculum with content developed for a diversity of cultural contexts rather than a one-size-fits-all standardized training model; and 4) explicitly focusing on sexual violence prevention instead of including it only as a component of a larger training.

With City Council support, we will be able to increase our capacity to provide these critical trainings. Our team will proactively push into underserved communities and take the time

to persuade reluctant managers and owners of nightlife establishments to host OutSmart programming. OutSmart will also rapidly respond to high profile cases of sexual violence in nightlife spaces by reaching out to affected establishments to offer technical assistance, training, and support with the goal of shifting the culture at problem venues.

Closing

City Council's funding and support for SAI ensure that survivors in New York have access to essential, survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and accessible prevention and response efforts for public safety.

Thank you for your time today and for your dedication to continuing to fund these critical services.

The Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC) has provided free, comprehensive healing services to survivors of interpersonal violence since 1977 and remains a leader in trauma-informed care. Through our partnership with the four other organizations that comprise the Sexual Assault Initiative, we are able to reach survivors across New York City who face barriers to accessing support, regardless of where they live. **For Fiscal Year 2027, we respectfully request $2.5 million in funding, to be distributed equally among the Initiative's five member organizations.**

First funded by the City Council in 2005, the Sexual Assault Initiative enabled CVTC to establish critical programming for male survivors of sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence. Before receiving Council funding, CVTC served only about a dozen male survivors each year. Today, male-identifying survivors represent 36% of our client population—significantly higher than the national average for comparable programs.

We now provide individual trauma-focused psychotherapy and four specialized support groups designed specifically for male survivors, including those who are incarcerated. Council funding also enabled us to develop targeted outreach materials aimed at reducing the stigma and shame that too often prevent male survivors from seeking help. These efforts have been so successful that demand for our services continues to grow.

Most recently, CVTC assumed statewide coordination of New York's Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) program and continues to strengthen partnerships with correctional facilities, including the New York City Department of Correction and Rising Ground's youth facilities in Brooklyn and the Bronx. We remain committed to building sustainable infrastructure within City correctional facilities, and continued Council support will help us expand access to these life-changing services for incarcerated individuals who are too often overlooked.

Funding through this initiative has also enabled CVTC to expand services into hospital emergency departments in Brooklyn and Queens, two boroughs that remain significantly underserved when it comes to sexual assault intervention and support. Our goal is simple: to ensure that a survivor's access to care and healing is not determined by the borough in which they were assaulted.

Beyond direct services, CVTC's Prevention Training Program advances community-driven strategies to prevent and respond to violence by addressing its root causes through culturally responsive, inclusive education and partnership. Key initiatives include middle and high school curricula that promote healthy relationships, positive identity development, bystander intervention, and youth leadership; training and resources that equip educators to support trauma-impacted students and foster safe, supportive learning environments; healthy nightlife programming that provides industry-specific tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence; and campus-based initiatives that help colleges and universities strengthen prevention efforts, awareness campaigns, and coordinated responses to domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence.

Support for the Sexual Assault Initiative extends far beyond the nearly 6,000 individuals who receive services through our programs each year. It strengthens families, supports communities, informs public policy, and drives systems-level change. The impact of this investment is felt not only by survivors, but by the neighborhoods, institutions, and systems that serve them. **We urge the Council to continue its longstanding commitment to survivors by funding the Sexual Assault Initiative at $2.5 million in Fiscal Year 2027. By doing so, the City will make a meaningful investment in healing, equity, and safety for survivors across New York City.**

KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER
Building a Better Bronx

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
3101 Kingsbridge Terrace, Bronx, New York - 10463
Tel:718.884.0700 | Fax: 718.884 .0858 | www.khcc-nyc.org | @khccnyc

May 13, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following written testimony on behalf of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC) and in coordination with the Sexual Assault Initiative. KHCC is a multiservice agency with free programs and services across the lifespan. KHCC is embedded in the Bronx with multiple entry points, like our Early Head Start classes, food pantry, housing services, and afterschool programs. As such, KHCC is best positioned to reach and support families impacted by sexual assault who may not otherwise access services. Changing Futures is one of the only free treatment providers in the Bronx that offers long-term therapeutic services to children and adults impacted by trauma with a focus on survivors of child sexual abuse, and individuals impacted by domestic violence, and/or sexual assault. Established in 1982, services include 1) long term mental health treatment through individual, family, and group counseling; 2) crisis intervention, information and referral; and 3) education/prevention through workshops and professional training, 4) Alternative therapies including art, play, animal-assisted and horticultural modalities. In 2025 our Changing Futures Program provided 7475 direct services to 900 individuals.

As a member of the Sexual Assault Initiative, KHCC, along with four other agencies across New York City, elevates voices and advocacy efforts regarding the widespread issue of sexual violence. Sexual violence impacts individuals across all demographics citywide. Tackling it together is necessary and more powerful than only focusing on our own borough or district. On behalf of our communities we are advocating for ongoing attention from the City Council to fund the Sexual Assault Initiative.

Many members of our community do not have access to mental health care, especially specialized trauma treatment. For families that do not have insurance and/or are undocumented, the ability to receive treatment for child sexual abuse or domestic violence is nearly impossible. By continuing to not require health insurance, the Changing Futures program staff use participant milestones and progress to determine the length of treatment which is frequently substantially longer than the traditional outpatient clinic model. KHCC provides an opportunity for families to receive free long-term treatment and services that are both intensive and individualized.

The Changing Futures Program aims to help participants exhibit reduced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, increased coping skills, and a return toward normative development. Changing Futures provides interventions for children and youth, and the family as a whole, recognizing that abuse is often an intergenerational pattern. We partner with non-offending parents and guardians through one-on-one sessions, family therapy, and parenting groups to assist them in breaking the cycle of abuse and violence. We additionally work with an increasing number of adult survivors of child abuse, and adult survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault. The Changing Futures Program mission is to help trauma and abuse survivors and their families stabilize, heal, and thrive in the context of a safe, caring, and nurturing environment. Our vision is to reduce the prevalence of child sexual abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence in Bronx communities.

Our culturally-responsive, trauma informed services are available to every New Yorker, inclusive of gender, race, sexual and gender identity, and citizenship status. Specifically, we are advocating for an enhancement in funding for the Sexual Assault Initiative to $2,500,000. This enhancement will allow us to reach more survivors across New York City, and to support their increasingly complex needs.

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Building a Better Bronx

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To end my written testimony I will share one family's story that highlights the powerful work we do, day in and day out, with your support. A client, 10 years old started treatment to address child sexual abuse. She resides with her foster mom and two other siblings. She presented with significant symptoms, including nightmare, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping. The client had a history of sexual abuse by her biological father and expressed feeling betrayed and lacked the protection by her mother. She also displayed anxiety around the possibility of reunification with her mother. The treatment utilized was TF-CBT and art therapy as an intervention to create a safe space for trauma processing. We focused on emotional regulation, building a trauma narrative. After about one year of consistent therapy, the client demonstrated significant progress. She was able to openly discuss her past trauma, express her fears, and her needs related to unification with her mom. She used her voice to advocate for herself in court and with her family. The client wrote a heartfelt letter to the court and participated in a joint session with her mom and therapist where she clearly communicated her concerns and preference not to return to her mother's home. Her mom and the court agreed to let the foster mother adopt her. She's thriving in school and is currently on the honor roll and received a scholarship to go to a private high school.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Shaniqua Saxon

Shaniqua Saxon, LCSW

Changing Futures Program Director

North Brooklyn COALITION

Board of Directors

Juan Ramos
Board Officer Member

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Adelaida Perez
Board Officer Member

Alison Cordero
Board Officer Member

Dana Christensen
Secretary

Date: June 8, 2026
Testimony by Leana Pardo on behalf of NBCAFV

This letter serves as a testimony from North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence (NBCAFV) to the Committees on Public Safety and Health and Mental Health. Our mission at NBCAFV is to combat systemic racism, institutional injustice, and cultural barriers that survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault face. We aim to build a community-based support network, provide vital services, and engage in outreach, education, advocacy, and activism.

NBCAFV is also proud to be a member of the Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI), a collaborative effort led by the City Council to support survivor services across New York City.

Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI)
The Sexual Assault Initiative is comprised of five New York City-based programs: Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC), Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), Mount Sinai's Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI), New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance), and North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence. Together, we provide support to thousands of survivors annually across all five boroughs.

The people we serve are survivors of various forms of sexual violence, including rape, attempted rape, unwanted sexual contact, child sexual abuse, drug/alcohol-facilitated assault, stalking, sex trafficking, and cyber-based sexual violence. These issues disproportionately impact marginalized communities. The Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI) network of advocates, counselors, and other professionals works diligently to support survivors, helping them heal from both recent trauma and long-term effects of past violence. In addition, we are committed to primary and secondary prevention efforts to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and drive systemic change to better support survivors.

Despite the progress we have made, the demand for our services continues to rise, and we are struggling to meet this increasing need. As a result, we are requesting an enhancement of funding to $2.5 million to continue providing the level of support that survivors need and deserve.

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Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

Should you require any further information or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Leana Pardo, at 718-302-4073 during business hours (9am - 5pm, Monday through Friday).

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Leana Pardo

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Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

New York City Anti-Violence Project
55 Exchange Pl, Suite 404
New York, NY 10005
212.714.1184 *voice* | 212.714.2627 *fax*
212.714.1141 *24-hour hotline*

June 10, 2026

Ensuring Access to Support for LGBTQ+ Survivors of Violence

Audacia Ray, Executive Director, New York City Anti-Violence Project

aray@avp.org 917-334-8618

Good afternoon - my name is Audacia Ray, I use they/them pronouns, and I am the Executive Director at the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). AVP submits written testimony today to express our gratitude to the New York City Council (City Council) for the funding that has allowed AVP to continue providing lifesaving services to LGBTQ+ survivors of violence even in the wake of unprecedented federal attacks on service providers like us. AVP was founded in 1980, and today we run a 24/7 hotline – the only LGBTQ-focused rape crisis hotline in the state – and offer free counseling, advocacy, and legal services to our community. We are continuously listening to and adapting to the needs of LGBTQ+ survivors in New York City. Right now, our client base of queer and trans, BIPOC, and immigrant survivors are increasingly under threat and in need of support as they are directly and specifically targeted by the administration in Washington. For over 40 years, AVP has been on the front lines, fighting for LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected survivors of violence. We provide crisis intervention, legal services, counseling, and advocacy to ensure our communities are safe and supported.

AVP's Support from City Council

City Council generously funds AVP's work through the following initiatives:

DoVE Citywide, restoration is $180,000 (including member and city-wide items), asking for $250,000

DoVE funding is critical to sustaining AVP's lifesaving central functions to protect LGBTQ+ survivors of violence, especially the maintenance of the hotline and crisis counseling, as well as providing for projects and partnerships in the community. Among other activities, DoVE funding allowed AVP Client Services staff to run a walk-in clinic for LGBTQ+ survivors of violence to navigate enrollment in health insurance, and provides for partnership projects with organizations like the LGBT Center.

DYCD (Discretionary), restoration **$447,500, asking for $640,000)**

- **Legal Services for Low-Income & Working-Class New Yorkers**
  - Restoration is $47,500, ask is $70,000

These funds have been essential in allowing AVP to provide holistic legal representation and counsel, addressing a wide scope of our clients' legal needs with one attorney. AVP legal provides low-income LGBTQ+ New Yorkers with legal services in family, housing, discrimination, immigration and LGBTQ+ related law.

- **Culturally Specific Services for Gender Based Violence Survivors**
    - Restoration is $250,000, ask is $300,000

These funds enabled AVP to serve more than 100 new LGBTQ+ immigrant survivors. AVP used this support to add two positions and double the size of its legal team, more than quadrupling its capacity to represent clients in immigration removal proceedings. The funding also allowed AVP to begin filing habeas petitions for detained clients and fight alongside City Council to keep ICE out of Rikers Island. This function of AVP's legal services allows us to address a critical unmet need in New York's LGBTQ+ community.

- **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade**
    - Restoration is $100,000, increase request is $170,000

This money allows AVP to provide crisis counseling services to survivors involved in the sex trade. Many of those served are also immigrants, and the counseling support cross pollinates with removal defense for these clients, strengthening their mental health and legal case simultaneously. This holistic service model, providing both legal representation and crisis counseling to underserved and victimized queer populations, is unique to AVP and represents one of our most crucial services.

- **Hate Crimes Prevention**
    - Restoration, $50,000, sub-select, ask is $100,000

AVP's core Hate Crimes Prevention work focuses on providing intersectional, trauma-informed Community Safety Trainings for LGBTQ+ survivors, as well as professional development trainings for the service providers who support them. By the end of FY26, AVP will have provided over 30 workshops for hundreds of New Yorkers on topics such as upstander intervention and de-escalation skills; safety planning for events; online and social media safety; law enforcement accountability; best practices for supporting LGBTQ+ survivors of hate violence; creating LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces; and much more.

Major Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2026

AVP worked especially closely with City Council during FY2026 in order to withstand the unprecedent attacks on our immigrant communities. AVP became a leading organizational voice opposing efforts to weaken New York City sanctuary protections and restore Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE's) access to Rikers Island jail facilities. During the summer, AVP was invited by City Council to assist in drafting an amicus brief opposing policy changes advanced by Mayor Adams that would have allowed ICE operations to return to Rikers Island. Working closely with pro bono legal partners, AVP helped develop and publish a comprehensive

amicus brief explaining the harmful impact that increased immigration enforcement would have on LGBTQ+ survivors, immigrant communities, and public safety. We were the only organization to put forth our own, standalone brief representing the unique impacts of reopening an ICE office on Rikers on LGBTQ+ immigrant survivors.

AVP expanded this advocacy work beyond the courtroom. Staff members testified before City Council on immigration legislation, sanctuary protections, and the impact of ICE enforcement on LGBTQ+ survivors. AVP staff also spoke at rallies, participated in press events, and joined coalition actions opposing increased cooperation between local government and federal immigration authorities. AVP delivered testimony before the City Council Committee on Immigration concerning the NYC Trust Act and related immigration bills, emphasizing the severe risks that increased immigration enforcement poses for LGBTQ+ survivors who may already fear law enforcement and government institutions due to prior trauma.

One of AVP's major accomplishments during the reporting period was successfully stabilizing and growing the Legal Services Program during a moment of severe uncertainty thanks to City Council's support in the Culturally Specific Survivors of Gender Based Violence Initiative. Despite fears that changing federal priorities could lead to program cuts or contraction, AVP instead expanded its legal team by adding an additional staff member and significantly increasing the organization's leadership role in New York City.

Direct legal services changed at AVP during this period. Historically, much of AVP's immigration legal practice focused on affirmative immigration filings before United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), including asylum applications, U visas, T visas, VAWA petitions, work authorization applications, and adjustment of status applications. During this reporting period, however, the nature of AVP's immigration work changed dramatically as LGBTQ+ immigrants increasingly found themselves thrown into removal proceedings due to changing and hostile federal practices. As a result, AVP transitioned into a substantially more litigation-focused immigration practice. AVP attorneys became regular practitioners before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), representing LGBTQ+ immigrants facing deportation proceedings in immigration courts throughout the region.

This transition required substantial growth in litigation capacity, rapid adaptation to changing immigration policies, and intensive client support for highly vulnerable populations facing extraordinary levels of trauma and instability. AVP's legal team handled increasingly complex removal defense matters involving detained and non detained immigrants, asylum seekers, transgender immigrants, survivors of trafficking, and individuals facing heightened risks of violence if deported. The organization developed expertise responding to emerging enforcement mechanisms, including Alternative Country Agreement deportation motions, in which the federal government sought to remove asylum seekers to countries where they had no meaningful ties or support systems, many of which are openly homophobic. AVP successfully opposed these motions in multiple cases, protecting clients from transfer to dangerous third countries and preserving their ability to pursue humanitarian relief in the United States.

Importantly, despite the increasingly hostile immigration environment, AVP continued its longstanding record of protecting clients from deportation. During this reporting period, AVP

secured multiple favorable outcomes in immigration matters and continued to ensure that no client represented by the program was deported. These outcomes included successful asylum adjudications, approvals in affirmative forms of relief like U and T Visas and work authorizations, continuation of removal proceedings to allow clients to pursue relief, and litigation victories preserving clients' access to humanitarian protections.

A particularly meaningful accomplishment during this reporting period was AVP's growing partnership with Betances Health Center in Corona, Queens. Through this partnership, AVP took on more than thirty removal defense and immigration-related matters for transgender and gender non-conforming immigrants living in Queens. The majority of these referrals involved Spanish-speaking transgender women and transgender sex workers who had fled severe violence, persecution, and discrimination in their countries of origin. Many were survivors of trafficking, family rejection, intimate partner violence, police violence, or anti LGBTQ+ hate violence. These individuals were almost uniformly unrepresented in their immigration matters and had little to no access to legal services prior to AVP's partnership with Betances.

This partnership allowed AVP to bring culturally responsive and trauma-informed legal services directly into communities that historically experience significant barriers to accessing legal representation. AVP attorneys and advocates worked closely with healthcare providers and community members to provide holistic support that addressed immigration issues alongside safety planning, healthcare access, and survivor support. The significance of this work was recognized publicly when two AVP staff members received Trans Visibility and HOPE TGNC community awards connected to their work supporting transgender immigrants in Queens.

AVP conducted multiple legal and Know Your Rights trainings in partnership with Betances Health Center and the Jackson Heights Corona Health Centers focused on immigration rights, interactions with law enforcement and immigration authorities, and available humanitarian protections for LGBTQ immigrants. One especially successful event held on March 3, 2026 brought together approximately sixty-five Latine transgender and gender non-conforming sex workers in Queens for a workshop focused on immigration legal needs, criminal legal system concerns, and community safety. The event was so well-attended and impactful that AVP and community partners began discussions about making the trainings a recurring offering.

AVP also continued its highly visible community outreach work in LGBTQ+ nightlife spaces in Jackson Heights, Queens. During the reporting period, AVP staff conducted multiple bar safety outreach events focused on Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ bar staff and patrons. These events reached hundreds of community members and provided information on violence prevention, bystander intervention, immigration related safety concerns, and access to AVP's hotline and legal services. These efforts reflected AVP's ongoing commitment to meeting survivors and vulnerable community members where they are rather than relying solely on office-based service delivery models.

AVP additionally participated in major community events and public demonstrations throughout the year, including the annual Trans Latinx March, Pride outreach events in Brooklyn, and numerous community safety forums. At the Trans Latinx March alone, AVP staff engaged with hundreds of LGBTQ+ Latine community members marching proudly with a large sign.

The organization also maintained strong educational and preventive programming through workshops and trainings. AVP provided bystander intervention workshops through the Gaymers Against Violence program, trainings for college students at institutions including John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Juilliard School, and legal issue spotting trainings for clinicians, interns, hotline volunteers, and social workers. AVP also presented cultural competency trainings for legal service providers, including a major training for approximately sixty-eight staff members and attorneys at New York Legal Services focused on LGBTQ+ client and coworker competency.

Client stories

Please note, all client sorties have had critical facts altered and are amalgams in order to preserve anonymity.

Legal Case Example 1: A transgender Latina nightlife worker living in Corona, Queens came to AVP after surviving extreme transphobic hate violence in Ecuador. She had filed an affirmative asylum application in 2016 based on the severe persecution she experienced because of her gender identity, but after years of waiting, her case remained stuck in the asylum backlog with no interview or decision. Like many LGBTQ+ immigrants, she lived in constant uncertainty while trying to survive economically and build safety in New York.

AVP represented the client in federal litigation and filed a writ of mandamus seeking to compel the government to adjudicate her long delayed asylum case. Following the lawsuit, the government finally scheduled her asylum interview, which went extremely well. However, months passed with no decision due to the nationwide asylum processing pause, leaving the client once again trapped in limbo and fearful of losing stability and protection.

Eight months later, AVP filed a second writ of mandamus in federal court demanding action on the delayed case. Shortly after, the government issued a final decision granting the client asylum. After nearly a decade of uncertainty, the client finally obtained permanent protection and the ability to move forward with safety, stability, and dignity in the United States.

Legal Case Example 2: A transgender woman and sex worker from Guatemala was referred to AVP through our partnership with Betances Health Center. When she came to AVP, she had only three days before her Master Calendar hearing in immigration court before a notoriously difficult judge. The Department of Homeland Security had already filed a motion to pretermit her asylum application, which would have prevented the court from hearing the merits of her case and instead allowed for her immediate deportation to Honduras under the Alternative Country Agreement (ACA) policy.

At the time, nearly all similar motions were being granted, often resulting in clients being violently detained in the courtroom immediately following their hearings. AVP acted quickly, consulting with a nationally recognized expert on Alternative Country Agreement litigation to identify the strongest possible legal arguments. While the expert generously assisted, she warned that success was highly unlikely given the political climate and outcomes in similar cases nationwide.

AVP's legal team focused its arguments on the unique and severe violence faced by transgender women in Central America and emphasized that the client had already been sexually assaulted while crossing through Honduras on her journey to the United States. Against overwhelming odds, the immigration judge denied the government's motion to pretermit. The client avoided immediate deportation and detention and will now have the opportunity to fully present her asylum claim in court. According to the national expert, AVP's case was the only known success of its kind during that period.

Legal Case Example 3: Another small non-profit legal center closed and transferred one of their clients to AVP. The client is a 65-year-old Haitian woman living with schizophrenia whose U.S. citizen, non-biological son has struggled for years to care for her while she cycled in and out of the shelter system. When we started meeting with her we formed a relationship by advocating for her transfer to safer shelter bed, but the legal team struggled to get her to sign a new retainer or paperwork for her immigration case due to her mental health condition. While her removal case had been previously closed, this left her vulnerable to deportation.

After the Trump took office, ICE moved to reopen previously closed immigration proceedings against vulnerable immigrants as well as cancelling TPS for Haitian immigrants. Our client's case was suddenly reactivated, and she faced imminent deportation. During this time, she fell into a coma and missed a court hearing, resulting in a removal order. AVP worked extensively with hospitals, social workers, and medical providers to document both her mental health condition and the lasting effects of the coma, ultimately persuading the court to close proceedings again. In order to best assist her, AVP appeared as a friend of the court to advocate for her despite her inability to comprehend and consent to legal representation. Had she been deported to Haiti, her severe mental health vulnerabilities and medical condition would have placed her at extreme risk of exploitation and violence, very likely resulting in her death. This case highlights our team going the extra mile – this client's disappearance and mental health issues meant that AVP had no legal obligation to find her, nor to reach out to her healthcare workers and family members to create a plan.

Clinical Services Case Example 1: Client is a Black lesbian woman in her 40s. Client initially sought short-term counseling services at AVP through the hotline following the end of her marriage to her abusive ex-partner. Client's ex was emotionally, sexually, and financially abusive, and used client's immigration status as a tool of power & control in the relationship. Client was in the process of petitioning for VAWA and was looking for a space to process the aftermath of the relationship and the abuse she experienced.

In initial counseling sessions, client described symptoms consistent with PTSD including hypervigilance, difficulty sleeping, avoidance of thoughts & feelings about the abuse, extremely negative beliefs about herself, and feelings of tense guilt & shame for staying in the relationship. Client's stated goals were to reduce the severity of her symptoms, process the trauma she experienced in the relationship, and rebuild her relationship with herself on a foundation of confidence and care. Counselor provided extensive psychoeducation about intimate partner violence in queer relationships and the impact of trauma on the nervous system. Counselor normalized client's responses to the trauma she experienced and validated the very real obstacles that prevented her from leaving the marriage sooner, particularly her immigration concerns.

Counselor and client worked on emotional regulation tools that allowed client to stay in her body and sit with both the pain of what she has experienced and the opportunities for growth and healing in her future.

As counseling progressed, client and counselor explored the impact of client's parental relationships in early childhood on her present-day framework of trust, safety, and love in romantic partnerships. Client came to a deeper understanding of the intergenerational patterns of intimate partner violence in her family that still affect her today. Over time, Client slowly reconnected with her social support system that she had been isolated from because of the violence. With more support, client was able to grieve the version of herself that existed before the abuse, everything she lost over the course of her marriage, and the pain of being on her own again.

At the conclusion of AVP counseling support, client had secured employment and was working towards getting a better apartment for herself and her son. Client stated that her confidence and relationship with herself felt stronger than before, and client expressed gratitude for having had the space at AVP to prioritize her own needs for the first time in her life.

Clinical Services Case Example 2: Client sought services with AVP through the hotline for crisis counseling, safety planning, and advocacy work following intimate partner violence (IPV) he experienced. Client identifies as a gay, cisgender man seeking asylum from his country of origin due to his sexual orientation and HIV status. Client called AVP after the IPV he had been experiencing for the past year escalated, with his partner at the time forcing Client out of their shared home and filing a malicious and false Order of Protection (OOP). The partner used the OOP and Client' s immigration status as leverage, to control client's movements and behaviors.

Client assigned AVP clinician supported him with extensive legal advocacy, working with his legal team to make sure he understood his legal options and how the situation impacted his immigration status. Additionally, the AVP clinician provided safety planning, preparation, and accompaniment for Client's OOP hearing. The AVP clinician assisted Client to find options for financial support and new housing. Together, Client and AVP applied for grants to cover moving expenses and rent. The clinician found a case manager for Client to help him apply for public housing. Following Client's separation from the former partner, he was presenting with multiple PTSD symptoms and experienced increases in suicidal ideation, anxiety, and isolation. The crisis counseling AVP provided allowed Client to find a sense of continuity. This was paramount for him to move through the emotional barriers impacting his ability to navigate multiple systems.

Client has reported that his work with AVP has been invaluable in the aftermath of the violence he experienced, empowering him to rebuild a life in New York City. Once Client's environmental stressors have been reduced sufficiently, the treatment plan is to refer client to long term therapy to further heal from the IPV and other traumas connected to it.

Looking Forward to Fiscal Year 2027

We respectfully urge City Council to establish and invest $15 million in a new initiative, the LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal Services Fund. This investment is urgently needed to meet the growing legal and safety needs of LGBTQ+ immigrants, asylum seekers, and transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive New Yorkers.

We also urge City Council to maintain, and grow, the financial commitments to immigrants made in Fiscal Year 2026. These funds have allowed AVP, and many other agencies, to keep and expand immigration legal services after devastating cuts that threatened entire programs during the spring of 2026 by the Trump administration.

We ask City Council to expand AVP's funding under Persons Involved in the Sex Trades to include funding for legal services. Our case work highlights that AVP has emerged as leaders in this space and we wish to expand this initiative. We would like to start a program offering legal services out of Betances Health Clinic for a medical legal partnership model. We believe that we could make a tremendous difference in helping this client population take meaningful and protective action earlier in their immigration cases, as we have witnessed many of the patients there do not seek legal help until they are on the eve of trial or after they have been issued a removal order. Earlier interventions is both lifesaving and critical.

Conclusion

AVP wishes to reiterate is deep gratitude to City Council. In the wake of federal disinvestment from LGBTQ+ initiatives and from immigration legal services providers, our services are only available to New Yorkers because of the Council. We hope to continue to fight for the most vulnerable New Yorkers alongside City Council in FY2027.

NEW YORK CITY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT (AVP)

24/7 ENGLISH/SPANISH CRISIS SUPPORT: AVP.ORG/GET-HELP | 212-714-1141
Hotline, counseling, advocacy support for LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected survivors of violence since 1980.

Who we are

- ☑ The nation's **largest** organization focused on **ending violence against LGBTQ+ people**.
- ☑ Our team includes **survivors**, **social workers**, **attorneys**, **organizers**, and **advocates** who understand the unique needs and challenges of **LGBTQ+ communities**.
- ☑ We provide **unique training** for 24/7 hotline where volunteers have the chance to pursue **New York State Department of Health certification** as a Rape Crisis Counselor.

Programs and Services

ONE-ON-ONE COUNSELING AND SUPPORT GROUPS & 24/7 HOTLINE
For LGBTQ+ survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and hate violence.
Always free, always confidential.

HOLISTIC LEGAL SERVICES FOR LGBTQ+ SURVIVORS
Including consultation and representation for immigrant survivors, services for asylum-seekers, orders of protection, other family law matters, name changes, and more.

COMMUNITY SAFETY OUTREACH AND TRAINING
For individuals who want to learn upstander de-escalation skills as well as groups and businesses who want to prevent hate violence and keep LGBTQ+ community members and patrons safe.

AVP is requesting the follow City Council support for FY27

- ☑ **$300,000**: Culturally Specific Gender-Based Violence Initiative (restoration + enhancement)
- ☑ **$30,500**: Community Safety and Victim Services (restoration)
- ☑ **$150,000**: Speaker Initiative (restoration + enhancement)
- ☑ **$60,000**: DoVE Citywide (restoration)
- ☑ **$100,000**: Legal Services for Low-Income & Working-Class New Yorkers (restoration + enhancement)
- ☑ **$20,000**: LGBTQ+ Youth Support and Services (restoration)
- ☑ **$50,000**: Hate Crimes Prevention (restoration, sub-select)

thank you!

For more information, contact AVP directly at community@avp.org.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY THE SEX AND LAW COMMITTEE,
CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE, AND
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER RIGHTS COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

RESTORATION OF CITY FUNDING AND STAFF TO THE NEW YORK CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (CCHR)

JUNE 10, 2026

The Civil Rights, LGBTQ Rights, and Sex and Law Committees of the New York City Bar Association ("the City Bar") strongly support restoration of City funding and staff to the New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), a cornerstone in our city's commitment to civil rights.

We submit this testimony to call on the City Council to fully fund CCHR to ensure that it is able to fulfill its crucial mission to protect New York City workers from discrimination, especially the most vulnerable.

The CCHR has suffered from disinvestment for years, rendering it unable to meet the needs of New Yorkers. CCHR has minimal staff and budget but plays an outsized role in maintaining the rule of law. As vital and frontline defenders of essential civil rights, CCHR provides indispensable and otherwise unavailable services to the people of New York. CCHR requires increased funding which is necessary for vigorous enforcement of essential civil rights on behalf of all New Yorkers.

We urge the City to restore the agency's effectiveness by protecting its staff from further budget cuts, exempting it from headcount caps, ensuring its staffing levels are commensurate with its critical missions, and bridging the disinvestment gap the agency has faced over the last several years.

We urge the City Council to increase the CCHR'S Fiscal Year 2026 budget by $10 million, so that it is funded at $25 million in Fiscal Year 2027. This small investment in the agency would have an oversized impact on the lives of New Yorkers.

About the Association
The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has over 20,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world.

Funding at this level will allow the Commission to address four urgent priorities.

1. ***Hiring New Staff & Expanding Mediation to Address Backlogged Cases.*** Without adequate funding or staffing, the CCHR's backlog of cases has grown significantly. Many of our members have experienced this first-hand, with cases they have filed taking years to get any response at all from CCHR. Restoring staffing levels and a robust mediation program is critical so that the CCHR can aggressively tackle its backlog—because justice delayed is justice denied.

2. ***Early Intervention.*** With adequate funding, the CCHR could expand its early intervention programs, and resolve cases early – keeping people in their jobs, allowing them to pay their rent and support their families.

3. ***Deputy Commissioner of Adjudications***. With adequate funding, CCHR could appoint a Deputy Commissioner of Adjudications, so that OATH decisions can be issued promptly. The CCHR refers hearings to OATH which then issues a report and recommendation to the Office of the CCHR Chair, who then has to issue a decision and order. Under the prior administration, OATH decisions have languished for months and years at CCHR while awaiting decisions, delaying monetary and injunctive relief for discrimination victims. Again, justice delayed is justice denied.

4. ***Affirmative Litigation.*** With adequate funding, the CCHR could establish an affirmative litigation team, to ensure that patterns identified by early intervention efforts, public reporting, and case investigations are pursued by the CCHR.

The New York City Human Rights Law ("NYCHRL"), administered by CCHR, is one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the country and applies to a long list of protected classes beyond those recognized by the federal and New York State governments.[1] We commend City Council for its expansive view of civil and human rights, amending the NYCHRL over 40 times since 2013 to add additional protections for New Yorkers.[2]

The consequences of the chronic underfunding of CCHR, which prevents New Yorkers from receiving justice when faced with discrimination, are particularly acute right now. The recent announcement by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) that it intends to stop or limit the acceptance, processing, and investigation of charges brought by those who suffer from workplace gender identity discrimination means that New Yorkers who experience workplace discrimination based on gender identity will look to New York State courts and the New

[1] New York City Comm'n on Human Rights, *The New York City Human Rights Law*, NYC.GOV, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/the-law.page. (All websites last accessed June 8, 2026)

[2] New York City Comm'n on Human Rights, *Amendments to the NYC Human Rights Law*, NYC.GOV, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/amendments.page.

York City Commission on Human Rights for protection of their rights. In addition, there are press reports that EEOC has instructed its staff to halt processing of all sexual orientation claims. [3]

This, of course, is occurring in the larger context of the Trump Administration's stance on discrimination in general, which led former EEOC Commissioner Jocelyn Samuels to comment, "I am deeply worried that the EEOC will no longer be an agency that is committed to protecting and vindicating the rights of vulnerable workers, and will instead be a barrier to their ability to be protected from discrimination."[4]

I. BACKGROUND

The New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL has prohibited discrimination based on gender identity since 2002, with the passage of the Transgender Rights Bill. It ensured legal protection for people whose "gender and self-image do not fully accord with the legal sex assigned to them at birth," with the intent to make explicit that the law prohibits discrimination against people based on gender identity. Recognizing the profoundly debilitating impact of gender-based discrimination on transgender, non-binary, and other gender non-conforming people, the amendment makes clear that "gender-based discrimination—including, but not limited to, discrimination based on a person's actual or perceived sex, and discrimination based on a person's gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression—constitutes a violation of the City's Human Rights Law." In 2018, the City Council amended the definition of "gender" in the NYCHRL to reflect a broader and inclusive understanding of gender. [5]

The United States Supreme Court held in *Bostock v. Clayton County* [6] in 2020 that discrimination on the basis of gender identity was barred by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The EEOC, the federal agency charged with enforcing federal workplace discrimination laws, subsequently issued guidance consistent with *Bostock*: Commission's Enforcement Guidance on Harassment in the Workplace[7]; the EEOC Strategic Plan (2022-2026); and the EEOC Strategic Enforcement Plan Fiscal Years 2024-2028, which included specifically, "targeting discrimination, bias, and hate directed against . . . LGBTQI+ individuals." [8] The EEOC in fiscal

[3] Some reports indicate that the EEOC has decided to halt processing not just gender identity discrimination claims, but sexual orientation claims as well. See here, Ryan Golden & Kate Tornone, *EEOC Tells Its Workers to Halt LGBTQ+ Discrimination Claim Processing*, HR Dive (Jan. 31, 2025), https://www.hrdive.com/news/eeoc-tells-employees-halt-lgbtq-discrimination-cases/738853/.

[4] Andrea Hsu, *How Trump's EEOC Is Attacking DEI and Emphasizing White People*, NPR (Mar. 31, 2026), https://www.npr.org/2025/02/09/nx-s1-5287582/trump-eeoc-dei-civil-rights-diversity.

[5] New York City Comm'n on Human Rights, *Legal Enforcement Guidance on Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Expression*, NYC.GOV, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/legal-guidances-gender-identity-expression.page.

[6] *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 590 U.S. 644 (2020).

[7] U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, *Enforcement Guidance on Harassment in the Workplace* (Apr. 29, 2024), https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-harassment-workplace.

[8] U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, *Strategic Enforcement Plan Fiscal Years 2024–2028* (Sept. 21, 2023), https://www.eeoc.gov/strategic-enforcement-plan-fiscal-years-2024-2028.

year 2023 received more than 3000 charges alleging discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, up more than 36% from the previous year.[9]

II. THE EEOC RENEGES ON ITS OBLIGATION TO TRANS AND NON-BINARY AMERICANS

All this changed after January 20, 2025. In a press release dated January 28, 2025, Acting EEOC Chair Lucas announced that pursuant to Executive Order 14168, one of her priorities for compliance, investigations, and litigation was to "defend the biological and binary reality of sex and related rights, including women's rights to single-sex spaces at work." In other words, not only to abandon claims of discrimination on the basis of gender identity, but to actively support those who carry out such discrimination.

"The Commission's harassment guidance was fundamentally flawed," said Lucas. "It ignored biological reality, effectively eliminated single-sex workplace facilities, and impinged on all employees' rights to freedom of speech and belief. In unlawfully expanding past *Bostock's* dictates, the EEOC exceeded its authority. The EEOC must rescind the guidance and protect the sex-based privacy and safety needs of women." [10]

The EEOC wasted no time putting these words into action. On February 18, 2025, the news media reported that the EEOC moved to dismiss six of its own cases on behalf of workers alleging gender identity discrimination. [11] One of these cases, *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Boxwood Hotels, LLC* (1:24-cv-00902), involved a housekeeper in a New York hotel who was fired after she complained about being the target of multiple derogatory comments by her supervisor, including being referred to as "it".[12]

The EEOC has explicitly chosen, in direct violation of its mandate under Title VII and Supreme Court doctrine, to simply stop pursuing cases based on gender identity discrimination. Whether this takes the form of absolutely refusing to accept new complaints of gender identity discrimination, completely eviscerating employee rights under Title VII, or simply refusing to investigate them, the EEOC's message is clear: the federal government can no longer be relied upon to protect trans and non-binary New Yorkers. Moreover, there have been press reports that

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[9] Claire Savage & Alexandra Olson, *EEOC Seeks to Drop Transgender Discrimination Cases, Citing Trump's Executive Order*, CBS News (Feb. 15, 2025), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/eeoc-transgender-discrimination-cases/.

[10] U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, *Removing Gender Ideology and Restoring the EEOC's Role of Protecting Women in the Workplace* (Jan. 28, 2025), https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/removing-gender-ideology-and-restoring-eeocs-role-protecting-women-workplace.

[11] Claire Savage & Alexandra Olson, *EEOC Seeks to Drop Transgender Discrimination Cases, Citing Trump's Executive Order*, CBS News (Feb. 15, 2025), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/eeoc-transgender-discrimination-cases/.

[12] U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, *EEOC Sues Boxwood and Related Hotel Franchises for Discriminating Against Transgender Employee*, EEOC, https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-sues-boxwood-and-related-hotel-franchises-discriminating-against-transgender-employee.

sexual orientation claims are being "paused", again in violation of Title VII. And, as former Commissioner Samuels has warned, there is reason to believe that the EEOC in general will be shifting its focus away from protecting historically disadvantaged populations and even targeting them for discrimination.

Just recently, the EEOC issued a decision allowing federal agencies to bar employees from using the bathroom that fits their gender identity. The first sentence of the decision quotes from Executive Order 14168 and reads, in derogation of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Bostock*: "It is the policy of the United States that 'intimate spaces [in federal workplaces] . . . are designated by sex and not identity.'"[13]

While the EEOC believes that is the "policy of the United States," it is not the policy of the City of New York. Now, more than ever, New York City's trans and non-binary workers need a robust and fully funded CCHR.

III. THE EEOC ABANDONS DISPARATE IMPACT LIABILITY

Disparate impact liability – one important type of civil rights protection – has been an important tool in targeting policies that result in unjust discrimination. More than 50 years ago, the Supreme Court adopted the disparate impact framework for proving discrimination, which Congress codified in 1991 in our federal civil rights laws.[14]

Discriminatory workplace policies persist today. For example, disparate impact liability successfully challenged Walmart's physical ability tests for certain warehouse grocery jobs, which were not correlated to a person's ability to do the work, but made it more difficult for women to be hired for the positions. The case resolved with a $20 million settlement, and Walmart agreed to stop using the tests, allowing more women to compete for relatively high-paying entry-level jobs at grocery distribution centers. [15]

In another example, in *Johnson v. AK Steel Corp.*, a federal court allowed the disparate impact discrimination claim of a female crane operator to continue after she explained that crane operators had to urinate off the back of their cranes instead of taking restroom breaks. The court found that this practice would have a significant discriminatory impact on women given the anatomical differences between men and women and women's hygienic needs.[16]

Disparate impact liability is an important element of the NYCHRL.[17] But as of today, it is no longer an element of federal anti-discrimination law. On April 23, 2025, President Trump

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[13] U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, *Complaint*, EEOC v. Boxwood Hotels LLC, No. 2025-003976 (filed 2025), https://www.eeoc.gov/sites/default/files/2026-02/2025003976.pdf.

[14] *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424, 424 (1971); 42 U.S.C. § 2000e–2(k).

[15] U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n, *Walmart, Inc. to Pay $20 Million to Settle EEOC Nationwide Hiring Discrimination Case* (Sept. 10, 2020), https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/walmart-inc-pay-20-million-settle-eeoc-nationwide-hiring-discrimination-case.

[16] *Johnson v. AK Steel Corp.*, No. 1:07-CV-291, 2008 WL 2184230 (S.D. Ohio May 23, 2008).

[17] N.Y.C. Admin. Code § 8-107(17).

announced a policy directive to eliminate the use of disparate impact liability "to the maximum degree possible" and directed federal agencies to deprioritize enforcement of laws and regulations that rely on the doctrine—undermining a cornerstone of civil rights protections that has expanded equal opportunity for decades.[18] The EEOC did as instructed and stopped pursuing disparate impact claims.[19]

As it did for protecting the workplace rights of trans and non-binary workers, the EEOC has now also closed its doors to claims of workplace discrimination based on discriminatory policies. Here, too, and now more than ever, the NYCHRL's disparate impact liability coverage is an essential tool for workplace equity, and the Commission an essential part of securing that protection for New York City workers.

IV. THE ROLE OF THE CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

While filing with the EEOC is a prerequisite for bringing a lawsuit under federal anti-discrimination workplace laws, New Yorkers may also exercise their rights under New York City's Human Rights Law, by filing a lawsuit, or by making an administrative complaint to the NYCCHR. Until the EEOC reversed its stance, New York employees could choose to file either with the EEOC or the NYCCHR (or with NYS State Division of Human Rights). For many employees, an administrative agency such as the EEOC or NYCCHR is the forum of choice – when working properly, these agencies can offer a faster, less expensive, more private alternative to litigation in court.

Now that the federal government in general, and the EEOC in particular, has announced that it no longer protects the rights of employees to be free of gender identity discrimination, we can only expect that New Yorkers suffering from such discrimination will be forced to turn to state and local agencies. With the EEOC turning its back on victims of gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination, and its anticipated policy shift away from protecting members of disadvantaged communities, the CCHR will become an important, if not the, critical administrative locus for protection of these New Yorkers and the vindication of their rights.

V. UNDERFUNDING CCHR UNDERMINES CITY GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND SERVICES

Effective enforcement of the NYCHRL is key to advancing many of the City's priorities, including workplace rights. This requires a well-funded CCHR that has the capacity to take on these cases.

Among its many protections, the NYCHRL protects workers against discriminatory practices such as sexual harassment, retaliation, lack of disability accommodations, or not providing a place and time for lactating employees to pump breast milk. Female employees, workers of color, and LGBTQIA employees, are some of the groups most vulnerable to these

[18] Exec. Order No. 14281, 90 F.R. 17537 (2025).

[19] Rebecca Klar, *EEOC to Close Workers' Disparate Impact Discrimination Charges*, Bloomberg Law News (Sept. 19, 2025), https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/eeoc-to-close-workers-disparate-impact-discrimination-charges.

insidious and illegal practices. They are also groups with lower labor force participation[20] and therefore most likely to be targeted by the City's workforce development programs. Providing training and education may prove to ultimately be meaningless if these workers are not hired, not promoted, or unfairly disciplined because of illegal discrimination.

New York City workers should be able to rely on CCHR to address their discrimination claims in a timely manner. Unfortunately, CCHR adjudications are not timely, and during Fiscal Year 2024, CCHR had an "average age of complaint closed" of 593 days, up from 515 days in Fiscal Year 2020 and a 5-year low of 427 days in Fiscal Year 2021.[21] New Yorkers cannot afford to wait so long for workplace justice. In the experience of National Employment Lawyer's Association's New York members, investigations often lag for many months, creating significant hardship for complainants, especially those who are still employed by the employer. By not effectively staffing and resourcing CCHR, the City does a disservice to all employees, but those who are already most vulnerable will bear the brunt of the agency's lackluster performance due to its lack of resources.

By not fully resourcing a critical tool in its arsenal, NYC countermands its own initiatives and commitment to workplace justice. The NYCHRL is not simply a pledge for the City to be more equitable; it is a law that should be enforced with the full weight of the government behind it. Leaving workers exposed to the whims of discriminatory actors in the employment space will not only impede the City's goals of equity but undermine the resources it invests in these crucial areas.

VI. CCHR'S ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY IS LIMITED BY ITS UNDERFUNDING AND UNDERSTAFFING

CCHR has a law enforcement function in a civil context that parallels that of the district attorney's office in a criminal context, serving both a prosecutorial and punitive role through initiating matters and handing down punishment. However, it has a fraction of the funding of the DA, which limits the capacity of the agency's staff. At its best, law enforcement should garner a sense of safety within communities. CCHR has the infrastructure necessary to grant that for NYC workers, but that is meaningless if it's not backed by sufficient resources to power its enforcement capacity.

CCHR has the power to investigate complaints, settle cases, and refer cases to the New York City Office of Administrative Trial and Hearing (OATH) for resolution. It also has the authority to assess fines, obtain monetary damages, and negotiate additional remedies including rehiring, policy change, training, and modifications for accessibility.[22] CCHR plays an important role in mediating reasonable accommodation requests. Under the NYCHRL, employers are required to engage in "cooperative dialogue" with employees who make reasonable

[20] N.Y. State Comptroller, *New York City's Uneven Recovery: Mothers in the Workforce* (May 2023), https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/osdc/new-york-citys-uneven-recovery-mothers-workforce.

[21] N.Y.C. Comm'n on Human Rights, *Mayor's Management Report: Fiscal Year 2024* (2024), https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2024/cchr.pdf.

[22] N.Y.C. Comm'n on Human Rights, *2024 Settlement Highlights*, NYC.GOV, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/enforcement/2024-settlements.page.

accommodation requests and CCHR can mediate these matters in the settlement process.[23] However, the capacity issues within CCHR are leaving New Yorkers with potentially viable workplace discrimination claims without a forum to address them due to the backlog in cases. In Fiscal Year 2024 CCHR administratively closed 40% of the 447 cases that it closed that year—approximately 179 cases. While this percentage is down from a 5-year high of 56% in Fiscal Year 2022, the high rate of administrative closures means that CCHR staff initiated some cases, because they determined there may be a viable claim, but failed to decide if the cases should be dismissed or referred, or CCHR staff were unable to settle those cases.[24] Consequently, these 179 cases were shelved without being decided on the merits. If New Yorkers must wait for years to have their discrimination cases reviewed, only to have them administratively closed, they don't have adequate protection from discrimination.[25] When it comes to discrimination, CCHR is the administrator of justice, but City government has not funded or staffed this agency sufficiently to meet that mandate. Consequently, New Yorkers are living in an acute state of lawlessness concerning discrimination, because their enforcement agency is under-resourced.

CCHR's settlement capacity is also limited by the agency only employing one mediator. Mediation often speeds up settlement. However, the existence of a single mediator and the fact that *pro se* litigants unrepresented by counsel do not have access to CCHR's mediation contribute to CCHR's backlog of cases. These problems undermine the deterrent effect of having a watchdog agency with the power to enforce penalties against those who violate the NYCHRL, because failing to sufficiently fund CCHR cuts the teeth of the agency. It also wastes the efforts of the City Council to continuously amend the NYCHRL and expand civil rights to New Yorkers, because CCHR's responsibilities continue to expand without sufficient staff and funding to carry out the work. In Fiscal Year 2024 CCHR administratively closed approximately 6 times more cases (179) than it mediated (31).[26] The need for a sufficiently staffed and funded CCHR is also about creating proactive enforcement, to keep the caseload and backlog down through both deterrence and timely enforcement of the NYCHRL.

CCHR also needs funding to dedicate staff to publicizing its work and offering policy positions within its guidance. This policy guidance would clarify how the NYCHRL will be applied by CCHR and create a deterrent effect for those looking to discriminate against New Yorkers, while also educating New Yorkers about their rights. Without sufficient funding and staffing, CCHR does not have the capacity to enforce these laws, leaving New Yorkers without essential protection.

While it is clear that CCHR is underfunded and understaffed, it can be difficult to gauge the extent of the problem due to gaps in reporting. In Fiscal Year 2024, CCHR received 13,360 inquiries, up from 10,015 in Fiscal Year 2020 and a 5-year low of 9,055 in Fiscal Year 2021, and it initiated 868 matters, down from 1,307 in Fiscal Year 2020. CCHR also reported having 1,206

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[23] N.Y.C. Admin. Code tit. 8, ch. 1 (Commission on Human Rights), https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/chapter-1.page.

[24] N.Y.C. Comm'n on Human Rights, *Mayor's Management Report: Fiscal Year 2024* (2024), https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2024/cchr.pdf.

[25] *Id.*

[26] *Id.*

open matters in Fiscal Year 2024, down from 2,398 in Fiscal Year 2020 and a 5-year high of 2,411 in Fiscal Year 2021.[27] While there could be several reasons why the number of matters initiated by CCHR has plummeted, including an attempt to address the backlog of open matters, the reporting from the agency is insufficient to draw a clear picture. There is a need for greater transparency in reporting, because it is not clear how many of CCHR's cases are held over from year to year. A worker experiencing discrimination at their job does not have years to wait for relief. This type of backlog is unacceptable and needs to be addressed with increased funding and staffing.

VII. CCHR'S LIMITED CAPACITY LEAVES NEW YORKERS WITHOUT JUSTICE

We are in the middle of a crisis, and the New York City government must act with the urgency of the last line of defense against discrimination in a context where federal anti-discrimination law and policy can no longer be relied upon.

To be clear, the work of CCHR has always been urgent, not only because anti-discrimination work is essential for all the reasons mentioned in this testimony, but also because there are protections that New York City residents enjoy that don't exist on the federal level. However, the urgency has increased under a federal administration that is dismantling decades of anti-discrimination law.[28] New Yorkers cannot afford a budget issue to stand between them and possibly their only forum for asserting many of their civil rights. City government must be accountable to its constituents. In this moment, recognizing a potential increased need for the services of CCHR, City government must act to increase funding.

VIII. CREATING A MORE RESPONSIVE AND BETTER RESOURCED CCHR

We ask that City Council allocate $25 million to give CCHR the resources necessary to work through its caseload, prepare for the possibility of an influx of cases due to the changes at the federal level, put resources towards educating the public about their rights and the work of CCHR, and decide cases on the merits, including through a robust mediation process.

In the years immediately prior to the pandemic, CCHR's budget peaked at $14 million, which adjusted for inflation is approximately $16.2 million today. This funding was insufficient before the pandemic, and City government has failed to allocate this level of funding since. With that amount of funding CCHR was administratively closing 51% of the cases it closed in Fiscal Year 2020, 60% in Fiscal Year 2019, 68% in Fiscal Year 2018, 65% in Fiscal Year 2017, and 62% in Fiscal Year 2016.[29] CCHR should also be staffed to address at least 10% of its cases through mediation to reduce the waiting times for complainants with viable claims. We believe the increase in both funding and mediation capacity is necessary to protect the civil rights of New Yorkers.

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[27] *Id.*

[28] Russell Contreras & Emily Peck, *Trump Rolls Back Bedrock Civil Rights Measure in Sweeping Anti-DEI Push*, Axios (Jan. 21, 2025), https://www.axios.com/2025/01/22/trump-dei-lbj-rollback.

[29] N.Y.C. Comm'n on Human Rights, *Mayor's Management Report: Fiscal Year 2020* (2020), https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2020/cchr.pdf.

For these reasons, the City Bar strongly urges increased funding and staffing for the Commission on Human Rights, to support its critical work on behalf of all New Yorkers, and to enable the Commission to do its job to enforce New York City's anti-discrimination laws, on behalf of all New Yorkers.

Sex and Law Committee
Natalie R. Birnbaum Co-Chair
Susan E. Cersovsky Co-Chair
Deborah H. Karpatkin Principal Drafter

Civil Rights Committee
Evan Henley, Co-Chair
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LGBTQ Rights Committee
Hayley Gornberg, Co-Chair
Jared Trujillo, Co-Chair

June 2026

Contact
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Testimony Submitted by:

Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director, New York Common Pantry

For the General Welfare Committee Jointly with the Committee on Finance
Hearing on Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
June 4, 2026

Thank you, Committee Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee on General Welfare, and Committee Chair Lee and the Committee on Finance, for this opportunity. We appreciate the thoughtful manner in which the City Council is evaluating the food insecurity crisis in New York City and seeking ways to dedicate funding and to partner with community-based organizations to address it.

My name is Stephen Grimaldi. I'm the Executive Director of New York Common Pantry, one of the largest food pantry and social services organizations in the city, and a founding member of The Roundtable: Allies for Food Access. The Roundtable is a coalition of nine of the largest emergency food providers in New York City. Aside from ourselves, it includes: Citymeals on Wheels, Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, Met Council, Part of the Solution (POTS), Project Hospitality, St. John's Bread and Life, The Campaign Against Hunger, and West Side Campaign Against Hunger.

For 45 years, New York Common Pantry has been one of the largest food pantry and social services organizations in the City. We see struggling city residents daily and have stepped up our provision of healthy and fresh food to communities in need. Last year, we served more than 11.7 million meals, assisted more than 764,000 guests and expanded our mobile programs to serve 350 community partner sites throughout the city with both food and public benefits access, including SNAP enrollment and recertification. We have operated a nutrition education program, funded by SNAP-Ed for over 12 years, and are now faced with a devastating loss to our programming due to the program's elimination.

As you know, poverty and hunger in New York has reached epidemic proportions:

- More than 40% of New York City families are unable to afford weekly food costs, falling short $205 per week[1]
- 1.3 million households – nearly 3 Million people – in New York are struggling to make ends meet.[2]
- More than 3 out of 4 NYC households say the cost of food is rising faster than their income[3]
- 1 in 3 New Yorkers has used a food pantry in the past 3 years[4]

The affordability crisis has made it difficult for New Yorkers to make ends meet and to feed their families. Everything in the city costs more -- the high cost of food, childcare, housing, healthcare, utilities… the list is endless. And federal programs designed to help low-income families, including pandemic-era SNAP benefit increases, stimulus payments, the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit have all expired. NYC residents are working – sometimes two and three jobs – yet wages have not kept up with inflation.

SNAP

For perspective, **1.8 million New Yorkers rely on SNAP** benefits to feed their families.

- 79% of SNAP recipients are children, the elderly or the disabled.
- The loss of SNAP dollars will have an impact on the economy as well, for every $1 in SNAP benefits generates up to $1.80 in economic activity.
    - In addition to families suffering, this will hurt local grocers, farmers, small businesses and food workers
- SNAP provides 9 meals for every 1 meal soup kitchens and food pantries provide.
- Roughly 66% of our Choice Pantry members already receive SNAP and have to rely on our Pantries for food.

[1] Robin Hood Poverty Tracker, November 2025
[2] True Cost of Living Report, April 2023. Produced by Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington School of Social Work, for the Fund for the City of New York and the United Way of New York City
[3] New Yorkers Are Going Into Debt Over The Rising Cost Of Food, No Kid Hungry Survey, March 2025. https://state.nokidhungry.org/new-york/new-poll-new-yorkers-are-going-into-debt-over-the-rising-cost-of-food/
[4] "The Annual State of Poverty and Disadvantage," Robin Hood and the Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, Volume 6, Winter 2024

Families need both SNAP dollars and assistance from emergency food providers to survive and thrive in the city.

But with the new work requirements and other restrictions, the OBBBA/H.R. 1 SNAP cuts are projected to impact **300,000+ NYC households**, and are estimated to **push approximately 500,000 New Yorkers into poverty** between 2028 and 2034.[5]

The loss of SNAP dollars to feed hungry New Yorkers will mean even more families will be coming to our doors for support. As the Council considers priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, we urge you to continue investing in frontline emergency food providers' innovative, community-based solutions that address food insecurity at scale and strengthen the emergency food system that so many New Yorkers rely on.

Maintain Funding for the NYCBenefits Program

The Mayor's proposed Executive Budget does not include funding for NYCBenefits, the program that helps New Yorkers connect to and keep the benefits they are eligible for. At the exact moment new federal work requirements are about to drive a surge of recertifications, exemption claims, and appeals, allowing this program to lapse would be a profound mistake. We urge the Council to restore and baseline NYCBenefits, to expand it beyond its current providers, and to raise per-provider funding so that community organizations can meet this wave. Every household we keep connected to SNAP upstream is a family fed more reliably and a measure of breathing room for an emergency network stretched thin. It also keeps our communities healthier, alleviating medical care costs that strain other parts of the NYC social safety net.

Continue Baseline $100M for Community Food Connection (CFC)

- The Mayor's Executive Budget dedicates $100 million as a baseline in 2027 for Community Food Connection (CFC) to provide sustained, flexible support for more than 500 pantries and community kitchens serving more than 1 million New Yorkers.
- Reform CFC eligibility and screening criteria to best serve the highest-need communities based on the Mayor's Office of Food Policy data guidelines.

[5] The Annual State of Poverty and Disadvantage," Robin Hood and the Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University, Volume 8, Winter 2026

- We ask that this increase be truly baselined and not a one-year addition for FY27 alone. We also ask the City to keep its sights on the full need: providers estimate it would take roughly $100 million annually to close the citywide Supply Gap, and we want to plan honestly, together, for what reaching that level will require.

Maintain $15M for Feeding Our Communities

Last year, City Council funded this new initiative to provide additional support to emergency food providers. New York Common Pantry was awarded $400,000 under the Feeding Our Communities Initiative. We need this funding to continue in FY27.

- This funding provided supplemental support for food and hygiene product purchases and operational expenses for food pantries and soup kitchens
- The adopted $115.9 billion NYC Fiscal Year 2026 budget maintains steady funding for emergency food programs, with a $15 million investment for the "Feeding Our Communities" initiative. We request that City Council maintains this funding for FY27.

Increase Support for SNAP Case Management Services

The City Council funds initiatives related to Food and Benefit Access, which provide support for case management and benefits assessment work. Given the changes to SNAP, including cuts to funding for SNAP Benefits Managers and onerous new administrative hurdles, we request that the City Council increases funding support for these critical case management services through its existing initiatives.

Support Collaborative, Community-Led Solutions

- Establish a dedicated City Council Committee on Food to reaffirm the City’s commitment to building a just and resilient food system, elevate food policy across legislative priorities, and ensure sustained oversight and accountability in addressing food insecurity across all five boroughs.
- Broaden FeedNYC leadership to prioritize community-driven resource allocation and include frontline emergency food providers, thereby promoting equitable decision-making and improved transparency.

Fund SNAP-Ed Continuation with $10M

- Establish City bridge funding of $10 million to continue SNAP-Ed operations through community-based providers, ensuring families retain access to nutrition education and cost-saving skills, and preventing avoidable strain on HRA programs.

SNAP-Ed strengthens the impact of SNAP by helping families stretch their food dollars and make informed decisions about what they eat. Through community-based providers such as New York Common Pantry, SNAP-Ed gives New Yorkers of all ages practical nutrition education and access points to fresh, affordable food that fits real budgets and real lives.

- Although H.R.1 completely eliminated federal funding for SNAP-Ed, the need – and the impact – remains. We request City Council increase funding to support essential SNAP-Ed programming to support New Yorkers struggling to make ends meet.
- Last year, NYCP's SNAP-Ed program, Live Healthy!, worked with more than 20,000 New Yorkers to create healthier lifestyles for themselves and their families, and we served the equivalent of 33,000 meals through our Farm Share Program. The termination of this education program will have a devastating effect on the low-income communities we serve.

New York Common Pantry

Since January, we have experienced more than a 10% increase in Pantry meals when compared to the same time last year, and that's on top of the 17% increase in individuals we served last fiscal year.

New Yorkers face a series of hardships that are hard to overcome: rising costs and lack of access to quality food and healthcare, the high price of utilities, childcare and housing. We, at New York Common Pantry and the Roundtable, battle daily to feed the millions of New Yorkers who are facing these hardships.

With committed, sustained investment to frontline providers, we can build a more equitable and resilient food system that ensures all New Yorkers have reliable access to nutritious food.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to supporting New Yorkers facing food insecurity.

# # #

New York City Council — Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance June 10, 2026
Testimony of Marc Safman
Astoria, Queens | DeafBlind New Yorker since 1986

DeafBlind Inclusion: Economic and Social Justice Starts with Workforce Development

Image One



NYC Council · Committee on Finance · FY2027 Budget Hearing · Testimony of Marc Safman, June 10, 2026

Image One description: Four-panel infographic comparing New York City disability funding and outcomes: MOPD annual budget under $700,000; proposed $25 million for secure bicycle parking; approximately 12% of NYC residents have disabilities; and only 33.7% of DeafBlind New Yorkers are employed, with more than 61% outside the labor force.

Good morning, Chair Lee, and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the Fiscal Year 2027 budget under consideration. My name is Marc Safman. I have been DeafBlind since 1986. Since 1997, I have lived in New York City, and Astoria, District 22, has been my home since 2008.

June is DeafBlind Awareness Month, chosen because Helen Keller was born on June 27. Presidents Nixon and Reagan both issued proclamations recognizing her legacy. Keller was remarkable not because she was DeafBlind. She was remarkable because she refused to accept exclusion, inequality, and injustice. Too few remember that she was also a prominent anti-war activist, labor advocate, and humanitarian who understood that war produced blindness, disability, poverty, and suffering on a massive scale. She understood preventing war was itself a disability-rights issue. Her legacy is not simply awareness. It is the recognition that exclusion is a policy choice and justice requires action. A lesson directly relevant as New York City decides whether disabled New Yorkers will have meaningful access to economic opportunity, health care, civic participation, and community life. Read about Helen Keller's socialist legacy - http://marxists.org/reference/archive/keller-helen/intro.htm

Thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I have never received SSI or SSDI. I have worked with reasonable accommodation. I spent three decades employed mostly in the private sector pursuing a career in litigation and financial crimes compliance with law firms and financial institutions. Paradoxically,

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as the technology improved, the challenge of obtaining meaningful access to accommodation increased exponentially. I pivoted my career because lack of awareness by policymakers remains one of the greatest barriers to economic and social justice for individuals with disabilities.
DeafBlindness is a distinct disability arising from combined vision and hearing loss. We create unique solutions to achieve meaningful access to communication, mobility, and information. Our support needs are ignored by advocates and organizations working with either Deaf or Blind populations.

Analysis of American Community Survey data indicates that 51,228 New York City residents are DeafBlind.[1] Because New York State and City lack basic supports, our community remains largely invisible in public policy, illustrated most recently by the NYCHA settlement addressing Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents, which omits the distinct needs of DeafBlind New Yorkers.[2]

The Budget as a Justice Document

Economic justice is not only about wages, housing, or consumer protection. It is about whether every New Yorker has a meaningful opportunity to participate in New York's vibrant civic, economic, and community life.

Social justice is not only about representation. It is about whether government meaningfully invests in the infrastructure necessary for every community to exercise equal opportunity and self-determination. By those standards, the Fiscal Year 2027 budget fails New Yorkers.

Speaker Julie Menin has argued that the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection requires an additional $32 million because agencies need adequate resources to fulfill their responsibilities.[3] I agree with that principle.

DCWP already employs more than 400 people and would be able to fund hundreds of additional positions under the Council's proposal.[3] Yet the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, which serves nearly one million New Yorkers, is funded at just $678,657 and had only three filled positions as of January 2026.[4] The Council Finance Division itself acknowledges that these staffing levels likely limit MOPD's ability to coordinate with agencies, respond to constituents, and advance disability initiatives across city government.[4]

If DCWP requires additional funding and staffing to effectively carry out its mission, how can MOPD be expected to advocate for nearly one million disabled residents with less than $700,000 and only three filled positions? The issue before us is not whether New York City has resources.

Governing Audaciously for Bicyclists

In March, Mayor Mamdani announced plans to allocate $25 million towards long-term bicycle storage while the City was publicly facing multibillion-dollar budget shortfalls.[5] The Council is now considering an additional $32 million for DCWP.[3] When City leaders decide something is a priority, they find the money.

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The question is whether anyone in City government is going to pay attention to 12 percent of New York city's population. Does any member of this committee realize how much the ableist tick the box approach is costing New York City?

Economic Exclusion Is an Economic Justice Issue

The Council Finance Division report documents a troubling reality: only 33.7 percent of DeafBlind New Yorkers are employed, while approximately 61.5 percent are outside the labor force entirely.[6]

When DeafBlind New Yorkers cannot access transportation, communication, health care, education, employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, or government services, the result is systematic exclusion from the economic life of the city. That should concern every member of this Council, not only those serving on the Committee on Disabilities.

The same report discusses a citywide DeafBlind CoNavigator program and notes that such a program could improve economic and civic participation among DeafBlind New Yorkers.[7] My analysis estimates that a CoNavigator program could be launched for approximately $750,000 annually — roughly what MOPD receives today to serve nearly one million disabled residents.[8] The question is not whether such a program would help. The question in 2026 is why New York City still has not funded it.

Workforce Development Cannot Exclude Disabled New Yorkers

The New York City Employment and Training Coalition recently praised major workforce investments included in the Fiscal Year 2027 New York State budget, including child care, CUNY and SUNY Reconnect, New York Career Connect, manufacturing, technology, health care, climate initiatives, and work-based learning programs. NYCETC correctly described workforce development as economic infrastructure and warned that even well-funded initiatives can fail without coordination, planning, integration, and implementation.[11]

That analysis is exactly why New York City must increase funding for MOPD.

At current funding levels, MOPD does not have the staffing, resources, or authority necessary to ensure disabled New Yorkers are included as workforce development plans move forward. Billions of dollars are being invested in education, training, child care, manufacturing, health care, clean energy, technology, and economic development. Yet disabled New Yorkers continue to be left out of the planning, implementation, employer engagement, data collection, and accessibility infrastructure necessary to make those investments meaningful.

The City's own NYC: ATWORK program illustrates the problem. While the program is intended to support employment for New Yorkers with disabilities, its design largely assumes participants can independently navigate the job search process. Applicants are expected to already possess career goals, resumes and cover letters, interviewing skills, and the ability to conduct an independent job search. Once accepted, participants are expected to proactively pursue opportunities themselves.[12]

While NYC: ATWORK provides accommodations upon request, accommodations are not the same as accessibility. Accessibility should not be something added after workforce programs are designed.

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Accessibility must be integrated into recruitment, training, employer engagement, hiring systems, digital platforms, workforce data collection, and performance measurement from the beginning. Training someone for a job they cannot access is not workforce development.
If workforce development is economic infrastructure, accessibility is workforce infrastructure.

Disabled New Yorkers are not excluded from the workforce merely because they lack skills or ambition. They are excluded by inaccessible websites, documents, training programs, hiring systems, transportation, inadequate communication access, shortages of interpreters and captioners, lack of assistive technology, lack of CoNavigators, employer bias, and government systems that continue to treat disability inclusion as an afterthought.

A strengthened MOPD could help ensure that workforce investments reach disabled New Yorkers by coordinating disability-inclusive workforce policy across agencies, supporting accessible entrepreneurship, advising Workforce1 and publicly funded training providers, expanding communication access, helping employers understand accommodation obligations, supporting accessible digital systems, and ensuring that disabled New Yorkers are counted in workforce outcomes.

Every New Yorker who enters or remains in the workforce becomes a taxpayer, consumer, entrepreneur, worker, caregiver, and contributor to the city's economy. Exclusion is expensive. Inclusion is economic development.

A Modest, Comparable Investment

Washington, D.C., with approximately 700,000 residents, funds both an Office of Disability Rights and a separate Office for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing. Together, those offices receive nearly $4 million annually.[9]

New York City has more than eight million residents and nearly one million disabled residents, yet its primary disability office receives less than $700,000.[4]

If New York City invested in disability infrastructure at the same per-capita rate as Washington, D.C., the comparable figure for this city would be approximately $45 million annually. Even adjusting only for New York City's disability population, a proportionate investment would fall between approximately $8 million and $10 million.[10] My request for $10 million is therefore not extraordinary. It is approximately what a comparable jurisdiction already spends, adjusted for the size of the population being served.

What $10 Million Would Build

Ten million dollars invested in disability infrastructure could support:

- MOPD staffing sufficient to carry out its mandate
- A citywide DeafBlind CoNavigator program
- Strengthened ASL, TASL, and Protactile education in New York City public schools, including pathways for DeafBlind and Deaf educators
- Braille literacy initiatives

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- Communication access services and NextGen 911 integration
- Mobility device maintenance and repair
- Assistive technology programs
- Economic and workforce development and entrepreneurship programs for disabled New Yorkers
- Reform and expansion of NYC: ATWORK so disability employment services are integrated into Workforce1, recruitment programs, employer engagement, accessible hiring systems, and workforce outcome reporting rather than operating as a small self-guided program outside the City's primary workforce infrastructure
- Disability inclusion support for Workforce1, publicly funded workforce training programs, and employer engagement initiatives
- Technical assistance for small businesses on accessible websites, documents and events, reasonable accommodations, tax credits and incentives, inclusive hiring, and how to prepare an effective cooperative dialogue requirements under the New York City Human Rights Law
- Data collection and public reporting on disability participation in workforce and economic development programs
- Partnerships with CUNY, SUNY, workforce providers, employers, and community-based organizations to build disability-inclusive career pathways
- A pilot program to recycle critical minerals from mobility devices, including power wheelchairs

These investments are not merely disability services. They are workforce infrastructure.

As NYCETC recently observed, workforce systems require coordination, planning, and integration to succeed.[11] New York City cannot claim to be building an inclusive workforce while maintaining a disability office with fewer than $700,000 in funding and only three filled positions. Disability inclusion cannot be an afterthought in workforce development. It must be built into the system from the beginning.

Chronic shortages of qualified and culturally appropriate interpreters and captioners serving DeafBlind, Deaf and Hard of Hearing New Yorkers are the predictable result of decades of underinvestment. Rebuilding that infrastructure should be a priority issue for the City's economic and workforce development.

City government continues to Crip wash community engagement. City policymakers find the first disabled person they meet and believe that one person represents 12 percent of the city's population. The racism within advocacy is a barrier that needs to be addressed. Consultation without representation is not inclusion.

Conclusion

The Mayor and City Council have been debating spending priorities that demonstrate neither party has genuine commitment to quality of life for 12 percent of New York City's population. **Worse, neither the Mayor nor members of City Council have demonstrated they have basic awareness that accessible websites, documents and events are fundamental to economic growth, innovation and expanding positive outcomes for everyone.** In 2026 you cannot run a business or government without the internet. **Economic and social justice – starts with WCAG**. Disabled New Yorkers are workers,

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students, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, consumers, caregivers, and voters. A city that can invest $25 million in long-term bicycle storage and debate an additional $32 million for consumer protection can invest $10 million in disability infrastructure, workforce participation, communication access, and economic opportunity. [3] [5] The measure of commitment is not what government says. It is what government funds.

I ask this Council to increase disability funding to no less than $10 million annually and establish a commission led by New Yorkers with disabilities (not filled by nonprofits) to prioritize how it will be invested.
Thank you.
Footnotes

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2. United States Enters Into a Settlement With New York City Housing Authority to Resolve Alleged Violations of the Americans With Disabilities Act, U.S. Attorney's Office, E.D.N.Y. (Mar. 3, 2026), https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/united-states-enters-settlement-new-york-city-housing-authority-resolve-alleged (announcing settlement requiring NYCHA to provide interpreters, auxiliary aids, accessible devices, and communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents).
3. Emma Delk, Menin Wants Mamdani to Give DCWP $32 Million More, City & State N.Y. (May 29, 2026), https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2026/05/mamdani-has-placed-dcwp-front-and-center-menin-wants-him-give-it-32m-more/413836/.
4. N.Y.C. Council Fin. Div., Report on the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Plan, the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan, and the Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report for the Committee on Disabilities 1–5 (2026), https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2026/03/Mayors-Office-for-People-with-Disabilities.pdf.
5. Dave Colon, Locked In: Mamdani Proposes $25M for Long-Sought Secure Bike Parking, Streetsblog N.Y.C. (Mar. 5, 2026), https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2026/03/05/locked-in-mamdani-proposes-25-million-for-long-awaited-secure-bike-parking; Streetsblog N.Y.C., The City Wants To Know Where You Want Secure Bike Parking (May 4, 2026), https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2026/05/04/the-city-wants-to-know-where-you-want-secure-bike-parking.
6. N.Y.C. Council Fin. Div., supra note 4, at 5.
7. Id.

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8. Marc Safman, Analysis of DeafBlind CoNavigator Program Costs and Comparative Disability Infrastructure Funding (2026) (on file with author).

9. D.C. Office of Budget & Performance Mgmt., Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and Financial Plan; D.C. Office of Disability Rights, FY 2026 Budget Oversight Responses; D.C. Office of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing, FY 2026 Budget Oversight Responses.

10. Calculation based on Washington, D.C.'s approximately $3.9 million annual disability infrastructure investment for approximately 700,000 residents, compared with New York City's population of more than 8 million residents and approximately 12 percent disability prevalence.

11. New York City Employment and Training Coalition, *Billions Invested. Now Comes the Hard Part: Why Implementation Will Determine the Success of New York State's Workforce Commitments* (June 3, 2026), https://nycetc.org/2026/06/billions-invested-now-comes-the-hard-part-why-implementation-will-determine-the-success-of-new-york-states-workforce-commitments/.

12. New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, *NYC: ATWORK*, https://www.nyc.gov/employment/programs/nyc-atwork (accessed June 2026).

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Exhibit 1 Marc
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City Council Finance Committee Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026 at 9:30 am

Good morning. I am Barbara Baer, New York Foundation for Senior Citizens' Home Sharing and Respite Care Program Director. On behalf of our Board of Directors, we would deeply appreciate your ensuring the continuation of our Home Sharing and Respite Care Program by supporting the provision of $750,000 from the 2026-2027 City Budget, including $500,000 from the Speaker's City-Wide Budget, $25,000 from each of the borough delegations plus funding from Council Members' discretionary budgets.

Our home sharing and respite care services: enable the City's older adults to prevent feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression by helping them to maintain and remain in their homes, obtain affordable housing, developing companionships and friendships, prevent institutionalization in nursing homes and homeless shelters.

Our home sharing service is implemented by Social Workers who use their skills to successfully match older adult "hosts" with space in their apartments or houses to share with "guests" in need of affordable housing.

Matches cost less than $4,000 per person and offer stability and cost effectiveness, especially compared to the $500,000 it cost to build a unit of affordable housing.

Our respite care service is also implemented by Social Workers. They arrange affordable, short-term, in-home care at the low cost of $19.65 per hour, paid directly to the home care workers by the frail elderly, managing at home alone.

Although the cost of private agency home care is $40 per hour, our respite care service provides the lowest cost, highest quality home care at $19.65 per hour.

The current per person cost of providing respite care services during the last 2025 fiscal year was only $553 per person.

Findings from our study of the July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 fiscal year demonstrate that New York City Council provided our Home Sharing and Respite Care Program with a total of $200,000 and saved New York City nearly $2 million in Medicaid expenses.

To continue our program, city-wide, requires $500,000 from the Speaker's City-wide Budget, allocations of $25,000 from Council Members' individual and $25,000 from each borough delegations' discretionary budgets within the City's next budget.

Thank you very much, in advance, for hopefully providing these desperately needed funds.

New York City Council
Committee on Finance

FISCAL YEAR 2027
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING

Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition
June 10, 2026

Hola, buenas tardes. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and members of the Finance Committee, for convening this important hearing.

My name is Vladimir Tlali, and I am an immigrant from México. I am also the Senior Policy Strategist at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), an umbrella organization representing over 200 immigrant-serving members and partner organizations. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify regarding the New York City Executive Budget for fiscal year 2027.

Immigration is not an unfamiliar topic for our city: 36% of all New Yorkers are immigrants. Immigrants make up nearly half (44.3%) of New York City's workforce and contribute nearly 37% to the city's total income[1]. However, as immigrant communities face unprecedented attacks from the federal government, New York City can do more. We must respond to this moment by investing in the people who keep this city running.

Immigrant legal services are increasingly important yet remain limited and underfunded. Masked agents in unmarked vehicles detain and separate our neighbors and families without due process, weakening constitutional protections for everyone. NYC must implement strong protections that defend our city's sanctuary policies and oversight authorities. We should move away from punitive systems and invest in community-based solutions that uphold justice, keep families together, and reinforce New York's commitment to immigrant rights.

Meanwhile, the affordability crisis severely impacts immigrant communities, which already face economic marginalization and exploitation. New and shifting eligibility requirements for workforce development programs and childcare vouchers influence job opportunities, pushing our communities into low-wage industries with few protections. It is crucial to protect immigrant workers' rights and provide the support all families need to succeed. This includes access to

[1] Kallick, David Dyssegaard, and Anthony Capote. "Immigrants in the New York City Economy: Overcoming Hurdles, Yet Still Facing Barriers." Immigration Research Initiative - Understanding Economics, Advancing Policy, Supporting Action, December 18, 2023. https://immresearch.org/publications/immigrants-in-the-new-york-city-economy-overcoming-hresulting decline in business due tourdles-yet-still-facing-barriers/

quality childcare, English language education, safe working conditions, and fair banking practices.

Similarly, the federal government has launched a direct attack on the political participation and inclusion of immigrant communities. We have seen systematic efforts to redefine and restrict citizenship, eliminate language access, exclude people from the census, and restrict voting rights for millions of Americans. These actions suppress civic engagement, ultimately harming our communities and the city as a whole. Underparticipation in elections dilutes political power. Undercounting in the census reduces population count and political representation, leading to lower budget allocations. NYC must invest in durable civic and census infrastructure, enforce language access as a civil right, and expand pathways to political inclusion.

Moreover, health and housing services for our communities are also being systematically dismantled. The new eligibility requirements and funding rule changes caused by HR1 have led to a loss of access to lifesaving programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP for thousands of New Yorkers. New restrictions on health, nutrition, and housing programs for mixed-status families threaten to recreate and expand cycles of poverty. Now more than ever, we must ensure access to essential services to build a resilient, inclusive New York City for all.

Finally, we believe that the city should do more to improve schools for immigrant students and protect their safety. Schools must expand and deepen policies on how to respond to federal immigration enforcement, addressing strategies for school perimeters, arrival and dismissal times, transportation, off-campus activities, and shelter-in-place procedures in coordination with law enforcement. Additionally, current support for English Language Learners must better incorporate their cultural traditions and culturally responsive instruction. For students to thrive academically, both their safety and educational quality must be prioritized together.

For all of these reasons, the NYIC strongly urges the City Council to stand with immigrant communities and fully fund the services and programs that support them, enabling these communities to succeed and contribute to the collective well-being of our city, as detailed in the funding requests and legislation below.

★ Protect All New Yorkers from Federal Overreach

- **Allocate $188M for immigration legal services, including:**
    - Funding for Immigration Legal Services - **$85M**
    - Baseline funding for the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative - **$4.5M**
    - Baseline funding for the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative - **$40M**
    - Fund the NY Immigrant Family Unity Program - **$40M**
    - Invest in the Unaccompanied Minor and Families Initiative - **$18.5M**
- **Invest $80M in Communities Impacted by Immigration Enforcement**
    - Create Restorative Justice Programs in Immigrant Communities - **$15M**

- Fund a new NY Citywide Family and Loved Ones Fund - **$65M**

★ Ensure Civic and Political Inclusion of All

- **Baseline funding for language access Services, including**
  - NYC Community Interpreter Bank - **$3M**
  - Worker-owned language service cooperatives - **$2.8M**
  - Baseline funding for multilingual emergency communications tools - **$3M**
- **Invest in voting, civic, and census engagement programs, including:**
  - Launch year-round Know Your Voting Rights workshops/programs - **$20M**
  - Baseline funds for Ranked Choice Voting, and Multilingual Voter Education- **$2.5M**
  - Launch a "2030 Census City Counts" **- $60M**
  - Expand staffing and access to naturalization programs - **$20M**
  - Invest an additional **$30M** in the NYC Human Rights Commission, above its current allocation, to foster a city free of discrimination by enforcing the comprehensive NYC Human Rights Law
  - Increase funding to the Mayor's Office of Immigrants' Affairs to expand operations - **$30M**

★ Advance Economic Justice for Immigrant New Yorkers

- Expand ACS's Promise NYC program - **$50M**
- Create a new Childcare Immigrant Family Outreach Initiative - **$4M**
- **Invest $50M in Adult Literacy and Workforce Development Programs, including:**
  - Create the new Education for Integration and Equity program. - **$20M**
  - Maintain DYCD Adult Literacy RFP contracts - $**12M**
  - Increase and consolidate funds on the Adult Literacy Forward Initiative - **$18M**
- **Protect Immigrant New Yorkers:**
  - Fund the Street Vendors Reform Implementation: $2.1 million for the Department of Small Business Services to establish the Office of Street Vendor Services (Local Law 53) and $3.1 million for the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection for license cap increase (Local Law 54). **- $5.2M**
  - Establish a citywide Immigrant Workers Task Force - **$15M**
  - Invest an additional **$30M** in the Department of Consumers and Workers Protection to increase enforcement of consumer protection, worker protection, and licensing laws, above the current allocation.

★ Foster Healthy Communities for All New York Families

- Expand Access Health NYC funding to educate their communities about health access, coverage, and benefits for immigrant communities, especially newcomers and asylum seekers. **- $4.5M**

- Strengthen NYC Care so that all immigrants—particularly those expected to lose Essential Plan coverage in 2026 and ACA coverage in 2027—can access healthcare services **- $200M**
- Increase funding for Community Food Connection to ensure access to healthy produce **- $100M**

★ Invest in Quality Education for Immigrant Students

- Create an English Language Learner Instructional Specialist position **- $8M**
- Fund the Support for Arts Instruction Initiative - **$6M**
- Baseline the Immigrant and Family Communications and Outreach Initiative - **$4M**
- **I**mprove public school buildings - $**800M**

Sound and sustainable investments are the best response to the hateful rhetoric from the federal government. NYC is at a crossroads, and we must do more to protect our neighbors and communities. Leadership in the city has a historic chance to do the right thing for all residents regardless of their immigration status.

These issues affect more than just immigrant communities; every time the federal government encroaches on and weakens the due process rights of immigrants, the rights of every person in this country diminish. Every time families are scared away from engaging with our electoral institutions or the census, our democracy weakens, and our political influence and budget diminish.

During a time when the country's economy is struggling, with prices rising far beyond wage growth, access to health, food, and education is at risk. Services and programs that support thriving communities are investments, not expenses.

We invite the Council to stand with us and create the bold, smart, and innovative solutions that only New York City can deliver. We are ready to work with you in creating an inclusive, affordable, and democratic New York City for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:

Vladimir Tlali
Senior Policy Strategist
New York Immigration Coalition

New York City Council
FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday June 10, 2026

Submitted on behalf of:
New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL)
36-36 33rd Street, Suite 504
Long Island City, NY 11106

Udai Tambar
President and CEO

Presented by
Scott Daly
Senior Director
Community Affairs

On behalf of New York Junior Tennis and Learning (NYJTL), I would like to thank Speaker Julie Menin, Chair Linda Lee, and the members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify and submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive City Budget.

As you know, for the past 50 years, the mission of New York Junior Tennis & Learning is to develop the character of young people through tennis and education for a lifetime of success on and off the court. The City of New York and the New York City Council have been close partners in accomplishing that mission and we are grateful for that support. Thank you.

With your help, today, NYJTL is the largest nonprofit youth tennis and education program in the nation, serving 90,000 K-12 NYC youth. **Funded under the Council's *Physical Education and Fitness Initiative*, NYJTL provides quality tennis, educational programming, and character development in EVERY borough throughout the city:**

Community Tennis Program (CTP) - Reaches children ages 5-18 throughout all FIVE boroughs year round; Provides trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, & special events; Provides FREE tennis equipment and instruction to over 1,000 Special Population/District 75 children during the Summer; Offers educational supports, including FREE SAT Prep & FREE SHSAT Prep, as well as special Tournaments and Events, including trips to the US Open Qualifiers and to Arthur Ashe Kids Day and various pro events and tournaments.

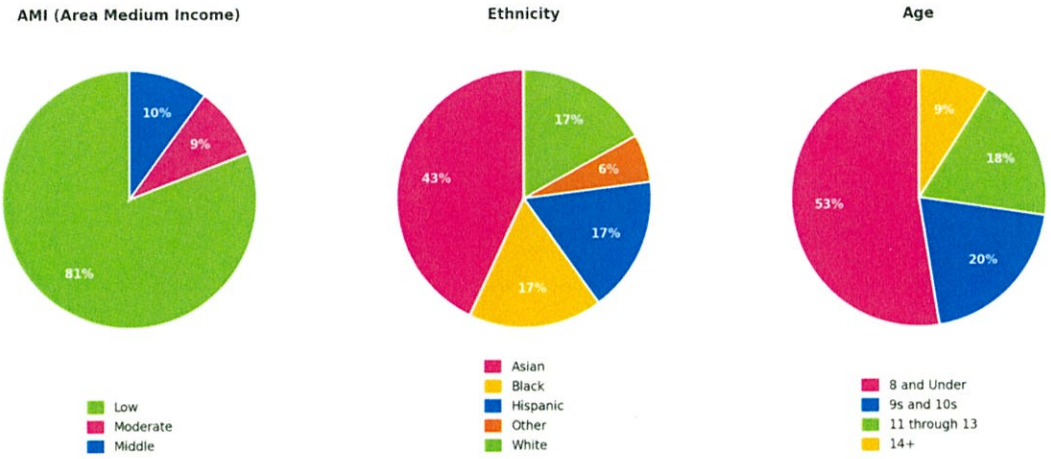
School-Time Tennis Program (STP) - Physical education teachers are trained by NYJTL's professionally certified coaches on how to incorporate tennis into their school's curriculum. NYJTL traditionally holds 6 training sessions each school year serving approximately 200 teachers/schools. All teachers and school-based staff are given a tennis curriculum, lesson plans, tennis equipment (rackets & balls) and ongoing onsite support if needed and requested. NYJTL is a NYSED Approved provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit. Training participants each receive for FREE 6.5 CTLE hours.

NYJTL also looks to expand upon our previously created CTP+ program, to relabel into two new pathway programs, the Accelerated Tennis Program and Varsity Tennis Program. These programs would allow participants who have expressed a desire for more training to get a higher level of tennis instruction.

<u>Impact through CTP</u>

- Over 10,000 unique kids enrolled every year
- Over 70% of our participants are ages 10 years and younger
- 75% of youth served are Black, African-American, Latino and/or Asian
- 80% of our families report as low-income based on NYC Area Median Income
- More than 75% of our coaches are alumni of the program
- 50% of coaches are in High School or College

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS



Ethnicity	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	43.2%	5 to 8	51.9%	Male	48.7%	New	65.2%
Black/African American	16.9%	9 to 10	20.4%	Female	51.1%	Returning	34.8%
Hispanic/Latino	17.2%	11 to 13	18.2%	Non-Binary	0.2%		
Caucasian	16.8%	14+	9.5%				
Other	5.9%						

** This data is from Fiscal Year 2025.

1 – Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 90,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually including its 30+ DYCD funded SONYC and Compass sites.

This year we are seeking **$1M** under the Council's *Physical Education & Fitness* Initiative – an increase of $200,000. **If allocated, it would be our first increase in 18 years.** In 2008 our citywide funding was reduced by 1/3 from $1.2M to $800,000 to fill a Mayoral created budget hole at DOE.

Funding of **$1M** will enable us to:

- Keep up with rising staffing costs due to NYJTL's **minimum wage of $20 (above NYC minimum)**
- Allow us to purchase sufficient equipment and cover additional site costs (permits/indoor court time)
- Allow us to bring programming to **NEW LOCATIONS** throughout the city
- Allow us to bring **ADDITIONAL HOURS** of free tennis instruction at existing sites
- **INCREASE SATURDAY** programming allowing access for kids who can't attend during the weekdays
- **INCREASE ENROLLMENT** throughout the city as a result of additional program hours and new locations

The City of New York and the New York City Council have been close partners in helping us accomplish our mission to and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe, who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life.

We could not do what we do without the strong funding support of the New York City Council. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families. On behalf of the youngsters and parents served by NYJTL, I thank you for the Council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your sustained support of NYJTL.

Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Finance
FY27 Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

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 Lee, as well as members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to comment.

As the federal government is rolling back decades of bipartisan environmental protections and drastically cutting funding for clean energy, and as our city continues to experience heat waves, extreme rainfall and flooding, droughts, and sea level rise—which disproportionately impacts vulnerable New Yorkers—local environmental leadership matters more than ever.

We appreciate the City Council's commitments in their Preliminary Budget Response, such as expanding the Fair Fares program to make subways and buses fully free for households under at least 150% of the federal poverty line, as well as the Mamdani Administration's commitment to the environment in the Mayor's Executive Budget, such as a new iteration of OMB's Climate Budgeting document, funding for bus and bike lanes, and building decarbonization projects.

With that said, the Mamdani Administration and City Council have the opportunity to invest in New Yorkers by funding city agencies that advance proven climate solutions, whether it's building out more renewable energy infrastructure, electrifying our fleet, funding our parks system, or investing in stormwater resilience.

Below you will find NYLCV's FY27 environmental budget priorities. We look forward to working with the City Council, Mamdani Administration, and environmental advocates to ensure our city prioritizes sustainability, resiliency, and environmental justice.

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

We appreciate that the Mamdani Administration baselined $15 million for NYC Parks in the FY27 Executive Budget, which means that 161 of the 276 temporary ("one shot") positions will be guaranteed a job by June 30th. This $15 million includes $3 million in permanent funding for critical forest management staff to support the care of our natural areas. This is a critical step forward, and we urge the Mayor and City Council to bring parks funding up to 1% of the city budget, as the Mayor committed to do during his campaign. We also appreciate the Administration's support and funding to make phase one of the QueensWay project reality.

Funding NYC Parks is even more vital as a Trust for Public Land report recently highlighted how New York City's parks system national ranking has been downgraded to 20th place, due in no small order to lack of funding and significant cuts to the agency's core staff over the last three years. Therefore, in accordance with the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, NYLCV supports the following for the FY27 budget:

- We urge the Mamdani Administration to baseline a remaining $8 million, which would mean 115 critical parks staff who will lose their jobs by June 30th will be guaranteed permanent jobs. This $8 million would mean 100 PEP Officers and 15 GreenThumb staff would be guaranteed jobs, and does not require vacancy reduction with the hiring freeze.
- We also urge the City Council to fund approximately $23 million for a new round of 276 one-shots for FY27, with a specific focus on the agency's needs. These positions will help the agency make progress in key areas that have been pain points for every council member. This includes:
    - 100 PEP Officers
    - 100 City Parks Workers, Associate Parks Service Workers and Gardeners
    - 50 Forestry Staff
    - 26 Playground Associates
- This is a total cost of approximately $46 million combined investment from the Mamdani Administration and the City Council.

NYLCV, along with Forest for All NYC, commends the Mamdani Administration for publishing the city's first-ever Urban Forest Plan. We look forward to working with the administration and advocates to implement and fund the goals for preserving and expanding the city's tree canopy. We appreciate approximately $2 million in Mayoral one-shot funding for 6 additional staff to expand in-house tree planting capacity. Despite these steps in the right direction, the Executive Budget does not include new expenses or capital funding to support the implementation of the NYC Urban Forest Plan.

In accordance with the Forest for All NYC Coalition:

- NYLCV requests $150 million in FY27 to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, including baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff positions and funding to support other City agencies that will expand tree canopy under their jurisdiction.
- We also request $1 million for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to support non-NYC Parks agencies tasked with heightened management and expansion of trees in their jurisdictions (such as NYC Housing Authority, the School Construction Authority, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, etc.) in implementing initial actions of the NYC Urban Forest Plan.
- NYLCV supports the recommendations contained in the Comptroller's recent report outlining ways to fund and maintain NYC's urban forest, including significantly increasing baseline operating support for parks workers, such as expanding staffing for pruning, inspection, and care, as well as investing in workforce development programs to build

long-term capacity in forestry and horticulture. We also support the Comptroller's recommendation that the City should explore complementary funding mechanisms, such as dedicated fees, bonds, or development contributions, while ensuring that these tools supplement, rather than replace, baseline public investment.

NYC Department of Buildings & NYC Fire Department

We commend the Administration's continued commitment to implementing Local Law 97 by providing $1.8 million to a new Co-op and Condo Hub within the NYC Accelerator program. This will provide specialized support to over 1,000 low- and middle-income co-ops and condos through engagement, decarbonization planning, and connecting with existing incentives and financing. This will ensure building decarbonization is both equitable and achievable. We are also happy to see funding for more decarbonization trade staff and $343,000 for a reporting platform in FY 2027.

Additionally, NYLCV supports the following funding for DOB and FDNY:

- For Local Law 97 DOB efforts, a key priority is focused on making compliance more straightforward and affordable. To do that, we view standing up a Local Law 97 Compliance Delivery Program that addresses the technical and financial support for covered buildings with a revolving fund as a key strategy for doing that. The program should aim to lower the costs and reduce complexity through city bulk purchasing of equipment and services to comply with the law. That means getting a pilot program launched as proof of concept targeting a prime audience for middle income co-ops and condos, and consulting with stakeholders and experts to align program design features and funding sources to support a cohesive, long-term program.
- Fund additional staff lines to support battery energy storage system (BESS) permit and safety review at FDNY and DOB's Office of Technical Certification & Research to ensure BESS applications can be handled efficiently. These safe systems can help meet grid reliability needs amid growing electricity demand, cut costs by mitigating the need for costly traditional infrastructure upgrades, and dramatically increase the grid's ability to onboard new renewable energy.
    - According to the *New York 6 GW Energy Storage Roadmap,* NYC will need approximately 2 GW of energy storage capacity within the five boroughs by 2030. Currently, there is just over 100 MW of energy storage deployed in NYC. This means ~380 MW of energy storage must be installed in the city *annually* between 2026 and 2030 to meet the 2 GW need. These agencies will need significantly more staffing to process applications.

NYC Department of Transportation

We appreciate the Mamdani Administration's funding for transportation projects in the Executive Budget and the City Council's support for Fair Fares. For FY27, NYLCV urges the City to fund and implement the NYC Streets Master Plan, prioritize Vision Zero policies, and expand the eligibility of the Fair Fares NYC program, and fully fund and staff DOT.

NYC Streets Plan

- As the Mamdani Administration continues to announce new bus and bike lanes, we appreciate the robust capital funding allocated that will ensure these projects are implemented over the next several years. This includes $306.9 million in capital funding and annual expense funding starting with $16.9 million in FY 2027 will expand the city's bus lanes, while $75.4 million in capital funding and $11.2 million in expense funding starting in FY 2027 will support new bike lanes.
    - We support the Executive Plan including an additional $16.9 million of City funding and 70 positions in Fiscal 2027, $30.0 million and 89 positions in Fiscal 2028, growing to $35.0 million and 104 positions by Fiscal 2030 for costs related to the City's Bus Action Plan.
- NYLCV urges the Mamdani Administration to continue prioritizing investments in bus stop upgrades, bus speeds, and protected bike lanes to make our streets safer. We also encourage DOT to work towards a comprehensive citywide bike network with protected bike lanes and bike parking infrastructure along major bike commuting routes.

<u>Fair Fares</u>

- Moreover, the Administration's baselining of $25 million for Fair Fares is essential for expanding access to transit for more low-income New Yorkers, and we urge the City to expand eligibility to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) including fully free for households under 150% of the FPL, in addition to an expansion of Fair Fares with half-priced fares on MTA Express Buses and CityTickets on the LIRR and Metro-North railroads within New York City, and automatic enrollment of qualified households.
- Not only do we need greater investment in the Fair Fares program to expand eligibility, we also need more investment for outreach and education to make sure the many who currently qualify are using the program, as well as expansion of the program so that other forms of public transportation discounts such as for Citi-Bike, Metro North, and Long Island Railroad, are included. With the cost of living only increasing, it is critical that we ensure affordable transportation for everyone.

<u>Vision Zero</u>

- We also urge the City to prioritize and fund Vision Zero policies that encourage safety through engineering, education, and enforcement to better protect pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.
- We support the City including $15 million in the FY27 budget to fund DOT's hardened daylighting program citywide, which will improve driver, pedestrian and cyclist safety.
    - The City is currently funded for 300 hardened daylighting locations in FY26, with a planned ramp-up to 500 locations per year by FY28. We support a significant increase by funding 1,000 hardened daylighting locations per year. DOT has estimated the cost of hardened installations at approximately $10,000 per location for labor and materials and approximately 20 additional staff, adding roughly $2 million in personnel costs. In total, a program delivering 1,000 hardened daylighting locations per year would cost approximately $12 million annually. We are requesting $15 million to allow for this expansion and to provide the program with the capacity and flexibility to ramp up effectively.

- NYLCV also supports calls by transportation and open space advocates asking Mayor Mamdani to follow through on his commitment to provide $20 million of baselined, expense funding to the Open Streets for Schools (School Streets) program, and call on the Mayor and City Council to fund School Streets.

Micromobility & Electrifying Our Transportation System

- We also support increasing access to affordable multimodal strategies to bolster the city's public transportation system, with priority to low-income and transit desert communities. This includes support for bike-share programs and e-bike infrastructure, more public charging stations for e-bikes and e-scooters like the newly-proposed Street Deliveristas Hubs and electrification of strategic CitiBike hubs, light rails, ferries and car-sharing programs. We urge the City to continue equitably expanding and funding the DOT's shared e-scooter pilot program.
- We urge the City to continue prioritizing efforts to revolutionize e-commerce delivery, such as NYC's Blue Highways Initiative, DOT's Microhubs Pilot, utilizing e-cargo bikes for last mile deliveries, increasing the number of Neighborhood Loading Zones, and implementing off-peak hour incentives for residential and commercial deliveries to improve air quality, reduce emissions, and improve worker and traffic safety, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

NYC Department of Sanitation

For FY27, NYLCV supports the following in order to meet our zero waste by 2030 goal:

- We are pleased to see strong funding for DSNY's waste containerization program, including $14.8 million in FY27 and growing to $162 million in FY30, moving the city towards a cleaner future. We underscore the importance of funding the purchase of Empire Bins, a European-style stationary on-street container for use by larger buildings, and automated side-loading trucks as the city continues to expand waste containerization.
- Increase funding for DSNY to conduct more outreach and education on DSNY's Residential Curbside Organics Program to increase participation rates. We are encouraged by DSNY's recent marketing efforts on this front, and we hope it ramps up, especially if there are partnerships with community groups and local elected officials to raise awareness.
- NYLCV also supports the NYC Community Compost Network request of $9,290,000 for the city's Community Composting programs, which includes $6,990,000 of program support and $2,300,000 for construction of a compost site. These programs complement the City's residential organics program in that it provides vital jobs and workforce development, educates New Yorkers on zero waste solutions, and invests in local economies.
- When it comes to Commercial Waste Zones, we urge the City to expand commercial organic separation requirements to all food businesses in concert with the implementation of Commercial Waste Zones. We also call on the City to provide continued funding for the electrification of light-, medium-, and heavy-duty DSNY and commercial sanitation trucks.

- We encourage the City to invest in residential and commercial recycling and waste diversion programs, including enforcement and education programs, with an emphasis on reduction and reuse to bring New York City closer to its Zero Waste by 2030.
- Expand recycling and organics services to all NYCHA residents, including increasing funding for DSNY and NYCHA staffing and for composting operations like the successful program being run by the non-profit Green City Force at nine NYCHA developments.

NYC Department of Environmental Protection

NYLCV appreciates the Administration's allocation of $10.6 million in FY27 for DEP's Bureau of Coastal Resilience, which will establish critical in-house capacity to manage the city's growing portfolio of shoreline protection assets and strengthen coastal resilience planning. We also strongly support the allocation of $95 million for a cloudburst hub that will help prevent dangerous flooding during intense rainfall events in Homecrest, Brooklyn, one of the over 80 flood priority areas that DEP has identified for flooding interventions.

Additionally, for FY27, NYLCV supports the following:

- Eliminate the NYC Water Board Rental Payment, in which the City plans to charge the Water Board more than $1.3 billion in rent from 2026 through 2029, taking money away from DEP water-related infrastructure improvements. This includes $312 million proposed for FY27. Already this year, the NYC Water Board has proposed raising rates by 6% and the water rental payment is attributed to the proposed increase (see PDF page 38 of the Water Board's Public Notice).
    - A more equitable approach would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently water rates don't capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By categorizing stormwater runoffs separately, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the establishment of incentive programs for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding.
- Fund the Stormwater Masterplan and provide $10 million for three contracts. DEP has begun work on the Stormwater Masterplan as mandated by legislation, but they have not been funded to do so, leaving this planning process in limbo.
- Dedicate $3 million to fully implement the Unified Stormwater Rule (USWR), including $2 million for additional staff at DEP to support implementation of the Rule, permit processing and site inspection to ensure compliance, as well as $1 million for the development of a new application platform and 2 IT staff to maintain it. When the USWR was expanded to apply to the entire city in 2021, DEP never received additional staff or funding for implementation, and this has led to a longer timeline for permitting approval of new sustainable development.
- We appreciate the Administration's allocation of $901 million in the Five-Year Capital Plan (FY 2026-2030) to rain gardens, porous pavement, and other green infrastructure. We encourage the City to invest in the maintenance of GI as well.
- Lastly, NYLCV stresses the importance of providing sufficient funding for DEP and MOCEJ hiring and retention. With numerous climate-related laws, policies, and

programs these agencies must develop and implement, it is vital they have robust resources to carry them through.

NYC Department of Citywide Administration Services

NYLCV urges the City Council and Mamdani Administration to fund agencies tasked with meeting city government greenhouse gas emissions targets, such as the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), whether it's by sustainably retrofitting city-owned and/or operated buildings to meet Local Law 97 targets, electrifying the city fleet, or scaling up city-owned and/or operated renewable energy such as solar and battery energy storage systems (BESS).

- As the City approaches the second LL97 compliance period, which is 2026 to 2030, NYLCV recommends ramping up capital funding and staffing for building energy efficiency projects, heat electrification, thermal energy networks, and on-site solar and battery energy storage for city-owned and -operated buildings to reach a 50% reduction by 2030.
- In accordance with Local Law 140 of 2023, which calls for the full electrification of the City's automobile fleet by 2038, subject to commercial availability and reliability, we urge the City to continue allocating capital funding for the full electrification of the city fleet and coordinating with utility companies to expand EV charging infrastructure throughout the city. We strongly support the Administration's allocation of $28.9 million to increase electric vehicle purchases to help the city meet its 2035 fleet electrification goal.
- The City has established a goal of installing 100 Megawatts (MW) of solar photovoltaic (PV) on City-owned buildings by the end of 2030, and 150 MW by the end of 2035, as set forth by Local Law 99 of 2024. We encourage the City to continue allocating capital funding for more solar installations not only on traditional rooftop solar but more innovative applications including solar canopies at parking lots, garages, and wastewater treatment plants, as well as combined solar plus storage projects. We also recommend the continuation of utilizing solar workforce development opportunities.
- NYLCV also recommends that the city allocate capital funding for the installation of BESS on city-owned lots to help us reach our carbon goals. According to the *New York 6 GW Energy Storage Roadmap,* NYC will need approximately 2 GW of energy storage capacity within the five boroughs by 2030. Currently, there is just over 100 MW of energy storage deployed in NYC. This means ~380 MW of energy storage must be installed in the city *annually* between 2026 and 2030 to meet the 2 GW need.

NYC Department of Education

- NYLCV urges the City, specifically DOE, to fully commit to the timely implementation and funding of Local Law 120 of 2021, which mandates an all electric school bus (ESB) fleet by 2035 to cut harmful pollutants, improve public health and air quality, and fight climate change. 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.
- For FY27, NYLCV is advocating for $2.2 billion for clean energy upgrades in NYC Public Schools. This includes solar installation on schools and electrification projects, insulation repairs and upgrades to HVAC systems, and exploring projects that utilize thermal energy networks.

NYC Office of Emergency Management

- NYLCV urges the City to allocate $1.2 million for the implementation of Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the NYC Cooling Centers Program. This should include funding for maintenance, staffing, increased hours of operation during extreme heat events (including weekends), and a public education campaign on extreme heat awareness and mitigation.

NYC Housing Authority

NYLCV stands with advocates and elected officials calling for increased funding for long-needed building upgrades and public health improvements, as well as significant funding to address the impacts of climate change.

Additionally, NYLCV supports the following:

- NYCHA should explore opportunities to pair building capital repairs such as elevator improvements and mold and lead abatement with energy efficiency retrofits and zero-emission heating, cooling, and cooking systems installation. We support the allocation of $5.6 billion in the 5-Year Capital Plan across existing funds, and $500 million in FY28 for comprehensive renovations at NYCHA, which, when paired with existing funds and investments made at FY27 Preliminary Plan, will allow NYCHA to rehabilitate and modernize thousands of homes across FY27 and FY28.
- NYLCV appreciates the Mamdani Administration's allocation of $38.4 million to provide all-electric heating and cooling at the New York City Housing Authority's Beach 41st Street development, which advances the city's goal of expanding Clean Heat for All to 20,000 apartments by 2031, according to NYCHA's 2026 Sustainability Agenda.
- The City must do everything in its power to ensure that NYCHA campuses are on track to meet Local Law 97 emissions reduction targets and procurement commitments for renewable energy, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050. NYLCV also urges NYCHA to explore the possibility of investing in thermal energy networks to decarbonize campuses to aid in reaching these emissions reduction goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

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Lynn Bodnar Kelly

New York Restoration Project

Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
FY27 Executive Budget Hearing — June 10, 2026

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance, for convening this hearing. My name is Lynn Bodnar Kelly, and I am the Executive Director of the New York Restoration Project (NYRP). NYRP is a proud member of *Forest for All NYC*, a coalition of over 215 member organizations committed to protecting, maintaining, expanding, and promoting New York City's urban forest, as well as Parks and Open Space Partners and the Play Fair Coalition.

For over 30 years, NYRP has partnered with residents of the city's least green neighborhoods to reclaim and steward public space, planting trees, renovating community gardens, and caring for parkland. Last month, we completed our annual free tree giveaway, distributing 4,000 trees across 27 events in all five boroughs. The demand was overwhelming: we distributed every available tree at every event. New Yorkers are asking loudly for a greener, healthier city, and the budget must respond in kind.

We acknowledge meaningful progress in the FY27 Executive Budget. The baselining of an additional $15 million for NYC Parks, accounting for 161 roles previously funded through temporary one-shots, including over 30 staff for managing forested natural areas, is a critical step forward. We also welcome the approximately $2 million to add six new full-time staff for in-house tree planting. These investments reflect real momentum. However, they are not enough. The NYC Parks budget remains $2.3 million lower than the FY26 adopted budget, and there is no new dedicated funding to implement the NYC Urban Forest Plan, which was launched just this April.

NYC Parks manages over 53% of the city's entire tree canopy. Required by Local Law 148 of 2023, the Urban Forest Plan charts a path to equitably expand tree canopy to 30% citywide by 2040. Fulfilling that mandate requires more than baselining temporary positions, it requires sustained, growing investment. As NYC

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Comptroller Levine noted this spring, true investment in the urban forest means expanding staffing for pruning, inspection, and care, as well as investing in workforce development programs to build long-term capacity in forestry and horticulture.

NYRP urges the Council and the Administration to honor Mayor Mamdani's campaign commitment to double the NYC Parks budget and to deliver on the promise of the Urban Forest Plan. Specifically, we call for **$150 million in FY27** to fund the plan's initial implementation, including: baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff; baselined funding for the remaining ~115 positions still on temporary contracts (including Parks Enforcement Patrol and GreenThumb staff); $16 million to fully implement the Forest Management Framework for forested natural areas; increased tree planting capacity to reach at least 25,000 street trees per year; and $1 million for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to support non-Parks agencies in implementing Urban Forest Plan commitments across their jurisdictions.

Fully funded parks and a thriving urban forest are not luxuries, they are critical infrastructure for public health, climate resilience, and environmental justice. The urban forest cools our streets, sequesters carbon, and provides equitable access to nature for all New Yorkers, especially those in the city's least green communities. NYRP stands with our partners to call on this administration to treat the urban forest as the essential city resource it is.

Thank you.

Committee on Finance June 10, 2026

T2026-1913 New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings

Testimony of the New York Shakespeare Festival d/b/a The Public Theater

Good afternoon, Chair Linda Lee, council members, and staff. My name is Kristina Lerner, the CUNY Brooklyn College, Government Affairs fellow for the New York Shakespeare Festival d/b/a The Public Theater. Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony during today's important hearing.

As the City Council works to finalize the City's budget through the Executive Budget hearings, on behalf of The Public Theater, I am here to respectfully request that the city restore and baseline the $30 million added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector. This should incorporate an additional $20 million into the FY27 Adopted Budget to build on the $10 million baseline increase included in the Executive Budget. Baselining this funding is crucial because cultural organizations cannot plan for the future when support changes from year to year.

Stable funding allows institutions to retain staff, expand programming, serve communities consistently, and invest in the artists and workers who make this important sector possible. This investment will help ensure that cultural institutions, communities, and artists can thrive in a city that continues to lead as an innovator in the arts. It also recognizes the importance of the City's creative economy, which generates $110 billion in economic activity each year.

The Public Theater demonstrates what this investment makes possible. As one of the City's leading cultural institutions, The Public creates free and low-cost programming, supports artists, connects New Yorkers to live performance, and makes theater accessible to communities across the city. Each year, The Public serves more than 150,000 New Yorkers with free programming through Shakespeare in the Park at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, our Mobile Unit performances in parks in all five boroughs, our community pageant, and our classes for seniors, youth, immigrants, military members, union members, and more. This free programming costs The Public over $10 million in direct expenses each year to produce, not including costs related to full-time staff salaries and benefits, operational support, and other general expenses.

Not only does The Public provide free art, but it also supports career growth within the sector through programs such as the Emerging Writers Group, the Joe's Pub Working Group, and the CUNY Fellowship. The fellowship offers recent graduates of the CUNY

Committee on Finance June 10, 2026

T2026-1913 New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings

Testimony of the New York Shakespeare Festival d/b/a The Public Theater

system a paid, seven-month opportunity to receive extensive, firsthand training and build a career in the arts.

I am especially proud to speak not only on behalf of The Public Theater, but also as a fellow whose own professional development has been made possible through this work. My fellowship provides meaningful experience in government affairs and nonprofit arts administration, helping me build a career in the cultural sector. Programs like this show how arts institutions do more than enrich the city culturally. They also cultivate the next generation of arts workers, advocates, and leaders that are sorely lacking.

As a fellow at The Public Theater, I have seen firsthand how nonprofit cultural institutions support workforce development by creating meaningful learning opportunities for emerging professionals like me. I have also seen the importance of City Council support, especially for CIGs that steward City owned property and provide affordable services that benefit your constituents. Since 1962, The Public's mission has been to provide free and accessible theater for all. That mission has only been possible through strong City support and sustained public funding.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully urge the Council to restore and baseline the full $30 million for DCLA. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Written Testimony
To New York City Council Committee on Finance
FY 27 Executive Budget
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chair and members of the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in response to the FY 27 Mayoral Executive Budget proposal.

About Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF)

Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) is a nonprofit lender, consultant, and advocate dedicated to helping community-based organizations access the capital and resources they need to serve New Yorkers effectively. Since 1980, NFF has provided over $1.7 billion in financing, supporting more than $6.3 billion in projects nationwide, including over $400 million in lending to New York City nonprofits

As a federally certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), NFF works closely with nonprofit leaders, funders, and government partners to strengthen financial health and advance equitable funding practices. Our work centers on building community wealth and ensuring that essential services – housing, education, workforce development, and human services – are accessible to all New Yorkers

We also provide financial management consulting and field research to surface the systemic challenges facing nonprofit organizations. Since 2023, NFF has delivered over 2,400 hours of consulting support to New York City nonprofits.

New Yorkers Are Facing Sustained Economic Insecurity

Economic insecurity in New York City is both widespread and structural. Using the True Cost of Economic Security (TCES) measure released by the Urban Institute and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, 62% of New Yorkers lack sufficient resources to meet basic needs, save for emergencies, and plan for the future.

This insecurity is even more severe for families with children, where 72% fall below the threshold, and for single-parent households, where the rate rises to 91
The gap between what families earn and what they need is significant. On average, economically insecure households fall short by more than $40,000 annually, and for families with children, the gap exceeds $50,000.

These challenges are compounded by rising living costs and uneven wage growth. While costs for housing, childcare, and healthcare continue to increase, wages for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers have stagnated or declined in real terms.

The scale of economic insecurity demands policy responses that address both inadequate incomes and rising costs – and human services nonprofits are central to that response.

Human Services Sector Is Critical to Economic Well-Being

Human services nonprofits are an essential infrastructure for New York City's economy and public well-being. They provide childcare, housing support, workforce development, health services, and other critical supports that enable New Yorkers to participate in the workforce and maintain stability.

These services are particularly vital for low- and moderate-income households navigating high costs of living. Without them, many New Yorkers would be unable to work, access healthcare, or secure stable housing – leading to even broader economic instability.

At the same time, the sector itself faces systemic underinvestment. Human services workers – who are disproportionately women and people of color – often earn significantly less than public sector counterparts despite performing comparable work. This wage gap undermines workforce stability and service delivery.

Investing in the human services sector is therefore not only a social imperative but an economic one. A strong nonprofit sector supports labor force participation, reduces long-term costs in health and housing systems, and stabilizes communities across the city. Further, strong nonprofit enterprises create a positive economic multiplier effect in local communities by hiring locally and contributing to payroll taxes, procuring local vendors, and leasing/owning real estate.

What NFF's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey Reveals

NFF's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey highlights the growing strain on nonprofit organizations in New York City. Among respondents:

- Only 19% of nonprofits receiving government funding report being paid on time
- 24% have one month or less cash on hand
- 40% reported operating with a deficit in 2024

At the same time, nonprofits report increased demand for services and rising operating costs driven by inflation.

These conditions create a dangerous cycle: delayed payments and underfunded contracts weaken organizations' financial health, which in turn limits their ability to meet growing community needs.

Without structural improvements to public contracting and funding practices, nonprofits will continue to face instability that directly impacts service delivery for New Yorkers.

Supporting Human Services Workers Is a Smart Economic Strategy

Nonprofit workers are the backbone of the human services sector, and their well-being is directly tied to community outcomes. When workers are financially secure and supported, organizations are better able to deliver high-quality services and sustain impact.

However, many nonprofit workers face economic insecurity, burnout, and limited access to benefits. These challenges stem in part from funding models that do not cover the full cost of services, forcing organizations to suppress wages and underinvest in staff.
Investing in nonprofit workers has measurable economic benefits:

- Improves retention and reduces costly turnover
- Enhances productivity and service quality
- Strengthens local economies, as workers spend their income in their communities

As NFF research shows, "worker well-being is community well-being" – supporting nonprofit staff is a direct investment in the communities they serve.

Our "Heart of the Sector" report identifies several actionable strategies to advance worker well-being, including prioritizing equitable pay through salary floors and transparent compensation structures, expanding access to comprehensive benefits such as healthcare, retirement contributions, and paid leave, and increasing flexible work arrangements to reduce burnout.

Additionally, the report calls for greater use of full-cost budgeting and multiyear, unrestricted funding to enable organizations to invest in staff, along with strengthening worker voice through collaborative leadership and clear career pathways. These strategies offer a roadmap for policymakers and funders to build a more stable, effective, and equitable human services workforce.

Equitable Funding Starts with Understanding Full Cost

NFF advocates for a full-cost funding approach – one that recognizes the true cost of delivering services. This includes not only program expenses, but also fair wages, benefits, administrative infrastructure, and reserves.

Current funding practices often fail to cover these costs, forcing nonprofits to operate with thin margins, delay investments, and rely on unstable funding sources.

Full-cost funding is essential to:

- Ensure reliable, uninterrupted services
- Build organizational resilience
- Enable nonprofits to invest in staff and infrastructure

When funding reflects the real cost of service delivery, nonprofits can shift from crisis management to strategic impact – ultimately better serving New Yorkers.

We Support Robust Public Investment Nonprofits, Intro 0441, and Intro 0452

Current government procurement and contracting practices are shortchanging the nonprofit sector. This is acutely being felt by the nonprofit workforce. To address these longstanding challenges, we support robust abd additional public investment in human services agencies and reforms to improve contracting practices.

NFF strongly supports Intro 0441, which would establish a task force to address disparities and inefficiencies in contracting. This should include updating cost assumptions, streamlining processes, and reducing payment delays.

We also support Intro 0452, which establishes wage standards for human services workers. These workers are critical to the city's functioning yet are often underpaid relative to their public-sector counterparts.

Together, these policies represent important steps toward:

- Improving nonprofit financial stability
- Ensuring fair compensation for workers

- Strengthening the delivery of essential services

We urge the Council to advance these measures and continue prioritizing investment in the nonprofit sector as part of the City's broader economic strategy.

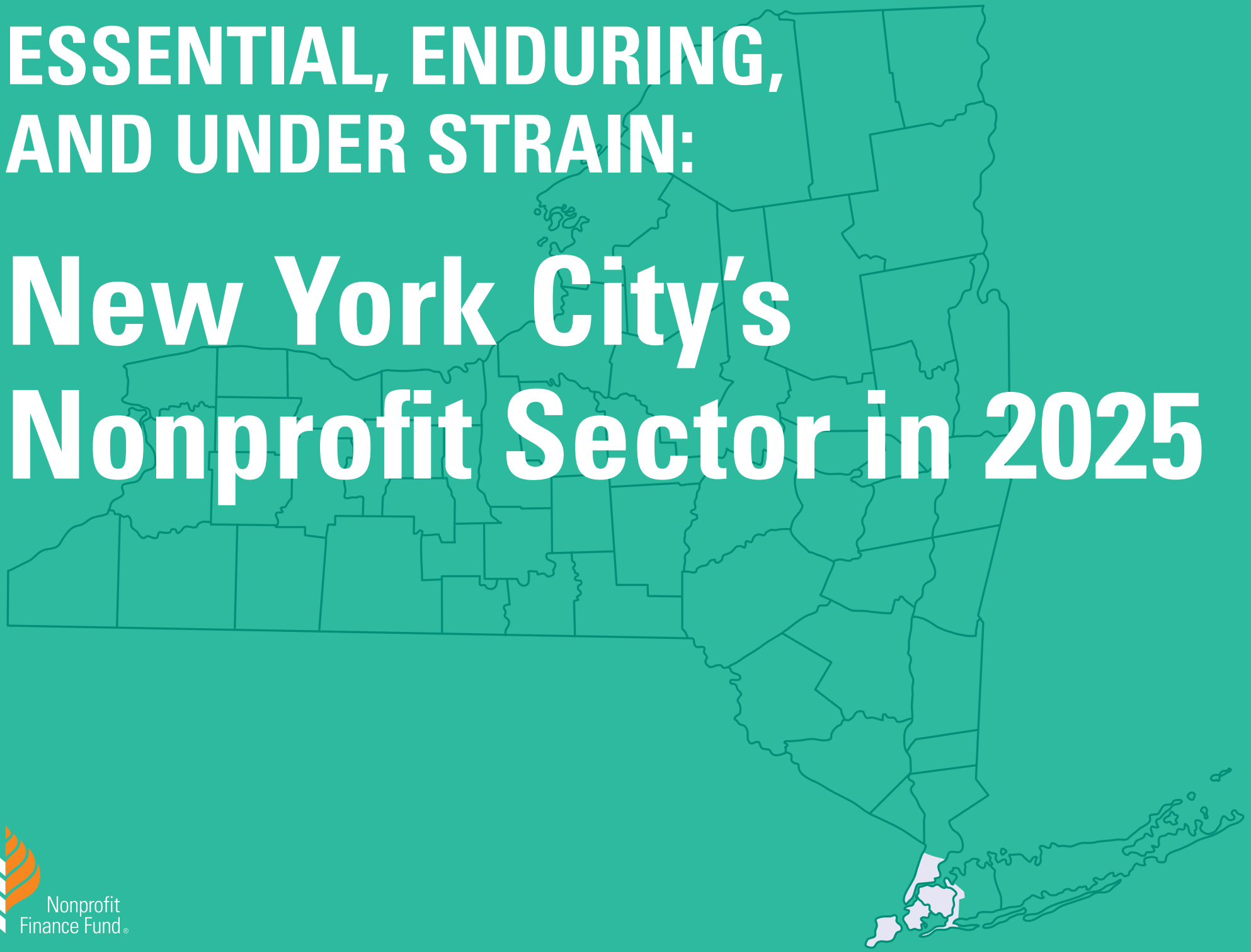
Thank you.

Edward Ubiera
Senior Director, Community Engagement
Nonprofit Finance Fund
eubiera@nff.org

Appendices Below

ESSENTIAL, ENDURING, AND UNDER STRAIN:

New York City's Nonprofit Sector in 2025



Nonprofit Finance Fund®

WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

A SNAPSHOT OF THE NYC NONPROFIT SECTOR



This report focuses on responses from the 133 organizations in New York City (NYC) that took the 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey. These nonprofits represented a range of budget sizes, sector, and leadership demographics. Compared to responding nonprofits in the rest of the country, those in NYC were significantly larger, more likely to have a national scope, and more likely to be led by a person of color.

Throughout this report, when comparisons are made between national and NYC nonprofits, the national data excludes respondents from NYC.

KEY SAMPLE DIFFERENCES: NYC VS. NATIONAL

	NYC	National (excluding NYC)
Number of respondents in sample	133	2073
Percentage with operating expenses under $1 million	31%	47%
Percentage primarily serving urban areas	94%	65%
Percentage with a national scope	35%	13%
Percentage led by a person of color*	53%	36%

*Person of color is defined in this survey as an individual self-identifying as one or more of the following races/ethnicities: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latine, Middle Eastern, and/or Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander.

ABOUT THE 2025 NATIONAL STATE OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR SURVEY

The State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey – Nonprofit Finance Fund's (NFF) tenth – gathered data about US nonprofits' health, including their collective challenges, successes, and the required investments to continue enriching millions of lives. This dataset is used across the sector to advocate for meaningful actions philanthropy, government, and others can take to support nonprofits now and into the future.

The 2025 Survey was conducted in collaboration with EVITARUS and Ambit 360 Consulting. From January 30 to March 14, 2025, we asked US nonprofit leaders a series of questions to understand the management, operational, and financial picture they navigated in 2024 and anticipated in 2025.

NFF is deeply grateful to the 2,200+ national survey respondents for all of the important work they do every day, and for entrusting us with their stories. NFF also thanks our survey sponsors and the many community partners who provided input on survey topics and distributed the survey to their networks.

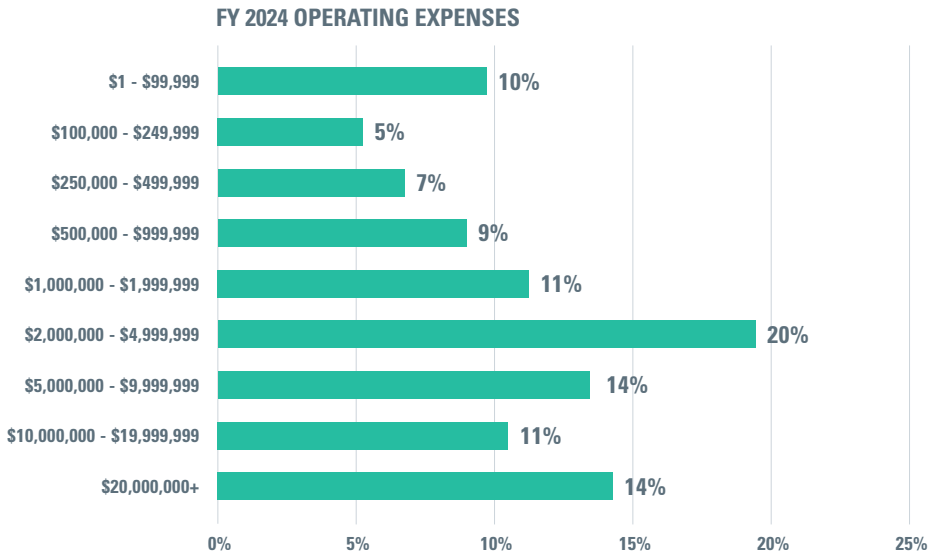
Note: Due to rounding and to questions that allowed respondents to select multiple answer choices, not all numbers in this report may appear to add up to exactly 100%.

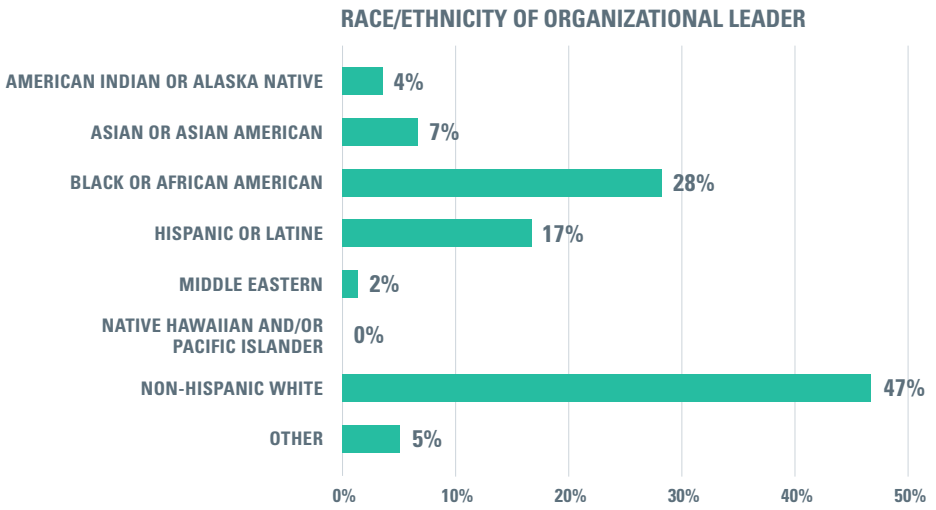
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> Our organization is intergenerational and through a process of deep listening, reflecting and celebrating the people in our community, we build trust and cohesion which translates into meaningful programs that resonate with our constituents and bring lasting value to the neighborhood.
>
> Arts/culture survey respondent in New York City

KEY AREA OF OF WORK	
Arts/Culture	22%
Human Services	17%
Education (other than Early Childhood)	10%
Economic Development (including Employment & Workforce Development)	9%
Social Justice/Civil Rights/Community Organizing	8%
Youth Services	7%
Housing/Shelter	6%
Community Development	5%
Other*	17%

*Categories in "Other" include: Capacity Building/Nonprofit Support, Education (Early Childhood), Environment/Environmental Justice, Food/Agriculture/Nutrition, Healthcare, Immigration, Mental Health/Crisis Intervention, Philanthropy or Grantmaking, Religion.



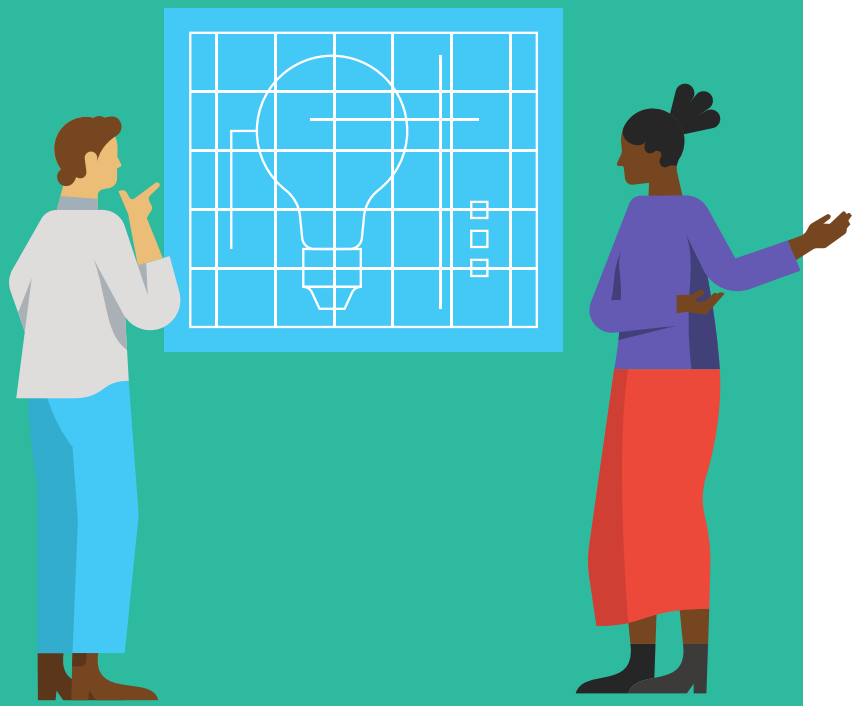


Over half of respondents (53%) are from organizations led by people of color. In addition, 55% of respondents said that half or more of their leadership team identify as people of color. Two-thirds (66%) of organizations are female-led and 20% have a leader who identifies as LGBTQIA+.

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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

NONPROFITS ARE THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT POWERS AND SERVES NYC COMMUNITIES



NYC nonprofits don't just serve the community; they are the community.

Across NYC, nonprofits are vital community infrastructure. They teach us, house us, feed us, entertain us, care for us, and make the city strong and vibrant. Local nonprofits are rooted in community and work toward a better future for all. 42% have a leader with lived experience representative of a community the organization serves. 45% said they received and acted on community feedback about their services in 2024.

Across sectors, 74% of NYC nonprofits exclusively or primarily serve people with lower incomes, as compared to 66% of organizations nationally.

MAJOR FOCUS AREAS FOR NYC RESPONDENTS	
Addressing Economic Inequality	68%
Advancing Racial Equity	61%
Building Community Wealth and Well-Being	60%
Helping People Maintain and/or Keep Quality Jobs	41%
Advancing Gender Equity	34%
Advancing Environmental Justice	18%

In addition to directly serving communities, 44% of respondents engaged in advocacy/policy work and 36% worked to increase community civic engagement in 2024.

> [Our special sauce] lies in our deeply rooted, community-first approach, with a unique blend of housing advocacy, youth development, and culturally responsive support that has been shaped by over 60 years of grassroots work…We're not just advocates; we're neighbors. We live the challenges we work to address.
>
> Human services survey respondent in New York City

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Nonprofits in NYC boost the economy by employing residents, buying locally, and driving tourism.

The 13,000 nonprofits across NYC contribute nearly $78 billion per year to the economy – nearly 10% of the city's GDP – and employ almost 18% of all workers. The NYC nonprofits in our survey employed 13,195 people in 2024. Over half (55%) spent more than $100,000 buying services, food, or other supplies from local vendors, with 18% spending more than $1 million at local vendors.

> We create jobs for our immediate staff and...for a network of 50 consultants and trainers. We use our own purchasing power to support more local and Black-owned businesses.
>
> Capacity building/nonprofit support survey respondent in New York City

> Our organization brings tourism into NYC from all over the world.
>
> Arts/culture survey respondent in New York City

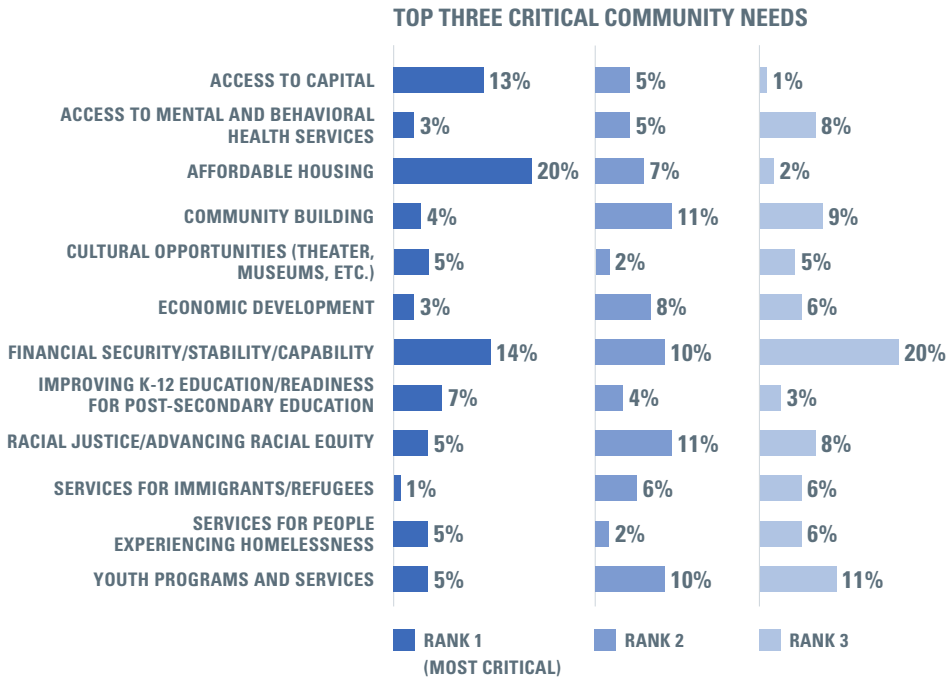


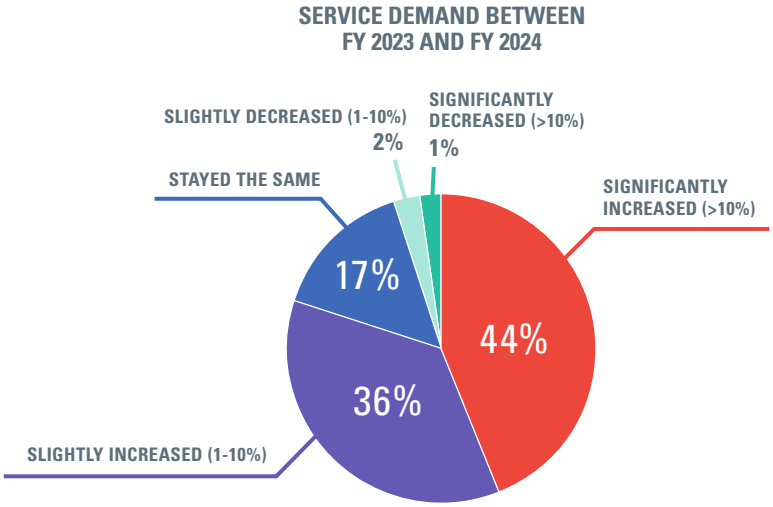
> We provide guaranteed income and work to 8,000 people coming home from prison every year.
>
> Social justice/civil rights/community organizing survey respondent in New York City

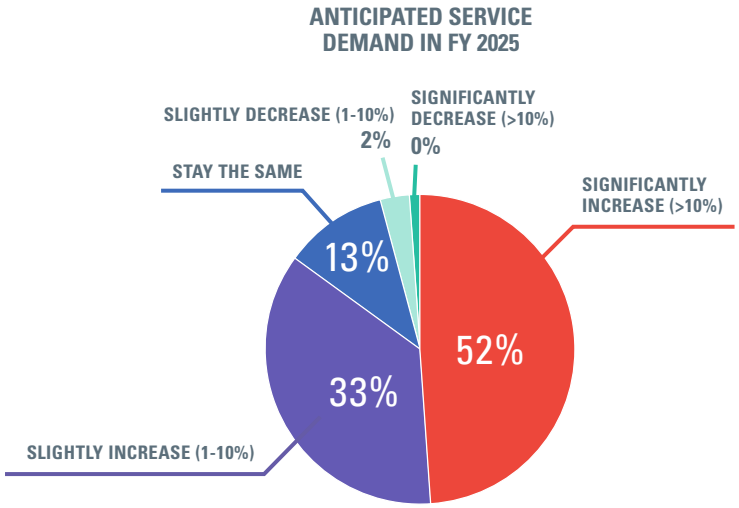
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Demand for services is rising, with housing and financial security identified as top community needs in NYC.

Local nonprofits are working to address a range of interconnected community needs. Most reported that demand for their services is increasing; about half (52%) don't expect to be able to meet service demand in 2025.





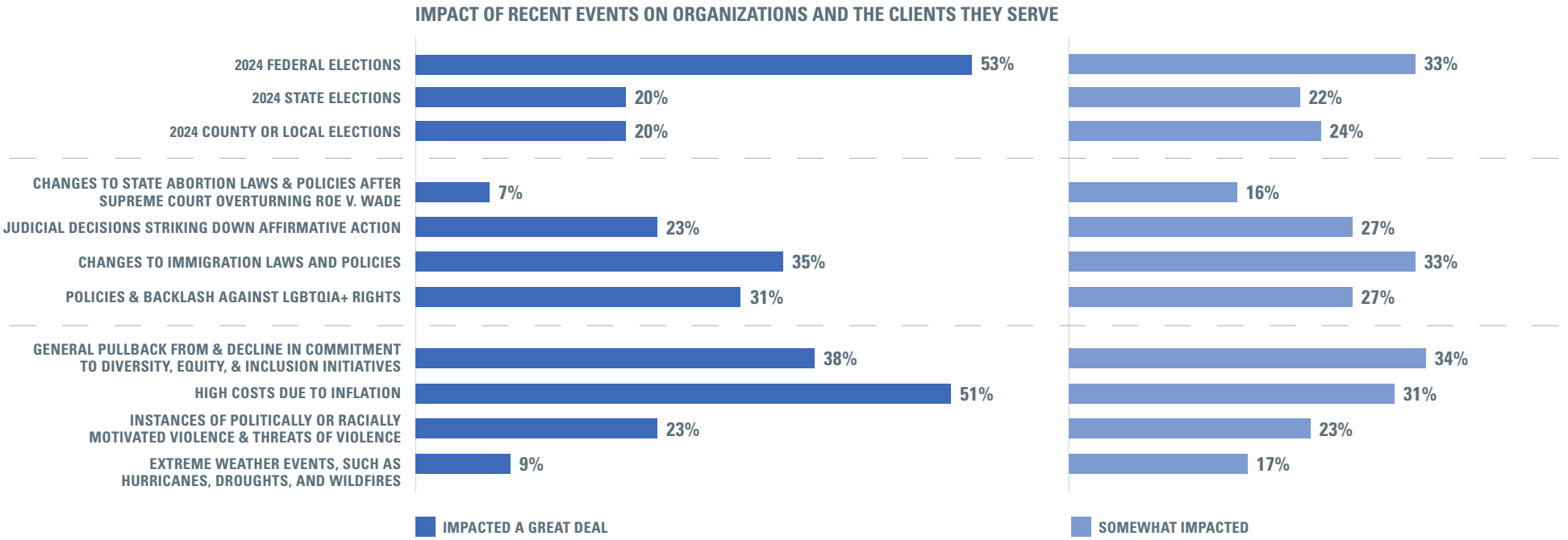


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With elections, inflation, and policy shifts, 2024 was a year of change for many NYC nonprofits.

Compared to respondents nationally, nonprofits in NYC were more likely to report impact from judicial decisions striking down affirmative action (50% for NYC respondents, compared to 36% nationally), changes to immigration laws and policies (68% for NYC respondents, compared to 54% nationally), and backlash against LGBTQIA+ rights (58% for NYC respondents, compared to 44% nationally). In 2025, organizations are preparing for the future by conducting internal risk assessments, joining coalitions to advocate and partner, investing in staff training, and pursuing new funding models.

> [As a result of the 2024 election], we are doing extensive scenario planning for client and staff safety, data protection, engagement, as well as for anticipated attacks and funding loss. We're increasing coalition work and partnerships. We anticipate major funding loss directly (federal money) and indirectly (economic downturn, lost state passthrough funds, corporate withdrawal of support) that will mean that many fewer people are supported and that staff lose jobs.
>
> Human services survey respondent in New York City



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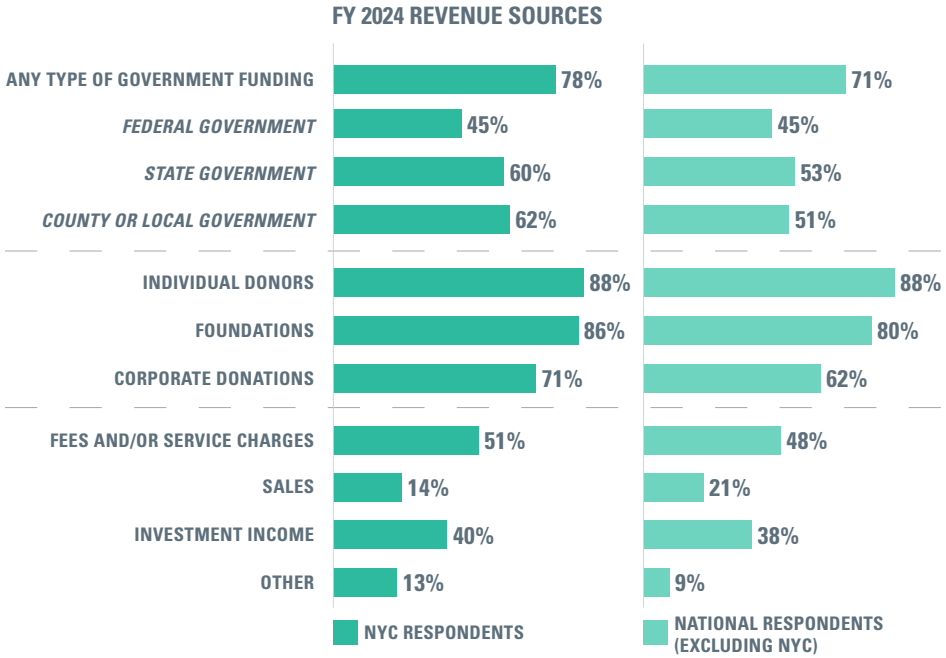
WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

NONPROFIT FUNDING DYNAMICS



Most NYC nonprofits rely on foundation and government funding to operate, and are navigating payment delays and lower funding levels.

More than three-quarters of NYC nonprofits receive funding from individual donors (88%), foundations (86%), and government (78%). A higher percentage of nonprofits in NYC rely on county or local government funding compared to nonprofits nationally.



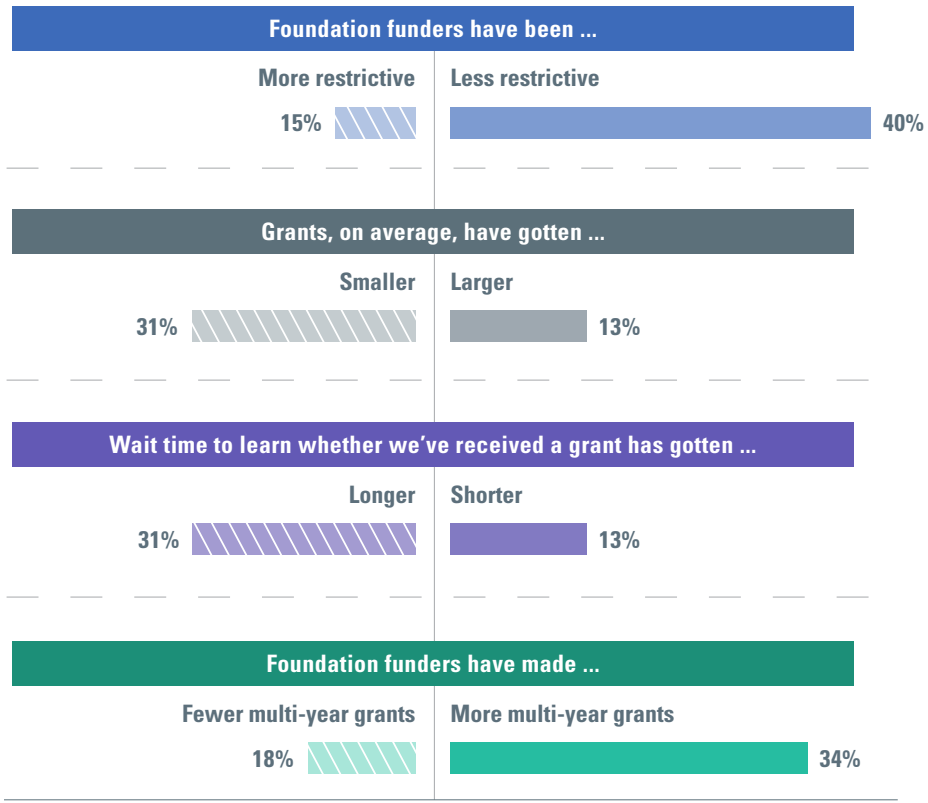
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A CLOSER LOOK AT FOUNDATION FUNDING

Our 2025 survey explored how foundation funding practices have changed since late 2022, to see if supportive funder practices started during the COVID-19 pandemic have continued.

Consistent with national results, many NYC nonprofits shared that funders have gotten less restrictive since late 2022. Among respondents in NYC who received foundation funding in 2024, one-third (34%) said funders are making more multi-year grants, compared to one-quarter (25%) of national respondents. While 31% in NYC shared that grants have, on average, gotten smaller, this is a lower percentage than nationally, where nearly half (49%) of nonprofits reported smaller grant sizes.

CHANGES IN FOUNDATION FUNDING PRACTICES SINCE LATE 2022



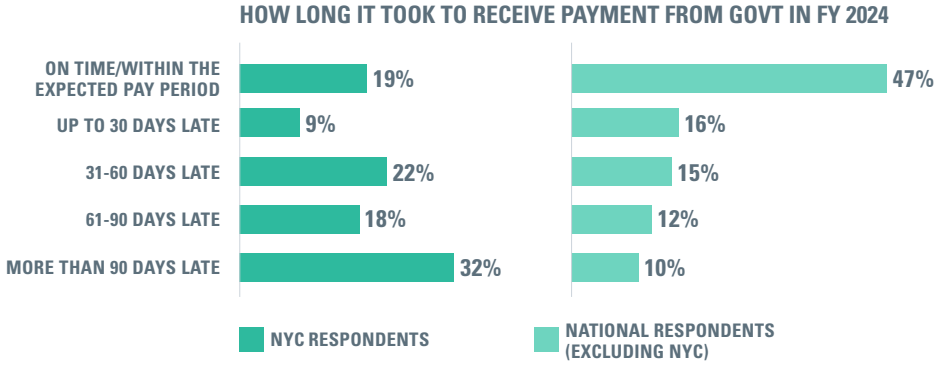
> We are preparing for Federal, State, and City funding to become unavailable. Or much more competitive. We are aware that Foundations may be shifting their funding priorities away from the needs of the constituents we serve. We are working to identify individual donors with deep pockets who can make up some of the difference. We are holding our breath.
>
> Arts/culture survey respondent in New York City



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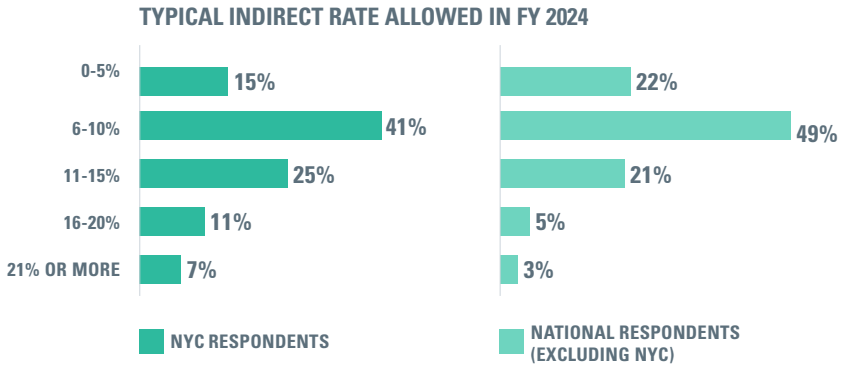
A CLOSER LOOK AT GOVERNMENT FUNDING

NYC respondents with government funding reported significant delays in payment from federal, state, and local government. Only 19% said they are paid on time, compared to 47% of nonprofits nationally. One-third (32%) said they typically receive payment more than 90 days late, compared to 10% of respondents nationally.



Government funding delays have been longstanding and severe across NYC nonprofits, with critical services to New Yorkers hanging in the balance. In 2024, over 90% of the human services contracts that NYC government had with nonprofits were registered late. At most agencies, the first payments to human services providers came an average of 6.5 months after the contract's start date. Our 2025 NYC survey respondents reported taking on debt (45%), delaying payment to vendors (29%), and drawing on their savings (29%) to continue operating amidst delays, with 12% having to pause or reduce services.

NYC nonprofits generally reported a higher average allowable indirect rate than nonprofits nationally. A majority (56%), though, still reported a typical rate of 10% or less, which is acknowledged in October 2024 OMB guidance as insufficient to run a healthy organization.



On top of these challenges with existing government funding, 83% of NYC nonprofits with government funding expect it will decrease as a result of the 2024 election, with 66% expecting it to decrease by more than 10%.



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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

NONPROFIT FINANCIAL HEALTH



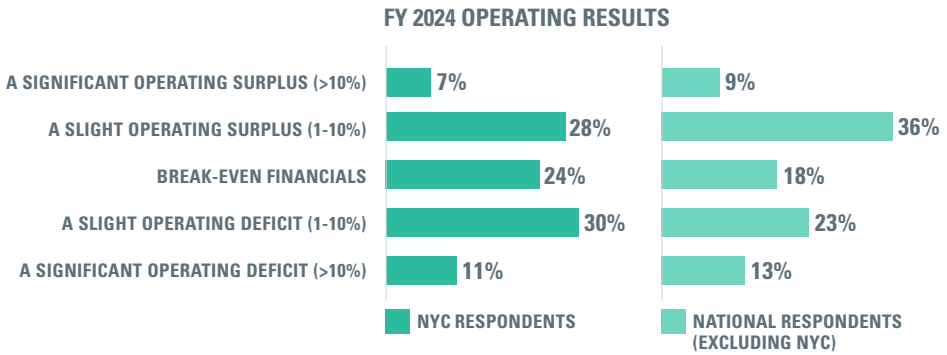
NYC nonprofits entered 2025 with fragile financial health.

Given these funding dynamics, what is the financial state of NYC nonprofits? To understand short- and long-term nonprofit financial health, we look at two main indicators in this survey: operating surplus/deficit and months of cash.

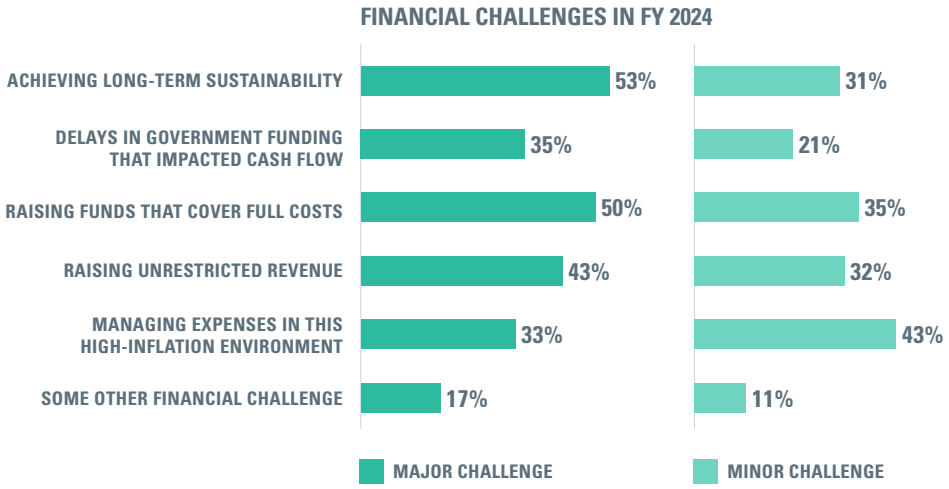
METRIC	WHAT IT MEASURES
Operating Surplus or Deficit	Whether your organization ended the year with more revenue than expenses (surplus) or less (deficit). A surplus supports stability and growth. A deficit limits flexibility, increases risk, and makes it harder to respond to urgent needs or invest in long-term change.
Months of Cash	How long your organization can operate with the cash it has today, assuming no new income. This is a key measure of liquidity. It indicates, for example, how long an organization could keep running if a crisis hit, or how much cash it has available to invest in opportunities.

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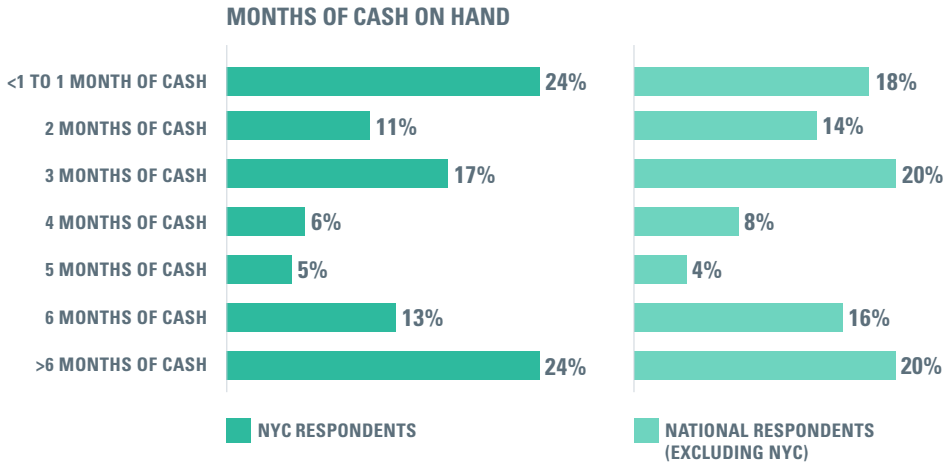
Many local nonprofits are struggling to cover their costs and don't have the cash on hand to manage delays or emergencies, or to make strategic investments. 41% of NYC respondents reported an operating deficit in 2024 – an even higher percentage than reported by nonprofits nationally (36%). In 2025, a greater proportion of nonprofits nationally reported deficits than in the past ten years of our survey data.

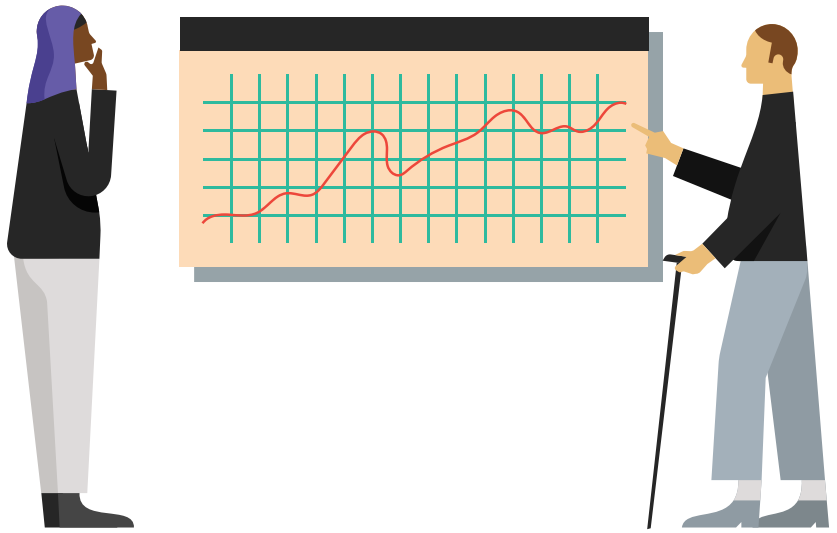


More than 80% of NYC nonprofits reported challenges raising funds that cover full costs and achieving long-term financial sustainability in 2024.



One-quarter (24%) of NYC respondents had one month or less of cash on hand. While 59% reported having reserve funds separate from operating cash on hand, this is a lower percentage than nonprofits nationally, where two-thirds (66%) reported having reserve funds.





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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

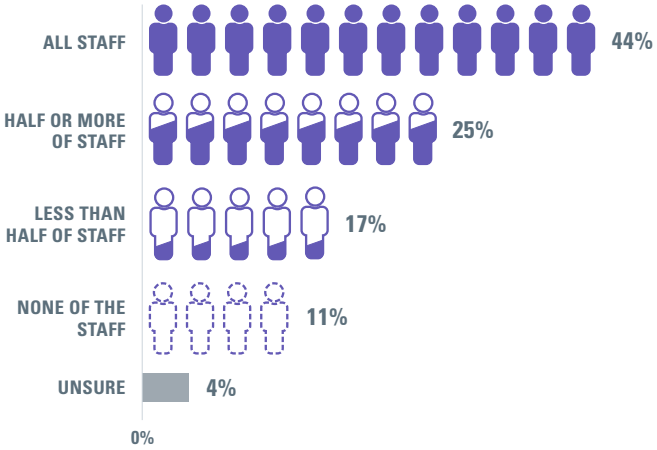
NONPROFIT WORKFORCE DYNAMICS



Investing in a healthy nonprofit workforce is a challenge with the high cost of living in NYC.

80% of respondents in NYC cited the high cost of living as a management challenge, compared with 68% of respondents nationally. For families with two working adults and two children in NYC, each adult must earn more than $35 per hour working full-time to support basic needs like housing, food, and childcare. For a family with one working adult and one child in NYC, the adult must earn more than $50 per hour – over $100,000 per year – to support basic needs.

HOW MUCH OF YOUR FULL-TIME STAFF IS YOUR ORGANIZATION ABLE TO PAY A LIVING WAGE?



Just 44% of NYC nonprofits were able to pay all staff a living wage in 2024. Most offered benefits, including 85% offering paid sick time and paid vacation time, 82% offering health insurance, and 67% offering retirement fund contributions. Consistent with national trends, the ability to pay a living wage and offer benefits was lower for NYC organizations with smaller budgets.

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In addition to high cost of living, most NYC nonprofits are struggling with burnout and employing enough staff.

We recognize that organizing and direct service work can be demanding, and we've taken steps to support staff well-being and prevent burnout. This is reflected in our commitment to work-life balance…robust health benefits, including mental health coverage, and professional development opportunities…Through our union, staff have a voice in shaping workplace policies.

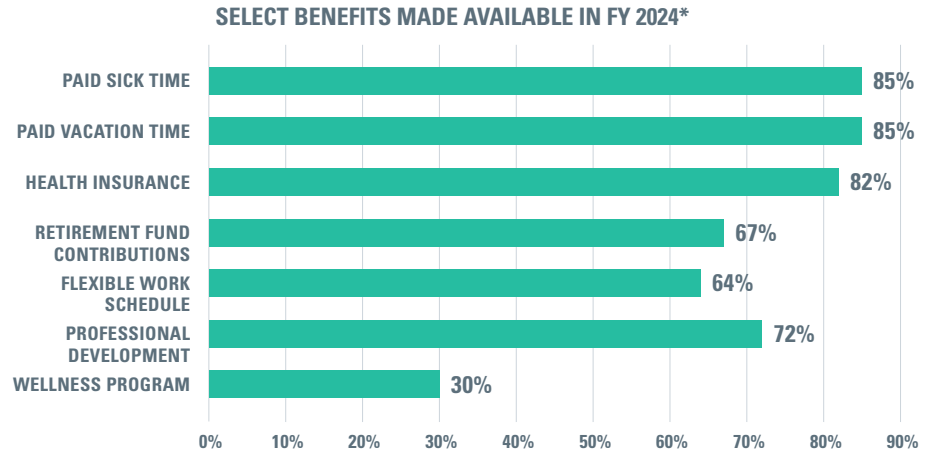
Social justice/civil rights/community organizing survey respondent in New York City

The only way to adequately address staff burnout is higher pay and benefits.

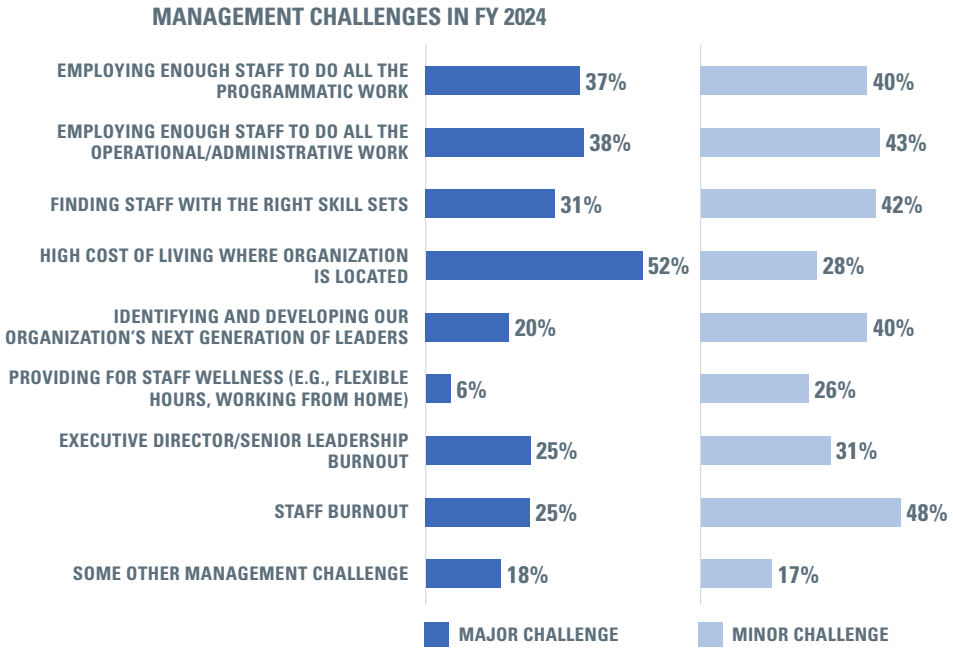
Community development survey respondent in New York City

[We address burnout with] flexible work schedules, work from home, support for wellness, and professional development. The burnout is fear of not raising enough funds to keep everyone employed. That is hard to overcome with an internal policy as foundations close and few are opening that support live performance.

Arts/culture survey respondent in New York City



*Other benefits survey respondents made available in 2024 included: dental insurance, vision insurance, paid family leave above what the state provides, short-term disability, long-term disability, pre-tax account for medical expenses, pre-tax account for dependent care, sabbaticals.



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GETTING THROUGH, AND BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

WHAT WE CAN DO TO EMERGE STRONGER AS A SECTOR



Recommendations from our National State of the Sector Survey Report

From building community wealth and well-being, to responding to urgent needs, to housing, feeding, teaching, and inspiring, to creating jobs for residents – nonprofits are essential infrastructure and the lifeblood of a strong and vibrant New York City. Yet in 2025, as costs climb, funding declines, and demand for services grows, this infrastructure is under strain. How can we all support nonprofits to thrive so that our communities thrive?

The following recommendations for funders and nonprofits come from NFF's National State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey report:

- **Be Creative, Adaptive, and Brave to Meet the Moment**
  - **For funders:** Increase your payout percentage, adapt your standard processes, listen to your grantees and pivot based on what you hear.
  - **For nonprofits:** Assess your current situation, develop budget scenarios, vocalize your story and needs – early and honestly.
- **Acknowledge – and Invest in – What It Truly Takes to Do the Important Mission Work**
  - **For funders:** Fund full costs, give multi-year, flexible funding, invest in workforce well-being and leadership sustainability, elevate the role and essentiality of nonprofits in public narrative.
  - **For nonprofits:** Calculate and advocate for your full costs, and make clear the community impact of dollars invested in your organization.
- **Collaborate as a System**
  - **For funders:** Invest in systems and coalitions, introduce nonprofits to funders and others who can support their work.
  - **For nonprofits:** Build power with your network, share and leverage resources, support each other as leaders.
- **Extend Grace – to Yourself and Others**
  Be compassionate with yourself during this time of heightened stress and fatigue, and focus your incredible energy on supporting your community, your team, and your peers.

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Additional Recommendations for NYC Government

Local government funding plays a huge part in NYC's nonprofit ecosystem, yet bureaucracy surrounding contracting and payments creates an immense burden for nonprofits managing this revenue source. Ultimately, critical services, workforce stability, equity, and the trust of nonprofits and communities are at stake. **Here are additional recommendations for NYC government to recognize nonprofits as businesses with operating needs and to support the nonprofit sector now and into the future:**

- **Move quickly** to clear backlogs in contract registration, invoice processing, and payment, including by providing sufficient staff resources to procurement agencies for contract and invoice processing.
- **Streamline and standardize** forms, contracting processes, and online payment systems and ensure all agencies adopt these changes; provide in-depth technical support to nonprofits navigating the government procurement process.
- **Partner with philanthropy, state government, and the banking community – including mission-driven lenders like CDFIs –** to expand grant and low-cost financing programs to help nonprofits navigate payment delays.
- **Update citywide cost and procurement assumptions** to pay what it truly takes for nonprofits to deliver critical services, keeping up with inflation and local cost of living.

> We are most proud of standing with and supporting our members over the past year, and through some real challenges. Anything we can do to help support them and the impact they are having in the community...is a top priority. We are as strong as we are because we stand together!
>
> Immigration survey respondent in New York City

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nonprofit Finance Fund® (NFF®) is a nonprofit lender, consultant, and advocate. For 45 years, we've helped organizations access the money and resources they need to realize their communities' aspirations. Alongside others, we're working to build community wealth and well-being and put affordable housing, essential services, quality jobs, and excellent education within reach of more people.

The National 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector survey was made possible through the generous support of our sponsors.



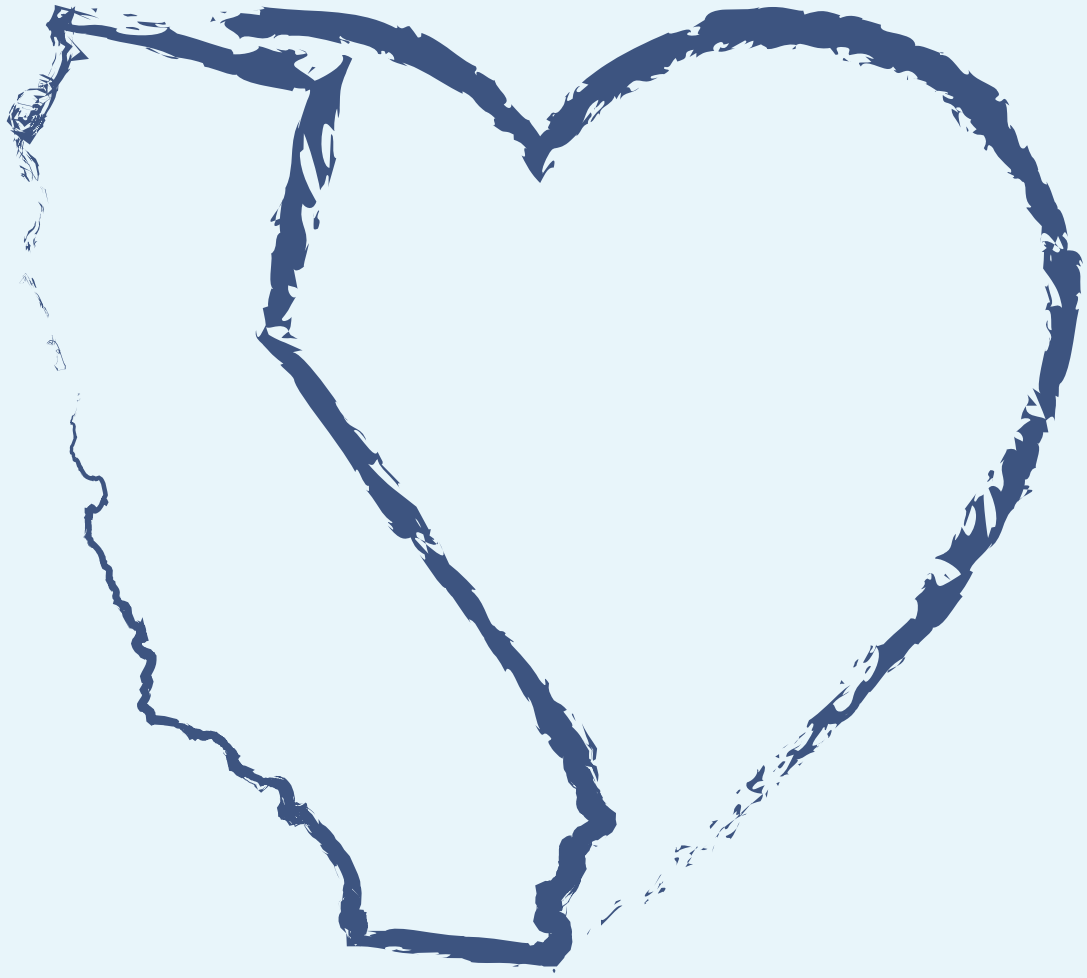
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The Heart of the Sector

How Funders Can Support Nonprofit Worker Well-being

Investing in nonprofit staff + Building thriving communities

Strategies for lasting impact



Nonprofit Finance Fund®

The Heart of the Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofit workers keep communities strong.

They show up every day with commitment, creativity, and deep local knowledge, even as many face financial strain, burnout, and structural barriers that undermine their well-being. When nonprofit workers thrive, organizations deliver stronger programs, and communities benefit. The reverse is also true: When workers are stretched thin, the whole ecosystem feels it. Across all sectors, it is estimated that turnover and lost productivity as a result of burnout costs 15-20% of an organization's payroll on average – costs which ripple into communities.

Through nearly 50 interviews with nonprofit, foundation, and government leaders, and responses from over 500 California nonprofits in Nonprofit Finance Fund's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey, we heard a clear message: Worker well-being is mission critical. As one nonprofit leader summed up:

> "Worker well-being is community well-being. When our staff are taken care of, our community is taken care of."

Organizations want to invest in their people and many are doing so in innovative ways. But they can't do it alone; improving nonprofit worker well-being is a collective effort. Funders – public and private – have a powerful role to play in removing constraints and fueling solutions. This report lifts up what nonprofits and funders shared with us, homing in on the promising practices already underway and the concrete ways funders can strengthen the nonprofit workforce, and in turn, the communities they serve.

This summary report was developed as part of a larger project on the state of nonprofit worker well-being in California. Although our research focused on one state, we believe the learnings and insights are widely applicable across the United States.

For more information and to read our detailed report, please visit nff.org/insights/worker-well-being.

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Defining Worker Well-being

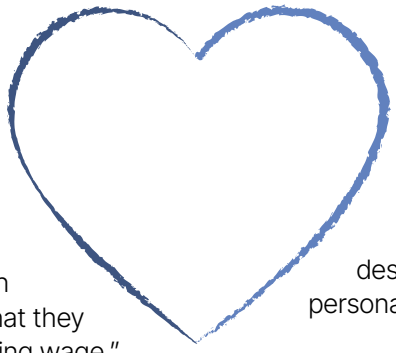
Worker well-being does not have a single definition; it can mean different things to different people, depending on their experiences and the nature of their work. Across interviews, leaders described worker well-being in ways that were practical, actionable, and deeply personal. While definitions varied, two themes repeatedly emerged: **the need for economic security and the ability to thrive professionally and personally.**

Economic Security

The ability to meet basic financial needs – pay the rent, cover healthcare costs, afford childcare – is foundational to an individual's well-being. Yet in our 2025 Survey, more than half (54%) of California nonprofits reported that they are unable to pay all full-time staff even a "living wage," the minimum income needed for a full-time worker to cover necessities for themself and their family. And even a living wage is a floor: true economic security is not just about having the resources to meet basic needs, but also about comfort, enrichment, and stability – having funds to pay for unexpected costs, invest in self-care and growth, and save for the future.

Leaders spoke about the importance of fair compensation – often above and beyond a living wage – and its strong connection to well-being, but the constraints of existing funding structures often don't allow for it. We heard a similar tension regarding benefits: Workers need health insurance that meets their needs, paid time off without guilt, and mental health services that acknowledge the emotional toll of nonprofit work – but there are often limited resources to provide these for staff. While economic security alone does not equate to well-being, without it, well-being can be elusive.

> "Individual wellness [programs] will impact your ability to show up and do the work, [but they have] to be coupled with actual shifts in people's material conditions."
>
> —Nonprofit leader



Thriving Personally and Professionally

Beyond economic security, leaders described well-being as the ability to thrive personally and professionally, encompassing:

- Having a connection to the mission, and finding meaning and value in their work and contribution to the organization and/or community.
- Feeling agency and autonomy over their work.
- Showing up as their "full self" at work, unafraid of any negative treatment or judgement.
- Having a positive relationship with their colleagues and manager.

These components of worker well-being may seem more abstract and subjective than the more easily quantified facets of economic security, but they are reflected often in national research on job quality. Workers want to feel trusted, seen, and like their work matters, within a workplace that treats them as whole people.

> "Well-being means that people want to work at the organization and identify with [its] mission and values. … The care that you bring to delivery of your mission is the same care that you bring to folks in your organization."
>
> —Nonprofit leader

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Dynamics Shaping Worker Well-being in the Nonprofit Sector: What Makes It So Hard?

Nonprofit worker well-being is shaped by the interconnected systems nonprofits operate within and the dynamics they navigate daily:



Funding that doesn't cover full cost. Grants and contracts tend not to cover the full cost of what it actually takes to deliver services. To fill the gap, organizations may keep wages low, stretch staff capacity, and delay investments in critical infrastructure. When the system is underfunded by design, difficult tradeoffs arise between supporting staff and keeping the doors open.



Persistent narratives that undervalue nonprofit work. A common, long-standing myth among both funders and organizations is that nonprofit workers should accept low pay and long hours because the work is "meaningful." While mission alignment does motivate many people to enter the sector, it alone doesn't pay the bills or prevent burnout.



Emotionally demanding and high-stakes work. Many nonprofit jobs involve high emotional labor, exposure to past and vicarious trauma, and long timelines for positive impact. While staff are often deeply connected to the mission – and many have lived experience in the communities they serve – this can make it hard to set boundaries within the work and for organizations to truly support health, stability, and healing.

Worker well-being is more than an individual or organizational issue; it's a systems issue. Supporting it means funding the full cost of services, allowing flexibility in how money is used, and truly recognizing workers as essential to community impact, not separate from it.

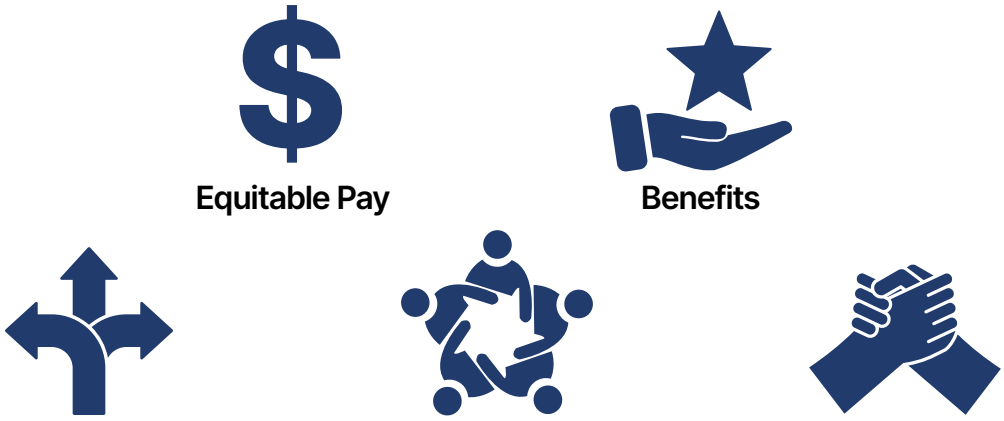
> "Particularly in the kind of work that we do, there is such a personal connection and tie to the work and the outcome of the work. We don't have deliverables like a bottom line; the outcome is a child's life, literally life and death."
>
> —Nonprofit leader

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Promising Practices Nonprofits Are Implementing to Improve Worker Well-being

Just as there is no single definition of worker well-being, there is no one formula for how organizations can support worker well-being. While there are some concrete benchmarks, especially around wages and benefits coverage, how an organization invests in worker well-being should be tailored to the needs of their workforce. And the path to get there will look different for each nonprofit.

There are many nonprofits leading the way, making a commitment to improving worker well-being, implementing responsive and creative efforts, and seeing tangible outcomes for their workers and the communities they serve. In this section, we highlight five promising practices nonprofits are enacting that emerged in our discussions with leaders. While these practices may not be right for all organizations and do not come without challenges to initiate and implement, they are examples of what's possible when nonprofits and funders recognize the well-being of the workforce as essential to mission. The five examples we will highlight are:



The nonprofit leaders we spoke with shared how these examples led to increased retention, fewer absences, more productive employees, and a happier, healthier team. This in turn fueled stability, improvements, and/or growth in their programs, and ultimately enhanced services and access for the community. Across these examples, one thing is clear:

Improving worker well-being is about making intentional, sustained investments in the people who make positive community impact possible.

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Equitable Pay

Increasing pay is typically prioritized by nonprofit leaders as the key lever they can use to address the interrelated issues of worker well-being and burnout, and staff attraction and retention. Intertwined with the issue of increasing pay is equitable pay. Leaders described equitable pay as:

- Pay that ensures workers at all levels earn at least a living wage, with a path to moving beyond that.
- Compensation practices that reflect a clear and transparent pay structure that values all worker roles.

Examples of equitable pay strategies from our research include:

- **Benchmarking:** Implementing across-the-board raises after benchmarking to industry standards, or setting the goal of all staff earning at or above industry median wage.
- **Internal pay equity:** Prioritizing raises for lower-paid employees; setting salary ratios (e.g., the highest salary in an organization is no more than 4x the lowest salary).
- **Salary floors:** Establishing a minimum salary for any role in the organization, at or above a living wage.
- **Tenure pay:** Automatically increasing salaries with each year of tenure to recognize and reward employees' ongoing service to the organization.

> "The work that we do – centering lived experience over a college degree – we've continued to try to advance equitable compensation, which contributes to well-being significantly. Cost of living is always scaling up, and unfortunately in the nonprofit sector, folks don't fund people, they fund the work. We try to be clear that pay equity is an organizational value, and not determined on budget. Our work on that doesn't stop. Folks get really uncomfortable talking about money. … I would love if people talked more about money. Without talking about it, it's hard to advocate for more and better."
>
> —Nonprofit Leader

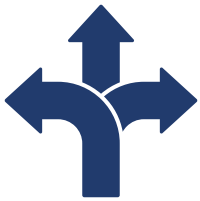
Benefits

Leaders consistently pointed to a core set of benefits as essential for all organizations: health insurance, disability insurance, and paid sick and vacation time. Beyond these, our research elevated numerous other supports that further worker well-being for those at different life stages or with different household needs. Examples include:

- **Full coverage of insurance premiums.**
- **A choice of healthcare plans.**
- **Caregiver assistance**, including stipends to cover costs of care, adoption, and paid leave.
- **Transportation stipends.**
- **Professional development and coaching**, shaped by staff, with flexibility in how funding can be used.
- **Employee hardship funds for emergencies.**
- **Mental health services**, availability of on-site therapy, insurance that covers mental health services, and/or private rooms for therapy or other self-care activities.
- **Time off for wellness**, including regular "wellness" days that everyone takes.
- **Sabbaticals.**

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Flexible Work Schedules and Locations



The COVID-19 pandemic changed the world in many ways, including how and where people work. What started as a necessary response to health and safety restrictions has become a key way organizations are positively impacting the day-to-day experience of work. Research shows that the flexibility of remote work is the top reason social impact employees stay in their jobs – cited even more frequently than mission alignment, a supportive work environment, and adequate pay/benefits. Nonprofits are implementing other flexibility strategies as well, such as the four-day work week, in which employees work four days a week instead of the conventional five for the same pay and with the same workload.

"We eased into a four-day work week over six months' time. We asked [ourselves], 'What makes this possible and successful for our team?' ... We were constantly checking in on how it's going as we were implementing: What is working? What is challenging?"

—Nonprofit Leader

Collaborative Leadership and Decision-Making



No matter where they work or how much they earn, workers want to feel that they can effect change in their workplace and job. In nonprofits, this may be even more pronounced: Workers want a real voice in shaping their organization's direction. In recent years, there's been movement away from traditional workplace hierarchies and top-down decision-making. One strategy for increasing worker involvement in organizational decisions is the creation of formal internal structures that distribute decision-making power across a broad, representative swath of staff. From what we saw, these types of structures are typically focused on a particular aspect of organizational operations, for example, budgeting. The involvement of staff from all levels is key, as is the inclusion of staff from all functional areas of the organization – not just those whose roles are directly connected to the committee's focus.

"We have a commitment that all of our decisions are made by the people who are impacted by them. So all staff-impacting decisions are discussed with the full team."

—Nonprofit leader

Nonprofit Staff Unionization



A union is a formal way for workers to share power and shape workplace decisions. Unionized workers tend to have higher wages, more benefits, paid leave, and control over their schedules, and use fewer public benefits than their non-unionized peers. Unionized workplaces have fewer occupational fatalities and smaller internal gender and racial wealth gaps than non-unionized ones. The issue of unionization in nonprofits is increasingly visible, and drawing interest from workers, leaders, and funders, even while only a small number of nonprofits are unionized. Unionization comes with its own challenges and may not be right or possible for all nonprofits. But as more nonprofits explore the approach, it can raise overall expectations and standards across the sector, and – even for non-unionized organizations – the model can offer important practices and ideas for supporting well-being.

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How Funders Can Support Improved Nonprofit Worker Well-being

Most nonprofits operate with constraints such as limited budgets and restricted funding. While there are promising ways organizations are supporting well-being without new dollars, funding often plays a critical and decisive role. How nonprofits are funded can either enable or limit their ability to pay equitably, offer benefits, and create healthy and sustainable work environments.

This section outlines practical ways philanthropic funders can support worker well-being, including both financial and non-financial tactics, taking into consideration multiple levers funders may be able to access. Examples we highlight include:



Starting the Conversation



Grantmaking Strategy



Well-being Programming and Initiatives



Research



Learning and Advocacy

Our goal is not to suggest a single approach, but to encourage funders to take intentional steps – even seemingly small ones – to strengthen the nonprofit workforce serving the communities they care about.

Starting the Conversation



One of the simplest things funders can do is ask grantees about how their staff are doing. This can be a powerful signal that funders understand the connection between a healthy workforce and mission impact, and can open doors for leaders to invest in their staff.

In light of the power imbalance in funder-grantee relationships, it's especially important for funders to initiate these types of conversations rather than waiting for nonprofits to raise them. These conversations can help grantees to understand that funding can go toward worker well-being and doesn't automatically mean an expectation to expand the work.

> "We've made it a point to ask, 'What is the organization doing to advance wellness and sustainability?' People appreciate that we ask about it. The general operating support that we provide doesn't have to be used on wellness, but the conversation allows them to think about and be more intentional about how they use unrestricted dollars."
>
> —Foundation leader

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Grantmaking Strategy



The good news is that philanthropy already has a key tool for supporting worker well-being: grants. Prioritizing well-being does not always require bigger grants – although it certainly can – but it does require intentionality and thoughtfulness about how funding is structured. Funders can provide:

Full cost funding

Full cost funding allows organizations to cover all of their programmatic and operational expenses, build reserves, and plan for future change. In some cases, this means bigger grants. When that is not feasible, funders can also adjust expectations of what is realistic with their existing support. Organizations may also need support in figuring out their full costs, amid a system that has conditioned them to undervalue their work and conform with arbitrary and outdated standards about minimizing compensation and overhead.

Multiyear and unrestricted funding

Multiyear and unrestricted funding give leaders the flexibility to decide how they best invest in their staff and plan for the future, while reducing some of the pressure of annual fundraising. Even when unrestricted funding isn't possible, funders can look for ways to offer greater flexibility and make their funding "unrestricted-like" – for example, by allowing generous overhead and reducing rigidity around budget line items.

> "Unrestricted funding is the best strategy; it allows us to maximize funds, to have the most impact, and to take care of our workforce who is moving the work forward. I was able to build relationships and have direct conversations with funders about having a more trust-based approach, including the need to move toward multiyear, unrestricted funding. I was able to get some funders to transition program restricted funds to unrestricted funds. This allows us to be nimble and pivot when the time calls for it."
>
> —Nonprofit leader

One-time or supplementary grants

Additionally, funders can provide one-time or supplemental funding alongside a grantee's core grant for well-being initiatives or investments identified by the grantee. This supplemental funding should come with choice and flexibility in how grantees use it to support their workforce, based on staff needs and priorities. When provided on top of core support, these grants allow nonprofit leaders to not have to make trade-offs between worker well-being and other critical organizational needs. Staff Operating Support grants have emerged as one tool for funders to flexibly invest in the well-being of nonprofit staff.

> "It can be hard for nonprofits to use the general operating support for self-care or worker well-being; it's in the DNA of the nonprofit mentality that staff sacrifice – and suffer. I often make an [unrestricted grant] that I know they will use for programs, and another small grant that is for worker well-being. Even if I encourage them to use the [unrestricted grant] for well-being, it's hard for them to do that. That second grant feels like 'permission' to them to use it to invest in their staff."
>
> —Foundation leader

Grantmaking Strategy in Action

Examples of foundations providing flexible and/or long-term support include The California Endowment and The California Wellness Foundation through their general operating support grants, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund through the Endeavor Fund and WE Initiative, and The James Irvine Foundation through the Better Careers Initiative.

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Well-being Programming and Initiatives

In addition to direct grantmaking, a number of foundations are investing – individually and collectively – in nonprofit worker well-being through dedicated programs and special initiatives focused on well-being. These efforts provide resources or supplemental support that organizations might not be able to provide on their own. And they often have the added benefit of creating connections and shared learning between staff from different organizations. Examples we heard include:

- **Sabbatical programs**, which provide financial support for nonprofit leaders to step away from work, contributing to organizational sustainability by reducing burnout and providing a chance for other team members to step into leadership roles while their colleagues are on sabbatical.
- **Cohort-based initiatives**, which bring staff from multiple organizations together for well-being programming and/or provide space for collective reflection, professional development, and rest.
- **Support for professional development**, which contributes to individual growth and job satisfaction over the long-term.

Funding Rest, Connections, and Professional Development

Several California funders offer sabbatical programs, leadership fellowships, and professional development opportunities that prioritize worker well-being and organizational sustainability. These programs are often flexible, trust-based, and designed to strengthen both individuals and their organizations.

Examples include sabbatical programs offered by The California Wellness Foundation and The Durfee Foundation, The John W. Mack Movement Building Fellowship funded by The Weingart Foundation, and The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation's funding of leaders to participate in executive learning and professional development programs.

> "You can't get at the impact of what happens when you invest in well-being without these real-world examples. People don't hear these stories very often, and ... [the value of well-being efforts] can be such a squishy thing. Funders are often all about return on investment and that's hard to measure [in this space]. Case studies can help demonstrate how the squishy, invisible stuff elevates the work and the organizations."
>
> —Foundation leader

Research

Another important role for funders is supporting research related to worker well-being. In general, the nonprofit field is understudied and suffers from a lack of data that limits our understanding of how workers are doing, and what works when it comes to improving well-being in the nonprofit context over time. This is especially important given the resource constraints of the field; better data can help both funders and nonprofits target their investments in worker well-being on efforts that will have the greatest impact.

Opportunities for funder support include:

- Case studies of effective practices that organizations have employed to improve worker well-being.
- Research and resources related to nonprofit unionization.
- Longitudinal studies of worker well-being, including how to create effective paths for career advancement.

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Learning and Advocacy

Funders can also support worker well-being by creating spaces for learning, sharing, and advocacy. When foundations create platforms for nonprofits to speak candidly about their experiences supporting their staff, it reinforces for the field that worker well-being matters and has a place within funder-nonprofit relationships. Convening is also a way for both nonprofits and funders to amplify their work and promising practices, and to catalyze additional investment in worker well-being.

Funders can also advance nonprofit worker well-being by supporting public education and advocacy campaigns that highlight the essentiality of nonprofits and call for needed changes in the policy and public funding landscape to address endemic challenges in the sector, such as delayed reimbursements and funding that does not cover full costs.

Raising the Profile of the Nonprofit Sector through Public Campaigns

Several recent campaigns highlight the importance of the nonprofit sector and call attention to the structural challenges that impact both organizational health and worker well-being.

In October 2025, Trinity Church Wall Street launched the #TheHeartofNY campaign to bring attention to the issues of underfunding and delayed payments to nonprofits in New York City. The campaign features portraits of nonprofit workers and emphasizes that "nonprofits are the heart of NY" and that "when nonprofits struggle, essential programs vanish and the burden falls hardest on low-income communities, immigrants, and people of color."







The Nonprofits Get It Done campaign, sponsored by the National Council of Nonprofits, urges advocacy around proposed changes to the charitable tax code, federal funding, and regulatory frameworks for nonprofits, describing nonprofits as "neighbors helping neighbors" and providing "urgent, even life-saving services where government and business can't."

Campaigns like these elevate the roles of nonprofits and help to connect nonprofit worker well-being to community well-being, and are key to countering longstanding and damaging narratives about the nonprofit sector. But they don't happen for free; rather, they require dedicated resources to both seed and sustain.

Other Practical Ways Funders Can Support Worker Well-being

There are a number of relatively low-cost, high-impact tactics funders are employing to help nonprofits address worker well-being, including:

- **Streamlining or reducing reporting requirements** – for example, allowing grantees to only submit updated budgets in the case of grant renewals or to use reports created for other funders.
- Instituting **automatic cost-of-living adjustments** in grants or other across-the-board increases that address the impact of inflation.
- Providing **grants to cover gaps in public funding**, making workers "whole" for the work they are already delivering.
- **Talking with grantees** about how salaries compare to local living wages.
- **Offering stipends** for mental health or other wellness needs.

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Moving Forward

Improving worker well-being is complex work.

Meaningful change takes time, money, and an ongoing commitment to dialogue and partnership, both within organizations and between nonprofits and their funders. It is not something that individual nonprofits or funders can fully address alone. Rather, sustained investment in worker well-being calls for greater collaboration across the entire nonprofit ecosystem.

With this report, we hope to give a sense of what is possible when worker well-being is treated as central to – not separate from – nonprofit missions and community impact. Change starts with the recognition that the well-being of nonprofit workers is inseparable from the well-being of the communities they serve – even more so given that many nonprofit workers come from the communities they serve – and it is carried forward through strong leadership, dedicated resources, trust, and collaboration. By taking practical steps, including actions highlighted in this report, together nonprofits and funders can strengthen the nonprofit workforce, and with it, the communities they are dedicated to serving.

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Acknowledgements

This work was supported generously by the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, in alignment with the foundation's focus on community well-being and its idea that nonprofit workers are a key pillar of a community's "social immune system," and The James Irvine Foundation, whose mission is to ensure that low-income workers in the state of California have the power to achieve economic advancement.

NFF is deeply grateful to the 47 nonprofit, foundation, and government leaders; researchers; and consultants we spoke to as part of this project who generously shared their insights, experiences, and recommendations investing in and supporting nonprofit worker well-being. Thanks as well to the 506 California-based respondents to NFF's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey.

Please visit nff.org to learn more about this work and read our detailed research report.

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About NFF

Nonprofit Finance Fund® (NFF®) is a nonprofit lender, consultant, and advocate. Since 1980, we've helped organizations access the money and resources they need to realize their communities' aspirations. Alongside others, we're working to build community wealth and well-being and put affordable housing, essential services, quality jobs, and excellent education within reach of more people.

NFF's research advances knowledge of key issues facing the social sector. Find all our reports, including our State of the Sector Survey on nff.org.

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Date: June 8, 2026
Testimony by Leana Pardo on behalf of NBCAFV

This letter serves as a testimony from North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence (NBCAFV) to the Committees on Public Safety and Health and Mental Health. Our mission at NBCAFV is to combat systemic racism, institutional injustice, and cultural barriers that survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault face. We aim to build a community-based support network, provide vital services, and engage in outreach, education, advocacy, and activism.

NBCAFV is also proud to be a member of the Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI), a collaborative effort led by the City Council to support survivor services across New York City.

Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI)
The Sexual Assault Initiative is comprised of five New York City-based programs: Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC), Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), Mount Sinai's Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI), New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance), and North Brooklyn Coalition Against Family Violence. Together, we provide support to thousands of survivors annually across all five boroughs.

The people we serve are survivors of various forms of sexual violence, including rape, attempted rape, unwanted sexual contact, child sexual abuse, drug/alcohol-facilitated assault, stalking, sex trafficking, and cyber-based sexual violence. These issues disproportionately impact marginalized communities. The Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI) network of advocates, counselors, and other professionals works diligently to support survivors, helping them heal from both recent trauma and long-term effects of past violence. In addition, we are committed to primary and secondary prevention efforts to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and drive systemic change to better support survivors.

Despite the progress we have made, the demand for our services continues to rise, and we are struggling to meet this increasing need. As a result, we are requesting an enhancement of funding to $2.5 million to continue providing the level of support that survivors need and deserve.

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Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

Should you require any further information or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Leana Pardo, at 718-302-4073 during business hours (9am - 5pm, Monday through Friday).

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Leana Pardo

Leana Pardo

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY
New York City Council
Committee on Health
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
June 5, 2026

Paula Magnus, President
Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good morning, Chairpersons Schulman and Lee, and members of the Committees.

Mayor Mamdani's first Executive Budget follows New York State's major new investments in mental health and early childhood. Those commitments flow through community-based providers. We appear today to report what we see on the ground.

My name is Paula Magnus, and I am President of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc. Founded in Harlem in 1946, Northside serves over 6,500 children and families across Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. As a New York State licensed Article 31 outpatient mental health clinic, we deliver therapy to children from birth through age 21, the majority from low-income communities of color. Our programs include our main clinic in East Harlem, mental health services embedded in 23 New York City public schools, a Therapeutic Early Childhood Center serving 72 children, and three Head Start/Early Head Start sites serving 181 children. Every child in those programs receives clinical services from Northside staff. We also operate a Home-Based Crisis Intervention program, court-involved youth services, preventive family services, and educational supports including tutoring, after-school, and summer programming.

This testimony addresses the funding shortfall between what DOHMH community-based mental health contracts reimburse and the true cost of delivering those services. That shortfall appears across three DOHMH-funded programs Northside operates:

- Home-Based Crisis Intervention
- Perinatal and early childhood mental health
- Children Under Five and Court-Involved Youth mental health programs

The Council has the authority to address this funding shortfall for all DOHMH providers delivering these services in the FY 2027 adopted budget.

The Core Problem

New York City is home to 57.8 percent of the state's Medicaid enrollees, who, by definition, are low income.[1] Because most children receiving publicly funded mental health services in New York are covered through Medicaid, the City bears the largest share of the state's community mental health need.

While the Mayor's FY 2027 Executive Budget commits $40 million to increase rates for child care and K-12 providers,[2] community-based mental health providers under

DOHMH contracts need a similar funding increase, but the Mayor's budget did not fund it. As such, clinical positions will stay vacant because contract revenue cannot support competitive salaries and experienced clinicians will leave for better-paying jobs. I note that since 2020, New York City CPI has risen 20 to 25 percent.[4] Municipal unions received cumulative raises exceeding 16 percent over that period. Nonprofit providers contracted with DOHMH received less than half the raises of municipal workers over five years.[5] Inflation-adjusted wages for the clinical workforce have declined.[5,6] The Council's own Mental Health Road Map identifies the result: a clinical workforce crisis, with some sectors reporting 30 to 40 percent vacancy rates post-COVID.[3] Through April 30, 2026, Northside carries a combined unreimbursed cost of $250,637 across four DOHMH-funded programs: Home-Based Crisis Intervention ($12,968), ECMH Perinatal ($188,413), ECMH Expansion ($28,652), and Community Mental Health ($20,604). That figure is not a fundraising success story. It is the size of the public subsidy New York City's children are depending on Northside donors to cover.

Three Programs Illustrating the Gap

Home-Based Crisis Intervention

This DOHMH-funded program delivers intensive in-home services to families when a child is at immediate risk of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. In FY 2026, Northside served 66 families through this program year to date. Of those, only 3 required inpatient hospitalization. Through April 30, 2026, the gap between true delivery cost and the DOHMH contract reimbursement is $12,968, covered by private donors rather than public funds. The Council has the authority to direct DOHMH to close that gap in FY 2027.

Perinatal and Early Childhood Mental Health

This DOHMH-funded program reaches families before problems escalate. In FY 2026, Northside served 181 children and families through this program in East Harlem and the Bronx. Through April 30, 2026, the combined gap across ECMH Perinatal and ECMH Expansion is $217,065: ECMH Perinatal ($188,413) and ECMH Expansion ($28,652).

The years from birth through five are when untreated trauma and developmental disruption carry the longest downstream consequences.[9] A provider whose contract rate falls short of true delivery cost cannot hire or retain the clinicians those children need.

Children Under Five and Court-Involved Youth

The Council's own Mental Health Road Map identifies the Children Under Five Initiative as a Council priority, documenting that base DOHMH contract rates do not reach every population in need.[3] 181 children across Northside's three Head Start/Early Head Start sites in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx receive clinical mental health services because the Council funds them. Every family qualifies for free and reduced lunch. The services are embedded in the Head Start settings where those families already are, removing the access barrier that keeps low-income families from traditional clinic settings. Through April 30, 2026, the gap between true delivery cost and reimbursement under Northside's Children Under Five and Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative contract is $20,604, covered by private donors rather than public funds.

The same logic applies to court-involved youth. Clinical engagement is a proven protective factor against reincarceration. The City spends $507,000 per person incarcerated annually.[8] Community-based mental health services cost a fraction of that. In FY 2026, Northside served 37 court-involved youth through this program year to date.

Recommendations

Northside recommends the following:

- Direct DOHMH to implement a meaningful cost-of-living adjustment for all community-based mental health contracts in FY 2027 that begins closing the gap between reimbursement and true delivery cost.
- Direct DOHMH to protect FY 2027 funding for perinatal and early childhood mental health services at levels that reflect true delivery costs.
- Direct DOHMH to set Home-Based Crisis Intervention contract rates at the true cost of delivery. Northside's current contract carries an unreimbursed cost of $12,968 through April 30, 2026, a gap covered by private donors rather than public funds.
- Direct DOHMH to report annually on clinical vacancy rates across its contracted provider networks and develop a funded workforce pipeline strategy.

The children in these programs are zero to five years old, or they are seventeen and trying not to return to Rikers. Their clinicians are funded by private donors because contracts fall short. The Council has both the authority and the responsibility to fix this structural failure in the FY 2027 budget.

Thank you.

Paula Magnus
President
Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.
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www.northsidecenter.org

Notes

[1] New York State Office of the Comptroller, Medicaid: Federal Funding and New York, citing February 2025 enrollment data. https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/budget/fed-funding-ny/medicaid

[2] City of New York, FY 2027 Executive Budget Summary, Mayor's Office of Management and Budget, May 2026. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/exec26/sum5-26.pdf

[3] New York City Council, Mental Health Road Map, Mental Health Workforce Shortage section. https://council.nyc.gov/mental-health-road-map/

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[6] JustPay NYC Campaign, Facts & Research, citing BLS Employment Cost Index data. https://www.justpayny.org/facts-and-research

[7] Center for New York City Affairs, The Road to and from Salary Parity in New York City, January 2020. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5e222c2ab457e7527ddc6450/1579297836053/SalaryParity_Parrott_Jan2020_Jan17.pdf

[8] NYC Office of the Comptroller, $507,000 per person incarcerated figure, July 2024. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/

[9] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Administration for Children's Services
and Department of Youth and Community Development
May 28, 2026

Paula Magnus, President
Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good morning, Chairpersons and members of the Committees.

We are grateful for the opportunity to testify today on the FY 2027 Executive Budget proposals for the Administration for Children's Services and the Department of Youth and Community Development. At a combined proposed allocation of approximately $4.6 billion within an overall city budget of $124.7 billion,[1] these agencies determine the strength of services for our city's most vulnerable children and families. This is Mayor Mamdani's first Executive Budget, and we see it as an important opportunity to lock in durable commitments to children's mental health and youth development from the outset of this administration.

My name is Paula Magnus, and I am President of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc. Founded in Harlem in 1946, Northside serves over 5,500 children and families across Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. As a New York State licensed Article 31 outpatient mental health clinic, we deliver therapy to children from birth through age 21, the majority from low-income communities of color. Our programs include an East Harlem clinic, mental health services embedded in 23 New York City public schools, a Therapeutic Early Childhood Center, and three Head Start/Early Head Start sites serving 253 children. Every child in those programs receives clinical services from Northside staff. We also operate a Home-Based Crisis Intervention program, court-involved youth services, preventive family services, and educational supports including tutoring, after-school, and summer programming.

This testimony addresses two things: a specific funding gap in our ACS-contracted Family Connections preventive services program, and the rate and workforce pressures Northside faces under contracts with both agencies. Funding decisions made in a first budget tend to get baselined, and that makes FY 2027 the right time to lock in commitments that will serve children for years to come.

Administration for Children's Services

Family Connections: Prevention That Pays for Itself.

Northside's Family Connections program, funded by the Administration for Children's Services, serves families facing domestic violence, substance abuse, and neglect. It works. Families stay together. Children who would otherwise enter foster care do not.

Paula: there are two ways to present the dollar shortfall below. Please pick one option and delete the other.

OPTION A

Northside's Family Connections program is funded on a per-slot basis at a contracted capacity of 72 slots. The ACS contract reimburses approximately $23,818 per slot annually against a true delivery cost of approximately $24,715 per slot, a gap of $897 per slot that multiplies across 72 slots to a documented annual shortfall of $64,559 that Northside absorbs through private fundraising.

OPTION B

Northside's Family Connections program serves 72 slots of contracted capacity. ACS reimbursement falls short of true delivery costs by $64,559 annually, a gap Northside absorbs through private fundraising.

Of the cases Northside closed in the most recently tracked period, not one child entered foster care within six months of completing the program. A program that prevents foster care placements is being partially subsidized by Northside donors. The Council can correct that.

Department of Youth and Community Development

The New York City Comptroller's April 2025 report, Nonprofit, Nonpayment, documents that 90.72 percent of human services contracts in FY 2024 were registered late, and that the median time from procurement to registration was 355 days.[2] Northside routinely begins delivering services months before a contract is executed or a first payment is received. That is not a Northside problem. It is a structural problem that the Council has the authority to fix by directing both ACS and DYCD to shorten execution timelines and establish advance payments as a standard feature for providers with strong performance histories.

The City spends $507,000 per person incarcerated annually.[3] Employment is a proven clinical protective factor for justice-involved youth. We recommend the Council create a formal pipeline from court-involved youth into SYEP placements.

Systemic Barriers Facing Providers and the Clinical Workforce

ACS and DYCD contract rates have fallen so far behind actual costs that providers across the sector can no longer sustain a licensed clinical workforce. Since 2020, New York City CPI has risen 20 to 25 percent.[4] Municipal unions received cumulative raises exceeding 16 percent over that period. ACS and DYCD contracted providers received 7.3 percent, less than half.[5] Inflation-adjusted wages in health and social services have declined approximately 4 percent in real terms.[6] Northside currently covers the gap with approximately $300,000 in private philanthropic revenue across our ACS and DYCD contracts combined. The Council has the authority to require that FY 2027 contracts reflect what the work actually costs.

The workforce gap is equally documented. Across New York City's human services sector, organizations are reporting vacancy rates of 30 to 40 percent, in some cases higher.[7] Human services workers with postgraduate degrees earn 37 percent less than the private sector median and 29 percent less than the public sector median for their education level.[8] These are not abstract statistics. They mean children wait longer for therapists.

Conclusion

The Council has the tools to make that possible for the next generation.

Northside recommends the following:

- Bring contract reimbursement rates for Family Connections in line with actual delivery costs, closing the documented $64,559 annual shortfall that Northside and providers like us are currently absorbing through private fundraising.
- Require a meaningful FY 2027 cost-of-living adjustment across ACS and DYCD contracts that begins to close the documented gap between City reimbursement and actual costs. Municipal workers received 16 percent in raises over five years. Nonprofit providers received 7.3 percent.[5]
- Direct both agencies to shorten contract execution timelines and establish advance payments as a standard feature for providers with three or more consecutive years of satisfactory performance, as the Comptroller's Nonprofit, Nonpayment report makes clear is long overdue.[2]
- Create a structural, guaranteed pathway from court-involved and clinically referred youth into SYEP placements.
- Direct ACS and DYCD to report annually on clinical vacancy rates across their contracted provider networks and develop a funded workforce pipeline strategy to address the documented 30 to 40 percent vacancy rates across the sector.[7]

Northside's founders believed this city would show up for its children in Harlem. It did. We are here today because we believe this Council will too.

Paula Magnus

President

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Notes

[1] NYC Office of the Mayor, FY 2027 Executive Budget Summary. https://www.nyc.gov/site/omb/publications/publications.page

[2] NYC Office of the Comptroller, Nonprofit, Nonpayment, April 2025. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nonprofit-nonpayment/

[3] NYC Office of the Comptroller, $507,000 per person incarcerated figure, July 2024. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/

[4] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics / FRED, New York-Newark-Jersey City CPI Series CUURA101SA0. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUURA101SA0

[5] NYC Independent Budget Office, Employees of Human Service Nonprofits Under Contract With New York City Set to Receive Less Than Half the Raises of NYC Employees Over 5 Years, November 2023. https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/employees-of-human-service-nonprofits-under-contract-with-new-york-city-set-to-receive-less-than-half-the-raises-of-nyc-employees-over-5-years-november-2023.pdf

[6] JustPay NYC Campaign, Facts & Research, citing BLS Employment Cost Index data. https://www.justpayny.org/facts-and-research

[7] JustPay NYC Campaign, Facts & Research, citing NYC Human Services Council survey data on vacancy rates. https://www.justpayny.org/facts-and-research

[8] NYC Independent Budget Office, November 2023, op. cit.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

New York City Council

Committee on Education

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Department of Education

June 8, 2026

Paula Magnus, President

Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz and members of the Committee.

Chair Dinowitz, thank you for visiting Northside's East Harlem campus on March 24. Your time with our children and staff meant a great deal to us.

My name is Paula Magnus, and I am President of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc. Founded in Harlem in 1946, Northside serves over 6,500 children and families across Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. As a New York State licensed Article 31 outpatient mental health clinic, we deliver therapy to children from birth through age 21, the majority from low-income communities of color. Our programs include our main clinic in East Harlem, mental health services embedded in 23 New York City public schools, a Therapeutic Early Childhood Center serving 72 children, and three Head Start/Early Head Start sites serving 181 children. Every child in those programs receives clinical services from Northside staff. We also operate a Home-Based Crisis Intervention program, court-involved youth services, preventive family services, and educational supports including tutoring, after-school, and summer programming.

Northside holds two DOE-funded contracts: (1) Universal 3k/Pre-K sites, one in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn, and (2) special education services at our Therapeutic Early Childhood Center in East Harlem. This testimony reports what those two contracts reveal about conditions facing every early childhood provider in this city: contracts that register months late and rates that no longer cover what the work costs.

New York State has committed $4.5 billion to universal pre-K and child care, including the new NYC 2-K program.[1] Albany made that commitment. Whether it reaches New York City's children depends on the city's contracting process working right: timely registration, prompt payment, and rates that match true delivery costs. When that process fails, the state's commitment fails with it. The Council has the moral compass and the power to make this right.

The Core Problem: Late Contracts and Inadequate Rates

Late Contract Registration: In FY 2024, 90.59 percent of nonprofit human services contracts were registered late. The median time from procurement to registration was 355 days.[2]

Providers delivered services for nearly a year before contracts were legally enforceable.

Inadequate Funding Rates: Early childhood funding through DOE dropped by roughly $125 to $130 million in FY 2025 and a further roughly $150 million in FY 2026, compared to prior levels.[3]

Since 2020, the New York City CPI has risen about 20 percent.[4] Municipal unions are set to receive cumulative raises of about 16 percent over five years. Employees of human service nonprofits under City contract are projected to receive less than half that increase.[5] Salaries fell behind. Positions went unfilled. Children waited.[6]

Those numbers have consequences at the provider level. Northside is one of those providers. Our experience this fiscal year shows what both problems cost in practice.

Therapeutic Early Childhood Center: 4410 Enhancement Contract

Northside's Therapeutic Early Childhood Center holds a DOE-funded contract for Article 89 Enhancement services under the DOE 4410 program, valued at $891,088, for the term ending June 30, 2026. In FY 2026, 24 of the 72 children enrolled in the Therapeutic Early Childhood Center received Enhancement services under that contract. These children have a legal entitlement to appropriate educational placement.[7] Through April 30, 2026, that contract left ($312,861) unreimbursed: School Age ($57,075), Preschool ($230,053), and Preschool Integrated ($25,733). The contract rate has not kept pace with what those placements actually cost to deliver.

New York State places students with disabilities in approved non-public school settings when the public school system cannot meet their needs.[8] These are the children with the highest support needs in the public school system. Since 2012, state aid to public school districts has increased 46 percent. Over that same period, 4410 preschool providers received a 10 percent tuition increase while facing the same rising costs of labor, facilities, and clinical staff.[9] The Council has the authority to ensure that DOE's Enhancement contracts reflect what those services actually cost to deliver.

Teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, and instructional support staff who serve the city's highest-needs children deserve contract rates that support competitive compensation. That is within the Council's reach in the FY 2027 budget.

Universal Pre-K

DOE pays UPK providers per enrolled child. A classroom staffed for fifteen children costs the same to run whether every seat is filled or not. Teachers are hired, and administrative staff and supervision and occupancy costs are fixed each year regardless of enrollment. At Northside's current contract rate of approximately $15,350 per child, one vacant seat means $15,350 in fixed costs with no reimbursement. The FY 2027 budget is the Council's opportunity to change that.

At Northside's two UPK sites, 87 children enrolled in FY 2026. At $15,350 per child, the combined funding gap at the two UPK sites through April 30, 2026 is ($13,732). That figure is not a management failure. It is what a per-enrollment payment structure costs a provider whose fixed expenses do not fluctuate even at near-full enrollment. The Council has the authority to ensure that FY 2027 rates reflect what delivery actually costs.

Northside's two UPK contracts for FY 2026, each valued at $592,476, were registered on February 26 and April 2 of this year, eight and ten months into the contract term. Northside delivered services without a registered contract and without payment.

The state's $4.5 billion commitment to universal pre-K will bring more young children into structured early childhood settings. The providers who serve them must be funded at rates that cover what delivery actually costs. Without that, the teachers and clinicians those children need will not be there.

Through April 30, 2026, the combined **unreimbursed cost** across all DOE-funded programs is ($326,593). That figure is not a fundraising success story. It is the size of the public subsidy New York City's children are depending on Northside donors to cover.

Recommendations

Northside recommends the following:

Shorten Contract Timelines: Direct DOE to implement Local Law 156 of 2025, which took effect January 1, 2026 and requires advance payment of 50 percent of contract value upon registration, and to accelerate contract registration so that no provider enters a second quarter of service without a registered contract.

Adjust UPK Rates: Direct DOE to ensure that FY 2027 UPK contract rates reflect the true cost of delivering early childhood education services, including the fixed costs that enrollment-based payment does not cover.

Fund 4410 Enhancement: Direct DOE to ensure that FY 2027 4410 Enhancement contract rates reflect the true cost of delivering clinical services to students with disabilities in approved non-public settings.

The children in these classrooms are zero to five years old, or they are children with disabilities whose legal entitlement to appropriate educational placement depends on a contract rate that covers what that placement actually costs. Their teachers and clinicians are subsidized by private donors because contract rates fall short. The Council has both the authority and the responsibility to fix that in the FY 2027 budget.

Thank you.

Paula Magnus

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Notes

[1] Governor Kathy Hochul, "Governor Hochul Announces Investments to Deliver Universal Child Care for New York Children Under Five," January 8, 2026. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-investments-deliver-universal-child-care-new-york-children-under

[2] NYC Office of the Comptroller, Nonprofit, Nonpayment, April 2025. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nonprofit-nonpayment/; New York City Council, Challenges for Nonprofits to Receive On-Time City Contract Payments, April 17, 2025. https://council.nyc.gov/press/2025/04/17/2846/

[3] NYC Comptroller, Spotlight: NYC's Publicly Supported Child Care Programs, September 2024. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-nycs-publicly-supported-child-care-programs/

[4] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics / FRED, New York-Newark-Jersey City CPI Series CUURA101SA0. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUURA101SA0

[5] NYC Independent Budget Office, Employees of Human Service Nonprofits Under Contract With New York City Set to Receive Less Than Half the Raises of NYC Employees Over 5 Years, November 2023. https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/employees-of-human-service-

nonprofits-under-contract-with-new-york-city-set-to-receive-less-than-half-the-raises-of-nyc-employees-over-5-years-november-2023.pdf

[6] NYC Council, City Council Holds Hearing on Early Childhood Educator Pipeline, April 16, 2026. https://council.nyc.gov/jennifer-gutierrez/2026/04/16/city-council-holds-hearing-on-early-childhood-educator-pipeline-warns-of-looming-staffing-crisis-without-coordinated-workforce-plan/

[7] New York Education Law § 4401 et seq. (Article 89).

[8] NYSED, "Approved Nonpublic Schools for Students with Disabilities." https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/approved-nonpublic-schools-students-disabilities

[9] NYS Legislature, Joint Budget Hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education, Testimony, February 2020. https://nyassembly.gov/write/upload/publichearing/001105/002354.pdf

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SCIENCE | ENGAGEMENT | ADVOCACY

June 10, 2026

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
New York City Hall
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Testimony of Saman Mahmood, Director of Advocacy and Engagement, NYC Bird Alliance to the NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for the Committee Hearing on the FY27 Preliminary City Budget

Dear Committee Chair Lee and distinguished members of the City Council Committee on Finance:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I will highlight the critical role the NYC Parks budget plays in supporting healthy ecosystems, protecting bird habitat, and enhancing the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

NYC Bird Alliance (a chapter of National Audubon) is a nonprofit organization that works to protect birds and strengthen urban biodiversity across New York City through science, advocacy, and community engagement. Through this work, we protect more than 500 species of birds that live in and migrate through New York City's beaches, wetlands, forests, and grasslands, and engage tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year with our public programs and volunteer opportunities across the City's parks. We work closely with NYC Parks and partner organizations to advance conservation practices across the five boroughs. NYC Bird Alliance is a member of Play Fair for Parks, Forest for All, and Parks & Open Space Partners coalitions.

Birds Are Essential to a Healthy Urban Ecosystem
Birds are a critical part of a healthy ecosystem: they control pests, pollinate plants, and disperse seeds. When we make New York safer for birds, we strengthen urban biodiversity and climate resilience for people, too. Yet birds are in steep decline across North America, so the work we do to protect birds is more important than ever.

Parks are Vital for Biodiversity

Parks in New York City provide critical habitat for birds – for migratory stopovers, nesting, and wintering. An important example is the Black-crowned Night Heron, a striking wading bird which depends on coastlines and parks. NYC Bird Alliance has been conducting annual surveys of the wading birds of New York Harbor for decades and our data shows an alarming trend: over the past 20 years, we've lost more than half of the harbor's Black-crowned Night Heron's breeding population. Our data also show that the species could disappear from New York Harbor by 2037 if we don't take conservation action including protecting their critical breeding habitat from human disturbance and improving the foraging habitat -– the saltmarshes, swamps, pond and stream edges.Nearly half of the Black crown night heroin population nest on NYC Parks land.

Natural areas of the city are critical for biodiversity. In particular, the beach in the Edgemere section of the Rockaways is a biodiversity hotspot with one of the East Coast's most significant breeding populations of the endangered Piping Plover. NYC Parks' Wildlife Unit and Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers are critical to ensuring these birds' survival.

Parks Need Increased Funding and Support

We call on the City Council and Mayor to allocate $150 million to restore hundreds of Parks Department staff positions that have been lost in recent years, including restoring $23 million in baseline funding for 276 critical parks positions, such as Parks Enforcement Patrol officers currently funded through one-year contracts.

These positions should be permanently funded to ensure the long-term health, safety, and stewardship of New York City's parks. Adequate staffing is essential to protecting wildlife habitat, enforcing park regulations, reducing human disturbance, and maintaining the natural areas that support biodiversity across the city. We urge the City Council and Mayor to invest in these positions to help address the decline of the Black-crowned Night Heron and protect the many endangered and threatened species that rely on our parks and waterways.

By investing in our parks workforce, New York City can protect wildlife, strengthen public spaces, and ensure a healthier future for both people and nature. What is good for birds is good for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the need to protect parks. Should you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 347.267.8612 or smahmood@nycbirdalliance.org.

Respectfully,



Saman Mahmood
Director of Advocacy and Engagement
NYC Bird Alliance

OKIN BARNEY P.C.

Testimony to be Presented at NYC Council
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings

June 10, 2026

My name is Jaclyn Okin Barney, and I speak today as the coordinator of Parents for Inclusive Education, as well as a private special education attorney practicing in New York City for nearly twenty-four years. I also serve as a Commissioner with the City's Human Rights Commission. I am here today to address issues related to students with disabilities in NYC.

First, I want to discuss an area of the Mayor's executive budget, which aims to decrease the number of students who attend private special education schools at the City's expense. I understand and respect the Mayor's initiative and agree that more community public school should serve an increased number of students with disabilities. However, the Mayor's budget only does half the work, without investing substantial resources into the City's public schools to serve students in the special education system, the Mayor's goal cannot be achieved.

I recognize that the Mayor's executive budget proposes an investment in preschool special education as well as allocating money to serve students who attend private schools at their parents' expense. Yet, there is no additional funding for school-aged special education students in community schools. This is a problem.

As a special education attorney, a significant part of my practice is tuition reimbursement cases. Families do not pursue tuition reimbursement because they are seeking a particular program or placement. They pursue it because their children are not receiving the individualized supports, services, and instruction they need to learn and succeed in school

I have observed students with disabilities succeed in learning alongside their peers when schools have the capacity to provide flexible instruction, integrated related services, effective behavioral and social-emotional supports, assistive technology, and meaningful collaboration among educators. However, too often, these conditions do not exist in public school. As a result, families are left searching for options outside the public system, not because their children require or want segregation, but because their needs are not being met.

A few examples of students with disabilities who seek private school placements that I encounter most often include:

High-Achieving Students with Attention and Executive Functioning Needs: I represent many students who are intellectually capable of succeeding in rigorous academic courses, but who need support with attention, organization, planning, and self-management. These students need schools that are equipped to provide executive functioning supports, flexible instructional practices, integrated related services, and coordinated collaboration among general education teachers, special educators, and service providers. Too often, these supports are unavailable or inconsistent in public schools, leaving families to seek alternatives outside the public system.

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Students with Social-Emotional and Serious Mental Health Needs: Many of my clients are students whose learning is interrupted by anxiety, depression, trauma, or other social-emotional challenges. These students are often fully capable of meeting grade-level expectations when provided with timely support, counseling, and responsive classroom practices. Yet many schools lack the integrated systems, staffing, and partnerships necessary to provide support when students need it most, which includes appropriate support in the moment when a student encounters a psychosocial issue in the classroom. As a result, students who could succeed in inclusive settings are often left without the interventions that would allow them to remain engaged in learning alongside their peers.

Students with Significant Physical Disabilities and Complex Communication Needs: I have represented many students who use wheelchairs, assistive technology, and alternative forms of communication. Too often, these students are presumed to require highly restrictive settings rather than being provided meaningful access to general education environments with the supports they need. When schools are equipped with accessible facilities, assistive technology, related services, and collaborative instructional teams, students with significant physical disabilities can participate in rigorous academic experiences alongside their peers. The challenge is not the students' potential; it is the system's capacity to provide inclusive educational opportunities.

These are just a few examples of students whose families often feel they have no choice but to turn to private schools to secure an appropriate education. It is simply illogical for the Mayor to set a goal to decrease tuition funding cases without investing in our public schools so that they can meet the needs of a broader range of learners.

I recognize that NYCPS has invested in expanding specialized pathways for students with disabilities, including programs such as NEST, ACES, AIMS, and Horizon. While these models may be appropriate for some students, expanding specialized pathways cannot be the primary strategy for meeting the needs of students with disabilities across a system as large and diverse as New York City. When access to supports depends on placement in a specialized setting, many students are left without meaningful options. As a result, families often turn to private schools not because they are seeking a particular program, but because they are seeking the supports and services their children need to succeed.

Additionally, specialized pathways are not a scalable strategy for integration, outcomes, or fiscal responsibility. The more sustainable approach is to build the capacity of community schools to provide individualized supports, integrated services, and rigorous instruction so that a broader range of students can succeed in inclusive settings.

The supports many students with disabilities require are not separate from the skills New York State now expects all graduates to develop. Executive functioning, communication, collaboration, self-advocacy, problem-solving, and resilience are central to the State's Portrait of a Graduate and increasingly necessary for success in college, careers, and civic life. Investments in inclusive practices, integrated supports, and collaborative instructional models benefit far more than students with disabilities—they build the capacity of schools to prepare all students for the future.

The City needs to allocate money into community schools so that all students with disabilities have inclusive opportunities for education. This would fall directly in line with Chancellor Samuels'

priorities, which include integration as a key tenet. To do this, the City needs to put funding and significant training into community schools to provide every student with a disability an individualized education and move away from a "one size fits all" approach. Schools need to learn to support students' needs while also challenging their strengths. Encouraging and educating schools to adopt practices such as universal design for learning, data-informed instruction, integrated service delivery, and multi-tiered systems of support will help all students—those with and without disabilities—and lead to truly inclusive opportunities.

Building capacity is also the most fiscally responsible investment. It creates lasting infrastructure that strengthens schools across the entire system, reduces reliance on costly private placements, and allows more students to attend their neighborhood schools rather than requiring separate programs and transportation.

Please consider investing more into our public school system

Additionally, please commit to adding $450 million to the 2025–2029 Capital Plan to make more schools ADA accessible for students with physical disabilities. Currently, only one-third of our school buildings are fully accessible, which means students with physical disabilities simply do not have the same opportunities and choices as their peers. Equality for these students does not exist.

Furthermore, school accessibility is an issue that not only affects students with physical disabilities, but also parents, teachers, and administrators with disabilities who need equal access to our schools.

Thank you for considering my testimony today.

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Testimony on 6/10/26 Executive Budget Hearing,
Finance Committee

Open Plans writes today in regard to the Executive Budget hearing on 6/10. Open Plans believes in a livable and affordable New York City, and below are our budget priorities that would work towards that aim:

- **The Mayor's campaign commitment of $20 million for the Open Streets for Schools: Full Closure (School Streets) program should be realized, and further funds should be allocated for School Plaza Blocks.** The School Streets program closes streets in front of schools to keep kids safe from traffic, and to unlock outdoor recreation space for schools that may not have enough or any at all. However, insufficient resources (as well as a lack of cross-agency collaboration) result in less participation than is possible. During the campaign, Mayor Mamdani pledged to provide $20 million to the School Streets program for operational expenses. We believe this money is essential and can be used to hire more staff to manage the program, conduct outreach to potential schools, and provide assistance during the application process and throughout the life of their School Street. This should be included as a $20 million line item; we are requesting that the Council fund the School Streets program as an important step toward expanding access for students across the city. Additionally, we know that plaza blocks deliver results for communities: a safer place to gather and experience joy. We believe that the Council should allocate capital dollars to create School Plaza Blocks on some existing School Streets. We discuss the potential of the School Streets program, and further details about School Plaza Blocks, in our report School's Out in the Streets.
- **Invest $25 million to pilot five Public Space Teams to foster local public space management.** In our city, some neighborhoods receive better public space management — better street cleaning, public programming, and planning — than others. To remedy this issue, in our report Framework for the Future, we proposed the idea of Public Space Teams. These Teams would operate in Community Districts, and consist of two DOT employees — a Public Space Facilitator to coordinate the Team and the evolution of the space, and a Public Space Coordinator to perform public outreach — as well as a group of paid contracted Public Space Stewards to perform supplemental sanitation. In our report, we performed a financial analysis and found that $25 million would be sufficient to pilot five of these teams, one for a neighborhood in each borough, to bring more equitable public space management.

- **Allocate $15 million for implementation of hardened daylighting.** Daylighting saves lives by removing obstructions from the curbspace at intersections, providing increased visibility for pedestrians and drivers alike. To ensure these spaces aren't occupied illegally, hardened infrastructure like planters, boulders, or bike racks is essential. A $15 million allocation would be the first step to make universal daylighting a reality.
- **Fund implementation of five low-traffic neighborhoods, one in each borough.** The majority of traffic in many residential neighborhoods is "cut-through traffic," meaning the drivers who drive through a neighborhood do not stop; they use neighborhoods as throughways to get to their true final destination. To avoid increased congestion and air pollution, we can use low-cost strategies to divert traffic out of neighborhoods and onto main roads. These strategies have been shown to be effective in cities like London, cutting down on congestion in residential neighborhoods while still allowing for local access for residents. The Council should allocate funding for the implementation of five low-traffic neighborhoods, one in each borough, as further described on our website.
- **Provide Open Streets partners operational support through staffing, allocating $30 million to DOT over three years.** This allocation would bring the City back in line with previous allocations. Far too often, Open Streets partners are overburdened and lack systemic support. This money would give them a lifeline and additional support at DOT. We also raise up Open Streets partners' calls for further funding.

Respectfully,
Open Plans

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Expanding Fair Fares Can Deliver Affordability Now

New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, June 10th, 2026

Good afternoon, I'm Henry Mei, Research and Advocacy Intern at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. For nearly 50 years, PCAC has served as the official voice of riders on the MTA system. Thank you, Chair Lee, for the opportunity to testify.

Fair Fares can literally change people's lives. It expands access to jobs, education, and more, but far too few people qualify under the stringent eligibility threshold: if you make minimum wage, you make too much.

My family's story is emblematic of this problem. There are three people in my household: myself – a part-time intern, my mother – a home health aide, and my father – recently retired. We are a quintessentially working-class New York family, and yet we take home too much annual income to qualify for Fair Fares.

You can change this. We are asking the mayor to unlock its full potential by:

1. Expanding Fair Fares to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
2. Making it fully free for households under 150% of the FPL
3. Expanding half-fares to Express Buses and CityTickets on the railroads
4. Implementing Automatic Enrollment and
5. Expanding half-fares for qualifying Paratransit users aged 65 and older

In my part of Queens alone, the 25th Council District, over 54,000 people would qualify for Fair Fares under these changes – that's almost 35 percent of the district. Over 30,000 of my neighbors would be eligible to ride transit for free. I am testifying today not just for myself, but for my mom who takes the bus every day to care for her elderly client, and for all of us in the five boroughs who depend on transit yet feel its burden on our tight budgets.

As the council's excellent oversight hearing last month brought to light, HRA badly needs to reform its enrollment and renewal processes to increase participation. Around 200,000 New Yorkers receiving other HRA benefits are not receiving Fair Fares, depriving them of up to $910 per year in transit savings.

An abysmal 50 percent of enrollees drop out of Fair Fares each year due to how difficult HRA makes it to renew. PCAC will do everything we can to ensure automatic enrollment and renewal is passed and implemented.

Thank you again for making Fair Fares a priority this year. With your help, we can change Fair Fares from just a good idea into one that will transform how New Yorkers get around their city.

Planned Parenthood of Greater New York
44 Court St, 4th Fl, Brooklyn, NY 11201
ppgreaterny.org 212-274-7200

Fiscal Year 2027 Discretionary Budget Request Testimony to the

NYC Council - Executive Budget Hearing

June 10th, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Maryam Mohammed-Miller, and I am the Director of Government Relations and Policy at Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (PPGNY). We would like to thank the entire Council for the opportunity to discuss PPGNY's programs, services, and fiscal year 2027 funding requests. Thank you, too, Speaker Julie Menin, for your continued support of PPGNY's work to provide health care to all New Yorkers in need.

PPGNY is a trusted provider of sexual and reproductive health care and education programs for communities throughout New York City. In 2025, we conducted over 67,000 patient visits through our virtual health center and at our NYC health centers, providing care to all those in need regardless of immigration status, identity, or ability to pay for services. We engaged over 28,000 individuals through our education and community engagement programs--including over 4,400 young people in middle and high school. Our Project Street Beat program (PSB), through their offices and Mobile Health Center, engaged over 650 individuals who are at high risk of HIV exposure, may be unstably housed, or suffer from substance abuse disorder. And in 2025, we helped enroll over 3,700 individuals in health insurance programs.

PPGNY is deeply committed to providing care, no matter what. Over these past several years, we have weathered many attempts to severely restrict sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion care. Years of under-investment in reproductive health care, rising health care costs, and workforce shortages have made it increasingly difficult for us to provide the care New Yorkers depend on. In fact, we were forced to close our Manhattan health center last year to help sustain patient care throughout the city. Patients seen in Manhattan are able to continue to receive care at our three remaining NYC health centers and through our virtual health center.

And now, a series of relentless attacks from the Trump administration on Planned Parenthood and sexual and reproductive health care providers throughout the country could lead to millions losing access to the care they deserve. In its first year back in office, the Trump administration along with House Republicans forced through a harmful budget reconciliation bill that included a provision that essentially "defunds" Planned Parenthood. The provision bars Planned Parenthood providers — including PPGNY — from receiving federal Medicaid funding for one year. After months of legal maneuvering in federal courts, including a preliminary injunction that paused enactment of the provision; the courts ultimately allowed the provision to go into effect. PPGNY specifically was poised to lose almost $20 million, potentially leaving thousands of New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid without access to cancer screenings, birth control, HIV testing, STI screening and treatment. and other essential services at our health centers.

Thankfully, Governor Kathy Hochul took decisive action and committed to funding Planned Parenthood providers. That means that nearly 100,000 Planned Parenthood patients across the state who rely on Medicaid coverage can continue to receive the care they depend on. This includes approximately 37,000 patients who seek care in our NYC-based health centers. Unfortunately, we expect these attacks to continue, threatening our ability to provide the care New Yorkers depend on.

Despite this challenging reality, PPGNY remains committed to providing quality health care services and educational programs to communities, no matter what. We appreciate that the City Council has continued to support PPGNY so that we can remain a critical source of care, particularly for thousands of patients who qualify for health services for free or at reduced cost.

Safeguarding Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care in NYC

PPGNY requests increased funding of $600,000 from the Reproductive and Sexual Health Initiative, which would enable us to maintain and expand essential health care services and educational programs throughout New York City. Amid escalating federal hostility that continues to threaten access to critical resources for sexual and reproductive health care providers, support from the Council is more important than ever.

Funding from this initiative helps PPGNY provide the full range of sexual and reproductive health care services that includes gynecological care, STI treatment and testing, contraception care, cancer screenings, and LGBTQ+ health care at all three of our NYC health centers. In 2025, PPGNY conducted over 67,000 sexual and reproductive health care patient visits via telehealth and at our New York City Health Centers. This care includes 55,000 STI tests, over 20,000 HIV tests, over 39,000 family planning visits, and over 700 PrEP/PEP care visits provided to New Yorkers last year

This funding also supports trainings for staff at youth serving agencies on how to support access to sexual and reproductive care, youth sexual development, birth control and pregnancy options, and sexually transmitted infection (STIs) and HIV prevention.

Additionally, this funding will support our Youth Health Promoters (YHP) program. The YHPs are highly trained peer educators who engage other young people and conduct interactive workshops to educate youth about teens' rights and access to sexual and reproductive health care.

PPGNY also seeks enhanced funding of $500,000 from the Dedicated Contraceptive Fund Initiative to provide long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) care, to patients who are uninsured or under-insured, ineligible for public insurance coverage, facing financial hardship, or unable to use their health insurance due to confidentiality concerns. LARC devices such as IUDs and implants are safe, effective, and allow New Yorkers who rely on this care with the ability to

make sound decisions about their lives and futures. In 2025, we provided over 8,000 LARC care patient visits at our NYC health centers. Ensuring New Yorkers have access to long-acting contraception is of critical importance, especially since the SCOTUS decision overturning Roe v. Wade and the growing hostility towards sexual and reproductive health care nationally.

Specifically, increased funding will help provide comprehensive contraception counseling, including access to LARC devices, insertion, and removal. This is provided free of charge to patients who are uninsured, ineligible for public insurance coverage such as Medicaid, and struggle to pay for their services out-of-pocket. Funds will also be used for patients who cannot use their insurance due to confidentiality concerns and would otherwise not have access. Increased funding will also offset the rising cost of providing this care due to inflation.

We also request funding $150,000 from the Trans Equity Programs initiative to help empower trans and gender non-binary (TGNB) communities to lead healthy lives by expanding access to sexual and reproductive health services and gender affirming care at our health centers. The importance of this funding cannot be overstated, especially during a time when the federal government has chosen to repeatedly threaten access to trans-related health care. Increased funding will allow PPGNY to provide this critical care to a community that has been historically marginalized and denied access to the health care they deserve. PPGNY offers trans/nonbinary care to all via telehealth and at all three of our NYC health centers. In 2025, we conducted over 3,100 gender affirming hormone therapy patients visits, providing care to over 1,500 transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming individuals.

PPGNY is ready to provide care to all individuals in need of this critical care as states across the country enact anti-gender affirming care policies that primarily target young people. The millions of Americans who depend on these services will look to NYC to secure the care they deserve.

The cost of medications associated with this care can also be burdensome, even for those who are insured. We will use Council funding to screen clients, expand the sliding scale system that helps offset the costs of gender-affirming hormone medications at all our New York City facilities, and expand culturally competent sexual and reproductive care to TGNB communities. Additionally, we will use funds to bolster access to Patient Navigators to help our TGNB patients comprehensively access care at PPGNY health centers, build relationships with partner organizations, and raise awareness of our culturally competent care throughout communities in need.

PPGNY is also seeking $200,000 from the Speaker's List and $100,000 from the Abortion Access Fund to help support our abortion patient navigation work. PPGNY bolstered our patient navigation team in response to the SCOTUS decision overturning *Roe v. Wade,* which ended the constitutionally protected right to abortion care. We help individuals forced to travel to or living in NYC secure the care they need from a trusted provider. Specifically, the team

guides patients through the abortion care system and works to remove obstacles they face while working to improve the systems and processes that shape access at the clinical and ecosystem levels. Patient Navigators help patients book appointments, utilize existing abortion funds to cover the costs of care, travel, and lodging; and understand payment and insurance options. They work with external stakeholders and organizations to build and strengthen relationships, systems, and processes that support access to abortion care to ensure individuals can safely secure care. Funding for PPGNY's patient navigation work is more important than ever. We expect to continue to see individuals from other states seeking care in New York, which can continue to grow in response to expanding abortion restrictions nationwide. In fact, we provided care to over 2,100 out-of-state patients and over 2,900 New Yorkers who live outside of the city through telehealth or at one of our NYC health centers in 2025.

Ending the Epidemic through Project Street Beat

Another program that allows us to continue serving vulnerable New Yorkers, including our immigrant populations, is Project Street Beat (PSB). **We ask for continued funding support of $200,000 from the Speaker's list and and $700,000 from HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care to support Project Street Beat (PSB).** PSB provides targeted outreach and services to communities most in need through our Mobile Health Center (MHC) and our PSB office in the Bronx. PSB currently provides mobile services in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Services on the MHC are available regardless of ability to pay.

The only program of its kind in New York City, since 1988, PSB has provided innovative client-focused, street-based HIV prevention and linkage-to-care programs that provide a range of services to some of the hardest to reach populations at high risk for HIV. PSB's MHC services include rapid HIV testing, linkage to HIV primary care, HCV screening and referral to care, STI screening and treatment services, referral services, opioid overdose prevention, and support groups. PSB also distributes Narcan to people living and working on the streets of NYC and trains them on how to reduce the harm of opioid abuse.

In 2025, PSB conducted over 700 Mobile Health Center visits, providing PrEP/PEP, HCV testing, birth control, pap smears, and routine gynecologic. We provided over 630 STI tests and over 680 HIV tests. Additionally, we provided over 600 intimate partner violence screenings, connecting those in need to trauma-informed care.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Education for New Yorkers

We also request $200,000 from the Speaker's List to support our Education and Training (E&T) team, which includes our Youth Health Promoters (YHP) program and youth serving programs. Our E&T team provides a holistic approach to our programs supporting youth and the adults who work with them daily. In 2025, the E&T team engaged over 6,800 individuals through our programs at schools and in the community, 5,498 of which were young

people under 21 years old. Our E&T team collaborates with stakeholders across NYC to provide evidence-informed and evidence-based workshops for young people. These workshops are provided by both our adult sexuality educators and our YHPs. The YHPs are highly trained peer educators who directly engage other young people. They conduct interactive workshops to educate their peers about their rights, including how to access sexual and reproductive health care, as well as overcome barriers and stigma that teens may experience when accessing care. In 2025, our YHP program engaged over 1,000 young people throughout New York City. We also provide professional development to youth-serving adults on sexual and reproductive health topics to support their capacity in engaging young people at their community-based organizations and in schools.

Funding from the City Council will allow PPGNY to continue our youth engagement work to ensure more young people have access to the care they need. It will also help expand our ability to support young people whose health and academic needs often go unsupported. This includes young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Trauma Informed Sexual and Reproductive Health Care

Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (PPGNY) requests funding to increase our work with victims and survivors of domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), especially those who experience language barriers, lack of access to health care or immigration status, living under the federal poverty level, and other systemic challenges. In 2025, we provided IVP screenings at all 67,000 patients visits at our New York City health centers and identified over 300 individuals at risk of IVP. With the support of the Council's Domestic Violence Initiative (DoVE), our Community Engagement team hosted over 27 targeted outreach events and engaged over 488 individuals, connecting them to care at our health centers last year. Our objective is to connect individuals to the sexual and reproductive health care and services provided by PPGNY, in collaboration with community organizations serving these individuals. Funding will allow our Community Engagement team to receive further training, reach victims and survivors, and build partnerships with additional agencies through the presentation of workshops, participation in events, appointment making, and other channels of engagement best suited to reach the communities they serve.

Conclusion

PPGNY remains steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers can access the care they need and deserve, no matter their background, income, or immigration status. Throughout my time working alongside the New York City Council, I have seen firsthand the impact of strong partnership in addressing the most urgent challenges in our health care system. In this moment of heightened need and uncertainty, it is especially critical that the Council continues to invest in programs and services that reach our most vulnerable communities.

We look forward to working with the Council to continue to ensure healthcare access to all.

Thank you.

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Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (PPGNY) is a leading provider, educator, and advocate of sexual and reproductive health care in New York State. PPGNY offers a wide range of services across 65% of NYS - including gynecological care; birth control; cancer screenings; pregnancy testing; STI testing and treatment; HIV prevention, testing, and counseling; transgender hormone therapy; and vasectomy. PPGNY is also proud to provide abortion services to anyone who needs compassionate, non-judgmental care. PPGNY is a trusted source of medically accurate, evidence-based information that allows people to make informed decisions about their health and future. As a voice for reproductive freedom, PPGNY supports legislation and policies that ensure all New Yorkers have access to the full range of reproductive health services and education

POWER OF TWO

June 10, 2026

Council Member Althea Stevens
Children and Families Committee
The City Council of the City of New York

Dear Madam Chair:

I am writing as the Executive Director of Power of Two, a nonprofit organization that harnesses the power of the foundational parent-child bond to help children thrive and lead healthy, productive, and successful lives.

Since 2015, from our offices in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and Hunts Point in the South Bronx, we have delivered the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) home-visiting program to more than 6,500 children and 6,000 moms, dads, and other caregivers across New York City. Developed more than 25 years ago by child development experts at the University of Delaware, ABC is a rigorous, evidence-based intervention endorsed by the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare.

We have been informed that Power of Two's Administration of Children Services (ACS) contract is proposed for complete elimination. We want this Council to understand what that means in plain terms: it is not a budget line being trimmed. It is the end of a proven program that works and a decision that will cost this city far more than it saves. The prevention organizations facing cuts are not duplicating each other's work, but collectively forming the infrastructure that keeps families stable before crises erupt. These are not redundant services. They are the first line of defense, and they are being dismantled piece by piece. Each cut will affect vulnerable families, the kind Power of Two partners with day in and day out. Together, these prevention cuts systematically erode a family support system that took years to build and cannot be quickly rebuilt once it is gone.

Prevention is proactive by definition. It is what happens before the emergency call, before the child welfare investigation, before the foster care placement, before a child struggles in daycare and later in school. Our program works with the youngest New Yorkers infants and toddlers to prepare them for the childcare and early education programs this City has invested so heavily in building. Cut prevention now, and those downstream investments will be squandered.

One in five mothers experience some form of pregnancy-related depression or anxiety. Black and Latina mothers experience these mental health challenges at twice that rate. Since 2015, we have eliminated depressive symptoms in 64% of the caregivers we serve, as measured by the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, a result that is both meaningful and life-changing.

A mother's mental health directly shapes her child's development. When a mother is struggling, her child is affected. Caregiver depression is associated with delays in language and cognitive development, increased behavioral problems, and deficits in social and emotional skills that follow children into the classroom and beyond. The health and wellbeing of mother and child are inseparable. When we invest in mothers, we invest in their children.

POWER OF TWO

At a time when parents and caregivers across New York City are contending with unaffordable housing, reductions in federal food assistance, economic instability, and growing stress on family systems, our program is often one of the few consistent, relationship-based supports available to families with very young children. Without Power of Two's preventive services, families who lose access will not be redirected to equivalent care. They will go without.

We have worked in these communities for a decade. We have seen conditions improve. New York's City's investment in early childhood has enhanced early learning opportunities, socialization, and kindergarten readiness, while also reducing financial stress on families that can affect children's wellbeing. **We can say with confidence, and with evidence, that prevention cuts will reverse that progress.** These cuts will squander the progress we have all fought so hard to achieve and, mor importantly, progress that has benefitted so many families across New York City.

As Nobel Prize-winning economist Dr. James Heckman and others have demonstrated, reducing investments in high-quality early childhood prevention does not produce long-term savings. It shifts far greater costs downstream into child welfare, special education, healthcare, mental health systems, and the criminal legal system. Cutting preventive programs is not fiscal responsibility. It is a false economy and the children of this city will pay the price.

Power of Two is an established, trusted, evidence-based provider with more than a decade of experience serving New York City families. We are meticulous stewards of public investment, as evidenced by multiple city contracts over the years. Our work aligns directly with the City's broader goals around early childhood care and education, child and human development, maternal child health, and prevention.

It is imperative that current prevention funding be maintained, whether through Administration for Children's Services (ACS) or the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), at $3.1MM, and modestly expanded over the next several years as the administration and City Council continue shaping the City's long-term strategy. At such time as the City is ready to move toward broader procurement, we would welcome an RFP that embeds ABC and early relational health into New York City's long-term maternal-child health and prevention framework. Power of Two would be well-positioned to respond.

We respectfully ask that you urge the Mamdani administration, including First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Helen Arteaga-Landaverde, Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner, Rebecca Jones Gaston, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Commissioner Alister Martin, MD, MPH, to fully restore and protect preventive services funding in the FY27 budget. The window to influence this budget is rapidly closing. The consequences for families, children, and this city will be profound if these cuts move forward. Thank you for this consideration.

Sincerely,

Coleen Stevens Porcher
Executive Director, Power of Two
Partner Project of the Fund for the City of New York

Dear Madam Chair and Committee members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify at this Committee hearing. My name is Laura Ensler. I have worked in the prenatal and early ed space for almost 40 years in NYC. I am the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Power of Two, a nonprofit organization that harnesses the power of the foundational parent-child bond to help children thrive and lead healthy, productive, and successful lives.

Power of Two is based in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and Hunts Point in the South Bronx, and since 2015 we have delivered a home-visiting program called Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) to more than 6,500 children and 6,000 moms, dads, and other caregivers across New York City.

Our Executive Director, Coleen Stevens Porcher, is also testifying today.

Our organization has been informed that Power of Two's Administration of Children Services (ACS) contract is proposed for complete elimination. This is a catastrophe and I am here today to tell you why.

We have worked in these communities for a decade. We have seen conditions improve. At Power of Two, we **can say with confidence, and with evidence, that prevention cuts will reverse the progress NYC has made to improve outcomes for NYC families.** These cuts will squander the progress we have all fought so hard to achieve and, more importantly, progress that has benefitted so many families across New York City.

If we want universal child care to succeed, we must begin at birth and stop trying to build this system from the fourth floor down. Po2 begins at birth, to support caregivers and children in strengthening and securing their attachments so the children can move into 2K slot ready to participate fully in an early education setting.

It is imperative that current prevention funding be maintained, whether through ACS or the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, at $3.1MM, and modestly expanded over the next several years as the administration and City Council continue shaping the City's long-term strategy.

We respectfully ask that you urge the Mamdani administration to fully restore and protect preventive services funding in the FY27 budget. Thank you.



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June 10, 2026

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We have worked in these communities for a decade. We have seen conditions improve. New York's City's investment in early childhood has enhanced early learning opportunities, socialization, and kindergarten readiness, while also reducing financial stress on families that can affect children's wellbeing. **We can say with confidence, and with evidence, that prevention cuts will reverse that progress.** These cuts will squander the progress we have all fought so hard to achieve and, mor importantly, progress that has benefitted so many families across New York City.

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Sincerely,

Coleen Stevens Porcher
Executive Director, Power of Two
Partner Project of the Fund for the City of New York

Kristina Garrity
Pro Se Plus Project Coordinator
City Council Testimony
June 10, 2026

To whom it may concern:

My name is Kristina Garrity, and I am the Project Coordinator for the Pro Se Plus Project, which received discretionary funding through the Council in FY2026 through its support of the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN). ASLAN is a network of experienced immigration legal service providers and community-based organizations that was started in 2023 through MOIA to meet the legal needs of newly arrived New Yorkers navigating the immigration legal system *pro se*. The Network includes the Pro Se Plus Project (which includes African Communities Together, Catholic Migration Services, Masa, and New York Legal Assistance Group), CUNY Citizenship Now!, Catholic Charities, and Lutheran Social Services.

In its early days, ASLAN providers assisted community members with asylum applications, work authorizations, changes of address, and changes of venue in a way that went beyond application assistance alone. This included offering substantial follow-up, repeated services for various individuals, more comprehensive submission support, interpretation and translation in a diverse range of languages, access to non-immigration legal services, and more. ASLAN has thus long straddled the world between light touch *pro se* and full representation. The intention behind providing this innovative form of what ASLAN partners refer to as *pro se* plus service was - and to continues to be - to ensure that community members receive continuous support in their efforts to navigate the immigration legal system without full representation, and to expand our collective capacity to respond to the ongoing humanitarian crisis as it unfolds through adapting quickly to changes within the legal landscape and sharing the expertise that such adaptation develops.

As experienced *pro se* plus providers whose workloads are organized to respond in real time, ASLAN members are able to take on complex applications, provide preventative services, and adapt to meet immigrant community members' emergent needs. ASLAN providers need consistent funding in order to provide this type of ongoing, responsive service for the City's most vulnerable immigrants. While other City-funded services such as the MOIA Legal Support Centers and the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative provide critical support to immigrant community members, ASLAN - by virtue of its capacity to be nimble and adaptive - finds itself at the frontlines of new developments and often fills in pre-existing gaps. This has become increasingly critical at a time when immigration policy has become particularly hostile, when individuals with viable asylum claims are now subjected to pretermission, when the appeals process has been functionally overturned, and when asylum case law is deliberately narrowing to exclude immigrants from any form of relief.

With the aforementioned shift in immigration policy and enforcement under the second Trump administration, ASLAN has further expanded the *pro se* plus services it offers in order to best

support immigrant community members with whom providers - through the Network's community-grounded approach – have developed deep relationships of trust. In addition to offering initial application and general legal support (asylum, work authorization, changes of venue and address, Temporary Protected Status, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and Notices of Appeal), ASLAN partners also assist with individual hearing preparation (evidence collection and submission, declaration drafting), pretermission (asylum amendments and Motions to Oppose Pretermission), and post-detention support (habeas petitions, emergency planning, courtwatching, and accompaniment). This list, which reflects the needs of the communities we serve, is constantly changing as experienced ASLAN providers continually pivot and expand the breadth of *pro se* services offered.

While other pre-existing programs might provide *pro se* services, what distinguishes ASLAN partners is their capacity to provide multiple services to a single individual. The following three case studies that exemplify the *pro se* plus services offered by ASLAN. First, A young, newly arrived New Yorker, who had been assisted by the City-funded Asylum Application Help Center with a *pro se* filing in Family Court, came to an ASLAN partner looking for support with next steps. After a quick screening, the ASLAN partner determined that the person, originally from Mauritania, was eligible for SIJS but would be turning 21 in just 3 days. In order to prevent this person from aging out of this form of relief, their team immediately prepared a Form I-360 for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and went to the USCIS Field Office at 26 Federal Plaza to file it. This same community member, who was also in removal proceedings, returned to this ASLAN partner for assistance with a *pro se* Motion to Continue. A navigator from this ASLAN partner accompanied this person to his court hearing, where the *pro se* Motion was granted.

Another ASLAN partner supported a woman who came to New York from Nicaragua, which she had fled out of fear for her safety. A victim of immigration fraud, this woman had paid thousands of dollars to an individual posing as an attorney, only to discover that documents had been falsified and the "hearing" she attended had been staged with a fake judge. The ASLAN partner she visited after facing this emotional and financial devastation was able to provide her with a mini-consultation, where it was confirmed that she had a deportation order. The team then filed an emergency Motion to Reopen, notified ICE of the Motion to Reopen - which granted her an automatic stay of removal and thus protected her from detention at the ICE check-in she had scheduled the next day – and put together an asylum application. The team also created an emergency plan that included guardianship and travel documents which would allow for someone else to take care of her 8-year-old son and take him back to Nicaragua in the instance she or her husband were detained.

A third ASLAN partner supported an indigenous Ecuadorian asylum seeker, who they had met in immigration court. One of this partner's attorneys provided *pro se* assistance at her hearing by appearing as Friend of the Court (FOTC). That day, the DHS attorney made a motion to pretermit her asylum application based on Matter of H-A-A-V-, which requested that the immigration judge terminate on the grounds that her claim for asylum was legally insufficient. Because the ASLAN attorney had appeared as FOTC, he was able to collect this person's

contact information. The attorney's team members completed a screening and scheduled her for a pretermission clinic, where a written opposition to DHS's motion to pretermit, a declaration, and supporting country conditions were prepared. After filing the person's *pro se* opposition and evidence, the ASLAN attorney appeared as FOTC for her next hearing, where the motion to pretermit was denied and the community member was scheduled for a final hearing. This asylum seeker is now scheduled to participate in a pro bono EAD clinic where her EAD fees will be fully covered and in a workshop on how to prepare for her final hearing.

As these three cases demonstrate, ASLAN providers have developed significant expertise in assisting community members with a wide range of highly complex immigrations applications *pro se*. Indeed, much of the program's strength stems from the fact that ASLAN providers have developed a breadth of skills and the discernment necessary for identifying when to apply these skills, particularly when supporting community members who have fallen through the cracks in the legal system. They have proven their capacity to adapt and learn new skills in a rapidly evolving, increasingly hostile policy environment.

To provide these services, ASLAN partners require the following levels of funding in a single year:

ASLAN Partner	**FY27 Request**	**Note**
African Communities Together	$340,000.00	
Catholic Migration Services	$188,475.00	
Masa	$398,815.25	
New York Legal Assistance Group	$296,050.00	
Lutheran Social Services	$2,222,971.00	*Note that this is an update from the initial request of $3,062,476.00.*
CUNY Citizenship Now!	$845,591.00	
Catholic Charities	$550,000	
Total	**$4,841,902.25**	

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter. We are deeply grateful for the support we have received from the Council in FY2026 and hope to continue our partnership in the coming year.

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New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings

Testimony from Rev. Dr. Darlene Williams, PhD, DRE
Chief Executive Officer, Project Hospitality

To the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

June 4, 2026

"In Staten Island, Project Hospitality is not just part of the system—it represents a significant portion of the system itself."

Introduction

My name is Rev. Dr. Darlene Williams, PhD, DRE, and I am the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Project Hospitality (PH). I would like to thank Chair Hudson and the other members of the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to submit testimony.

I assumed the role of CEO for Project Hospitality on June 1, 2026, and therefore will begin my first statement to this Committee by introducing myself before turning to Project Hospitality – a Staten Island social services institution you know and support, our community's needs, and a request for increased support.

I am a lifelong New Yorker whose personal, professional, and family life has been deeply rooted in service, faith, and community. I am married to a retired Assistant Chief of the New York City Police Department, who served with distinction for nearly 30 years, and our family's commitment to public service continues through our son, who currently serves as a detective. That legacy of service is also grounded in my faith heritage. My late parents were devoted members of the faith community and served through ministry, pastoral leadership, and care for others, values that continue to shape my own calling as clergy and as a leader in the NYC Community. Together, these experiences have given me a deep respect for public servants, faith leaders, families, and communities working every day to strengthen the well-being of New Yorkers.

My work has been centered on helping leaders and organizations strengthen their connection to community—ensuring that people are not only served, but seen, heard, and empowered to move forward. I have consistently focused on building systems where individuals and communities can

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use their voices and experiences to create meaningful and lasting change. I have served senior roles in:

- New York City government, including Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Administration for Children's Services, and Department for Veterans Services
- Non-profits, including Women In Need, Inc., Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Union Settlement, and East Harlem Community Alliance
- Education, including as Adjunct Professor, Long Island University, School of Health Professionals, CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College, Shekina Charities Seminary, and Metropolitan College of New York

My leadership is grounded in a simple but deeply held belief: community is a commitment. It requires us to show up with consistency, restore dignity where hardship has taken hold, and ensure that no individual or family is left to face crisis alone.

I chose to serve as Chief Executive Officer of Project Hospitality because its enduring mission of dignity, compassion, service, and hope deeply aligns with the values that have guided my life, leadership, faith, and commitment to community. For more than four decades, Project Hospitality has been a pillar of care, stability, and restoration for individuals and families facing some of life's most difficult circumstances. This is sacred and necessary work, and I am honored to help carry it forward with vision, integrity, and deep respect for the legacy already established.

Project Hospitality's continued impact is made possible through the support of this Council and the dedication of the staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, funders, and partners who sustain this work every day, in every season, year after year. As I step into this role, I recognize the strength of the foundation already built, and I am committed to expanding our impact and further strengthening Project Hospitality's role in serving Staten Island. My immediate priority is to listen, learn, and ensure our work continues to respond effectively to community needs. I look forward to meeting members of this Administration whom I have not yet met and reconnecting with those I have had the privilege of working with in the past.

Project Hospitality is more than a service provider—it is a community anchor for individuals and families facing hunger, homelessness, and instability. It delivers coordinated care, restores stability, and creates pathways to hope. **I am confident that I have an extraordinary opportunity to build on that legacy while positioning the organization for its next chapter of growth, impact, and excellence.**

Continued and increased investment is critical to advancing this work. Funding Project Hospitality is not simply supporting programs—it is sustaining a community-based system of

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care that stabilizes lives, strengthens neighborhoods, and advances a more just and compassionate New York City.

Project Hospitality: Background and Mission

Project Hospitality (PH) was established in 1982 as a volunteer effort and has since expanded to become the **largest social services provider on Staten Island, serving one in ten Staten Islanders annually.**

The agency's mission is to reach out to community members who are hungry, homeless, or otherwise in need of work with them to achieve their self-sufficiency—thereby enhancing the quality of life in our community.

The organization seeks to realize its mission both by advocating for those in need and by establishing a comprehensive continuum of care that begins with the provision of food, clothing, and shelter and extends to other services which include health care, behavioral health, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, HIV care, education, vocational training, legal assistance, and transitional and permanent housing. Project Hospitality's public mission materials likewise describe a continuum of compassionate care that begins with street outreach, shelter, and food assistance and extends to treatment, clinical supports, and transitional and permanent supportive housing.

PH's programs promote economic opportunities for low-income individuals and communities by providing essential basic needs such as food and shelter. The organization meets clients where they are by helping them through challenging life situations such as homelessness, hunger, mental health issues, and addiction. In this way, PH has been able to help thousands of low-income Staten Islanders escape the brutal cycle of poverty and reintegrate into the workforce and society at large.

Project Hospitality exists to ensure that individuals and families are supported within community, not left to struggle beyond it. Project Hospitality is a pillar of hope, healing, and stability" who daily turn from crisis to clarity, instability to resilience, and from survival to purposeful restoration.

Staten Island Context and Need

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44 Years of Service to Staten Island 1982 – 2026

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Staten Island faces significant need alongside a more limited service infrastructure, with fewer providers and access points than other boroughs. Residents experiencing hunger, homelessness, and instability encounter real barriers to care. At the same time, the borough receives only about **3% of the city's emergency food distribution**, placing increasing pressure on a small and already strained network of providers.

Within this landscape, Project Hospitality plays a uniquely critical and stabilizing role. Serving more than 47,000 individuals annually—approximately one in ten Staten Islanders—Project Hospitality is not only the borough's largest social services provider, but also its only comprehensive homeless services organization. Its integrated, borough-wide model spans street outreach, food access, shelter, behavioral health services, and housing pathways, creating continuity of care in ways fragmented systems often cannot.

New York City has previously recognized Project Hospitality as one of the few providers operating both street outreach and shelter programs. This distinctive position allows the organization to serve at multiple points across the continuum of care: at the front door of the system through outreach and food access, and within the system through shelter, supportive services, behavioral health care, and pathways to housing stability.

Project Hospitality has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach—delivering coordinated, compassionate care at scale, while also **partnering with and strengthening other community-based organizations to expand reach** and impact across Staten Island. This is a system that is not only working but adapting in real time to rising need.

As demand continues to grow—driven by rising costs, food insecurity, and reductions in federal supports—this infrastructure is under increasing strain. The question is no longer whether the need exists—it is whether the systems already serving tens of thousands of Staten Islanders will be resourced to keep pace.

Alignment with Mayoral and Council Priorities

Project Hospitality aligns with the housing and food vision of Mayor Mamdani and the New York City Council.

Mayor Mamdani has emphasized that systems must keep people connected to food and benefits. On June 1, 2026, the Mayor announced a whole-of-government initiative to help New Yorkers maintain SNAP access and said that new federal work requirements "make it harder for people to access food." He also said, "Here in New York, we refuse to stand by while Washington takes food away from our families."

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On homelessness, the Mayor has emphasized connection to housing rather than displacement. He said that if the City is "not connecting homeless New Yorkers to the housing that they so desperately need, then you cannot deem anything you're doing to be a success."

Project Hospitality delivers on this vision every day by:

- Serving as a direct point of connection to care,
- Ensuring continuity across services rather than fragmentation, and
- Maintaining pathways from outreach to shelter, services, and housing. Project Hospitality's public continuum-of-care materials describe exactly this integrated progression from food and shelter to clinical supports and transitional and permanent housing.

Similarly, the New York City Council has affirmed that **food is a human right** and that government bears responsibility for ensuring access. The Council's food equity agenda states that "the primary responsibility for ensuring the right to food lies with government" and emphasizes supporting emergency food providers across the city. Council oversight on hunger and food insecurity has also focused on increasing demand at food banks and pantries, improving access to benefits, and the impact of federal cuts on local providers.

Project Hospitality operationalizes these priorities every day by ensuring access to food, connecting individuals to benefits and services, and delivering integrated care at scale.

FY2027 Discretionary Funding Requests

Project Hospitality respectfully submits the following FY2027 discretionary applications. **These requests reflect our most minimal programmatic needs**—funds that New Yorkers on Staten Island are already relying on for access to food, housing support, health services, and stability.

Given the organization's unique and outsized role in the borough—**1 in 10 Staten Islanders will benefit from these funding requests**—we respectfully urge the Council not only to support these requests, but to consider **increasing funding** where possible to meet rising demand and ensure continuity of care.

ID Number	Project Title	Requested Funding	Meeting the New Need
2165982	HIV Pathways	$150,000	$150,000

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2210825	Older Adults Mental Health	$100,000	$100,000
2211724	Children and Families in NYC Homeless System	$79,550	$79,550
2211731	Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education for Vulnerable Staten Islanders	$50,000	$100,000
2211737	Food Access and Benefits	$75,000	$125,000
2211739	Food Pantries (Speaker's Initiative)	$50,000	$100,000
2211743	Food and Nutrition Services for Homeless and Hungry Staten Islanders	$15,000	$25,000
2211754	Mid-Island Mobile Food & Nutrition Program Serving Seniors	$10,000	$20,000
2211759	South Shore Mobile Food Pantry & Nutrition Program Serving Seniors	$15,000	$25,000
2211774	LGBTQIA+ Youth Support and Services	$100,000	$100,000

Closing

Investing in Project Hospitality is not about supporting a single program or a temporary intervention. It is about sustaining a proven community-based infrastructure that keeps vulnerable New Yorkers connected to care, stability, safety, food, shelter, services, and pathways forward.

Project Hospitality is one of Staten Island's most essential access points for individuals and families facing hunger, homelessness, housing instability, behavioral health challenges, and crisis. In a borough with limited alternatives, continued investment is not optional—it is fundamental to maintaining the safety net that residents depend on every day.

At a time when community need is increasing and access to support is under continued pressure, New York City has both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that every borough, including Staten Island, has the infrastructure required to care for its residents with dignity. The Mayor has emphasized the importance of keeping New Yorkers connected to food assistance and housing, and the Council has affirmed the City's responsibility to support food access, emergency response, and community-based providers.

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Sustained and increased investment in Project Hospitality is not the launch of a new idea. It is a strategic decision to strengthen a trusted system that is already delivering results at scale. It protects critical access points, preserves continuity of care, supports frontline response, and ensures that residents facing hardship are not left to navigate crisis alone.

This investment is also a statement of values. It says that New York City will continue to stand with its most vulnerable residents, strengthen the organizations closest to the community, and ensure that compassion is matched with the resources required to deliver care effectively. Project Hospitality is ready to continue doing this work with excellence, accountability, and partnership. With sustained and increased support, we can strengthen this vital system of care and help ensure that Staten Island residents have access to the dignity, stability, and hope they deserve.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to the communities we serve.

Prospect Park Alliance
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Written Testimony of Morgan Monaco
Prospect Park Alliance President
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Oversight – Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Finance:

My name is Morgan Monaco, and I am the President of Prospect Park Alliance and the Prospect Park Administrator. I am testifying as a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, representing more than 450 organizations that believe our city's parks are not a luxury, but essential public infrastructure.

I often speak of Prospect Park as Brooklyn's Backyard, and it truly is. We welcome more than 10 million visits each year from every zip code in the borough. But as any homeowner knows, a backyard is only as good as its upkeep. Parks support public health, climate resilience, recreation, and community connection, but they can only fulfill that role when they are adequately staffed and maintained.

We appreciate Mayor Mamdani's inclusion of funding in the FY27 Executive Budget to baseline 161 critical Parks positions. This investment recognizes the importance of the workforce that keeps our parks safe, clean, and accessible.

However, the Executive Budget fails to provide permanent funding for 115 additional Parks employees whose one-year contracts are set to expire at the end of this fiscal year. These positions include 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers and 15 GreenThumb staff. These workers provide essential services to New Yorkers every day and should not face annual uncertainty about whether their positions will continue to exist.

PEP officers help ensure public safety, assist park visitors, and support the welcoming environment that New Yorkers expect in their public spaces. GreenThumb staff provide critical support to hundreds of community gardens across the city, helping local volunteers steward green spaces that strengthen neighborhoods and improve quality of life.

At the same time, the Parks Department continues to face the cumulative impact of years of disinvestment. Since 2023, NYC Parks has lost more than 600 staffing lines. While non-profit partners, volunteers, and community organizations contribute enormously to the care and activation of public spaces, they cannot replace the core workforce required to operate and maintain a park system that serves millions of New Yorkers each year.

The lack of operational funding creates a maintenance gap that undermines the City's capital investments and wastes taxpayer dollars. While funding is often available to build or renovate facilities, there is frequently insufficient funding to maintain them over time. As a result, the City is forced into a costly cycle of rebuilding infrastructure that could have been preserved through routine care and maintenance. It is fiscally irresponsible to invest in new assets while failing to adequately support the workforce needed to protect existing ones.

In Prospect Park, we see the consequences of this challenge every day. Most of our 10 million annual visitors arrive during afternoons, evenings, and weekends, placing tremendous demands on park operations, maintenance, and public safety. At the same time, climate-driven challenges—including severe storms, flooding, drought, and extreme weather events—continue to place additional strain on our public spaces and the workers who care for them.

To begin rebuilding agency capacity, we urge the Council to fund an additional 276 Parks positions, including:

- 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers;
- 100 City Park Workers, Associate Park Service Workers, and Gardeners;
- 50 Forestry staff; and
- 26 Playground Associates.

These investments would help ensure that parks remain safe, clean, welcoming, and accessible for all New Yorkers while beginning to reverse years of staffing losses throughout the agency.

Funding our parks is one of the most effective ways to improve quality of life and affordability for New Yorkers. Parks provide free access to recreation, nature, community, and respite in every neighborhood. They are among the City's most valuable public assets, but they cannot thrive without the workers who maintain them.

I urge the Administration to permanently baseline the remaining 115 Parks workers currently funded through one-shot contracts and ask the Council to fund the additional 276 positions needed to rebuild agency capacity. Together, these investments will move New York City closer to the long-overdue goal of dedicating 1% of the City budget to NYC Parks.

Thank you for your time and your continued advocacy for New York City's parks.

NYC Council – Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

I am writing to urge the City Council to honor the commitment made during the One LIC negotiations by including funding for a lighting study in the Long Island City IBZ in the executive budget. Inadequate street lighting has created serious safety concerns — and an equally serious perception of unsafety — that make it increasingly difficult for businesses and their employees to operate in the neighborhood.

Pursuit is located at 47-10 Austell Place and has been in there for nearly a decade.

We are a workforce development organization promoting economic mobility for low-income New Yorkers by providing an AI-Native training program and connecting participants with high paying jobs. Participants dedicate 600+ hours of training in their pursuit of better jobs, and we make our facility available 24/7 so that they have reliable access to tech, wifi, and whatever tools they need to further their education. Most classes run during nights and weekends, and safety has been a top concern of ours for years.

The Long Island City IBZ lacks the retail presence that typically provides natural lighting, foot traffic, and informal street safety. As a result, streets and sidewalks remain dangerously dark — and because most business activity occurs inside the buildings themselves, sidewalks receive little of the foot traffic that would normally deter crime. This becomes especially concerning during evening hours, when employees arriving and departing are left vulnerable in poorly lit conditions. These concerns are not unfounded: over the past three years, the IBZ has seen documented incidents including verbal and physical assault, grand larceny, and illegal dumping. A comprehensive lighting study is a critical and overdue step toward addressing these conditions.

Our need for improved lighting is well-documented and long-standing. We have advocated through 311 submissions and in partnership with the Long Island City Partnership (LICP), the area's local economic development organization. Through that process, NYC DOT reviewed our submissions and approved eight lighting installations across the Long Island City IBZ — a determination made over four years ago. Yet despite that approval, not a single light has been installed. When LICP followed up with DOT, they were told that no contract is currently in place to carry out the work. The approved lights exist on paper; what is missing is the commitment to fund and execute their installation.

We have tried reaching out to our local elected officials through LICP, but there has been no traction. We were encouraged when this became part of the agreement with

One LIC thanks to Councilmember Julie Won, but was extremely disappointed when it was left out of the draft executive budget. It has been clear that without the City Council's advocacy, these lights will not be installed, nor does the opportunity for new lights exist at all.

Pursuit is very happy operating in LIC, but the perception of safety concerns has hurt our business multiple times over the past couple of years alone. We have had multiple physical assaults on students coming or going from our office, had a student stalked and threatened with their life, a hate crime with perpetrators threatening to pull a student onto the overpass on Skillman where there is no lighting and it would be very difficult to see any incident, multiple threats of violence with a firearm, harassment, stalking, and theft. We've reported these incidents, requested police presence, tried to organize with other tenants, and have ultimately found support and solidarity through the LIC BID team. We are grateful to them for hanging lights during the holiday season, but feel we are severely overdue for the city's investment in safety in our area - the presence of street lights would be an obvious first step.

We hope that you consider our testimony and include the funding for the lighting study in the budget.

Sincerely,

Victoria Mayo

Workplace Experience Lead at Pursuit Transformation Company

victoriam@pursuit.org

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Brie Taylor

Trustees
Sharla Emery
Abigail Goldberg
Carol Rance-Fisher

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321
DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
FY 2027 Executive Budget
Testimony
June 10, 2026

Speaker Julia Menin, Deputy Speaker and Libraries Committee Chair Dr. Nantasha Williams, Finance Committee Chair Linda Lee, and fellow City Council members, thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify on behalf of the over 840 Local 1321 Queens Library Guild members, that include librarians, clerical, IT, motor vehicle drivers, maintainers, custodians, public safety officers, and other titles.

Local 1321 members are disappointed.

In 2016, with great fanfare and many news articles, Mayor De Blasio and the City Council touted their agreement to "baseline" funding across the three library systems. From an August 26, 2016 City Council Press Release, these are their words "Working alongside the Administration, they were also able to secure $43 million baseline funding which was adopted through negotiation in the FY 17 budget. This funding will help with more staff hires, extended hours on open days, continue 6 day service, more classes offered to the public and more materials."

Mayor De Blasio's baseline did not stop him from proposing cuts in successive preliminary budgets. Mayor Adams continued this strategy and proposed cuts in his preliminary budgets. Mayor Mamdani continued the decades' long library budget dance and proposed cuts in his preliminary budget. With great social media fanfare, he celebrated the 10th Anniversary of Mayor De Blasio's baselining, by announcing his proposed underwhelming baseline.

As we have experienced, these mayoral declarations are not guaranteed baselining. Local 1321 is calling for our elected officials to guarantee baseline funding and legislate or amend the City's Charter to allocate 0.5% of the City's budget to New York City's public libraries, which would be an amount that provides substantial financing for the library system. With a predictable and adequate funding source, libraries can plan for the future, hire additional staff, provide sustainable six-day service, modernize library infrastructure, maintain clean branches, provide robust

IT, and offer additional programs and services. Furthermore, having baselining will prevent unnecessary conflicts between Local 1321 and the Library's Administration. Currently, the Administration refuses to recognize and pay a vital group of public service library workers for their invaluable work.

Mayor Mamdani, this country and our City needs you to succeed. That success comes with a strong foundation of public institutions including libraries.

Mayor Mamdani and the City Council, if you are serious about supporting public libraries, amend the City's Charter or legislate baselining of library budgets, and allocate 0.5% of the City's budget to the three public library systems.

Queens Museum
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368

Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
Submitted by:
Debra Wimpfheimer, Executive Director, Queens Museum
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Debra Wimpfheimer, and I am the new Executive Director of the Queens Museum.

First, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of our local Queens Councilmembers for your continued support and leadership. We are deeply grateful for the Queens Delegation's longstanding partnership and support of the Queens Museum.

Before turning to the Museum's specific capital and operating requests, I would like to join my colleagues across the Cultural Institutions Group in urging the Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million for arts and culture in the Fiscal 2027 Adopted Budget. We are grateful that the Executive Budget includes $10 million for the sector, but a significant gap remains. Stable and predictable funding is essential to sustaining the cultural organizations that serve millions of New Yorkers each year through education programs, workforce development, public programming, and free community access.

As New York City's cultural institutions continue to face rising operating costs, inflationary pressures, and increased demand for services, baselining this funding would provide the stability necessary for long-term planning, staffing, and program delivery. Cultural institutions are not only centers of creativity and learning; they are vital civic infrastructure, supporting jobs, tourism, economic activity, and community wellbeing across every borough. For institutions like Queens Museum, predictable operating support allows us to maximize the City's substantial capital investments and ensure those investments translate into meaningful public service. We also encourage continued efforts to improve the City's cultural capital process so that institutions can more efficiently steward public investments and deliver projects that benefit New Yorkers.

With the completion of our $42 million capital renovation, the Queens Museum will be significantly strengthened in its ability to serve children, teens, families, and seniors across the borough. The Museum of the future will be greener, more sustainable, and fully accessible.

This renovation will:

- Address long-standing accessibility challenges;
- Establish the Suna Children's Museum at Queens Museum — the borough's first dedicated children's museum for arts and culture;
- Create a World's Fair Archive, Exhibition Galleries, and Study Center honoring Queens' global legacy;
- And introduce a new outdoor playscape designed for broad public use.

We have several requests before the Council, including $4 million in capital funding to fully replace the Museum's roof.

Since approximately 2016, the Museum has documented more than 45 roof leaks impacting galleries, collection storage, the auditorium, and back-of-house areas. Nearly 50% of the roof has experienced active or recurring leaks, despite repeated repairs and coordination with the Department of Design and Construction, the Department of Cultural Affairs, manufacturers, and contractors.

The persistence of these leaks indicates a systemic failure—not isolated maintenance issues.

Replacing the roof before the larger renovation proceeds is essential to protecting the City's $42 million capital investment. Without full replacement, new construction, finishes, and building systems would remain vulnerable to water damage, potentially resulting in delays, change orders, and avoidable future capital costs.

We are seeking:

- $1 million from the Queens Borough President;
- 1 million from the Queens Delegation of the New York City Council; and
- 2 million from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Together, this funding will allow us to move forward responsibly and safeguard the long-term success of this transformative project.

In addition to our capital request, we are seeking the following operating support:

- $50,000 in Queens Delegation funding; and
- $150,000 from the Speaker.

This funding will support educational capacity-building as we prepare for this next phase of growth. As we expand our physical footprint, we must also expand our outreach to schools, senior centers, and community-based organizations across Queens. Our Education team, led by Chief Learning Officer Kimaada LeGendre, will continue conducting focus groups and piloting programs informed directly by community needs, with a strong emphasis on equity, access, and inclusion.

The roof replacement, combined with strategic investment in educational capacity, will ensure the safety, accessibility, and long-term vitality of the Queens Museum—and will allow for the successful launch of Queens' first Children's Museum for arts and culture.

We thank you for your continued partnership and for your consideration of this request. With your support, the Queens Museum will be fully equipped to meet the growing needs of our borough.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

New York City Council Committee on Finance

In Support of Funding the New Visions Data Portal

June 10, 2026

Submitted by: Marina Galazidis

Date: June 10, 2026

Good morning, Chair and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Marina Galazidis, and I am the Principal of Quest to Learn, a New York City Public School serving grades 6–12 in Chelsea, Manhattan, operating within the New Visions District. I appear before you today to urge the City Council to fund the New Visions Data Portal.

This is not a request for something better or more convenient. This is a request to preserve something irreplaceable.

No Existing NYCPS System Does What the Portal Does

New York City Public Schools maintains many data systems, and I use them. But none of them — individually or combined — comes close to what the New Visions Data Portal offers. The Portal is centralized, transparent, interactive, and collaborative. It is customizable and adaptive, so that any member of a school team can see exactly what they need to see about a student in a way that is both broad and immediately actionable.

The difference is not a matter of degree. It is a matter of design. The Portal was built for school teams — for the counselor checking credit accumulation, the special education team tracking post secondary milestones and CUNY applications, the teacher identifying which students are on the edge of failing a course that determines graduation eligibility. Losing that system means losing intentional integration, real-time responsiveness, and a coherent view of the whole student.

Data That Gets Put to Use in Real Time

At Quest to Learn, we serve a high-need population, including a multilingual learner community that has grown from 3 percent to 25 percent of our school over the last four years. Our students carry complex needs. Catching problems early, and acting on them immediately, is not aspirational. It is the equity work that our students demand of us.

The Portal gives us what we need to do that. It is data put to use in real time: for programming decisions, for intervention targeting, for identifying students who qualify for opportunities they might otherwise never know about. It is the mechanism by which no student falls through the cracks. And crucially, it is useful not just for staff, but for students and families — something no other NYCPS tool achieves in the same integrated, accessible way.

I Have Seen This Work at Scale

Before becoming a principal, I served as the Director of Leadership at New Visions for Public Schools, where I guided dozens of school leaders in using the Portal as a core tool for decision-making. The outcome, year over year, was exceptional results for students. The Portal was not incidental to those outcomes. It was central to them.

I have now seen both sides: the school network level and the building level. The conclusion is the same. The Portal is how school leaders lead with data rather than around it.

Graduation Is the Finish Line. Equity Is the Journey.

Under my leadership, Quest to Learn's graduation rate has risen from 74 percent to 86.7 percent. I am proud of that number. But graduation is the finish line, not the whole race. The Portal is what ensures equity along the way — that the student who is falling behind in October does not become the student who does not graduate in June. It closes gaps before they become crises.

This Tool — Not Tools Like It — Is Essential

I want to be precise in my language here. I am not asking the Council to fund a category of tools. I am asking you to fund this tool. The New Visions Data Portal has been built, tested, refined, and integrated into the daily practice of schools like mine over many years. That institutional knowledge, that functional coherence, that trust from school teams — it cannot be replicated quickly or cheaply.

I cannot imagine my work without it. More importantly, I cannot imagine the work of the students and families my school serves without it. Losing the Portal does not create a gap in our tool set. It creates a gap in our ability to serve children.

I urge this Committee to fund the New Visions Data Portal in full. The return on that investment is measured in students who graduate, families who are partners in their children's education, and schools that can do the equity work the City expects of us.

Thank you.

Marina Galazidis

Principal
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QUEST TO LEARN

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Testimony on the New York City Fiscal Year 2027 Budget
for the Committee on Mental Health & Substance Use
June 5, 2026

Hewett Chiu

Good afternoon. My name is Hewett Chiu, President & CEO at RaisingHealth Partners. Thank you, Chair Cabán, for the opportunity to testify about the importance of continuing to fund the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative, Peer Specialists Support Initiative, and other initiatives that ensure vulnerable immigrant populations receive equitable access to mental health services.

RaisingHealth is a public health nonprofit in Sunset Park that helps close the mental health care gap faced by immigrant New Yorkers. Since 2020, our Mental Health Program has provided bilingual, culturally tailored mental health counseling, peer support, and community psychoeducation and destigmatization, free of cost and without regard to legal status and insurance. We work primarily with undocumented immigrants who suffer high risks of behavioral health issues due to legal barriers to health care access, financial challenges, language barriers, and cultural stigma.

One such individual is Winnie, an immigrant from China. She sought our support while undergoing chemotherapy, raising children as a single parent, and experiencing overwhelming anxiety. Through in-language sessions with our Licensed Mental Health Counselor, she learned strategies for emotional regulation, coping, and drawing on personal resilience.

Upon completing her course of therapy, Winnie told us, “Thank you for helping me find ways to cope. My life feels more empowering, and I’m able to cherish my relationships with my children. I feel grateful and hopeful, looking forward to the future for both myself and my family.”

The incredible impact we made on Winnie was made possible by discretionary funding from NYC Council that supports our health services for immigrants, including our Mental Health Program.

Winnie is just one of many community members we serve each year who have their own unique, complex mental health needs. Our community members, many of them

undocumented and speaking little to no English, struggle to navigate healthcare systems and do not know where to seek services. Due to low health literacy and/or limited financial resources, many do not know how to take care of their mental health or have to prioritize finding employment and providing for their family. Now, in the midst of the federal administration's significant increase in immigration enforcement activities, with NYC as one of the top targets, many immigrant community members are unwilling to leave their homes to access critical mental health care to address their heightened anxieties. It is more important than ever to adequately fund immigrant-serving community-based organizations like RaisingHealth that have built trusting relationships with the community and continue to reach these individuals who are struggling to live their daily lives.

RaisingHealth is one of many such organizations uniquely rising to the occasion to address the ever-growing needs of immigrant New Yorkers. Our team members are linguistically and culturally competent to ensure every community member we serve feels comfortable sharing the full scope of their needs so we can support them appropriately.

For our Mental Health Program specifically, our bilingual Peer Specialists conduct psychoeducational outreach and workshops and connect individuals in need directly with our in-house bilingual therapists. Together, our therapist and the participant determine a plan to address their needs, which typically includes joining individual and/or group mental health counseling and receiving continuous follow-up peer support from our Peer Specialists.

We also inform all program participants of our other in-house services, including health care enrollment, food pantry, ESOL classes, and safety trainings, ensuring their full range of needs are met. We operate within a network of over 100 community-based partners, and together, we are building the infrastructure to identify immigrant community members with health, mental health, and social needs and address those needs in a prompt and culturally sensitive manner.

I would like to thank the City Council for its support of the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative, Peer Specialists Support Initiative, and other mental health initiatives. I urge the Council to both continue and enhance funding in FY27 for these initiatives, which have been crucial to sustaining much-needed health and social services for immigrants across NYC. This moment of crisis for immigrant New Yorkers calls for even greater investment in these services. We ask that the Council increase its funding for these initiatives to uphold the value that healthcare is not a privilege but a basic human right.

June 09. 2026

RECESS ART

Testimony of **KT Kennedy (kt@recessart.org):**
Associate Director of Youth Organizing
On Behalf of Recess Art: Assembly
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing on Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon Chair Rivera, Chair Joseph, and members of the Council,

My name is KT Kennedy, and I serve as the Associate Director of Youth Organizing at Recess Art. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Recess Assembly, the program I lead, a decade-long arts-based alternative-to-incarceration and youth leadership program serving system-impacted young adults with felonies, misdemeanors, and mental health mandates, ages 18–26 across New York City.

I want to begin with a simply profound truth: The work we do saves lives.

Every week, young people walk through our doors carrying the weight of systems, criminal legal system involvement, housing instability, foster care placement, family separation, poverty, violence, discrimination, and profound isolation. Many have internalized who they are, what they are worth, and how far they can go. At Recess Assembly, we offer something increasingly rare in New York City: a place where system-impacted young people can grow into leaders, artists, visionaries, and community members with something deeply valuable to contribute.

For the last ten years, Assembly has provided an alternative pathway. Through paid fellowships, leadership development, mentorship, community care, mental health support, and creative practice, we help young creatives and leaders build the relationships, skills, confidence, and stability necessary to thrive. We have watched hundreds of participants return to school, secure housing, gain employment, reconnect with their communities, become mentors, become teaching artists, and become advocates for others navigating the same systems they once faced alone.

This is why funding arts and culture is not separate from funding youth development, public safety, workforce development, or community wellness. It is all connected. This is public safety, we are a part of the daily programs that create safety every day for all New Yorkers.

When a young New Yorker has access to an intentional trusted community space, meaningful relationships, creative expression, and paid opportunities to lead, they are less likely to become disconnected from school, employment, and community. Assembly participants are more likely to envision a healthy and safer future for themselves and those connected to them, and have the support necessary to reach it.

Far too often, organizations like Recess Art are asked to address the consequences of systemic disinvestment while operating with limited and uncertain resources. Yet community-based arts organizations consistently fill gaps that other state and city systems cannot. Recess Assembly provides

belonging where there is isolation, opportunities where there are barriers, and care where there has been harm.

Arts and culture are not a luxury. They are essential civic infrastructure, and it is essential to community safety. They strengthen neighborhoods, support local neighborhoods, improve mental health outcomes, foster connection, and create pathways for young people who have too often been excluded from opportunity.

As you finalize the Executive Budget, I urgently encourage the increased investments in the Department of Cultural Affairs and protect funding for community-based cultural organizations serving New York City's most vulnerable young people. We need sustained, long-term investments in programs that are proven to keep young people connected, safe, engaged, and alive.

Young new yorkers deserve places to belong, create, to heal, and they need places to imagine a future. But most importantly, they deserve a city willing to invest in their futures. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to New York City's young people who are always excluded.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.
Thank you,

KT Kennedy

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EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT/ SECRETARY
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Testimony for June 10, 2026 - 9:30 AM Hearing at NYC Council

I am Francine Garber-Cohen, president of Regina Opera Company.

Thank you for listening to the testimony today explaining why NYC and NYC arts request that $30 million be added to the Baseline funding for Arts and Culture in the Budget . Rather than recite all of the reasons given by others, I'd like to single out 1..

Do you enjoy music? Whether it means going to Lincoln Center to hear the NY Philharmonic, or visiting the Metropolitan Opera to enjoy an opera by Mozart or Puccini or a new opera, or attending a Broadway show?

And don't you feel proud hearing your child or your niece or nephew play in the school band or sing in the Chorus? Well…how do you think these players, singers, teachers get their training and experience? From your small, local arts organizations which depend on NYC funding.

For example, Regina Opera's recent performance of Haydn's Trumpet Concerto featured our long-time trumpet player Nathan Mckinstry. Because of the experience and training he received playing in Regina Opera's 35-piece orchestra, he was able to "score" an audition for the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. When he was asked to sight-read some trumpet parts of several operas, they were operas that he had already just studied, rehearsed, and performed with us in Brooklyn. He "aced" the audition and is now a full-time trumpet player in the Met Opera Orchestra.

Nathan's professional career is the result of your funding. Baselining the $30 million will make funding more predictable and stable which is so important for small orgs like ours which depends on public funds to keep going. Please help us to continue training more professional musicians, singers, dancers, and teachers, so YOU and NYC can enjoy yourselves.
Thank You,
Francine Garber - Cohen

FY27 Executive Budget Testimony to NYC Council

Re: Council Must Restore Funding for Front-Line NYC Ethics Oversight Agencies – Department of Investigations, Conflicts of Interest Board

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony about the budgets of the Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB) and Department of Investigation (DOI). Reinvent Albany advocates for transparent and accountable government in New York.

First, we thank the City Council for holding budget hearings on the FY 2027 Executive Budget for both DOI and COIB, responding to a joint letter from Reinvent Albany and other watchdogs urging the City Council to restore funding to both agencies. Both DOI and COIB are operating at historically low funding and staffing levels despite their increasing responsibilities. The Council's hearing was very illuminating about the effect this has had on their ability to fulfill their missions.

While Reinvent Albany fully supports the funding requests from both agencies, we caution that these requests only stabilize the agencies and meet their needs for FY2027. This is not a "once and done" budget need. The Council must ensure that the FY2028 budget continues the progress in restoring them to past staffing levels, as well as meeting other technology and contracting needs of the agencies.

1. **DOI – total of $10 million for staffing**
    a. $4 million for mandated 9/11 investigation
    b. $6 million to stabilize the budget
        i. $4.53 million for Other Than Personal Services (OTPS) costs
        ii. $1.14 million to reverse 50 percent vacancy reduction plan
        iii. $290,520 for five new, entry-level investigators
2. **COIB – total of $395,000 for staffing**
    a. $95,000 for legal advice attorney
    b. $300,000 for pay equity, so COIB staff salaries are more competitive
        i. $230,000 for senior staff
        ii. $70,000 for junior staff

3. **Additional COIB needs**
    a. **$1.5 million in capital for new financial disclosure system** – COIB stated at its hearing that it is seeking a new financial disclosure filing system, and a budget line should be provided for OTI for $1.5 million in capital expenditures. The current system does not allow COIB to search the data – it only produces PDF reports, and they are unable to edit the questions. Additionally, COIB is unable to provide elected officials' responses in an open data format. The current system is both antiquated for COIB and does not provide the public easy access to disclosure statements of the elected officials that represent them.
    b. **Auditor needed for legal defense trusts** – COIB also stated that it does not have funding or current staff expertise to perform the audit requirements of the Legal Defense Trusts Law. Under the law, biennial audits using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) are required. These audits have not taken place for any of the reported trusts.
    c. **Case management system upgrade** – Lastly, COIB noted that it has to annually seek approval for upgrading its outdated, 2013-era case management system from OMB. Because COIB is a small agency, it has been at the back of the line for this upgrade, and as a result, it has had to annually reapply.

Department of Investigation down more than 100 staff since FY17

DOI has been decimated by repeated Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) initiatives from the Adams administration. DOI has also been tasked with new responsibilities, in particular a mandated 9/11 investigation pursuant to Resolution 560-A of 2025 that must be funded. The next page shows a chart and table of DOI's full-time staffing and budget levels from FY17 to FY27, compared to adjustments to reflect the growth in the overall NYC budget and inflation. More than 100 positions have been lost in this time period.

It is clear that despite the growth in the NYC budget and complaints made to DOI, the agency has not been given adequate resources to oversee City agencies. According to the Mayor's Management Report for DOI:

- Complaints increased from **12,128** in FY17 to **14,435** in FY25.
- It took **152 days** to complete an investigation in FY17, compared to **251 days** in FY25.
- **1,346** investigations were closed in FY17 vs **806** in FY25.
- **765** arrests resulted from DOI investigations in FY17 vs **220** in FY25.
- **498** policy and procedure recommendations were issued to agencies in FY17, compared to **158** in FY25.

COIB's staff has not increased, despite much larger responsibilities

While COIB does not report to the MMR, it is clear that they also have experienced challenges meeting their goals. At the hearing, COIB noted that they had 21 staff in 1991 when they were first created, and were responsible for overseeing 240,000 NYC employees. Today, they have 22 staff members and oversee more than 300,000 employees, in addition to former NYC staff who must abide by revolving door limitations.

While COIB has done remarkably well in handling a large volume of inquiries and filings, their enforcement efforts have been strained. For example, in 2019, COIB issued 86 findings of violations. In 2024, this dropped to 46, according to their 2024 annual report (2025 report not yet available).

Independent budgeting needed for DOI and COIB

We strongly urge the City Council to not only meet COIB and DOI's funding requests, but also ensure that they are permanently protected from budget cuts. We ask that you support a charter amendment to provide independent budgeting to both agencies via a fixed formula, as proposed by the 2025 NYC Council Charter Revision Commission.

Joint Testimony to the NYC Council for
Executive Budget Hearing, Public Comment

Modest $255,000 investment in OpenRecords portal will encourage better NYC FOIL performance, fully implement Local Law 11 of 2025

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the Executive Budget as relates to the budget of the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS). Our organizations were strong supporters of Intro 1235 of 2025, which codifies the NYC OpenRecords portal for Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests, and requires all city agencies to use it. We thank the City Council for passing this transformative transparency legislation, and again urge you to ensure that it is fully funded.

We continue to support DORIS's $255,000 funding request so that the agency can have the resources necessary to fully implement the law. This includes the following:

- $105,000 annually for a permanent new developer for DORIS;
- $110,000 in OTPS funding for a systems architect and UX designer, likely under the citywide Microsoft contract; and
- $40,000 annually for Azure cloud storage to support the OpenRecords portal.

This is an extremely modest amount in the context of a proposed $124.7 billion NYC budget, but will mean a great deal for DORIS as it implements Local Law 11 of 2025 while fulfilling its current responsibilities.

We ask that the City Council ensure that the final budget includes this important funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

RENAISSANCE

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

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Testimony of Ximena Pena, Renaissance Economic Development Corporation

Good afternoon. I am Ximena Pena, Director of Business Development at Renaissance Economic Development Corporation. Thank you, Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

Renaissance was founded by Asian Americans for Equality nearly 30 years ago to provide affordable capital and free training and resources to underserved entrepreneurs. To date, we have deployed $70 million in low-interest loans, creating and retaining more than 7,000 jobs across New York City. As a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) certified by the U.S. Treasury, we play an essential role in helping our diverse NYC neighborhoods thrive.

For many years, the City Council's Chamber on the Go Initiative has been vital to our work, allowing us to provide counseling and education in English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish. Two years ago, we partnered with the Council as well as BOC Capital and Accompany Capital to launch the CDFI Small Business Initiative, which provides crucial support to emerging solo-entrepreneurs.

As new federal policies and challenging economic conditions threaten struggling small businesses, these Council programs are more important than ever. They are crucial funding streams, allowing Renaissance to continue helping immigrant entrepreneurs survive.

Rising interest rates and operating costs are squeezing small businesses, while consumers are pulling back on their spending. Meanwhile, the U.S. Small Business Administration is now restricting its loan programs to U.S. citizens. Many green card holders - lawful permanent residents - are now effectively locked out of federal capital funding. Additionally, CDFI-funded technical assistance is limited to only U.S. citizens, preventing us from offering critical support to green card holders and other legal permanent resident clients.

These new restrictions have caused an unprecedented spike in demand for Renaissance's services, pushing our resources to the breaking point. At the same time, our own costs for

capital are rising, but we are doing everything in our power to avoid passing these higher costs on to our low-to-moderate clients. It all adds up to an unsustainable situation for both Renaissance and our clients, which will undoubtedly limit lending opportunities to spur new small businesses. More than ever, we need the Council's support to fill the gaps left behind by restrictive federal policies.

We urge the City Council to fully fund its small business initiatives, and to provide even more robust resources to Renaissance and other CDFIs. By investing in our capacity today, you are providing a lifeline to the hard-working entrepreneurs who are being left behind.

We also ask for your support and advocacy for a new version of the NYC Small Business Opportunity Fund, an essential program that, in partnership with nonprofits like Renaissance, helped keep many businesses running in the aftermath of the pandemic. The current crisis facing our small businesses mirrors the darkest days of the pandemic. If our neighborhood mom-and-pops - the backbone of NYC's economy - are to survive, they need immediate, accessible and affordable capital and technical assistance. A program like this one could be their last hope.

Renaissance and AAFE are grateful for your steadfast support through the years and we are eager to partner with you to make sure small businesses continue to be the lifeblood of our immigrant and working class neighborhoods.

Thank you.

June 10, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Finance, Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by Em Ruby, Policy Specialist, Riverkeeper

My name is Em Ruby, and I am the New York City Policy Specialist at Riverkeeper. Riverkeeper is a member-supported watchdog organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Hudson River, including its tributaries, expanding recreational access in waters throughout New York City, and safeguarding drinking water supplies, through advocacy rooted in community partnerships, science and law. Thank you, Chair Lee and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify today.

New York City is on the frontlines of climate change, and New Yorkers today face serious, overlapping threats from rising sea levels, coastal storm surge, extreme rainfall and extreme heat. According to the most recent New York State Climate Impact Assessments, total annual precipitation in New York State is projected to increase by 6% to 17% by the end of the century, with the largest increases projected for New York City, the Catskills, and the lower Hudson River Valley[1]. At the same time, the city's critical water infrastructure systems, many of which were built decades ago, require significant investment to maintain current levels of service and to expand capacity in order to meet the challenges posed by today's changing climate.

The federal government's unprecedented attacks on climate mitigation and resiliency, on clean air, clean water, and environmental justice, are upending decades of work to improve public health and the environment. Now more than ever, we need bold leadership from the New York City Council and this Administration to ensure that adequate funding and resources are provided to critical agencies to protect existing ecosystems and to prepare our city for a changing climate.

Riverkeeper applauds Mayor Mamdani and the administration for showing a strong commitment to tackling the climate crisis in the FY27 Executive Budget. The administration is making a meaningful investment in flood resiliency, committing $10.6 million to fully staff the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency, and $95 million to expand the Cloudburst program

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1 https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-the-assessment/new-york-states-changing-climate/nysc-precipitation/

Em Ruby, Advocacy Policy and Planning Coordinator · eruby@riverkeeper.org
· 20 Secor Road · Ossining, NY 10562 ·

to help prevent flooding from extreme rainfall in Homecrest, Brooklyn. We are also pleased to see funding for the FiDi Coastal Resiliency Plan, and investments in a city climate adaptation plan for 2027, and $3 million in permanent funding for critical forest management staff to support the care of our natural areas included in the Mayor's Executive Budget.

As the final budget takes shape, Our testimony calls for the Council and Administration to support the following additional priorities in this year's budget:

1. Eliminate the $313 million NYC Water Board Rental Payment, in which the City plans to charge the Water Board more than $1.3 billion in rent from 2026 through 2029, taking money away from DEP water-related infrastructure improvements. Already this year, the NYC Water Board has proposed raising rates by 6% and the water rental payment is attributed to the proposed increase.

2. Dedicate $3 million to support full implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule

3. Allocate $10 Million for DEP to complete the comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan, as mandated by Local Law 70 of 2025.

4. Allocate $10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan.

5. Fully fund the Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the Ashokan headworks project that is needed to repair the Delaware Aqueduct, and the Supplemental EIS for water discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek.

6. Dedicate $150 million to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, including baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff positions and funding to support other City agencies that will expand tree canopy under their jurisdiction.

7. Provide $4.5 Million to protect New York City's Wetlands to invest in natural and nature-based solutions that protect residents from coastal and inland flooding and improve water quality.

I. Reject the $313 million rental payment from the NYC Water Board

Riverkeeper strongly urges the City Council to reject the proposed $1.3 billion rental payment from the NYC Water Board over four years, from FY27-FY29, including $313 million in FY27. This rental payment is the legacy of an outdated agreement that allows the Mayor to request payment from the Water Board, taking funds generated by water ratepayers intended to fund and maintain the city's water and sewer operations, and

transferring them to the city's general fund. Originally, the rental payment was used to pay off bonds issued by the City for water and sewer purposes, but since 2004 those bonds have been paid off – and administrations have continued to take a rental payment at the expense of water ratepayers.

At a time when the rising costs of rent, groceries, and utilities are making New York unaffordable for many, increasing water rates to pay for a rental payment is a blow that hits low-income home owners particularly hard. In 2024 alone it was estimated that the rental payment taken by the Adams Administration resulted in an 3.1% increase in water rates for the public. This amounts to a regressive water tax on everyday New Yorkers, who pay for water not based on income or ability but based on usage. Looking ahead to May 2026, and through at least 2028, New Yorkers can expect continued yearly impact on their water rates as a result of the rental payment.

Capital funding for water infrastructure is urgently needed to address critical stormwater flooding, support coastal resiliency, improve water quality and strengthen drinking water infrastructure in New York City. In the 10-year Capital Improvement Program released by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) last year, there was an estimated need of $33 billion dollars for wastewater, stormwater and drinking water programs. By taking billions of dollars in the form of a rental payment, the administration is taking desperately needed funds and threatening the long term resilience of the city. This especially impacts parts of the City that have historically been neglected and will suffer the brunt of more frequent extreme weather events due to the ongoing climate crisis.

The rental payment is further hampering infrastructure investment by weakening the city's ability to go after state funding. Eliminating the rental payment will help New York City better leverage its fair share of NYS Environmental Bond Act funding. We cannot advocate in good faith for more state funding while our City continues to give away $1.3 billion in rental payments over the next four years for non-water purposes.

While we work to find a legislative solution to end the rental payment, Riverkeeper calls on the Council to reject the $313 million proposed rental payment in FY26.

II. $3 Million to fully fund implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule

Riverkeeper urges the City to support efforts to manage stormwater and rain induced flooding by providing $3 million for implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule (USWR). This funding will support 15 additional staff to support implementation of the rule. Riverkeeper applauds the Mamdani administration for providing $1 million in the FY27' Executive Budget to develop a new IT application platform to speed up permitting.

The USWR is a key 2021 rule that updated and aligned water quantity requirements in the city's combined sewer drainage areas with water quality requirements in separately sewered drainage areas, providing a comprehensive, citywide stormwater management

policy for public and private development. It facilitates residential and industrial development in a sustainable way that prepares the city for major storms. The rule mandates that newly developed or redeveloped properties disturbing 20,000 square feet or more of soil, or creating new impervious surfaces of 5,000 square feet or greater, must manage stormwater more effectively on-site. These properties must adopt a green-infrastructure-first strategy, utilizing methods such as rain gardens, permeable pavers, and green roofs.

By increasing the retention of stormwater on-site, the USWR aims to prevent the city's drainage system from becoming overwhelmed during heavy rain, which can cause flooding, backups into homes and businesses, and combined sewage overflows (CSOs) into waterways. Projections suggest that the rule will also reduce CSOs citywide by around 360 million gallons annually by 2030, improving harbor water quality.

When the USWR expanded from separately sewered areas of the city to include the combined sewer areas of the city, DEP never received additional staff or funding to staff the office. This has significantly impacted the implementation of the rule, leading to a longer timeline for permitting approval of new development – threatening the success of the program.

The Unified Stormwater Rule is key to ensuring the city is able to manage stormwater, reducing street flooding and improving water quality–and it is critical to meeting the city's nonnegotiable regulatory requirements. To support the effective implementation of the rule, $4 million in funding is needed for additional staff.

III. Allocate $10 million for DEP to complete the legislatively mandated comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan

Under Local Law 70 of 2025, DEP is mandated to create a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan that will recommend how much rainfall NYC's stormwater system should handle per hour, and identify projects necessary to achieve those levels and reduce flooding. However, DEP has not been funded to complete the Master Plan. This Master Plan is key to ensuring that DEP can respond effectively to increased stormwater flooding from extreme rainfall, and will help direct capital investment in stormwater management for the future. Riverkeeper urges the City to fully fund the Stormwater Masterplan, and provide $10 million for three contracts.

IV. Allocate $10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and Department of Environmental Protection to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan

As a member of the Renewable Rikers Coalition, Riverkeeper urges the City to include an additional $10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan in the FY27 Budget.

The Renewable Rikers Coalition seeks to address the historic and ongoing injustice on Rikers Island by closing the jails in August 2027, as required by Local Law 16 of 2021, and transforming the island into a sustainable center with renewable energy sources, wastewater treatment infrastructure, and food scrap and yard waste. Feasibility studies on Renewable Rikers released by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice and the Department of Environmental Protection in the spring of 2024 illustrate the promise that Renewable Rikers provides, finding that :

- A wastewater treatment plant would save New Yorkers $10 million over the lifetime of the plant, allowing for four nearby wastewater treatment plants to be used to treat high volumes of CSO during wet weather events. The new, energy-efficient treatment plant on Rikers Island would serve as the cornerstone for water quality improvements in the Upper East River, Harlem River and tributaries by reducing combined sewer overflows and restoring waters for safe swimming and fishing. The Renewable Rikers project is essential if the city is to achieve the goal as expressed in PlaNYC to eliminate sewage overflows by 2060.
- Solar energy production, an offshore wind energy converter station, and battery storage housed on the island could significantly increase the renewable energy produced by the city while potentially leading to the phasing out of five peaker power plants in the South Bronx and Eastern Queens. These peaker plants emit exorbitant levels of local pollutants like nitrogen oxides (NOx) and sulfur oxides (SOx), which contribute to bad local air quality and exacerbate health impacts on surrounding environmental justice neighborhoods.
- Organics processing could process over 365,000 tons of organic waste per year, 34% of NYC's total organic waste stream, and generate biogas increasing on-site renewable energy production for the island.
- A recycling hub could generate green jobs, remove polluting trucks from the road, and activate urban ecologies.

While these studies give us a sense of what the possibilities are, additional comprehensive planning will be needed to develop an actionable implementation plan for Renewable Rikers. Intro 1038 will require the City to take on this master planning process, and Riverkeeper stands with the Renewable Rikers coalition in urging the City to include $10 million in funding in the FY27 budget.

V. Fully fund Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the Ashokan headworks project that is needed to repair the Delaware Aqueduct, and the Supplemental EIS for water discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek

As DEP looks to retain the FAD in 2027 and ensure our drinking water source infrastructure is functioning properly, funding is required to initiate the Ashokan Headworks Project, part of the Century Program. This project will upgrade and modernize valves, release works and other infrastructure at the Ashokan Reservoir, which is necessary for a successful

repair of the Delaware Aqueduct which carries drinking water from the Catskill-Delaware system downstate.

The Ashokan Reservoir, while key to protecting drinking water for New York City residents, has had negative impacts on the Lower Esopus Creek and the communities that rely on it. Along with investing in the Ashokan Headwaters Project which will improve the health of the Lower Esopus, funding is needed to complete the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the state Catalum permit which allows for water discharges from the Ashokan. DEP has been working with communities in Ulster County for years to address concerns about the releases of water from the Ashokan Reservoir to the Lower Esopus Creek and this funding will create needed enforceable release protocols to balance the needs of the water supply with the needs of downstream communities and stream ecology.

VI. Dedicate $150 million to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan

New York City parks are home to 5 million of NYC's 7 million trees, they absorb 22% of its stormwater and 70% of its carbon, and can also be up to 13 degrees cooler than nearby streets during extreme heat events. Forested natural areas make up 24% of the city's parkland portfolio, but receive an annual average of 0.7% of the Parks Department's expense budget, and 0.84% of staff resources to manage it.

As a member of Forest for All NYC, Riverkeeper is committed to helping the city reach 30% tree canopy cover citywide by 2035 in an equitable manner. The proposed $3 million in funding for forestry staff is a great start by the Mamdani administration, but additional funding is needed to maintain and expand our urban forest to respond to climate change and extreme heat. To address this, Riverkeeper urges the city to provide $150 million to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, including baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff positions and funding to support other City agencies that will expand tree canopy under their jurisdiction.

VI. Provide $4.5 Million to protect New York City's Wetlands

New York City is a city of water. Our over 520 miles of shoreline boast over 6,000 acres of tidal marshes, swamp forests, and streams across all five boroughs, and half of NYC's wetlands and streams can be found in New York City parks. These wetlands support more than 325 species of birds, 315 species of plants, and 200 species of fish and shellfish. They play an invaluable role in mitigating the harmful effects of climate change by capturing and storing floodwaters, sequestering carbon, and creating resilient shorelines. And, wetlands protect the quality of waterways by retaining stormwater, absorbing nutrients and filtering sediment and contaminants, and reducing flood risk for coastal communities.

As climate change impacts to our city grow every year, we should be investing in and expanding wetlands across our coastal communities. Instead, we are struggling to protect our existing wetlands from threats from development, rising sea level and extreme heat, and we continue to observe over 6 acres of salt marsh wetlands lost per year. Further, mitigation funds from large-scale resiliency and renewable energy projects are intended to benefit tidal wetlands in the city – however we are running out of project areas within the five boroughs where those funds can currently be used.

As a result, more oversight and staffing will be needed to ensure that the Parks Department can maximize the benefits of this funding, and increase the restoration and protection of our vital wetland resources. To address these challenges, Riverkeeper urges the Council to approve $4.5 million in funding to support 45 staff at the Parks Department in FY27 for wetland restoration and protection.

Conclusion

The climate crisis is here, and New York City needs to adapt quickly to ensure that our communities and infrastructure are prepared for this generational challenge. In the last 12 years, Superstorm Sandy exposed the threat to New York City's coastlines from storm surge, Tropical Storm Ida underscored the vulnerability of inland communities to flash flooding from extreme rainfall, and rising summer temperatures have endangered the health of thousands of New Yorkers living in urban heat islands underserved by green infrastructure.

Riverkeeper urges the City Council and the Administration to take bold action now, and lead our city forward toward an equitable, climate ready future that reimagines our waterways as critical resources for recreation, ecological health, and climate adaptation. To accomplish this, we urge the City to include the above priorities in the FY27 Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of Riverkeeper's testimony. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council Members, DEP staff, and our partner organizations to create a climate resilient New York, restore our waterways, and increase access and swimming for New Yorkers in their natural waters.

Em Ruby, NYC Policy Specialist · eruby@riverkeeper.org
· 20 Secor Road · Ossining, NY 10562 ·

Testimony of Rachel Jordan, Safe Passage Project
NYC Council Committee on Immigration
NYC Council Committee on Children & Youth
NYC Council Committee on Finance
May 28, 2026

Thank you to the members of the Committees on Immigration, Children and Youth, and Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Rachel Jordan, and I am the Managing Attorney for Partnerships and Advocacy at Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We currently serve over 1,600 children and youth, most of them unaccompanied minors, who live in the five boroughs of New York City and on Long Island.

I write to you today because immigrant children, the young people that our organization aims to serve and protect, are directly in the crosshairs of a federal government that seeks to strip them of rights, safety, and dignity. We are deeply grateful for the NYC Council's funding support through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative, the Special Immigrant Juveniles Initiative, the School-Based Immigrant Rapid Response Legal Access Initiative, the Speaker's Initiative, and the Domestic Violence Empowerment Initiative. Yet we are facing a new reality in which the City Council's current level of support is no longer sufficient to keep up with the attacks on due process rights that our clients and staff now face on a daily basis.

The current hostile federal environment has altered the operational baseline for legal representation, driving up our yearly per-case cost due to new and increased mandatory federal filing fees and direct attorney hours. Under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," (H.R. 1) filings that were previously free now include a $250 fee for a petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), a $100 initial asylum application fee, and a $102 annual fee for pending asylum applications. Initial asylum-based work permits require a $560 fee, while subsequent renewals cost $275 every 18 months. Under H.R. 1, these fees are non-waivable for humanitarian relief. In addition, fees to reopen and appeal removal orders before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have soared to over $1,000, with mandated annual increases.

To navigate the systemic barriers created by new federal practices, policies, and case law, direct attorney hours have also significantly increased as a result of several factors, including the following:

- **Federal Litigation to Fight Unlawful Arrests and Detention of Clients:** Since November 2025, ICE has conducted aggressive enforcement actions, including the unlawful arrest and detention of our clients. Clients with approved SIJS have been stripped of their deferred action and work authorization. Defending these clients requires extensive extra hours for specialized training, registration with local federal district courts, and complex, time-consuming briefing for petitions for writs of habeas corpus.

- **Increasing Hostility of Immigration Courts, Appellate Preparation, and Court Purges:** Since January 2025, the federal government has executed an unprecedented purge of experienced Immigration Judges, replacing them with personnel lacking immigration law experience or holding documented anti-immigrant records. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has issued a record number of restrictive precedential decisions that allow the dismissal of asylum claims without hearings and accelerate the deportation of children with pending or approved SIJS. To counter these biased administrative forums, Safe Passage Project attorneys must expend significant additional hours litigating motions, while preparing every single removal case for eventual review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Safe Passage Project staff remain committed to preserving our clients' rights and delivering necessary social services to unaccompanied youth. However, when each individual case requires a surge of additional legal work hours and mandatory fee coverages, our organizational capacity is reduced–yet the number of unaccompanied children and youth in need of legal representation remains high. To maintain the scope and quality of our vital legal services in this incredibly hostile federal environment, Safe Passage Project Council requests that the Council grant our total finance request of $5,100,000, representing a necessary increase of $674,944 from our FY26 allocation.

This moment is a historic one, and it demands a historic response. We ask the NYC Council to be our partner in rising to meet it.

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Testimony of Rachel Jordan, Safe Passage Project
NYC Council Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Thank you to the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Rachel Jordan, and I am the Managing Attorney for Partnerships and Advocacy at Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We currently serve over 1,600 children and youth, most of them unaccompanied minors, who live throughout the five boroughs of New York City and on Long Island.

I write to you today because immigrant children, the vulnerable young people that our organization aims to serve and protect, are under attack by an emboldened federal government determined to strip them of rights, safety, and dignity.

Over the years, the NYC Council has proven itself to be a leading champion for the legal rights of immigrant youth, and we are deeply grateful for the Council's funding support through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative, the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative, the School-Based Immigrant Rapid Response Legal Access Initiative, the Speaker's Initiative, and the Domestic Violence Empowerment Initiative.

Today, however, as we face a persistent and mounting federal assault on the due process rights of children, the City Council's current level of support is no longer adequate to defend our clients. As a result, we are asking the City Council to increase its funding, so that NYC can continue to lead the charge on protecting the legal rights of immigrant children. Below is a brief account of the challenges we and our clients are facing, and why we are asking for your continued support to fight back against those challenges

- **Exorbitant Federal Fees for Humanitarian Relief and Increased Attorney Workload**
  The current hostile federal environment has altered the operational baseline for legal representation, driving up our yearly per-case cost due to new and increased mandatory

federal filing fees and direct attorney hours. Under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," (H.R. 1) filings that were previously free now include a $250 fee for a petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), a $100 initial asylum application fee, and a $102 annual fee for pending asylum applications. Initial asylum-based work permits require a $560 fee, while subsequent renewals cost $275 every 18 months. Under H.R. 1, these fees for humanitarian relief are non-waivable. In addition, fees to reopen and appeal removal orders before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have soared to over $1,000, with mandated annual increases.

- **Federal Litigation to Fight Unlawful Arrests and Detention of Clients:** Since November 2025, ICE has conducted aggressive enforcement actions, including the unlawful arrest and detention of our clients. Clients with approved SIJS have been stripped of their deferred action and work authorization. Defending these clients requires exponentially more direct attorney hours and support for specialized training, registration with local federal district courts, and complex, time-consuming briefing for petitions for writs of habeas corpus.

- **Increasing Hostility of Immigration Courts, Appellate Preparation, and Court Purges:** Since January 2025, the federal government has executed an unprecedented purge of experienced Immigration Judges, replacing them with personnel lacking immigration law experience or holding documented anti-immigrant records. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has issued a record number of restrictive precedential decisions that allow the dismissal of asylum claims without hearings and accelerate the deportation of children with pending or approved SIJS. To counter these biased administrative forums, Safe Passage Project attorneys must expend significant additional hours litigating motions, while preparing every single removal case for eventual review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

- **End of SIJS Deferred Action**: The federal government has ended deferred action for Special Immigrant Juveniles, leaving a large number of our clients without access to employment authorization and at heightened risk of removal while they wait to apply for lawful permanent residence. This increases our client's vulnerability to food insecurity,

housing instability, and labor exploitation. As a result, our Safe Passage social workers need to spend more time connecting clients to food assistance programs, navigating shelter processes, providing mental health support, and connecting clients to city and state agencies for alternative forms of government-issued identification.

Safe Passage Project staff remain committed to preserving our clients' rights and delivering necessary social services to unaccompanied children and youth. However, when each individual case requires a surge in additional legal work hours and mandatory fee coverages, our organizational capacity is reduced, even while the number of unaccompanied children and youth in need of legal representation remains high. To maintain the scope and quality of our vital legal services in this incredibly hostile federal environment, Safe Passage Project Council requests that the Council grant our total finance request of $5,100,000, representing a necessary increase of $674,944 from our FY26 allocation.

This moment is a historic one, and it demands a historic response. We ask the NYC Council to be our partner in rising to meet it.

###

sage | Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders
We refuse to be invisible®

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Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Finance

FY 27 Executive Budget Hearing – Finance Public Testimony

June 10th 2026

Good Afternoon Chair Lee and members of the New York City Council, my name is Bryan Ellicott-Cook (They/He) and I serve as Director of Government Relations at SAGE, the nation's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults.

Since our founding in 1978, SAGE has worked tirelessly to advocate for policies and programs that empower LGBTQ+ elders, ensuring they can age with dignity, security, and support. From leading national advocacy efforts to providing direct services, we have remained at the forefront of combating social isolation, housing insecurity, and healthcare disparities among LGBTQ+ older adults.

New York City has long failed to prioritize the programs and services that help older adults remain in their communities as they age. We are optimistic that our new Mayor will begin to address some of these challenges, especially at a time when older adults already make up 1 in 5 New Yorkers, a number projected to grow to 25% by 2040. Over the past few decades, the city has underfunded and undervalued older adult programs, making it nearly impossible for providers to meet the growing needs. Without further investment, we risk center closures and the reduction in core services at a time when demand continues to rise.

More and older New Yorkers, including LGBTQ+ elders, who are already disproportionately at risk, have to navigate more holes in an ever-weakening safety net. Now, more than ever, SAGE continues to remain a steadfast source of support, connection, and security for LGBTQ+ older adults in these challenging times.

With an actively anti-LGBTQ+ administration in Washington stoking a hostile political climate, many LGBTQ+ older adults face heightened fear and uncertainty about their rights, healthcare, and overall well-being. For thousands, SAGE is a lifeline to critical services, advocacy, and a supportive community, ensuring they do not face these challenges alone. Considering the needs and the climate, SAGE is seeking increased support to serve this important population of queer elders.

LGBTQ+ elders are often invisible, disconnected from services, and severely isolated without traditional biological familial supports. They are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving. In fact, 25% of SAGE's constituents have reported not having anyone else to call during an emergency. Because of these thin support networks, LGBTQ+ older people need

to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age. Yet, they're often distrustful of mainstream providers based on historical and ongoing discrimination and mistreatment. The services, community, and support system provided by SAGE are designed to address these gaps and serve as a lifeline for LGBTQ+ elders in New York City.

The elders whom SAGE serve also have unique healthcare needs. For example, in 2023 New York State reported over 2,000 new HIV diagnoses, with 12.6% occurring among individuals aged 50 and older. This age group now comprises 57% of New Yorkers living with HIV. Furthermore, older adults are more likely to receive a concurrent AIDS diagnosis, with 36% of new HIV cases among those over 50 also being diagnosed with AIDS within 30 days of their initial diagnosis. About 14% of LGBTQ+ New Yorkers over 50 report frequent poor physical health and transgender New Yorkers of all ages are nearly 50% more likely to report being in fair or poor health when compared to non-transgender respondents.

Many of our constituents may also delay or avoid seeking care in typical settings since LGBTQ+ adults are twice as likely as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts to report experiencing discrimination from a healthcare provider, including instances of unfair treatment or disrespect. Our SAGE Center network serves as a safety net for LGBTQ+ elders and older people aging with HIV. We provide programming that reduces isolation and improves access to services, by offering benefits counseling, legal and financial planning, educational workshops, health and wellness programs, support groups, and nutritious meals.

These vital services are made possible from our partnership with the New York City Council, and they have been funded by the LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough Initiative (formerly the LGBTQ+ Senior Services in Every Borough Initiative) since its creation in FY15.

In FY27, SAGE requests the restoration of our New York City Council funding at FY26 levels, along with additional support to sustain and enhance our vital services. City Council funding enables SAGE to serve residents of **Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House** and their surrounding communities, maintain our **citywide network of SAGE Centers** and their extensive virtual programming, provide **comprehensive case management**, reinforce services for **LGBTQ+ older veterans**, and support **mental health services for homebound LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders.**

Specifically, SAGE requests:

- Renewal with an enhancement of **$1,255,000** in Council Initiative LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough to fund programs and services at our network of SAGE Centers—LGBTQ+-affirming older adult centers—reaching over 5,000 LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV with 100 virtual and 200 in-person programs each week. This year, SAGE is requesting an enhancement to implement Know Your Rights initiatives and comprehensive training programs for both older adults and staff, ensuring they are equipped to navigate their rights and access critical resources.

- Renewal of **$250,000** from the LGBTQIA+ Caucus to provide holistic, LGBTQIA+-affirming, and HIV-competent care management for those 60+ (50+ if transgender, a veteran, or living with HIV). Services include benefits enrollment, crisis intervention, caregiving, counseling, friendly visits, legal aid, and

mental health referrals. With evolving federal policies, ensuring access to these essential services is more crucial than ever.

- Renewal of **$275,000** from the Trans Equity Programs Initiative to expand our SAGETrans Support Group and Services Program, which offers culturally responsive, trauma-informed support for transgender and gender nonbinary (TGNB) older adults (50+) across New York City. This funding will also support the SAGETrans Emergency Fund, which provides direct financial relief to TGNB elders experiencing housing insecurity, food scarcity, community workshops, legal guidance or crisis health-related needs.

- Renewal of **$100,000** under the Older Adults Mental Health Initiative to support crucial mental health services for LGBTQ+ elders and older adults living with HIV who are frail and homebound, including comprehensive screening for mental health and substance abuse issues, home visits, support groups, and referrals to partner health care and substance abuse programs.

- Renewal of **$100,000** from the Citywide Initiative of Legal Services for Veterans to fund SAGEVets, New York City's only program designed to address the unique needs of older LGBTQ+ military service veterans. SAGEVets helps older LGBTQ+ veterans access Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals for discharge status upgrades.

- Renewal of **$36,868** through the Senior Centers, Program, and Enhancement Initiative to support care management services offered at SAGE Centers, including crisis intervention, care assistance, caregiving services, individual and group counseling, friendly visiting for homebound elders, legal services, and mental health referrals.

Bryan Ellicott-Cook

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(929) 458-2095

Written Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing, FY2027 - June 10, 2026

Submitted by: Tan Hayat, Manager of Advocacy & Impact Strategy Sakhi for South Asian Survivors

On behalf of: Sakhi for South Asian Survivors, The Collective, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), and The 18% & Growing Campaign

Introduction

Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Tan and I am the Manager of Advocacy and Impact Strategy at Sakhi for South Asian Survivors. I submit this written testimony on behalf of Sakhi, The Collective, and the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families in support of critical FY27 budget priorities for immigrant survivors of gender-based violence and AAPI communities across New York City.

About Sakhi for South Asian Survivors

Sakhi for South Asian Survivors has worked with South Asian and Indo-Caribbean survivors of gender-based violence across New York City since 1989. We provide a comprehensive and holistic range of culturally and linguistically specific services including crisis intervention, safety planning, housing advocacy, immigration legal services, mental health counseling, and economic empowerment programming. In 2025, Sakhi worked with 710 survivors across all five boroughs, engaging more community members than at any point in our history.

The survivors we work with navigate compounding barriers: language, immigration status, cultural stigma, and deep distrust of systems that have historically failed them. For many, Sakhi is the only organization equipped to help them in their language and within their cultural context.

Priority Ask 1: Renew and Increase the Culturally Specific Gender-Based Violence Services Initiative — Minimum $3 Million

I testify today on behalf of The Collective, comprised of Sakhi for South Asian Survivors, Womankind, the Korean American Family Service Center, Sauti Yetu Center for African Women and Families, and the Violence Intervention Program. We are the only coalition of culturally specific, gender justice organizations working exclusively with immigrant and BIPOC survivors in New York City.

Last year, through the sustained advocacy of The Collective, the City Council created the Culturally Specific Gender-Based Violence Services Initiative, investing $3 million to fund organizations providing multilingual, culturally responsive GBV services to immigrant survivors. This was a historic and necessary recognition that the city's GBV system contains structural

gaps, and that closing them requires dedicated, sustained investment in the community-based organizations that survivors already trust.

This initiative is not baselined in the FY27 Executive Budget. Without Council action, it will not survive into the coming fiscal year. The Collective urges the Council to renew this initiative at no less than $3 million and commit to a path toward permanent, baselined funding.

The need is urgent and well-documented:

- Roughly 60% of NYC Council Districts see more than 1,000 NYPD reports of domestic violence per year. Those figures reflect only what gets reported. In immigrant communities, survivors routinely do not contact law enforcement due to language barriers, immigration fear, and distrust of systems. Culturally specific organizations fill that gap.
- At any given time, between 10 and 40 percent of clients at culturally specific GBV organizations arrive as referrals from other providers, meaning these organizations serve as essential infrastructure for the broader GBV system citywide.
- Federal cuts under H.R. 1 are restricting benefits eligibility for immigrant survivors and increasing demands on already under-resourced organizations.

Sakhi's own data reflects this growing pressure. In 2025, our Anti-Violence Program saw a 65% increase in rapid response support from 2024. Our Housing Program worked with 272 survivors, a 21% increase from the prior year, securing nearly $1 million in rental assistance, security deposits, and broker fees. In our Counseling Program, 100% of survivors reported feeling better equipped to manage trauma symptoms at the one-year mark. In our Economic Empowerment Program, 90% of clients gained the tools needed to become financially self-sufficient, and 85% of those seeking employment support achieved at least one professional goal.

These outcomes depend on sustained, predictable city funding. Renewing and growing this initiative is among the most direct investments the Council can make in the safety and stability of immigrant survivors across New York City.

Priority Ask 2: CACF 18% and Growing Campaign

I also submit this testimony on behalf of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, which unites over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City. AAPI New Yorkers represent nearly 18% of this city's population and remain among the most chronically underserved communities in the city's budget. The inequity is structural: AAPI communities face well-documented gaps in health access, linguistic accessibility, child care, legal services, housing, and gender-based violence support, and the burden of filling those gaps has consistently fallen on community-based organizations rather than city government.

Sakhi, CACF, and the 18% and Growing Campaign urge the Council to advance the following priorities in the FY27 adopted budget:

- **Expand the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million** to sustain and grow community-based organizations providing direct services to AAPI New Yorkers across the five boroughs.
- **Expand the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million** to provide critical operational support to BIPOC-led nonprofits that have faced years of structural underfunding relative to the populations they work with.
- **Expand the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million** to improve health access and health outcomes for AAPI communities, which face persistent disparities in insurance coverage and culturally competent care.

Conclusion

The FY27 budget is being finalized at a moment of compounding pressure for immigrant and BIPOC communities in New York City. Federal policies are restricting access to benefits, immigration enforcement is generating fear that keeps survivors from seeking help, and demand for culturally specific services is rising across every program Sakhi operates. The City Council has historically stepped up when the city's most vulnerable communities needed it most, and we are grateful for the leadership this body has shown on these issues.

We urge the Council to renew and increase the Culturally Specific GBV Services Initiative, and to advance the CACF 18% and Growing Campaign priorities in the final adopted budget. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Council toward a city that truly serves all of its residents.

Sincerely,

Tan Hayat | tan.hayat@sakhi.org
Manager of Advocacy & Impact Strategy
Sakhi for South Asian Survivors

City Council Finance Committee Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026 at 9:30 am

Good morning. I am Barbara Baer, New York Foundation for Senior Citizens' Home Sharing and Respite Care Program Director. On behalf of our Board of Directors, we would deeply appreciate your ensuring the continuation of our Home Sharing and Respite Care Program by supporting the provision of $750,000 from the 2026-2027 City Budget, including $500,000 from the Speaker's City-Wide Budget, $25,000 from each of the borough delegations plus funding from Council Members' discretionary budgets.

Our home sharing and respite care services: enable the City's older adults to prevent feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression by helping them to maintain and remain in their homes, obtain affordable housing, developing companionships and friendships, prevent institutionalization in nursing homes and homeless shelters.

Our home sharing service is implemented by Social Workers who use their skills to successfully match older adult "hosts" with space in their apartments or houses to share with "guests" in need of affordable housing.

Matches cost less than $4,000 per person and offer stability and cost effectiveness, especially compared to the $500,000 it cost to build a unit of affordable housing.

Our respite care service is also implemented by Social Workers. They arrange affordable, short-term, in-home care at the low cost of $19.65 per hour, paid directly to the home care workers by the frail elderly, managing at home alone.

Although the cost of private agency home care is $40 per hour, our respite care service provides the lowest cost, highest quality home care at $19.65 per hour.

The current per person cost of providing respite care services during the last 2025 fiscal year was only $553 per person.

Findings from our study of the July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 fiscal year demonstrate that New York City Council provided our Home Sharing and Respite Care Program with a total of $200,000 and saved New York City nearly $2 million in Medicaid expenses.

To continue our program, city-wide, requires $500,000 from the Speaker's City-wide Budget, allocations of $25,000 from Council Members' individual and $25,000 from each borough delegations' discretionary budgets within the City's next budget.

Thank you very much, in advance, for hopefully providing these desperately needed funds.

Testimony presented to the

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Catherine Thurston, LCSW,
Chief Executive Officer
Service Program for Older People (SPOP)
www.spop.org

Thank you, Chairman Lee and members of the Committee on Finance for this opportunity to share our concerns about the well-being of older adults in New York City.

I am CEO of Service Program for Older People (SPOP), the city's only agency entirely dedicated to offering community-based age-affirming mental healthcare for older adults. We provide professional services to over 1,000 older New Yorkers each year, including individual and group therapy, psychiatry, group-based psychiatric rehabilitation services, and linkages to social health services and support for housing, emergency meals, and socialization opportunities.

SPOP's client population is generally low-income, medically frail, and isolated. Our goal is to reduce mental health symptoms while teaching coping and independent living skills that enable older adults to live as they choose. Client outcomes include improved health, decreased social isolation, reduced hospitalizations, and increased ability to manage daily challenges.

Older adults are the fastest-growing segment of New York City's population, which has led to a 20% increase in referrals and inquiries for SPOP over the past five years. We receive referrals from hospitals, older adult centers, and aging services providers and, while we make every effort to connect incoming clients to services promptly, there are times when we are unable to keep pace with demand.

Mental healthcare is a critical factor in supporting the emotional health and overall well-being of older adults. I urge the Committee on Finance to support renewed funding in FY2027 for vitally important initiatives relating to aging and mental health, including the Older Adult Mental Health

Initiative, Older Adult Center Improvements, Support Our Older Adults, and Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations.

SPOP works in coordination with NYC Aging, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and dozens of aging services providers, with a goal to make New York City the best place in America for older adults. I hope that the FY2027 New York City budget will include robust support for mental health services and other programs for older adults.

Thank you.

June 8, 2026

Re: FY'2027 Budget Hearing

Testimony by Heidi Henderson, Esq., MPA, Executive Director & CEO

Good afternoon,

Thank you, Chair Lee and Chair Schulman and the members of the Committee on Finance and Health Committee for the opportunity to address you today regarding SHARE Cancer Support and the important impact this organization has for those at risk and in treatment for breast and gynecologic cancers in New York City.

ORGANIZATION MISSION AND DESCRIPTION

SHARE Self Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer, Inc. (SHARE Cancer Support) is a peer-led nonprofit organization established in 1976, which provides free linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive programs for individuals diagnosed or at increased risk for breast or gynecologic cancers (e.g. cervical, ovarian, and uterine) and those living with metastatic breast cancer.

Our programs and services include information and education that has been developed in partnership with medical professionals and researchers, referrals, and navigation to care and support services, facilitation of support groups, outreach, multi-lingual peers and mentors, and a national Helpline staffed by peer volunteers and available in English and Spanish,, as well as other languages, as needed, upon request. We have also recently translated our materials into Chinese, Korean and Bangla.

Our mission is to help all individuals diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancer effectively address the emotional and practical issues that arise from a cancer diagnosis and provide the support they need to feel less isolated, better informed, and more empowered as healthcare consumers. No one should go through cancer alone.

BACKGROUND/NEEDS STATEMENT

Breast cancer in this country is epidemic: 233,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women; 63,000 new cases of carcinoma in situ (CIS) will be diagnosed; 40,000 women will die this year from breast cancer, and 1 in 8 women will develop invasive breast cancer during her lifetime. According to the CDC, “Black women have the highest death rates of all racial and ethnic groups and are 40% more likely to die of breast cancer than white women.” This difference results from many factors, including limited social and economic resources.

Latina women are about 20 percent more likely to die of breast cancer than non-Latina white women diagnosed at a similar age and stage, according to the American Cancer Society. Latinas

are significantly more likely to present at a later stage with larger tumors that are hormone-receptor negative, which are more challenging to treat. These disparities are exacerbated by barriers to treatment and lower rates of mammograms in the Latina community.

Gynecologic cancers – ovarian, cervical and uterine – are on the rise, particularly among women of color. Black women in particular, continue to experience late diagnosis and poor treatment outcomes due to a number of disparities in access to care, treatment, and support services.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT

Through our outreach programs, we have teams of multilingual Ambassadors who conduct hundreds of visits to community organizations, consulates, older adult/senior centers, community centers, health fairs, food pantries, health centers, and other venues annually. They provide education on the signs, symptoms, testing, and treatment options for breast, gynecologic, or metastatic breast cancer. We reach over 50,000 New York City residents each year.

Through our national programs, including support groups, online educational programs, educational materials, and our toll-free national Support Line, we reach over 350,000 patients, caregivers, and allies throughout the US with critical, potentially life-saving information on these cancers annually.

Our Ambassador services are available primarily as a result of the NYC discretionary funding received through the Cancer Health Initiative, Support for Older Adults, and individual discretionary awards from about a dozen City Council members. We are so grateful.

In addition to renewal funding for our Ambassador Programs, we seek additional funding to support our Patient Navigation Program. Patient Navigation is a proven, evidence-based best practice for addressing health disparities caused by race and other social determinants of health. Patient Navigators have been shown to effectively support patients with severe, high-risk, longer-term conditions, illnesses, or diseases. When Patient Navigators are recruited from historically excluded and unsupported communities, they can successfully engage and support members of those communities.

In 2025, through our Patient Navigation Program, we served over 300 breast and gynecologic patients, identified 1,932 concerns, provided 655 interventions, and provided over $209,000 in financial assistance for the navigated patients. Our Patient Navigation Program is open to all patients who are diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancer. We have a particular focus on serving low-income Latinas and Black women from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Our Patient Navigation team offers ongoing, intensive support to help connect patients with the resources they need. The majority of our patients are from low to middle-income families and are experiencing financial, physical, or psychological crises due to the impact of treatment, including financial toxicity.

SHARE
CANCER SUPPORT

The challenges that our patients face during and after treatment are many and complex – often extending far beyond their healthcare needs. Below are brief case studies that demonstrate the level of need among our patients.

One of our patients was a 56-year-old woman who was diagnosed with Metastatic Breast Cancer. She was undergoing chemo and bone therapy. She experienced severe side effects that caused her to be hospitalized. The patient was experiencing extreme weight loss - she weighed less than 80 pounds when we met her and was barely eating because of the side effects of chemotherapy. The only thing that kept her from losing more weight was Ensure. However, faced with the high cost of Ensure and limited funds, she was forced to choose between buying groceries for her 14-year-old autistic son and 76-year-old mother or buying Ensure. She chose to feed her family rather than prioritize her own health. SHARE's Patient Navigation team was able to provide a broad range of support services for this patient, including securing funding for Ensure, and she now is on the road to recovery.

Our Navigation team experiences stories like this far too often. We know that our Patient Navigation Program is greatly needed and has the potential to be incredibly impactful in the lives of breast and gynecologic cancer patients – particularly those who are vulnerable, disconnected from care, and historically marginalized.

FULL RANGE OF SERVICES

SHARE Cancer Support provides a broad range of programs and services all of them are free.

- Multilingual Helplines answered by knowledgeable, trained volunteers with their own cancer experiences
- On Demand Educational Webinars with up-to-the-minute information led by some of the world's leading medical professionals that are attended by over 185,000 people each year, providing previously inaccessible expertise for everyone who wants it.
- Support Groups for those who have been diagnosed, led by professionally trained survivors in English and Spanish.
- Novelas in English and Spanish that bring cancer signs, symptoms, treatment options and personal experiences to life, to help educate broader communities with culturally sensitive content.
- A robust Patient Navigation to provide one-on-one support for those in need of overcoming barriers to their healthcare and financial toxicity relating to their treatment.
- On-the-ground outreach to many of New York's most vulnerable populations with information about signs, symptoms, myth, facts, and free screenings from members of the community who have faced their own diagnoses.

- Groundbreaking conferences that convene patients, healthcare providers, community organizational partners, pharmaceutical executives, and elected officials to determine and address key obstacles to equitable healthcare.
- Wide distribution of research projects that explore important topics such as older women's experiences with breast cancer diagnoses, and Black women's experiences with TNBC.

PATIENT TESTIMONIAL

"When I found out I had stage three breast cancer I wasn't sure what to do. I called SHARE's Support Line and they helped me find the resources I needed to understand my diagnosis. Then I started to attend one of their breast cancer Support Group meetings. The ladies shared a lot of personal information and best strategies with me. They taught me how to ask questions and empowered me to communicate with my medical team about my treatment.

SHARE has meant so much to me. First, they held my hand throughout my treatment and now, when new members join our group, I'm one of the ladies who helps them get perspective and build their confidence. I've become part of the support system that helped me!"

– Jocelyn Shao

FUNDING REQUEST

In order to continue SHARE's critical services, we are requesting funding from the City Council. Our funding requests this year include the following:

- $248,969 through the Cancer Services Initiative
- $20,000 through the Support Our Older Adults Initiative
- $30,0000 through the Food Pantry and Access Health Initiative
- $10,000 through Member Items
- $10,000 Older Adults Across Boroughs
- $125,000 through the Speakers Initiative for the SHARE Cancer Support Ambassador Outreach Program

Thank you for your consideration and support. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Should you have any questions, I can be reached at hhenderson@sharecancersupport.org.

Sincerely,

Heidi Henderson
Executive Director & CEO

SHARE Cancer Support
315 West 39th Street,, Ste. 910, New York, NY 10018
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The mission of Special Olympics NY is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-style sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, peer athletes and the community.

Member Items

Special Olympics NY (SONY) is respectfully requesting $10,000 from Districts 2, 3, 11, 23, and 50 to support programs that allow people with intellectual disabilities (ID) to prioritize their health and wellness.

Our community training clubs provide training and competition experiences for athletes of all ages in 22 different Olympic-style sports. Popular sports include track & field, basketball, bocce, bowling, floorball, soccer, and softball.

Athletes are placed in training clubs based off several considerations including geographic location, age, ability level, and sport interest. Clubs train for the duration of a sport season, 8-12 weeks, attending weekly or bi-weekly practices and seasonal competitions. Athletes learn from certified volunteer coaches who teach inclusive and adaptive athletic curricula to accommodate individuals at any ability level. Training clubs also have opportunities to represent their hometown while competing at Special Olympics' highest levels: State Games, USA Games and World Games.

The requested funds will be used to cover the cost of facilities for weekly or bi-weekly Special Olympics sports practices or competitions and transportation to and from Special Olympics competitions.

SONY serves 28,000 individuals with ID across New York City. With councilmember support, we hope to grow this number to 30,000 by 2027. SONY's services and activities are offered at zero cost to our athletes, their families, and caretakers.



STATEN ISLAND CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
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Written Testimony of Dina Rosenthal
Executive Director, Staten Island Children's Museum
Member, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

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

The Staten Island Children's Museum respectfully urges the New York City Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million needed to reach the full $30 million commitment for arts and culture funding in Fiscal Year 2027.

As a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, SICM joins cultural organizations across the city in supporting this request. Baseline funding is essential to ending the annual cycle of uncertainty that makes long-term planning difficult for institutions that provide year-round public services. Cultural organizations cannot effectively manage staffing, programming, educational partnerships, and facility operations when critical funding must be restored year after year.

The Staten Island Children's Museum serves a distinct role within New York City's cultural landscape. We are not a destination institution primarily serving tourists. We are a hyper-local cultural resource serving the families, schools, and communities of Staten Island and the adjacent South Brooklyn shoreline. Approximately 90 percent of our audience comes from Staten Island and Brooklyn, mirroring the communities that make up Congressional District 11.

In a typical year, SICM reaches approximately 125,000 children and adults through museum visits, school partnerships, community programs, and outreach activities. Approximately 65 percent of our audience consists of families visiting on their own time, while 35 percent participate through school programs delivered at the museum, in schools, and in the communities where children live and learn.

For many families, SICM is their most accessible cultural institution. We provide affordable educational and cultural experiences close to home, eliminating the need for families to travel elsewhere in the city to access high-quality enrichment opportunities. Parents and caregivers rely on us during weekends, school holidays, and school breaks. Teachers rely on us to reinforce classroom learning through hands-on experiences that support science, literacy, art, and creative problem-solving skills.

For many young children, SICM is their first museum experience and their first encounter with arts, culture, science, and informal learning. Through exhibits, performances, workshops, and educational programs, children develop curiosity, confidence, and a lifelong connection to learning. These experiences are not extras. They are part of the educational ecosystem that helps children succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

Our impact extends beyond traditional museum programming. Each year, SICM hosts New York City's largest Pre-K Enrollment Fair, connecting more than 1,000 families with schools, government agencies, and community

organizations. We partner with City agencies and nonprofit organizations to deliver programs and resources directly to families. These initiatives succeed because families already know and trust our institution as a welcoming community space.

This work is particularly important on Staten Island, where residents have fewer nearby cultural resources than many other New Yorkers. Local cultural institutions ensure that children and families have access to high-quality educational and cultural opportunities within their own communities. Investment in Staten Island's cultural organizations helps ensure that cultural funding reaches every borough and that all New Yorkers benefit from the City's commitment to arts and culture.

At the same time, cultural institutions continue to face increasing costs associated with staffing, utilities, insurance, maintenance, supplies, and facility operations. We support the Cultural Institutions Group's request for annual cost adjustments that recognize the impact of inflation on nonprofit cultural organizations and help preserve services for the communities we serve.

The Staten Island Children's Museum respectfully urges the Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million for arts and culture in the Fiscal Year 2027 Adopted Budget. Stable funding allows cultural institutions to plan responsibly, retain experienced staff, maintain affordability, and continue serving as trusted community resources for New York City's children and families.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of New York City's cultural sector.

Dina Rosenthal
Executive Director
Staten Island Children's Museum

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

June 10th, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Mohamed Attia, I am the Managing Director of the Street Vendor Project. I would like to thank Chair Lee and the Committee members for the opportunity to testify today.

The Street Vendor Project (SVP) is a membership-based organization with more than 3,400 vendor members. We strive to support street vendors across the 5 boroughs by providing direct services such as small business consultations, legal representation, and access to a wide variety of resources. We also organize to build power to the vendors community across the city and ensure that their voices are heard, and they have a seat at the table when policies and rules are being developed that will impact their livelihoods. Vast majority of our members are immigrants who hail from across the globe. Given the diversity of our membership, our services are offered in 7 different languages, Arabic, Bangla, English, French, Mandarin, Spanish and Wolof, thanks to the diversity of our small team.

We respectfully request that the council consider our funding applications for this fiscal year, since SVP is almost the only entity providing education, outreach and small business services to street vendors in NYC.

As you know, 96% of street vendors are immigrants, and we're seeing immigrants' communities being under attack and threats from the federal government. Yesterday the Trump administration threatened to send more ICE agents to NYC. What would that mean? More attacks on our communities which call for more resources to fight back.

Last year was the first time we received funding from the City to conduct a citywide outreach effort to educate immigrant vendors on their rights and how to deal with federal law enforcement. We hope to see this funding growing this year! We don't have the luxury to slow down.

Also, street vendors are non-traditional workers running the smallest businesses in our city, and they need the city's support to thrive.

Earlier this year, the City Council passed a historic landmark package of legislations, including Local Law 54-2026, that will create a total of 21,500 new licenses for street vendors.

11,000 of which will go to food vendors as Supervisory Licenses, a system that is still new to the vendors community, that has created a lot of confusion with the existing system that has been in place for decades.

10,500 of the new licenses will be offered to merchandise vendors as General Vendor Licenses. A substantial change to a 47-year-old law that a lot of vendors don't know about.

We respectfully request that the City Council prioritize allocating $5 Million for **Worker Rights Organizing and Education initiative** to ensure sufficient resources for all workers across our city.

Street vendors, delivery workers, laundry workers, and many others need support from the city to make sure they are aware of the new systems, protections, and laws that the city has created.

The laws and reforms are as good as they're followed and implemented, and we have to do our part to ensure workers are aware of the reforms taking place, so they can benefit from them.

We also urge the Council to ensure that there's adequate funding to the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection this coming fiscal year, so they have the capacity needed to implement the local laws recently passed and release the 10,500 licenses for vendors.

We're looking forward to working with the City Council to deliver the reforms and changes to the hardest working people who call NYC home.

Thanks

Mohamed Attia

Dear City Councilpersons,

I write to you to urge you to revisit how New York City approaches Animal Welfare. There is no central authority in nyc regarding animals at all. Some pet issues go to nypd, who have bigger fish to fry, ACC is under the Dept of Housing so they are also not a priority there.

When there is no one in charge, nothing gets done. Currently, nothing is getting done. The city routinely rejects lost pets at ACC - if the city shelter is not "the place where lost pets go" what is it exactly? Just the place where people surrender animals. Not enough. We are in a crisis.

I recently had an ACC employee tell me "put the [very clearly a lost pet cat that was so injured it died] back outside, Sunset Park has a culture of community cats" perhaps the council can explain to me why Dumbo and Tribeca, Midtown, the Upper West, don't have a "culture of community cats" exactly? Which culture is it. The ones with money?

There is no one to appeal to there, because animal welfare is not their mission. They take any animal off the streets of Tribeca, so it is tidy and nice and no animals suffer, and reject cats from poor areas because they can, because who cares, there are already lots of animals suffering there. But if Tribeca Doctor Person finds a cat, right this way, sir.

The city funds (does not offer, which is inane btw) 3500 spay/ neuter surgeries when 200k are needed, minimum. And they are unevenly distributed to the areas that need them least. And there is no one to speak to about this. If poor schools got less because, who cares, there's already lots of poor kids there, we have people who are passionate about equality in education to appeal to. For animals? We go to the 3rd sub-department of people who are passionate about housing.

Because there is no animal welfare authority in nyc.

Fund spay/neuter. It's the only thing that will make a difference. 200,000+ spay/neuter appointments must be offered. Mobile vans must be reinstated also since acc and aspca

intentionally build far from public transport to discourage people in need from accessing their services (but Tribeca Doctor Man who has an Escalade, right this way sir). This is called “managed intake” where the letter of the law can be met without the spirit being fulfilled (because this isn't people who are passionate about animals, they seem to be passionate about spending as little as possible on animals so they can keep their budget for their real passion). Far away, inconvenient hours, rude staff, are all intentional ways to keep intake numbers low without technically breaking the law.

Even within the umbrella of Housing, nycha properties are among the most neglected/ abused animal areas in nyc. Because they have different priorities.

There is a central authority in nyc for potholes. For cable television. For the temperatures at restaurant refrigerators.

Why is there no central authority for animal welfare in New York City?

Rose Martin
President, Sunset Park Cats
[redacted]
rose@sunsetparkcats.org

Francis Yu
Director of Supermarket Access
Community Food Advocates

New York City Council Committee on Economic Development
Hearing on City-Owned Supermarkets
May 29, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Maloney and members of the Committee:

My name is Francis Yu, Director of Supermarket Access at Community Food Advocates. On behalf of our organization and the broader Groceries for All Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

Community Food Advocates works to ensure all New Yorkers have access to healthy, affordable, and culturally affirming food. We lead research and coalition-building efforts focused on addressing systemic inequities across our food ecosystem, including longstanding campaigns around universal school meals, cafeteria modernization, and Good Food procurement. In recent years, we have also led research and advocacy efforts focused on supermarket access and affordability.

The Groceries for All Coalition represents a broad and growing alliance of community-based organizations, food justice advocates, labor partners, cooperative leaders, researchers, and neighborhood stakeholders who share a common belief: the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers demands bold structural intervention. Importantly, we hold an expansive view of supermarket access solutions. We believe public, cooperative, and private sector models all have important roles to play in strengthening New York City's food system.

We also want to express our strong support for the City's continued exploration and advancement of this initiative. **We believe city-owned supermarkets represent one of the most ambitious and potentially transformative affordability interventions currently under consideration in New York City**. At a moment when rising grocery costs are placing increasing pressure on low-income, working-class, and middle-class households alike, New Yorkers are looking for bold solutions that materially lower the cost of everyday living. We commend the Council and Administration for engaging seriously with a public model that has the potential to reshape food access, reduce household expenses at scale, and establish a new national benchmark for food affordability policy.

As discussions move from concept toward implementation, we want to emphasize several critical considerations that we believe are necessary to make this initiative a success.

First, **City-owned supermarkets must be supported by substantial and sustained operating investment.** If the City's goal is to create stores that meaningfully lower grocery bills for New Yorkers, operational funding is not optional, it is foundational.

Our coalition's research has consistently pointed to the importance of a military commissary-style model, where public subsidy is used to offset operating costs in order to pass savings directly to consumers. This is the mechanism that allows commissaries to maintain consistently low prices across the store. Without this type of operational support, City-owned supermarkets risk becoming conventional retailers operating within the same market pressures and razor-thin margins that already constrain the private grocery sector.

We believe the City should plan for operating support at a scale of approximately $20 million annually per store in order to achieve meaningful affordability outcomes, particularly in the early years of operation. While this level of investment is significant, it should be understood in the context of the scale of the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers and the public resources already devoted to other forms of economic infrastructure. If implemented correctly, City-owned supermarkets could function as one of the most direct and visible forms of cost-of-living relief available to working families.

Second, **meaningful affordability must extend across the entire supermarket**, not simply within a narrowly defined "core basket" of discounted goods.

While targeted discounts on staple items provide benefit, New Yorkers do not shop exclusively from a limited basket of essentials. Families purchase culturally specific foods, fresh produce, household goods, proteins, snacks, prepared items, and other everyday necessities. A model that only subsidizes a small subset of products risks creating a two-tiered shopping experience that fails to materially change household food costs.

For City-owned supermarkets to build public trust and become genuine community assets, consumers need to experience broad, noticeable savings throughout the store. The goal should not merely be to create a handful of cheaper items, but to shift the overall economics of grocery shopping for working-class New Yorkers.

Finally, as the City explores potential operators for these stores, **we urge openness to values-aligned operating models, particularly cooperatives and mission-driven entities** with demonstrated commitments to community accountability, democratic governance, and equitable food systems.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that the City pursue a traditional member-owned grocery cooperative model that requires individual buy-in or membership fees for access. Rather, we believe the City should remain open to nonprofit, worker cooperative, and other mission-driven

operating entities whose business and governance structures are aligned with public goals around affordability, equity, and long-term neighborhood stability.

Traditional supermarket operators bring important operational expertise, but the City should not assume that conventional for-profit chains are the only viable partners for this initiative. Cooperative and community-centered models often prioritize affordability, worker wellbeing, local economic circulation, and community accountability in ways that align deeply with the public goals of this project.

As the City develops its operator selection process, it is critical that evaluation criteria extend beyond financial capacity alone and include demonstrated commitments to equity, workforce standards, community responsiveness, and public benefit outcomes. If these supermarkets are intended to function as civic infrastructure, then the operating model should reflect those civic values.

New York City has an opportunity to create a national model for publicly supported food access. But success will depend on whether the City is willing to fully embrace the structural conditions necessary to make these stores genuinely affordable, community-centered, and mission-driven.

We urge the Council to continue advancing this work with ambition and urgency, and to ensure that operational investment, whole-store affordability, and values-aligned governance remain central to the development of this initiative. Please see materials attached to this testimony that further explain various public supermarket factors and dynamics.

Thank you for your time and leadership. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Council and Administration to advance an equitable and transformative vision for food access in New York City.



WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD SUCCESSFUL CITY-OWNED SUPERMARKETS

City-owned supermarkets represent a bold opportunity to address food access and affordability, but only if they are designed to succeed. Achieving meaningful savings requires a system built for scale, supported by centralized distribution, sustained through public investment, and designed for operational efficiency. As the City develops this initiative, it is essential that the model is designed to build and sustain a network of stores that provide deeply affordable food for New Yorkers.

New York City has an affordability problem, and you don't have to look any further than your most recent grocery bill to see it. Grocery bills in NYC increased by 56.2% from 2012-2023 and by 25% since 2021.[2] New Yorkers are feeling the strain when it comes to feeding themselves and their families.

Following his election, Mayor Mamdani is advancing a policy to make food more affordable with the announcement of the first City-owned supermarket at La Marqueta in East Harlem, marking a critical first step toward a new model of public food infrastructure. The vision is to leverage City resources to maximize affordability and access for New Yorkers by "buying and selling goods at wholesale prices, centralizing warehousing and distribution, and collaborating with local neighborhoods on product selection and sourcing."[3] At its full potential, this model is designed as a network of City-owned grocery stores that establish affordable food as a public good.

THE INITIAL PHASE

AN IMPORTANT STARTING POINT TOWARD A LARGER NETWORK OF STORES

- **startup capital to build and outfit five grocery stores**, one in each borough;
- **baselined funding to cover ongoing operational costs** for each store.

This initial rollout establishes the foundation. A five-store network alone will not generate the purchasing power needed to maximize low prices. Achieving meaningful affordability requires expansion into a larger, coordinated 20+ store network.

DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Brooklyn Packers
Catskills Agrarian Alliance
Cooperative Economics Alliance of NYC (CEANYC)
Community Food Advocates
Compassion Coalition, Bargain Grocery
CUNY Community & Worker Ownership Project
CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute
Equity Advocates
Forgotten Foods
Institute for Policy Studies Inequality Program
New Amsterdam Market
New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYC NOWC)
WHEDco
Washington Heights-Inwood Food Council (WHIN)

1 SCALE MATTERS MOST

SCALE IS WHAT MAKES LOWER PRICES POSSIBLE

Wholesale pricing improves with volume. The larger the network, the greater the purchasing power, a primary factor in how savings are passed on to consumers. The type of purchasing power that unlocks maximum affordability requires a system built for volume. A five store pilot can demonstrate feasibility, but expansion to a 20+ store network maximizes affordability and ensures sustainability.



IN PRACTICE

A twenty-store network would receive lower wholesale prices for peanut butter because of the larger volume it will need to purchase to stock every store. This results in a significantly lower price for consumers.

2 ONGOING PUBLIC FUNDING

WITHOUT ONGOING FUNDING FOR OPERATIONS, PRICES WILL RISE

Startup capital funds are essential to get stores up and running. However, the success of a City-owned model that maximizes affordability structurally depends on the City providing sustained funding to cover operating costs. This is essential to keeping retail markups minimal and therefore goods as affordable as possible.[4] Affordable groceries require ongoing public investment, not just public ownership.



BUILDING STORES IMPROVES ACCESS

FUNDING OPERATIONS IS WHAT LOWERS PRICES

IN PRACTICE

Supermarket chains often rely on margins of 30% or more to cover operating costs. If the goal is to keep prices close to wholesale with little-to-no mark up to consumers, those costs must be covered through sustained public funding in the City budget—otherwise, they will ultimately be passed on to consumers through higher prices.

3 INTENTIONAL INVENTORY

WHEN THE GOAL IS LOWER PRICES, STREAMLINED INVENTORY BEATS ENDLESS CHOICE

Each product (SKU) carries its own wholesale price, logistics requirements, inventory risk, and labor cost. Stocking larger quantities of a well rounded, but more limited assortment of products enables deeper wholesale discounts compared to maintaining a wide variety of products at lower volumes.



IN PRACTICE

Costco and Aldi maximize savings by limiting products and optimize a higher sales volume per product, again contributing to the importance of scale.

4 STORE DESIGN

LOWER-COST OPERATIONS MAKE LOWER PRICES POSSIBLE

Classic supermarket design means aisles and shelves of products displayed individually requiring a considerable amount of labor, maintenance, and storage. A well designed warehouse-style model allows for streamlined shelving and merchandising, reducing labor and capital expenses. This softens the need for a large employee base, while ensuring unionized, well paying, and high quality jobs.

IN PRACTICE

Warehouse-style retailers like Costco use simpler layouts and pallet-based stocking, which reduce staffing needs and overall operating costs compared to traditional supermarkets that rely on highly labor-intensive shelving models (e.g., ShopRite).

5 CENTRALIZED, CITY-CONTROLLED DISTRIBUTION

CENTRALIZED BUYING POWER LOWERS COSTS & STREAMLINES LOGISTICS

One buying entity and one logistics system lowers costs dramatically by maximizing and concentrating purchasing and distribution power. This allows for a purchasing economy of scale, and a coordinated in-house distribution that not only allows for savings and efficiencies, but strengthens the broader food infrastructure for the City.

THE DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY: THE PREMIERE PUBLIC GROCERY MODEL

Established in the late 1800s, ***the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) provides affordable groceries to military personnel, veterans, and their families through a network of nearly 250 stores worldwide****. Commissaries operate on a cost-plus-5% model, pricing goods at cost (i.e., wholesale price) plus a small margin to support operations. Additional federal funding, totaling approximately $1.5 billion annually, further reduce prices, enabling DeCA to deliver average savings of approximately 23.7% compared to traditional retailers—a level of affordability that is explicitly mandated and built into the system's design.*

Like all public goods, City-owned supermarkets will require sustained public investment to deliver a high-quality experience, reliable service, and—most importantly—affordable food. Fortunately, there is an existing model: the military commissary system. The City's charge, rather than reinventing the wheel, is to build a model based on critical elements learned through the long established, highly successful, and well regarded military commissary model.

Like DeCA, New York City will need to establish and maintain a clear benchmark for affordability. Above all, scale will determine the level of savings that can be achieved. Without sufficient scale, savings will remain limited. Finally, sustained operational subsidies will be a critical lever for maintaining and deepening affordability over time. Together, these pillars offer a roadmap for the success of New York City's supermarket initiative.

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What It Takes to Deliver on Affordable Food
UNDERSTANDING THE COST STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC SUPERMARKETS

The Mayor's $70 million capital investment is a critical step toward building public supermarket infrastructure and expanding food access. But capital funding alone will not achieve affordability or long-term sustainability, public supermarkets also require ongoing operating support. **Funding for Operational Costs must be baselined in the City budget for New York City to deliver affordable groceries as a public good.**

Checking the math:

EXPENSE BREAKDOWN

WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN A GROCERY STORE

Every grocery store, public or private, must cover three core categories of costs:

1. the cost of **food**,
2. the cost of **occupying and maintaining space**, and
3. the cost of **running day-to-day operations**.

COST OF FOOD AND PRODUCTS (COGS)

The wholesale cost supermarkets pay to stock their shelves with products.

OCCUPANCY COSTS

Rent, utilities, taxes, and facility-related expenses.

OPERATING COSTS

Staffing, systems, operations, and other day-to-day expenses.



How these costs are funded ultimately determines grocery prices.

Checking the math:

REVENUE BREAKDOWN

WHO PAYS FOR WHAT?

A conventional grocery store model and a public supermarket model differ in one major way: **who absorbs the cost of running the store.**

In a conventional grocery model, these operational costs are recovered through product markups, increasing the price consumers pay at checkout. If operating costs are not publicly funded, those costs will be passed on through food prices.

CONVENTIONAL GROCERY STORE

Consumers pay for:
- Food
- Occupancy costs
- Operating costs

All folded into grocery prices

Higher grocery prices are needed to cover the full cost of running the store.

PUBLIC SUPERMARKET MODEL

Consumers pay for:
- Food at or near wholesale cost

City funds:
- Occupancy costs
- Operating costs

Lower grocery prices are possible because wholesale savings are passed directly to consumers.

ABOLISH THE NYC TAX LIEN SALE COALITION

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

June 10, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT BRIEF

Beyond Reform

Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale

May 2026

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

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

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

Key Findings

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

The Tax Lien Sale encourages real estate speculation

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

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

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

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

The Lien Sale disproportionately affects Black and Latine neighborhoods

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

Uncertainty and confusion about the Lien Sale

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

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

Most properties were rental and in poor condition

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

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

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

Challenges with exemptions

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

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

DOF created barriers & offered poor guidance

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

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

ABOLISH THE NYC TAX LIEN SALE COALITION

Contact: jakobs@eastnewyorkclt.org

Testimony Regarding Priorities for the New York City Executive Budget, Fiscal Year 2027

June 10, 2026

The Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) thanks Speaker Menin, Council Finance Chair Linda Lee, and the committee members, for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Proposal. **About the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development**

ANHD is one of New York City's lead policy, advocacy, and technical assistance and capacity-building organizations. We maintain a membership of 80+ neighborhood-based and citywide nonprofit organizations that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. We are an essential voice, bridging the power and impact of our member groups to build community power and ensure the right to affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We value justice, equity, and opportunity, and we believe in the importance of movement building that centers marginalized communities in our work. Across 5 decades and 5 boroughs we have consistently focused on addressing New York's housing affordability crisis, displacement, and economic inequity to build community power.

ANHD's work directly supports the needs of our members who develop, manage, and organize to preserve affordable housing, and who fight to bring equity into low-wealth communities in New York City—especially communities of color. Our groups rely on us for technical assistance and capacity-building resources that allow them to maximize their resources, skills and impact. The support services, research, analysis, public education, and coalition building we do helps to identify patterns of local neighborhood experiences and uplift citywide priorities and needs. Our work translates into the capacity to win new programs, policies and systems that ensure the creation and preservation of deeply and permanently affordable housing, and economic justice.

The Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) Initiative

We are grateful for the Council's longstanding commitment to the Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) Initiative, which has served as a lifeline for the city's most vulnerable tenants and homeowners for more than fifteen years. Through CHPS, over 45 community-based organizations provide preservation services in neighborhoods most at risk of displacement, particularly among low-income, BIPOC, and immigrant communities. However, despite this essential work, our CHPS partners continue to face significant challenges: over a decade of flat funding that has ignored a ~38% rise in the cost of living since FY16, growing community need, and systemic delays in city contracting and payment processes that place enormous strain on service providers.

In light of the escalating housing crisis, we call on the City Council to increase CHPS funding to $5.37 million in FY27. The program's funding has remained flat at $3.65 million since 2016, despite skyrocketing demand and increasing costs. New investments would enable CHPS groups to scale their services, provide cost-of-living adjustments for staff, and expand their capacity to address evictions, poor housing conditions, and tenant harassment across the city.

Displacement Alert Project (DAP)

DAP is a critical resource for affordable housing advocates, helping users to proactively identify and outreach to those at risk of displacement and do in-depth research of individual building histories. The tool has scaled since inception and has the capacity to continue expanding in New York and beyond to support unit, building, and area level strategies that prevent affordable housing displacement. We gained over 450 new registered users in 2025, bringing the total to 1,842 users. Additionally, the spike in DAP engagement from 2023 to 2024 (when the total number of users doubled from 20,000 to 40,000) was sustained over the past year, with over 40,000 total users in 2025. Importantly, DAP users are using the site more consistently as well, rising from 76 active users per day in 2023 to nearly 150 in 2025. In addition, ANHD provided two introductory training sessions to DAP to help organizations and advocates leverage data tools, build organizing strategies, and advance tenant protections, while providing direct troubleshooting support to CHPS-funded groups responding to housing crises in real time.

We urge the City Council to continue their crucial funding of this work through our application for $218,171 for ANHD's Displacement Alert Project and our Capacity Building Training and Technical Assistance for the CHPS program. This will allow us to maintain and expand DAP, provide technical assistance and training to CHPS-funded organizations to improve housing stability efforts, and produce research and data tools around housing risk and affordability, to support housing advocacy and policy solutions

Housing Capital Funding

Preservation

ANHD urges the Administration and the City Council to prioritize preservation of our existing affordable housing in the Housing Capital budget for FY27 and beyond. Over the past several decades, New York City has rightly invested billions of dollars to develop and preserve affordable housing throughout the five boroughs. Much of this government subsidized and regulated affordable housing is now financially unstable due to rising operational costs.

Utilities and insurance costs have risen 20–35%, squeezing budgets already stretched thin by mortgage payments, payroll, and regulatory compliance. Meanwhile, tenant incomes have stagnated, resulting in decreased rent collection rates. Pandemic-era tenant delinquencies have worsened the problem, as many non-profit owners of subsidized housing were never able to access programs like ERAP that prioritized private landlords.

ANHD has called for a minimum of $1 billion per year in housing capital dollars to be

devoted specifically for preservation for the next 4 years - the Administration's executive budget proposal meets this goal for FY27. We commend their commitment of resources to the critical need to preserve our existing affordable housing for both current tenants and those to come, and urge the City Council to support this allocation.

Public Land

ANHD has long supported the use of public land for public good, and we commend the Mayor's effort to identify city-owned sites across agencies' portfolios that would be suitable for affordable housing development. We urge the Mayor to commit to a policy that any housing developed on city-controlled sites be 100% affordable, and permanently affordable, with as high a percentage of deeply affordable units as financing terms can enable. Public land presents one of the clearest opportunities to deliver deeply affordable housing at scale, and continued investment in these projects will be essential. We also believe the public interest is best served by prioritizing mission-driven non-profits as developers for public sites, as they are more accountable to and engaged with the needs and priorities of local communities, and use any available income from their development projects after costs to provide essential services to their communities.

Deep affordability

While ANHD maintains the need to prioritize preservation in our current moment, we also agree that increased affordable housing supply is needed. However, it's important that our public investment in new affordable housing matches the need, which is heavily concentrated at the lowest income levels. ANHD's analysis shows that households making 50% of AMI or below made up more than three-quarters of rent burdened renter households in NYC. Yet in 2024, the overwhelming majority of the new housing units built in NYC were affordable only to households with incomes of 80% AMI and above. Public resources for new housing development must be targeted to help correct this imbalance. Mayor Mamdani's recently released housing plan takes steps in this direction, with a specific commitment for 30% of homes financed by the city to serve ELI households, and 20% to serve VLI households. While this allocation still falls short of the need, it is a step in the right direction and a commitment for which we encourage the City Council to hold them accountable.

Code Enforcement

ANHD is heartened by the new Administration's expressions of commitment to prioritize safety, affordability, and dignity for NYC's rent stabilized tenants. New York City's tenants have organized for years to preserve their homes and defend their right to live in safe, healthy conditions. But for too long, known bad actors have continued to harass and displace tenants, have been responsible for horrific living conditions and threats to public safety - and have not been properly held accountable by city government.

Organizing is an essential tool to uplift the challenges many tenants are facing in their homes and their buildings due to deteriorating physical conditions and tenant harassment. The Partners in Preservation program represents a powerful collaboration between the city and community groups that should continue to be robustly funded. Together, by forming tenant associations and accessing education on their rights under New York law, tenants are taking

charge of their living conditions.

ANHD supports continued funding for Partners in Preservation, new requests for code enforcement staffing, and calls for strengthened funding to the Emergency Repair Program to adequately meet the need – much of which will be self-funding, if the City collects the penalties it is owed.

For numerous reasons, including language barriers, problematic inspection scheduling, and more, tenants with clear violations of the City's Housing Maintenance Code face difficulty navigating the complaint process to establish a violation. If a tenant is successful in securing an inspection with an inspector who can communicate in their language and who correctly identifies the presence of a violation, they still face the core challenge: getting their landlord to perform meaningful repair work. A particular challenge is landlords who abuse their ability to self-certify violations as corrected. Since 2019, HPD has conducted an annual audit of self-certifications of the most hazardous violations (Class C) – in each of the past five years, at least 30% of audited certifications of corrections have been found to be falsely certified (HPD Audits of Certification of Correction 2019-2025). And when repairs are done, too often they do not address the underlying condition causing the issue—for example, when a property manager abates the surface-level mold on a bedroom wall but doesn't repair the leak in the pipe behind the wall causing the mold.

Although landlords are supposed to face penalties when they fail to make proper repairs, for years, the City has routinely forgiven or deferred penalties in favor of negotiated agreements. While this may be an appropriate strategy to get violations corrected in the case of good actors with limited numbers of serious violations, tenants often find themselves going back to housing court numerous times over the course of years, only to see the pattern of broken agreements repeat. This Mayoral administration has repeatedly signaled that it will change this policy, and, moving forward, the City must emphasize the collection of penalties in order to ensure that they actually act as a deterrent. And increased collection rates would have additional financial benefits for the public. As the City faces budget shortfalls, it is essential that we hold negligent landlords accountable for what they owe. Looking exclusively at false certifications of Class C violations, there is significant room to raise revenue: in 2025, we collected only $60,000 in penalties for falsely certified violations ($3.37 per known false certification). If the City had merely applied the lowest penalty amount ($500) to each of these, it could have raised $8.9 million – in other words, the City collected **less than one percent** of what it was owed in this realm alone (ANHD analysis of HPD Audits of Certification of Correction 2019-2025).

To tackle these problems holistically will require major investments, which start to materialize in this budget proposal. Partly to staff up the new "Fix the City" initiative aimed at tackling conditions in problem portfolios, the Executive Budget and the administration's housing plan propose new investments in code enforcement staff – $2.9 million for 14 positions (Expense, Revenue, Contract Budget - FY27 Executive Budget). ANHD strongly supports these new positions and urges the Council to do the same. **Continuing to grow HPD's capacity to robustly enforce housing maintenance laws is critically important, and we see this as an important and significant step forward.**

In the interim, in situations where violations create hazardous situations that threaten their

health, safety, and wellbeing of tenants, the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) is an absolutely critical backstop. The Executive Budget also increases funding for the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) by $4.5 million and $3.7 million in FY27 (Financial Plan Reconciliation - February 2026 Plan). The Council should support this increase and push further – trends in recent spending indicate that, despite the increase, this program is still underbudgeted relative to the need. Currently, contractors do much of the emergency repair work, but directly engaging city staff to do this work may be a path toward cost savings while maintaining high quality (Budget Function Analysis - FY27 Executive Budget).

Right to Counsel

Since New York City established the Right to Counsel program in 2017, it has become clear that it works as intended – when they have representation, New Yorkers are nearly always able to fend off eviction and stay in their homes. And yet, as we approach 10 years since the program was first piloted, it is underfunded and in crisis. Nearly all tenants facing eviction are eligible for Right to Counsel, yet since the end of the eviction moratorium in January 2022, only 40% have received representation. Over time, as eviction caseloads have steadily climbed and courts have moved through cases faster, funding has lagged behind: from 2022 to 2024 the number of tenants facing eviction who were eligible for RTC more than doubled but spending grew by only 33%. In tandem, the percentage of tenants with representation has fallen, declining by 40% over the same time period, with less than 1 in 3 tenants receiving legal representation in recent months (NYC Eviction Crisis Monitor; Independent Budget Office).

Although the law was slated to be fully implemented by 2022, RTC has never been adequately funded (City Limits). Today, this chronic underfunding threatens to erode the promise of the program. With a contract structure that covers less than 60% of the real costs of eviction defense – which has become increasingly complex as courts sift through positive but significant changes to housing law in the wake of 2019's Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act and 2024's Good Cause Eviction Law – providers are stretched thin (Legal Aid). Funding has hovered around $136 million per year on average, which is woefully inadequate. The Executive Budget takes steps toward closing the gap (with funding increasing to $198.2 million in FY27 and $222.4 million in FY28, up from an adopted FY26 budget of $180 million) but continues to fall well short of the need (City Limits).

ANHD supports the Right to Counsel coalition's call for an investment of approximately $500 million in total to fully fund the program, which will ensure adequate staffing to meet the rising need and full compensation for the attorneys and organizations defending clients from eviction.

When we invest in eviction prevention, it pays off for all of us – in reduced shelter costs, lower demand for public assistance, and more resilient communities.

CityFHEPS

ANHD was proud to work with our members, allies, and the City Council to pass legislation in

2023 expanding eligibility for CityFHEPS vouchers. We are disappointed in Mayor Mamdani's decision to continue the previous administration's lawsuit against this legislation, and urge the Mayor to follow through on the promises made by Mayor Zohran Mamdani on the campaign trail and fully implement the 2023 CityFHEPS expansion. CityFHEPS is a proven way to help get New Yorkers into safe and permanent housing while also providing a steady and reliable income to our affordable housing providers. While expanding the program to cover families facing eviction is projected to cost the city approximately $8 billion dollars, it is also expected to save $5 billion from reduced shelter and rehousing costs–resulting in a net cost of about $3 billion over five years (CSS). **The expansion of CityFHEPS will make great strides in alleviating the increasing homelessness crisis and we strongly urge the Administration to act quickly to implement the law.**

Source of Income Discrimination

We urge the City to strengthen our current laws to prevent the discrimination we often see voucher holders face in their search for housing. Even after New Yorkers have gone through various obstacles to obtain their voucher, they face more hurdles as they begin their search for a safe and affordable home. These New Yorkers are too often faced with discriminatory practices, given excuses that are often proxies for race and class. We urge the Council to quickly pass Council Member Krishnan's MOVE Act (Intros. 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, and 269 of 2026) to ban credit checks and income requirements for voucher holders and end this culture of discrimination. ANHD further recommends increasing staffing of the NYC Commission on Human Rights to 2018 levels to support voucher holders who have faced discrimination.

Agency Staffing

Increased capacity at key housing agencies, including HPD and HRA, is critical to addressing New York City's housing crisis.

HPD must have sufficient staff capacity to support nonprofit developers working under regulatory agreements across all stages of preservation and asset management. Many of ANHD's members manage portfolios of HPD-financed affordable housing and are facing significant financial distress driven by rising operating costs and an inflationary environment. The urgency is underscored by the City's own data: HPD's asset management rental portfolio grew 17 percent in a single year to nearly 2,500 projects, and the share classified as high risk has risen steadily to 16 percent. A growing portfolio with increasing financial distress demands more staff capacity, not less — yet the personal services budget for the Office of Housing Preservation stands at $59.3 million in the FY27 Preliminary Budget, less than the previous fiscal year. Delays in updating preservation term sheets, processing subsidy renewals, and approving program applications put these buildings in jeopardy. **We urge the Council to prioritize new hiring in HPD's preservation and asset management divisions and to establish clear processing time standards so that nonprofit developers can plan and execute with greater certainty.**

HPD's code enforcement and litigation units require additional staff to address the needs of tenants. Increasing staff capacity for inspections and for oversight through programs like the

Alternative Enforcement Program, the Underlying Conditions program, the Certification Watchlist, and the Certificate of No Harassment is necessary to ensure that the agency can respond promptly and thoroughly to tenant complaints and conduct routine inspections, as well as engage in proactive, holistic measures like roof-to-cellar inspections. Additionally, the new commitment in the Mayor's housing plan to investigate every heat complaint individually will require more staff time. There is a corresponding need for additional funding for litigation – the Mayor's earlier proposal to significantly increase staffing at the Law Department was a good start and will support the larger lawsuits the City is pursuing, but dedicated litigation support at HPD is essential to adequately enforce the housing maintenance code and keep tenants safe. ANHD is glad to see that the Executive Budget builds upon this earlier investment, with a specific request for 14 new positions for Code Enforcement and the Housing Litigation Division. **The Council should prioritize this proposal for increased staffing within the Code Enforcement and Housing Litigation Division.**

Delayed Contracts and Stalled Projects

The failure of NYC's contracting process is now well known, but unfortunately persists. Non-profit organizations that carry out essential services are being forced to lay off staff, reduce programming, and decline new city funding, and take out loans because of long delays in receiving payment for city contracts.

ANHD members working in low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities across the city that depend on timely City contracts to sustain their operations. This includes nonprofit housing developers, who need reliable funding to preserve and build affordable housing. When contract approvals are delayed, projects stall, forcing nonprofits to absorb financial losses they cannot afford. Every CHPS organization has reported delays in registration and payment, forcing them to front costs for essential services while waiting months or even years to be reimbursed. These delays significantly hinder program operations and staff retention, placing strain on frontline teams and putting tenant protections at risk.

We urge the City to address the systemic contracting backlog by advancing reforms and ensuring timely contract approvals and payments.

Homeownership

Low- and moderate-income homeowners, especially older adults, are also increasingly at risk of displacement in neighborhoods throughout New York City. ANHD commends the Council for its support of the Foreclosure Prevention Initiative, which leverages loans, counseling and education to keep New Yorkers in their homes. We support increasing this initiative to $6.29 million in FY27. Additionally, ANHD supports increasing funding for the Home Loan Program Initiative, the CLT Initiative and the Estate Planning and Resolution (EPAR) Initiative to keep families in their homes, expand permanently affordable homeownership opportunities, and protect generational assets as homeowners age.

Merchant Organizing for Commercial Tenants

Every New Yorker knows the value that small businesses bring to their neighborhoods– whether it's their corner bodega or fruit vendor, favorite restaurant or barbershop, locally owned yoga studio or accessible financial services. Every New Yorker also knows the reality of a less and less affordable city, where low-income tenants are being pushed out of their homes and hard-working people are struggling to pay for basic necessities like groceries and utility bills. Our favorite small businesses also endure this reality.

In order to keep their doors open, small business owners are struggling against landlords, corporations, and banks that threaten to push them out. Despite the myriad challenges, small business owners remain committed to their communities and continue to play a vital and unique role. They not only provide goods and services that we rely on, but also act as cultural beacons, social glue, and safe spaces for all New Yorkers.

Since 2021, ANHD has been analyzing and collecting data about the state of storefronts in New York City. Our analysis of changes in storefront rents from 2019 to 2022 showed that in much of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens, rents had been rising year over year since 2019, while in Manhattan storefront rents that dipped in 2020, likely due to the economic impacts of the pandemic, were again on the rise. Our 2023 analysis showed that threats to small businesses are consistently higher both in communities of color and for small business owners who are people of color and immigrants themselves.

In order to combat those vulnerabilities, small businesses need protections. While New York City has some policy frameworks and technical assistance programs in place, these alone are not enough. For example, the commercial tenant anti-harassment law and the business owner bill of rights establish foundational protections, but without adequate enforcement of such policies, small business owners are left to fend for themselves. City programs like the Commercial Lease Assistance Program and the Business Express Service Team provide access to legal support and technical assistance, but these programs have very limited reach. In order to protect small businesses, we urge you to:

- Expand the Commercial Lease Assistance Program: The CLA Program is a vital resource for small businesses and other commercial tenants who may not otherwise be able to consult with a lawyer before signing a potentially predatory lease agreement. Such lease agreements put commercial tenants at risk of losing income and even their entire businesses due to factors like landlord harassment, structural issues, unforeseen rent increases, and more. In order to counterbalance the currently unchecked and unregulated power of commercial landlords, tenants need free and accessible legal assistance.

- Fund community-based organizations (CBOs) engaging in merchant organizing and outreach efforts: Local CBOs can work alongside the existing community of small businesses in a corridor or neighborhood to provide support that would otherwise not reach them. Such organizations continuously do outreach in order to make sure every single small business receives the information and services it needs. Especially in a regulatory environment that can be confusing and punitive, having a trusted source of information in the neighborhood can be a lifeline.

These partnerships and resources will ensure that our small business can remain the foundation of thriving New York City communities.

Industrial Business Service Providers

The industrial sector plays a crucial role in creating a more equitable, thriving, and functioning New York City. **Industrial businesses pay higher wages and offer more career opportunities to a workforce that is 67% people of color and 70% of whom do not have a college degree. Preserving and growing these jobs lies at the heart of a true equitable economic development strategy.**

- The industrial sector provides over 500,000 jobs in New York City, making up nearly 15% of our city's workforce, while contributing over $1.7 billion annually in tax revenue.
- 33% of all NYC jobs that pay over $50,000 and do not require a college degree are industrial jobs.

In addition, the industrial sector is essential to the functioning of New York City's services and infrastructure and is critical to addressing our climate resiliency and climate adaptation needs now and into the future.

As a convener of the Industrial Jobs Coalition (IJC), a city-wide coalition of IBSPs, non-profit developers of industrial space, and industrial policy advocates, ANHD and our member organizations have long advocated for increased support for the industrial sector and IBSPs. IBSPs play a crucial role in supporting the industrial sector. Every year, IBSP organizations collectively serve hundreds and hundreds of industrial businesses across the city, providing the specialized expertise and hands-on assistance that manufacturers and industrial firms require. For decades, these IBSPs have been the connective tissue between city government and the industrial businesses that make New York run — the manufacturers, distributors, and freight operators who move people, goods, and food through every borough. These are not transactional service providers. They are long-standing community institutions with deep roots in industrial neighborhoods, cultivated over years, often generations. They know their businesses

by name. They show up when a lease is threatened, when a permit is stuck, when a loan falls through.

For these reasons, we oppose the Department of Small Business Services (SBS)'s new policy to dismantle the only business support program for small manufacturers via their recent RFP (Business Solution & Industrial Business Zone Centers; EPIN:80125P0049) and its amended versions. **Eliminating funding for the IBSP program would end a more than 40-year commitment by the City to retain and grow industrial jobs**—and it would do so at the very moment when those businesses face some of the greatest pressures in decades.

The amended RFP assumes the Business Solutions Center model that serves all NYC small businesses will serve small and medium-sized industrial businesses. This is not only a deeply flawed assumption but is at variance with the city's own recommendations from the New York Industrial Plan report, which finds that industrial firms require specialized expertise, long-term relationships, and consistent on-the-ground presence. The report clearly identifies the need for specialized support for industrial businesses that addresses the evolving needs of industrial businesses with high quality services at scale. It also emphasizes the importance of sustained engagement with businesses located in Industrial Business Zones. Yet the amended RFP threatens to effectively dismantle the city's existing Industrial Business Service Provider network and replace it with a generalized small-business service model in which a single rotating staff member is expected to serve multiple industrial neighborhoods across an entire borough**.** While we acknowledge the amended RFP does offer a new, 3-year contract to one, citywide provider to provide more intensive services to small and midsized industrial firms, this still does not preserve the existing network of place-based Industrial Business Service Providers that many of NYC's industrial firms rely upon at a resource level commensurate with service need. By eliminating the very infrastructure that currently provides that support, the RFP does not advance the recommendations of the Industrial Plan—it makes a mockery of them.

At a moment when industrial businesses are already facing rising rents, shrinking industrial space, workforce shortages, and increasing regulatory complexity, this is **the worst possible time to dismantle the infrastructure that helps these businesses survive and grow.** This infrastructure is made of organizations that exist not just to help new businesses open. They exist to keep existing businesses alive, to ensure this city remains a place where durable things are made, where neighborhoods stay employed, where the industrial legacy of New York is not merely preserved as history but grown as a diverse and resilient economy.

Modest Investment for Outsized Economic Impact

Although the IBSP program represents only $1.2 million in citywide funding, it supports businesses with over 500,000 jobs, making up nearly 15% of our city's workforce, and contributing over $1.7 billion annually in tax revenue. That represents only $2.40 per job of investment. This funding is critical keystone support for the nonprofit community economic

development organizations that support these businesses. For many of these organizations, IBSP funding represents a significant portion of their operating budgets. Eliminating it would severely weaken the capacity of community-based economic development organizations that serve underinvested industrial neighborhoods across New York City and undermine the Mamdani administration's goals of creating a more equitable and affordable city for all.

What We Recommend to Grow Industrial Businesses

ANHD urges the Administration and City Council to increase critical funding for IBSPs, which hasn't increased since 2016 despite record inflation, and to make it a multi-year commitment to help ensure the stability of the non-profit organizations that use this funding to serve industrial businesses across the city.

We also strongly believe that this program needs to remain distinct from other SBS programs that are more targeted to other types of small businesses.

We are asking the City to:

1. Remove industrial business support from the Business Solutions Center RFP.

Industrial firms require specialized support that general small business programs are not designed to provide.

2. Provide a two-year extension for existing Industrial Business Service Provider contracts.

This will ensure continuity of services while the City works with stakeholders to design a stronger program.

3. Collaborate with industrial organizations to develop a modernized IBSP program that better meets the needs of industrial businesses.

A future Industrial Business support program should:

- Address rising industrial real estate pressures
- Support manufacturing growth and retention
- Connect firms to green economy and infrastructure opportunities
- Strengthen workforce pipelines for industrial jobs
- Provide resources for nonprofit-managed affordable industrial space to prevent displacement of small businesses.
- Reinvest in the Industrial Developer Fund (IDF) to give nonprofits throughout NYC the means to develop affordable industrial real estate for manufacturers in their communities

We ask the City Council to work with us to ensure SBS makes these necessary changes to their amended RFP, extends IBSPs existing contract, and works to develop a modernized IBSP support program.

We look forward to continued engagement as the budget process moves toward adoption and thank the Committees for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Emily Goldstein: emily.g@anhd.org.

THE BILLIE HOLIDAY THEATRE

Testimony to the New York City Council Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Intercultural Intergroup Relations Committee & Finance Committee on the Fiscal 2027 Executive Plan for the Department of Cultural Affairs

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

My name is Shadawn Smith, I am the Executive Director of The Billie Holiday Theatre, located in the legendary neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant and serving the residents of Central Brooklyn and beyond for 54 years. Congratulations to Deputy Speaker & Chairman Williams, Chairman Lee, and the members of the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, & International Intergroup Relations for the successful budget hearings on the Mayor's FY27 Executive Plan.

The Billie Holiday Theatre ("The Billie") is a state-of-the-art creative campus and the only multi-platform performing arts center with presenting, institutional residency, and education programs designed for and led by the nation's most prominent African American community — Central Brooklyn. Our mission is to convene unapologetic, authentic voices to make American Black Theater and other performing arts a rigorous space to disrupt and foster social change. Located in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant at Restoration Plaza, The Billie has long served as a cultural hub, providing an open, creative space that amplifies diverse voices and addresses social justice issues. We tackle socioeconomic inequities head-on, producing programming that inspires and reflects the African American and diasporic experience, offered at accessible times, locations, and costs for low- and moderate-income audiences and those with disabilities.

The Billie is the home for storytellers in every artistic sector and the launching pad for some of today's iconic artistic iconic voices like Debbie Allen, Samuel Jackson, Vanessa E. Williams, and Omari Hardwick. We are the home for Bed-Stuy's own, Ronald K. Brown, and his EVIDENCE, a dance company. We are one of the few remaining theatres forged during the Black Arts Movement, and the only one in the borough of Brooklyn. Over the years, we have expanded services from theatre to all performing arts, visual arts, top notch arts education programs, and premier residency programs.

Thanks to the robust support from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs, The Bille has been able to survive and remains a beacon of hope for our communities. *We are one of the original recipients of the Coalition of Theaters of Color initiative when the total funding was under $1 million for about eight theaters. While we are proud to witness the continued support of this imitative where the total funding is now $5.7 million and now includes approximately 63 theaters, performing arts*

venues, and other cultural centers, ***we are adding our voices to the call for funding to increase to $8 million to adequately support these organizations. This modest $2.3M increase will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30%, which is a minimum of what is needed to increase capacity and stabilize these vital organizations.***

We are also proud recipients of the Council's Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Speaker's Fund, and the Department's Cultural Development Fund and Equity Initiative. *These local resources allow us to bring world-class art to Central Brooklyn, support primarily Black and brown creatives across the City, develop and maintain a talent pipeline, bolster local businesses, and serve over 25,000 community members annually through our core programming in education, performing arts, and visual arts.* **We demand that the Mayoral Administration add $20 million back to the department's baselined budget, and we are grateful to the City Council for advocating for the full restoration of this baselined funding.** Organizations like mine need every dollar granted to them through the Council initiatives and departmental allocations. With the cultural sector losing millions of dollars from the federal government, every public sector dollar from the City and State is a precious commodity. It is my hope that the City will once again be a nationwide leader by increasing its support of the cultural sector, particularly those organizations that historically serve Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian communities.

I have been leading The Billie for three years and am proud of the work we are doing to uplift, amplify, and nurture artistic storytelling for Bed-Stuy and all of Central Brooklyn. *The cultural corridors of Fulton Street and Eastern Parkway are vibrant footprints that make New York City, a global cultural capital. I am equally proud to serve alongside the other cultural leaders of the Brooklyn Arts & Cultural Kollective (BACK): 651 Arts, BRIC, BAC, Brooklyn Children's Museum, Cool Culture, Drive Change, Ifetayo, Laundromat Project, MoCADA, Prospect Park, Recess, and Weeksville.*

In conclusion, **we respectfully request a modest $2.3M increase, which will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30%, which is a minimum of what is needed to increase capacity and stabilize these vital organizations, demand the restoration of $20 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs baseline budget, and continue the support of The Billie through the Speaker's Fund and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative.** Thank you for all that you do to support and uphold the NYC cultural sector. I hope to welcome you all home to The Billie this summer for our free outdoor programming on Restoration Plaza!

Submitted by,
Shadawn Smith
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Empowering Young Voices

6/10/26 Written Testimony for City Hall's Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning. I would like to express my gratitude to the committee for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Tatiana Wolkowitz, and I am a Youth Guardianship Paralegal at The Children's Law Center ("CLC"), a legal services organization in New York City that has represented more than 185,000 children in child protective legal proceedings in the New York City Family Courts and the New York State Supreme Court Integrated Domestic Violence Parts since 1997. Through our work in the courtroom and the community, we empower young people through legal representation and support, reduce the harms of family dissolution and court involvement, and promote well-being and equity for children and youth.

This year, CLC succeeded in expanding our capacity to represent vulnerable youth by creating our Youth Guardianship Project – an initiative focused solely on the representation of undocumented youth as they petition U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (or "SIJS") in Family Court.

With IOLA funding this year, we were able to build a specialized SIJS team by hiring two dedicated Youth Guardianship Paralegals, including myself, and shifting one staff attorney into a role focused exclusively on this work.

Through in-depth interviews, document and hearing preparation, and ongoing support, we help ensure our clients feel informed, empowered, and connected to the resources they need.
When appropriate, our social workers assist youth in accessing mental health care, medical services, and other forms of support. I am proud to say that every SIJS client we have represented has successfully obtained guardianship and SIJS findings orders from Family Court. This means that with the support of CLC's SIJS initiative, over 200 children have completed the first step towards obtaining permanency and stability in this country.

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For nearly three decades, CLC has represented children in Family Court proceedings involving issues like custody, domestic violence, guardianship, and child protective matters. This expertise uniquely positions us to represent youth seeking SIJS because their SIJS processes begins in Family Court, where young people must first obtain findings that demonstrate their SIJS eligibility before they can seek SIJS status from USCIS. Because advocating for vulnerable children in Family Court has been at the core of CLC's mission since our founding, we are uniquely equipped to help young people navigate this critical first step toward safety, stability, and lawful status.

Through the SIJS Initiative, CLC works alongside our partners in the ICARE coalition to ensure that undocumented youth do not have to navigate these complex legal systems alone. Together, ICARE providers bring complementary expertise to secure Family Court findings, file and monitor SIJS petitions with USCIS, provide removal defense when necessary, and coordinate services that ensure young people receive continuous support and representation throughout every stage of the process. Without sustained investment, many youth risk remaining in legal limbo even after establishing their eligibility for protection. The impact and importance of sustained representation becomes clear when we consider the experiences of the youth behind these cases.

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I would like to share the story of one of our clients. Ibrahima, whose name has been changed to protect his privacy, is a minor from Guinea. His mother abandoned him when he was only three years old, and he never heard from her again. He grew up in a home characterized by abuse and instability. His father physically abused him, and his older brother was also abusive.

As a child, Ibrahima lacked the most basic protections that every child deserves: safety, stability, and consistent care. Ibrahima witnessed political violence affecting his family, and that violence ultimately claimed the lives of both his father and brother due to their political affiliation. Left with no remaining family members able to care for him, Ibrahima suddenly found himself completely alone and without any meaningful support system in Guinea. At just eighteen years old, Ibrahima made the difficult decision to travel to the United States by himself in search of safety and opportunity. After arriving, he entered New York City's shelter system. Like many of our clients, he arrived with tremendous uncertainty about what the future might hold.

Today, however, his life looks very different. Ibrahima is enrolled in high school in Brooklyn. He is learning English, working, and hopes to attend college and study finance. He participates in school activities and is actively building a future for himself.

He has also found something he had been missing for much of his life: a trusted adult who cares about him. Through an English class, Ibrahima met Kristen, whose name has been changed, who eventually became his proposed guardian. Their relationship grew over time through trust, consistency, and support. Kristen attends important events in his life, offers guidance about school and work, encourages him to pursue his educational goals, and provides the emotional support every young person deserves. She has described Ibrahima as resilient, kind, humble, and deeply committed to his future.

To many people, guardianship may seem merely a legal designation, but for young people like Ibrahima, it represents something far more important: a stable adult relationship. Kristen provides the consistent support that every young person needs as they build a future for themselves.

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Ibrahima 's story demonstrates why this initiative is so important. SIJS is not simply an immigration benefit; it is a critical protection for young people who have experienced abuse, neglect, abandonment, and other forms of instability. With legal representation, youth like Ibrahima can access safety, permanency, and the opportunity to build stable futures in New York.

The need for these services continues to grow. This year alone, CLC's SIJS team and additional staff attorneys have represented over 200 SIJS-eligible youth in family court, 100% of which received signed guardianship and SIJS orders that will permit them to continue seeking status in immigration court. Still, there are thousands of children seeking representation who are unable to access advocates. These numbers demonstrate both the tremendous need for these services and the impact that dedicated funding can have.

With continued funding, CLC and our ICARE partners could expand capacity, serve more young people, and provide even more holistic support. Additional resources could allow us to grow our legal teams and increase access to social work and mental health services specifically tailored to SIJS youth. Many of our clients carry significant trauma and face barriers to accessing appropriate service – several of them are too fearful to reach out for mental health support due to their undocumented status. With extended funding, CLC's social work team could use their own expertise to positively help our clients. Continued investment would allow us to better meet those needs while ensuring that legal representation remains available throughout the entirety of the immigration process.

We therefore respectfully ask the committee to continue supporting the SIJS Initiative and the critical work performed by the ICARE coalition across New York City by maintaining the same amount of IOLA funding OR increasing the funding by 125% to allow CLC and other organizations to invest in more holistic approaches and to take on greater case loads.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to protecting immigrant children and youth in New York City.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to protecting immigrant children and youth in New York City.

Written Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
New York City Council, Finance Committee

Miranda Massie, Director, Climate Museum
Testifying on behalf of the Climate Museum
June 10, 2026

Greetings, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Miranda Massie, and I am the Director of the Climate Museum. As you may know, we are the first museum in the U.S. dedicated to climate change and climate action. We use arts and cultural programs to educate visitors about the climate crisis and offer ways for visitors to take civic and collective action. Since 2018—over the course of 18 exhibitions, 360+ events, and 190,000+ in-person visitors—the Climate Museum has provided dynamic and rich arts programming, all of it free or payment-optional, that moves people from experiencing distress and isolation about the existential climate threat to feeling informed, connected, and empowered to act.

In late 2025, Chair Gennaro and the Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency, and Waterfronts passed a Resolution in support of the Climate Museum. We are deeply proud of this Resolution. It confirms our sense of the Museum as a public good of, by, and for New Yorkers as well as an emerging element of our city's national and global leadership on culture, climate, and their intersection.

The Museum is currently working to scale up to a permanent location. We have convened a dream team of advisors to help us identify and secure, in sequence, an interim location for exhibitions and programming and then a lasting home for climate and culture. We will continue to present a variety of programs and events with outstanding partners as we scale up; you will find examples below.

I write with an urgent request today: that you strengthen New York City's civic fabric on climate and its cultural leadership by expressing your support for the Climate Museum through the Speaker's Initiative.

As previously mentioned, in December 2025, the Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency and Waterfronts passed a Resolution supporting the mission and growth of the Climate Museum. During the hearing, New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds—organizational partners, former high school interns, scientists, educators, artists, and more—shared their stories about how being a part of or experiencing the Museum's work moved them. A digest of that testimony is attached. The Resolution continues to play a key role in elevating the Climate Museum, and we are very appreciative of this statement of support from the Committee and Chair Gennaro.

In FY26 we also received our first Speaker's Initiative Grant of $100,000—a critical inflection point for the Museum as we seek to achieve eligibility for receipt of capital funds. This grant allowed us to present programs that keep us in dialogue with our community as we work toward our next exhibition and future home—including an Earth Day Concert in Times Square with Broadway Green Alliance; a Climate Game Show Night with noted drag artist and environmental activist Pattie Gonia; a poetry and visual arts inflected book launch for a brand new book by climate leader and bestselling author Dr. Katharine Wilkinson; and a celebration of World Oceans Day with the New York Climate Exchange, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Met Orchestra Musicians, and Te Ao Mana that will foreground Pacific Island music and dance.

This year our key strategic objective is to secure a second Speaker's Initiative grant of $100,000 to advance the process of establishing eligibility to apply for capital funds from City Council, so that the Museum can continue to be a publicly accessible and accountable New York City institution as we progress toward our permanent home.

Through the Resolution and the support from the Speaker, the city council has not only lifted up arts and culture, but maintained and grown New York City's position as a global leader on climate and civic engagement with it. In 2025, the Climate Museum coauthored a peer-reviewed study with researchers from the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. The study found that, after seeing our exhibition, visitors left more aware of just how much others are concerned about climate change, more hopeful that it can be solved, and more confident and determined to speak out about it.[1] The Museum does the critical climate work of seeding a sense of agency and possibility in the public. This work lays the foundation for meaningful and sustained change, with our city in the lead.

As President Trump continues to maliciously attack fundamental public services, civil rights, clean energy, climate justice, and indeed democracy itself, we all feel a sense of collective urgency. Now is the time to come together around an issue we are all concerned about. Now is the time for New York City to defend our values and stand together for unwavering climate, cultural, and civic leadership.

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[1]Nicholas Badullovich, Amanda Nesci, Miranda Massie, John Kotcher, Edward Maibach; "Communicating about 'The End of Fossil Fuel' in a museum setting: a mixed-methods investigation of the climate museum," PLOS Climate, February 19 2025. https://journals.plos.org/climate/article?id=10.1371/journal.pclm.0000518

Today, I am asking for your support in helping the Climate Museum continue to do this vital work. We have submitted a request as part of the Speaker’s Initiative and ask for your support with Speaker Menin and her team. We deeply appreciate the past support we've received from the Council and hope to extend this vital partnership.

Thank you again for your support, for your time today, and for your service.



WITNESS TESTIMONIES

New York City Council Hearing on Resolution in Support of the Climate Museum

October 22, 2025

CIVIC AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS



CHRISTA FARMER
Professor, Hofstra University

“I visited the pop-up exhibition space of the Climate Museum on February 10, 2024, with seven students from my GEOL140 Paleoclimatology course at Hofstra University...We were all impressed with the welcoming space and the engaging exhibit. I was especially touched by the connections made between community, equity, and the climate system.”



BRAD LANDER
New York City Comptroller

“This is not just a museum — the NYC Climate Museum is a civic institution for culture and the sense of hope we need to meet the challenges posed by the climate crisis. By translating complex ideas into accessible stories and experiences, the Museum builds the public understanding and collective will necessary for bold, lasting climate action.”



RYAN MANN-HAMILTON
Professor, LaGuardia Community College

“The Climate Museum has served as a vital cultural and educational resource—empowering communities, especially youth and underrepresented groups, to confront the realities of climate change and to envision a just, sustainable future. The continued investment in the Climate Museum is an investment in New York’s resilience, innovation, and leadership in the global movement for climate justice.”



JOEL TOWERS
President, The New School

“The work of the Museum has reached the hearts and minds of so many. Not just my students, but thousands of all ages and backgrounds. Not just teaching about climate change, but changing the course of students' lives and fostering the next generation of civic leaders.”

CLIMATE SCIENCE EXPERTS



SONALI MCDERMID

Professor of Environmental Studies, New York University

“The Climate Museum is not just a place to learn about climate change. It’s a place to gather community and galvanize our community towards action and create the city and the world we want to live in.”



CYNTHIA ROSENZWEIG

Senior Research Scientist, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia Climate School; Vice Chair, Climate Museum Board of Trustees

“The Climate Museum provides the key elements necessary not only for New Yorkers, but for visitors from the U.S. and the world, to solve climate change, the significant planetary challenge of our time and for generations to come.”



CLIMATE POLICY EXPERTS



MARK CHAMBERS

Architect and Executive Director, Terreform ONE; Former Senior Director for Building Emissions and Community Resilience, White House Council on Environmental Quality

“The Climate Museum wields a precision and an empathy that policy alone cannot, helping communities to interpret, to challenge, and ultimately to co-author the future that we’re all building together.”



NATHANAEL GREENE

Director, Renewable Energy Policy, Climate & Energy, Natural Resources Defense Council

“When I visit, I’m reminded that solving the climate crisis is not only a technical project; it’s a human one. Policy can clear the way for wind turbines, solar fields, and transmission lines, but culture is what gives us the courage to build them… You cannot counter fear with data alone. You counter it with belonging, with a sense of purpose, with art, and with stories that make people proud to be part of the solution. That’s exactly what the Climate Museum does.”



DAN ZARRILLI

Chief Climate & Sustainability Office, Columbia University; Former Chief Climate Policy Advisor, NYC Mayor’s Office

“The Climate Museum has been a key player introducing culture alongside the policy, technology, and finance themes that dominate climate discourse. If we hope to make more progress here in New York City, we will need an even stronger focus on culture to activate the public, which of course supports clean energy and climate justice by very wide margins, but which has remained dramatically under mobilized.”

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADERS



EDDIE BAUTISTA

Executive Director, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

“The Museum’s exhibitions and other programs have played a helpful role in informing the general public about the connections between climate change and social (in)justice and the critical role of the environmental and climate justice movements in advancing climate progress.”



LONNIE J. PORTIS

Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, WE ACT for Environmental Justice

“From its conception, the Climate Museum has been a valued addition to the broader effort to raise awareness and understanding of the climate crisis and how to address it. With its unique cultural perspective, the museum has helped educate the general public—both young and old—about the critical dynamics linking systemic inequities and climate change.”



CREATIVES



DARIAN DAUCHAN
Actor, Writer, Musician; Lead Teaching Artist, The Climate Museum

“Every exhibit, every event, every session, when we’re together, creating together, planning together, in conversation with one another, experiencing poignant art together, we are reminded that we’re not alone, that the challenge can be met, and that with our collective efforts we have a chance.”



GUY GEIER
Senior Partner, FXCollaborative Architects

“This project is about creating public spaces that reflect who we are as New Yorkers—open, inclusive, and forward-looking.”



SARI GOODFRIEND
Photographer

“The Museum helps us confront a very existential question—where do we fit in and what can we do to ensure a safe future for our planet and humanity as a whole?”



EMILY RABOTEAU
Writer and Essayist

“It is an innovative and maverick space for urgent climate communications that inspire collective action as well as a safe pathway into the dark and overwhelming reality of the climate crisis... Speaking for myself, it helped give me the tools to confront that reality instead of avoiding it.”



GABRIELA SALAZAR
Artist

“Above and beyond any other institution, the Climate Museum has helped me to understand that through my devotion to art and its community, there is a way to make a difference.”

MUSEUM LEADERS



SEAN DECATUR
President, American Museum of Natural History

“The Climate Museum successfully weaves art, historical documents, and scientific data into a coherent and cohesive narrative that both informs and activates its audience...With its focus on the human side of the climate crisis through arts and cultural programming, the Climate Museum is an important and distinctive addition to our sector.”



JENNY NEWELL
Curator for Climate Change, Australian Museum

“The Climate Museum has been empowering ever-growing numbers and, crucially, diverse ranges of people to support climate and social justice. Ten years ago, it was hard to get visibility in museums for the ‘difficult’ topic of climate change. Now, integrating climate content with culture is increasingly normative. More museums—large and small—are stepping up and exploring ways of engaging the public with the climate crisis. The Climate Museum has played an important leadership role in this urgently-needed change.”



YOUTH LEADERS



MANAV BANSAL
Climate Museum Youth Program Alum

“It wasn’t until I encountered the Climate Museum that my outlook on life, as well as the impact I thought I could make, was altered. The Museum ignited a spark within me, fueling a desire to think differently and to explore how I might have a broader impact.”



DREW KNOTTS
Former Climate Museum Volunteer

“What I expected to be another college volunteer role became one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. The Climate Museum taught me how to turn my anxiety about the future into action, creativity, and hope.”



IDEA REID
Climate Museum Youth Program Alum

“The world was seemingly at its most hopeless, yet I don’t think I’ve ever felt as unafraid and bold as I did [when I was working with the Climate Museum]. The Museum gave me the tools to turn my passion and artistry into action.”



JASMINE WYNN
Climate Museum Youth Program Alum

“Since 2020, I have been involved with climate education and advocacy in various capacities—facilitating high school teach-ins, writing about climate solutions for Congressional audiences, and leading lobbying efforts in both Albany and New York City. However, none of this would have come to fruition without the help of the Climate Museum, which provided me with a pathway into climate leadership and understanding environmental justice.”

FUNDERS



RICKY BENAVIDEZ
Director, The Carmack Collective

“Even for organizations that have not relied on federal funding, the current federal administration’s actions and stated policies actively threaten the resilience and sustainability of climate organizations and other nonprofits. We are in a moment of perverse attacks on clean energy and climate justice. It is paramount for both private and public funders to step up and support the excellent work being done.”



ARMANDO BENGOCHEA
Senior Program Officer & Director, The Mellon Foundation

“We initiated our support because we believe that the vibrant interdisciplinary programs the Museum offers the public—explicitly uniting the arts and humanities with civic engagement on matters vital to us all—illuminate innovative pathways forward toward a safe, just, and vibrant future.”



CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS



NIC BADULLOVICH

Researcher, George Mason University and The University of Western Australia; Author of "Communicating about *The End of Fossil Fuel* in a museum setting: A mixed-methods investigation of the Climate Museum"

"In short, we found several important behaviours and mindsets that were positively affected by visiting the Museum: visitors had greater hope that climate change can be addressed, greater intentions to engage in climate change conversations, and we observed a marked shift in social norm perceptions."

"It uses empirical evidence to build its programming and to communicate the realities of climate change. And it does not sugarcoat hard truths – but our research study shows that not only do people feel more hopeful when they leave the Museum, but they feel more compelled to do something about it. That is remarkable."

"Its impact reaches far beyond New York – it serves as a model for the world. Our empirical research paper also demonstrates this, as people visiting the museum came from five continents across the world, comprising 40 different countries."



ED MAIBACH

Director (Emeritus), George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

"Through its programming, the Climate Museum is offering state-of-the-science and state-of-the-art climate education to NYC residents and visitors—which is an important service that reflects well on America's leading city."

PARTNERS



VICKI CERULLO

Director of Urban Engagement, The New York Climate Exchange

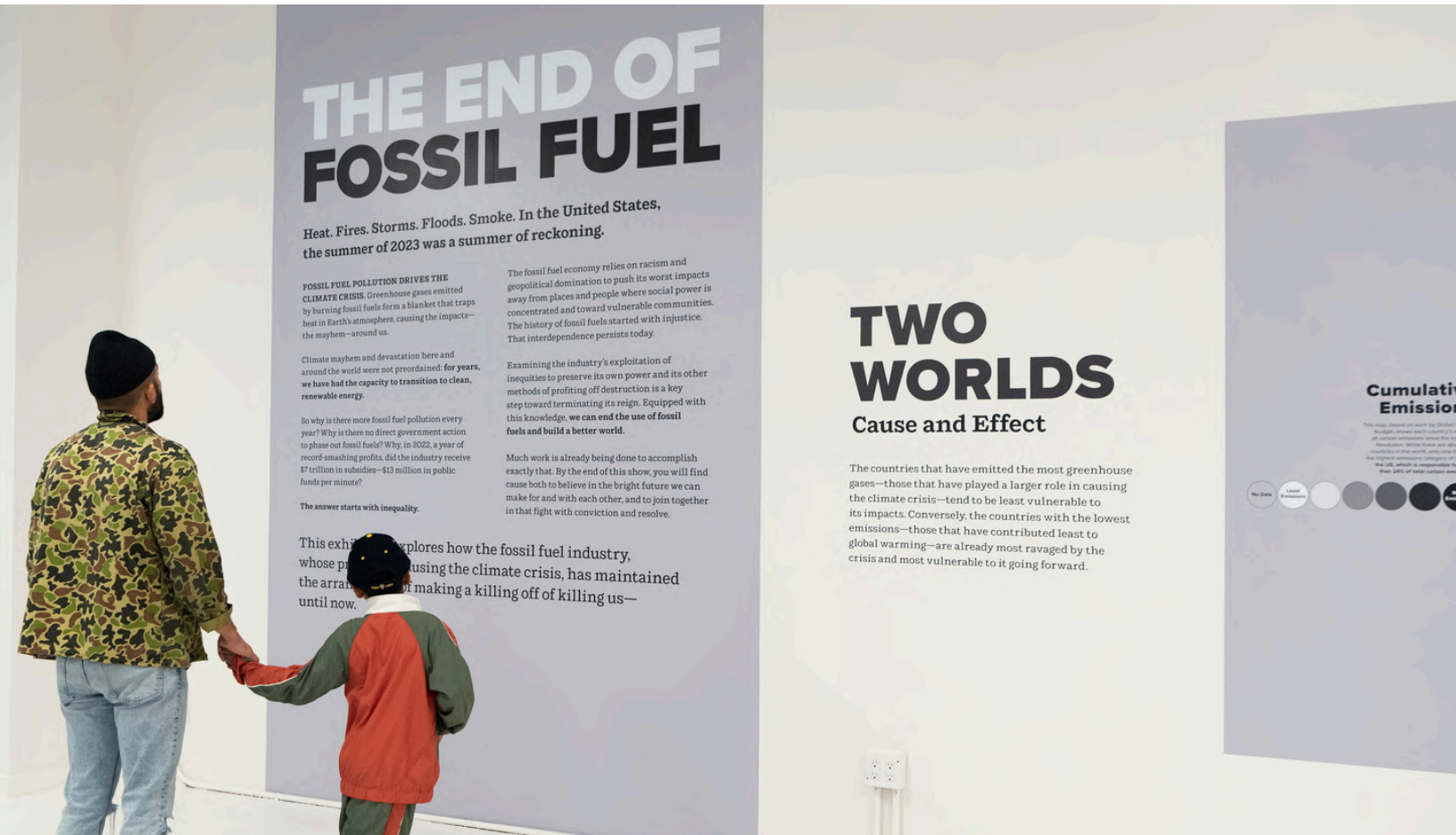
“We at the Exchange know that climate solutions can only be unlocked at speed and scale if they're multidisciplinary. The arts are key to that equation. Art sparks conversation, evokes emotion, and most importantly, research shows that it leads to action. That is exactly what the Climate Museum does.”



SARAH KRAUTHEIM

Chief of Staff, The Trust for Governors Island

“This Climate Museum’s exhibition felt fundamentally different from other climate-focused programs I had experienced. Rather than overwhelming visitors with dire predictions, it met people where they are—tapping into individual feelings and experiences around the climate crisis while providing hopeful pathways for action. Working with Miranda and her team left me inspired and motivated, not paralyzed by fear.”



THE CLIMATE MUSEUM

THANK YOU!



COALITION FOR
Community School
Excellence

The Coalition for Community School Excellence Testimony: Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing

Background:

New York City has one of the largest portfolios of community schools in the nation. We stand as a national leader in the strategy's implementation, with NYCPS' Office of Community Schools supporting 419 schools from grades K-12 across New York City.

The community school strategy addresses some of the most pressing challenges facing students today; chronic absenteeism, learning loss, mental and physical health needs, and food insecurity. Through school-based supports, targeted interventions, and strong relationships with students and families, community schools remove barriers to learning and improve student engagement.

Community schools advance the current Chancellor's key priorities of strengthening academic rigor, creating culturally responsive and community-connected classrooms, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and promoting family empowerment and collaborative leadership. Community schools have historically partnered with culturally and spiritually rich communities that have concentrated areas of material impoverishment. These communities have been disproportionately affected by systemic inequities that distort their depth of talent and value. As such, we believe **every school should be a community school.** The strategic benefits are universal because there is an increased value on people and processes that can raise expectations, leading to improved outcomes.

Research data reinforces the strategy's effectiveness in the short and long term. Studies have found a correlation between the effective implementation and execution of the community school strategy and stronger student connectedness, higher attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, improved academic outcomes and graduation rates. In New York City, community schools have outperformed comparison schools over the past decade, including larger gains in graduation rates, ELA and math proficiency with smaller increases in chronic absenteeism.

Community schools deliver these high-impact outcomes at a fraction of the cost of downstream interventions. Addressing the root causes of student challenges before they escalate reduces the reliance on more expensive crisis-response systems. National studies show returns of $10-14 for every dollar invested, while local data shows that a $100,000 investment in a Community School Director can leverage more than $600,000 in services and grants.

Budget Recommendation:

We are grateful to the City Council, City Hall and NYCPS leadership for recognizing the value of the community school strategy, and for more uniformly embracing non-profit providers as true partners in advancing the Chancellor's priorities. Maintaining level funding for community school contracts in FY27 and the outyears is an important step that provides stability and builds trust between community-based organizations and NYC City Government.

At the same time, continual improvement of the strategy's implementation and its long-term sustainability remain at risk. Community schools face significant challenges; unstable federal and state funding streams, inefficient contracting and procurement systems, delayed payments, and understaffing within the Office of Community Schools (OCS). The Executive Budget's reduction in OTPS funding for OCS threatens to further limit the office's ability to participate in professional learning and capacity-building to support schools and providers. Together, these challenges strain implementation of the strategy with fidelity and hinder New York City's ability to sustain and expand it effectively.

In partnership with the Coalition for Community School Excellence (CCSE), we urge the Council and the Administration to strengthen the infrastructure needed to support community schools by prioritizing the following actions:

- **Restore OTPS funding for the Office of Community Schools (OCS)** so they can access the professional learning and technical assistance needed to implement best practices and effectively support schools.
- **Invest $1M to expand the Office of Community Schools (OCS) headcount from 20 to 28 full-time positions,** working toward a 15:1 program manager-to-provider ratio. This investment would help stabilize partnerships, address persistent contract and payment delays, and provide more targeted support to providers. The addition of a dedicated data analyst would augment the system to improve data collection, support resource mapping, and ensure fidelity to the community school model while better measuring impact.
- **Fund a city-wide impact study on the Community School strategy.** The two most recent evaluations, released in 2020 and 2022, rely on data only through the 2018–2019 school year. They do not capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A new, comprehensive study would provide critical insights into the effectiveness of the city's community schools portfolio and identify implementation challenges that must be addressed to support future expansion.
- **Commit to strategic expansion** by adding 100 new elementary community schools by 2028, while maintaining fidelity to the strategy.

At this critical moment for New York City's students and families, the City must reaffirm its commitment to community schools. By strengthening infrastructure, stabilizing funding, and

expanding access, we can ensure that community schools continue to serve as anchors of stability and pathways of opportunity, innovation and equity for several generations.

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

Testimony submitted on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation

This testimony is submitted on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), a nonprofit community development finance institution that was formed in 1974 to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities that had been devastated by deterioration and abandonment. Thank you to Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, and to the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testi for NYCHA mony today.

On behalf of CPC, we congratulate the Mamdani administration for their recent release of their first housing plan, *Block by Block: The Housing Plan for a New Era*, and the FY 2027 Executive budget, which balances the City's books and remains grounded in building and preserving the affordable housing New Yorkers need. We are very pleased to see this budget's $22 billion commitment to housing over five years, a vital investment towards achieving the goal of building 200,000 new affordable homes and preserving another 200,000 existing homes over the next decade. These funds are a landmark investment that will fuel the HPD pipeline, fully utilize expanded federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and sustain critical NYCHA preservation programs. The inclusion of $5.6 billion over the next five years for NYCHA specifically will support both PACT-RAD conversions and comprehensive modifications for conventional public housing developments, a catalytic investment in NYCHA which has been underfunded and overlooked for too long. We are grateful for this administration's visionary leadership to advance both preservation and new construction together to meet the scale of the City's housing needs.

Scaling Up Preservation Programs

We strongly support the scaling up of HPD's preservation programs, including the more than $2 billion in capital funds committed across FY27 and FY28 to clear backlogs and accelerate new preservation work. We are particularly encouraged by the dedicated funding for physically distressed City-Supervised Mitchell-Lama buildings, which is expected to preserve upwards of 2,800 units. The Mitchell-Lama program was designed to create affordable rental and

homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers, and it remains one of the city's most crucial sources of regulated affordability. Approximately 100,000 Mitchell-Lama units remain across roughly 179 developments in New York City, yet over 28% of the original stock, some 38,000 units, has exited the program over the past two decades. Without targeted capital intervention, more buildings will reach a point where program exit becomes the only financially viable path for their owners. Therefore, we welcome the portfolio-wide strategy outlined in *Brick by Brick*, to explore preservation tools tailored to the distinct needs of Mitchell-Lama properties.

We are also encouraged by new preservation tools aimed at securing affordability, stability, and quality. The TOOLS initiative is an important step toward strengthening the financial health of affordable housing. Of particular significance is the new acquisition pathway for at-risk buildings and portfolios, which recognizes that escalating operating costs have strained rent-stabilized portfolios and increased the risk of financial and physical distress. By facilitating sales of at-risk buildings to responsible landlords and pairing those transfers with capital investments and discretionary tax abatements, HPD can intervene before distress becomes irreversible. As this program gets underway, a dedicated budget allocation for acquisitions and capital investment will be essential to meeting likely demand. Anchored by a $60 million NYCRS investment, CPC's management of the Community Stabilization Partners portfolio, made up of approximately 35,000 majority rent stabilized units formerly held by Signature Bank, demonstrates how mission-focused capital can stabilize distressed housing at scale. We look forward to leveraging that experience to support the City in preserving large-scale distressed multifamily portfolios across the five boroughs.

Lowering Operating Costs

CPC conducts a yearly survey of our New York City borrowers to gather property income and expense data from the previous year. The data reflected in this year’s survey was gathered in early 2025 and reflects actual building expenses during calendar year 2024 from a representative sample of 324 loans (~55% of portfolio) encompassing 14,552 rent-stabilized units. In 2024, CPC's borrowers reported a 5% increase over 2023 per unit expenses for a total of $10,016, with General and Administrative, Utilities, and Property Insurance showing large increases. Notably, investments in Repairs and Maintenance increased only 3.4%, the third consecutive year of essentially flat growth in this category. Since 2020, total investment in Repairs and Maintenance has grown only

1%. This small increase does not reflect decreased maintenance needs, as aging buildings typically require more attention, not less. Rather, it reflects owners' budgeting decisions. Owners of buildings where expenses outpace revenue will make the logical decision to prioritize paying non-negotiable expenses like property taxes, utilities, and insurance first. Routine repairs and building-wide system maintenance becomes discretionary and often deferred.

As expenses continue to increase while rent increases for stabilized buildings remain low or flat, more buildings are struggling to cover vital expenses and maintain housing quality. These concerns only get worse for buildings with lower rents, as is often seen in 100% stabilized buildings in the outer boroughs. *Block by Block's* spotlight on the Bronx as the borough where housing quality and stability challenges are most acute closely mirrors what CPC observes across our own portfolio. Where the 2024 average rent-stabilized rent is approximately $500 lower than the citywide average, financial stress has already arrived and is worsening at an accelerated pace. We support focused attention and resources directed toward preserving and creating affordability within the borough.

Given these rising expense pressures, we are grateful for the City's focus on lowering operating costs for affordable and rent stabilized buildings through interventions in insurance, water rates, and property taxes.

Insurance: The City's $100 million investment in a new, lower-cost insurance program for regulated housing could be a lifeline for the affordable housing industry. Of all rising operating costs, the exponential growth in multifamily property insurance premiums has emerged as one of the most destabilizing forces for affordable housing providers. Per-unit insurance premiums across CPC's portfolio have risen 75% since 2020, and we know there have been even steeper increases for supportive and deeply affordable housing providers[1]. The City's work to stand up a new, lower-cost insurance program has the potential to stem insurance price growth and significantly reduce operating costs for participating buildings.

Property taxes: CPC's data analysis has shown that a 100% property tax exemption could meaningfully slow financial decline and free up capital to support vital building improvements. Property taxes represent one of the single largest line items in the operating budgets of many rent-regulated buildings and one of the few expense drivers where direct government intervention can

[1] https://thenyhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Affordable-Housing-Insurance-Policy-Brief-3.16.24-Final.pdf

meaningfully influence building stability. As this Administration and Council continue to explore innovative ways to ease property tax burdens for rent-regulated buildings we stand ready to lend our data to inform policy making.

Water rates: At a time when rent-stabilized housing faces mounting financial pressure, the Multi-Family Water Assistance Program is a critical lifeline to offset rising costs that should be bolstered and expanded. Water rates increased 8.5% in 2024, the steepest single-year increase in a decade, and the University Neighborhood Housing Program estimates water payments will reach $2,000 per unit per year by 2030[2] without policy intervention. The Multi-family Water Assistance Program is consistently oversubscribed, turning away eligible households, and its $250 credit has not kept pace with costs since the program's inception over a decade ago. We applaud the expansion of the Multifamily Water Assistance Program to 75,000 units and additionally support UNHP's calls to increase the per-unit benefit and broaden the program's reach.

J-51: For affordable and rent-stabilized buildings, J-51 has long enabled owners to undertake capital work that would otherwise be financially infeasible, and we thank the Governor and State Legislature for recognizing the importance of this critical program by reauthorizing it in the FY27 budget. A renewed J-51 remains an essential preservation tool that is needed now more than ever. We urge the City Council to act swiftly to adopt and enact the J-51 Tax Incentive Program so affordable buildings can access this resource as soon as possible.

New Construction

In addition to preserving existing housing, building new housing must be a key part of the City's strategy for combatting the ongoing housing crisis, and we applaud the Mamdani administration for centering new construction in their housing plan and budget. Expanding HPD's capital budget for FY27 and FY28 by more than 35% over FY24 and FY25 will allow HPD to produce more affordable housing at a time when New Yorkers, especially low-income New Yorkers, need it most. This capital, combined with new development possibilities unlocked by the recently

[2] https://unhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Every-Nickel-Counts-Report-1.pdf#:~:text=If%20there%20are%20no%20changes%20in%20policy,sent%20to%20the%20City's%20general%20operating%20budget.

adopted City of Yes Zoning Text Amendment, a reformed State Environmental Quality Review Act, and the State's 485-x tax incentive program, has the potential to jumpstart new development citywide.

To meet the need for new deeply affordable homes while also maximizing the impact of HPD's capital, we urge the Administration and Council to promote new construction of mixed-income housing. Buildings with a mix of affordability levels may have a lower total number of affordable units than a 100% affordable building but they will require less subsidy per unit and can rely on the higher rent units to cross-subsidize lower rent units, all while leaving more city subsidy available for other projects. Rather than concentrating affordable units to a few deeply subsidized 100% affordable new buildings in only a few neighborhoods where low land costs can offset total development costs, the City should explore a mixed-income development agenda that when layered on top of the City's Fair Housing Growth Strategy can yield economically integrated buildings equitably distributed across New York City's neighborhoods and extend the reach and impact of City subsidy.

Council Legislation

Alongside the Mayor's budget and Housing agency agendas, the City Council has a critically important role to play in advancing effective legislation that sufficiently regulates the housing industry to ensure outcomes and prevent mismanagement while also not becoming overly burdensome. In that vein, CPC strongly supports the revamp of the Third-Party Transfer program through the SAFER Homes Act and applauds the administration for recognizing its critical importance. We also support the administration's commitment to further implementing and expanding the reach of CityFHEPS, which helps New Yorkers move into housing more quickly and stay stably housed for the long-term.

On behalf of the Community Preservation Corporation, we reiterate our strong support for the initiatives outlined in *Block by Block* and supported by the Mayor's Executive Budget, including the $22 billion commitment to housing and the $5 billion in new affordable housing capital funds over the next five years. Sustained action on the construction of new and preservation of existing housing is critical to making New York City more affordable for all

residents. Moving towards implementation, additional specificity in strategy will be crucial to achieving the ambition of this vision, including mobilizing the right incentive structures needed to drive development, equitably directing where that development should occur across the five boroughs, and guiding how preservation and new construction activity ensures equitable outcomes for all New Yorkers.

CPC applauds the Mamdani administration for setting a bold vision to scale housing production and preservation, and we stand ready to serve as a partner to the City in implementing this robust pro-housing agenda. Thank you again to the Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit this testimony today and please feel free to contact CPC's Policy and Public Affairs team directly with any questions.

Eric Bederman, VP Director of Public Affairs: ebederman@communityp.com

Emily Klein, AVP Deputy Director of Policy and Public Affairs: eklein@communityp.com

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About The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC)

The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) is a nonprofit affordable housing and community revitalization company that was formed in the early 1970s to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities which were devastated by disinvestment. Today, CPC uses more than fifty years of expertise in housing finance and public policy to expand access to quality housing, drive down the costs of affordable housing production, advance diversity and equity within the affordable housing development industry, and finance the construction of energy efficient housing. Since our founding, CPC has invested over $16 billion to finance the creation and preservation of more than 276,000 units of affordable and workforce housing through our lending and investing platforms. CPC serves as a permanent lending partner to the New York City Retirement Systems and the New York State Common Retirement Fund, and we are also the servicer of a portion of the rent stabilized multifamily loan portfolio formerly held by Signature Bank, which includes just under 35,000 units of housing across New York City, where we are working diligently to preserve the physical quality and financial stability of that critical portion of the housing stock.

For more information, visit www.communityp.com.

TESTIMONY

NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CHAIR, ERIC DINOWITZ

Oversight Hearings on The Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

Presented on
Monday, June 8, 2026

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

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New York, NY 10006
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Thank you, Chair Dinowitz and members of the City Council, for the opportunity to offer written testimony on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget. My name is Henry Rubio, and I am President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators. CSA represents more than 17,000 in-service and retired principals, assistant principals, educational administrators, supervisors, as well as directors and assistant directors of CBO-based early childhood centers across New York City.

The Executive Budget builds on several priorities raised during the Preliminary Budget process and includes meaningful investments in class size implementation, special education services, early childhood education, literacy and math supports, and citywide mental health and community safety initiatives.

At the same time, funding alone does not ensure successful implementation. School leaders are responsible for translating policy into practice, managing staffing, supervising instruction, maintaining safety, and supporting students and families every day. In each of the areas that follow, our goal is to ensure that investments made at City Hall translate into real improvements for students, educators, and families in every neighborhood.

Early Childhood Education

We strongly support the City's commitment to expanding access to early childhood education. Decades of research confirm what educators and families already know, that high quality early childhood programs improve school readiness, strengthen social and emotional development, increase long-term academic outcomes, and provide critical support to working families. Early childhood education sits at the center of any serious effort to support working families, and CSA supports the Administration's goal of expanding these programs.

The Executive Budget reflects further movement toward that goal. We appreciate the Administration's child care partnership with the State, including the State's $1.2 billion investment to help make child care more affordable for working families. We also appreciate the Executive Budget's $40 million investment in FY27 to increase provider rates, as well as funding for The Little Apple, the City's first municipal daycare. These investments are important acknowledgments that early childhood education is both education infrastructure and affordability infrastructure.

However, as school leaders well know, the long-term success of expansion depends on the stability of the workforce responsible for delivering these programs. Provider rate increases are an important step, but the City must ensure that public investments reach the educators, directors, assistant directors, and staff whose work makes early childhood education possible.

Today, New York City's early childhood sector is one of the largest in the nation, with nearly 37,000 educators working across more than 10,000 licensed childcare programs serving families in every borough. According to a comprehensive December 2025 workforce report released by the Day Care Council of New York and authored by Emmy Liss, who now serves as Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Childcare, the workforce supporting these programs is overwhelmingly female and reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. Approximately 95 percent of childcare workers are women, about 75 percent are non-white or multiracial, more than 40 percent identify as Hispanic, and more than half were born outside the United States.

The same Day Care Council workforce analysis found that the median annual wage for childcare workers in New York City is approximately $38,000, compared to a citywide median wage of roughly $65,000, meaning childcare workers earn less than 95 percent of occupations in the city. As a result, they are twice as likely as other employed New Yorkers to live in poverty, and a significant number rely on public assistance programs such as Medicaid or SNAP.

Our members have lived through previous expansions which succeeded in increasing access, and many families benefited. However, expansion also scaled long-standing inequities. Two early childhood systems now exist side by side, one operated directly by the Department of Education and one operated by community-based organizations, and they remain fundamentally unequal.

CSA represents Directors and Assistant Directors in CBO programs who perform substantially the same work, under the same regulatory requirements, as their counterparts in DOE buildings. Yet they are paid less. Their staff are paid less. Their programs operate with fewer resources. This inequity has persisted for years despite repeated commitments to parity.

These compensation disparities have real consequences for workforce stability. Many educators leave community-based programs for DOE positions that offer higher salaries and stronger benefits. Recruitment becomes more difficult, leadership turnover increases, and classrooms become harder to staff. Across the early childhood sector, too many teachers leave the field within their first five years, and 57 percent of programs report being short staffed statewide. Even without further expansion, the system requires approximately 5,000 new educators each year simply to replace turnover, and workforce projections suggest that a universal birth-to-five system could require tens of thousands of additional childcare workers.

Leadership stability is particularly affected by compensation inequities. Directors and Assistant Directors in CBOs carry responsibilities that closely mirror those of DOE administrators. They supervise staff, evaluate teacher performance, guide curriculum implementation, manage attendance and payroll systems, oversee budgets, ensure regulatory compliance, and often respond to contracting and grant requirements associated with nonprofit governance.

Yet despite performing comparable supervisory roles, they are compensated on a lower scale. Analyses included in the Day Care Council workforce report estimate that directors who remain in community-based programs can lose more than $2 million in earnings over the course of a 25-year career compared to similar leadership positions within the DOE system. No education system can sustain leadership stability when the professionals responsible for running programs face such a significant financial penalty for remaining where they are most needed.

In addition to compensation inequities, providers continue to face serious operational challenges related to delayed payments from the DOE. In recent years, community-based programs have experienced chronic payment delays that have made it difficult to meet payroll, pay rent, and maintain basic services. The City Council has already examined these failures through oversight hearings because centers have at times been forced to operate for months without reimbursement for services already delivered. These delays create financial instability, push programs into debt, and threaten closures even as demand for early childhood seats continues to grow.

Funding structures also contribute to instability. Many community-based providers operate under enrollment-driven funding models in which program budgets are tied directly to the number of students enrolled. Even small fluctuations in enrollment can create significant financial gaps for nonprofit providers operating on narrow margins. Unlike DOE schools, which operate within more stable institutional budgeting frameworks, community-based providers often absorb the financial risk created by shifting enrollment patterns.

CSA supports the Administration's vision for early childhood education and appreciates the new investments reflected in the Executive Budget. But we urge the City to address the full system, not just access. True success requires pay parity, workforce stability, operational reliability, timely payments, and respect for the professionals who lead these programs every day. If New York City is going to continue expanding early childhood education, it must fix the inequities that have defined it for too long.

Special Education Services and Due Process

CSA appreciates that the Executive Budget directly recognizes the long-standing challenges faced by special education students and their families. For decades, too many families have had to fight for services their children are legally entitled to receive. School leaders see the consequences when evaluations are delayed, providers are unavailable, placements are difficult to secure, or mandated services are not delivered with the consistency students need.

The Executive Budget states that NYC Public Schools has done important work in recent years to improve access to services and that the City is building on that work through additional investment. CSA supports that direction. The most effective way to reduce conflict, reduce

litigation, and support families is to provide students with the right services early, consistently, and close to home.

At the same time, the Executive Budget also identifies due process cases as a major cost driver and states that changes to program management are expected to reduce cases and generate annual savings. CSA understands the need for responsible fiscal management. But savings in special education must come from better service delivery, stronger administrative systems, clearer central support, and earlier resolution of family concerns, not from restricting access, delaying services, or shifting additional burdens onto individual schools.

Principals and assistant principals are often the people families turn to first when services are not in place. They work to coordinate IEP implementation, manage provider schedules, communicate with families, support teachers, and resolve conflicts before they escalate. But school leaders cannot solve systemwide capacity issues by themselves. They need adequate staffing, sufficient related service providers, timely evaluations, reliable transportation, clear placement options, and central systems that respond quickly when a student's services are at risk.

CSA urges the Administration and the Council to ensure that special education investments are measured not only by savings in due process spending, but by improved student outcomes, stronger family trust, and the ability of schools to deliver mandated services without forcing parents into adversarial processes. Reducing litigation should be the result of a better system for students, not a substitute for one.

School Safety

School safety remains one of the most urgent issues facing our schools. The Chancellor has rightly identified safety as a core pillar of his education strategy, and CSA strongly agrees. Children cannot learn when they are anxious or afraid. Families cannot fully trust the system if they do not feel confident sending their children into school buildings each morning. Educators cannot teach effectively when they are managing constant disruptions or responding to unresolved safety concerns.

In recent years, school leaders have seen a noticeable increase in anxiety among students and families. Parents consistently share heightened concern about social media-driven conflicts, mental health challenges, and incidents of violence both inside and outside school buildings. Students are carrying trauma into classrooms. School leaders are spending increasing amounts of time responding to behavioral crises, peer conflicts, and emotional distress.

New York City schools are currently supported by approximately 3,600 school safety agents, and the New York City Independent Budget Office reported in February 2025 that the number of school safety agents had declined by 28 percent, a loss of 1,413 positions, compared with July

2019 levels, reflecting a substantial reduction in the school safety workforce over the past several years.

Meanwhile, safety personnel continue to intercept dangerous items on a regular basis. Police reporting found that during the 2023-2024 school year NYPD school safety personnel confiscated approximately 3,700 dangerous instruments and 278 weapons in New York City public schools, representing thousands of situations in which trained personnel prevented potentially dangerous incidents from escalating.

School safety agents play a critical role in maintaining secure and welcoming school environments. They are often the first adults students see when they enter the building and the last when they leave. In many schools, safety agents are trusted figures who build relationships with families over years. They know the children by name. They recognize when something feels off. They de-escalate conflicts, support school staff during emergencies, and provide reassurance to parents. For many students, safety agents function as steady, familiar adults, often described by families as trusted uncles or aunts who help anchor the school community.

Despite their importance, the number of school safety agents has declined in recent years, leaving many buildings understaffed and school administrators overly burdened and concerned for the safety of their students and staff. For several years now, CSA has repeatedly raised concerns about this shortage and its impact on daily operations. While recruitment challenges are frequently cited, there has not yet been a comprehensive, systemwide strategy to address recruitment, retention, compensation, deployment, and working conditions.

The Executive Budget includes citywide investments in community safety, hate crime prevention, and access to mental health care. CSA supports these investments. They are important, and they reflect a broader understanding that safety includes prevention, intervention, and community stability. But citywide investments cannot substitute for the specific safety needs inside school buildings. Schools need enough trained safety agents, adequate mental health staffing, and leadership capacity to manage incidents in real time.

Recent incidents reported across New York City illustrate the kinds of situations school leaders and safety personnel are managing every day:

In September 2025, a 16-year-old student in Queens allegedly brought a loaded 9-millimeter handgun to school and posted threats on social media about shooting up the building.

In October of this school year, police recovered a loaded handgun from a student in Brooklyn, a school building that does not have permanent metal detectors.

In November, a 17-year-old student was slashed in the head and neck with a scalpel during a hallway fight inside a Bronx school and was transported to the hospital.

Right before the December holidays, a 12-year-old boy was charged with attempted murder after stabbing another 12-year-old in the chest at a Brooklyn school.

In January 2026, two separate students brought loaded firearms into two different New York City schools on the same day.

Even when violence occurs outside the building, the consequences immediately affect the school day: that same month, a Manhattan school building in Chelsea was placed on lockdown after gunfire erupted in a nearby park, forcing students and teachers to shelter in place.

In February, a school safety agent in Brooklyn was stabbed while attempting to break up a fight near a school during dismissal.

And earlier this month, an 11-year-old student stabbed another child inside a Bronx school, sending the victim to the hospital. Meanwhile, more than a dozen students were injured in a pepper spray incident at a Queens school.

These incidents represent only a fraction of the events school leaders manage each year. Even when situations are contained quickly, they leave lasting impacts on students, staff, and families. Each incident requires investigation, counseling, communication with families, and often weeks of follow-up to stabilize the school community. This is a growing strain on administrators who must quickly and appropriately address these incidents to support their students and families.

Safety also extends beyond physical security. Student well-being is deeply connected to mental health supports, restorative practices, and access to caring adults who can intervene early when problems arise. The New York City Department of Health reported in September 2025 that 35 percent of New York City public high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless in 2023, up from 27 percent in 2013, while 18 percent reported seriously considering suicide and 14 percent reported a suicide attempt in 2023. These statistics are drawn from the NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which is conducted every two years, making 2023 the most recent year of available citywide data.

At the same time, many schools lack adequate mental health staffing. A December 2025 report from New York City Comptroller Brad Lander found that 53 percent of New York City schools do not meet recommended guidance counselor ratios. Principals report that many conflicts stem from untreated anxiety, housing instability, social media pressures, and unresolved trauma. Without adequate counseling services, restorative programs, and school-based mental health professionals, schools are often left responding to crises rather than preventing them.

CSA continues to advocate for the restoration and expansion of restorative justice programs, school-based mental health supports, peer mediation, and guidance counseling services. These resources are not optional. When students have access to counseling, when conflicts are addressed through structured restorative practices, and when families are engaged as partners, schools become safer and more stable.

An AP in Every School

Leadership capacity is another critical factor. As anyone who has spent time in a school building knows, assistant principals are central to the daily operation of safe and effective schools. They work at the intersection of instruction, operations, and school culture. They supervise and support teachers, coordinate professional learning, manage compliance responsibilities, reinforce expectations across the building, and address the countless day-to-day issues that determine whether a school runs smoothly. In many buildings, assistant principals are among the most visible and consistently present members of the leadership team, maintaining steady relationships with students, staff, and families throughout the school day.

That presence is especially important when it comes to safety. Assistant principals are often the first administrators to respond to student crises, medical emergencies, behavioral incidents, and safety concerns. They coordinate with school safety agents, direct staff, communicate with families, support teachers, and stabilize school operations in real time. These moments require judgment, composure, and experience.

But safety is not only about crisis response. It is also about prevention. Assistant principals help build the school culture that allows adults to identify problems early, intervene before conflicts escalate, and maintain clear expectations in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and common spaces.

When schools do not have sufficient assistant principal coverage, these responsibilities do not disappear. They fall entirely on the principal or are distributed in ways that create gaps in supervision, communication, and follow-through. That is not sustainable, particularly in large schools where the number of students, staff, programs, and daily incidents requires a distributed leadership structure.

As class size implementation brings thousands of new teachers into the system, ensuring sufficient supervisory staffing becomes even more important. Schools need enough assistant principals to mentor new educators, support instruction, maintain consistent operations, and respond quickly and effectively to safety concerns. For these reasons, CSA continues to advocate for at least one assistant principal in every school and for the supervisory capacity necessary to keep schools safe, stable, and well led.

Professional Development

CSA supports school leaders not only through advocacy but through sustained professional development delivered by our Executive Leadership Institute. For more than two decades, ELI

has provided CSA members with training designed by school leaders for school leaders, grounded in the realities of New York City schools.

ELI offers many single-topic workshops each year on timely and practical subjects, including instructional leadership, restorative practices, mental health supports, science of reading implementation, chronic absenteeism, family engagement, and crisis management. In addition, ELI provides structured, year-long programs for new and experienced administrators who want to reinvest in their professional growth. These programs focus on instructional supervision, school culture, staff development, operational management, and equity-centered leadership.

The centerpiece of ELI's work is ALPAP, CSA's Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals, which serves as a principal preparation program. ALPAP is a year-long experience that pairs aspiring principals with veteran mentors who are currently leading schools. Participants engage in seminars, field-based learning, action research, and direct coaching. They build practical leadership skills while developing professional networks that continue long after the program ends. ALPAP has helped prepare hundreds of school leaders for principalship and remains one of the most effective leadership pipelines in the City.

The Executive Budget includes $17.3 million in FY27 to expand NYC Reads and Solves. CSA supports investments that strengthen literacy and math instruction. But the success of these instructional initiatives depends heavily on school leaders. Principals and assistant principals must understand the instructional models, support teachers, use data effectively, monitor implementation, and communicate with families. That requires targeted professional development aligned to the real work of school leadership.

For many years, professional development relied heavily on in-person workshops. While those remain valuable, the pandemic accelerated a shift toward virtual learning, and school leaders have embraced it. Virtual sessions allow administrators to participate from their buildings, reduce travel time, and balance professional learning with demanding schedules. Attendance has increased, and engagement has broadened across boroughs.

At the same time, school leaders are increasingly asking for asynchronous learning. Principals and assistant principals work long days and often cannot attend live sessions at fixed times. They are requesting high-quality online courses that can be completed at their own pace, while still earning required certifications and professional learning credits. This flexibility is essential for leaders who are managing staffing shortages, student needs, and operational challenges throughout the school day.

CSA is preparing to transform its offerings by converting much of our existing content into asynchronous formats while continuing to offer live workshops and mentoring. This will allow us to reach more school leaders, provide consistent learning across the system, and support

administrators in ways that fit the realities of their schedules. This transition requires significant investment in curriculum development, digital platforms, instructional design, and staffing.

A critical component of this expansion is artificial intelligence literacy. AI is already reshaping education. Yet many school leaders have not received structured training on how to responsibly integrate AI into instruction, operations, and school culture. CSA believes that systemwide transformation begins with principals.

We are developing professional learning specifically focused on AI, created by New York City administrators for New York City administrators, covering best practices for instructional use, staff support, student safety, data privacy, and ethical implementation. Increasing AI literacy among school leaders and administrators will produce dividends across the system. It will strengthen instructional leadership. It will support teachers as they adapt their practice. It will help schools operate more efficiently. It will ensure that students benefit from emerging technologies in thoughtful and equitable ways.

CSA is trusted with professional development because our programs are created by New York City school leaders who understand New York City schools. Our facilitators are practitioners. Our content reflects the instructional frameworks, compliance requirements, staffing realities, and community dynamics that principals face every day. This credibility matters. School leaders engage deeply with ELI because the learning is relevant, practical, and immediately applicable.

We are asking the Council for increased investment of $1.2 million in ELI, bringing the total to $2.2 million, because this moment represents a critical turning point.

Class Size Law Implementation

CSA has always supported smaller class sizes. Educators understand that when teachers have fewer students, they are better able to provide differentiated instruction, build relationships, identify learning gaps, and spend meaningful time with each child. Smaller classes create stronger classroom communities and improve academic outcomes. For these reasons, CSA supported the class size legislation at the state level.

From the beginning, however, we have been clear that reducing class size must be done responsibly. We warned early that successful implementation would require sufficient staffing, adequate funding, and available space. Without all three, schools would be placed in impossible positions and students would ultimately bear the consequences.

The Executive Budget makes significant new commitments toward class size compliance. We appreciate the additional $122 million investment to hire 1,000 more teachers. We also appreciate the addition of $1.5 billion to the School Construction Authority's Five-Year Capital

Plan, bringing the total identified in the Executive Budget summary to $7.6 billion. These investments reflect the reality that class size implementation cannot succeed without both staff and space.

Over the past two years, CSA has worked closely with the DOE and UFT to move implementation forward in a practical way. Principals were asked to analyze their buildings, assess staffing needs, evaluate space constraints, and report back on what their schools would require to meet the mandates. We appreciate that the City used this information to guide funding decisions and to direct additional resources to schools that demonstrated need.

We appreciate the Executive Budget's additional $122 million investment to hire more teachers, and we continue to urge the city to pair teacher hiring with sufficient supervisory staffing. CSA has consistently emphasized that hiring teachers alone will not be enough. If thousands of new educators enter the system, schools also need supervisors who can provide instructional coaching, professional development, and operational stability. APs play a central role in mentoring new teachers, maintaining consistency across classrooms, and responding to daily challenges in school buildings. We were pleased that the City recognized this reality, and we continue to advocate for further supervisory support as implementation continues toward the compliance thresholds.

Another one major challenge has become increasingly clear. Many schools simply do not have the physical capacity to add classrooms. New construction has not kept pace with enrollment growth, and there has not been sufficient progress in identifying where additions to existing buildings are feasible or where entirely new schools are required. Without a comprehensive facilities strategy tied directly to class size implementation, principals are left trying to solve structural problems at the building level with limited options. Space constraints remain one of the most significant barriers to full compliance. We must prioritize the facility retrofit requests that principals have already submitted to increase the number of available classrooms, and the City must begin to identify locations for new school buildings.

Lastly, CSA remains concerned about the financial structure supporting implementation. Fair Student Funding was designed around class sizes that will no longer exist. When schools reduce enrollment to meet new caps, they lose per-pupil funding even as they are required to staff additional classrooms. Without adjustments to Fair Student Funding, schools may be forced to cut programs or support services to cover basic instructional costs. The funding formula must eventually be updated to reflect the realities created by the law.

Additional Priorities

In addition to the areas already discussed, CSA urges the Council to continue supporting several programs and operational needs that are essential to school stability and student success.

CSA strongly supports expanded investment in Career and Technical Education. CTE programs provide students with industry-aligned instruction, hands-on experience, and pathways to meaningful careers. School leaders see firsthand how these programs engage students who may otherwise feel disconnected from traditional academic models. Yet access remains uneven across boroughs and communities. CSA urges increased funding to expand CTE and career pathway offerings so that every student has access to career-connected learning, including apprenticeships and internships, particularly in high schools serving high-need populations.

Equally important is early exposure to digital literacy and computer science in elementary and middle schools. Students must develop foundational skills in computational thinking and responsible technology use at an early age. CSA continues to advocate for dedicated funding for computer science instruction, professional development for educators, and equitable access to devices and curriculum resources so that students across all neighborhoods are prepared for high school, college, and an evolving workforce.

CSA also supports expanded investment in STEAM Centers that provide students with opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. These centers expose young people to robotics, design, and emerging fields while building creativity and problem-solving skills. School leaders urge that these opportunities be made available in every borough, not concentrated in a limited number of communities.

Community Schools remain another critical support structure. These schools provide wraparound services that address food insecurity, health care access, housing instability, and family engagement. When paired with strong instructional programming, Community Schools help stabilize neighborhoods and improve attendance, behavior, and academic outcomes. CSA encourages continued investment in community schools.

Access to functioning technology remains essential. Schools continue to rely on student devices for instruction, assessment, and communication with families. CSA urges the City to continue funding the purchase, maintenance, and repair of devices so that technology does not become an unfunded mandate placed on individual schools.

CSA also appreciates the Executive Budget's investment in expanding NYC Reads and Solves. Literacy and math investments are important, but they must be accompanied by sufficient staffing, coaching, professional learning, scheduling support, and high-quality materials. Principals and assistant principals will be responsible for making these initiatives work in classrooms, and they need the tools and time to do that work well.

Finally, CSA also urges the City to sustain funding for New Visions. New Visions provides critical support to schools through technology solutions specifically designed for the unique realities of public education. The New Visions Portal was created in partnership with educators

and school communities to reflect the day-to-day workflow of schools. By thoughtfully consolidating student, academic, attendance, program, and intervention data into one accessible system, the Portal empowers school leaders and staff to make informed decisions, identify student needs early, and coordinate timely supports that improve student outcomes.

The Portal is not simply a reporting dashboard. It is a planning, case-management, and student-support tool that allows school teams to monitor progress, document interventions, coordinate services, and act on real-time information before challenges become crises. Its widespread voluntary use across the system demonstrates the meaningful value administrators and school-based staff find in the platform.

Continued investment in New Visions funding is essential to ensuring that schools have access to tools that foster collaboration, efficiency, and student success. The Portal fills a critical gap by connecting schools, districts, and community-based service providers through a shared platform that supports coordinated care and communication**.** It also helps connect school teams with district offices, CUNY, DHS shelters, community-based organizations, and citywide initiatives through shared, permission-based access to timely and actionable information. Its flexibility allows schools to customize processes to meet local needs while maintaining consistency in data use and intervention strategies.

Sustaining this funding for the platform will help schools strengthen support systems, improve operational effectiveness, and ensure that every student has access to the resources they need to thrive. CSA urges the Council and Administration to maintain stable funding for the New Visions Portal so that school leaders and their teams can continue using coordinated, real-time data to support students and families effectively.

Conclusion

CSA appreciates the Administration's recognition that New York City's education system requires sustained investment in early childhood education, class size implementation, special education services, school safety, instructional supports, mental health, and leadership development.

The Executive Budget includes important new investments, including support for class size staffing and capital needs, special education services, childcare provider rates, NYC Reads and Solves, citywide mental health access, and early childhood expansion. These are meaningful steps. But the success of these investments will depend on implementation, staffing, space, central support, and the ability of school leaders to turn budget commitments into daily practice.

At the same time, school leaders see every day that funding decisions made at City Hall translate directly into classroom conditions, staffing stability, and student well-being. Expanding early childhood education requires resolving long-standing inequities in compensation and payment systems. Improving special education requires early access to mandated services and a system that supports families before disputes escalate. Implementing class size mandates requires

adequate staffing, space planning, and funding structures that reflect current realities. Ensuring school safety requires investments in people, mental health supports, and leadership capacity, not just infrastructure. Strengthening professional development requires preparing current and future leaders for the evolving demands of their roles, including responsible integration of emerging technologies.

CSA's members are responsible for turning policy into practice. They manage complex organizations, support educators, partner with families, and care for students under increasingly challenging conditions. They are committed to delivering on the City's goals, but they cannot do so without stable systems, equitable funding, and sustained support.

CSA looks forward to continuing to work with the Administration and the City Council throughout the budget process to ensure that these investments lead to meaningful improvements in school communities across all five boroughs. We thank you for your continued partnership and for your commitment to New York City's students, families, and educators.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

THE DOOR
Where Young People Thrive

To: NYC Council, Committee on Finance
From: Lora Adams, Legal Program Manager, Detained Minors Project at The Door's Legal Services Center**,** and **Angie Toribio,** Director of Government Relations and Strategy at The Door
Date: June 10, 2026
Re: FY 2027 Executive Budget and Supports for Immigrant Youth

The Door is comprehensive youth development organization that has served young people in New York City since 1972. We serve up to 11,000 youth annually across our four locations, including our lower Manhattan and South Bronx youth centers and two supportive housing sites on the Lower East Side. Broome Street Academy (BSA), a charter high school embedded at The Door, enrolls up to 330 students and prioritizes applicants who are experiencing housing instability or have been involved in the child welfare system. At The Door, young people between the ages of 12 and 24 can access a wide range of services including health care, education, mental health counseling and crisis intervention, legal assistance, high school equivalency and college preparation services, career development, housing support, arts, sports and recreational activities, and nutritious meals, all for free.

Established in 1992, The Door's **Legal Services Center (LSC)** ensures that young people are provided with high-quality civil legal representation in matters including access to higher education and vocational services, humanitarian immigration applications, public benefits, and the right to safe and supportive foster care placements. Our team is comprised of over 50 professionals, including attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support personnel. While the LSC's target population is all young people in NYC in need of civil legal services, most of our services support immigrant youth, many of whom have faced insurmountable challenges regarding their safety, legal status, and rights in the United States. Our attorneys represent young people in removal proceedings before immigration courts, as well as those seeking to regularize their status through the filing of affirmative humanitarian applications.

Over the past year alone, we handled more than 2,500 immigration legal matters for youth in need, including legal services for 614 unaccompanied immigrant children from ages 0 to 18.

Fear and Harm Facing Immigrant Youth

The impact of escalating immigration enforcement has been devastating for many young people in our community. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has continued to conduct raids across the country, arresting people at their homes, places of work, or even on their way into the courthouse to comply with the immigration legal process. We have observed significant drops in attendance for many programs other than direct legal services out of fear. These detentions also have a ripple effect as the adult sponsors, often family members, of our clients are also being arrested and detained, frightening other adults from sponsoring unaccompanied children. Young people no longer feel safe and have difficulty trusting us when it is impossible to guarantee what will happen next in their cases.

In response, our legal team has been forced to expand its federal litigation capacity, including preparing to file more habeas corpus petitions on behalf of young people unlawfully detained in the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) or ICE custody.

Growing Need Amid Federal Funding Uncertainty

To meet the growing demand for these services, we operate several free legal clinics, including a weekly drop-in clinic primarily serving recent arrivals who are unhoused or housing insecure. However, the need continues to outpace our resources. At the same time, the federal government has taken a multi-pronged approach to dismantling the rights of immigrants across the country, creating significant obstacles that impact our ability to help young people pursue humanitarian immigration relief, including by targeting critical funding sources that sustain this work.

For the past several years, The Door has served as a subgrantee of the Acacia Center for Justice's Unaccompanied Children's Representation grant through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Many of these young people arrived in the United States without a guardian, and we are seeing an increasing number who were taken from their parent or guardian and detained. We provide know-your-rights education, in-court assistance through our Friend of Court program, social work services, and full legal representation during their detainment and after their release should they stay in New York.

In March 2025, the federal government attempted to eliminate the Unaccompanied Children's Representation program nationwide, illegally canceling its funding overnight. We worked unfunded until a May 2025 preliminary injunction, but thus far we are only contracted in three-month increments until ORR proposes a new long-term contract.

In February 2026, ORR released a new solicitation for bids for the Unaccompanied Children's Representation program. The terms of this RFP raise serious concerns regarding the future of legal representation for unaccompanied children and threaten the integrity of services that help children establish safety, permanence, and due process protections after fleeing violence in their home countries.

The Door signed a commitment letter to continue to work with Acacia should it be awarded the contract, and Acacia submitted their first proposal in early April 2026; however, they also filed a protest of the solicitation on the same day, challenging various aspects of the procurement. Though ORR has twice retracted its proposal due to protests around billing, attorney ethics, and client privacy, the most recent proposal has only worsened the negative impact on our young people. The short-term contract awarded after the preliminary injunction expires July 2026, but ORR has yet to enter a proposed replacement in good faith. We are extremely concerned about the existence of immigration legal services for detained youth after this summer.

City Council Investments

As a founding member of the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE) coalition, The Door has received discretionary funding through the Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families initiative for more than a decade. We have also received support through the Welcome NYC initiative since its creation. These critical sources of support make it possible for us to provide comprehensive wraparound services to immigrant youth including direct legal representation, Know Your Rights trainings, legal clinics, and brief services to triage and prioritize urgent cases.

In FY26, City Council made a significant investment in immigrant youth legal services, enabling providers to expand capacity, reduce waitlists, and reach more young people than ever before. That investment has made a measurable difference during an extremely challenging time and we are deeply grateful. However, the need remains urgent.

We respectfully urge the City Council to fully fund ICARE at the coalition's requested amount of $18,559,420. Of that total, The Door would receive $2,766,000 to continue strengthening our capacity to provide effective, comprehensive, and zealous legal representation to immigrant youth.

Additionally, we call for your support of The Door's expanded requests of $350,000 through the Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJS) initiative, $50,000 through the Welcome NYC initiative, and its new request of $750,000 through the proposed Speaker Initiative for LGBTQ Immigrants.

Current funds allow us to support a weekly drop-in legal clinic for runaway and homeless youth with two dedicated staff. The young people who attend our clinic seek quality advice and representation in their immigration cases, and most are in removal proceedings. Each young person receives a one-on-one consult, where attorneys, paralegals, and social workers screen the young person for legal and social work needs and provide them with know-your-rights information, advice, and referrals. In the last several months, we have also developed a growing pro se services practice in response to the increasingly harsh state of immigration law and the dangers faced by young people forced to navigate removal proceedings without a lawyer. The needs at this clinic far outpace our capacity, and this expanded request would enable us to dedicate additional staff and educational resources to some of the most vulnerable teens and young adults in our city.

The young people who come through our doors are resilient, ambitious, and deserve every opportunity to thrive. With your continued partnership, we can ensure that immigrant youth in New York City continue to have access to the legal representation, services, and support systems they need to build safe and stable futures.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing commitment to immigrant youth,



Lora Adams, Legal Program Manager
Detained Minors Project
The Door Legal Services Center



Angie Toribio, Director
Government Relations and Strategy
The Door

TESTIMONY OF
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

City Hall,
New York, NY

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Joint Hearing of the Committees on Children and Youth, Mental Health and Substance Use, and Oversight and Investigation

PURPOSE: To Express Opposition to Intro 660

Presented by

Reggie Chatman
Director of Policy, The David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy

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212-691-7554

http://www.fortunesociety.com

Thank you, Deputy Speaker Williams and Chairs Stevens, Caban, and Krishnan, for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Reggie Chatman, and I am the Director of Policy at The Fortune Society's David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. In my role, I help lead Fortune's policy and advocacy efforts. I am also a formerly incarcerated youth who spent 25 years in prison starting at age 17, and who now also works as a credible messenger, coach, and mentor for justice impacted youth. Therefore, I have lived experience with respect to how important trust is between youth and the staff of the programs that serve them. It is our belief that Intro 660 may threaten that trust and thus, we have grave concerns about this proposed legislation.

The Fortune Society is a 58-year-old organization committed to providing alternatives to incarceration and supporting successful reentry. Our mission aims to strengthen the fabric of communities by instilling a belief in the power of individuals to change. Through programs shaped by the experiences of our participants, we help rebuild lives. We also seek to change minds through education and advocacy to foster a fair, humane, and rehabilitative justice system. In Fiscal Year 2025, Fortune served more than 18,000 New Yorkers – including over 2,000 people under the age of 25 – through our broad array of programs, including employment services, mental health and substance use treatment, and housing. Every day we see how comprehensive, community-based programming and interventions can change lives, break cycles of involvement in the justice system, and create safer communities for all of us. We have no wrong front door, meaning that whether someone is mandated to participate in our services or comes to us voluntarily, and regardless of which program is their initial form of engagement, they can avail themselves of everything we have to offer. Because of the care with which our staff build trust, it is common for our younger participants to reach back out to their case managers well after they have completed a specific program, to keep them updated on their progress or to inquire about re-enrolling in another Fortune program.

In 2026, we were proud to be selected as a partner organization for the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Community Resources for Employment and Development (CRED) program. This program offers career development training through mock interviews, resume writing support, digital literacy lessons, and green building operations and maintenance training with our partner Solar One. With the gracious support of DYCD,

participants receive up to 24 weeks or 600 hours of paid training and internship experience, earning $20 per hour. Upon completion of the program, participants are placed in transitional work opportunities for 21 hours per week. After their internships, participants remain in Fortune's continuum of support and are assigned to an Employment Specialist who will continue to help them find permanent work opportunities. This program operates out of our Supervised Release Program location in the Bronx and is designed for and available to residents in communities most impacted by gun violence. The services have been well received, and we have not experienced any issues between our participants. In fact, during our many years of serving thousands of participants annually, including young people whom we have served in various ways since our founding, we have rarely experienced altercations between participants in our sites.

In CRED, we serve young people between the ages of 18-24. We are therefore concerned that Intro. 660 will impact the young people we serve in a way that erodes their trust in our frontline staff, and Fortune as a whole. Intro 660 would require all programs funded by DYCD, including the CRED program, to report on in-person verbal or physical altercations involving youth under the age of 24, provide details on the reasons for those altercations, examine related online activity, and report on whether an agency responded. The bill also suggests that community-based providers "monitor and identify" young people's online activities to prevent potential altercations. We know that youth-serving spaces are most effective when they are built on trust, relationship building, de-escalation, and support; thus, these requirements raise serious concerns for Fortune as a provider of youth programming. Young people need places where natural conflict can be addressed safely and constructively. Requiring reporting on any altercation and monitoring online activity will instead create an atmosphere that disrupts trust, making relationships between youth and staff feel less authentic and less conducive to the program's intended outcomes.

One of our former young participants shared that after a few weeks, "I started to open up because Fortune was my safe haven in a sense," which enabled him to fully embrace the program. The requirements outlined in Intro. 660 would complicate that sense of safety and vulnerability, thereby undermining the true power of the programs we offer. Mandating reporting on participating youth is simply antithetical to our program's purpose. Our goal is to support

their growth and prevent future criminal legal system involvement – not inadvertently increase their exposure to it because they no longer want to attend a program out of distrust.

The requirements laid out in this legislation would impact over 120,000 young people throughout our city. We are deeply concerned that Intro 660, if implemented, would create a new surveillance database of our youth that in effect could become a new iteration of the gang database. To protect the integrity of programs at Fortune and at our partner organizations across the city, we urge the Council to refocus its concerns about protecting young people towards investment, rather than surveillance, and to safeguard the critically important relationships built between our staff and the youth we serve.

Testimony Provided by
Jackie Rogers, President, The Garden by the Bay
For the Committee on Finance of the FY27 Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Thank you to Chair Linda Lee and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Jackie Rogers, and I am a member of The Garden by the Bay, located at 480 Beach 43rd Street, Edgemere, NY 11691 in the Borough of Queens. The Garden by the Bay, has a rich history of community advocacy, action and engagement; and has been a vital green space in our neighborhood for the last six years. We have become a beacon of hope for the marginalized and underserved community of Edgemere.

As a member of the Green Guerillas Council of Gardeners, a dynamic coalition uniting community gardeners across New York City, I want to highlight several crucial recommendations for advancing a sustainable and equitable food system in our city.

While we applaud the City's decision to baseline $15 million in funding for NYC Parks workers, we urge the Council to ensure that GreenThumb's seasonal staff are also baselined. GreenThumb is the primary support system for more than 550 community gardens across New York City. However, GreenThumb continues to operate with limited staffing and budget constraints, even as gardens are being asked to meet growing community needs.

GreenThumb's 17 seasonal staff positions must be included in the baseline, along with the restoration of $2.6 million in funding. Without this investment, gardens will continue to face delays and gaps in receiving materials, technical assistance, infrastructure support, and direct communication from the City.

Therefore, we call upon the city to invest in:

1. Baseline GreenThumb's 17 seasonal staff and $2.6 million in funding.
2. Increasing funding to the Parks Equity Initiative (PEI) and allocating $300,000 of PEI funds to create a pilot program empowering garden groups to access funds directly, through a simplified application and reporting process, fostering equity and sustainability.
3. Continuing to invest in A Greener NYC to empower local organizations in providing youth with green jobs, infrastructure, and advocacy opportunities to community gardeners.
4. Increase funding to the Get Stuff Clean initiative to enable the DOHMH Rat Academy to address rodent infestation and illegal dumping affecting community gardens, while also strengthening collaboration between DSNY and GreenThumb, and enhancing the relationship and outreach of the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene Rat Academy Training program with community gardeners for effective access to this citywide resource.

Community gardeners have been left to fend for themselves for decades. It is time for the city to invest in its communities and uplift the benefits community gardens contribute to neighborhood success. We urge the Committee on Finance to restore and baseline funding for GreenThumb, create direct funding opportunities for gardens, strengthen sanitation and rodent support, continue investing in youth green jobs, and ensure that community gardens receive the protection and resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Jackie Rogers,
President, The Garden by the Bay
Where Hope, Inspiration and Tranquility Reside

Testimony
for
The New York City Council

6/10/26

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jolene Gunther-Doherty, and I am the Director of The Guild for Exceptional Children's 4410 Preschool Special Education program.

4410 preschool special education programs have existed for decades serving NYC's students with special needs. Our highly trained school staff includes special education teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists which work with students with complex educational needs. Placements for preschoolers with special needs requires the thoughtful development of individualized educational plans. Without qualified special education teachers, the promise of early intervention for NYC's most vulnerable students will fall short and further slow the development of our preschoolers with special needs. Salary parity needs to be addressed for 4410 programs to continue to provide services to students with special needs.

I urge the City Council to ensure 4410 programs are fully and equitably incorporated into plans and budgets for universal childcare.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

The Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, Inc.

Testimony Before the New York City Council

Committee on Finance — FY2027 Executive Budget Hearing - June 10, 2026

Submitted by Raye Barbieri, Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Raye Barbieri, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), a settlement house in the Northwest Bronx that has served our community for 52 years.

KHCC was founded in 1974 by three Bronx women who walked into City Hall and demanded better for their neighborhood. That founding spirit — rooted, bold, and unapologetic — guides everything we do today. We serve more than 6,500 families annually across early childhood education, youth development, mental health and trauma services, food justice, adult literacy, workforce development, and wraparound case management. Our $16.5 million budget is overwhelmingly government-funded, and the vast majority of the families we serve are low-income New Yorkers of color in the Northwest Bronx and Upper Manhattan.

We are a proud member of United Neighborhood Houses, and we stand fully behind the priorities UNH has set forth in its FY27 testimony. In this statement, we speak to the priorities that are most directly tied to KHCC's programs and the families who depend on us — and we urge the Council to invest accordingly.

Early Childhood Education: Protect the Investment in Our Youngest New Yorkers

KHCC operates a comprehensive early childhood continuum — including Early Head Start, 2-K, 3-K, and 4-K classrooms, and Family Childcare Networks (FCCNs) serving families in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan. In FY25, we served 500 children ages 0–5, and 95% of children completing our preschool programs met school readiness targets.

We applaud Mayor Mamdani's commitment to universal, high-quality early childhood education and his prioritization of free childcare for two-year-olds — including the announced expansion into Kingsbridge and Inwood this fall, and across the city next year. KHCC stands ready, willing, and able to expand and ensure the City reaches its target for free childcare for all.

However, the federal landscape is threatening to undermine what the City is building. New York City lost an $80 million federal Head Start grant in 2025, all of which was subcontracted to organizations including KHCC for high-quality head start programs across the five boroughs. While the City stepped in with transitional funding through FY28, the long-term future of impacted programs remains uncertain. The City must make a sustained, multi-year commitment to ensure all affected providers obtain new City contracts and that critical early childhood capacity is not lost unnecessarily — especially at a time of significant citywide expansion. We urge the Council to:

- Fully fund the DOE's FY27 early childhood budget to backfill the lost federal Head Start dollars and protect approximately 6,000 seats citywide, increase nonprofit PreK teacher salaries to match those of DOE employees, and increase the rates per child, ensuring no community loses capacity due to the federal funding transition.
- Baseline child care outreach funding at $5 million as proposed in the Executive Budget — with specific attention to multilingual, culturally responsive outreach that reaches the immigrant families we serve.
- Baseline Promise NYC at $25 million, ensuring that immigrant children excluded from ACS-funded care receive the same access to quality programming as their peers.

The federal attack on Head Start is real and escalating. A proposed rule would rescind workforce compensation standards that have helped attract and retain qualified early childhood educators. Our staff are some of the lowest-paid professionals in the city doing some of the most important work. The City must fill the gap the federal government is creating to fulfill the promise of affordability for families and workers alike.

Youth Development: From Afterschool to College and Beyond

KHCC served 1,078 tweens and teens across our youth programs in FY25. Ninety-three percent showed measurable growth in key social-emotional learning areas, as measured by the Hello Insight SEL assessment. Our College Directions program has achieved a 96% college acceptance rate — and with new support from the Robin Hood Foundation, we are expanding our Persistence Initiative, providing structured advising, financial guidance, and ongoing support to help our graduates not just get into college or other training programs, but stay enrolled despite setback and challenges.

Strong youth outcomes require stable, ample flexible City investment. We support UNH's call to restore funding to Student Success Centers, Learning to Work, and alternative summer programming models. KHCC operates two highly effective Student Success Centers serving multiple high schools on both the John F. Kennedy and Walton public school campuses — pairing college counseling expertise with peer leadership to guide students through the admissions and financial aid process. KHCC has operated year-round youth programming for five decades; we know what works: community-based relationships, trauma-informed practice, and trust built over time — not a one-size-fits-all school-year extension.

We are also actively planning for expanded youth and workforce development programming at the Kingsbridge Armory when it opens in 2030 — a generational opportunity for the Northwest Bronx that will require a strong City investment foundation to build from.

Mental Health Services: Restore and Baseline Council Initiatives

KHCC's Changing Futures Program (CFP) is one of the few certified rape crisis and child sexual abuse intervention programs in the Bronx — but our mental health work extends far beyond crisis response. We offer a full continuum of care, including bilingual, licensed, trauma-informed mental health services for both adults and children. We carry deep specialization in supporting survivors of domestic violence, interpersonal violence, sexual violence, and commercial exploitation, serving both children and adults navigating these experiences. In FY25, the CFP team served 900 individuals — 548 through counseling and 352 through prevention and education — and held 6,385 individual counseling sessions.

These are among the most vulnerable New Yorkers: survivors of sexual trauma and their families, parents at risk of child welfare involvement, and children navigating unimaginable harm.

KHCC provides this work in large part through City Council Mental Health initiatives — flexible, community-based funding that allows us to meet our community's specific needs. We strongly urge the Council to restore all 15 previously-funded DOHMH Mental Health Council Initiatives at a total investment of $47.27 million, with the 3% COLA increase recommended by UNH.

Specifically relevant to our work:

- Children Under Five Mental Health — which supports the families of the youngest children in our early childhood programs
- Trauma Recovery Centers — which align directly with our Changing Futures model
- Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations — which reaches the adults and families we serve through CFP, Parenting Journey, and KHCConnect
- Peer Specialist Supports — which KHCC and our BronxFirst coalition partners see as a critical complement to clinical services

Mental health is the top priority of BronxFirst, the 50-institution Bronx-wide coalition of which KHCC is a founding member. The Bronx has among the highest rates of unmet mental health need in the city. Council funding for community-based mental health programs is not a supplement — it is an essential foundation for a comprehensive continuum of care in communities like ours.

Food Justice: Expand the Community Food Connection

Our food justice work is more urgent than at any point in recent memory. In FY25, KHCC distributed 304,000 pounds of produce through our twice-weekly food pantry — and in our FY25 annual report, we announced a 35% expansion of the pantry, now distributing 380,000 pounds annually, in direct response to rising Bronx hunger. We also offer up to 25 community garden plots, offer programming including intergenerational gardening, chef battles, and family cooking classes, and are actively developing an urban farm to grow our own supply.

The new federal SNAP work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) are already driving more New Yorkers to our pantry. Per HRA testimony this spring, over 40,000 New Yorkers lost SNAP benefits in June due to the expanded ABAWD rules, and 15,000 refugees and asylees lost eligibility in April. These are our neighbors.

We urge the Council to:

- Increase the Community Food Connection investment to $100 million, building on the Mayor's $54 million commitment. Emergency food providers across the Bronx are past capacity.
- Invest in the Civic Impact Fund and NYC Service at $13 million, enabling community-based organizations to expand volunteer infrastructure that supports SNAP recipients meeting work requirements. KHCC has volunteer opportunities across our food, youth, and garden programs and is prepared to serve as a partner site.

- Support the HRA Community Service Partnership and provide financial resources to CBOs managing the added burden of tracking and supporting volunteers for SNAP compliance.

Adult Literacy: Restore and Increase City Council Discretionary Investment

KHCC's ESOL program served 268 adult learners in FY25, with roughly 80% advancing at least one English proficiency level. Our ESOL classes are an entry point into our full continuum — many participants go on to access workforce development, parenting programs, and wraparound case management through KHCConnect. Language access is not a standalone service; it is the door.

The 2024 DYCD Adult Literacy RFP introduced geographic restrictions that excluded many long-standing providers. City Council stepped in with $16.5 million in FY25 and FY26 discretionary funding that sustained more than 60 programs — a critical lifeline. Without renewed and increased Council investment, KHCC and providers like us will lose the ability to offer adult literacy classes after June 30.

We urge the Council to increase its adult literacy discretionary investment to $18 million, ensuring that programs excluded from the DYCD portfolio can continue to serve adult learners. We also urge DYCD to revisit the unnecessarily restrictive geographic criteria that shut out organizations with strong track records and established community trust.

Wraparound Services and Benefits Access: Fund the Connective Tissue

KHCC's KHCConnect unit screens every program participant for unaddressed needs — including benefits assistance, social care network screening, and navigation — and connects them to referrals, intensive case management, and educational opportunities. In FY25, 569 families received case management across 2,017 sessions. KHCConnect is what makes KHCC a settlement house and not just a collection of programs — it is the connective tissue that allows us to see the whole family.

KHCC is not a current recipient of the NYCBenefits program. We currently fund this critical benefits navigation and social care work through a patchwork of local discretionary dollars, some fee-for-service, and private donations — a fragile and inadequate foundation for work this essential. NYCBenefits was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget, and its absence would be felt immediately. The families we serve need one-to-one, linguistically appropriate support navigating SNAP, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, FHEPS, and more — and that support should not depend on whether an organization was lucky enough to receive a contract. We urge the Council not only to include NYCBenefits in the Adopted Budget, but to expand it: we recommend increasing the investment from $9.75 million to $15 million, ensuring that all communities have access to these services, that the program is baselined for FY28–FY32, and that new providers can be added so no neighborhood is left without coverage.

Nonprofit Contracting Reform: Pay Us Fairly and Pay Us On Time

KHCC operates on an 84% program efficiency rate, with only 13% going to management and general overhead. We have delivered clean audits, no material weaknesses, and increasing

net assets for multiple years running. We are exceptional stewards of public dollars. But our financial stability is routinely degraded by poor funding practices and a lack of political will by the City of New York. We — like every settlement house — are constantly asked to do more with less, and our frontline staff and the communities we serve bear the cost.

We strongly support:

- Intro 452 (Stevens), establishing wage requirements for City-contracted human services workers. Our staff are professionals. They deserve wages that reflect it.
- Legislation requiring interest on late payments — and a firm commitment to eliminate delays in contract registration. With delays of a year or more now common, nonprofits including KHCC are forced to draw on commercial lines of credit at high rates of interest just to keep programs running. These costs are real, they are significant, and they must be borne by the City — not absorbed by the organizations providing services to residents.
- All City agencies must honor federally-approved or City-negotiated Indirect Cost Rates —full stop. The practice of capping administrative costs at a 10% de minimis rate creates a significant structural deficit that is absorbed entirely by the nonprofit providing services to City residents. It is a hidden tax on mission-driven organizations that the City has chosen not to address. That must end.

Conclusion

Fifty-two years ago, KHCC was founded because the Bronx deserved better. Today, we serve more than 6,500 families a year — through early childhood, youth development, trauma-informed mental health care, food justice, adult education, and wraparound supports — because the Bronx still deserves better, and we are committed to providing it.

The federal government is retreating from its obligations to low-income communities. Head Start is under threat. SNAP is being cut. Medicaid work requirements are set to begin mid-FY27, and when they do, tens of thousands of New Yorkers — disproportionately in communities like the Bronx — will lose health coverage, further shredding an already fraying social safety net. Mental health funding is uncertain. In that environment, New York City's investment in community-based settlement houses is not just important — it is essential infrastructure.

We urge the Council to adopt the priorities outlined in this testimony, invest in the programs and funding streams that have proven results, and stand with the families of the Northwest Bronx and Upper Manhattan who have counted on KHCC for over half a century.

KHCC welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions and to discuss any of these priorities further. Thank you all very much.

Raye Barbieri,

Chief Executive Officer
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
3101 Kingsbridge Terrace, Bronx, NY 10463
Rbarbieri@khcc-nyc.org

THE LIBERTY FUND

Testimony of:
David Long
Executive Director, The Liberty Fund

Before the:
New York City Council - Committee on Finance
2027 Executive Budget Hearings Public Testimony
June 10, 2026

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dave Long and I am the Executive Director of The Liberty Fund. This testimony outlines our programming and how funding from the NYC Council will enable continued justice reform while ensuring public safety. I have attached documents which provide even more details and specifics about our work.

OVERVIEW

The Liberty Fund is a non-profit organization committed to reducing pretrial detention and improving public safety. Building upon the success of our Charitable Bail Fund Program, we launched the ROR Case Management Program—a voluntary, person-centered initiative providing case management and court reminders to individuals released on their own recognizance (ROR) or out on bail with pending cases. The program is also available to individuals with prior court involvement. Our support spans the pretrial period, during proceedings, and post-disposition. All services are delivered by certified case managers trained in trauma-informed care and risk-need responsivity.

IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES PROVIDED

The Liberty Fund served 204 clients in FY25. The Liberty Fund continues to maintain an active New York City court presence as well as be involved in community based outreach fairs and network opportunities. Our tailored case management approach supports individuals in overcoming systemic barriers while reducing reliance on incarceration. Our impact as of December 31, 2025 includes the following:

- 2,056 individuals served through voluntary case management

- 11,850 wellness calls completed
- 6,003 CLIENT UPDATES SENT TO DEFENSE ATTORNEYS + REFERRAL PARTNERS.
~~- 6,003 client updates sent to defense attorneys and referral partners~~

- 709 community-based referrals made

- 87% court appearance rate, enhancing public safety

- 7,800+ days of detention prevented, yielding over $5.7 million in annual cost savings

View our outcomes dashboard: libertyfund.nyc/outcomes

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

The Liberty Fund benefits the community because our groundbreaking approach ensures no net-widening and builds personal agency for individuals from NYC communities that have been historically impacted by racial/social injustices. The Liberty Fund also ensures that the recent criminal justice reforms remain consistent while filling a critical service gap, to ensure public safety.

Specifically, The Liberty Fund provides the following community benefits with our target population:

- Filling a Critical Service Gap - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed.

- Rising Detention Costs - Pretrial detention is a significant financial burden to the community. The NYC Comptroller's office has placed the recent cost of incarcerating an individual in New York City at a record $1,500 per day in 2025, not counting community losses from disruption of work, childcare, housing. Misdemeanor cases can often range up to three to five months to resolve.

RECENT KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Housing Court clients - Building upon a pilot project in the Fall of 2025 in which The Liberty Fund case managers spent two days each in Housing Court parts in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, The Liberty Fund established a formal partnership with Legal Services of New York City (LSNYC). Starting in February 2026, LSNYC will be referring up to 10 clients a month who can benefit from the person centered case management services that our ROR Case Management program can provide.

- Partnership Building - The Liberty Fund undertook a pilot program with the Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) project that yielded strong results. For one full week in November, Liberty Fund case managers were onsite, attending and supporting all workshops offered by BCS. This engagement was followed by a comprehensive outreach effort to workshop participants, as well as to clients who met with their BCS case managers during that week. As a result of this targeted outreach, more than 40 clients enrolled in and became active participants in the Liberty Fund ROR Case Management Program.

Both accomplishments demonstrate The Liberty Fund's commitment to remaining a key INSTITUTION SERVING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY, WHILE CONTINUING TO SHOW (NEXT PAGE)

flexibility, innovation, and creativity. Collaboration has been—and continues to be—a hallmark of how we successfully achieve our goals and fulfill our overall mission as an organization.

GOALS FOR 2027

1. Increase capacity so as to be able to serve at least 235 clients annually

2. Further explore and develop our Housing Court client pilot project

3. Build organizational resilience in response to expected volatility in government and nonprofit funding streams

ATTACHMENTS

Client Success Stories

Organization Overview

Organization Flyer

THE LIBERTY FUND

Client Success Stories - June 2026

Every day, The Liberty Fund helps people break cycles of incarceration and build stronger futures. But numbers don't tell the full human story. Meet some of our success stories.

B.W.

BW, a 43-year-old man, had been entangled in the criminal justice system since his first arrest at age sixteen. Much of his twenties and thirties were spent incarcerated, and without a high school diploma, he struggled to see a path forward. When he entered The Liberty Fund's ROR Case Management Program, BW felt overwhelmed and uncertain about his future. His case manager immediately began working with him to set concrete, achievable goals. Together, they completed an application for a dual adult education and workforce development program, with the case manager also coordinating directly with the program to support BW's intake process. At the same time, recognizing the instability of his temporary living situation with a relative, the case manager assisted BW in searching for permanent housing. BW also received weekly wellness calls that provided both accountability and encouragement. These check-ins not only helped track his progress in education and housing but also offered a consistent space to discuss his mental health and overall well-being. Six months later, BW had secured his own studio apartment and successfully completed the first phase of his education and workforce development program. Just as importantly, with a more stable foundation, he began to rebuild relationships with family members, gaining renewed emotional support to sustain his progress. Through The Liberty Fund's ROR Case Management Program, BW transformed a cycle of repeated arrests into an opportunity for stability, growth, and reconnection with his community.

J.E.

When JE was navigating a pending criminal case while seeking custody of his two children, he was overwhelmed and unsure where to turn. Through regular wellness calls and consistent support from The Liberty Fund, JE regained his footing. He reunited with his family, returned to work, learned healthy co-parenting skills, and avoided further justice involvement. JE shared that our guidance helped him "rebuild his life and confidence." Your support made that possible.

B.O.

NYU student BO reached out to us for mental health support during a difficult period. We connected her with a local clinic in New Jersey—close to home—and, through therapy and continued check-ins with our Social Worker, she developed strong coping strategies. With renewed confidence, BO began commuting to school, secured a part-time job, and strengthened her relationship with her father. Her progress is a testament to what compassionate, timely support can spark.

S.S.

When SS came to us seeking housing support, she was determined to build a stable future but didn't know where to begin. Our team helped her complete her Housing Connect application, and soon after, she began receiving multiple apartment options. SS is now in the process of choosing the best home for her family. She shared her excitement about finally finding stability—and is even exploring a second job so she can furnish her new place. Your generosity opens doors like this, quite literally.

J.R.

JR was referred to the Liberty Fund as she worked to complete her GED and rebuild her life. We connected her with a range of educational options, including remote and hybrid courses, and she ultimately enrolled in virtual GED classes through GED.com. She begins classes this month, energized and hopeful. Through regular wellness calls and support in navigating the educational system, JR found the confidence to take this crucial next step. She expressed deep gratitude for the guidance and encouragement that helped her get her life back on track.

THE LIBERTY FUND

Mission

The Liberty Fund reduces the pretrial jail population, prevents the poorest New Yorkers from having their lives upended and their freedom sacrificed, and provides support in order to avoid future interactions with the criminal justice system. We achieve our mission by providing pretrial services, including robust case management, to any qualifying Released on Recognizance (ROR) client throughout the pendency of their court case.

Target Population:

Vulnerable, low-income individuals:

- *Released on Recognizance (ROR).*
- *Voluntarily agree to participate.*
- *Past demographics include 87% men; 53% Black; 35% Latinx; 38% Ages 20-29; 42% Ages 30-39.*

Program Design and Services

INNOVATIVE MODEL

Our model has four innovative features for impact:

- ***Pretrial*** *- Interventions are initiated at the most critical touchpoint for success.*
- ***Voluntary*** *- Non-mandated services ensure no additional restrictions placed on clients to prevent further "net widening" as they stabilize their lives.*
- ***Person-Centered*** *- Services determined by client to better meet individual needs, promote personal agency and connect to best-fit services.*
- ***Court-Based*** *- Low-touch interventions leveraged during court appointments for effective time usage.*

DIRECT SERVICES PROVIDED

Each client participates in the following services:

- ***Case Management*** *- Intake, needs assessments, service action plans, and wellness calls.*
- ***Critical Court Needs*** *- Client court-reminders and emergency needs, such as MetroCards, food vouchers, hygiene kits.*
- ***Workforce Development and Homelessness Interventions*** *- Referrals to best-fit housing/job training programs.*
- ***Access to Social Service Team*** *- Services led by our Social Services Director (LCSW) and 2 certified Case Managers who double as licensed New York State bail bond agents.*

Questions? Don't hesitate to contact us.

David Long, Esq.
Executive Director
dlong@libertyfund.nyc
(646) 373 0327

Check out more at www.libertyfund.nyc

Community Benefits

Social Service Impacts - Since 2017, we have helped 1,700+ clients access community-based services, prevented 7,000+ days of detention, facilitated annual cost savings of $5.1 million, and achieved an 88% client court appearance rate.

Filling a Critical Service Gap - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed. Since 2017, Liberty Fund staff made 10,308 wellness calls with our program participants and 595 referrals to community-based services.

Criminal and Social Justice Reforms - Through its established partnerships with several key criminal and social justice organizations, the Liberty Fund has provided valuable support to our partners as we collectively implement needed criminal justice reforms in New York City.

Partnerships

Defense Agencies - including NYCDS, Legal Aid, Bronx Defender Services, Brooklyn Defender Services, Queens Defenders, and 18B attorneys. We communicate with attorneys as a best practice to help relay the most current information to all parties. Our resource manual includes a citywide network of social service organizations specifically adjusted to navigate a post-pandemic landscape.

Established Agreements - The Liberty Fund has entered into agreements with the following criminal/social justice agencies to provide our case management services for their clients as additional support or as a step down from their programming: Manhattan Justice Opportunities; Bronx Community Solutions; Fortune Society Parole Restoration Program; Osborne Association; Exalt Youth; Exodus Transitional Community; Unite Us; Center for Community Alternatives; NYC Criminal Justice Administration; Queens Community Justice Center.

Financial Need

Financial support now will underwrite our essential services for New York City's most vulnerable, while ensuring both continued reform and public safety.

The Liberty Fund is citywide. Our clients have lived in these zip codes:

BRONX: 10451; 10452; 10453; 10454; 10455; 10456; 10457; 10458; 10459; 10460; 10462; 10463; 10465; 10466; 10467; 10468; 10469; 10472; 10473; 10474; 10475

BROOKLYN: 11202; 11203; 11205; 11206; 11207; 11208; 11209; 11210; 11211; 11212; 11213; 11215; 11216; 11217; 11218; 11221; 11222; 11223; 11224; 11225; 11226; 11229; 11230; 11231; 11233; 11237

MANHATTAN: 10001; 10002; 10009; 10010; 10011; 10012; 10014; 10016; 10017; 10019; 10023; 10024; 10025; 10026; 10027; 10028; 10029; 10030; 10031; 10032; 10033; 10034; 10035; 10036; 10037; 10039; 10040

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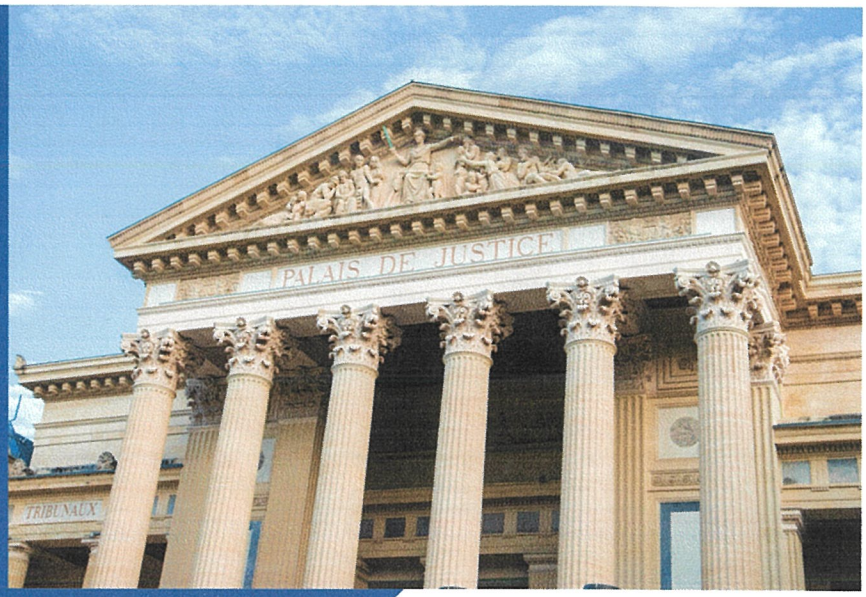
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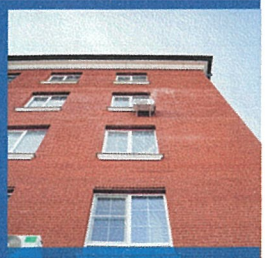
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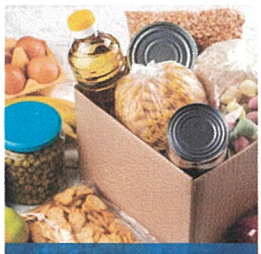


The Liberty Fund is a non-profit dedicated to individuals released on their own recognizances (ROR) or out on bail with a pending case.

THE LIBERTY FUND


Person-Centered


Housing Help


Food Resources



Employment Referrals

THE ROR CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

We strive to enhance clients' lives by providing resources that keep them out of the justice system so they can thrive in their community.

- **Voluntary participation** with no mandates or restrictions.
- **Person-centered** to focus on individual needs, preferences and values.
- **Referrals** to community-based organizations with supportive services.
- **Holistic services** such as mental health, benefits, housing , jobs, food, court reminders and

THE LIBERTY FUND

Testimony of:

David Long
Executive Director, The Liberty Fund

Before the:

New York City Council - Committee of Public Safety
Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dave Long and I am the Executive Director of The Liberty Fund.

This testimony outlines our programming and how funding from the NYC Council will enable continued justice reform while ensuring public safety. Attached documents which provide the specifics on our work.

OVERVIEW

The Liberty Fund is a non-profit organization committed to reducing pretrial detention and improving public safety. Building upon the success of our Charitable Bail Fund Program, we launched the ROR Case Management Program—a voluntary, person-centered initiative providing case management and court reminders to individuals released on their own recognizance (ROR) or out on bail with pending cases. The program is also available to individuals with prior court involvement. Our support spans the pretrial period, during proceedings, and post-disposition. All services are delivered by certified case managers trained in trauma-informed care and risk-need responsivity.

IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES PROVIDED

The Liberty Fund served 204 clients in FY25. The Liberty Fund continues to maintain an active New York City court presence as well as be involved in community based outreach fairs and network opportunities. Our tailored case management approach supports individuals in overcoming systemic barriers while reducing reliance on incarceration. Our impact as of December 31, 2025 includes the following:

● 2,056 individuals served through voluntary case management

● 11,850 wellness calls completed

● 6,003 client updates sent to defense attorneys and referral partners

● 709 community-based referrals made

● 87% court appearance rate, enhancing public safety

● 7,800+ days of detention prevented, yielding over $5.7 million in annual cost savings

View our outcomes dashboard: libertyfund.nyc/outcomes

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

The Liberty Fund benefits the community because our groundbreaking approach ensures no net-widening and builds personal agency for individuals from NYC communities that have been historically impacted by racial/social injustices. The Liberty Fund also ensures that the recent criminal justice reforms remain consistent while filling a critical service gap, to ensure public safety.

Specifically, The Liberty Fund provides the following community benefits with our target population:

- Filling a Critical Service Gap - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed.

- Rising Detention Costs - Pretrial detention is a significant financial burden to the community. The NYC Comptroller's office has placed the recent cost of incarcerating an individual in New York City at a record $1,500,per day in 2025, not counting community losses from disruption of work, childcare, housing. Misdemeanor cases can often range up to three to five months to resolve.

RECENT KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

● Housing Court clients - Building upon a pilot project in the Fall of 2025 in which The Liberty Fund case managers spent two days each in Housing Court parts in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, The Liberty Fund established a formal partnership with Legal Services of New York City (LSNYC). Starting in February 2026, LSNYC will be referring up to 10 clients a month who can benefit from the person centered case management services that our ROR Case Management program can provide.

● Partnership Building - The Liberty Fund undertook a pilot program with the Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) project that yielded strong results. For one full week in November, Liberty Fund case managers were onsite, attending and supporting all workshops offered by BCS. This engagement was followed by a comprehensive outreach effort to workshop participants, as well as to clients who met with their BCS

case managers during that week. As a result of this targeted outreach, more than 40 clients enrolled in and became active participants in the Liberty Fund ROR Case Management Program.

Both accomplishments demonstrate The Liberty Fund's commitment to remaining a key institution serving vulnerable populations in our community, while continuing to show flexibility, innovation, and creativity. Collaboration has been—and continues to be—a hallmark of how we successfully achieve our goals and fulfill our overall mission as an organization.

GOALS FOR 2027

1. Increase capacity so as to be able to serve at least 235 clients annually

2. Further explore and develop our Housing Court client pilot project

3. Build organizational resilience in response to expected volatility in government and nonprofit funding streams

ATTACHMENTS

Client Success Stories

Organization Overview

Organization Flyer

THE LIBERTY FUND

Client Success Stories - June 2026

Every day, The Liberty Fund helps people break cycles of incarceration and build stronger futures. But numbers don't tell the full human story. Meet some of our success stories.

B.W.

BW, a 43-year-old man, had been entangled in the criminal justice system since his first arrest at age sixteen. Much of his twenties and thirties were spent incarcerated, and without a high school diploma, he struggled to see a path forward. When he entered The Liberty Fund's ROR Case Management Program, BW felt overwhelmed and uncertain about his future. His case manager immediately began working with him to set concrete, achievable goals. Together, they completed an application for a dual adult education and workforce development program, with the case manager also coordinating directly with the program to support BW's intake process. At the same time, recognizing the instability of his temporary living situation with a relative, the case manager assisted BW in searching for permanent housing. BW also received weekly wellness calls that provided both accountability and encouragement. These check-ins not only helped track his progress in education and housing but also offered a consistent space to discuss his mental health and overall well-being. Six months later, BW had secured his own studio apartment and successfully completed the first phase of his education and workforce development program. Just as importantly, with a more stable foundation, he began to rebuild relationships with family members, gaining renewed emotional support to sustain his progress. Through The Liberty Fund's ROR Case Management Program, BW transformed a cycle of repeated arrests into an opportunity for stability, growth, and reconnection with his community.

J.E.

When JE was navigating a pending criminal case while seeking custody of his two children, he was overwhelmed and unsure where to turn. Through regular wellness calls and consistent support from The Liberty Fund, JE regained his footing. He reunited with his family, returned to work, learned healthy co-parenting skills, and avoided further justice involvement. JE shared that our guidance helped him "rebuild his life and confidence." Your support made that possible.

B.O.

NYU student BO reached out to us for mental health support during a difficult period. We connected her with a local clinic in New Jersey—close to home—and, through therapy and continued check-ins with our Social Worker, she developed strong coping strategies. With renewed confidence, BO began commuting to school, secured a part-time job, and strengthened her relationship with her father. Her progress is a testament to what compassionate, timely support can spark.

S.S.

When SS came to us seeking housing support, she was determined to build a stable future but didn't know where to begin. Our team helped her complete her Housing Connect application, and soon after, she began receiving multiple apartment options. SS is now in the process of choosing the best home for her family. She shared her excitement about finally finding stability—and is even exploring a second job so she can furnish her new place. Your generosity opens doors like this, quite literally.

J.R.

JR was referred to the Liberty Fund as she worked to complete her GED and rebuild her life. We connected her with a range of educational options, including remote and hybrid courses, and she ultimately enrolled in virtual GED classes through GED.com. She begins classes this month, energized and hopeful. Through regular wellness calls and support in navigating the educational system, JR found the confidence to take this crucial next step. She expressed deep gratitude for the guidance and encouragement that helped her get her life back on track.

THE MET

Norah Yahya
Chief Government Affairs Officer

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The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Executive Budget Testimony
The New York City Council
FY 2027

Thank you to Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Williams and the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Relations for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Norah Yahya, and I am the Chief Government Affairs Officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Met is known for its iconic permanent collection spanning over 5,000 years of artifacts, objects and art from around the world, and its current, must-see exhibits, but the Museum also serves as a unique destination for training programs, educational opportunities for all ages and abilities as well as supporting world class research divisions in preservation, conservation, and archeology. Further, the Met's multi-disciplinary offerings are available both virtually and in-person, and in recent years, brought millions of attendees to over 30,000 events. The Met hosts nearly 180,000 school children annually, with over 2.5 million annual student visits across the Cultural Institutions Group organizations citywide.

The Met employs approximately 2,000 staff, more than 1,600 of whom are New York City residents, and roughly 80 percent of whom are union members. More broadly, the cultural sector supports over 100,000 jobs citywide, including 15,700 at Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) organizations with 5,800 union employees with living-wage jobs that participate in city health & retirement plans.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art appreciates the proposed executive budget. We would like to thank the Council for prioritizing culture and for its advocacy in securing a historic $75 million increase and a $45 million baseline increase for the arts and culture sector in Fiscal 2026.

We remain grateful to the Council for your collaboration, and we look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Council in this new time and exploring new areas of collaboration to better serve our communities and ensure that culture is affordable and accessible for ALL New Yorkers.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

We take pride in our role in this landscape and in the impact, we have on local and widespread communities. Last year, The Met welcomed 5.7 million visitors and for the second consecutive year, local visitorship exceeded pre-pandemic figures. The Museum strives to serve local and global audiences alike, as well as diversity of communities as reflected in the variety of exhibitions, events, and programming. Nearly half of the visitors last year were local and from New York state, most of whom made use of the museum's Pay As You Wish program for entry.

The Museum's reach extends deeply into communities across all five boroughs. The Met partners with more than 500 community-based organizations through its festivals and public programming and collaborates with approximately one-third of New York City senior centers through the Met's ArtBox program. Through initiatives such as Community Wednesdays, the Museum welcomes seniors, veterans, CUNY students, and other underserved groups for dedicated access to the galleries. The Met also hosts major cultural programming, including Lunar New Year, Museum Mile, MetFest, and Teens Take The Met!, drawing thousands of families, young people, and community partners each year. Accessibility remains a core priority, with thousands of visitors with disabilities served annually through dedicated programs. In 2025, these audiences included people with dementia and their caregivers, people with developmental and learning disabilities, people who are blind or partially sighted, the deaf community, older people with disabilities, and veterans with disabilities in hospital and residential settings.

The Met strives to be a place for all New Yorkers, regardless of income, and actively works to reduce barriers to access. This includes paid internship opportunities, with 25 annual positions reserved for NYCHA residents, and transportation support for community programming, particularly for participants from the outer boroughs.

We applaud the Mayor's $10M baseline to the DCLA budget in his Executive Budget proposal. We urge the Administration and the City Council to add the additional $20M at adoption to ensure that Culture stays whole. We ask the city to fully restore and baseline the **$30 million** that was added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector. Baselining this funding is critical to ending the 'budget dance' and supporting sustainable culture and culture jobs. Huge swings in annual funding levels impede staffing, planning, and programming, and are most damaging to small community-based organizations in our coalitions.

We appreciate the Council's recent efforts to address the need for reform around the capital projects process, we reiterate how improved processes and more expeditious reimbursements would help to ensure there is no additional

burden placed on organizations working in partnership with the city in the stewardship of public buildings and institutions.

In addition, there is need for the Council and Administration to support annual cost adjustments tied to inflation and rising operational expenses. Cultural institutions continue to face increasing costs, and a predictable funding framework is critical to sustaining operations, retaining talent, and ensuring fair wages for the cultural workforce.

The Met remains committed, alongside our partners in the Cultural Institutions Group, to serve all New Yorkers and strengthen the City's cultural and economic vitality. Continued and sustained investment from the city is essential to ensuring that culture remains accessible, affordable, and impactful for all.

Lastly, we thank the Council and the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs for the opportunity to offer testimony and their commitment to a thriving cultural sector in New York.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

The Municipal Art Society of New York
MASNYC

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New York, NY 10006
MAS.org

MAS Testimony on the Executive FY27 Budget for the Department of Parks & Recreation

June 10, 2026

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) is a longtime advocate of New York City's public realm, championing the equitable design and maintenance of open spaces citywide. As a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and the Forest for All NYC Coalition, **we continue to urge Mayor Mamdani to fulfill his campaign promise to allocate 1% of the City budget to the Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks).**

We commend the mayor's decision to baseline an additional $15 million for NYC Parks staffing and $2 million in temporary funding for tree planting capacity in the May Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27). These are significant improvements in funding from the January Preliminary Budget, but still a reduction from what was allocated in the FY26 Adopted Budget.

We also applaud the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) for the recent release of the city's first-ever Urban Forest Plan. The publication of this plan, which includes a goal of 30% city tree canopy coverage by 2040, represents a meaningful effort to preserve and expand our urban forest. However, the Executive Budget lacks dedicated funding to implement the plan.

NYC Parks is responsible for the care of over 30,000 acres of parkland across the five boroughs, and more than half of the city's tree canopy. Between rising temperatures, flood risks, and concerns over our air quality, investing in the urban forest is essential to maximizing New York City's livability for generations to come. Our tree canopies also have the capacity to disrupt climate inequities across our city, lowering emissions and mitigating flooding in our most vulnerable neighborhoods.

MAS stands with the Forest for All NYC Coalition to call for $150 million to fund the Urban Forest Plan in FY27 so that our city can reach its 30% tree canopy goal by 2040. This funding will be allocated toward sufficient staffing, tree maintenance, new tree planting, workforce development programs, and tree health research and monitoring. Without adequate investment in our parks, it becomes increasingly challenging to kickstart new initiatives like the Urban Forest Plan, as well as to maintain existing public open spaces. The plan's dual mission to both plant and preserve trees further underscores the need to fund our parks and public spaces holistically. With this new roadmap in hand, it's time that the City commit funding for the Urban Forest Plan and 1% for NYC Parks for a resilient and healthy future for New Yorkers across the five boroughs.

Sincerely,

Keri Butler
President, Municipal Art Society of New York

Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance Hearing on the FY27 Executive Budget
Tami Lin-Moges, Director, NY Cities Program, The Nature Conservancy
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Tami Lin-Moges, and I am the Director of The Nature Conservancy's New York Cities Program. The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization, and our diverse staff and more than 400 scientists conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We impact conservation in 76 countries and territories, directly and with partners. We have 90,000 members across New York, 35,000 of whom are in New York City. We advance strategies that create a healthy, resilient, and sustainable urban environment and are committed to improving NYC's air, land, and water to sustain and support the people and nature of this great city.

In New York City, we convene the 200+ member Forest for All NYC coalition and we are leading practitioners on the science and policy of the NYC urban forest. In 2021, we authored the State of the Urban Forest in NYC (SUFNYC) a comprehensive assessment of the local urban forest, and with Forest for All NYC, released the NYC Urban Forest Agenda, a collaborative roadmap that provides detailed recommendations to meaningfully protect, maintain, expand, research, and promote the NYC urban forest to benefit all New Yorkers justly and equitably. We also conducted an analysis, using 2017 data, of local tree canopy potential that shows the feasibility of expanding canopy cover in every neighborhood across the city. Later this year, we will be publishing updates on these analyses using the latest available 2021 canopy data, allowing us to further understand the dynamics of the NYC urban forest.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of The Nature Conservancy and as a leading member of Forest for All NYC and the Play Fair Coalition regarding the FY27 Executive Budget. We urge the Mayor and City Council to dedicate new funding to support the implementation of the city's first ever *Urban Forest Plan* and baseline and restore NYC Parks staff. We are grateful to the Administration and Council for notable gains for NYC Parks in the Executive Budget – namely, $15 million to baseline NYC Parks staff previously funded by one-shots, as well as the addition of $2 million in one-shot funding for 6 additional staff (Gardeners, Associate Park Service Workers, and supervisors) for the in-house tree planting pilot team. These are notable steps in the right direction, especially in a tight fiscal environment. However, the proposed NYC Parks budget as a whole is still lower than it was for FY26, potentially resulting in another budget cut.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to invest more deeply in the NYC urban forest and finally start moving toward dedicating 1% of the City budget to parks, starting with $150 million in capital and expense funds for the NYC urban forest in FY27. These funds would further restore and baseline critical NYC Parks roles, expand forestry and natural areas staffing, and support implementation of the Urban Forest Plan across City agencies.

The urban forest includes not just the trees and their canopy, but also their physical infrastructure, such as tree beds and soil, the accompanying biodiversity, and a rich social infrastructure, such as the people who dedicate their careers and free time to it. The urban forest includes over 7 million trees, with their canopy covering 23.4% of the city as of 2021. It spans the whole of the city,

crossing jurisdictions and owners, and can be found on our streets, private backyards, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses, City parks, schools, institutions, and other sites.

This year's budget cycle comes at a pivotal moment. In April, Deputy Mayor of Operations Julia Kerson, Chief Climate Officer Louise Yeung, NYC Parks Commissioner Shimamura, Councilmembers, and stakeholders stood together to announce the launch of the City's first-ever Urban Forest Plan, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023. This Plan directly builds on the work of the Forest for All NYC coalition and the *NYC Urban Forest Agenda*, and in many ways, is the culmination of decades of science, advocacy, collaboration, and community leadership. The Plan sets forth a comprehensive roadmap for achieving a 30% tree canopy goal citywide in an equitable way by 2040, detailing 43 actions helmed by the City and its partners to expand the workforce, improve tree maintenance, strengthen community stewardship, and build a more resilient urban forest across all five boroughs.

The release of this 10-year Plan is a defining moment for NYC and requires associated investment to ensure its success. The Urban Forest Plan could set New York apart as a national and global leader in nature-based climate solutions. It also has the potential to substantially improve the lived experience of New Yorkers – particularly those living in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods with historically low canopy and fewer public resources. But it cannot be implemented without restoring and expanding the very workforce that sustains the urban forest.

For years, the City's ability to manage its portion of the urban forest has been constrained by chronic and unstable underfunding, which has led to workforce reductions. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) is responsible for 53.5% of tree canopy in NYC and manages more than 14% percent of all NYC's land area. Despite its enormous ecological, social, and economic value, NYC Parks only receives 0.5% of the City budget, with even fewer resources allocated to the forestry activities of NYC Parks, and the agency has faced repeated staff cuts and hiring freezes. As NYC Comptroller Levine highlighted in his recent report on funding the urban forest, "chronic underfunding and staffing reductions have limited the City's ability to provide consistent care," even though we know that "long-term canopy growth depends on…consistent maintenance and the protection of existing trees across the five boroughs." The Comptroller further recommends that the City significantly increase baseline operating support for NYC Parks, especially by expanding the maintenance, pruning, inspection and care staff, as well as related workforce development programs.

There are severe inequities in the spatial distribution of the NYC urban forest, and thus meaningful disparities in terms of where benefits and services are provisioned and to whom. This is further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. As climate change increases the frequency and intensity of heat waves, heavy rainfall, and coastal storms, New Yorkers already burdened by environmental and socioeconomic challenges face heightened vulnerability, as outlined in the City's EJNYC report from 2024. The most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods in NYC are often home to lower-income residents and communities of color and have significantly less tree canopy, higher energy burdens, and greater exposure to air pollution (See SUFNYC Ch. 4). On average, more than 500 New Yorkers die prematurely each summer due to hot weather, with the death rate for Black New Yorkers two times higher than white New Yorkers. Extreme rainfall is becoming more frequent, overwhelming infrastructure and putting increasingly vulnerable households at risk of displacement. The cost of inaction is not theoretical – New Yorkers are experiencing climate change now, and its consequences fall disproportionately on the communities with the fewest resources to adapt.

As the Trust for Public Land and I highlighted in this recent op-ed in Politico, nature and green spaces help make the city more affordable and livable. Research published in 2018 by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service on the urban forest indicates that its benefits and services of carbon sequestration and mitigation, air pollution removal, avoided stormwater runoff, and reduced energy costs to be worth well over $260 million per year, and the cost to replace this resource if lost would be about $5.7 billion. Investments in trees and green space reduce household energy costs, mitigate heat exposure, and lower the financial burdens associated with climate risks. They reduce flooding in vulnerable areas, which helps avoid costly damage and provides direct economic savings. Parks also serve as free, accessible, proximate places to rest, play, gather, and seek relief on hot summer days – benefits that matter enormously in a high-cost city. Nature is not an add-on to affordability; it is an effective tool to reduce financial strain and improve quality of life.

The Nature Conservancy respectfully requests that the Council and the Administration work together to allocate $150 million in FY27 to start to rebuild NYC's urban forest workforce and launch the first phase of the Urban Forest Plan. This $150 million investment includes:

- Restoration, expansion, and baselining of NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) staff and programs to support ongoing operations and to grow the urban forest:
    - Expand NYC Park's capacity for tree risk management and inspections, including increasing and baselining the number of staff (climbers and pruners, foresters, and related management) and contract funding that are critical for caring for and managing the existing tree canopy across NYC. Planting new trees is critical, but recent research from The Nature Conservancy (report forthcoming) indicates that approximately 90% of the canopy growth from 2017-2021 was due to growth of existing trees – highlighting just how critical the protection and maintenance of the trees we already have is in reaching the 30% canopy goal.
    - In addition to baselining $15 million for 161 staff previously funded by Mayoral one-shots, baseline the remaining NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts that were not included in the Executive Budget (approximately $8 million for 115 positions including Parks Enforcement Patrol and Green Thumb staff) to limit turnover and sustain the operational efficiency that comes from retaining a stable workforce.
    - Provide $16 million in baselined annual funding to fully implement the Forest Management Framework for forested natural areas, including capital funding for large scale restoration and contract work, baselined expense funding for in-house staff to conduct maintenance and for materials and operating costs, and baselined expense funding to provide one trails crew per borough supporting the formalization and maintenance of NYC's nature trail network.
    - Increase the number of tree planting staff (via Capital funded Interfund Agreement) to increase the number of street trees planted from just under 18,000 in FY25 to at least 25,000 per year, with the aim of shortening the 9-year Neighborhood Tree Planting Program.
    - Increase funding for the trees and sidewalks program, to increase the City's capacity to respond to damage to sidewalks caused by tree roots.
- $1 million for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to support non-NYC Parks agencies tasked with heightened management and expansion of trees in their jurisdictions (such as NYC Housing Authority, Department of Education, the School Construction Authority, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, etc.) in

implementing initial actions of the NYC Urban Forest Plan. This includes funding for an updated citywide Lidar remote sensing data capture and analysis to monitor the canopy coverage of the urban forest and measure the growth or loss of tree canopy coverage and track progress towards the 30% goal, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed every 5 years.

In addition to these budget requests, there are several staffing-related needs that are essential in rebuilding and expanding the City's urban forest workforce, including salary increases for the advanced and technical civil service roles like Foresters and Climber & Pruners, to help attract and retain the best candidates to manage the nation's largest urban forest. We also call for expansion of City-led workforce training programs, including internal programs to train existing employees and create promotional opportunities like the NYC Parks Climber & Pruner program, as well as programs that bring in new workers to expand overall workforce capacity.

These investments are necessary to ensure that millions of New Yorkers across generations can benefit from the cooling, health, safety, and economic impacts of a thriving urban forest. They are investments in public health, in workforce stability, and in the long-term affordability and livability of our city.

I urge the Council and the Administration to seize this moment by fully funding the workforce, programs, and cross-agency coordination necessary to bring this plan to life. The Nature Conservancy stands ready to continue offering technical expertise, community partnership, and support for the City's efforts.

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

THE New York HISTORICAL

Testimony to the
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

FISCAL YEAR 2027 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS
Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations:

Thank you for your continued service to education and the arts in New York City, and for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of The New York Historical. Founded in 1804, The New York Historical conveys the stories of the city and nation's diverse populations, expanding our understanding of who we are as Americans and how we came to be. Our work is made possible, in part, by generous funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council, and we thank you for your vital partnership.

UNCOVERING HISTORY

Ever-rising to the challenge of bringing little or unknown histories to light, The Historical's mission is to collect, preserve, and interpret, for the broadest possible public, material relevant to US history and American democratic heritage. Current and upcoming exhibitions include:

Old Masters, New Amsterdam **(May 1, 2026 - August 30, 2026)**, a first-of-its-kind exhibition that uses the paintings of Rembrandt and his contemporaries to help envision life in the little Dutch settlement that would become New York. With works by Rembrandt van Rijn, Frans Hals, and Jan Steen, many of them never before shown in New York, the exhibition brings New Amsterdam to life, illustrating the people and policies that would eventually become the center of the American melting pot.

Democracy Matters **(June 18, 2026 - November 1, 2026)**, a tracing of the evolution of American democracy through the lens of American art. Drawing primarily from the permanent collections of The New York Historical, the exhibition explores how the concept of democracy has stretched, contracted, and shifted through key moments in the history of the nation; how competing understandings of it have come into conflict; and how those conflicts have reshaped its boundaries.

You Should Be Dancing: New York, 1976 and Beyond **(October 2, 2026 - April 4, 2027),** a transportation back to 1976 when New York City was the main stage for America's 200th birthday celebration. Despite the parades and festivals, New York was in crisis, facing near-bankruptcy, spiking crime, and a housing and drug crisis. Still, the city's youth reinvigorated American culture, introducing disco, punk and hip hop, which would forever change music history. This exhibition surrounds the visitor with music, fashion, instruments, photographs, and original documents to learn about the glitz and grit of this transformative year in New York City's history.

EXTENDING OUR REACH THROUGH EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Education is the cornerstone of our mission, and each year, The New York Historical delivers direct services that enhance history and humanities learning to over 300,000 individuals, from pre-K through post-graduate students. More than half of these individuals are New York City K-12 students and teachers to whom we provide quality education programming that builds critical thinking, literacy, and creative problem-solving skills, while encouraging knowledge of US

history, appreciation for cultural diversity, and responsible civic engagement. Leveraging our expansive American history collections and our object-based learning pedagogy, our **K-12 offerings** are designed to supplement content learned in classrooms, filling gaps in traditional history curricula by providing diverse, undertold American history narratives, enabling students to see themselves in our nation's shared past.

Through field trips, social studies enrichment workshops, workforce development opportunities for teens, teacher professional development opportunities, and digital curricula and classroom resources, The Historical enriches classroom learning and highlights the perspectives, experiences, and contributions of historic figures or populations who have traditionally been excluded along lines of race, gender, sexuality, or class. Our object- and inquiry-based pedagogy infuses art and artmaking into its education programs, drawing direct connections between history taught in schools and visual language students already know. This methodology has been proven to be more effective in reaching a wide range of students with varied learning styles, including ENL students, and trumps rote memorization in enabling students to participate more actively in their own education. Our staff conduct deep and thorough outreach to ensure our programs are promoted across all five boroughs, and that school administrators are aware of our programs' accessibility and affordability.

This commitment extends to our adult audiences, who engage with the Museum as scholars, researchers, or lifelong learners. For example, our **Citizenship Project** provides Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) seeking citizenship with free civics and American history workshops that prepare them for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization Test. Our **Master of Arts in Museum Studies** program, offered through City University of New York's School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS), offers flexible class schedules and scholarships for individuals looking to enter the museum field to ensure all New Yorkers have access to pathways into New York's vibrant arts and culture workforce.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the year ahead, to ensure our programming reaches our youngest audiences, The Historical seeks to renovate its **DiMenna Children's History Museum** (DCHM), driving a pipeline of civics and history education opportunities that starts with children ages 2-8 and extends through adulthood. DCHM, established in 2011, translates our expansive collections and prestigious scholarly efforts into digestible early childhood programming capable of reaching the city's youngest learners. Soon, The Historical will renovate the space to include a new gallery entitled ***Building America***, featuring objects from our prized collection of American history treasures, including maps, flags, and more, alongside engaging digital interactives, games, and replica touch object, giving young learners endless opportunities to interact with history with their own hands. The new installation will explore ideas of Americanness, the nation's founding documents, and the three branches of government. Installation themes will be accompanied by life stories of historical figures who lived in New York City as children, allowing youth to make connections between themselves and the lives of past New Yorkers, including new arrivals to the country, free Black Americans, and young women.

The Historical remains grateful for the City's generous investment in our work, including Cultural Development Funds through the Department of Cultural Affairs, discretionary funding allocated by the City Council, and critical capital funds to support the physical infrastructure that supports our programming. Support from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs ensures that our programs have a sustainable future, and we thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

For more information, please contact Donju Min, Director of Institutional Giving
donju.min@nyhistory.org
(212) 873-3400 x.300

The Noble Maritime Collection

Celebrating forty years ~ Established 1986

Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
The Noble Maritime Collection
Member of the Cultural Institutions Group

My name is Megan Beck, and I am the Executive Director of the Noble Maritime Collection, one of the newest members of the Cultural Institutions Group, located at Snug Harbor on Staten Island. I am here to urge the City Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million needed to reach the full $30 million investment in arts and culture that New York City's cultural institutions received last year. This is not a request for new funding—it is a request to maintain the same level of support provided in FY2026 and to give our institutions the stability needed to plan for the future.

New York City's cultural institutions are essential civic infrastructure as anchors for tourism, economic activity, education, and community wellbeing. At the Noble Maritime Collection, we preserve and share the stories of New York Harbor and the people whose lives and work shaped our city. Through exhibitions, school programs, family activities, public events, and pay-what-you-wish admission, we connect New Yorkers to their history and to one another.

These funds represent real jobs. The full $30 million investment supports between 325 and 350 positions across the cultural sector, professionals who live and work in neighborhoods throughout the city. Since 2019, New York's cultural sector has lost approximately 20,000 jobs. We cannot afford to lose even one more.

Beyond employment, this funding enables broader public access: additional days of service, free and low-cost programming, and partnerships with public schools and senior centers. These initiatives ensure that arts and culture remain a public good rather than a luxury, a principle central to our mission at the Noble Maritime Collection, by providing pay-what-you-wish admission year-round to the thousands of visitors, students, families, and seniors we serve each year.

We also support the Cultural Institutions Group's request for stable, predictable funding through baselining, with annual adjustments that reflect rising operating costs. Like many nonprofits, we face increasing expenses related to staffing, maintenance, and insurance. Sustainable funding allows organizations like ours to retain staff, plan responsibly, and continue serving the public effectively.

Finally, we encourage the City to continue improving the cultural capital process. Institutions like ours steward historic public assets that require ongoing investment. Greater transparency, more efficient project delivery, and long-term infrastructure planning would help cultural organizations better maintain these spaces for future generations.

We respectfully ask that you use your voice and your vote to fully restore and baseline $30 million for arts and culture in the FY2027 budget. The stability of our sector is critical to the vitality of our organizations, our communities, and our City.

Respectfully,

Megan Beck, Executive Director, The Noble Maritime Collection, meganbeck@noblemaritime.org

June 11, 2026

To: New York City Council – Committee on Finance
Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, Majority Leader Shaun Abreu, Council Members Christopher Marte, Virginia Maloney, Shirley Aldebol, Oswald Feliz, Justin Sanchez, James F. Gennaro, Phil Wong, Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Lincoln Restler, Crystal Hudson, Alexa Avilés, Darlene Mealy, Mercedes Narcisse, Frank Morano

Dear Deputy Speaker Dr. Williams, Chair Lee, Majority Leader Abreu, and members of the committee on Finance:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership, commitment to equity, and support of the arts & culture sector. I write this letter on behalf of **The People's Theatre**, a member of the **Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC), Cultural Equity Coalition (CEC), Alianza de Teatros Latinos (ATL)** and steering committee member of the **Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LxNY)**.

Rooted in Washington Heights and Inwood, **we create theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more and equitable world.** Through professional productions, high-quality free arts education programs, and advocacy, we serve over **2,500 artists and audiences annually**, rooted in the belief that **immigrants telling their own stories can change hearts, minds, and policy.**

Thanks in part to a **$25.7 million capital investment by the City**, we are on the cusp of opening **The People's Theatre: Centro Cultural Inmigrante**, a state-of-the- art, 20,000-sf center dedicated to the immigrant experience. When it opens in September 2026, Our new home will be NYC's first performing arts center dedicated to the immigrant experience and **the largest Latino theatre in New York State**.

We join our colleagues across the cultural sector in urging the Council to restore the **full $30 million in arts funding** and **establish it as a baseline investment** with **automatic cost-of-living adjustments** that keep pace with inflation.

In tandem with the baseline funding, we ask that the Council increase the **Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative** to **$8 million.** The CTC Initiative was the first City Council cultural initiative and helped pave the way for later initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative

and Cultural After School Adventures (CASA). Yet despite supporting 65 organizations across New York City, **the initiative has not received an increase since 2021,** and the funding for the subsequent cultural initiatives has outpaced this foundational initiative. **This funding is vital, especially for legacy Black and Indigenous theatres** that are excluded from other pockets of funding like the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. To add to it, many of these organizations who are core to NYC's cultural history have seen significant reductions in or have been zeroed out of DCLA Cultural Development Fund (CDF) grants in recent years. **This modest $2.3M increase will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30% and serve as a Cost-of-Living Increase after being stagnant for 5 years.** We also ask that the Council **restore flexibility** so organizations can use these funds to **sustain their operations, build capacity, and support workforce development**. This allows us to serve New Yorkers more richly, more abundantly.

Lastly, with an eye to future stability, we ask that the Council set a target of **$20 million in cultural funding** per City Council district: this would be a **notable, brave step towards equity while remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.**

With these changes, you would see **investments with immediate returns**. **Culture in NYC generates 13% of the city's economic activity!** The People's Theatre and our colleague arts organizations of color support local businesses, education, public safety, tourism, and neighborhood vitality. As our leaders, we know that you care about equity and our city's flourishing. We respectfully ask for you to translate that commitment into sustained investment in the organizations that advance it every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Aya Esther Hayashi, PhD
Development Director
aya@thepeoplestheatre.org

New York City Council - Committee on Finance

Deputy Speaker Dr. Williams, Chair Lee, Majority Leader Abreu, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Leticia Cortes Ortiz, and I am the Youth & Family Advocate for **The People's Theatre**, a member of the **Coalition of Theatres of Color, Cultural Equity Coalition,** and steering committee member of the **Latinx Arts Consortium of New York**. At The People's Theatre, **we create theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more just and equitable world.** Like several of our colleagues, we provide multilingual, intergenerational programming and services to our Uptown community, and **they trust us**. For us, theatre is the entry point into the work of social justice.

Thanks in part to a capital investment of **$25.7 million** by the City of New York, the New York City Council, and former Manhattan Borough President Levine, we will open **The People's Theatre: Centro Cultural Inmigrante** in September 2026. Our new home will be NYC's first performing arts center dedicated to the immigrant experience and **the largest (by square footage) Latino theatre in New York State**.

Today, we join our colleagues across the cultural sector in urging the Council to restore the **full $30 million in arts funding** and establish it as a baseline investment with automatic cost-of-living adjustments that keep pace with inflation.

In tandem with the baseline funding, we ask that the Council increase the **Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative** to **$8 million.** The CTC Initiative was the first City Council cultural initiative and helped pave the way for later initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative and CASA. Yet despite supporting 65 organizations across New York City, **the initiative has not received an increase since 2021**. This funding is necessary and vital, especially for notable and legacy cultural organizations of color that have seen significant reductions in or have been zeroed out of DCLA funding in recent years. Additionally, we ask that a target of **$20 million in cultural funding** per City Council district be set: this would be a notable, brave step towards equity while remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.

With these changes, you would see investments with immediate returns. Culture in NYC generates **13% of the city's economic activity!** The People's Theatre and our colleague arts organizations of color support local businesses, tourism, education, public safety, and neighborhood vitality. As our leaders, we know that you care about equity and our city's flourishing. We respectfully ask for you to translate that commitment into sustained investment in the organizations that advance it every day. Thank you for your time and consideration.

June 11, 2026

To: New York City Council – Committee on Finance
Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, Majority Leader Shaun Abreu, Council Members Christopher Marte, Virginia Maloney, Shirley Aldebol, Oswald Feliz, Justin Sanchez, James F. Gennaro, Phil Wong, Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Lincoln Restler, Crystal Hudson, Alexa Avilés, Darlene Mealy, Mercedes Narcisse, Frank Morano

Dear Deputy Speaker Dr. Williams, Chair Lee, Majority Leader Abreu, and members of the committee on Finance:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership, commitment to equity, and support of the arts & culture sector. I write this letter as the Executive Artistic Director for **The People's Theatre**, City Council District 10's largest performing arts organization and a proud member of the **Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC), Cultural Equity Coalition (CEC), Alianza de Teatros Latinos (ATL)**. I also serve on the steering committee of the **Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LxNY)**.

For over 17 years, we have **created theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more equitable world.** Through professional productions, high-quality free arts education programs for children and adults, and advocacy, we serve thousands of **artists and audiences annually**, rooted in the belief that **immigrants telling their own stories can change hearts, minds, and policy.**

Thanks in part to a **$25.7 million capital investment by the City**, we are weeks away from the opening of **The People's Theatre: Centro Cultural Inmigrante**, a state-of-the- art, 20,000-sf center dedicated to the immigrant experience. When it opens in September 2026, our new home will be **NYC's first performing arts center dedicated to immigrants** and **the largest Latino theatre in New York State**.

The opening of The People' Theatre's new home in September comes with huge growth for our organization. **We expect to serve over 25,000 New Yorkers a year**, which will almost **double our expenses** with an unprecedented impact on workforce development for our community. At The People's Theatre, we are actively developing **workforce training opportunities for youth** and **new jobs for local residents** in the areas of **hospitality, front of house, facilities, and technical theatre**. Building **a home built by and for local and immigrant communities** is core to our mission, and **we are proud that our space is over 66% MWBE, immigrant, and locally built.** We look forward to partnering with the City Council to expand the creation of strong, new jobs for New Yorkers.

Additionally, we join our colleagues across the cultural sector in urging the Council to restore the **full $30 million in arts funding** and **establish it as a baseline investment** with **automatic cost-of-living adjustments** that keep pace with inflation. In tandem with the baseline funding, we ask that the Council increase the **Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative** to **$8 million.** The CTC Initiative was the first City Council cultural initiative and helped pave the way for later initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative and Cultural After School Adventures (CASA). Yet despite supporting 65 organizations across New York City, **the initiative has not received an increase since 2021,** and the funding for the subsequent cultural initiatives has outpaced this foundational initiative. **This funding is vital, especially for legacy Black and Indigenous theatres** that are excluded from other pockets of funding like the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. To add to it, many of these organizations who are core to NYC's cultural history have seen significant reductions in or have been zeroed out of DCLA Cultural Development Fund (CDF) grants in recent years. **This modest $2.3M increase will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30% and serve as a Cost-of-Living Increase after being stagnant for 5 years.** We also ask that the Council **restore flexibility** so organizations can use these funds to **sustain their operations, build capacity, and support workforce development**. This allows us to serve New Yorkers more richly, more abundantly.

Lastly, with an eye to future stability, we ask that the Council set a target of **$20 million in cultural funding** per City Council district: this would be a **notable, brave step towards equity while remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.**

The People's Theatre and our colleague arts organizations of color support local businesses, education, public safety, tourism, and neighborhood vitality. As our leaders, we know that you care about equity and our city's flourishing. We respectfully ask for you to translate that commitment into sustained investment for The People's Theatre and the cultural organizations that advance it every day.

¡Gracias y Pa'lante!



Mino Lora
Executive Artistic Director
mino@thepeoplestheatre.org

Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria

The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria
23-15 Newtown Avenue
Astoria, NY 11102

Dr. Allison Persad, Principal
Michael Cohen, Assistant Principal
Alexandra Gialaboukis, Assistant Principal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing with urgency and deep conviction to express my **unequivocal support for the continuation of our longstanding partnership with Girls Inc.**, which has been an integral part of our school community since 2014.

For over a decade, Girls Inc. has not simply operated as an after-school provider within our building—they are **woven into the very fabric of our school community**. Their presence is felt every day through their unwavering commitment to empowering our students, supporting our families, and reinforcing the core academic and social-emotional priorities that define our mission, vision, and values as a 6–12 school in Queens.

Girls Inc. has consistently delivered **high-quality, research-based programming** that fosters leadership, confidence, and academic success—particularly for our young people who benefit most from sustained, culturally responsive support. Their staff build authentic relationships with students and families, demonstrating a level of trust, continuity, and care that cannot be replicated quickly or superficially by a new provider.

This partnership has resulted in:

- Strong student engagement and retention in after-school programming
- Meaningful family involvement and support structures
- Alignment with our school-day priorities, including social-emotional learning and college and career readiness
- A safe, empowering environment that uplifts student voice and leadership

It is for these reasons that I must express serious concern regarding the recent decision **not to renew Girls Inc. as our COMPASS provider**.

At no point was there a clearly communicated or collaborative vetting process involving school leadership regarding a replacement Community-Based Organization (CBO). There was no transparent ranking, comparative evaluation, or meaningful engagement with our school to assess **alignment with our unique needs, priorities, or student population**.

As the instructional leader of this school, I must state clearly:

We do not agree that this change will serve the best interests of our students, families, or community.

Replacing a deeply rooted, highly effective partner like Girls Inc. without a deliberate, inclusive process risks:

- Disrupting critical relationships built over many years
- Undermining trust with families and students
- Introducing programs that may not align with our school's culture or priorities
- Compromising the quality and impact of after-school services

Girls Inc. is not interchangeable with another provider. Their work is **essential—not supplemental—to our ecosystem of support**. They have demonstrated sustained, measurable impact and have earned the trust of our entire school community.

I respectfully urge the DYCD COMPASS Unit to **reconsider this decision and allow for the renewal of Girls Inc. at our site**, or at minimum, engage in a transparent and collaborative process that meaningfully includes school leadership in determining the best aligned provider for our students.

Our students deserve continuity, quality, and care. Our families deserve trusted partners. And our school deserves to have its voice recognized in decisions that directly affect our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Allison Persad
Principal

Young Women's Leadership School of Manhattan

140 W. 102nd Street, New York, NY 10025
Phone: (212) 678-7390
Fax: (212) 674-7391
Colleen McGeehan, Principal
Medina del Castillo and Alexa Allen, Assistant Principals

June 8, 2026

Dear City Council,

I am a school administrator at The Young Women's Leadership School of Manhattan, a school with an economic needs index of 87%. I have used versions of the New Visions Portal for 17 years, and I cannot imagine doing the work of supporting students without it. **On behalf of our school community, I beg you not to remove Portal funding from the budget.**

During a recent mandatory academic policy training, I was reminded that the DOE recommends Insight for tracking student progress. I honestly don't know how anyone relies on it. It lacks the most essential functions—especially the ability to record interventions and share them with staff. As a principal, I cannot afford to use a system that is incomplete and not user-unfriendly.

The Portal, by contrast, is a daily tool that gives us accurate, real-time information and allows us to plan and track individualized supports. We use it to identify graduation pathways, monitor Regents needs, program tutoring, track attendance, and share notes across teams. Our quarterly color-coded attendance reports to families come directly from the Portal and have helped us shift attendance patterns this year which has been a huge win.

The mock Regents tool is powerful and becoming integral to our end of year Regents prep. As a co-teacher in Algebra, I rely on its detailed, standard-level data to reteach concepts and group students effectively. I've trained half our Regents teachers how to do the same and planned to do more in school year 26-27

We use the system daily and recently prioritized training all our advisors on its use so they can use it in their academic conversations. We want and need more of this system and would be at a huge disadvantage without it.

Please maintain funding for this essential tool. I am happy to answer any questions. Please reach out via cmcgeehan@schools.nyc.gov or our school number 212-678-7390

Sincerely,



Colleen McGeehan

Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria

May 2026

TO: Respected Leadership of the Mamdani-Samuels Administration, Councilwoman Tiffany Cabán, Assemblymember Diana Moreno NYCPS and DYCD Colleagues

My name is Gayathri Iyer, School Counselor of over eight years at **The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) of Astoria (30Q286)**, a school imbued with the exact working family fuel that powered the Mayor's inspiring campaign promises, especially that of affordable exemplary childcare. I am writing with great concern at the news of the potential loss of our longstanding afterschool partner, **Girls Inc. of New York City**, with a specific and symbolic plea to reverse this decision and retain this invaluable resource to our staff, and students enrolled from all areas of Queens.

My relationship to this request relies on the memory of my own experience as a "latch key" afterschool kid with the once rare profile of a working second income mom in a far off town, in a far off time when a parent who wasn't home to fix an afterschool snack and activity was treated as a personal family failure. It is with healing and pride that as a counselor **I hear the sacred daily stories of young women almost all raised by working moms and teams of caregivers, girls normed to aspire to college and career ambitions where the grind for the whole family never dares to end before 5PM, which deserves due dignity and sustained systemic support.**

I came to work in schools, and TYWLS in particular first as afterschool educator at Museum of Moving Image partnered here, where arts and after-hours proved inextricable to working with the whole child and whole school community, and I still **serve as a citywide consultant to teaching artists and nonprofit on the social emotional best practices of these kinds programmatic collaborations**. Now, as a District 30 solo

parent working for the city's largest childcare provider (NYCPS) who can not live without aftercare to fulfill my union hours and local commute, **I have never been more convinced that the key to family welfare is a quality afterschool provider in high functioning symbiosis with regular school day culture.**

This cohesion for me as a parent and educator means the sweet spot of a great end of day transfer and safe pickup protocol, exposure to all the extracurriculars parents can't afford in boutique weekend classes, and an empathetic, trained, organized staff with structure and philosophy that has all the responsibility of school, with all the frills and fun that kids need in the fuzzy hours after seven demanding class periods. **After years in witness, Girls Inc is the exemplar** I sought for my own kid *(*I landed for PreK aftercare in Superkickers at 30Q069, also a program to be preserved and funded)*, where kids light up to see staffers when the enter the building, and look forward to elective-type **offerings that echo what we do in project-based learning with a rigorous middle school accelerated curriculum by day**. There have been over three Program Director transitions (shout out to Soukeyna Abbott, Jazmin Navarro, Siobhan Vega, Adina Gordon) in Girls Inc at TYWLS in my time, and in a consistency I've rarely seen at any nonprofit or educational institution, **the core ethos of care and competency has stayed at the highest level**, all from leaders with strong education and social work certifications and related networks.

Their staff goes above and beyond to align to things that are not transferable to another provider: our emergency building response team roles, workflow at our community events like Multicultural Day with their own booths, respect for our classroom facilities and material resources, strategic staffing, and even training in our intricate internal grading and student anecdotal systems so an incident from the day never lingers into a new issue into the early evening. As a counselor, knowing that students go home hours after I do with their behavior monitored and supported to de-escalation and distress tolerance is priceless, especially in the era when the **competing afterschool activity is an exploitative overstimulating doomscroll** at the (however well-appointed) deli. Girls Inc is full of optimal social-emotional, arts, academic, and vocational experiences from jewelry making to social media literacy to dedicated homework support for kids who don't always have the needed extra desk space or snack pantry at home to set those conditions. Their

every opportunity from ice skating, to Broadway showgoing, to sports, to body image workshops, to inclusive holiday celebrations, are exactly **suited to our students' requests for experiences they may not otherwise receive, bolstering our diverse girls empowerment mission**. Their programs are delivered by trauma-informed staff with classroom and administrative management skills that are failsafe and part of our students' reasons for daily attendance and academic growth. **Their practices are accessible to all levels of learners, creative, flexible, communicative, and visible** as reliable red shirt staff hired from communities our students belong to and identify with, even **hiring our own high school students as paid and growing interns** in a **beautiful sisterhood continuum**.

Additionally, one Girls Inc staffer who used to visit my office to liaise healthy conflict resolution or rapport with 6th graders in her afterschool group came back two years later after a formal teaching degree to become a now tenured member of our special education full time school staff in a time where teacher recruitment is challenging. **These are the non-line item benefits of DYCD and NYCPS partnerships as the manifest of childcare for all, and with intention.** In our incredible feminist faction of working families in Queens, **afterschool *IS* school**, and re-assigning Girls Inc is like taking a horn off our unicorn, or in the words of our students, cringe, sus, and lowkey messed up.

We respectfully urge that you do not crash out and take our Girls Inc homies from our home, because the best young women in the best district in the best city, at the most dysregulated afternoon hours of the tweenage day will pull up on you demanding these incredible stakeholders, mentors, and other-moms back in their lives. Our Girls Inc team every day at the cafeteria gathering chants a fitting call and response that quiets a room to direct attention to the task: **"Bring it back, bring it back, bring it back!"** On behalf of our students, we hope you understood the assignment.

Sincerely,



Gayathri Iyer

Public Testimony of Transportation Alternatives
City Council Finance Committee Hearing on the Executive Budget on Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Good Morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Executive City Budget. My name is Corey Hannigan, and I am the Policy & Government Relations Director for Safe Streets at Transportation Alternatives.

New Yorkers deserve a budget that reflects how they actually move through our city and one that meets the urgent safety, transit, and accessibility challenges we face today. The vast majority of New Yorkers walk, bike, or take transit, yet our city investments have not always matched that reality.

We applaud the Mamdani Administration's commitment to building streets that are safer, more accessible, and truly world-class. But that vision will only become reality if it is backed by sustained investment in DOT and the safety projects that New Yorkers have been demanding for years.

During the previous administration, our city often faced the same problem: DOT lacked the resources and staffing necessary to meet the goals laid out in key city blueprints like the Streets Plan. New Yorkers were promised safer streets, faster buses, better public spaces, but those promises were often constrained by insufficient investment.

With less support, there are fewer safety projects, street transformations, and intersection upgrades. We'll never know how many New Yorkers were killed or seriously injured because DOT didn't have the resources it needed.

Today is a new administration and a new era, and we're encouraged to see Mayor Mamdani's commitment to initially invest $34.9 million annually in safe and world-class streets, growing to a $65.1 million investment by 2030. We hope that these investments will be sufficient for DOT to meet and exceed the streets plan benchmarks, including the unmet targets from the previous administration, to transform our city into one where bus riders aren't trapped in traffic, people on bikes have safe and protected rides end to end, and New Yorkers will have more and better sidewalk space for walking.

As the city considers where to direct these investments, two immediate priorities stand out: hardened daylighting and expanding our Open Streets Program.

Hardened daylighting is an incredibly effective tool to prevent crashes and save lives. To meet the scale of need across New York City, we are calling for $15 million in Fiscal Year 2027 for hardened daylighting alone. Hardened daylighting is the practice of repurposing the parking spaces closest to an intersection to prevent parking and increase visibility — the exact infrastructure solution that could have prevented the crashes that killed nine-year-old Kamari Hughes and nine-year-old Dolma Naadhun. In 2025, just 0.8% of NYC's intersections received hardened daylighting.

Open Streets need funding to survive. The current $2 million annual allocation is simply not enough to sustain the program or keep pace with rising costs. The City must also establish a reliable reimbursement timeline for Open Street partners, many of whom are grassroots organizations and volunteers advancing public space improvements with little to no financial support. New Yorkers should not have to personally shoulder the costs of operating public infrastructure.

We recognize that achieving these goals requires identifying new revenue sources. Fortunately, we have an opportunity sitting at our doorstep: expanding metered parking. Today, only 2.5% of our parking spaces are metered — far below peer cities like San Francisco, LA, or Boston. Expanding metered parking on commercial corridors would better manage our curb space while generating substantial new revenue. Implementing demand-based metered parking on just 25% of eligible commercial corridors would raise over four billion dollars annually — more than enough to fund the streets plan or make buses fast and free.

For too long, DOT has been expected to deliver transformative projects with inadequate resources and support. We are happy to see that pattern begin to change with the current administration. The greatest city in the world deserves the greatest streets in the world, and that requires sustained, ambitious investment. By increasing dedicated funding to DOT and pairing it with smart revenue solutions, New York City can build a transportation system for the future, not one catching up with the past. Thank you so much for your time and the opportunity to testify today.

https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1415407&GUID=87344321-8CE7-4CA6-8E08-6F8A0D6179B0&Options=info%7C&Search=

Slush:

Every year, cars and trucks kill and seriously injure New Yorkers, disrupt families, burden our healthcare system, and cost our city billions of dollars — traffic fatalities and injuries cost New Yorkers an estimated $3 billion annually. Investing in Vision Zero is not only the right thing to do, it is fiscally responsible.

Trinity Church

6/5/26- Trinity Church Testimony – Committees on Finance and Mental Health & Substance Abuse - FY27 Executive Budget

To Chairs Lee and Caban and Members of the Committees on Finance and Mental Health & Substance Abuse:

My name is Natasha Lifton, Managing Director of External Affairs and Special Projects at Trinity Church in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for this Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget hearing.

Trinity Church is an Episcopal church in Lower Manhattan with a congregation of more than 2,600 parishioners from all five boroughs, representing a diverse range of racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Beyond our ministry, Trinity advances faith and social justice through direct services, grantmaking, and advocacy.

We are pleased to see the Mamdani administration dedicate $40.2 million toward the creation of a new Office of Community Safety, an important first step to improve how the city responds to New Yorkers experiencing mental health crises. We are also grateful for the administration's recognition of the need to enhance and expand the Behavioral Health Assistance Response Division (B-HEARD), which dispatches trained mental health professionals in response to 911 calls involving individuals experiencing emotional distress.

As faith leaders and fellow New Yorkers, we believe these investments represent meaningful progress toward a more compassionate and effective public safety system. This issue has particular resonance for the Trinity Church community. In October 2016, Trinity parishioner Deborah Danner was tragically killed by police officers in her apartment while experiencing a mental health crisis.

We were encouraged when the B-HEARD program was first piloted but believe the program has not yet reached its full potential. With the new administration's creation of the Office of Community Safety, New York City now has an opportunity to strengthen the program's implementation, improve coordination between agencies, and ensure more mental health crisis calls are directed toward trained care professionals, including peers, minimizing the role of law enforcement.

The inclusion of peer workers in the B-HEARD program, specifically individuals with lived experience navigating mental health challenges, is a critical best practice. Peer support workers can help build trust, de-escalate crises, and connect New Yorkers to long-term care and stability. We also call for the following improvements to the program:

- Operate the program 24/7 and expand it citywide, starting with communities with the highest rates of 911 calls related to emotional crises.

- Change catchment areas from police precincts to community health districts as a way to delineate geographic boundaries and enhance the ability to connect crisis response teams to the existing continuum of services for those in crisis.

- Ensure that all mental health crisis calls are handled by 988 dispatchers who have expertise in mental health care, based on direct calls or calls forwarded by 911 or 311, with teams to be dispatched by 988 operators. There should also be the ability for the public to request B-HEARD services directly, as well as training for 911 operators to support interoperability.

- Invest not only in robust, traditional mental health services, but also in “third spaces” such as crisis stabilization centers, support and connection centers, crisis respite centers, and clubhouses.

We encourage the administration and Council to continue investing in community-based mental health responses that prioritize care, dignity, and safety.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Ahmed Lashuel, Transportation and Environmental Justice Fellow
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings
10 June 2026

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee on Finance today. My name is Ahmed Lashuel, and I'm a summer fellow at Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit that works towards transportation and environmental justice in the New York City metro area, and I attend the City College of New York, in Councilmember Abreu's district. I'm also a daily user of our streets and sidewalks, so I want to bring attention to the state of our bike infrastructure outside of the city's wealthiest urban neighborhoods.

In December of 2021 the DOT committed to building 50 miles of protected bike lanes per year, and I understand that commitment extends into fiscal year 2027. In addition, the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice charges the DOT with the task of reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries in certain historically underserved neighborhoods. That includes Washington Heights, where I live. Our district, Community Board 12, is home to part of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway—and the Greenway system is incredible, and hopefully the city will continue to expand it—but as for our streets, where we live, work, and pray, there are just 2 miles of protected bike lanes, by my count. And of course, that's just Washington Heights. How many miles of protected bike lanes are there on the streets of East Flatbush, or Canarsie, or Brownsville, or Kingsbridge, or Grand Concourse? I'll tell you the answer: it's less than one mile, in all those neighborhoods combined.

A protected bike lane is one of the most effective tools at our disposal for preserving life and promoting healthier, more sustainable transportation, and the DOT's own polling tells us that a majority of New Yorkers want them on their streets. The richest city in the richest country in the world should have had no issue building 50 miles of bike lanes in a year. I watched the testimony given by Commissioner Flynn a couple weeks ago, and I do trust him to lead the DOT well. That being said, the executive budget sets aside $11.2 million for bike lanes in fiscal year 2027. We need to see a comprehensive plan on how that money will be spent, how many miles of bike lanes we can expect to see, and where those bike lanes will go.

Andrew Manoo, Transportation and Environmental Justice Summer Fellow
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Testimony: New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings - Finance
June 10th, 2026

Good morning. My name is Andrew Manoo. I am a Summer Fellow at Tri-State Transportation Campaign and an Electrical Engineering student at the City College of New York. Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable transportation, equitable planning policies and practices, and strong communities throughout the New York City metropolitan area. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a comment to the Committee on Finance on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget.

Following the recent DOT budget hearing, I want to highlight two priorities. Faster streetlight repairs, and fairer red light camera placement. DOT's $331 million investment in streetlights and sensors shows a strong commitment to safety. In FY25, repairs took an average of 5.3 days, up from 3 days in 2021. DOT blames coordination with Con Edison and aging infrastructure for these delays, but working streetlights are too important to let repair times keep getting worse. We urge DOT to set a clear repair time target as part of this investment.

That same concern for safety brings me to red light cameras. Expanding the red light camera program to 600 intersections is a great step forward, but these cameras only help the communities that receive them. DOT says it places cameras based on crash data and found no racial or economic differences in where they are located. Yet when asked whether communities were benefiting equally, the data was not readily available. I've felt the difference these cameras make on Atlantic Avenue, where I cross more safely now. We urge DOT to make the racial and economic analysis behind these placement decisions more accessible.

I appreciate the work DOT has done to improve safety across the city. But safer streets only work when their benefits are shared by everyone. Whether it is restoring streetlights quickly or ensuring transparency in red light camera placement, every New Yorker deserves to move through the city safely, regardless of where they live.

Thank you.

Grey D'Orazio, Summer Fellow
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing
June 10th, 2026

Good morning. My name is Grey D'Orazio, and I am a summer fellow with Tri-State Transportation Campaign. TSTC is a non-profit advocacy and policy organization dedicated to improved mobility, accessibility, affordability, and sustainable transportation systems in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a comment to the Committee of Finance on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget.

The maintenance of public roads impacts everyone who uses them, it is important that it remains accessible to all populations of people. The amount of resurfacing and pothole repair has been trending down in recent years, according to the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Plan Department of Transportation Budget Overview, this decline does not represent a lack of potholes but can likely be attributed to the 704 vacant positions at the DOT (11.8% vacancy rate) and lack of staffing necessary to complete the required jobs [from the same report]. More of the funding needs to be put towards filling these vacant positions and ensuring that potholes are being filled in all communities. This would increase the efficiency of the DOT at dealing with the potholes, improving the safety on the road.

I live in the Rockaways and can attest to the large number of potholes scattered throughout the peninsula. After watching the Meeting of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure I went on a 60 block bike ride from 129th street to 69th street along Rockaway Beach Blvd the following is what I noticed:

- In the shared car/bike lane from 116th to 108th, near the curb and at intersections the road becomes rough and potentially unsafe to ride on for bikes. Some of these spots require pulling further into the middle of the lane and closer to the cars [this shared car/bike lane is along a two way with parking permitted on one side]
- In the last meeting potholes present at the entrance to the YMCA parking lot were mentioned, the bulk of the issue at the parking lot entrance was addressed but, there were smaller divots left and the potholes up and down the street were left untouched, to be specific there were two groupings of large potholes (73rd street)
- Multiple areas of potholes were present in crosswalks, this makes the path inaccessible/more difficult to traverse for disabled people, like those in wheelchairs, and the elderly with walkers or people with strollers.
- The size of the potholes got worse going past 104th st. Are these potholes being dealt with equitably across each neighborhood?

These were just some of the issues noticed on this bike ride. All of these issues impact the safety of populations using these roads, cyclists, pedestrians using the crosswalks, public transit riders, and those in cars deserve roads free of these obstructions. More of the funding should be dedicated to ensuring roads are free of these hazards and safe for all users. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Ali Goldfarb and I am the Trails Program Manager for Trust for Public Land in New York.

Trust for Public Land's mission is to connect people to nature, ensuring that everyone, regardless of zip code, has access to the outdoors. Across New York City, we work to expand access to parks, trails, and green space, particularly in neighborhoods that have historically lacked this critical infrastructure. We transform asphalt schoolyards into neighborhood parks, repurpose underutilized land, and conserve land, like in Staten Island when we protected Pouch Camp.

Today, I want to thank the City of New York for its continued commitment to advancing the QueensWay, particularly the first section of the project, the Metropolitan Hub. The planned ground breaking of the Met Hub represents a major milestone after years of planning, advocacy, and community engagement. We are grateful to the City, NYC Parks, NYCEDC, elected officials, and community partners for their leadership in moving this transformative project toward construction.

Once complete, the Met Hub will provide new opportunities for recreation, outdoor learning, active transportation, and community gathering while serving as the first tangible step toward the larger vision of the QueensWay, a 3.5-mile linear park and trail connecting neighborhoods in Queens. For many residents, especially in communities with limited access to parks and open space, this investment will create safer connections to nature, recreation, and local businesses.

At Trust for Public Land, we remain deeply committed to engaging communities along the corridor. Community input shaped the original QueensWay plan through hundreds of stakeholder meetings, and that commitment continues today through public tours, cleanups, school programs, volunteer events, and partnerships with local organizations. As the project moves forward, we will continue working to ensure residents are informed, involved, and have meaningful opportunities to help shape the future of the QueensWay.

While we celebrate the progress of the Met Hub, we also encourage the City to continue advancing future sections of the QueensWay. Completing additional phases will improve access to Forest Park, strengthen connections between neighborhoods, and bring the full benefits of the project to hundreds of thousands of Queens residents.

Thank you again for your leadership and investment in the QueensWay. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City and the community to bring this vision to life.

MICHAEL:
Good morning Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for giving me the chance to speak today.

My name is Michael Sasy, and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills. I am here today to share why the QueensWay is important to me, my school, and my community.

My school is located right next to where the first section of the QueensWay, the Metro Hub, is being built, so this project is important to me and many other students. Right now, there are 3.5 miles of abandoned railway that are not being used. The QueensWay would turn that space into something that students, families, and community members can enjoy every day. It would create a place where people can walk, run, bike, and spend time outdoors.

As a track athlete, I know how important it is to have safe places to train and stay active. The QueensWay would give students like me a safe, car-free place to run outside of school practices. It could be used for training, recovery runs, walking, or just staying active on weekends and during school breaks. Not every student has access to athletic facilities outside of school, so having a free public space where anyone can exercise would make a big difference.

Running is also about more than fitness. It helps people manage stress and clear their minds. Having more green space near our school would give students a place to relax, enjoy nature, and take a break from the pressures of school. It could also bring the community together through events, fitness programs, and activities for people of all ages.

I appreciate the City's investment in building the first phase of the QueensWay, the Metro Hub. This project will create new opportunities for recreation, improve our neighborhood, and make better use of a space that has sat unused for many years.

I believe the QueensWay will make our community healthier, greener, and more connected. I respectfully ask the Council to continue supporting funding for this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HARMAN:
Good evening, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Harman Kaur, and I am a student at MELS. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Last week, I co-hosted a Town Hall at my school where panelists talked about the impact that the QueensWay could have on the community, showing my peers what the abandoned railway track could turn into… a great park! As a student and community member, I care about having safe and welcoming spaces where people can walk, exercise and socialize with one another. My classmates said they were excited about a place where they can hang out, meet people and play sports!

In my neighborhood, there are not enough green spaces where families or students can safely enjoy the outdoors. If we have access to parks and walking paths, it can support our physical health and our mental well-being! This can also strengthen community connections. I love to go for walks while listening to music or going for walks with my friends to admire flowers or to bond. These activities make me feel super calm and peaceful. And when you see other people doing the same thing, it proves you're not alone.

The Queensway could also provide possible opportunities for learning, volunteering, exercise, and to explore new hobbies. Funding is important because it will help turn this vision into a reality for future generations.

I politely ask our city leaders to support funding for the QueensWay project. Thank you for your time.

SHIRLEY:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Shirley Penafiel , and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

I am here to thank the City of New York for their support of the QueensWay, a project that will directly benefit my school and my community.

I think the QueensWay is important because as a student the amount of work I get can be stressful, and whenever I feel overwhelmed I go to a park. Seeing the birds and flowers and spending time with my friends and family there help decrease that streess because for a couple hours, I have a place to escape.

I am excited about the QueensWay because it's going to be a place where me and my friends, family and people I care about can spend time together and have fun. This park can help me stay active in the outdoors instead of being inside, on my
phone all day. It will also bring joy to our community by providing a place where families, friends and neighbors can come together..

I would like to thank New York City for its commitment to building the first section of the QueensWay, the Metropolitan Hub. I hope the City will continue investing in future sections so that even more people can benefit from a gathering place to have fun and relieve stress.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

SOL:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Sol, and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens. I am here to thank the City of New York for their support of the QueensWay, a project that will directly benefit my school and my community.

I think the QueensWay is important because of the health benefits, giving people a place to socialize, walk, and play sports. Also important are the environmental benefits for plants and wildlife, supporting biodiversity. I am excited about the QueensWay because students and other community members can socialize, connect, and share ideas.

I would like to thank New York City for its commitment to building the first section of the QueensWay, the Metropolitan Hub. I hope the City will continue investing in future sections so that even more people can benefit from safe, accessible green space.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

SAYID:

Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sayid Ali. I'm a 9th grader at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

As many of you know, high school can be very stressful. One of my favorite ways to deal with this stress is by going outside. Spending time outside has shown to have many mental health benefits such as reduced stress, preventing mental burnout and even improving sleep. However, in my neighborhood, everything is surrounded by cars, buildings and houses, making it difficult for people to access green spaces like Forest Park without having to cross major thoroughfares. My neighborhood is filled with highly trafficked roads and streets, making green spaces very loud and not really away from city life. To access these green spaces, you need to cross highways such as Queens Boulevard and Woodhaven, making it dangerous. Manhattan has the Highline and now the people of Queens have the Queensway. Queens residents will profit from the plethora of benefits the Queensway will provide. The Queensway will allow for a green space that is away from city chaos but still accessible for so many people. It will connect various neighborhoods together and be the closest green space for many Queens residents. Finally, people will be able to escape hectic streets and reap the rewards of nature. With that, I kindly ask that you fund the expansion of the Queensway as it will benefit so many. Thank you for your time.

Prakhar:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Prakhar Verma, and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

I want to thank the City of New York for supporting the QueensWay project, which will benefit my school and my community.

This QueensWay will change the underutilized corridor of the abandoned rail line into a fun and fully accessible public space. The public space will advance environmental sustainability, strengthen community ties through meeting, and preserve biodiversity by revitalizing native plant species.

Through conversations with stakeholders, case studies in my classes, and research, I have learned the importance of civic participation and how quality planning, environmental shifts and community involvement can create positive impacts on the lives of future generations for years to come. Our ecosystems will thrive and that will spread awareness. We can also engage in activities such as gardening and taking long walks which is one of my personal favorite hobbies. The MELS campus is connected to the Queensway, providing advantages in our education such as creating outdoor classes and an easy way to go on fieldwork.

I am super excited for the Queensway as I will finally have a park that is near my house and have an efficient way to meet up with my best friend who lives farther away. At the same time it will also reduce the traffic that leads to a substantial amount of pollution, creating a safer environment and a breath of fresh air.

Thank you, New York City for its commitment to build the first section of the QueensWay, the Metropolitan Hub. I look forward to continued City investment sections of QueensWay to create more safe, accessible green space for all to use.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Rosenberg:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Elyse Rosenberg, and I am a high school teacher at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

I am here to express my gratitude to the City of New York for its investment in the QueensWay, a project that will have a lasting impact on both my school and the surrounding community.

Our school directly abuts the QueensWay, and a developed QueensWay will help us expand instructional possibilities for going on fieldwork, learning in nature, building outdoor classrooms and helping our students forge relationships and build community outside the traditional classroom environment.

My colleagues and I have been working with our students for years to help them provide design input and gather information about their priorities and imagined possibilities for the QueensWay. Through this work, I have seen firsthand how invested students are in the future of this space. A fully realized QueensWay would provide our school community with travel safety, spaces for teachers to work and be creative in outdoor classrooms, and provide learning opportunities for future generations of my students.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of the QueensWay.

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES ON FINANCE BUDGET AND OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027

ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADVOCATES AND ATTORNEYS, UAW LOCAL 2325

JUNE 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Lisa Ohta and I am the president of UAW Local 2325, the Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys. My local represents more than 3,700 legal service workers, at over 35 different employers, primarily in New York City. Many of my members are currently bargaining renewal contracts, including the Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, and Neighborhood Defender Service.

ALAA members testified before the City Council in March about untenable workloads, a crisis of attrition especially among experienced staff, and the chronic underfunding of our offices and our work. We are bargaining with management right now—bargaining for sustainable pay and manageable caseloads—bargaining for the conditions that allow us to do excellent work on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of clients we serve each year—and it is not going well.

These negotiations have laid bare what every member of our union has known for years: that public defense and legal services remain critically underfunded. Our members face a looming unaffordability crisis. If our salaries do not increase, we anticipate disastrous consequences not only for our members but also for our clients and for the criminal and civil court systems.

And we want you to hear it from us: we are ready to strike.

Year after year, this city and this Council has found the money to keep police officers and District Attorneys in their jobs and guarantee them a pension. Yet we have not seen the same increases in wages and benefits. We are the ones whose jobs fulfill a constitutional mandate. We are the ones standing between our clients and a Rikers cell, or family separation, or immigration detention. We are the ones fighting to keep communities together. Yet we are told by management that our salaries simply can't keep up with inflation. That we must either pay more for the healthcare coverage we've relied on, or accept worse coverage.

Budgets are moral documents. And you can support us and our clients, your own constituents, with your budget choices. You can support labor by funding the real

cost of our work, so we can settle fair contracts and that COLA increase goes directly to increasing wagesJustice demands equal pay for equal work. That we can devote decades to our work, to our clients, and earn far less than our counterparts in DAs offices or corporation counsel inherently injustice but within the power of the Mayor and City Council to fix.

And you should do this not just because our members and their families deserve an affordable city—we do. Not just because we love our jobs and want them to be sustainable—we do. But because funding us builds public safety. Equally funding our work ensures that working class New Yorkers get the absolute best legal representation. It protects them from law enforcement overreach. It forces the justice system to treat them fairly. It keeps families together. Our communities deserve nothing less. And we are ready to fight for it.

NYC Council Hearing on Mayor's Executive Budget
June 10, 2026
Written Testimony of Walter Mugdan, President, Udalls Cove Preservation Committee

My name is Walter Mugdan. I serve as president of the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee (UCPC, www.udallscove.org). UCPC was founded in 1969; its mission is the conservation, preservation and restoration of the last undeveloped natural areas in the Udalls Cove watershed in northeastern Queens. Udalls Cove is the eastern arm of Little Neck Bay, itself part of Long Island Sound. Much of the area has been protected as the Udalls Cove Park Preserve, a New York City *Forever Wild* area with trails winding through woods and along the shoreline. UCPC serves as the park stewardship organization for Udalls Cove Park, and also for the northeastern portions of Alley Pond Park.

We write in support of increased funding for New York City parks. A recent Trust for Public Land report shows that NYC's park system has been downgraded to 20th place, due largely to lack of funding and significant cuts to the agency's core staff over the last three years. We are pleased that Mayor Mamdani's budged baselined $15 million for NYC Parks in the FY27 Executive Budget, which means that 161 of the 276 temporary ("one shot") positions will be made permanent and guaranteed a job after June 30th. This is very important, but not yet sufficient.

We strongly encourage the Mayor and City Council to raise Parks funding to 1% of the City budget, as Mayor Mamdani committed to do during his campaign. We also urge that baselining a further $8 million, which would mean 115 critical parks staff who will lose their jobs on June 30th will be guaranteed permanent jobs. And we urge the Council to fund about $23 million for a new round of 276 "one-shot" positions for FY27. These positions will help the agency make progress in key areas that have been pain points for every council member, such as tree maintenance.

As a park stewardship organization, UCPC has taken on the responsibility for trail maintenance, including installation of wooden walkways (also called puncheons) over perpetually muddy sections of trail to minimize erosion and improve the experience for walkers; trimming back excess vegetation that grows into trails about three times during the growing season; and removing fallen trees or tree limbs that block the trails. But many City parks do not have comparable stewardship organizations with the capacity to perform these maintenance tasks, and even in park areas for which we are stewards we rely on the Parks Department to address issues beyond our capability (e.g., when a large tree falls). Adequate funding for NYC parks is vital!

Walter Mugdan
President, Udalls Cove Preservation Committee
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New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings
Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Linda Lee, Chair

Submitted by: Faith Behum

June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a 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 nearly $200 million each year to support older adults, combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

UJA-Federation of New York submits the following recommendations for the New York City FY 2027 Enacted budget.

The Committee on Aging

Maintain Funding for the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative

The Council-funded Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative continues to be a critical lifeline for Holocaust survivors grappling with poverty, food insecurity, isolation, complex medical needs, and the lasting effects of trauma.

More than half of New York's remaining Holocaust survivors live in or near poverty. Many arrived in the United States later in life with limited savings and receive little to no Social Security income. Today, the youngest survivors are over 80 years old. While the survivor population declines each year, the cost of providing care continues to rise due to increasingly complex physical, cognitive, and mental health needs. Holocaust survivors experience disproportionately high rates of chronic illness, trauma-related mental health conditions, and long-term medical complications stemming from persecution, displacement, and malnutrition. In recent years, these challenges have been compounded by the lingering effects of the pandemic, rising antisemitism, global conflict, and the increasing cost of living.

Last year, the City Council allocated $4.2 million for the Holocaust Survivors Initiative. **UJA-Federation respectfully requests that the FY27 budget maintain funding at $4.2 million.**

This investment supports specialized case management, trauma-informed mental health services, crisis prevention and emergency assistance, legal and benefits counseling, socialization programming, caregiver support, and end-of-life services. Demand for these services remains high, and many providers continue to maintain significant waitlists.

As New York's survivor population ages, sustaining this funding is essential to ensuring survivors can live their remaining years with dignity, security, and the support they deserve. There is limited time left to honor our collective promise to those who survived the Holocaust: never abandon, never forget.

Strengthening Aging Services
New York City is rapidly aging, yet the City's investments have not kept pace with the needs of older adults and family caregivers. While the older adult population has grown to 1.4 million New Yorkers, NYC Aging's budget remains less than one-half of one percent of the City's total budget.

These funding gaps have real consequences. Older adults struggle to access nutritious meals, case management, caregiver supports, and other critical services that allow them to remain healthy, independent, and connected to their communities. Family caregivers face increasing demands with insufficient support, while aging services providers are stretched beyond capacity as they work to meet growing need. Without adequate community-based supports, older adults are more likely to experience housing instability, avoidable hospitalizations, social isolation, and unnecessary institutionalization.

Investments in aging services work. Community-based programs reduce avoidable hospitalizations, emergency service utilization, and other costly interventions while helping older adults remain healthy, safely housed, and engaged in their communities. These investments are not only fiscally responsible; they reflect whether New York City values the dignity and well-being of older New Yorkers as they age.

As a member of the Age Strong NYC coalition, UJA-Federation supports a comprehensive, multi-year strategy to strengthen aging services, expand affordable housing options for older adults, and ensure that all New Yorkers can age with dignity and security. The recommendations below represent critical investments needed to meet both current and future demand:

1. Invest **$2.3 billion to fully fund aging services** in New York City, including affordable housing, community services and supports, and nutrition.
2. Invest **$500 million in Older Adult Center (OAC) State of Good Repair capital improvements** to address decades of deferred maintenance and ensure centers remain safe, accessible, and able to meet growing demand. Additionally, **establish and expand an emergency repair fund of at least $10 million** to address urgent facility and infrastructure needs.
3. **Increase funding for case management services by $44 million** to expand staffing capacity, reduce waitlists, and provide older adults with timely access to benefits, healthcare navigation, housing assistance, and supportive services.
4. Invest **$90 million in nutrition programs**, including:
    a. **$60 million for congregate meals at Older Adult Centers** to address inflationary costs and sustain providers.
    b. **$30 million to provide fully funded weekend meals** for home-delivered meal recipients.

NORC in Every Neighborhood
NORCs help older adults age safely in place by providing social services, health and wellness programming, case assistance, and opportunities for community connection. As New York City's older adult population continues to grow—and more older adults live alone—expanding NORCs is a critical strategy to reduce isolation, improve health outcomes, and help residents remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

UJA-Federation supports efforts to expand NORC coverage to neighborhoods by **investing $10 million in the FY27 budget to ensure that there is a NORC in every neighborhood** that currently lack access to these services and supports continued investment in the NORC system.

Additionally, the City Council NORC initiative provides essential supplemental funding for programs, and independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. Since the Council began providing these funds in 2019, the standard hourly rate to hire nurses has increased from $85 to approximately $100 per hour. This rising cost must be reflected in future allocations to ensure programs can continue delivering essential care.

Council initiative funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council's enthusiasm for the NORC program, providers have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. **In FY27, the City must baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council's NORC Initiative of approximately $1 million and continue to fund the Council's NORC Initiative funding.**

UJA-Federation joins aging services providers and advocacy organizations across New York City in calling for sustained investments in nutrition, NORCs, case management, capital improvements, and community-based supports that enable older adults to age with dignity, independence, and security.

Committee on Contracts

Maintain the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers and Support Int. 0452

UJA appreciates the City Council and Administration's commitment to provide a 3% COLA for human services workers through FY27. Years of underfunding of the sector have resulted in the human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. The current COLA investment is a step in the right direction to ensuring City-contracted human services workers are paid fairly. Next year, the Mayor and Council will need to prioritize lifting salaries for human services workers with another COLA and ideally, a multi-year investment.

Despite this recent investment, nonprofit workers continue to earn 30% less than their government counterparts. Because of this, **UJA urges the Council to pass Int. 0452-2026 which will make progress towards achieving wage equity for nonprofit workers.** Government is not just the predominant funder of human services, but is also the main driver of human services salaries, and either directly sets salary rates on contracts or does so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract. Int. 0452 is a significant step towards ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts. By establishing a clear wage requirement system, this legislation promotes transparency in compensation, ensuring that every worker is paid solely based on their qualifications and experience. The legislation also states, "Before registering a human services contract, the comptroller shall affirm that the required wage and mandatory fringe is fully funded in the procurement." Explicitly stating that the required wage and fringe will be funded by the City is crucial. While nonprofits want to pay their employees competitive wages, they cannot do this without increased funding included in their contracts.

UJA urges the City Council and Administration to continue their commitment to supporting this workforce by funding the 3% cost of living adjustment for City-contracted human services workers through fiscal year 2027 and committing to funding a multi-year COLA in FY 2028. The City Council must also pass Int. 0452-2026 the "Wage Equity Legislation" to create lasting change with how human services employees are compensated through City funded contracts.

The Committee on Parks and Recreation

Investing in an Aquatics Initiative

Many of the nonprofits in UJA's network have pools in their facilities. Those with indoor pools offer private and group swim lessons as well as opportunities for children, youth and adults to engage in other aquatic

activities throughout the year. Those who have outdoor pools are usually located at camps and use these spaces to host swim lessons and aquatic activities for their camp participants. In a few instances, when they do not have access to their own indoor or outdoor pool, some nonprofits use New York City pools for swimming lessons and water activities for their campers.

The nonprofits in UJA's network are committed to providing swim lessons and water safety instruction to the communities they serve. In many instances, if these nonprofits did not offer this resource their communities would lose access to this life saving skill. UJA joined the New York City Lifeguard and Aquatics Taskforce in 2022 to partner with city agencies and local nonprofits to better understand why there is a lifeguard shortage and what can be done to address it. It soon became clear that to create a lifeguard pipeline, the Taskforce needed to broaden their focus by locating ways to increase access to swim and water safety training, as well as supporting nonprofits and municipal partners in building capacity. In many instances, access to swim lessons and water safety instruction is only available to those who can afford the classes and/or are fortunate enough to have access to a pool in their community.

The lack of broadly accessible swim instruction and sufficient lifeguards to staff beaches and pools has created an urgent public health crisis. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), more children in the United States, ages 1–4, die from drowning than any other cause of death. And for children ages 5–14, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury or death. This entirely avoidable public safety hazard has an outsize impact on communities of color. The CDC also reports that, on average, the drowning death rate among the Black community is 1.5 times that of the white population. As the lifeguard shortage continues to result in decreased access to swimming education programs, the racial disparities in drownings and water accidents are likely to continue to increase.

A challenge of this significance cannot be fully addressed by a single entity or solution. To achieve meaningful change, a multifaceted approach that meets people where they are and removes barriers to access is needed. As a first step, **UJA supports the New York City Lifeguard and Aquatics Taskforce's proposal to create a $5 million Aquatics Initiative to help nonprofits provide access to four categories of programming including**:

1. Land-based water safety education consisting of classroom-based set of lessons focused on water safety.
2. "Second Grade" Swim- A partnership between nonprofits and the NYC Public Schools that brings students (2nd grade or similar age) to schools with pools for multi-week swim safety classes.
3. Swim Lessons- Free City funded swim lessons provided to New York City youth & adults overseen by community-based organizations in all five boroughs.
4. Lifeguard Training and Certification: Free lifeguard training and nationally recognized certification programs provided across all five boroughs. Free lifeguard development programs provided across all five boroughs to create a robust pipeline of youth prepared to undertake lifeguard training and certification.

This Aquatics Initiative is both a lifesaving skills program and a workforce development program. In addition to stand alone programming, the four aquatics programs listed above can seamlessly push into existing youth programs managed by both the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and the New Yok City Department of Education. UJA urges the city to also consider beginning with pilot programs during this fiscal year at programs including but not limited to 3-K and Pre-K, Saturday Night Lights, Beacons and Cornerstones.

To truly improve water safety at City pools and beaches, swim and water safety instruction must be made available to every resident in the city. New York City does not have enough pools to accomplish this. Nonprofits must be partnered with and funded adequately, particularly in poorer, under-resourced areas to increase the number of people accessing these life-saving lessons. Nonprofits with pools have the infrastructure in place and connections to their local communities to support the city's efforts in improving water safety for its residents.

Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use

The City Council's Mental Health initiatives provide funding that goes directly to community-based organizations that oversee behavioral and mental health services throughout New York City in several languages. These funds provide vital resources for programs that would often not have any other City, State or Federal support. The FY27 NYC budget must continue to support these initiatives by providing a 3% increase to match the citywide human services COLA initiative, thus allowing providers to address the increasing costs to provide these services to their communities. Additional targeted investments are requested for Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Clubhouses and Peer Support Specialists. Federal funding reductions are expected to negatively impact mental and behavioral health services for vulnerable populations. This is why it is critical that the New York City Council continue to invest in the Mental Health Initiatives in FY 27. Below are the investments UJA is requesting be included in the FY27 budget for all the Mental Health Services Initiatives:

Autism Awareness **$3,359,704**
Children Under Five **$1,602,917**
Court-Involved Youth Mental Health **$6,850,000**
Developmental, Psychological, & Behavioral Health **$2,323,157**
Emergency Medical Services Mental Health and Wellness **$1,030,000**
LGBTQIA Youth All-Borough Mental Health **$1,236,000**
Mental Health Clubhouses **$3,790,000**
Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations **$3,809,990**
Mental Health Workforce Retention & Development **$309,000**
NYC 988 Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Hotline **$5,150,000**
Older Adults Mental Health **$3,450,005**
Opioid Prevention & Treatment **$3,167,250**
Peer Specialist Supports **$6,000,000**
Trauma Recovery Centers **$4,944,000**
Youth Peer Support **$257,500**

UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through a few mental health initiatives including Autism Awareness, Older Adult Mental Health, Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health, Children Under Five, Trauma Recovery Centers and Peer Specialists Supports. Below are examples of the types of services and supports the nonprofits in UJA's network oversee using funding from the Mental Health Initiatives.

The Autism Awareness Initiative

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

One of the nonprofits in UJA's network supported hundreds of families last year using Autism Awareness Initiative funding. They provided parent education workshops that educate families about addressing sensory needs, conflict resolution, self-care, skill-building for children with autism, creating structures and routines, and family teamwork. This program has empowered parents to become leaders in their children's schools and has allowed some parents to transition to parent coordinators or facilitators of the education workshops.

The wraparound after school and summer programs funded by the AAI focus on assisting participants to develop intellectually and socially. More importantly, they provide a familiar social outlet for participants. One

of the nonprofits in UJA's network uses AAI funding to oversee a daily after school program for children with autism and a pre-employment program for adults with autism. The afterschool program focuses on increasing the social, communication, and adaptive daily living skills of participants. This program also supports the parents of the children who attend by providing daily in-person updates on their children's progress and having longer conversations on a weekly or biweekly basis depending on the family's needs. They also refer parents to other services and help them access OPWDD services if they are eligible. The pre-employment program is a weekly group session for young adults between the ages of 23-35 who are on the Autism Spectrum. It focuses on building participants' strengths, helping them to raise their self-esteem and confidence, foster their employment and social skills, and expose them to new potential career paths.

Autism Awareness Initiative providers all stated that while it has become more expensive to provide trainings for parents, after school or employment programs for individuals with autism, the funding has not been increased to meet these rising costs. In fact, the AAI was cut in FY 24 and that remained through FY 26. UJA urges the City Council to fund the Autism Awareness Initiative at $3,359,704 a 3% increase from FY 26 that will help providers cover increasing programmatic costs.

The Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative
JCCA, a nonprofit in UJA's network, receives funding through the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative. JCCA uses this funding for the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment program to target Jewish Orthodox and Bukharan youth between the ages of 14 and 19 in Queens who are at-risk for or engaging in opioid abuse. Youth in this community have experienced high rates of depression. The Orthodox and Bukharan community has seen a spike in marijuana use due to the legalization of marijuana, as youth self-medicate to relieve anxiety, which can become a gateway drug with teenagers. As a result, JCCA is providing youth with preventative measures to teach them about risks of using marijuana substances. The Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment program focuses on empowerment to support those who are suffering and prevention for those at risk of developing an opioid addiction.

Programs like the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment continue to be needed throughout New York City and have even been asked to be implemented in Jewish Day Schools. UJA is requesting that the City Council fund this initiative at $3,167,250 which would increase funding by 3% from FY26.

The Children Under Five Initiative
The Children Under Five Initiative funds community-based outpatient mental health clinics that provide mental health treatment to children aged five years and younger. The Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association of Washington Heights and Inwood (Washington Heights Y), a nonprofit in UJA's network, uses this funding for a part-time mental health practitioner who works with children and staff in their pre-school program. The practitioner observes children in their classrooms and identifies those who need additional supports and services. They work directly with families to develop strategies to address developmental concerns and provides support when children are being evaluated for outside services. Pre-school staff also work with the mental health practitioner to develop classroom modifications that benefit all children in the program. Lastly, the mental health practitioner trains staff on social, emotional, and developmental issues and develops support plans for students when challenges arise. UJA requests that the City Council increase funding to $1,602,917 for the Children Under Five Initiative so Washington Heights Y and the other agencies who receive this funding can address the rising costs of these programs.

The Older Adults Mental Health Initiative (OAMHI)
The OAMHI supports organizations to provide individual and group counseling to older adults in non-clinical settings such as senior centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and food pantries, while also supporting in-home services for homebound elderly. This initiative also provides financial support for in-home services such as psychiatric evaluations and counseling, services that are often not covered by insurance companies or reimbursed poorly. By offering these services in a non-clinical setting, providers can adapt

services to the needs of communities without stigma. Older adults have also benefited from case management services funded by the OAMHI, helping them to get connected to additional social supports like SNAP.

Loneliness and social isolation continue to impact older adults. One of the nonprofits in UJA's network provides counseling, case management, referrals to outside services, and support groups. Programs are designed to address older adults' unique needs to prevent medical emergencies, reduce social isolation, increase safety at home, and improve quality of life. Wraparound services allow this provider to address acute needs in the population they serve as well as the root causes of mental health issues. Providers recognize the continued and increased need for these services in their communities. Increasing funding by 3% for a total of $3,450,005 for this program in FY27 would allow our nonprofit partners to continue to connect older adults with the mental health services they require to live fulfilling lives in the community.

The Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative
The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative funds critical services for youth. The program was funded at $3.425 million since FY23. UJA is requesting that funding be doubled to $6.850 million in FY27 to support existing providers and to add new providers to address the growing mental health needs of court-involved youth.

This is a citywide initiative that assesses risk for mental health concerns and connects court-involved youth with nonprofits. The initiative also provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth. These services are essential for preventing entry and re-entry into the juvenile justice system. At-risk youth often lack access to mental health services, family counseling, or other supports that will keep them from juvenile detention. This initiative addresses lack of access to these important interventions through best practices in support services and referrals. Currently 3,000 youth are served annually by 21 providers across New York City.

JCCA receives funding through the Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative. The JCCA's "Second Chances" program is for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 who have mental and/or behavioral health needs and do not have health insurance, are court-involved or have behavioral indicators for court involvement. The program provides free mental health/counseling services, educational support and substance abuse referrals, family support services, and advocacy. It also connects participants to long-term supports. Last year, 179 youth expressed interest in participating in Second Chances. JCCA was only funded to serve 45 youth.

Since FY20, JCCA has also overseen an eight-week program titled, "Make it Work" using funding from the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative. Make It Work, prepares youth to enter the workforce. Make It Work is extremely successful and often has 60 applicants for only 15 open slots per cycle. Three cycles of Make It Work are provided each year. Referrals are received from a variety of sources including probation, ACS, schools, hospitals, and other non-profit agencies. JCCA continues to exceed both their intake and outreach targets annually. Long waitlists exist for Make it Work and JCCA would like to expand the program additional participants per cohort if they received additional funding. An increased investment of $6,850,000 in the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative in FY 27 would support agencies like JCCA to expand capacity and meet the growing demand for these important services.

The Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Initiative
This initiative supports a range of programs and services that address the needs of individuals with substance use disorder, developmental disabilities, and/or serious mental illnesses and their families and caregivers. A nonprofit in UJA's network oversees two programs with the funding they receive through this initiative. One of the programs provides housing and services to ten people with serious mental illness who are transitioning from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization into a less restrictive setting. The second program is at a clinic where adults with mental illness and older adults receive mental health treatments in a group setting. The clinic provides services to approximately 900 individuals annually. An increased investment of $2,323,157 in this initiative in FY 27 will help providers cover the rising costs associated with coordinating these services.

Trauma Recovery Centers
Trauma recovery centers were created in FY 23 to provide trauma-informed healing support to survivors of violent crime from underserved communities. The Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island (JCCGCI), a nonprofit in UJA's network, was named as the Trauma Recovery Center for Brooklyn. UJA requests that funding for Trauma Recovery Centers be increased by 3% to $4.9 million to support CBO's like JCCGCI as they continue to grow this program.

The Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) at JCCGCI provides trauma-informed, client-centered care for individuals affected by various forms of violence and trauma, including physical assault, sexual assault, gun violence, domestic violence, and more. Their services focus on immediate stabilization and long-term recovery, particularly for underserved and marginalized groups like people of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and those facing homelessness or food insecurity. The center offers personalized services, including outreach, trauma therapy, case management, and flexible care to meet diverse needs. JCCGCI's TRC has shown measurable improvements in mental and physical health outcomes since 2023. UJA requests the Trauma Recovery Centers initiative be funded at $4.9 million in FY 27 to support JCCGCI and other CBOs as they continue to try to build this resource for the communities they serve.

Invest in School-Based Mental Health Clinics
UJA asks the City to invest $3.75 million in FY 27 to bolster up to 50 existing school-based mental health clinics (SMHCs). Each SMHC should receive approximately $75,000 in annual operating support to maintain and expand on-site mental health services for children. SMHCs provide on-site mental health services to children during the school day, including psychiatry, medication management, family peer support, youth advocacy, and counseling. SMHC staff work closely with school staff to identify children in need and coordinate services. SMHCs work to engage the whole family and can serve family members at their community location. SMHCs provide crisis mental health services, ensuring children receive a compassionate response when they are in need and reducing the use of suspensions, detentions & punitive measures. Currently, most funding comes from Medicaid, which does not adequately cover the range of services provided. **A $3.75 million investment would provide the additional resources these clinics need to fully cover the costs of overseeing these services.**

Baseline Funding for the Mental Health Continuum
For the past four years, the City has allocated $5 million of one year funding for an innovative model called the Mental Health Continuum, an integrated system of targeted and intensive supports for students with significant mental health needs. This model includes school partnerships with external partners, including NYC Well, professionals for crisis response, and training for school employees. Through a partnership between the Department of Education, New York City Health + Hospitals, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, this model aims to meet the needs of students with significant mental health challenges in fifty schools with the highest rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism. **To fully implement and sustain the Mental Health Continuum, UJA requests the City baseline $5 million for the program.**

<u>The Committee on General Welfare</u>
DoVE Initiative
Currently, 180 organizations across NYC use DoVE funding to address domestic violence in their communities by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, outreach, education, and training. The DoVE initiative provides vital supports to individuals living in violent situations. Funds are directed to many of UJA's nonprofit partners who understand the unique needs of their communities. **UJA strongly urges the City Council to maintain its investment at $12 million for the DoVE Initiative in FY 27.**

NYCBenefits
UJA was disappointed that $9.75 million was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget for NYCBenefits. Since 2023, NYCBenefits has funded nonprofits (including four in UJA's network) across the City to support low-income residents when they apply for public benefits. Case workers guide individuals through the often-

confusing process of applying for public benefits and ensures applicants know all the benefits they are eligible for. The failure to fund this program will impact some of the most impoverished New York City residents as well as the nonprofit employees who support them. The City should not be disinvesting in NYCBenefits when the need for supports like these is increasing due to the federal government actively cutting access to public benefits and complicating the process to apply. **UJA requests $9.75 million be restored for NYCBenefits, allowing nonprofits to continue to support individuals to access food, housing and healthcare assistance.**

The Committee on Children and Youth

Strengthening afterschool programs

This administration's focus on creating a universal child care system accessible to all NYC families is admirable. Because child care needs do not stop at age five, an important component of any truly universal child care system is strong and affordable afterschool programs. While, the Executive Budget maintains commitment to the afterschool expansion plan initiated under the previous Mayoral administration, the recent release of the center and school-based COMPASS awards has raised concerns over how the system is being expanded and its eventual impact on the communities afterschool programs are present in.

The center-based COMPASS awards resulted in more than fifteen community-based centers losing entire afterschool contracts or facing significant seat reductions, despite demonstrating high-quality programming and continued community need. As a result, many longstanding providers that families have relied on for years may be forced to close their doors, disrupting trusted relationships and limiting access to safe and supportive spaces for children.

The school-based COMPASS awards created additional disruptions to continuity of care for children and families. Many community-based organizations (including two nonprofits in UJA's network) lost contracts at schools where they have successfully provided services for years and had the support of school leadership. While UJA supports a fair and competitive procurement process, in some cases these awards have created fragmented service models within individual schools — with different providers operating elementary and middle school COMPASS programs and serving as the lead Community School CBO partner. This discontinuity can create unnecessary administrative burdens for school staff and undermine consistency and coordination of services for students and families. In addition, several schools were not matched with any provider despite receiving applications, including applications supported by principals. This raises important questions about whether all previously promised program sites will ultimately be served.

The timing of the release of the COMPASS awards also has negatively impacted CBOs. Providers who applied for center and school-based COMPASS awards, were notified in April and May respectively if they were chosen to oversee programs. This has resulted in a truncated timeline for afterschool programs to either begin developing programming for the upcoming school year or notify staff that they will no longer be employed in their afterschool program if they did not receive an award. For those who lost awards, the staffing for their 2026 summer programs has been put into jeopardy with many staff considering leaving programs and looking for employment elsewhere due to not having a job at the end of August.

Beyond challenges resulting from the award process, UJA remains concerned that the current reimbursement structure is insufficient to sustain high-quality programming over the long term. The per-participant rates offered in the COMPASS RFP will allow providers to recover only about 60–70 percent of true program costs in the first year, with the gap widening over the six-year contract due to the absence of annual cost escalators. As a result, providers must either subsidize programs with other funding sources or offer staff wages that do not reflect their responsibilities and expertise, creating inequities in the quality and stability of programming available to families.

Given these concerns, UJA is calling on the City to:

- Restore and baseline funding for community-based organizations that lost center-based contracts or experienced significant seat reductions despite meeting eligibility requirements.

- Provide greater transparency regarding how school-based awards were determined.
- Ensure that all unmatched school sites are paired with providers as quickly as possible.
- Provide support and establish clear coordination protocols in schools undergoing a provider transition and where multiple providers are now working together.
- Ensure all new COMPASS contracts for their entirety include at least a 3% annual COLA or other cost escalator.

UJA welcomes the opportunity to partner with DYCD to ensure that efforts to expand New York City's afterschool system strengthen community-based organizations, preserve continuity for families, and expand access to high-quality programming.

Child Care Assistance Program

As the Mamdani Administration works towards creating a universal child care system, the 25,600 children on the waitlist for the child care assistance program (CCAP) must not be forgotten. The families who access CCAP vouchers live in high poverty neighborhoods and have little access to additional resources to fund their child care needs. No affordable child care means parents and guardians need to make difficult decisions on how to care for their children including reducing work hours, leaving a job, or making suboptimal child care arrangements.

The New York State Enacted budget included over $3 billion for the CCAP. A portion of that funding, $950 million, is for New York City to be split evenly and used for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027. The funding for New York City will allow ACS to maintain enrollment in the CCAP but it is not enough to supply vouchers to children on the waitlist. **The City Council, Mamdani Administration and ACS must work together to decide how much additional money the City will need to address the waitlist for the CCAP and ensure all children who are eligible have access to child care vouchers**.

Adult Literacy

More than 2.2 million adults in New York City have limited English proficiency or lack a high school diploma, yet public investment in adult literacy remains far below the level needed to meet demand. As a result, fewer than 3 percent of New Yorkers who could benefit from English language instruction, Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED preparation, digital literacy, and civics education programs are able to access services in a given year.

Adult literacy programs are a critical pathway to economic opportunity and self-sufficiency. These programs help New Yorkers gain the language, educational, and workforce skills necessary to secure employment, advance their careers, support their families, and fully participate in civic life. As New York City faces persistent workforce shortages across multiple sectors, investments in adult literacy strengthen both individual economic mobility and the City's long-term economic health.

At the same time, adult literacy providers face growing uncertainty. More than $24 million in New York City's adult literacy funding comes from the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and federal proposals have called for eliminating this funding entirely. Such cuts would significantly reduce access to educational opportunities for thousands of adult learners across the city and place additional pressure on already oversubscribed community-based programs.

New York City must respond by strengthening its own commitment to adult learners. UJA-Federation supports the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy's proposal to **create a new $20 million Education for Integration and Equity initiative** to expand access to English language instruction, adult basic education, digital literacy, high school equivalency preparation, and civics education. This investment would help address longstanding unmet need while protecting educational opportunities at a time of significant uncertainty in federal funding.

UJA-Federation also urges the City Council to **increase discretionary funding for adult literacy education from $14.5 million to $18 million** and to consolidate all Council-funded adult literacy programs under Adult Literacy Forward. This nationally recognized model has demonstrated the value of flexible, community-responsive funding and stronger accountability for publicly funded programs.

Adult literacy education helps New Yorkers build stable careers, support their families, and contribute to their communities. Investing in adult learners advances economic mobility, strengthens the workforce, and creates pathways out of poverty. UJA-Federation urges the Administration and the Council to make adult literacy a budget priority in FY27.

Committee on Education

Preschool Special Education

UJA appreciates the additional investments made in preschool special education in the FY 27 Executive budget. Specifically, starting in FY 27 $67.5 million and increasing to $81.6 million in FY 30 will be included to expand Special Education Pre-K programs and make them more accessible to all New York City children. For years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has struggled to provide an appropriate special education preschool seat to every child who required one. As of May 2025, 29% of preschoolers with disabilities were missing one or more of their legally mandated services like speech therapy or counseling. More than half of those children were receiving none of their mandated preschool special education services. Additionally, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) recently posted information online indicating a shortage of preschool special education classrooms in Spring 2026 that could leave hundreds of young children with disabilities with the most intensive needs without access to a preschool program.

It is clear any decrease in funding to preschool special education programs will result in further damage to a system that is already struggling to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a timely manner. While investments made in expanding special education pre-k programs in FY 27 are welcome, it is important to note what some preschool special education programs are experiencing now as they begin planning for the 2026-2027 school year. Recently, the Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) started a new practice where inclusion specialists must approve placements in special education preschool programs. This is part of New York City's efforts to reduce the rate at which preschoolers are recommended for self-contained special education classes. Since this practice began, special education preschool providers have noticed a decrease in referral to their programs. This will decrease the number of children entering preschool special education programs, directly impacting these programs' ability to stay open.

While federal law requires children be placed in the least restrictive environment, it is critical that this is an appropriate placement for them. There are some children who require specialized preschool special education programs and general education programs with services are not going to provide the programming they need to thrive. It is imperative the DOE carefully monitor the impact of inclusion specialist approvement on preschool special education providers and the children not being placed in these programs.

Pre-K and 3-K Programs

UJA is thankful for the baselining of $5 million for Early Childhood Education outreach in the FY 27 Executive Budget which will help to ensure families across New York City know about free 3-K and Pre-K programs.

UJA's non-profit partners oversee New York City funded 3-K and Pre-K programs and hosted private pay programs before publicly funded programs existed. Transitioning to and working in a City funded early childhood education system continues to be challenging. Before creating a City funded universal child care system, it is critical that the Mamdani Administration and City Council understand and address the issues facing nonprofit 3-K and Pre-K providers because these same issues will most likely impact any expansion of child

care. Improving the current City funded early childhood education system will lay a stronger foundation to build the universal child care system.

Continued delayed reimbursement from NYCPS threatens 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 benefited 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 should have to wait months to be compensated for completed work. To address the payment issues facing the 3-K and Pre-K systems, the Mamdani Administration must pay early care and education service providers on time and complete payments owed immediately. NYCPS must fully staff their divisions responsible for invoicing and payment and continue to grant ECE providers the ability 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 New York City Public Schools. NYCPS enrolling families in CBO 3-K and Pre-K programs creates an 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. If enrollment continues to be managed through NYCPS, providers should not be penalized for under-enrollment, consistent with protections afforded to early childhood programs operating in public schools. Programs in CBOs should be held harmless for under-enrollment when NYCPS's district schools are not cited for under-enrollment in their 3-K and Pre-K classrooms.

New York City Public Schools is in the process of extending contracts that were awarded through the current Birth-to-Five RFP. The Birth-to-Five RFP was issued in 2020 and went into effect in the fall of 2021. It includes the City's contracts for Pre-K, 3-K, and Extended Day/Extended Year programs. Providers were recently notified these five-year-old contracts that will be extended two years. The Executive Budget included a $40 million baseline investment for enhancements to these contracts resulting in Community Based Organizations receiving a 2% increase in their contracts during the next two years to address rising costs. While grateful for this increase, 2% is not enough funding for early childhood educators to meet the rising costs of food (specifically kosher food in the UJA network of nonprofits), 3.5% salary increases for staff in DC Local 215, or the rising costs of fringe benefits. Because of this, **UJA urges the City to immediately implement cost escalators of at least 3% in current Birth to Five Contracts to reflect increased costs for insurance, utilities, and other necessities of maintaining early childhood education programs.**

Lack of comprehensive pay parity across the early childhood education workforce continues to plague the sector as well. The 2019 salary parity agreement 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 and are offering their staff smaller salaries and less benefits due to continuing to work off an outdated salary agreement.

Preschool special education teachers are also among the lowest-paid teachers in New York City, making less than their counterparts in NYCPS. As a result, preschool special education teachers are leaving for higher-paying positions within NYCPS, CBOs have been forced to close their programs, and children are forced to wait at home until a special education seat opens. The lack of providers (speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) has forced children in integrated classrooms to wait for their services, causing further harm and developmental delays.

Before expanding the child care system, the City needs to immediately create true pay parity for the entire early childhood workforce. This would include Local 215 and non-unionized CBOs as well as ensure that staff at community-based preschool special education programs are included. 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 contract 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.

New York City families need access to affordable, high quality child care. UJA's nonprofit partners are ready and willing to provide this service. But the City must address the previously stated issues to expand the early childhood education system in a responsible way.

Non-Public Schools

Jewish day schools have faced increased security threats since October 7, 2023. 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.

In recent years, the student enrollment threshold for the Nonpublic School Security Reimbursement Program was increased making more nonpublic schools eligible to be reimbursed for security services through New York City funds. The combination of more schools being eligible for this funding as well as the continue rise of antisemitic incidents across New York City has created the need for additional funding to be added to the Nonpublic School Security Reimbursement Program. **UJA is urging the Council and Administration to increase the investment in this program to ensure that all religious and independent schools have access to adequate security funding.**

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 2027 New York City budget. If you have any questions, please contact Faith Behum at behumf@ujafedny.org.

Uniformed Emergency Medical Service Officers Union
Local 3621, DC37, FDNY, NYS-PEC, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

In a system where minutes matter – we have a system that is completely out of balance and teetering on the brink of collapse. *Without change, EMS simply cannot keep up.*

New Yorkers must know that it is now more deadly in our city if you or your loved one suffers a heart attack, life threatening illness, serious accidents or fall. *Health and emergency care in our city is in serious jeopardy. The survival rate from a cardiac arrest is at an all-time low. (17%)*

This public safety crisis didn't happen overnight; it's been long time in the making, with years of neglect and bad decisions. This mayor didn't cause it, and neither did this Council. In fact, this Council has been an advocate for EMS over the years and we want to thank you for your effort and help, and we know that this Mayor is committed to equity, affordability and fairness. Pay equity is an affordability issue.

Emergency medical care for New Yorkers must be a priority. We ask you to help us do what's best for our city and prioritize this issue because it is literally a matter of life and death. We need to adequately compensate and resource our EMS First Responders, so that they can properly protect the people of our city during emergencies.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Vincent Variale

President

125 Barclay Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10007 * Email: Local3621uemso@gmail.com * Office # (212) 815-1220 * www.Local3621.com

UNION SETTLEMENT
EMPOWERING EAST HARLEM SINCE 1895

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Testimony to the New York City Council
COMPASS Program Funding for Union Settlement

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Submitted by Sean Wynter
Executive Director Youth Development and Opportunity
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Chairperson and members of the New York City Council.

My name is Sean Wynter- Executive Director of Youth Development and Opportunity Department at Union Settlement, and I am here today to urge the Council to support the reinstatement of COMPASS funding specifically for Middle School participants for Union Settlement, an organization that has proudly served East Harlem for more than 130 years. For generations, Union Settlement has been a trusted anchor institution, providing critical educational, recreational, and social services to children, youth, and families throughout the community.

We were deeply disappointed to learn that Union Settlement was not awarded funding to continue operating COMPASS Middle School programs despite being selected by school principals as their provider of choice. These principals have witnessed firsthand the quality, consistency, and impact of our programming and intentionally chose Union Settlement because of the strong relationships we have built with students, families, educators, and the broader East Harlem community.

For more than a decade, Union Settlement has successfully operated COMPASS programs in four East Harlem middle schools, serving over 1,000- 6th–8th grade young people and their families annually. Union Settlement and other East Harlem providers can now will only serves 441 kindergarden-5th grade participants. New York City Department of Health Community Health Profiles indicate that East Harlem experiences some of the highest rates of chronic health conditions and premature mortality in the city, driven by long-standing inequities in access to care, economic opportunity, and environmental conditions (NYC Department of Health, Community Health Profile, 2023). Union Settlement and other East Harlem providers are safe havens for the families in the community. The continuity of the program is critically important. Families depend on stability, familiarity and Union Settlement is well-established entity in East Harlem. Disrupting the security of support harms the students and their families. Trust has been developed throughout the years, and this will undermine and add risk to the community.

The loss of these services represents more than a funding decision—it represents the loss of trusted relationships, proven outcomes, and vital support for young people in one of New York City's most underserved communities Students and

families who have relied on Union Settlement's programming for years now face significant gaps in services and opportunities.

The impact is particularly troubling for residents of Washington Houses. Following years of disruption caused by extensive building repairs, residents were eager to benefit from the reopening of Union Settlement's newly renovated community center. This revitalized space was envisioned as a hub for school aged youth engagement and community-building activities. Yet despite this significant investment and the clear need for services, no COMPASS funding was awarded to support programming.

In addition to providing high-quality after-school programming, Union Settlement offers a comprehensive network of services that extend far beyond the walls of the schools we serve. Through our longstanding presence in East Harlem, we have built trusted relationships with students and families and are uniquely positioned to address the broader needs that impact youth success.

Families connected through our COMPASS programs have access to workforce development and job training opportunities, mental health counseling and wellness services, benefits enrollment assistance through New York Benefits programs, financial empowerment services, adult education, college and career readiness resources, and family support programs. These integrated services allow us to support not only the academic and social-emotional development of young people but also the overall stability and well-being of their families.

The loss of COMPASS funding impacts much more than after-school activities. It disrupts a critical entry point through which families become connected to essential services that help them secure employment, access healthcare and public benefits, address mental health needs, and achieve greater economic stability. Union Settlement's ability to provide these wraparound supports has been a cornerstone of our work in East Harlem.

Because of the deep trust, we have established with families, our school-based programs often serve as the first connection to a broader continuum of services. By removing Union Settlement from the East Harlem community, many families may lose access to a trusted partner that understands their needs and can connect them to resources that improve outcomes for the entire household.

East Harlem continues to face challenges related to poverty, educational inequities, community violence, and limited access to youth development opportunities. Organizations like Union Settlement play a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing consistent, high quality programming that keeps young people safe, engaged, and on pathways toward success.

We respectfully ask the New York City Council to review this funding decision and advocate for the restoration of COMPASS funding to Union Settlement. Doing so would honor the choices made by school leaders, preserve trusted community partnerships, and ensure that thousands of East Harlem youth continue to have access to the high-quality programming they deserve.

For over 130 years, Union Settlement has stood beside the residents of East Harlem. We remain committed to serving our community, and we ask for your partnership in

ensuring that these essential services continue for the young people and families who depend on them.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to New York City's youth.

For the Community
By the Community

www.unionsettlement.org

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony from Mary Vaccaro, vice president for education and executive director of the UFT Teacher Center

Good morning. My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I am the UFT's vice president for education and the executive director of the UFT Teacher Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about several initiatives that are making a meaningful impact on educators, students and school communities across New York City.

I'd like to begin with the UFT Teacher Center, which promotes teacher excellence and academic achievement for all students through high-quality professional development tailored to the unique needs of each school. The Teacher Center's work is grounded in the belief that when educators are supported, students thrive.

Last year alone, the Teacher Center provided more than 126,000 hours of professional learning to over 341,000 educators, principals and parents across the city. These learning opportunities range from instructional coaching and curriculum support to leadership development and collaborative planning. The impact is clear: Ninety-nine percent of participating educators reported that the professional learning they received significantly improved their practice.

We have expanded our reach by opening 11 new Teacher Center sites this school year. We now have well over 200 site coaches embedded directly in schools, working shoulder to shoulder with educators to strengthen instruction, address challenges in real time and support student success. These coaches help schools implement evidence-based practices and build sustainable systems that continue to benefit educators and students long after a workshop ends.

The Teacher Center has also played an essential role in supporting major citywide instructional initiatives, including the development and rollout of NYC Reads. By providing ongoing training, coaching and implementation support, the Teacher Center helps ensure that educators have the tools and confidence they need to deliver high-quality instruction in every classroom.

The UFT Teacher Center has also teamed with nonprofit partners to provide social-emotional supports for our school communities, including joining with the Goldie Hawn Foundation to introduce MindUP to over 300 schools, Think Equal to support social-emotional learning in pre-K to over 500 educators and CommonPoint to host wellness days. These partnerships have given us the ability to make connections and to expand our reach to educators, students and families. This is all while we continue to be a certified

provider of TCIS (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention). This year, a record number of educators took advantage of this training.

I also want to briefly highlight the PROSE initiative, which empowers district schools to develop innovative approaches that better serve their students and families. Interest in PROSE continues to grow as more educators seek opportunities to implement creative solutions and share successful practices with colleagues across the system.

Finally, I would like to discuss the importance of supporting educators' well-being. Sixteen years ago, the UFT recognized that educators in crisis had limited places to turn for support. In response, we created MAP, which has become the supplemental mental health program for DOE employees. Today, more than 50,000 educators use MAP's counseling services, support groups and wellness workshops. It is a trusted resource that provides critical support to the people who dedicate their lives to serving our students.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate the power of investing in education. By supporting professional growth, encouraging innovation and prioritizing well-being, we strengthen our schools and create better outcomes for all students.

Testimony from Karen Alford, vice president for elementary schools and executive director of United Community Schools

Good morning, my name is Karen Alford. I am the UFT vice president for elementary schools and the point person for the UFT's nonprofit United Community Schools. The City Council has supported the UFT's community schools initiative from the program's start in 2012. In 2025, support from the City Council helped UCS schools feed over 71,000 families and provide over 48,000 health and wellness exams, screenings and check-ins.

These supports translate to increased test scores, attendance and student engagement at our UCS schools. We found that:

- 46.3% of UCS students met ELA standards, compared to 36.2% of the comparison group, showcasing a 10.2 percentage point advantage for middle and elementary school students
- High school students at UCS schools accumulated roughly one more credit than similarly situated noncommunity-school students

Teachers too feel the impact of working in a UCS school, and we often hear our UCS teachers say they feel more supported, secure and engaged in their work.

We hope to continue to expand upon this work in the upcoming year with a particular focus on building a dedicated UCS mental health team to deliver mental health services to schools, to increase academic enrichment programming and attendance-improvement activities, and to provide staff and educators with targeted technical assistance and instructional support to ensure they are well-equipped to meet students' needs.

Additionally, the UFT is eager to partner with the mayor and the City Council to fulfill the promise of truly universal 3-K and to ensure the successful rollout of 2-K for families across New York City. To ensure the success of these critical initiatives the UFT asks that:

- Providers are paid in a timely manner without delays.
- Independent, nonnetwork-affiliated and home-based providers are included in the expansion of 3-K and the rollout of 2-K.
- Our youngest learners are provided with the appropriate special education services.

Finally, I want to touch on two of our union's programs that greatly affect students and families. The first is our BRAVE hotline, an immediate, compassionate resource for any child experiencing bullying. The hotline is staffed by licensed counselors and trained professionals who provide confidential support, guidance and crisis intervention to students and families in need. The hotline is available from 2–9:30 p.m. on weekdays by phone, chat or text. If we can save just one child from the anguish of bullying, protect one family from the heartbreak of a preventable tragedy and shield one school community from the ripple effects of these incidents, then we as a community will have done our jobs.

The second program is Dial-A-Teacher. The UFT's Dial-A-Teacher homework hotline (212-777-3380) answered tens of thousands of calls last school year from students and parents looking for homework help. It operates Mondays through Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m. and offers homework help in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. With your continued support, we can expand our outreach and keep serving students and families.

All of these programs change lives, and we are grateful for your continuous investment in and support of them.

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony of Michael Mulgrew, UFT president, submitted before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

My name is Michael Mulgrew, and I am the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's over 200,000 members, I would like to thank Finance Chair Linda Lee and all the members of the City Council's Committee on Finance for holding today's public hearing on the New York City executive budget for fiscal year 2027. I would also like to thank Speaker Julie Menin for her strong leadership these past few months.

RESPECT for Paraprofessionals

The UFT has been pushing for the paraprofessional RESPECT check legislation for over a year now. Many of you have signed onto Int. 0692-2026 as sponsors and championed this issue in hearings and at rallies. We are grateful for your support, but now we need to get this bill across the finish line. It is not enough to simply say we support paraprofessionals. We need to put action behind our words and ensure that each paraprofessional in this city receives $10,000.

Class Size

When the class size law was first implemented, we understood that reaching full compliance was a difficult but worthwhile undertaking. The UFT was ready to move full steam ahead, but the city dragged its feet. To prevent this from happening again, and to ensure the city is held accountable for timely compliance with the law, the UFT negotiated a differential payment for teachers whose classes are exempt from the class size limits due to either space or hiring limitations. This differential will be $8,500 in school year 2026-27 and $9,500 in school year 2027-28. We are eager to work with you all as we enter the final stages of implementation to ensure that every classroom comes into compliance by 2030.

Child Care

The UFT applauds Mayor Mamdani and Gov. Hochul's investment in universal child care. To make 3-K truly universal and rollout 2-K, we will need to grow and support our early childhood education workforce. To do this, the city must pay providers in a timely manner without delays, so they are not forced to provide services without income. The city must also include independent, non-network-affiliated and home-based providers in this child care expansion. The UFT currently represents 8,000 home-based child care providers, who make it possible to offer families care in their very own neighborhoods.

They also provide culturally responsive care and nontraditional hours of care, which is crucial for parents who work hours other than 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Finally, as we scale up our universal child care services, we must ensure that our youngest learners receive the appropriate special education services.

Additionally, New York City families deserve affordable, safe care for their children. However, child care has become increasingly expensive and difficult to find. In response to this, the UFT created NYC Childcare Navigator to connect our members to affordable child care. Based on the overwhelming positive feedback from our members, we decided to expand our reach, and we are proud to now offer this valuable free resource to all residents of the five boroughs. Recently, we added new features to the program to allow families to find out in less than five minutes whether they also qualify for federal WIC and SNAP food programs and housing vouchers. We ask that the City Council embrace the NYC Childcare Navigator as a frontline tool for families and providers to navigate eligibility and placement for existing and new child care capacity.

Fund UFT Programs

For years the UFT's programs have ensured that education funding goes directly into the classroom and improves educational outcomes for students and working conditions for teachers. This year we submitted discretionary-funding applications for six programs that we ask the City Council to support. We greatly appreciate the Council's past support for these programs and have seen a dramatic increase in demand for each of them in recent years. Because of that, we are requesting a proportionate adjustment in allocations to support these activities.

UFT Teacher Center

The UFT Teacher Center promotes teacher excellence and academic achievement for all students through professional learning tailored to each school's unique needs. Last school year, Teacher Centers delivered over 126,000 hours of transformative professional development to over 341,000 participants - educators, principals and parents. Additionally, ninety-nine percent of participating educators reported that the Teacher Center's professional learning sessions improved their practice.

Thanks to the support we received from the City Council and the City Council Speaker's Initiative in 2025-26, we were able to open 11 new Teacher Centers, for a total of 197 sites — a 60% increase from 2020-21. The funding also enabled our 203 site coaches, who are embedded in schools across the city, to provide support in three critical areas:

1) Ensuring that educators are prepared to support students in literacy development using the science of reading and the new curricula used in the NYC Reads.

2) Ensuring that educators are prepared to provide the social and emotional support their students need to address the trauma they have experienced in these unprecedented times, including students who are new arrivals to our city.

3) Ensuring that all students receive support equitably through providing professional learning that prepares educators to reach all students, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

Additionally, the UFT Teacher Center is committed to expanding our work with the Provider Professional Education Program and United Network for Early Childhood Education, which aim to grow the early childhood workforce for both teachers and home-based child care providers alike. This work is particularly important right now as we work to expand universal 3-K and create the 2-K program in New York City.

For 2026–27, we are requesting a grant of $6.5 million from the City Council Speaker's Initiative and $4.12 million from the City Council's discretionary funds to sustain and expand Teacher Center programming. This funding will allow us to retain and bring on additional central team staff who work with multiple schools, open new Teacher Centers in areas without any sites, and continue to offer Teacher Center supports to schools across the city.

United Community Schools (UCS)

United Community Schools is a teacher-inspired and educator-led nonprofit with proven results that serves close to 20,000 families. Within each school there is a community school director who leverages outside relationships to bring the necessary resources directly to students and families. Our community schools provide food for families and offer mental health, physical health, dental and vision services within school buildings. In 2025 support from the City Council helped UCS schools feed over 71,000 families and provide over 48,000 health and wellness exams, screenings and check-ins.

As a result of these robust supports, we've seen test scores go up, attendance improve and student engagement increase at our UCS schools. We found that 46.3% of UCS students met ELA standards compared to 36.2% of the comparison group, showcasing a 10.2 percentage point advantage for middle and elementary school students. We also saw that high school students at UCS schools accumulated roughly one more credit than similarly situated non-community school students. Teachers too feel the impact of working in a UCS school, and we often hear our UCS teachers say they feel more supported, secure and engaged in their work.

This year we ask that the City Council provide UCS with $5 million to sustain our 32 community schools and expand the services we offer to communities. This funding will be used to build a dedicated UCS mental health team that will work in close collaboration with school principals, administrators and health practitioners to deliver coordinated, high-quality mental health and wellness services. It will allow six community school

directors and three community school associates to oversee academic enrichment programs, attendance improvement activities, STEM/STEAM courses, family engagement workshops, community forums, vision and dental clinics and coat and toy drives at each of their school sites. Funding from the City Council will also enable us to provide UCS educators and staff with targeted technical assistance and instructional support to ensure they are well equipped to meet students' needs.

Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC) and Member Assistance Program (MAP)

The PLC program is one of our most effective tools for bringing equity to New York City public schools. This model weaves together social-emotional supports, restorative practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, mindfulness and healing-centered practices to support school communities and ensure every child has the social, emotional and academic skills needed to succeed in the classroom and life.

Recently, the PLC has collaborated with the MAP program to further expand the UFT's capacity to meet the needs of educators and school communities around social emotional support, mental health support and professional development opportunities. Thanks to Council's support, our free, multilingual MAP careline is now available twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. This line has received over 30,000 calls since 2022, with a recent increase in calls relating to bias and hate crimes, as well as immigration crackdowns and fear of deportation of our students. Since the fall, MAP has also served over 300 schools that have requested crisis counseling from our team of trained clinicians because their school community has been impacted by suicide, grief and immigration fear (especially around ICE) that affected the school community.

Since 2019, MAP has also offered the Let's Talk About It all-day program to thousands of middle school students from around the NYC area, with a focus on the Bronx in the 2023–24 school year and Queens in the 2024–25 and 2025–26 school years. Since 2018, MAP has also offered thousands of hours of professional learning opportunities and credits to educators and counselors.

To sustain and continue to expand all this programming, the UFT is requesting $1.9 million for the 2026–27 school year from the City Council.

Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE)

PROSE amplifies the voices of educators 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. Many of the over 280 PROSE schools that currently exist have a strong emphasis on project-based learning. The program includes most of the consortium high schools in the city, which have a state waiver allowing them to replace state Regents exams with project-based assessments, as well as other schools that focus on this kind of innovative curricula and

assessments. PROSE also includes most of the Internationals Network of high schools, which are focused on serving students who are new arrivals to our city. We propose to use $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 in the 2026–27 school year.

BRAVE Hotline

Bullying continues to pose a significant challenge in our schools, deeply affecting students' mental health, academic potential and overall well-being. That is why the UFT created BRAVE (Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education), which raises awareness about bullying prevention, digital safety, conflict resolution and restorative practices through interactive workshops, school-based presentations and community outreach. We also have a BRAVE hotline that students, their families and educators can call, chat or text for help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As our schools face evolving challenges, such as the rise of cyberbullying and the increasing diversity of student needs, it is imperative that BRAVE continues to adapt and expand its critical services. We are requesting a grant of $300,000 from the City Council this fiscal year to fund program coordination, consultant-led workshops, outreach materials and community engagement efforts. This support will ensure that BRAVE can expand its reach, maintain high-quality programming, and continue serving schools and families with timely, relevant and impactful anti-bullying education.

Dial-A-Teacher

Dial-A-Teacher operates Mondays through Thursdays from 4 to 7 p.m., offering free homework help to students and parents in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. Last year, the program received over 35,000 calls. Dial-A-Teacher is respectfully requesting $325,000 in City Council funding for fiscal year 2027 to allow us to expand access to these supports by increasing the number of teachers available to answer calls, continuing with technological upgrades and providing staff development that will enhance our ability to serve students in the modern educational arena.

Support Citywide Initiatives

I would also like to advocate for citywide programs that are vital for our students and educators. We need to continue to baseline Teacher's Choice, and I also ask the Council to support arts in education and Commonpoint.

1. **Teacher's Choice** – Thank you for your continued support of the Teacher's Choice program. It is a key initiative to ensure teachers and other school staff are reimbursed for the school supplies and materials they purchase for their

classrooms and for many of their students in need. We ask that you continue to provide $20 million in baseline funding for Teacher's Choice in fiscal year 2027.

2. **Arts in Education** – The arts introduce our students to new ways of thinking and expressing themselves. That is why we ask that the City Council support Broadway Bridges, the Broadway League program that provides $10 tickets for 10th grade students to see Broadway shows, aiming for every student to attend a show before graduation. This program also celebrates educators by hosting special events for them to experience the theatre. We also ask the Council for increases in funding for arts education in city schools and cultural centers such as museums and music halls.

3. **Commonpoint** – Commonpoint is a social services organization that supports the diverse needs of New Yorkers of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The organization offers a variety of supports for youths and families, ranging from sports programs and summer camps to job training and college access assistance. We ask that you support Commonpoint's programs in the fiscal year 2027 budget.

Thank you for holding today's hearing and for working with us to support and fully fund public education in New York City. I look forward to our continued collaboration.

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony from the United Federation of Teachers before the City Council Committee on Finance

Testimony from Priscilla Castro, chair of the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter

My name is Priscilla Castro, and I am the chair of the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter. We have been loud and clear for the past year: We must make the paraprofessional RESPECT check — Int. 0692-2026 — a reality. This is an issue of affordability. Due to the harm that pattern bargaining has caused, our members struggle to live in the city that they serve. Paraprofessionals cannot afford to go without additional pay, and students cannot afford to be without their paraprofessionals for one day longer.

Without paraprofessionals, students do not receive the necessary special education services. Next year, the city is projected to spend $1.5 billion on Carter cases because public school students are not receiving the support they not only need but are legally entitled to. It's time to direct this money toward the people actually doing the work.

I want to thank all the City Council members before us who have shown their support for the paraprofessionals in this city and the RESPECT check legislation. We will not stop until the hardworking, caring and dedicated paraprofessionals of New York City receive the respect and recognition they deserve.

Testimony from John Kamps, member representative of the Paraprofessionals Chapter

My name is John Kamps, and I am a representative of the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter. I am here to express my strong support for the RESPECT check legislation and to urge you to continue advancing this important measure.

This legislation represents a critical step toward addressing longstanding inequities affecting paraprofessionals, who are among the most essential yet undercompensated members of our school communities. Every day, paraprofessionals provide indispensable support to students, particularly those with disabilities and complex needs, helping to ensure safe, inclusive and effective learning environments.

Paraprofessionals are always there when they are needed. In every crisis, and every time the Department of Education or our school system has relied on them, they have been there and served admirably. During the reopening of schools after COVID, paraprofessionals sat side-by-side with students because you cannot guide a student's pencil from six feet away. Many stepped up when teachers were unavailable, managing classrooms to keep schools running.

The passage of this bill would send a powerful message that those sacrifices were not in vain. It would show that the city recognizes the dedication, resilience and commitment paraprofessionals have demonstrated time and time again. The RESPECT check would also provide meaningful financial relief and help stabilize a workforce that schools depend on by improving recruitment and retention. It is both a practical solution and a long-overdue acknowledgment of the role paraprofessionals play.

We simply want to be seen as the essential members of the school community and educational system that we truly are. Paraprofessionals make the difference every single day. Thank you for your leadership and attention to this issue. I respectfully urge you to support the passage of the RESPECT check legislation.

Testimony from Michael Sill, secretary of the UFT

Good morning. My name is Michael Sill, and I am the secretary of the United Federation of Teachers, which represents over 200,000 members.

You heard the leaders of our paraprofessional chapter. It is time to pass Int. 0692-2026 and get this RESPECT check to all our paraprofessionals. We have paraprofessionals working two to three jobs and living in homeless shelters because the job they love does not allow them to keep the lights on and pay their rent. This injustice must stop. Enough is enough.

Thank you to Chair Linda Lee and the rest of the City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify and advocate for the UFT's impactful programs. When you invest in UFT programs, you can be sure that education dollars go directly into the classroom to improve educational outcomes for students and working conditions for teachers. This year we submitted funding applications for six programs that we ask the City Council to support. You have all been wonderful partners in the past, and we look forward to continuing to serve our city's students, educators and families together.

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony from Mary Vaccaro, vice president for education and executive director of the UFT Teacher Center

Good morning. My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I am the UFT's vice president for education and the executive director of the UFT Teacher Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about several initiatives that are making a meaningful impact on educators, students and school communities across New York City.

I'd like to begin with the UFT Teacher Center, which promotes teacher excellence and academic achievement for all students through high-quality professional development tailored to the unique needs of each school. The Teacher Center's work is grounded in the belief that when educators are supported, students thrive.

Last year alone, the Teacher Center provided more than 126,000 hours of professional learning to over 341,000 educators, principals and parents across the city. These learning opportunities range from instructional coaching and curriculum support to leadership development and collaborative planning. The impact is clear: Ninety-nine percent of participating educators reported that the professional learning they received significantly improved their practice.

We have expanded our reach by opening 11 new Teacher Center sites this school year. We now have well over 200 site coaches embedded directly in schools, working shoulder to shoulder with educators to strengthen instruction, address challenges in real time and support student success. These coaches help schools implement evidence-based practices and build sustainable systems that continue to benefit educators and students long after a workshop ends.

The Teacher Center has also played an essential role in supporting major citywide instructional initiatives, including the development and rollout of NYC Reads. By providing ongoing training, coaching and implementation support, the Teacher Center helps ensure that educators have the tools and confidence they need to deliver high-quality instruction in every classroom.

The UFT Teacher Center has also teamed with nonprofit partners to provide social-emotional supports for our school communities, including joining with the Goldie Hawn Foundation to introduce MindUP to over 300 schools, Think Equal to support social-emotional learning in pre-K to over 500 educators and CommonPoint to host wellness days. These partnerships have given us the ability to make connections and to expand our reach to educators, students and families. This is all while we continue to be a certified

provider of TCIS (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention). This year, a record number of educators took advantage of this training.

I also want to briefly highlight the PROSE initiative, which empowers district schools to develop innovative approaches that better serve their students and families. Interest in PROSE continues to grow as more educators seek opportunities to implement creative solutions and share successful practices with colleagues across the system.

Finally, I would like to discuss the importance of supporting educators' well-being. Sixteen years ago, the UFT recognized that educators in crisis had limited places to turn for support. In response, we created MAP, which has become the supplemental mental health program for DOE employees. Today, more than 50,000 educators use MAP's counseling services, support groups and wellness workshops. It is a trusted resource that provides critical support to the people who dedicate their lives to serving our students.

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Testimony from Karen Alford, vice president for elementary schools and executive director of United Community Schools

Good morning, my name is Karen Alford. I am the UFT vice president for elementary schools and the point person for the UFT's nonprofit United Community Schools. The City Council has supported the UFT's community schools initiative from the program's start in 2012. In 2025, support from the City Council helped UCS schools feed over 71,000 families and provide over 48,000 health and wellness exams, screenings and check-ins.

These supports translate to increased test scores, attendance and student engagement at our UCS schools. We found that:

- 46.3% of UCS students met ELA standards, compared to 36.2% of the comparison group, showcasing a 10.2 percentage point advantage for middle and elementary school students
- High school students at UCS schools accumulated roughly one more credit than similarly situated noncommunity-school students

Teachers too feel the impact of working in a UCS school, and we often hear our UCS teachers say they feel more supported, secure and engaged in their work.

We hope to continue to expand upon this work in the upcoming year with a particular focus on building a dedicated UCS mental health team to deliver mental health services to schools, to increase academic enrichment programming and attendance-improvement activities, and to provide staff and educators with targeted technical assistance and instructional support to ensure they are well-equipped to meet students' needs.

Additionally, the UFT is eager to partner with the mayor and the City Council to fulfill the promise of truly universal 3-K and to ensure the successful rollout of 2-K for families across New York City. To ensure the success of these critical initiatives the UFT asks that:

- Providers are paid in a timely manner without delays.
- Independent, nonnetwork-affiliated and home-based providers are included in the expansion of 3-K and the rollout of 2-K.
- Our youngest learners are provided with the appropriate special education services.

Finally, I want to touch on two of our union's programs that greatly affect students and families. The first is our BRAVE hotline, an immediate, compassionate resource for any child experiencing bullying. The hotline is staffed by licensed counselors and trained professionals who provide confidential support, guidance and crisis intervention to students and families in need. The hotline is available from 2–9:30 p.m. on weekdays by phone, chat or text. If we can save just one child from the anguish of bullying, protect one family from the heartbreak of a preventable tragedy and shield one school community from the ripple effects of these incidents, then we as a community will have done our jobs.

The second program is Dial-A-Teacher. The UFT's Dial-A-Teacher homework hotline (212-777-3380) answered tens of thousands of calls last school year from students and parents looking for homework help. It operates Mondays through Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m. and offers homework help in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. With your continued support, we can expand our outreach and keep serving students and families.

All of these programs change lives, and we are grateful for your continuous investment in and support of them.

UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES
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Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Council Member Linda Lee, Chair

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by Nora Moran, Director of Policy and Advocacy
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Thank you Chair Lee and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify. United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) is a policy and social change organization with a mission to promote and strengthen settlement houses' neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. Settlement houses provide multi-generational services designed to support individuals, families, and communities. Settlement house programs build bonds within and between communities and create opportunities for advocacy and social change. UNH was founded in 1919 by settlement house leaders who recognized the strength in their collective voices to drive important social reforms. With this goal, UNH was tasked to coordinate the efforts of settlement houses; document their shared learning and experiences; and increase the influence and impact of settlement houses for the greater good of New York communities. UNH has successfully advocated for fair and affordable housing, child labor laws, inclusive policies and services for immigrants, adult literacy education, public recreation space, quality child-care and after-school programs, job training, programs serving older adults, access to the arts and to healthy food, and more.

This testimony provides an update on numerous programs and budgetary needs that we highlighted in our Preliminary Budget testimonies, including for the committees on Aging, Children & Youth, Contracts, Education, General Welfare, Immigration, and Mental Health. Several of our priorities were addressed in the Executive Budget, but many needs remain, including essential programs that rely on Council funding year over year.

NYCBenefits

Since 2023, the NYCBenefits initiative has helped New Yorkers secure and maintain public benefits to meet their food, housing, healthcare, and other basic needs. This high-impact program is a partnership between the Department of Social Services (DSS), 35 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and three Technical Assistance (TA) providers. Settlement houses in UNH's network operate 40% of the NYC Benefits contracts (15 programs).

NYCBenefits' work is absolutely critical now in the face of an increasing affordability crisis in New York City and an attack on the social safety net at the federal level, but the program is in jeopardy: **NYCBenefits was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget.** If NYCBenefits loses

funding, tens of thousands of New Yorkers will lose targeted benefits assistance and over 400 nonprofit staff will be impacted. Furthermore, it is vital that funding be secured so as not to disrupt operations and service delivery within DSS.

The City must:

- **Include $9.75 million for NYCBenefits funding in the June FY27 Adopted Budget.**
- **Baseline $9.75 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28-FY32 to ensure program continuity.**
- **Include $5 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28-FY32 to allow for its expansion to serve additional youth and families.**

The impact of this work speaks volumes: In the first 9 months of FY26, NYCBenefits social service providers served 28,000 low-income New Yorkers, already on track to outpace the 34,000 New Yorkers assisted in FY25.

Thus far in FY26, clients that applied for or recertified for SNAP with NYCB CBOs have received over $20 million in annual benefits. In addition to feeding families, this money goes right back into NYC's economy.

CBO staff help clients citywide enroll in or renew essential benefits that range from SNAP, Medicaid, and Cash Assistance to FHEPS, One-Shot Deals, and Fair Fares. Staff serve clients from all 200+ NYC zip codes and collectively provide services in 54 languages. This local, linguistically appropriate, one-to-one support leads to more successfully completed applications, upholds client dignity, and makes benefits more accessible in diverse communities. This support means cash in the pockets of everyday New Yorkers—helping them to live in an increasingly unaffordable city and afford the everyday basics of food, rent, health insurance, childcare, and more.

Core aspects of this program include training, case consultation, and case resolution support provided by the Technical Assistance (TA) Providers. The TAs, who have decades of expertise in public benefits and housing programs, provide a full training series to the 35 CBOs. This series, covering the full array of public benefits and housing programs available to New Yorkers, is the most comprehensive of its kind offered to CBOs in NYC. TAs also provide consistent support to frontline CBO staff through the complete benefits application process and correspond with DSS on case resolution needs.

DSS's integrated role in the program is key to its success. Their leadership and case support across the full spectrum of HRA-administered benefits and services has led to thousands of positive outcomes. Additionally, together, DSS and TAs help CBO staff navigate the real-world impacts of federal policy changes. This includes expanded SNAP ABAWD rules as well as upcoming Medicaid work rules and more frequent recertifications. These changes will affect food security and healthcare for thousands of New Yorkers—so the NYCBenefits CBOs have been well-prepared and are poised to help clients maintain their urgently-needed benefits and prevent program drop-offs that will be costly for NYC.

A deeply integrated nonprofit partnership with DSS has never existed on this scale before, and its impact is unprecedented. This program operates on an annual budget of $9.75 million—but the value of the benefits clients receive at the federal and state levels alone is exponentially greater, leading to improved economic security across New York City. The program's efficacy is

so well proven that ACS is collaborating with DSS to expand NYCBenefits' reach to ACS-involved youth and families to promote long-term stability for an additional $5 million annually. Furthermore, DSS has already begun planning for a new procurement, including ways to strengthen and expand the program. That important progress will be lost if NYCBenefits does not have baselined funding.

If NYCBenefits is not included in the budget and baselined, a critical lifeline will be cut for tens of thousands of New Yorkers who are living in shelters, facing eviction, or do not have enough food, clothing, or other necessities. **We urge the City to include funding for NYCBenefits in the FY27 Adopted Budget and to baseline future funding for ongoing NYCBenefits work so that providers can continue working towards our shared vision of a just and equitable city.**

New SNAP Work Requirements and Community Service: HRA Community Service Partnership and Civic Impact Fund

The federal administration has implemented new barriers to accessing SNAP that requires Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) recipients to meet specific work requirements, which is expected to impact hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers; similar rule changes will be coming soon for Medicaid recipients. These work requirements can also be met through community service or volunteer hours. Settlement houses are eager to assist New Yorkers who are unable to access SNAP benefits that they could previously access, and many have volunteer opportunities available, thus offering a win-win solution that also benefits the community. In fact, last year 13,535 people volunteered with UNH member settlement houses. Still, it takes staff time and money to manage volunteers, and the City should provide financial support and technical assistance to organizations who are providing these volunteer opportunities.

Some of this work is already happening, and we encourage the City to expand on these efforts:

HRA Community Service Partnership

The NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) has created an opportunity for CBOs to partner with the agency to offer community service and volunteer engagement opportunities to support cash assistance and SNAP recipients' compliance with work requirements, including ABAWDs. CBOs can fill out a form on HRA's website, choosing between two pathways: the Community Service Provider (CSP) track for high-touch organizations that can support structured, compliance-driven service activities, or the Self-Enrolled Voluntary Service Provider (SEVSP) track for light-touch programs offering voluntary, small-scale opportunities.

Several of UNH's members filled out this interest form and have been working with HRA to begin the partnership. Most are taking part in the SEVSP track for small-scale opportunities. Under this program, they complete a memorandum of understanding with a larger work referral organization. The larger organization refers clients to volunteer opportunities in their local community including the CBO. The CBOs work on a clearance process and paperwork for the volunteer, receiving some technical assistance and support from the larger organization.

While the program is still under development, our settlement house members participating in the program suggest it is working well so far, and that there is good communication with the larger organization. Still, they are not receiving any financial support to help manage the volunteers,

which is essential to ensure volunteers are properly placed, trained, managed, and supported. At one settlement house, there is just one volunteer coordinator who manages volunteers at multiple sites across an agency that serves 50,000 individuals each year. Another settlement house reports having three volunteer coordinators on staff, and that they would feel comfortable taking on up to ten new volunteers before needing to hire another coordinator.

As HRA rolls out this program, we urge the City to invest in the programs signing up to do this work so it can meaningfully carry out the City's goals, and we can begin to create systems to address federal work requirements that show no signs of ending in the near future.

Civic Impact Fund

The Civic Impact Fund (CIF), under NYC Service, provides up to $10,000 for nonprofit and community-based organizations in TRIE-designated high-need neighborhoods to expand volunteer-driven services addressing food access, safety, and mental health. Organizations use this funding for staff time, supplies, volunteer stipends, and training needs. In 2024, CIF recipients engaged 2,792 volunteers, served 122,584 residents, and distributed 444,385 pounds of food. While these grants are often short-term and meant to support specific time-bound issues, it represents an important tool for the City to support and encourage community service. In addition, NYC Service offers wide-scale trainings and technical assistance for CBOs across the City who want to support and scale-up their volunteer work.

Investing in the CIF program and NYC Service presents an opportunity for SNAP recipients who are ABAWD to continue receiving SNAP benefits by meeting their work requirements through volunteering at organizations across the City. **In the FY27 Budget, the City should invest $13 million in NYC Service and its Civic Impact Fund, which funds nonprofits to expand their volunteer infrastructure, which in turn will help those newly subject to federal SNAP work or volunteer requirements.** This investment would expand the CIF program to include more community-based organizations and larger grant sizes, allowing CBOs and settlement houses to expand or fund their volunteer programs. For example, between 50 to 100 CBOs could receive grants, worth about $50,000 for small or mid-sized organizations, up to $250,000 for larger CBOs, and about $500,000 of the $13 million fund could be reserved for administrative support for NYC Service.

Community Food Connection (CFC)

As we testified during the Preliminary Budget hearings, **we continue to urge the City to increase its investment in the Community Food Connection (CFC) program to $100 million total,** building on the Mayor's $54 million investment announced earlier this year. This program, which supports emergency food providers across the City, is essential in the face of stunningly high rates of food insecurity. It is even more urgent given new data on the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who began losing their access to SNAP benefits this Spring due to the federal spending bill H.R.1 – including over 40,000 people who are newly subject to work requirements and lost their benefits in June, and 15,000 refugees and asylees who were enrolled in SNAP and lost their eligibility starting in April (per testimony from HRA Administrator Scott French in June). Without access to food benefits, more New Yorkers will be forced to turn to pantries, making this funding a true emergency need to ensure New Yorkers do not go hungry.

Addressing SNAP Skimming

SNAP skimming continues to plague New Yorkers, with numerous providers in our network indicating a significant increase in cases over the last few months. Fortunately, the Enacted State Budget included funding to transition to chip-enabled EBT card technology, which will effectively eliminate SNAP skimming fraud cases. The allocation is approximately $25 million statewide, some of which is covered by a federal administrative cost share.

Unfortunately, the State did not provide funds to create a skimming victims compensation fund to support New Yorkers who have had their benefits stolen. HRA Administrator Scott French testified this month that roll out of the chip cards will begin in January 2027. This leaves a significant gap in time when SNAP recipients will still be having their benefits stolen with no financial recourse.

We urge HRA to work with the State to implement the new chip cards swiftly, and in the meantime continue to train community members and CBOs on how to freeze their cards when they are not in use – an interim and insufficient solution that is especially challenging for older adults who are not comfortable with smartphone technology.

Early Childhood Education and 2-Care

Early childhood education is finally getting the attention it deserves, and UNH applauds the Mamdani Administration and the New York City Council for their commitment to creating a universal, high-quality early childhood education system. Mayor Mamdani has made significant strides in recent months by prioritizing and investing in early childhood education. We are particularly eager for the implementation of free child care options for two year olds, which is based on our 2-Care proposal that we developed alongside New Yorkers United for Child Care.

Child Care Outreach Funding

The FY26 Adopted Budget included one-time funding for early childhood education outreach to help families better understand and access available programs. This funding has helped families understand their options, navigate complex systems, and access care equitably, while also supporting stable and predictable enrollment for providers. It is especially important that outreach include robust multilingual services and culturally responsive strategies to reach immigrant families and families with limited English proficiency who may face additional barriers navigating enrollment and eligibility systems. Several of our members provide this type of outreach and enrollment support and have seen strong results. **We are pleased to see that the Executive Budget recognized the importance of these funds and baselined $5 million in child care outreach funds.**

Promise NYC

Despite there being many types of child care programming in New York City, immigrant children do not always qualify for extended day/year child care programming because of their status. Promise NYC was created to fill in this gap, and to ensure that children who were not eligible for child care programming via ACS's traditional assistance program could still receive care. **We are grateful that the Executive Budget for the first time baselined Promise NYC with $25 million in recurring funds.**

Alternative Summer Program Model for Middle School Youth

The City must work with local stakeholders to pilot summer program models other than Summer Rising. The Summer Rising model made sense when it was first created in Summer 2021, when students had been learning remotely for long periods of time during the COVID-19 pandemic and there were real concerns about learning loss and student readiness to return to school buildings long-term. However, we are now in a different time, and we have an opportunity to rethink and reshape summer programming to meet students' current needs.

In response to questions from settlement houses and their communities about the efficacy of this model, 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, we 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:

1. 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.
2. 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."
3. 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.
4. 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.

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.

There exist a number of respected summer programming models that be used as a basis for alternative models, including:

- COMPASS Summer: DYCD funds community-based and Cornerstone programs to operate non-Summer Rising programming during summer months. This model reflects school-year programming and includes field trips, physical activity, leadership development, and integrated academics.
- Freedom Schools: This research-based and culturally sensitive program focuses on academics, civic engagement, family engagement, and social emotional learning. The training and model have been developed by the Children's Defense Fund.
- In addition, settlement houses operate a number of alternative summer models, including:
    - Life Lines Arts Camp: This program run by the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park engages youth in consistent group and community-building activities that promote social, physical, and artistic development. Campers attend a 5-day/week, full-day program and participate in enriching activities, including dance, theater, music, visual arts, and sports. Two full days per week are spent off-site on day trips.
    - Learning Campus Model: Henry Street Settlement operates this program as an extension of their school-year afterschool program, bringing together young people from two local community centers to participate in a club model. All students participate in academic sessions, but are given voice and choice to select enrichment activities, resulting in higher retention rates.

Youth and families should have a voice in deciding what kind of programming is right for them. **The City must commit to funding alternative summer programming models to meet the diverse needs of NYC's youth and families.**

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 FY27 funding process to help providers understand earlier how much funding they should expect per site, and how to access this funding. Lack of clarity from NYCPS and lack of communication from school leadership has led to confusion and delays in payments to CBO partners. Increased transparency and accountability for the roles of all stakeholders will improve the planning and implementation of SSCs.

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. In the current school year, Learning to Work programs are available citywide in 46 Transfer Schools and 20 YABCs. Settlement houses operate 27 of these contracts. **We are grateful that the Mayor included $31 million in baselined funds for LTW in the Executive Budget.**

NYCPS released a Request for Proposals (RFP) in December 2025 (R1231) that laid out a higher total budget of $57.4 million. While the FY27 Executive Budget restored and baselined $31 million to ensure programming can continue after June 2026, **the City must fund the $14.4 million differential for FY28 to fully enact the future RFP, set to commence in July 2027.**

Beyond concerns about whether funding is secured for the open RFP, providers have also expressed concerns about how NYCPS has proposed to change the program model. For three years, CBO providers met with the NYCPS' Office of Student Pathways (OSP) to inform the redesign of the program, the results of these conversations and program evaluations were outlined in Eskolta School Research and Design's reports. Additionally, UNH worked with LTW providers ahead of the RFP to develop a set of recommendations that were shared with NYCPS. Surprisingly, the new RFP did not incorporate the major recommendations from either Eskolta's report or the providers' recommendations. Instead, the RFP drastically changes the model, which threatens its proven success in reaching the hardest-to-serve young adults, supporting them in navigating life's challenges, graduating, and developing meaningful postsecondary plans.

Concerns with the current RFP are:

- The increased caseload of 1 Advocate Counselor to 75 students (current ratio averages 1:50) is not feasible with this population of students.
- Advocate counselor responsibilities have changed from emotional/mental health supports to post-secondary and vocational learning. In the currently successful model, LTW programs support students at high risk of dropping out of high school by leveraging the strong relationships they build with CBO Advocate Counselors to provide resources and opportunities to guide them through graduation.
- The RFP emphasizes post-secondary planning and work-based learning experiences with no mention of the growing mental health needs of the target population. Current LTW providers have cited this as a growing need, sharing the importance of addressing students' basic needs as part of a strategy to increase their chances of graduating high school.

- Providing internships and other work-based learning opportunities is within the purview of the CBOs in this RFP, but the funding to pay student stipends will be funneled through a DOE centralized system that will place added burdens/steps into the equation. This will also impact LTW providers' ability to support undocumented students at transfer schools and YABCs.

Adult Literacy Services and Council Funding

UNH advocates for an adult literacy system that provides quality, comprehensive, and accessible educational services for New Yorkers to improve their literacy skills, learn English, obtain a High School Equivalency diploma, and enter training and post-secondary education.

In New York City, an estimated 2 million adults have limited English-language proficiency or lack a high school diploma. No-cost community-based adult literacy programs such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), adult basic education (ABE), and high school equivalency (HSE) preparation programs enable New Yorkers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to secure higher-paying jobs that can sustain their families, support their children's education, and advocate for themselves and their families. Adult literacy programs run by settlement houses and other community-based organizations reach over 9,000 people each year and often serve as entry points for adult learners who are subsequently connected to workforce training support and other wraparound services that strengthen their families' economic and social well-being.

In 2024, the Department of Youth and Community Development's Adult Literacy RFP introduced new requirements tying program eligibility to specific Neighborhood Tabulation Areas (NTAs), which significantly limited which organizations could apply for funding. As a result, many long-standing providers were excluded from securing multi-year contracts and lost the funding needed to sustain their adult literacy programs, despite a large student base and successful program outcomes.

To address the gaps created by the 2024 DYCD RFP, the City Council made a historic investment of $16.5 million in adult literacy funding in FY25 and FY26. This discretionary funding is sustaining more than 60 programs. For four UNH settlement house adult literacy program providers (CAMBA, Center for Family Life, Queens Community House and Sunnyside Community Services), City Council discretionary funding is the sole funding source sustaining these programs, and they have served or expect to serve more than 3,100 students collectively. Without renewed funding, organizations excluded from the current DYCD literacy portfolio will not be able to offer adult literacy classes after June 30th of this year.

It is necessary for adult learners to have stable programs and support, as continued City Council funding supports staffing and essential program infrastructure and thousands of adult learners depend on these programs for essential skills. Ideally, these programs would be supported by a robust, baselined program managed by DYCD that offered students and providers stability with year-over-year funding. However, until DYCD revisits its unnecessarily restrictive stance on geographic priority for programming, **it is crucial that the City Council increases its investment to $18 million to make sure that more adult learners can have access to quality classes**.

Immigration Legal Services

The City Council must **renew its investment in immigration legal services** so that immigrants navigating complex legal systems can access the support they need. Without free or low-cost legal assistance, many immigrants, especially low-income families, face significant barriers that can lead to family separation, economic hardship, and reluctance to engage with essential services. By sustaining these investments, the City Council helps ensure that community-based organizations can continue to show up for their communities and that all New Yorkers have a fair opportunity to live, work, and contribute to the communities they call home.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities: NORC in Every Neighborhood and Council Initiative Funding

NORC in Every Neighborhood

Earlier this year, UNH published *A NORC in Every Neighborhood: Expanding Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities to Meet the Needs of Older New Yorkers*, which analyzes the need to expand NORC programs across New York City as the City's older adult population continues to grow. Our brief examines the benefits of NORC programs and highlights neighborhoods with a high concentration of older adults without NORC programs. For example, the Queens Village, Bellerose, and Rosedale neighborhoods in Queens have a combined population of 58,238 residents aged 60 and older, about 28 percent of all residents, but currently have no NORC program. In every neighborhood of New York City, from Bushwick to Flushing, there are thousands of older adult residents who would benefit from a contracted NORC program in every neighborhood.

An expansion of NORCs will ensure older adults have their needs met in the comfort of their own neighborhoods and communities for as long as possible. The growth in the older adult population, especially in the share of those living alone, should compel the City to invest in and expand services that not only help reduce the risk of social isolation, but also enable older adults to remain safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

With an upcoming NORC procurement planned in the coming months by NYC Aging, and a brand new State investment in NORCs, the time is now to invest in this essential program for New York City's aging population. **UNH recommends that New York City include a new investment of $10 million in the FY27 budget to ensure that there is a NORC in every neighborhood.** Ideally this would be realized through a contracted procurement process from NYC Aging that prioritizes sitting a NORC program in each of the 31 neighborhoods that currently lacks one. This procurement could happen concurrently with a planned NORC Request for Proposals (RFP) for the entire system, which we believe is planned for later this year, or could be a standalone RFP for new programs only. Each program would cost approximately $322,000, more than the current contract average of $251,000, to account for higher staff salaries and program costs. A $10 million investment to ensure that there is a contracted NORC program in every neighborhood in New York City would benefit thousands of older adult residents and contribute to a more age-friendly, affordable and inclusive city.

NORC Council Initiative

The City Council NORC initiative provides essential supplemental funding for programs, and also independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. Since the Council began providing these funds in 2019, the standard hourly rate to hire nurses has increased from $85 to approximately $100 per hour. This rising cost must be reflected in future allocations to ensure programs can continue delivering essential care.

Council initiative funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs, and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council's enthusiasm for the NORC program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. **In FY 2027, the City must baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council's NORC Initiative of approximately $1 million, and continue to fund the Council's NORC Initiative funding.**

Congregate Meals for Older Adults

Rising inflation rates have affected senior meals programs, especially food costs for congregate meals. There has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget at older adult centers (OACs) in years, since at least the last RFP in 2021 which predated a period of abnormally high inflation. Food costs have reached record highs, placing an immense strain on an already chronically underfunded meal program. Rising food costs have made it increasingly difficult for providers to provide culturally-competent and nutritious meals.

UNH documented the dramatic increase in meal costs in our 2025 report, *Let's Eat: The Need to Invest in Congregate Meals for Older New Yorkers*, which highlighted Census data on the growing financial hardship of older New Yorkers and the impact of inflation on their mental and economic well-being. As one example noted in the report, inflation has gone up by 22% for food since older adult center contracts began in 2021, though some providers reported wholesale food price increases that have gone up as much as 76%. The costs faced by providers have significantly outpaced general inflation rates. Still, the City has not provided any new funding for food in that time period. Older adult centers are doing the best they can with extremely limited funds to ensure seniors receive the meals they need.

At the same time, federal cuts to SNAP and ABAWD regulations are driving more older New Yorkers to older adult centers to utilize their meal programming. This places an even greater strain on meal programs at Older Adult Centers across the City, most of which are already stretched thin and lack the resources to accommodate the growing number of participants. The time is now to plan for expanded units at OACs and ensure additional funding to support expected growth in food needs, including ensuring that culturally competent, nutritious meals remain consistently available.

The City must ensure inflation costs are included annually in future budgets for congregate meals at OACs. The City must **increase food budgets at older adult centers with a $60 million**

investment in FY27 to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services. This $60 million figure is consistent with an analysis of the on-the-ground needs from UNH and our advocacy partners, taking into account inflation rates and the true cost of food for OACs, which has risen much faster than inflation rates. **We also urge contract flexibility and additional funding to meet the expected growing demand for congregate meals in light of federal SNAP cuts and ABAWD requirements for SNAP.** Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced.

Home Delivered Meals

Nonprofit home delivered meals (HDM) providers deliver a daily nutritious meal to homebound older adults who are unable to prepare their own food, while also providing case management and regular in-person wellness checks for those at risk of social isolation. Eight UNH members currently provide home delivered meals in their communities, either as lead contractors or subcontractors. We deeply appreciate the Council's support over the last few years in securing funding for a higher reimbursement rate for the HDM program. Since 2021, the per-meal reimbursement rate has increased from $9.58 to $14.78 per meal. This is a significant and essential improvement.

Older adult hunger is at a crisis level. For many homebound older adults, the HDM program is the only food they are receiving for all of their nutritional needs, and they will stretch the meal to last all day. We need to look toward expanding this system and providing more meals to those who need them. We call for a **$30 million investment to operationalize Council Member Lee's Intro 280, which requires the City to pay for meals 7 days a week.** Currently, weekend and holiday home-delivered meals are provided through a public-private partnership with Citymeals on Wheels. Intro 280 shifts the responsibility from Citymeals on Wheels to regular NYC Aging home delivered meal contracts, allowing Citymeals to provide additional meals per day. Expanding home delivered meals is critical to addressing food insecurity among older adults and ensuring homebound seniors receive nutritious meals.

Capital Improvements for Older Adult Centers

Older adults deserve dignified spaces to provide them with healthy meals, fun activities, classes, fitness programs and social services. However, NYC Aging-funded programs often face major difficulties with aging buildings and equipment upkeep. Systemwide needs include infrastructure upgrades, HVAC repairs, accessibility upgrades, technology systems, kitchen equipment, bathroom repairs, and more. Providers frequently express problems with leaks and flooding after storms, and note that these are becoming more frequent as climate change accelerates the rate and intensity of weather-related disasters.

Capital funds play an important role in high-quality service provision by keeping buildings and equipment in a state of good repair. Unfortunately, aging services programs have a number of long-standing capital needs that continue to grow. These issues vary by provider and include building repairs, renovations, kitchen equipment, HVAC units, vehicle repairs and replacements, and more. Without sufficient capital funding streams available, these repair needs are exacerbated, and can result in interrupting service delivery when buildings or equipment become unsafe. For example, HVAC units may break down, meaning a cooling center may not

be able to open and keep older adults safe in a heat wave. Tumultuous weather may cause a roof to leak, leaving spaces inoperable until repairs can be made.

We were incredibly grateful that in the FY26 Budget, the Council allocated $5 million in expense funding to fund repairs to older adult center infrastructure across the city. Several UNH members receive this funding and report positive results with their ongoing repair work. One of our members just began upgrading their OAC office and computer room. **We urge the Council to expand the emergency infrastructure fund from $5 million to $10 million to keep centers accessible and ensure critical infrastructure needs are met.**

Council Mental Health Initiatives

In FY 2027, UNH recommends the City Council restore funding to all 15 of the previously-funded DOHMH Mental Health Council Initiatives with some targeted increases, for a total value of $47.2 million. Nineteen UNH members provide services through City Council Mental Health initiatives.

We greatly appreciate the Council's long-standing support for these programs that bring mental health services to vulnerable populations in their own communities. Year after year, these initiatives provide crucial funding to nonprofit providers to offer mental health services in non-clinical community settings, including community centers, senior centers, and early childhood programs. Despite the fact that the funding must be restored each year by the Council instead of being on more stable multi-year contracts, the funding is flexible and allows providers to best meet their hyper-local needs through creative solutions to distinct mental health challenges.

Further, while many mental health programs were baselined by the City as part of the 2015 ThriveNYC initiative, these Council initiatives continue to be important because several of the Thrive programs changed scopes of services and were structured in a way that prevented existing providers from applying. For example, many of UNH's settlement house members were excluded from applying to serve as host sites for NYC Aging's Geriatric Mental Health Program due to rigid selection methodology.

Funding levels for these initiatives have fluctuated over the last several years. In addition, resources have not kept pace with inflation or community need, putting providers under significant financial strain.

This year, to ensure these vital initiatives can keep up with rising costs and provide high quality services, we urge the Council to provide at least a 3% increase to match the citywide human services COLA initiative, thus allowing providers to address the increasing costs to provide these services to their communities. In addition, we recommend targeted increases for three initiatives: Court-Involved Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Clubhouses, and Peer Specialist Supports. **It is crucial that the Council at a minimum restore and invest all of this funding in the FY 2027 budget ($47.27 million total).**

Specific funding levels in FY25 that must be maintained in FY26 include:

Autism Awareness	$3,359,704
Children Under Five	$1,602,917
Court-Involved Youth Mental Health	$6,850,000
Developmental, Psychological, & Behavioral Health	$2,323,157
Emergency Medical Services Mental Health and Wellness	$1,030,000
LGBTQIA Youth All-Borough Mental Health	$1,236,000
Mental Health Clubhouses	$3,790,000
Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations	$3,809,990
Mental Health Workforce Retention & Development	$309,000
NYC 988 Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Hotline	$5,150,000
Older Adults Mental Health	$3,450,005
Opioid Prevention & Treatment	$3,167,250
Peer Specialist Supports	$6,000,000
Trauma Recovery Centers	$4,944,000
Youth Peer Support	$257,500

Prevention Services

We are deeply concerned with the proposed cuts to funding for Prevention Services in the Executive Budget, and to ask for immediate restoration of these cuts.

For decades, New York City has invested in supporting families with prevention services. This has resulted in an impressive service network, and New York City has been a national leader in supporting families and keeping families safely together. Prioritizing prevention services and supporting families has successfully reduced the number of children in NYC foster care from over 13,000 a decade ago to a historic low of 6,300 today. These programs provide critical support and guidance for New York City families, and create pathways to food, clothing, housing, education, and access to medical and mental health services. Families receive the necessary oversight and support for children to remain safely at home as prevention programs' staff work collectively with families to address challenges that brought them to the attention of the child welfare system. This has also been an important City and State partnership, as now for decades, New York State has contributed significant reimbursement back to counties (now at 62%) for investments made in prevention services.

Due to cuts included in the Executive Budget, these same prevention services are now at risk. Prevention services serve as a safety net for children and families and represent significant cost savings for the city. These proposed cuts to prevention represent a departure from the City's long-standing direction to invest in family support.

The Administration must immediately restore the proposed $2.7 million in cuts to prevention services. If these cuts are implemented, four agencies (Good Shepherd Services, Forestdale, CAMBA, and Coalition for Hispanic Family Services), 49 staff, and 360 families in Brooklyn and Queens will be directly affected. Furthermore, because every day is critical in a child's life, we urge that these restorations be made immediately and that the four impacted provider agencies be promptly informed that their contracts will be reinstated. This decision should not be delayed until June 30. Stability and predictability for families are paramount in prevention services and we must eliminate the uncertainty families are now feeling today as to how they will be supported after June 30. The staff deserve to know that their jobs are secure. As of this writing, the provider agencies have not received written notification from ACS regarding the prevention cuts or a timeline for closing programs. To prepare and manage the challenge of closing programs safely and deliberately, providers have already withdrawn offers to candidates currently in the hiring process and are moving toward staff layoffs. Moreover, agencies are struggling to halt program expansions, pause existing restoration projects, and manage long-term leasing contracts. Unfortunately, due to the significant fiscal impact across agency programs not slated for cuts, some providers are considering returning other human services contracts to the city. Should agencies be forced to make such decisions, the resulting ripple effect on children, families, and communities will be devastating, and the cost to the City cannot be overstated.

Additionally, the fiscal impact on the city exceeds the $2.7 million in proposed cuts to the city tax levy dollars. Prevention services funds are reimbursed by the State at a rate of 62% to all counties. This means the City's proposed cut of $2.7 million in city tax levy will result in $4.3 million in state funds being left unclaimed. Consequently, the total loss to prevention services will amount to $7 million. The city should maximize every dollar available to invest in keeping families together.

Families currently receiving these prevention services are being informed that their relationships with staff and providers will soon change. Any change carries the risk that families may discontinue the prevention program if their case is transferred to a different provider agency, notwithstanding the potential safety risks to children who are no longer enrolled in services.

Given the unique circumstances surrounding the approaching end of the budget process, the provider agencies' fiscal years, and the specific needs of the families served by prevention services programs, it is important to note that there is a precedent for reversing preliminary decisions regarding targeted cuts through last-minute executive or legislative restorations. This practice has been in place for over a decade. We strongly urge the City to continue investing in keeping families together by restoring the cuts to prevention services.

Nonprofit Contracting

As we've testified before, there are numerous problems plaguing the nonprofit contracting system, including late payments and chronically low pay for staff. There are a number of policy proposals designed to strengthen the nonprofit contracting system and alleviate some of these problems. We support various efforts to address these urgent issues, including the following proposals:

Intro 452 (Stevens) - Establishing wage requirements for city-contracted human services workers
UNH supports Intro 452 (sponsored by Council Member Stevens) to establish wage requirements for City-contracted human service workers, which would require City agencies to include sufficient funding to cover those wages in contracts, and track implementation of those wages by human service contractors.

While developing a system of human services worker titles and corresponding civil service titles will be arduous and will require careful analysis, we cannot continue to ignore the need. For years, the government at every level has asked nonprofit partners to "do more with less." This dynamic has pushed our sector to a real breaking point, and our workforce has suffered the consequences. It's time for us to look beyond stopgap measures and towards efforts that would have a long-lasting impact on the human service sector.

One potential problem to note is that the bill creates potential staffing complications for settlement houses and other community-based organizations that blend funds from city, state, federal, and private sources. Unless other funding sources agree to increase budgets for New York City contractors to match New York City's funding-levels, providers with blended-budgets will struggle with internal wage differentials for similar positions (i.e. a human service worker on a state contract with similar responsibilities to one on a city contract may be paid less than prevailing wage unless the state agrees to adjust contract budgets to match the city's prevailing wage schedule). The City should encourage New York State to engage in a similar process for human service contracts

UNH urges the Council to pass this legislation and ensure that sufficient funding is included to limit major disruptions to programs.

Intro 514-2024 - Interest to be paid on late contract payments to non-profit contractors
This bill, which was introduced in 2023 but not yet reintroduced in this session, would require interest to be paid on late payments under City contracts with nonprofit organizations. Due to late payments, many providers have been forced to take out loans and lines of credit, which incur interest, all because of the City's delayed payments. In other words, nonprofits are effectively floating the City money. Intro 982 sends a clear message to the Administration to address the backlog and cover any costs incurred in the future. Short of guaranteeing that the City would register contracts and make payments on time every time, this bill is the next best thing, because it ensures that the consequences of late payments are not borne by nonprofits when delays are often out of their control. UNH strongly supports this bill and appreciates the sponsors for their support.

Intro 482-2024: Public procurement database
UNH supports transparency initiatives, and therefore supports the formerly introduced Intro 482-2024, which would establish a searchable, online database containing information from all stages of the contracting process for every mayoral agency procurement that exceeds the small purchase limits. Should the public procurement database become law, UNH urges City agencies to leverage existing proposals and reporting from contractors to update and maintain the database, given that providers already report on the data called out in the bill. City agencies should not pass the reporting burden on to contractors by requiring additional paperwork above and beyond what is already required of them as current reporting is more than sufficient to comply with the law.

Ensure Agencies follow the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR)

Several City agencies require providers to default to a 10% *de minimis* indirect rate in their program budgets, saying that rates will be adjusted later rather than including their higher federally-approved or CPA-certified indirect rate. This has led to confusion and mistrust as agencies do not want to undercount their costs in their budgets, with no guarantee that those rates will be adjusted to their actual ICR. This provides yet another procedural delay in the payment process. Agencies should never require contracts to use the 10% *de minimis* rate if they have a higher accepted ICR.

Testimony of United Way of New York City
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Public Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance,

United Way of New York City (UWNYC) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget.

For over 85 years, UWNYC has coordinated resources and advocacy to ensure low-income New Yorkers can access essential services and support.

Through a network of more than 600 community-based partners, UWNYC directly funds and strengthens over 400 food pantries, soup kitchens, mobile meal providers, and SNAP enrollment specialists across the five boroughs each year.

UWNYC also plays a critical role in standing up programs that foster safe communities throughout the city we call home, including through partnerships with schools and mental health providers to serve our youth.

Our testimony here uplifts three of UWNYC's priorities for the FY27 budget: the Community Food Connection program, which anchors the city's emergency food network; Atlas, UWNYC's citywide violence-prevention initiative; and the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, a culturally responsive curriculum for New York City Public Schools. Each is a community-based investment that the budget should protect and bolster.

UWNYC urges the Council and the Administration to baseline $100 million for the Community Food Connection (CFC) program in the FY27 Adopted Budget. The Mayor's Executive Budget takes an important step forward, and we ask the Council and the Administration to build on it and close the remaining gap, so the network of 700+ emergency food providers can meet rising demand.

We also recommend sustained funding for Atlas in FY27, to remain consistent with existing Atlas contracts.

UWNYC also urges the Council to fund the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative at $6,507,000 in FY27, the third year of a citywide effort to build a culturally responsive curriculum for New York City Public Schools.

The Executive Budget Moves CFC in the Right Direction

UWNYC commends Mayor Mamdani for significantly increasing baseline CFC funding in the FY27 Preliminary and Executive Budgets. This is a meaningful shift away from the year-to-year emergency restorations that have defined CFC's recent history, and toward the consistent, predictable funding the network requires.

UWNYC doesn't take this increased investment lightly. For the past two budget cycles, CFC was on the chopping block. The Mayor's decision to baseline this funding signals that this Administration understands CFC as core infrastructure, not a discretionary line.

The remaining gap is the difference between meaningful and sufficient. UWNYC is asking the Mayoral administration and the NYC Council to work together to close it and bring CFC to a $100 million baseline.

CFC Is the Backbone of NYC's Emergency Food Network

CFC, administered by the Department of Social Services/HRA, is New York City's primary baseline funding stream for direct community food assistance. The program's FY25 Impact Report, released earlier this year, highlights:

- 703 providers supported across the five boroughs.
- 47.1 million pounds of food distributed.
- 37.2 million pantry visits recorded in FY25, a 5.4% increase over FY24.
- 19% of the citywide Supply Gap closed, and 24% closed in TRIE neighborhoods identified by the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity.

Most importantly, CFC provides predictable, multi-use grants that let local organizations plan ahead, staff adequately, and invest in the refrigeration, equipment, and capacity they need to operate.

Demand Is Rising, While Federal Support Collapses

Pantry visits across NYC remain elevated, and the families waiting in line are being squeezed by rent and food prices. UWNYC's ALICE metric shows that half of New York City's households, roughly 1.3 million families, lack the income to consistently meet their basic needs. More than 1 in 7 NYC residents are food insecure.

At the same time, the federal infrastructure that has historically bolstered this system is fragmenting:

- H.R. 1, signed into law on July 4, 2025, is the largest cut to federal food assistance in U.S. history. It is projected to remove more than 300,000 NYC households from SNAP through harsher work requirements, restricted utility allowances, and a Thrifty Food Plan freeze.
- The same law puts 1.5 million New Yorkers' Medicaid coverage at risk, a parallel hit that compounds household financial pressure and drives more families toward emergency food.
- Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) reimbursements were previously suspended. Of note, payments restarted April 30, 2026 following a prolonged disruption.
- USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) funding for New York is set to expire.

- Beginning in FY29, H.R. 1 shifts a share of SNAP benefit costs onto states based on payment error rates, creating sustained downstream pressure on the state and city budgets that fund emergency food.

While food insecurity is rising, federal support for these programs is falling. Providers across the UWNYC network are responding the only way they can: rationing food, limiting hours, deferring equipment repairs. Smaller pantries, often the ones closest to the highest-need neighborhoods, are the most exposed.

Why it is Crucial to Provide Baselined Funding for CFC at $100 Million

Baselining matters as much as the number. Year-to-year uncertainty is itself a cost, as pantries cannot hire, sign leases, or plan capital investments against funding that might or might not return. Baselined funding lets the network operate effectively.

Reaching a $100 million baseline does three things:

- Sustains direct service at the moment demand is highest. It keeps 700+ pantries and soup kitchens operational as H.R. 1's SNAP cuts land on top of an already-stretched network.
- Funds capacity. Multi-use grants let providers invest in the refrigeration, staffing, and infrastructure that determine whether food actually reaches families.
- Prioritizes equity. CFC dollars flow through community-based organizations rooted in the neighborhoods they serve. UWNYC's ALICE research shows that nearly half of New York households are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, working families above the federal poverty line but below the cost of living. These are the families most affected by SNAP cuts, and the families CFC reaches.

No New Yorker should have to choose between rent and dinner. Pantries and soup kitchens should never have to ration meals or turn families away. A $100 million baseline for CFC in FY27 emphasizes that food is a basic survival resource, and that resilient, community-led food systems are central to the functioning of a just and equitable city.

UWNYC stands with Food Bank for New York City, City Harvest, and the more than 400 frontline providers in our network in recommending this request.

Atlas: A Public Health Model of Safety

UWNYC's second funding recommendation is for the Atlas program, a citywide violence-prevention initiative that UWNYC coordinates with the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Office of Neighborhood Safety. Atlas's Functional Family Therapy (FFT) program is a short-term, evidence-based family counseling model for youth and young adults at elevated risk of violence, many of them referred by the courts, schools, or the juvenile justice system. Functional Family Therapy is recognized as a Model program by Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development and rated Effective by the federal CrimeSolutions clearinghouse, which finds that it reduces recidivism among justice-involved youth. The

Washington State Institute for Public Policy, a leading source for cost-benefit analysis of justice programs, finds that Functional Family Therapy returns more in public savings than it costs to deliver.

Trained therapists deliver Atlas FFT in offices, homes, schools, and other community settings, working with a young person and the people closest to them to interrupt the conflict and isolation that lead to violence.

UWNYC's own data show the model is working:

- 80% of Atlas participants had no pretrial arrest.
- 92% of Atlas participants had no pretrial violent felony arrest.
- 1,480 referrals and 854 families served to date.

The fiscal case is just as clear. Holding one person on Rikers Island costs roughly $550,000 per year. Serving one youth through an Atlas community program costs less than $30,000.

Prevention rooted in those relationships keeps young people out of the justice system and anchored in school, work, and family.

Building the Capacity to Deliver Safety

Atlas reaches New Yorkers only because community-based organizations deliver it. UWNYC provides capacity-building support to every Atlas partner: hands-on help with staffing, data, and the operational systems that let a community organization deliver an evidence-based model with fidelity.

UWNYC sees daily how thin the margins are for the organizations that carry this work: stretched staff, limited infrastructure, and long waitlists for the services families need. When the City invests in their capacity, it builds public safety that lasts, because the organizations that prevent violence stay standing.

Atlas and capacity building work together. Atlas reaches young people and families before harm hardens into a justice-system record. Capacity building keeps the organizations that deliver that work standing. Together they describe what durable public safety looks like at the neighborhood level.

Since 2020, Atlas has brought this evidence-based model to the neighborhoods that carry the heaviest burden of violence. UWNYC urges the Council and the Administration to sustain funding for Atlas in the FY27 Adopted Budget, so the initiative can continue reaching the young people and families who need it most.

The Latinidad Curriculum Initiative

UWNYC's third funding recommendation is the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, a citywide effort to build a culturally responsive PK-12 curriculum that reflects the histories, cultures, and contributions of Latine communities in New York City Public Schools. UWNYC urges the Council

to fund the initiative at $6,507,000 in FY27. UWNYC serves as project lead and convener, alongside the Edmund W. Gordon Institute for Advanced Study at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Hispanic Federation.

In a city where roughly 430,000 public-school students are Latino, this is a core investment in educational equity. The curriculum gives teachers classroom-ready resources across grade bands, aligned with content-area standards in English language arts, mathematics, STEM, social studies, and multilingual learning, so that students study and understand the Latine experience as part of how the city teaches history, civics, literature, and the arts.

FY27 is the third and final year of the initiative's development. Funding this year finalizes and pilots the PK-12 curriculum and builds the professional learning and teacher training that district-wide adoption requires.

This investment also supports the Community Through Learning Collaborative, which expands implementation and teacher training across the city's culturally responsive curricula, including Jewish, MENA, AAPI, and LGBTQ studies. The result is a stronger foundation for every student to see their community reflected in what they learn.

Thank you for your time and your continued partnership.

Respectfully submitted,

United Way of New York City

About Us

United Way of New York City has been serving low-income New Yorkers for over 85 years. As a backbone organization, we coordinate cross-sector efforts across food access, education, health equity, and economic mobility. Through a network of more than 600 community-based partners, we connect resources to where they're needed most and advocate for structural solutions to poverty. Our work centers equity, trust, and long-term impact, because every New Yorker deserves the opportunity to thrive.

UNLOCK NYC

New York City Council
Budget Hearings - Public Testimony

Testimony of Mar Maguire, Report Intake Specialist & Community Outreach Coordinator
Unlock NYC
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Mar Maguire and I am the report intake specialist and community outreach coordinator at Unlock NYC, a tech nonprofit led by women who have experienced source of income (SOI) discrimination. At Unlock NYC, our mission is to equip voucher holders with the paper trail, voice, and connections to create accountability when they face housing discrimination. We're creating a power shift where landlords and brokers fear the social and financial costs of illegally discriminating against voucher holders. The majority of tenants who use our tools are currently experiencing homelessness, either staying in a shelter (36%), living doubled up with family (24%), or on the street (4%). **SOI discrimination is a vicious barrier that keeps New Yorkers homeless.**

Since launching our reporting tool in 2021, **we have received over 3,500 complaints of SOI discrimination, and referred over 1000 of these reports to the NYC Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) for further action.** As the enforcement agency tasked with protecting New Yorkers from discrimination in housing and employment, CCHR has effective tools at its disposal to combat SOI discrimination and house homeless New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, **CCHR desperately needs more funding and staffing.** The Commission has had to do more and more work with dwindling resources. In nearly every year in the past decade, the City Council has added to the NYC Human Rights Law in some way. Most recently, the Council passed the Fair Chance Act to ban employers from using criminal records in hiring decisions. We all know the work, the community power and advocacy that goes into codifying human rights protections in NYC. While having the country's most expansive Human Rights Law is commendable, these valuable protections are toothless without proper resources to enforce them. So we must ask: **what good are laws if they can't be enforced?**

We call on the Mayor to reverse course and invest in the Commission so that it is funded at $25 million in FY27. This is less than 0.02 percent of the City's $127 billion FY2027 preliminary budget – it's pennies, a rounding error, a fraction of a fraction that will pay for itself.

The Human and Financial Cost of Understaffing CCHR

The capacity strain at the Commission has a direct impact on the lives of low-income New Yorkers. The current wait time for an intake appointment is up to six months, while cases take years to be brought to court. Formal complaints languish for months (or years) without resolution, and are sometimes “administratively closed” with no clear motive. This waiting process is particularly crushing for homeless New Yorkers who are in a race against the clock to find an apartment before their voucher expires. Furthermore, the lack of enforcement sends the wrong message to discriminators, who continue their illegal practices knowing that they are unlikely to face any consequences.

Progress has been made, thanks to the efforts of the New York City Council. The FY2024 Adopted Budget included $1.3 million for CCHR’s specialized SOI Unit, which carries out a mediation program called Pre-Complaint Interventions (PCIs).

The Impact of PCIs

Every week, I work with voucher holders who have been ghosted, denied, and given the runaround–hundreds and thousands of times. What I've seen actually work: CCHR's pre-complaint interventions. Their PCIs give voucher holders a direct shot at justice–not a court date months from now, but a phone call or email that changes everything within days, sometimes hours.

I’ll give you a real example: Walter was living in a shelter. He found an apartment on StreetEasy and called a broker. The broker's tone was condescending from the start. He told Walter he couldn't tour the unit because the building had violations and wouldn't pass inspection. Walter later told me: "Why am I getting punished for their building not being up to code?"

Then came the real reason: the broker said verbatim he'd lose money waiting for the inspection. Profit over people, plain and simple. I've seen it before–and it goes unchecked until CCHR steps in.

Thankfully, Walter had recorded the call. He reported to Unlock NYC. We sent his case to CCHR. Within days, CCHR initiated a pre-complaint intervention. They told the broker he had one chance to do things right before they filed a formal complaint. And just like that–the disrespect vanished. The broker changed his tune immediately. He apologized. He made excuses. But more importantly: he complied. That is what enforcement looks like.

Walter got a fair shot at viewing and applying for the apartment. A man who had been treated as less than human, as an inconvenience to profit, was suddenly treated as a renter with rights. In all his time searching for an apartment, it wasn’t until CCHR advocated for his rights as a voucher holder that Walter was able to view and apply for an apartment.

Voucher holders deserve the opportunity to become tenants and achieve tangible justice. Today, not someday. Because for families facing eviction or living in shelters, that speed is survival. Our city's human rights laws are only as powerful as they can be enforced. CCHR is where New Yorkers turn for that enforcement–a phone call that actually puts a roof over someone’s head.

Record It, Report It is what we preach. It's how we get people housed. I urge you to fund the City Commission on Human Rights. Because every day, another Walter is waiting for his fair shot. And only enforcement gets him there.

Investing in enforcement to combat SOI discrimination is a cost-saving measure.

In the last year alone CCHR has secured long term affordable housing for 31 households who reported source of income discrimination to the commission. If we take it that one year in a NYC shelter costs the city $95,000, keeping these 31 households housed saved the city $3 million, and that's just this year alone.

This year CCHR also secured 70 set aside units exclusively for voucher holders. Another 1,000 units are either currently occupied by voucher holders or are being held for them as part of commission initiated set aside settlements. The commission's enforcement actions have saved the city many millions, in this case $100 million, and won stable, long-term housing for low income new yorkers.[1]

In our current housing market, turning down applicants with housing vouchers is the norm. SOI discrimination is the most pervasive form of housing bias in New York City,[2] and landlords have adapted their techniques over the years to become increasingly hard to catch. Our organization has cataloged over 20 discrimination tactics, including changing the price of the apartment after a voucher holder applies, creating a separate "waitlist" for voucher holders, not responding to an applicant after they reveal their voucher, steering voucher holders to substandard housing units, implementing exclusionary income requirements, exploiting the gross/net effective rent loophole and many more.

While PCIs are incredibly effective in reversing illegal denials, they are not enough to create a robust enforcement landscape that deters the real estate industry from perpetrating SOI discrimination.

Our Ask: Protect the People, Fund the Commission

Funding CCHR at $25 million is the baseline needed to ensure New Yorkers are protected in practice, not just on paper.

Without proper SOI enforcement, vouchers cannot be an effective tool to alleviate our daunting homelessness crisis. SOI discrimination does not happen in a vacuum; research suggests that SOI discrimination may serve as a proxy for racial discrimination[3] and that it

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[1] See CCHR's Executive Budget Testimony from 5/27/26

[2] ibid

[3] Scott and Uprety, "In the District, Source of Income Discrimination Is Race Discrimination Too – Equal Rights Center;" Tighe, Hatch, and Mead, "Source of Income Discrimination and Fair Housing Policy."

disproportionately impacts women, the elderly, and the disabled.[4] The Commission is the agency responsible for protecting New Yorkers from these myriad forms of discrimination.

The Commission's proposed FY2026 budget of $15.4 million and FY2027 budget of $14.3 million, is infinitely small compared to the immense mission it has been tasked with. T**he Commission's entire budget would remain less than 0.02% of the City's total budget.**

We urge the Mayor and the City Council to **increase the NYC Commission on Human Rights' budget by 11 million dollars, to $25 million.** Our ask includes:

- Restore the proposed cuts to the Commission
- Add $10 million more to CCHR's budget to total $25 million
- Permit CCHR to hire at top of the salary range for all lines (investigators & attorneys)

As New Yorkers, we pride ourselves on our culture of acceptance–but without the Commission, it is an illusion and not a reality. We look forward to continuing to work with our allies in City Council to build a robust anti-discrimination landscape and house our homeless neighbors.

We thank the Council for its consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,
Mar Maguire
Report Intake Specialist and Community Outreach Coordinator, Unlock NYC |
mar@weunlock.nyc

[4] Bluthenthal, "The Disproportionate Burden of Eviction on Black Women."

Please fund $1.5M for spay/neuter and $2M for pet food pantries

As the co founder and president to Urban Cat League, Inc. a group working for 20 years to fill the gaps in the care of animals in NYC, I am appealing directly to **Budget Chair Linda Lee, Speaker Julie Menin, and Mayor Mamdani** to fund these critical services. Please fund $1.5M for spay/neuter and $2M for pet food pantries

Sincerely, Mike Phillips

- Right now, more than half of New Yorkers cannot afford a basic veterinary office visit. Animal rescuers are overwhelmed by the growing number of stray and abandoned animals who need help — with no financial or logistical support from the city.
- Families are surrendering the animals they love because they cannot access resources — adding even more pressure to NYC's already strained rescue community and shelter system.
- NYC spends just $2.98 per person on animal care — among the lowest of any major U.S. city.
- 75% of dogs entering ACC are unfixed.
- 193,000 spay/neuter surgeries are needed annually for community cats and owned pets who cannot afford them. The city funds only 3,500 surgeries.
- No New Yorker should have to choose between feeding themselves and feeding their pet.
- Affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter keep animals where they belong — at home with the people who love them.
- As cost barriers are removed, adoptions will increase and preventable euthanasia will decrease.
- Fewer cats will suffer outdoors

URBAN JUSTICE CENTER | Freedom Agenda

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Submitted by Darren Mack, Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

Chair Lee and Council members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm Darren Mack, Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We are led by our members who have experienced incarceration themselves, or through a loved one. We're one of the organizations leading the Campaign to Close Rikers.

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create safety. The Executive Budget eliminates some waste in DOC's budget, and restores what would have been devastating cuts to mental health, diversion and reentry programs, **but we'll need to do more than maintain the status quo to get Rikers closed.** Specifically, we need at least:

- **$39.2M more to meet mental health needs in the community** through investments in Intensive Mobile Treatment, Assertive Community Treatment, an outpatient competency restoration pilot program, Crisis Respite Centers, and capital funding for new dual-diagnosis residential treatment beds.
- **$47.3M more for diversion and reentry programs** including funding alternative to incarceration and reentry programs to scale, expanding mental health programs for court-involved youth, and opening new units of low-barrier housing for people with court involvement and mental health diagnoses.
- **$3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction and increase their oversight capacity.**

The City Council has fought hard in the past few years for investments in evidence-based programs that strengthen communities and keep people out of Rikers. These programs are not just effective, they're also popular. A recent survey of crime survivors in New York City showed that 3 of 4 preferred alternatives to incarceration and mental health treatment instead of jail.

And yet, more than 1,000 people still sit on waiting lists for community-based mental health treatment. In the meantime, too many spiral into crisis, are met with police instead of healthcare workers, and end up at Rikers, where their health almost always deteriorates. ATI and reentry programs also remain underfunded, while Riker is set to operate at a cost of **$2.96B in FY27**.

New York City CAN afford to invest in these programs that work. The Executive Budget eliminates 586 vacancies for uniformed officers at the Department of Correction. That's a good start, but at least 715 of these vacancies remain. Eliminating them could free up $96 million – an amount that could pay for the budget needs we outlined, with money to spare.

The budget also includes funding for 580 more police officers, at a time when NYPD is arresting more and more people who need housing and mental health services. Hiring more police will not address the reasons why people are sleeping on the subway or stealing food, but it will consume funding that could be used to address their needs.

The FY2027 budget will show this Mayor's priorities, along with the City Council's. We need an Adopted Budget that shows the City is serious about taking a whole of government approach to meeting its moral and legal obligation to close Rikers. We are not there yet, and we cannot afford another year of arresting and jailing our neighbors who need housing and healthcare, and then being surprised when they cycle back through Rikers.

Included with this testimony is full budget analysis **that outlines the amendments needed to align the FY27 budget with closing Rikers Island.**

As we look toward closing Rikers, we also need to begin planning for the repurposing of the land to benefit impacted communities, and our entire community. **We urge the City Council to ensure the adopted budget includes $10 million to conduct a master plan for Renewable Rikers.**

We also strongly support the proposal put forward by the People's Plan to collect on the billions owed to the City by the largest lawbreaking corporations.

Thank you,

Darren Mack

Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

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[attached – FY2027 Campaign to Close Rikers Executive Budget Analysis]

CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE * DEFEND * DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

FY2027 City Budget Analysis & Priorities

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create community safety. The FY2027 Executive Budget includes some key steps toward reining in jail operation costs, and reinvesting those savings in true public safety. And in order to Close Rikers as quickly as possible, we'll need to do more. To align the FY2027 budget with the City's legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, it must include:

1. **An additional $39.2M to meet mental health needs outside of Rikers,** including:
    a. **At least $66.3M, baselined, for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams,** $22M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which should eliminate the current waitlist.[1]
    b. **At least $23.8M, baselined, for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT),** $4.5M more than the Executive Budget allocates.[2]
    c. **At least $6M, baselined, for Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT),** $2M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which provides both mental health and reentry services to people returning from jail and prison.[3]
    d. **$1.7M to establish an outpatient competency restoration pilot program** for 50-75 people who might otherwise be waiting at Rikers for transfer to a state hospital.
    e. **$3M in capital funds to support 60 new residential treatment beds** for people with serious mental illness and with co-occurring addictions.[4]
    f. **At least $8.8M, baselined, for crisis respite centers,** $6M more than the Executive Budget allocates, to open four new centers, in compliance with Local Law 118-2023.[5]
2. **An additional $47.2M for diversion and reentry services through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), including:**
    a. $10M in new funds for ATI programs and **$10M** in new funds for Reentry Services, as recommended by the ATI/Reentry Coalition, to scale up these evidence-based models.
    b. **$6.9M** to expand programs serving court-involved youth with mental health needs.
    c. **$20.3M**[6] to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.
    d. OCJ should also publish an analysis of the full need for transitional reentry housing, and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for Justice Impacted Supportive Housing (JISH), a permanent reentry housing model.[7]
3. **An additional $3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction (BOC), and expand their oversight capacity.** The Executive Budget shows $605,000 in cuts to BOC's budget.[8] These cuts

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[1] Per DOHMH testimony on June 5, 2026, the waitlist is 600 people. Each new IMT team can serve 27 people.
[2] The combined waitlist for all ACT teams, including FACT and SPACT, was 654 people as of June 5, 2026 per DOHMH testimony. The City should also work with the state to eliminate the waitlist for all ACT teams.
[3] For FACT teams, the City adds approximately $675,000 per ACT team to supplement state funding by adding reentry specialists.
[4] State funding through OASAS would provide operational funds.
[5] The FY2026 budget for crisis respite centers was $5.3M, but only $2.8M in the FY2027 Preliminary Budget, as reported by DOHMH.
[6] Approximately $135,000 per unit, based on similar Safe Haven models.
[7] While JISH funding would come through DOHMH, OCJ coordinated the first (and only) data match, when the program was launched.
[8] $233,000 is associated with cutting two vacancies, and $374,437 is associated with cuts to OTPS

are unwise and unnecessary. The Board of Correction has testified that they need at least 60 staff roles (29 more than the Executive Budget includes)[9] to carry out their oversight responsibilities, as a first step to rightsizing their budget.[10] Expanding BOC's capacity could not only improve conditions in the jails, but also protect the city from future liability, like the $123 million dollars paid out in FY2025 for claims against DOC.

Meanwhile, DOC remains over-resourced. With new management in place, DOC can better deploy resources, not rush to fill vacancies. The FY2027 budget should build on smart vacancy reductions announced in the Executive Budget, and:

4. **Eliminate vacancies for DOC uniformed staff, to begin to rightsize the agency**
    a. The Executive Budget authorizes 6,474 positions for uniformed officers in FY2027 (down from 7,060 in FY2026), but as of January 1, 2026 DOC employed 5,759 officers and 1,301 positions were vacant.[11] Filling DOC's remaining 715 vacancies would cost an additional **$95.6M annually.**[12] These remaining vacancies should be eliminated, in order to reduce incarceration and cut wasteful spending.
5. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where 109 officers are still assigned.[13]
6. **Conduct and release a staffing analysis as soon as possible,** to determine how many staff DOC actually needs to operate the facilities it currently manages.

The Executive Budget also includes 580 more police officers, among a surge of low-level arrests that frequently impact New Yorkers who lack stable housing and need mental health services. These resources should instead be used for housing, healthcare, and other community-based interventions.

DOC Budget Breakdown

- The Executive Budget proposes spending at least **$2.96 billion**[14] **for jail operations in FY2027**. This represents a slight reduction from the FY2027 Preliminary budget, but still a 3.8% increase from last year's adopted budget.[15]
- The Executive Budget shows an authorized headcount of **6,474 uniformed DOC officers**. With approximately 6,600 people in custody, this amounts to a **staffing ratio that is still nearly 4 times higher than the national average**, and **2 times more officers** than will be required to operate the borough jails.[16]
- DOC is on track to spend **$369 million on overtime** for uniform staff in FY2026 - 229% of their adopted budget.[17]
- New York City spent at least **$485,801 annually to incarcerate one person** at Rikers in FY2025.
- Most of DOC's costs are driven by staffing. The FY2027 budget projects that 87% of DOC expenses will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.

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[9] Based on testimony from the Board of Correction on March 7, 2025 that approximately 60 staff are needed to fulfill their mandate. BOC's proposed staffing in the F27 budget is 33 people, and total agency budget of $3.67M, per Departmental Estimates.
[10] Board of Corrections representatives previously advocated increasing their budget to a minimum percentage of DOC's.
[11] Per Independent Budget Office
[12] Based on $133,756 per officer, as calculated by the Vera Institute.
[13] City of New York Executive Budget Fiscal Year 2027, Supporting Schedules p. 1414
[14] Including expenses, associated fringe benefits, pensions, and debt service. Expense Revenue Contract Budget
[15] DOC's FY2026 Adopted Budget was $2.85 billion. A-Look-Inside-the-FY-2027-New-York-City-Department-of-Correction-Budget.pdf
[16] The Independent Rikers Commission estimates 3,240 officers will be needed in the borough jail system.
[17] Per Independent Budget Office

Written Testimony
New York City Council
Committees on General Welfare and Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
June 4, 2026

Thank you, Chair Hudson and members of the Committees, for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Committee on General Welfare's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am a Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. I will be sharing budget priorities for support needed by nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing providers, as well as necessary investments to the CityFHEPS voucher program.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Procurement Reform & Prevailing Wage for Human Services Workers

The FY27 Budget must take decisive action to resolve payment issues for contracted nonprofits.

Nonprofits are contracted by the City to provide essential services on the government's behalf, but the City is not paying contracted nonprofits who deliver critical services to our city's residents most in need on time. In many instances, payments are made months after services have been provided. The NYC Comptroller's April 2025 report found over $1 billion in unpaid invoices for human service contracts, with at least $675 million for service dates in 2024 or earlier. Moreover, Nonprofit Finance Fund's 2025 survey showed 32% of NYC nonprofits received government funds more than 90 days late, compared to 10% of U.S. nonprofits overall.

The lack of normalcy when it comes to payments puts organizations like ours at risk. It makes it difficult to pay staff and vendors, and operate programs for the people we serve.

The FY27 Budget must take decisive action to create wage equity.

The sector is grateful for the multi-year COLA investment, and while that ends next year, we need to push for true wage equity, where nonprofit workers are not paid up to 30% less than their government counterparts. Government is not just the predominant funder of human services, but is also the main driver of human services salaries, either directly setting salary rates on contracts or doing so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract.

Our programs rely on case managers to connect the people we serve with services and resources to achieve their goals, maintenance workers to keep buildings clean and well-maintained, security staff to ensure the safety of our residents, and cooks to prepare healthy meals. Unfortunately, many human services organizations, including Urban Pathways, are struggling to fill essential positions; Urban Pathways currently has a 14% staff vacancy rate. Ultimately, this reality has the most negative impact on the people we serve, as staff vacancies strain service capacity and limit our ability to deliver consistent, high-quality care. Intro 0452 is a significant step toward ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts; by establishing a clear wage requirement system, it promotes transparency in compensation and ensures that every worker is paid based on their qualifications and experience.

To create a fair and transparent contracting system, the Council must:

- pass Int. 0452 **to align nonprofit and government human services job titles**, and through that, **raise salaries** for nonprofit human services workers;
- **drastically reform its procurement and payment process**, with additional staff, updated technology, increased efficiency and transparency, and a streamlined process that eliminates burden and barriers;
- pass Int. 514 for City agencies to **pay interest on late payments** to contracted nonprofits;
- **pay the true cost of the services** being provided through the term of its contracts.

<u>CityFHEPS: Increase Funding</u>

We urge the City Council to increase funding for the CityFHEPS voucher program.

As the federal government moves to significantly cut funding to housing, homelessness, and social safety net programs, it is imperative that our City government increase funding and expand access to programs like the CityFHEPS voucher that help New Yorkers escape and avoid

homelessness through rental assistance. New York City, the wealthiest city in the world, must protect its most vulnerable neighbors and prevent our homelessness crisis from worsening by allocating the necessary resources to expand the reach of the CityFHEPS voucher program in the FY27 budget.

Research shows rental vouchers significantly reduce homelessness and housing instability. Federal Housing Choice Vouchers reduce the poverty rate for recipients by 43% and provide long-term benefits to households that previously experienced homelessness. Despite evidence of the positive effects of rental assistance, there are not nearly enough vouchers to meet the need, and many HCVs will disappear soon due to federal funding cuts. Only one in four eligible households currently receive Housing Choice Vouchers, leaving households with little options to help them afford rent or escape homelessness. With increased funding, CityFHEPS has the potential to play a pivotal role in filling this gap, serving households at risk of losing their HCV, and ending New York City's homelessness crisis.

Investing in CityFHEPS is not just a moral imperative, it is the only fiscally responsible path forward. Shelter costs approximately 35% more than the CityFHEPS voucher and moving families into permanent housing with CityFHEPS could save the City as much as $635 million in shelter costs over 5 years. This analysis reflects only the direct cost comparison between shelter and CityFHEPS and does not account for the broader negative externalities of homelessness, such as the heavy reliance on costly emergency services, which if prevented would result in even greater savings.

CityFHEPS: Administrative Barriers

We urge the City Council to reduce barriers in the administration of CityFHEPS to expedite placement in permanent housing.

The CityFHEPS voucher program fails to realize its full potential as a pivotal tool to combat homelessness due to a bureaucratic process that lacks clarity and efficiency, requiring eligible individuals and voucher holders to be their own advocate in receiving and utilizing vouchers. **Concrete timelines and guidelines, increased accountability and responsiveness, and streamlined processes** are essential in addressing the persistent barriers within the administration of the CityFHEPS voucher.

As it stands, there is no set standard for how long it should take to complete an application from start to finish. The City Council must expedite CityFHEPS applications by committing to a 15-day maximum turnaround from finding an apartment to approval to ensure that voucher holders can retain permanent housing prospects. Many voucher holders lose apartments due to the lengthy process that must be completed before an apartment can be approved and checks cut.

Most landlords are unwilling to hold an apartment beyond this time frame, which mirrors the private sector application timeline. Losing an apartment to bureaucratic processes is unfair to the apartment seeker, who applies for many apartments before finding one that will accept them. The process of leasing an apartment with a CityFHEPS voucher is opaque and creates a sense of hopelessness for the people we serve. To remedy this, the administration must require the creation of an accessible voucher holder checklist that clearly communicates all the necessary paperwork to the recipient. This should be universally accessible and available in all languages via AccessHRA. This will decrease the chances of incomplete or incorrect applications and increase voucher-holder confidence.

Furthermore, the city should eliminate or significantly extend the expiration date for CityFHEPS Shopping Letters. Households in shelter are at significant risk of losing viable housing opportunities while waiting for their expired shopping letter to renew, given delays in the recertification process. Eliminating or significantly extending the shopping letter expiration date for households in shelter will reduce the burden to staff in regenerating these letters. In addition, it will increase efficiency of tenants looking for housing.

Affordable & Supportive Housing Expansion

We are pleased to see that the Mayor has proposed approximately $4 billion in additional housing capital funding over five years through HPD, contributing to more than $22 billion in total housing investment across the capital plan. This positions housing production as one of the administration's signature priorities. As a supportive housing provider, we rely heavily on HPD capital financing to assemble projects servicing formerly homeless New Yorkers. Unfortunately, the proposed budget falls short of announcing a significant new city investment dedicated specifically to supportive housing operations or expansion. For Urban Pathways, the budget creates potential opportunities to expand housing development and strengthen placement pathways, while also raising questions about whether supportive housing providers will receive the operating and service investments necessary to meet demand.

We applaud and extend our appreciation of the NYC Progressive Caucus for their FY27 Budget Proposal, ***Rentals within Reach***. This campaign centers smart investments to ensure over 20,000 New Yorkers have access to quality publicly funded housing, including supportive housing. One of their two priorities is a $78 million investment to preserve and renovate supportive housing units, including (1) $13 million flexible expense pot to renovate or repair up to 1,000 units; and, (2) $44 million in Capital and $21.3 million in Expense funding to preserve at least 325 units in FY27.

Urban Pathways strongly encourages support of the Rentals within Reach campaign. Preserving existing supportive housing is just as important as building new supportive housing.

Combat Source of Income Discrimination

Source of Income (SOI) Discrimination is rampant city-wide and is the biggest challenge the people served by Urban Pathways face when searching for an apartment. SOI discrimination leads to extended stays in our safe havens, stabilization beds, and drop-in centers. Although discrimination against voucher holders is illegal, inadequate enforcement makes it difficult to prove instances of discrimination by property owners. The City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), the only agency tasked with holding discriminators accountable, has historically been underfunded and understaffed.

To combat SOI discrimination, the City must:

- properly resource CCHR to end discriminatory housing practices and ensure that voucher holders are able to utilize their vouchers in a timely manner;
- develop and implement outreach initiatives to educate voucher holders about their rights and help owners, managers, and agents understand the available resources to help support tenants and clients;
- require an annual public reporting on SOI complaints and the average time it takes to resolve a complaint; and
- pass Introductions 1210-1215 to strengthen penalties against landlords and brokers who refuse to rent to tenants using rental subsidies.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:

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Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Written Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings
Executive Budget Hearing
June 2, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Urban Pathways has worked hard to build strong partnerships with the people we serve. Across 10 of our supportive housing sites, we have established tenant association boards. Each month, boards meet to discuss internal challenges and successes. They work with our Community Organizer to bring projects to fruition and create changes in their building and individual apartments. Through this work, many boards have created good neighbor policies, which emphasize respect for surrounding community, shared responsibility for space, and active participation in neighborhood life. Tenants plan and host activities throughout the year, which include cookouts, movie nights, attendance at sporting events, and much more.

In addition, we host consumer advocacy groups twice per month where tenants learn how government and policy work, discuss current issues, engage in advocacy campaigns, and prepare for speaking with elected officials. Through this group, tenants are provided with information about upcoming rallies, public hearings, and advocacy opportunities, including conferences and panels.

As one of lived experienced advocates, Will Woods, has shared, “Having a stable home gave me the opportunity to be the advocate I am today.” His words reflect the very mission behind Urban Pathways supportive housing programs and services: that when people have housing, they have the chance not just to survive - but to lead, to contribute, and to thrive. Throughout all our

groups, we regularly hear of tenants' challenges exiting supportive housing due to the lack of available affordable housing within their income range. Several tenants have discussed at length their inability to qualify for housing lotteries as their income range is below the acceptable guidelines. This lack of affordable housing and opportunities to move from supportive housing settings often discourage tenants. To better support tenants' needs Urban Pathways joined the ***Homes for NYC Campaign*** launched in 2026.

Homes for NYC Campaign:
New York City stands at a breaking point in its housing crisis. More than 100,000 individuals sleep in shelters every night, while hundreds of thousands more are on the brink of homelessness, burdened by rents that are more than half of their income. This is the direct result of policy choices that have failed to meet the needs of those at the lowest end of the income spectrum. **If the City is to reverse the tide of mass homelessness, it must adopt a fundamentally different approach: one that builds from the bottom up.**

At the heart of this crisis is a severe shortage of housing that is truly affordable to extremely low-income households. While New York City has invested heavily in "affordable housing" over the past decade, the majority of these units have been out of reach for those who need them most. Eligibility requirements often exclude households with the lowest incomes, resulting in people experiencing homelessness or extreme rent burden unable to access the very housing intended for them. As a result, the City's shelter system, originally designed as a temporary safety net, has become a long-term housing solution for tens of thousands.

To address this systemic failure, **New York City must commit to a targeted housing mandate centered on those at greatest risk, creating 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing each year for the next five years.** These units must be reserved for individuals who are currently homeless or living in extreme poverty. This level of investment is not only necessary, but long overdue. By focusing resources where the need is greatest, the City can deliver immediate relief to those most at risk and begin to reduce the overwhelming demand on the shelter system. Building new housing alone will not be sufficient. The City must also **invest in preserving its existing affordable housing stock.** Many units that are currently affordable are at risk of deterioration, conversion, or loss due to expiring subsidies. Preservation is not only a cost-saving strategy, it is essential to ensure long-term housing stability for low-income residents.

Additionally, the City must take action to **repair and utilize vacant housing units.** At a time when homelessness is at record levels, it is unacceptable for habitable units to sit empty due to bureaucratic delays, disrepair, or lack of coordination. Bringing these units back online quickly can provide immediate housing opportunities for those in need.

Housing that is initially affordable often becomes inaccessible over time due to rising rents or expiring affordability requirements. The City must **implement safeguards to guarantee that investments made today continue to serve low-income households for decades to come.** This includes stronger regulatory frameworks, sustained funding commitments, and accountability measures to prevent the erosion of affordability.

When deeply affordable units are created, they relieve pressure across the entire housing market. **By stabilizing the lowest-income households, the City can reduce competition for scarce low-cost units, ease rent burdens for similar income groups and create a more equitable housing system overall.** Reducing homelessness leads to significant savings in public resources, including shelter operations, emergency services, and healthcare costs.

Solving mass homelessness is not only a moral necessity but benefits New York City as a whole. The City thrives when everyone has the safety, dignity, and stability of a home. By committing to large-scale investment in deeply affordable housing, preserving existing units, utilizing vacant spaces, and ensuring long-term stability, the City can begin to reverse decades of policy failure. A decisive shift toward building from the bottom up, placing the needs of the most vulnerable at the center of housing policy, offers a clear and achievable path forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:
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Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use
Executive Budget Hearing
June 5, 2026

Good morning, Chair Cabán and members of the Committee. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing about the need for substantial investments in the behavioral health continuum of care, with an emphasis on the B-HEARD program and employing peers (people with lived mental health experience).

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Invest in a Non-Police Mental Health Crisis Response System

More than 20 New Yorkers experiencing a mental health crisis have been killed in police encounters since 2015, underscoring ongoing concerns about relying on law enforcement as the primary response to behavioral health emergencies. People experiencing mental health crises are best served by a non-police response that avoids the risk of serious harm or death, arrests, and people being transported with handcuffs, which is traumatic and can lead to exacerbating the crisis. When medical personnel, trained mental health workers, and people with lived mental health experience respond to a person in crisis, care options involve de-escalation, being treated on-site, receiving a referral for community-based care, being transported to a social service location, or being transported to a hospital for additional care. By investing in a non-police mental health crisis response system, we can enhance public safety and refer people to long-term

support as opposed to crisis escalation often resulting in serious harm, arrests, and the use of handcuffs.

While we appreciate the City's attempts to shift crisis response to a more person-centered approach, there is much more that needs to be done. Currently, the B-HEARD program is the main alternative to police when a mental health crisis call is placed to 911 in NYC. Current teams consist of EMTs and licensed social workers, which are limited in capacity and not available 24/7 or city-wide. **B-HEARD can be a true non-police response to mental health crises, adopting best practices and prioritizing the experience of the individual in crisis if it enacts the following changes:**

- **Mandate that peers be added to B-HEARD teams** and made a part of all aspects of planning, training, implementation, and oversight. Peers bring indispensable firsthand knowledge, insights, and trust in the community that cannot be replicated.
- **Expand the number of B-HEARD teams to match the call volume.** There are currently 18 B-HEARD teams and 38 social workers to staff them. The ratio of teams to call volume is mismatched: the City's own data shows that the need for teams to respond to calls always surpasses the number of teams available. The number of teams therefore must be increased to ensure all eligible calls are responded to with B-HEARD.
- **Expand the number of B-HEARD teams to ensure citywide and 24/7 coverage.**
- **Establish 988 as the number to be dialed for mental health and substance use crises** in lieu of 911, while ensuring interoperability among 988, 911, and 311.
- **Renew and expand the speaker budget initiative for the peer behavioral workforce (Chart #30 in the FY26 budget) to $6M in FY27.** Funding eligibility criteria must be refined to spotlight peer support specialists, emphasizing positions that aid in community-based behavioral health crisis response systems.
- **The Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use jointly with the Committee on Workforce Development must hold an oversight hearing this spring on behavioral health workforce development.** A comprehensive workforce strategy, coupled with adequate funding, will help the City build a behavioral health workforce pipeline and support retention through professional development and career pathways.

<u>Invest in Substance Use Disorder Treatment</u>

New York City must strengthen its investment in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs and services at a moment when the federal funding landscape has become increasingly unstable. Recent federal actions and proposed reductions affecting the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - including attempted grant cancellations and broader restructuring and reduction proposals - have created uncertainty for providers and the people who rely on treatment, recovery support, outreach, and overdose prevention services every day. When federal support becomes unpredictable, cities cannot afford to retreat. New

York has a responsibility to ensure continuity of care and preserve the local infrastructure that keeps people connected to treatment before crises escalate into emergency room visits, shelter entry, incarceration, or preventable overdose deaths. Stable City investment can help sustain outpatient treatment, medication-assisted treatment, peer services, mobile engagement teams, and recovery-oriented programs that meet people where they are.

Investment in SUD services is also a fiscal and public health imperative. Substance use disorder is deeply interconnected with homelessness, behavioral health needs, emergency services utilization, and long-term housing instability. For many New Yorkers, especially those experiencing housing insecurity or living with co-occurring mental health conditions, access to treatment is often the difference between stabilization and repeated contact with costly crisis systems. City funding should prioritize low-barrier treatment access, culturally responsive care, integrated behavioral health and housing models, and sustained recovery supports that extend beyond short-term intervention. At a time when federal behavioral health priorities remain in flux and providers face continued uncertainty, New York City has an opportunity to lead - to protect existing programs, prevent service disruptions, and affirm that access to treatment and recovery is an essential component of a healthy and equitable city.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Urban Pathways. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:
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Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Oral Testimony
New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearings
June 10, 2026

Thank you, all Chairs and members of Committees, for the opportunity to provide oral testimony for the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am a Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. I will be sharing budget priorities for support needed by nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing providers.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

<u>Procurement Reform & Prevailing Wage for Human Services Workers</u>
The FY27 Budget must take decisive action to resolve payment issues for contracted nonprofits, as well as create pay equity.

Nonprofit workers are not paid up to 30% less than their government counterparts. Government is the predominant funder of human services, and the main driver of human services salaries, either directly setting salary rates on contracts or doing so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract. Unfortunately, the government pays nonprofit workers so little that we have a 14% vacancy rate and high turnover rate. Intro 0452 is a significant step toward ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts; by establishing a clear wage requirement system, it promotes transparency in compensation and ensures that every worker is paid based on their qualifications and experience. Please pass Intro 0452.

CityFHEPS: Increase Funding & Address Administrative Barriers

We urge the City Council to reduce barriers in the administration of CityFHEPS to expedite placement in permanent housing.

The CityFHEPS voucher program fails to realize its full potential as a pivotal tool to combat homelessness due to a bureaucratic process that lacks clarity and efficiency, requiring eligible individuals and voucher holders to be their own advocate in receiving and utilizing vouchers. **Concrete timelines and guidelines, increased accountability and responsiveness, and streamlined processes** are essential in addressing the persistent barriers within the administration of the CityFHEPS voucher.

Affordable & Supportive Housing Expansion

We are pleased to see that the Mayor has proposed approximately $4 billion in additional housing capital funding over five years through HPD, contributing to more than $22 billion in total housing investment across the capital plan. This positions housing production as one of the administration's signature priorities. As a supportive housing provider, we rely heavily on HPD capital financing to assemble projects servicing formerly homeless New Yorkers. Unfortunately, the proposed budget falls short of announcing a significant new city investment dedicated specifically to supportive housing operations or expansion. For Urban Pathways, the budget creates potential opportunities to expand housing development and strengthen placement pathways, while also raising questions about whether supportive housing providers will receive the operating and service investments necessary to meet demand.

We applaud and extend our appreciation of the NYC Progressive Caucus for their FY27 Budget Proposal, ***Rentals within Reach***. This campaign centers smart investments to ensure over 20,000 New Yorkers have access to quality publicly funded housing, including supportive housing. One of their two priorities is a $78 million investment to preserve and renovate supportive housing units, including (1) $13 million flexible expense pot to renovate or repair up to 1,000 units; and, (2) $44 million in Capital and $21.3 million in Expense funding to preserve at least 325 units in FY27.

Urban Pathways strongly encourages support of the Rentals within Reach campaign. Preserving existing supportive housing is just as important as building new supportive housing.

Combat Source of Income Discrimination

Source of Income (SOI) Discrimination is rampant city-wide and is the biggest challenge the people served by Urban Pathways face when searching for an apartment. SOI discrimination leads to extended stays in our safe havens, stabilization beds, and drop-in centers. Although discrimination against voucher holders is illegal, inadequate enforcement makes it difficult to prove instances of discrimination by property owners. The City Commission on

Human Rights (CCHR), the only agency tasked with holding discriminators accountable, has historically been underfunded and understaffed. To combat SOI discrimination, the City must:

- properly resource CCHR to end discriminatory housing practices and ensure that voucher holders are able to utilize their vouchers in a timely manner; and
- pass Introductions 1210-1215 to strengthen penalties against landlords and brokers who refuse to rent to tenants using rental subsidies.

Homes for NYC

Throughout all resident advisory boards/consumer advocacy groups, we regularly hear of tenants' challenges exiting supportive housing due to the lack of available affordable housing within their income range. Several tenants have discussed at length their inability to qualify for housing lotteries as their income range is below the acceptable guidelines. This lack of affordable housing and opportunities to move from supportive housing settings often discourage tenants. To better support tenants' needs Urban Pathways joined the Homes for NYC Campaign launched in 2026. **New York City must commit to a targeted housing mandate centered on those at greatest risk, creating 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing each year for the next five years.** These units must be reserved for individuals who are currently homeless or living in extreme poverty. This level of investment is not only necessary, but long overdue. By focusing resources where the need is greatest, the City can deliver immediate relief to those most at risk and begin to reduce the overwhelming demand on the shelter system.

Invest in a Non-Police Mental Health Crisis Response System & Substance Use Disorder Treatment

The City Council must expand the number of B-HEARD teams to ensure citywide and 24/7 coverage, as well as establish 988 as the number to be dialed for mental health and substance use crises in lieu of 911, while ensuring interoperability among 988, 911, and 311.

Investment in SUD services is also a fiscal and public health imperative. Substance use disorder is deeply interconnected with homelessness, behavioral health needs, emergency services utilization, and long-term housing instability. For many New Yorkers, especially those experiencing housing insecurity or living with co-occurring mental health conditions, access to treatment is often the difference between stabilization and repeated contact with costly crisis systems. City funding should prioritize low-barrier treatment access, culturally responsive care, integrated behavioral health and housing models, and sustained recovery supports that extend beyond short-term intervention.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:
Kandra Clark, Director of Policy & Advocacy
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New York City Council

Hearing to Discuss:
Executive Budget

Wednesday, June 10, 2026
9:00 AM

Testimony Presented By
Reverend Wendy Calderón Payne

Good afternoon, Chairperson Lee and members of the Finance Committee.

My name is Reverend Wendy Calderón Payne, and I am the Executive Director of Urban Youth Alliance, a Bronx-based juvenile justice organization serving court-involved youth. Since 1999, our program has served more than 3,000 youth and young adults facing charges in Manhattan and the Bronx. From its inception, our program has addressed the epidemic of juvenile incarceration among youth in New York City. In recent years, we have expanded our service locations to Manhattan, Staten Island, and Philadelphia.

As part of New York City's Crisis Management System and ATI Coalition, we serve the Bronx by providing Cure Violence Services, gun violence school-based prevention, community therapeutic services, and employment services. For over 20 years we have also worked in supporting people coming out of jails and prisons, by connecting them to services and employment.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on the need to resource preventative services for our communities.

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

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

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

Thank you for your time.

Vision Urbana, Inc.

Educate. Empower. Transform.

June 10th, 2026

City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: FY27 Budget Recommendation "Feeding Our Communities Initiative"

Honorable Councilmember Lee:

There is a newly created taxpayer funded initiative called, "Feeding Our Communities Initiative" released this fiscal year 2026 during the Transparency Resolution in July that put $5M into the CFC program and $8M into 10 nonprofit providers across the City. Can this initiative fund for FY27 be used to fund 33 *"high capacity"* pantries across 33 TRIE neighborhoods?

As Executive Director of Vision Urbana, Inc., celebrating 30 years of community based programming on the Lower East Side of Manhattan (Council Districts 1 and 2), I have had the pleasure of working directly with 15 NYCHA Tenant Associations across the Lower East Side of Manhattan providing food pantry and fresh produce totaling an average of 15,000 lbs. of food to more than 1,000 households (over 2,500 individuals) weekly. We are an Emergency Food Relief Organization (EFRO) designated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) in 2017 which never stopped providing pantry services to residents during the pandemic. Our work fighting food insecurity during the pandemic resulted in securing a lease to renovate a medical clinic within a NYCHA development by City Hall - the Alfred E Smith development, a full diagnostic and treatment center being renovated this year that will open in 2027. Vision Urbana successfully raised more than $3.3M to renovate through NYS and Federal funding. This center located in NYCHA, will provide not only medical services but nutrition services. **I would consider Vision Urbana, alongside 32 other NYC pantries like Vision Urbana to be considered *"High Capacity"* pantries critical for food security investment in the FY27 budget.**

The average food pantry feeds between 300-500 households a week. Understanding that pantries are a volunteer-based program model (typically older and retired members of the community lacking formal data reporting training) with Personnel costs underfunded - if at all funded there is need in the council budget to underwrite an investment in trained personnel. This lack of investment in trained personnel results in disincentivizing pantries to exist at all, let alone operate at levels deserving of food handling to minority communities which would require basic digital data entry skills for reporting pantry outputs (required by FeedNYC and to become an EFRO). In order to sustain pantries citywide moving forward, I would posit that an investment of food pantries require at least one full time staff equivalent (FTE) investment at no less than $25/hr or $45,500 annually per pantry. However, there are more than 470 designated EFRO pantries (and assuming all are registered in

PASSPort to manage council funding) would require an annual city council budget of $22M annually (more than any existing council budget addressing pantry costs).

Understanding the budget constraints, I would propose a concept for the council's consideration to establish a new initiative at city council to underwrite one full time equivalent (FTE) staff person for 33 *"High Capacity"* pantries within each of the 33 TRIE neighborhoods which would cost the council $2.3M to underwrite at $70k salary FTE per *"High Capacity"* pantry. The investment would ensure *"High Capacity"* pantries could continue to attract and sustain higher caliber talent to 1. Sustain the TRIE *"High Capacity"* pantry in their community, 2. Ability to source additional food outside foodbanks, and 3. Collaborate with the other 33 TRIE neighborhood *"High Capacity"* pantry staff to ensure best practices and leverage a collective coalition to become a NYS funded pipeline to sustain this initial city investment to 33 TRIE communities. I would define *"High Capacity"* pantries as pantries who can 1. Demonstrate multiprong approaches to pantry distribution (home delivery, client choice, community hub and on site pick up) 2. Report data of clients served into the FEEDNYC database 3. Demonstrate capacity to pick up pallets of food and 4. Connect pantry recipients to additional wrap around services. A pantry who can achieve 3 out of 4 of these capacities would be deserving of additional city funding.

This perspective becomes an on the ground accounting and recommendation for how to utilize the newly formed "Feeding Our Communities Initiative" which this fiscal year provided $13M to addressing food insecurity that would sustain 33 of what I would call *"High Capacity"* pantries throughout the already defined 33 Taskforce Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) neighborhoods citywide.

It is important also to note that the operating costs of pantry food for pantries currently are low because foodbanks subsidize 75-100% of the total cost of food per pantry making discretionary dollars useful for salaries and stipends, but ONLY for those pantries who can register and keep up with reporting in PASSPort. This is why personnel costs are critical investments but for *"High Capacity"* pantries because normal pantries are burdened weekly bearing the responsibility of managing and distributing millions of dollars' worth of food each year with less than $10,000 a year. There are large foodbanks subsidizing a significant food for local pantries while who receive multi-million dollar operating budgets to do so from both NYS and NYC discretionary, as well as contract dollars from the Feds to purchase food and transport them to EFRO pantries across the city. The foodbanks are not going to task themselves in figuring out a solution to invest in *"High Capacity"* pantries (I've tried to have conversations with them) but will continue to invest whatever capacity dollars they have to host food summits, collect surveys from the EFRO pantries and transport pantries to advocate for their multimillion dollar contracts in Albany and City Hall.

Vision Urbana has been able to exceed average expectations of pantries citywide because we are able to underwrite several staffing costs, stipends for volunteers, cost of our 14 ft box truck with liftgate (insurance, gas, parking and driver) and are able to populate our proprietary database with pantry recipients from which we connect to additional wrap around services at 50% of our total operating budget year after year.

There is a newly created taxpayer funded initiative called, “Feeding Our Communities Initiative” released this fiscal year 2026 during the Transparency Resolution in July that put $5M into the CFC program and $8M into 10 nonprofit providers across the City. Can this initiative fund the 33 TRIE *“High Capacity”* pantry model? If this cannot happen, would there at least be a consideration to use the “Feeding Our Communities Initiative” to build the infrastructure and capacities of the more than 450+ EFRO registered pantries in NYC, instead of a select number of nonprofit providers? Again, the problem goes back to capacity for these EFRO’s many of whom cannot staff trained personnel. Hence, an investment in personnel is critical, at minimum, to the 33 *“High Capacity”* pantries within the 33 TRIE neighborhoods.

I welcome the opportunity to workout further the complete policy for establishing a new pipeline of funding for 33 *“High Capacity”* pantries across the 33 TRIE neighborhoods.

From the community & for the community,



Eric Diaz
VU Executive Director

Volunteers of America GREATER NEW YORK

NYC COUNCIL FY27 EXECUTIVE BUDGET TESTIMONY 6/10/26
HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, AND EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction and Thanks

My name is Catherine Trapani, Assistant Vice President of Public Policy for Volunteers of America Greater New York (VOA-GNY), one of the largest housing and homeless services providers in NYC. I would like to thank Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Hudson, Chair Sanchez, Chair Dinowitz, and Members of the Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

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, impacting more than 12,000 adults and children annually through 70+ programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester. Our programs include DHS and HRA DV emergency shelters and transitional housing, and we are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing. VOA-GNY has a robust portfolio of permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties totaling over 2,100 beds—with over 1,600 more units actively in the pipeline.

Housing is just the start of what we do. VOA-GNY also operates the Bronx Early Learning Center (BELC), a vibrant 22-classroom preschool special education program for students ages 2.9 to 5 years old, as well as the Bronx Economic Empowerment Center where our SSVF Veteran's program, YouthBuild, and Career Access Program provide services.

VOA-GNY is a member of the Human Services Council (HSC), Homeless Services United (HSU), The Supportive Housing Network of New York, the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC), the Homes Can't Wait Coalition, and the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF).

We are heartened by the Mayor's focus on streamlining development and access to affordable housing through the recommendations laid out in the SPEED Report and look forward to continued partnership with the administration as it moves forward with implementation to

shorten development and predevelopment stages and approval processes for affordable housing. In the same spirit of the SPEED report, we have the following recommendations to continue progress towards ending homelessness by strengthening shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness and expanding supply and access to affordable and supportive housing throughout New York City:

Housing and Homelessness Recommendations:

1. Expand Development of Affordable and Supportive Housing

    a. **Pass Int. 905-2026 (Nurse) Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA)** COPA will unlock more parcels of land for non-profit affordable housing development citywide. VOA-GNY is one of the City's largest affordable housing nonprofit developers, with over 1,600 units currently in the pipeline and more on the way. Through COPA, the City can reduce speculative real estate influence and displacement of predominantly low-income communities of color while enabling non-profit developers like VOA-GNY to create even more affordable housing for low and extremely income households to remain within their community.

2. Improve Access to Existing Affordable and Supportive Housing

    a. **Implement the CityFHEPS Expansion with an additional $500 million in the FY27 Budget.** As this administration agrees, CityFHEPS is the most effective means of helping people experiencing homelessness to access housing and to keep those most at risk of becoming homeless in their homes. We urge the Mayor to drop the CityFHEPS lawsuit and fully implement Local Laws 99 to 102 of 2023 to help tens of thousands of New Yorkers who don't qualify to exit shelter or prevent loss of their housing. According to our estimates, a $500 million investment to fund the expansion in FY27 would help 15,000 households experiencing homelessness including in HRA DV shelters and DYCD runaway and homeless youth programs to attain permanent housing, as well as helping 15,000 more households at risk of eviction to remain in their homes.

    In addition to fully implementing the laws, VOA-GNY urges the administration to extend CityFHEPS eligibility to NYCHA EHV households as part of CityFHEPS larger expansion. These impacted EHV households including survivors of domestic violence and runaway and homeless youth who may not have a DHS shelter history required by current CityFHEPS rules, and this inclusion would allow them to remain in their homes, preventing further instability to EHV recipients and maintaining the income stream for thousands of landlords renting to them.

    Current CityFHEPS income and work requirements make the path to eligibility

too narrow. Voucher holders in shelter are forgoing raises and promotions to keep their vouchers limiting their economic mobility while people parenting infants and those with non-federally recognized disabilities or other significant barriers to employment are languishing in shelter with no pathway to housing. Had the CityFHEPS laws been enacted, people could earn more money and still be able to qualify for a voucher, rather than walking this financial tightrope. Within our own shelter program, one of our clients, Mr. X, was in shelter for three years before finally getting a job working for the city. However, upon completing his CityFHEPS paperwork, Mr X. learned his income was too high to qualify for the voucher. Rather than risk losing his voucher, he chose to forgo his full-time job, choosing to reduce his hours part-time, to be able to remain beneath the 200% Federal Poverty Level limit.

Mr. X's story is unfortunately not uncommon. One of our programs had a temporary employee, Ms. Y, working as a Case Manager for us. Ms. Y was an exemplary employee, so much so that VOA-GNY went through the proper paperwork with the temp agency to offer her a full-time position within our organization. She accepted our offer, however within the first two weeks of starting, she was approved for an apartment through CityFHEPS and chose to resign. Instead of staying with a full-time job with healthcare and retirement benefits, Ms. Y chose to return to temping to avoid losing her CityFHEPS voucher and exit shelter.

We urge the administration to drop the lawsuit and swiftly enact the CityFHEPS legislation so that New Yorkers no longer need to choose between housing and being able to earn a decent living.

b. **Expand HPD headcount to reduce delays administering rental assistance vouchers.** HPD is tasked with administering several voucher systems, including Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), the Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) switchover to Home TBRA, the roll out of the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) and potentially other locally administered programs. As such, HPD's headcount must keep pace with these additional responsibilities. Due to HPD delays administering HCVs, it has taken two years to fully lease one of VOA-GNY's new affordable housing buildings. When the city is in a housing crisis with a 1.4% vacancy rate and over 90,000 people currently experiencing homelessness, paperwork processing delays must not impede access to vacant affordable housing.

c. **Fully Fund the NYC Council Progressive Caucus' Rentals within Reach campaign.** We applaud the Progressive Caucus and Speaker Menin for their leadership and commitment to widening access to affordable and supportive

housing through the Rentals Within Reach campaign. VOA-GNY urges the administration to fund this campaign in the FY27 budget, including $65.3M to permanently preserve 325 units of Supportive Housing and $13M for a flexible expense funding to address smaller repairs within HRA and DOHMH supportive housing units.

d. **Implement the SPEED Report's proposed Making Accelerated Transitions to Coordinated Housing (MATCH) pilot program** which will empower homeless services providers to work directly with landlords and marketing agents to match people in shelter to homeless set-aside units. Providers are best suited to knowing who can best utilize this precious limited resource, and by enabling providers, the City can minimize bureaucracy which slows down access to permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and reduce time affordable housing units sit vacant.

e. Pass Int 346-2026 (Nurse) to identify ways to streamline the 2010e supportive housing application. By identifying which parts of the application are mandated by state or federal law or contractual agreements, the city can reduce and eliminate non-essential pieces which take time to collect and can be barriers particularly for people who experienced unsheltered homelessness, lacking a regular address, missing personal identification/documents, and who may not be able to offer a comprehensive recount of their personal situation.

f. Change the Supportive Housing Interview process to a housing acceptance meeting. Currently, three households in shelter are interviewed per available supportive housing unit, with the intention of only one being selected by the supportive housing provider. This process results in at least two out of three households being turned down after the interview, in some cases with households being passed over multiple times without any clear reason leaving them without a pathway to housing. The Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) indicates what types of supportive housing are appropriate for each applicant to thrive within the community. Instead of forcing applicants to be interviewed for housing which some are continually passed over for, all that should be necessary is a housing acceptance meeting, akin to how prospective tenants view an available apartment, ask questions of the landlord, and flag potential concerns they may have with the unit.

We would like to thank the Council and the Administration for your support of VOA-GNY's Street to Home program, which offers unsheltered individuals a lease for permanent supportive housing, often within the first two weeks of meeting them. Thanks to your leadership and support, we're in the process of working with the Administration to scale up the program and will have more to

share in the coming months. The Street to Home model relies on this "acceptance interview" concept. Presumptively eligibility applicants are shown an available unit and if they decide they want it, it's theirs. The lessons we have learned from this successful program should be applied to other types of supportive housing. Placing the choice in the applicants' hands has led to faster leasing and decreased vacancies.

g. **Roll back DSS/HRA cost-containment strategies which will slow down or negatively impact access to shelter and effectiveness of CityFHEPS rental assistance. This churning causes prolonged stays in shelter and ultimately costs the City more.**

    i. **Pass Int. 232-2026 (Hudson) to reduce DHS' required housing history for families with children applying for shelter from two year down to one.** It can be extremely challenging for families to recount contact information for every single place they stayed for two years, when bouncing from one person's home to another. Reducing the number of times a family is placed in conditional status will remove extremely disruptive bi-weekly reapplications for shelter which make it difficult to maintain/seek employment, help children regularly attend school, and manage other appointments/check-ups.

    While DHS policy allows parents to not bring their children for reapplications, families can still experience extremely dire consequences. A mother in conditional status within VOA-GNY's shelter left her child in our shelter staff's care while she went to the PATH Center to reapply. However, she still did not return by the evening, and without any word from her, our staff called PATH to confirm whether she was still there. DHS staff would not confirm or deny her presence, ultimately leaving our shelter staff, as mandatory reporters, with no choice but to call Child Protective Services. When the mother finally returned from PATH close to midnight, CPS had unfortunately already taken her children away. While she was ultimately able to regain custody of them, no family should need to go through that to prove they are indeed homeless and need shelter. In addition to that extremely traumatic incident, many families are stuck in conditional status at times for several months in shelter before being found eligible, all the while unable to qualify for housing resources like CityFHEPS, the most effective tool DHS has for attaining permanent housing.

    ii. **Rent reasonableness tests will further lengthen the CityFHEPS application process, and depending on the methodology could result in**

viable housing opportunities being lost. Trying to conduct rent comparisons is not an exact science, as units vary in large and small ways within a community. It is also unclear whether the methodology only factors in recently leased units or also ongoing rent payments from long-term tenants or rent-stabilized units which would not reflect current market prices and could artificially lower the reasonable rent calculation. Beyond tests for new applications, the administration intends to test rents at annual renewal for the 65,000 households receiving CityFHEPS. Commissioner Dalton's testimony that there would not be new staff hired to conduct these tests is a cause for concern that this additional responsibility will further strain workloads of current HRA staff focused on processing CityFHEPS applications and renewals.

iii. **Move HCR legal regulated rent verifications to post lease signing to avoid further delaying the process.** We are not aware of overcharges being a significant problem to warrant this widescale adoption, however if the administration switches verifications to post lease signing and works with tenants to lower their rents and pursue treble damages, this measure could further the Mayor's efforts to hold bad landlords accountable while maintaining streamlined processes for accessing permanent housing.

iv. **Reductions in broker fees will negatively impact CityFHEPS utilization for shelter residents.** Shelter residents face an uphill battle finding permanent housing when using a voucher, competing with cash-in-hand renters for an exceedingly small percentage of low to moderately priced apartments. Brokers are used on occasion to help shelter residents having tougher times locating viable housing. Acknowledging that one month's rent is the standard fee for cash renters who utilize brokers, the paperwork and inspection process for voucher holders is comparatively more work. Without a strong enough incentive, brokers may lose interest in working with voucher holders, given the easier alternative.

3. <u>Contract Reforms and Investments in the Nonprofit Homeless Services Sector</u>

   a. **Fully Implement Local Law 156-2025, providing 50% advances for non-profit human services contracts.** VOA-GNY is alarmed by recent reports that the Mayor is considering delaying implementation of New York City's new nonprofit contract law, which ensures timely payments to nonprofits providing critical services to New Yorkers in need. This law was passed by the Council to address a longstanding crisis of delayed payments to nonprofits that forced providers to front the City's cost of shelter, domestic violence, services, and other essential

services.

Nonprofits are not the City's bank. Any delay, of any amount, would have a serious and immediate impact on our programs, our workforce, and New Yorkers who depend on our services. Nonprofits support the City in battling the affordability crisis by implementing its boldest policy initiatives, from social services to affordable housing development. **Delaying payments would not resolve the cash flow challenge; it would simply shift the burden from the City to the nonprofit sector and our workforce. We urge the Mayor to fully implement the law as enacted, and work with nonprofit providers to address the City's fiscal challenges without undermining the essential services that keep our communities housed, safe, and healthy.**

b. **Resolve the DHS and HRA Contract Reimbursement Backlog, Paying Back Nonprofit Providers for Services Rendered Years Ago. As of March 31st, 2026 VOA-GNY is owed approximately $23.8 million for contracted services rendered as far back as FY21.** Even if we were fully paid back tomorrow, these reimbursement delays do not come without costs, as our organization has had to take private loans to float expenses incurred by the City's chronic delays. **In FY25 VOA-GNY paid $1.08 million in non-reimbursable interest, and for FY26 we budgeted $1.14 million. This money could have done a lot of good for New Yorkers, had the City paid us on time.**

Commissioner Dalton's testified that average invoice processing is 31 days, which more than three times exceeds the 9-day timeline in DHS' fiscal manual. But as Chair Lee and the Council well understand, invoicing is only the last step in the City's reimbursement process that unfortunately for nonprofits, could span years.

We urge the Council and administration to take a critical eye on further improving DSS' timeline for processing contract amendments and budget actions. Providers cannot invoice while budget modifications are active, as well as registration delays and outright refusals to review new needs on an emergency basis, leaving providers to front costs while begging for reimbursements later.

While the City has a limited pot of money in a returnable grant fund to provide interest free loans to nonprofits, **VOA-GNY is being prohibited from accessing more bridge loans to cover current costs until DHS pays back monies owed to the fund for prior loans**. Such situations demonstrate the limitations of the loan fund and signal the need for action to address the payment backlog.

We successfully applied for and received 16 bridge loans totaling $4.6 million,

but $4 million of reimbursements are held up by DSS, either because of pending contract amendments or us awaiting HRA's go ahead to submit POCRs. HRA asked us to sequence our invoices according to their timeline, regardless of the urgency of this situation. Thus, our organization is in a similar position to last year, owed significant monies and lacking a transparent timeline for the agency to process our contract amendments and budget actions to enable VOA-GNY to invoice for services provided from prior years only now, we have no access to emergency loans to soften the impact of these delays.

c. Improve the City's shelter portfolio to make it more humane and welcoming to people experiencing homelessness

i. Conduct a Shelter Conditions Capital Needs Assessment to address physical concerns to reduce aversion to shelter. This administration inherited an aging shelter portfolio patched together over decades. We urge the City to build upon its efforts to address long-standing conditions issues like at the 30th Street Intake Center, to do a full assessment of the needs of the entire shelter portfolio to ascertain the degree to which each site needs repairs. Shelters have been stuck in perpetual loops resubmitting the same new needs request year after year to fix conditions like leaky roofs or outdated issue-prone elevators without resolution, ultimately leading to more costly damage as maintenance issues compound. Under resourcing capital needs of shelter contracts sets both the clients and staff up for failure, and this administration could finally right a longstanding reason people choose to not enter shelter.

ii. Update the DHS Model Budget to be indexed to inflation and increase funding for building maintenance. The DHS Model Budget exercise in 2018, while increasing budget lines for the lowest paid shelter contracts, did not include increases for inflationary costs. Each year, we see fixed costs increase, including healthcare, water, and utilities, yet our program budgets remain flat. As a stop-gap measure, DHS allows providers on a case-by-case basis to modify our budgets to use accruals from Personnel Services (PS) budget lines due to vacancies to cover these increased costs. Without addressing inflation, our PS lines will continue to be cannibalized to cover OTPS costs, reducing wages and the number of staff within shelter programs.

We urge DHS to increase funding for building maintenance within DHS shelter budgets. Our maintenance staff work hard to keep our shelters clean and in good condition, but they are stretched thin. By increasing

maintenance staff lines, DHS shelters can bolster headcount to help maintain dignified spaces for clients and help prevent minor issues from growing into costlier repairs.

iii. **Establish a dedicated renovation and preservation fund to conduct major repairs and implement trauma-informed redesigns of City-owned shelters.** The City's aging shelter portfolio utilizes repurposed spaces like Parks Department buildings which were not originally designed for their current use and have likely seen limited renovations over decades of use. The administration by establishing a fund to renovate these City-owned buildings, can modernize its temporary housing stock while reenvisioning physical layouts that incorporate trauma-informed designs to help soothe the inherently traumatizing experience of homelessness for people in shelter.

iv. **Empower nonprofit operators in the capital repairs process to inform DHS' plans and help smooth the impact for staff and clients.** Nonprofit providers are the closest to the work and operations of their buildings and should be included when DHS develops plans to renovate their facilities. Our insights can help make good strategic decisions and prioritize which items need to be remedied most urgently. By engaging in the planning process, providers will also be able to create transition plans with advanced notice for program staff and the ability to help better support impacted clients.

d. **Fund the 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers.** Thank you to the Speaker Menin and the Council for your support of the sector with a multi-year COLA. We are enthused to see that the executive budget includes the final year of the COLA slated to go into effect July 1st, 2027. Next year, the Mayor and the Council will need to prioritize lifting salaries for human services workers with another COLA and ideally, a multi-year investment.

e. **Pass Int. 452-2026 (Stevens), the Human Services Wage Equity Legislation to establish wage parity between City and nonprofit human services workers.** While COLAs can help workers to keep up with the cost of inflation, they are not a long-term solution to address chronic underpayment of government contracted human services workers. Our nonprofit workforce is paid a fraction of what City workers earn doing equivalent work. This legislation would seek to close the gap, finally addressing a longstanding deficiency and helping tens of thousands of nonprofit human services workers to earn equal pay for equal work.

Education Recommendations:

VOA-GNY, an anti-poverty organization focused on ending homelessness in the Greater New York area, recognizes that focusing on providing services for three pillars, housing, health, and wealth, can help lift people out of poverty and break the cycle long term. A good education is fundamental to helping people gain higher paying jobs and generate wealth.

1. **Volunteers of America- Greater New York is extremely grateful to the Council for your heroic work saving our signature initiative Operation Backpack® in last year's budget!** Thanks to the Council's robust support, Operation Backpack® was able to provide **almost 24,000 backpacks** filled with high-quality grade-appropriate school supplies, **to every student in shelter who needed one!** This targeted operation, in partnership with DHS, identifies the need on the shelter level, ensuring that each child is equipped with fun brand-new backpacks and supplies prior to the first day of school, to start the year off right!

   Through your continued support of $250,000 for VOA-GNY's Operation Backpack® citywide initiative, we can continue to fully meet the needs of students in shelter for the coming school year!

2. VOA-GNY is thankful for the Mayor's inclusion of education investments in the FY27 Executive Budget, including extending and baselining funding for critical initiatives including preschool special education services, summer programming, Learning to Work programs, and early childhood education outreach programs.

   We appreciate Speaker Menin, Chair Dinowitz and the entire City Council for your inclusion of the following programs in your Preliminary Budget Response. We urge you to continue carrying these priorities with you to the negotiating table, calling on the Mayor to restore funding for these critical education programs currently helping thousands of NYC students and their families:

   a. **$8 million for Sensory Exploration, Education, & Discovery (SEED) Programs** for students with intensive sensory needs

   b. **$6 million for Restorative Justice** to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended

   c. **$5 million for Mental Health Continuum** to provide mental healthcare to students at fifty schools

   d. **$4 million for Immigrant family communications and outreach** to help families receive information about their child's schooling in their language and mode they can understand

   e. **$3.75 million for Student Success Centers** to allow youth leaders to build a

culture of college-planning and help their peers with the college admissions process.

Closing

VOA-GNY is grateful to Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Hudson, Chair Sanchez, Chair Dinowitz, and Members of the City Council for your steadfast commitment to nonprofit human services providers and the New Yorkers we serve, and we continue to stand ready to partner with both the Council and the Administration in supporting the needs of all New Yorkers.

Testimony respectfully submitted by Catherine Trapani.

If you have any questions, please contact me at Ctrapani@voa-gny.org .

TESTIMONY OF VOLUNTEERS OF LEGAL SERVICE
Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
June 9, 2026

Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) supports New Yorkers with comprehensive, free legal advice, representation, and education. For over 40 years, VOLS has partnered with community-based organizations and the private bar to provide free civil legal services to New Yorkers who otherwise cannot afford or access representation. Our five core projects serve small business owners, individuals accessing benefits, immigrant young people, incarcerated mothers, and older adults in every borough.

For more than 30 years, VOLS' Incarcerated Mothers Law Project (IMLP) has helped individuals incarcerated in New York's women's prisons and jails, including the Rose M. Singer Center (RMSC) on Rikers Island, with their family law needs. Through this work, VOLS IMLP regularly meets parents who are trying to maintain relationships with their children while navigating incarceration, family court, and re-entry.

What we see is a crisis that goes unnoticed: the steady erosion of family relationships when parents become involved in the criminal legal system. Structural support for parents before incarceration, during detention, and after release is extremely limited to non-existent. Family court and foster care timelines continue to run while parents are being held in custody, communication with caregivers and children becomes difficult, and guidance about parental rights is scarce. As a result, many parents lose contact with their children or, worse, lose their parental rights all together without ever receiving meaningful legal information or assistance.

At RMSC, the VOLS IMLP team meets many mothers and parents who come to our legal clinics hoping to understand how to protect their parental rights. But, far too often, the question they ask us is not how to keep their rights; tragically, it's whether there is any way to get them back after they have already been terminated. Generally, the answer is no. We have found that many of these outcomes could have been prevented with earlier access to legal support.

VOLS IMLP legal clinics at women's prisons assist incarcerated parents with family law matters. While these clinics and the great work of institutional legal services providers and social services organizations such as Hour Children and Osborne Association provide critical support, they are only a small intervention in a much larger systemic problem.

To address this gap, New York City should take three key steps: (1) fund programs that provide family law assistance specifically for incarcerated parents; (2) invest more in community-based organizations such as Hour Children and the Osborne Association so they can develop family law advisory services; and (3) ensure that parents receive clear information about their parental rights and family court obligations at sentencing or at the *earliest* stages of custody.

To ensure that VOLS IMLP can meet the demand for the aforementioned programs, that incarcerated parents may continue to receive family law assistance and adequate legal representation, and that we may expand our offerings to all vulnerable New Yorkers in need, VOLS respectfully requests **$100,000 in Speaker's Initiative funding.**

When parents become involved in the criminal legal system, they should not lose the chance to remain part of their children's lives. With earlier support and targeted investment, New York City can take meaningful steps to preserve these vital family connections.

Testimony in Support of FY27 Funding for Spay/Neuter, Veterinary Care, and Pet Food Pantries

Dear Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and Members of the New York City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We are submitting testimony on behalf of Voters For Animal Rights in support of two critical investments in the FY27 budget:

- **$1.5 million for affordable spay/neuter and veterinary care**
- **$2 million for pet food pantries across New York City**

New York City is a national leader in so many areas, but we are falling behind when it comes to investing in animal care. Despite being the wealthiest city in the country, New York spends approximately **$2.98 per capita on animal care — one of the lowest amounts of any major U.S. city.** By comparison, cities like Miami spend $13.70 per capita and Dallas spends $14.78 per capita. We can and must do better.

Right now, thousands of New Yorkers are struggling to afford food and basic veterinary care for their pets. Families are being forced to surrender animals they love — not because they want to, but because they cannot access the resources they need to keep them.

At the same time, animal rescuers and TNR volunteers across the five boroughs are overwhelmed. They are responding every day to stray and abandoned animals, but without enough affordable spay/neuter appointments, veterinary services, or city support to meet the need.

Investing in prevention is not only the compassionate choice — it is the fiscally responsible choice.

It costs New York City more than $1,000 to shelter an animal after they enter the system. By comparison, approximately $250 can provide basic veterinary care, vaccines, and spay/neuter services that help keep animals with their families and prevent unplanned litters before they happen. Upstream investments save money, reduce shelter intake, and improve outcomes for animals and people.

We are requesting **$1.5 million for spay/neuter and wellness care through nonprofit veterinary providers.**

This funding would help provide essential veterinary services for more than **10,000 cats and dogs annually**, supporting pet owners, rescue organizations, and trap-neuter-return volunteers. It would reduce overcrowding at Animal Care Centers of NYC, prevent unnecessary suffering, and allow more families to keep the animals they love.

We are also requesting **$2 million for pet food distribution through nonprofit community-based organizations.**

With 36% of New York City adults and 42% of families with children reporting food hardship in the past year, too many households are being forced to make impossible decisions between feeding themselves and feeding their pets.

Pet food pantries provide immediate relief. They keep animals out of shelters, keep families together, and create an important connection point where New Yorkers can access additional support and veterinary resources.

New York City's animal welfare system cannot rely only on responding after animals are already in crisis. We need to invest in solutions that prevent suffering before it happens. A city that supports animals also supports the people who love and care for them.

We urge the Council to include **$1.5 million for spay/neuter and veterinary care and $2 million for pet food pantries in the FY27 budget.**

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to building a more humane New York City.

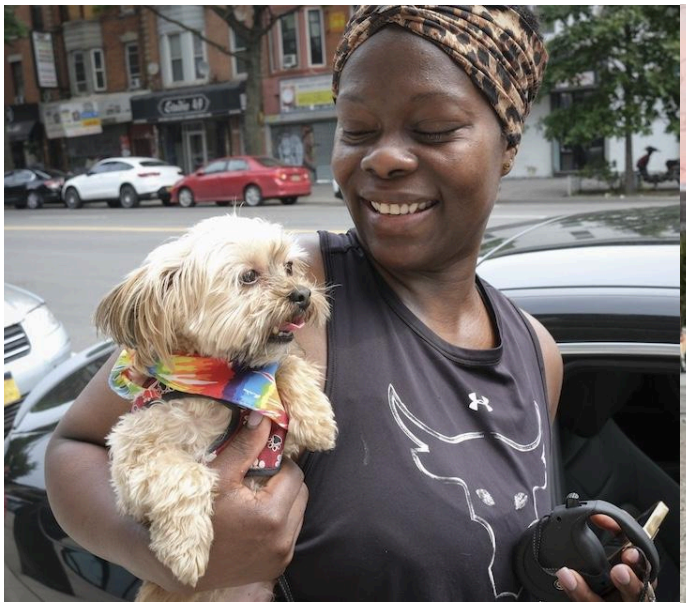
Allie Taylor
Board of Directors, Voters For Animal Rights
1276 Putnam Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11221
vfar.org

Animal Welfare and Pet Affordability

Policy Transition Team Memo For Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani

Prepared By Flatbush Cats and Voters For Animal Rights
Updated 12/12/2025

Top Priority: Making Pet Care Affordable to Keep NYC Pets With Their Families




New York City is facing a preventable animal welfare and public health crisis. Rising veterinary costs, housing instability, and gaps in community support are stretching animal shelters way beyond their limits. Families are surrendering pets due to solvable medical or financial challenges, and overcrowded shelters are straining staff, budgets, and outcomes.

- Every New Yorker loves their pet and believes they are family. But right now, **over 4.7 million NYC residents** live in households that cannot afford a basic vet visit.[1]
- **Affordability and housing** barriers are the top reasons why people end up surrendering their pets to chronically overcrowded city shelters, which operate far beyond capacity. Animal Care Centers of NYC ("ACC") annual intake reached more than 15,000 pets in 2024, while adoption and placement rates have not kept pace. Lengths of stay for shelter pets has increased.
- **1 in 3** animal surrenders in NYC are due to a lack of affordable housing that allows pets.
- Concern around the rising cost of pet ownership - and particularly the cost of vet care - is also the #1 barrier to adoption.[2] The average length of stay for pets at ACC has *tripled* since 2020[3], and **70% of pets now entering the shelter are not spayed or neutered.**

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (link) and American Housing Survey (link)
[2] 2024 Hill's State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report (link)
[3] ABC 7 NY: Animal Care Centers of New York City closed to dog surrenders due to critical capacity (link)

- NYC will spend over **$30 million per year** to run overcrowded animal shelters, but this doesn't address why pets are being surrendered in the first place. **Less than 1% of NYC funding** for animal welfare is focused on services that keep pets with their families.

This crisis is caused by a lack of investment: NYC spends **just $2.89 per capita** on animal care, which pales in comparison to other cities like Miami ($13.70) and Dallas ($14.78).

Upstream Solution: Make basic veterinary care affordable for New Yorkers

- To solve these issues, we must get to the root cause. By our estimates, New York City has approximately **790,000 unfixed pets** in need of free or low cost spay/neuter services right now.[4]
- In FY2026, the City Council created **a new budget initiative to make spay/neuter services more affordable for pet owners and rescuers**. But this covers less than 2% of the need - we must expand this initial $500k funding to appropriate levels to reduce pet surrenders and shelter overcrowding.
- According to the ASPCA, **NYC needs 189,000+ affordable spay/neuter surgeries per year** to get ahead of this problem. Currently, the city is only funding 3,500 spay/neuter surgeries annually.
- Beyond funding veterinary services, the city should support community engagement and outreach efforts to connect New Yorkers with information and key resources, including pet food and other basic supplies.

Policy + Legislative Actions

Immediately

- Appoint a new Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare, as is standard practice for a mayoral transition. Currently this office operates with only one staff member, which is insufficient given the scale of the city's animal welfare challenges. We recommend expanding it into a multi-person team with operational, policy, and data capacity, enabling the city to coordinate prevention strategies, improve access to care, and address the systemic drivers of shelter overcrowding. The new Director should be laser focused on making pet ownership more affordable and accessible for all New Yorkers, which will in turn alleviate the strain on overcrowded animal shelters. We have candidate recommendations.
- Appoint DOHMH leadership or a Deputy Commissioner that understands their duties with regard to animal welfare enforcement. DOHMH is not currently enforcing current regulations governing dog sales, licensing / vaccination compliance, and spay/neuter mandates. This must change.
- Require DOHMH to submit quarterly performance metrics and public reporting - including inspection activities, response times to complaints, and targeted enforcement against illegal breeding and unlicensed animal sales (backyard breeding).

[4] 88% of pets with underserved families are not spayed or neutered. The Humane Society of the US (link).

First year

- Introduction of new legislation requiring **low-cost veterinary clinics in every borough**, mirroring 2018 Local Law 123 which requires that full-service animal shelters are operated in all five boroughs. These can be run by local nonprofits with the funding streams below, with 50-70% of ongoing operating costs covered by service fees. This bill has strong support from current and incoming city council members.
- Introduce a new bill requiring **two pet food pantry pilots** to be run in The Bronx and Brooklyn (the two areas where the need is highest). A bill was introduced on this matter and earned a supermajority, but did not advance. We recommend redrafting the bill with a few updates (see Appendix) and reintroducing it. This bill has strong support from current and incoming city council members, including Speaker-Elect Menin.
- Ensure that pets are permitted in all new construction of affordable housing.
- Reintroduce legislation that would remove no-pet clauses from existing rental housing.

First term

- Work with the City Council to prioritize creating a new **Department of Animal Welfare** through legislation**.** More than 100 years ago, the primary concern and function of "animal control" was to keep stray and rabid animals off city streets. Over many years, the importance of animal protection issues in NYC has evolved to include a wide range of companion animal issues, as well as urban wildlife, and commercial use of animals. DOHMH has become the primary agency responsible for administering laws and regulations related to animals, pets and the environment. However, some of NYC's laws are wildly outdated and in need of overhaul. NYC's most pressing challenges for animals should be met by a well-funded agency dedicated to animal welfare, deeply knowledgeable about and capable of enforcing local laws and empowered to advocate for NYC's animals, increased funding and expanded priorities. Currently, DOHMH has abdicated all responsibility here and does not enforce existing laws, nor advocate for funding priorities.
- A new Department of Animal Welfare would unify management fragmented functions currently spread across DOHMH, NYPD, ACC, OEM, Parks Department and nonprofit organizations into a single, prevention-focused agency coordinating veterinary access, pet retention, field services, wildlife management, and shelter operations. By prioritizing preventative support, the city can keep pets with their families, reduce sheltering costs, and establish a more humane and cost-effective system.
- Next step: convene an interagency and nonprofit working group to formalize operating structure, priority focus areas, staffing and budget for the Department of Animal Welfare.

FY 2027 Budget Needs

Flatbush Cats

- Capital funding to build a second community veterinary clinic in Central Brooklyn, to open in 2028, serving 20,000+ pets and families per year (**$5M** - total capital expenditures estimated at $10 - $12M, with private support to cover the remainder).
- Launch a research-based **community engagement pilot** to identify effective approaches for keeping pets with their family / reducing intake (**$1.8M**). As the recipient of funds from this initiative, Flatbush Cats will deliver a report outlining recommendations and projected costs **for citywide implementation**, including a network of veterinary clinics and other support services across all boroughs.

Open RFP

- Funding for two pet food pantry pilots in The Bronx and Brooklyn (**$6M** - tied to new bill)
- Increase / baseline funding for the current spay/neuter initiative to **$2.5M** in the executive budget (not Speaker funding), to provide 15,000+ affordable spay/neuter surgeries + vaccines per year (all boroughs). Funding should increase in subsequent years as citywide clinic capacity becomes available.

Total for FY 2027: **$15.3 million**

Note: Funding all of these initiatives, in addition to continual baseline support for ACC, still totals less than 0.04% - *less than half of one tenth percent* - of the city budget.

Impact

In addition to **making NYC a more affordable and humane city,** these initiatives pay for themselves. Upstream investments average over **$750 in cost savings per animal**. It costs the city $1,000+ to shelter an animal vs $250 to cover a pet's basic veterinary care needs, help keep them at home and prevent unplanned litters.

Benefits

- **Affordability**
    - More New Yorkers can afford to keep their pets[5]
    - Increased shelter adoptions as cost barriers and housing barriers are removed
- **Quality of Life**
    - Pets are a critical lifeline for many New Yorkers, especially seniors
    - More families can enjoy the love and companionship pets provide
    - Provision of accessible core vital veterinary services for pet owners
    - Fewer pets suffering outside

[5] 45% of surrenders could have been prevented with access to low cost/free veterinary care or support with medical costs. 2024 Hill's State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report.

    - Decrease in preventable euthanasia in shelters
    - Reduced burnout and compassion fatigue for animal shelter staff, rescuers, and volunteers
- **Cost Savings**
    - City will spend 75% less per animal vs current downstream approach
    - Reduced intake and shorter lengths of stay for sheltered pets
    - Total funding required will *decrease* on a per animal basis over time

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Who We Are

Voters For Animal Rights

Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) is a 501(c)(4) organization focused on passing humane legislation that improves the lives of animals and the New Yorkers who care for them. We have a long record of success passing numerous city and state measures protecting shelter animals, companion animals, wildlife, exotic animals, and farmed animals:

- Local Law 138-2017 prohibiting the use of wild animals in circuses
- Local Law 202-2019 prohibiting the sale of foie gras from force-fed ducks and geese
- Local Law 201-2019 prohibiting the trafficking of wild birds
- Local Law 54-2023 prohibiting the sale of guinea pigs in pet stores
- Local Law 132-2024 prohibiting the sale of animals from a residence, aka “backyard breeders”
- State Law prohibiting the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits in pet stores
- State Law prohibiting wildlife killing contests

We also led the successful effort to secure $500,000 in city funding for a spay-neuter TNR pilot program with Flatbush Cats. VFAR also works closely with ASPCA, NYS Animal Protection Federation, Humane World, Animal Legal Defense Fund, World Animal Protection, and NYC ACC. We have deep ties to NYC’s rescuer community in every borough, and our experience informs a practical, solutions-oriented approach to partnering with grassroots rescuers and pet parents.

Other Legislative Priorities for VFAR

- Supporting Intro 1325: Prohibits the sale of birds in pet shops

Flatbush Cats

Flatbush Cats is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on ending overcrowded animal shelters in NYC and beyond. We believe **every pet deserves to see a vet** and get the care they need. We have both the desire and the organizational capacity to provide these critical services and help move NYC animal welfare forward.

Through private funding, we recently built a new nonprofit veterinary clinic (Flatbush Vet) to help more New Yorkers get the care they need for both cats and dogs.

In our first two years after opening, Flatbush Vet has provided **10,000+ affordable spay/neuter surgeries** and 12,500+ wellness appointments for pet owners and rescuers. Over 900 individual rescuers and groups across NYC currently access low cost veterinary care at this facility.

Flatbush Cats works closely with other leading animal welfare partners including ACC, the ASPCA, and Bronx Community Cats. We receive multi-year funding support from The New York City Council (FY 24-26 Discretionary), The New York Community Trust, and PetSmart Charities among others.

Press:

- New investigative series about NYC's hidden cat crisis, and how to solve it: Underfoot
- Interview with Brian Lehrer about how to address NYC's overcrowded animal shelters
- The New York Times: How to Clear 500,000 Feral Cats From New York's Streets

VFAR and Flatbush Cats are trusted, experienced partners on the city's most complex and politically sensitive animal issues — from bodega cats to horse carriages. Having long worked at the intersection of policy and community, we look forward to advising Mayor-Elect Mamdani as he advances an affordability agenda that keeps New Yorkers and their pets together.

Allie Taylor
President, Voters For Animal Rights
allie@vfar.org

Will Zweigart
Executive Director, Flatbush Cats
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Appendix

Updated pet food pantry bill language:

"Within 9 months of the effective date of this local law, the City must establish pet food pantries in at least two locations, one in the Bronx and one in Brooklyn, for a minimum of 24 months.

Nonprofit organizations, existing food pantries, or animal welfare organizations may operate the program. Each location shall maintain accessible operating hours and adequate inventory to support at least X households per month.

Within 30 months of the effective date, lead service providers shall deliver a report evaluating the number of households served, volume of food distributed, geographic accessibility, impact on pet retention and shelter surrender rates, cost per household served, community partnerships established, and recommendations for program continuation, expansion to additional boroughs, or integration into permanent city services."

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CHARITY NAVIGATOR Four Star Charity

June 10, 2026

Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on June 10, 2026 regarding Fiscal Year '27 Executive Budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation

Dear Chair Lee and Finance Committee,

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a community-based organization that has been building healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and/or low-income residents participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health policies and practices for over 35 years.

WE ACT is a member of the Forest for All NYC coalition, comprised of over 200-plus organizations seeking to equitably protect, maintain, expand and promote the New York City urban forest. Our members in Northern Manhattan find themselves at the intersection of vulnerabilities to extreme heat, flooding, and air pollution, in part because low income communities of color have 21% less park space compared to more affluent neighborhoods. The NYC urban forest cools the air, offers shady respite from heat, sequesters carbon, increases energy efficiency, and contributes to New Yorkers' health and wellbeing, and yet it does not serve New Yorkers equitably. We applaud the Mayor for releasing NYC's first ever Urban Forest Plan, required by Local Law 148 of 2023, in April and we are proud to have supported the creation of this Plan. It charts a path for NYC to equitably expand tree canopy cover to 30% citywide by 2040. To ensure the plan is successful, the City will need to plant additional trees, expand the workforce that protects and maintains trees, as well as invest in workforce development programs, tree nurseries, tree health research and monitoring, wood salvage, and more. It is with this mission in mind that we urge this Council to allocate $150 million to ensure the Parks Department and the Urban Forest Plan are set up for success:

- Restoration, expansion, and baselining of NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) staff and programs to support ongoing operations and to grow the urban forest:
- Expand NYC Park's capacity for tree risk management and inspections, including increasing and baselining the number of staff (climbers and pruners, foresters, and related management) and contract funding that are critical for caring for and managing the existing tree canopy across NYC.

- Baseline NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts (approximately 276 positions including Parks Enforcement Patrol, Urban Forest Rangers, Forestry staff, etc.) to limit turnover and sustain the operational efficiency that come from retaining a stable workforce.
- Provide $16M in baselined annual funding to fully implement the Forest Management Framework for forested natural areas, including $2.4M in annual capital funding for large scale restoration and contract work, $11.2M in baselined expense funding for in-house staff to conduct maintenance and for materials and operating costs, and $2.4M in baselined expense funding to provide one trails crew per borough supporting the formalization and maintenance of NYC's nature trail network.
- Increase the number of tree planting staff (via Capital funded Interfund Agreement) to increase the number of street trees planted from just under 18,000 in FY25 to at least 25,000 per year, with the aim of shortening the 9-year Neighborhood Tree Planting Program.
- Increase funding for the trees and sidewalks program, to increase the City's capacity to respond to damage to sidewalks caused by tree roots.
- $1M for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to support non-NYC Parks agencies tasked with heightened management and expansion of trees in their jurisdictions (such as NYC Housing Authority, Department of Education, the School Construction Authority, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, etc.) in implementing initial actions of the forthcoming NYC Urban Forest Plan. This includes funding for an updated citywide Lidar remote sensing data capture and analysis to monitor the canopy coverage of the urban forest and measure the growth or loss of tree canopy coverage and track progress towards the 30% goal, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed every 5 years.

In addition to these budget requests, there are several staffing-related needs that are essential in rebuilding and expanding the City's urban forest workforce, including:

- Salary increases for the advanced and technical civil service roles like Foresters and Climber & Pruners, to help attract and retain the best candidates to manage the nation's largest urban forest.
- Expansion of City-led workforce training programs, including internal programs to train existing employees and create promotional opportunities like the NYC Parks Climber & Pruner program, as well as programs that bring in new

workers to expand overall workforce capacity.

- We are grateful to see $15M for baselined positions in the Executive Budget – this is a step in the right direction. However, there are still 115 positions in NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts that were not included in the Executive Budget such as Parks Enforcement Patrol and GreenThumb Staff. These roles are vital to maintaining high quality, safe parks and fostering community stewardship of parks and community gardens. Without stable funding for these teams, Parks will not be able to optimize their operations because they are forced into a cycle of losing and replacing talent. The whole City benefits when all Parks employees have job security.

These budget requests represent a critical investment in environmental justice by directly addressing the structural inequities that have long denied low-income communities and communities of color equitable access to the benefits of New York City's urban forest. By restoring and stabilizing the workforce, expanding tree planting and maintenance, and ensuring rigorous data tracking and interagency coordination, the City can move beyond piecemeal solutions toward a sustained, systemic approach to climate resilience. Fully funding these initiatives will not only advance the goals of Local Law 148, but also deliver tangible health, economic, and climate benefits—cooler neighborhoods, cleaner air, safer public spaces, and reduced energy burdens—to the communities that have historically borne the greatest environmental harms.

Sincerely,

Caleb Smith
New York City Policy Manager
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
caleb.smith@weact.org | 646-983-7288

NYC Council – Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

I am writing to urge the City Council to honor the commitment made during the One LIC negotiations by including funding for a lighting study in the Long Island City IBZ in the executive budget. Inadequate street lighting has created serious safety concerns — and an equally serious perception of unsafety — that make it increasingly difficult for businesses and their employees to operate in the neighborhood.

Weickert Industries, Inc. is located at 26-35 47th Ave, Queens, NY 11101 and has been in there for *30* of years.

Weickert Industries is a family-owned HVAC, sheet metal fabrication, and mechanical systems contractor serving the New York City metropolitan area. The company specializes in:

HVAC system design and installation
Custom sheet metal fabrication
Air-side mechanical systems
Testing and balancing services
Fire life safety and damper services
Building efficiency and ventilation solutions for commercial and institutional properties

The company is now in its fifth and sixth generations of family leadership, with a long-standing reputation in the sheet metal and HVAC industry.

Hours of Operation:

Monday–Friday: 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Saturday–Sunday: Closed
Additional appointments may be available by request.

Clientele:
Weickert primarily serves:

Commercial buildings
Institutional facilities
Industrial properties
Healthcare facilities
Educational institutions

Weickert
INDUSTRIES, INC.

Property owners and facility managers throughout New York City's five boroughs

Number of Employees: 22

The company is a small-to-mid-sized HVAC and sheet metal contractor with more than a dozen employees.

Publicly listed projects and clients include organizations such as New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and the New York City Department of Education.

Weickert Industries, Inc. has proudly operated in Long Island City, Queens for over a century as a family-owned HVAC and sheet metal contractor serving New York City's commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings. Our work involves the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of mechanical systems that are essential to building performance, including heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and air distribution systems.

As a long-standing industrial employer in the area, we operate a facility that supports fabrication and field operations requiring skilled technicians, equipment handling, and coordination with job sites across the five boroughs. Our employees and vendors regularly move between our shop and project locations, making reliable building infrastructure and safe working conditions critical to our operations.

One of the most persistent challenges we face in Long Island City is aging and inconsistent infrastructure that affects industrial businesses like ours. This includes outdated building systems in surrounding properties, limited modernization of mechanical infrastructure in older industrial buildings, and broader gaps in support for energy efficiency upgrades across the district. These issues directly impact operational efficiency, building performance, and long-term sustainability for businesses operating in the area.

26-35 47th Ave, Long Island City, New York 11101, phone: 718.706.0707 fax: 718.706.0977
www.weickert.com

Weickert
INDUSTRIES, INC.

For companies in the HVAC and construction trades, improving mechanical infrastructure across the district is not only a matter of efficiency but also safety and resilience. Better ventilation standards, upgraded building systems, and improved support for energy-efficient retrofits would help ensure that industrial businesses can continue to operate safely and competitively in New York City.

Weickert Industries has invested heavily in maintaining high standards in our own operations, but broader support from the City is necessary to modernize infrastructure across industrial areas like Long Island City. Without coordinated investment, many older facilities will continue to operate with inefficient or outdated systems that increase costs and limit performance.

We respectfully urge the City Council to support initiatives that fund HVAC modernization, mechanical infrastructure upgrades, and energy efficiency improvements for industrial business zones. These investments will strengthen local manufacturing and construction businesses, improve building safety and performance, and help ensure that companies like Weickert Industries, Inc. can continue contributing to New York City's economy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Weickert
Chief Operating Officer
Weickert Industries, Inc.

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Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
Christopher Durosinmi, Director, Government & Community Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chairwoman Dr. Williams and members of the Committee. My name is Christopher Durosinmi, Director of Government and Community Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and a member of the Cultural Institutions Group. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

The Cultural Institutions Group is a coalition of 39 organizations that care for many of New York City's most significant publicly owned cultural assets across the five boroughs. Together, we help sustain New York's identity as a global cultural capital. Our institutions are welcoming spaces where New Yorkers and visitors gather in our buildings, classrooms, parks, and performance venues. At our core, we are committed to expanding access and opportunity for all. I would like to thank the Council for prioritizing culture and for its advocacy in securing a historic $75 million increase, and more specifically the $45 million baseline increase for the arts and culture sector in Fiscal 2026.

We are thankful to the Mayor for baselining $10 million in his FY27 Executive Budget. However, additional support is needed to maintain current funding levels for the CIG and CDF. We are asking the Council to restore and baseline the $20 million added in the FY26 Budget into FY27. This investment would provide stable, predictable support for New York City's cultural sector. We also urge the City to implement annual funding adjustments to keep pace with rising costs, sustain jobs, and ensure fair wages across the sector. Additionally, we urge improvements to the capital project process. These should include greater transparency, better long-term infrastructure planning, and streamlined procedures to reduce delays. These changes would help organizations more effectively maintain and invest in their facilities. Finally, we request continued support for programmatic initiatives like SCI Network NYC, Urban Advantage, CASA, the Immigrant Initiative, and others that expand cultural resources and opportunities for a broad and diverse range of constituents.

Cultural institutions are powerful economic engines, generating $110 billion dollars in economic activity and supporting local vendors with approximately $500 million dollars in annual spending. At WCS, we operate the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo.

Saving wildlife is central to our mission, and ensuring public access to that work through our parks is fundamental to how we engage and educate New Yorkers. In Fiscal Year 2025, 69 percent of New York City residents, more than half a million visitors, attended the Bronx Zoo through free or discounted admission programs.

Through our Community Access Program (CAP), WCS provides complimentary admission to seniors, young people, individuals with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, and community-based organizations. In partnership with city agencies, including the New York City Department of Homeless Services, the New York City Administration for Children's Services, and the New York Police Department and the New York City Housing Authority, we distributed more than 32,000 free tickets in

2025. In addition to CAP, WCS offers multiple pathways to free or reduced-price access for New York City residents, including Free Wednesdays at the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, where visitors can reserve tickets for up to four guests. The organization also provides free weekday admission year-round for NYC school groups, reaching over 253,000 students and chaperones, and offers complimentary Limited Admission to NYC undergraduate students with proof of eligibility. WCS honors active U.S. military members and veterans with free admission, along with discounted access for their families. Through partnerships like the Urban Advantage Program, WCS has delivered free admission and STEM learning experiences to students and teachers since 2004. Additional initiatives, including free memberships through IDNYC and community partnerships like Community Mayors Inc., ensure access for vulnerable populations and children with special needs across the city. These programs ensure that our parks remain accessible spaces for recreation, learning, and connection.

Workforce development is another critical pillar of our work. Across our parks, WCS provides meaningful pathways for young people to gain skills, experience, and employment. With the support of the City Council, WCS has expanded its STEM Career Lattice, a tiered workforce development model that provides youth ages 14 to 24 with paid opportunities and clear career pathways. Each year, participating youth collectively earn approximately $5.5 million dollars while gaining valuable professional experience. The program currently serves more than 1,900 young people, with strong participation from those underrepresented in STEM fields. Seventy-seven percent of participants identify as youth of color, collectively representing 49 languages.

Building on the success of the Career Lattice program, public support and City Council investments in youth help leverage additional resources to expand opportunities beyond our parks. Through the Eco-Vivencias program, young people gain direct, hands-on exposure to conservation in places like Puerto Rico, while creating a pathway to bring that knowledge and experience back to our parks in New York City. Experiences like the Puerto Rican crested toad restoration project provide students with a real-world understanding of how conservation is practiced both in in the wild and at our zoos and aquarium and help inspire the next generation of conservation leaders.

WCS also led the creation of SCI Network NYC, a collaboration of 8 science-based cultural institutions. With City Council support, in 2025, this network provided 1,141 interns across more than 60 types of internships in fields such as animal care, horticulture, science research, education, and conservation advocacy, earning more than $2.4 million in stipends. These results underscore the tangible value of public investment. Our efforts go beyond student engagement; they establish lasting pathways into growing and in demand career fields. Participants often move forward into seasonal positions, permanent roles, and leadership opportunities within our institutions and across New York City's economy.

As the City Council considers its priorities for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, we respectfully urge continued investment in cultural institutions by restoring and baseline the $30 million that was added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector, implementing annual funding adjustments to keep pace with rising costs and improvements to the capital process. We also request continued support for programmatic initiatives like Sci Network, Urban Advantage, CASA, the Immigrant Initiative, and others that expand cultural resources and opportunities for a broad and diverse range of constituents. Sustained investment ensures WCS can continue delivering for New Yorkers, expanding access, supporting jobs, and strengthening communities across the city.

Thank you.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

Testimony of Win (Formerly Women in Need, Inc.) for the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
June 10th, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. My name is Jade Vasquez, and I am the Director of Policy and Research at Win, the largest provider of shelter and supportive housing to families with children in New York City and the nation. We operate 16 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win "home," including 3,600 children.

Today, as our city faces its worst affordability crisis, approximately 100,000 New Yorkers, including 31,000 children, are experiencing homelessness.[1] As the federal government significantly cuts social welfare programs, like SNAP and Medicaid, and threatens to cut funding for housing assistance and homeless services, it is imperative that our City government expand *not* diminish local programs and initiatives that serve struggling New Yorkers experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. New York City can lead the nation in passing a progressive budget that centers the needs of working people and marginalized communities, and we urge the City to:

1. **Fully implement the 2023 CityFHEPS Reform Package and allocate funding that would extend the rental assistance program to low-income households in the community, expand to households earning 50% of the City's Area Median Income, and remove burdensome work requirements.**

   We are thankful to City Council for passing Local Laws 99, 100, 101 and 102 of 2023, which, if implemented, could have saved the City over $1 billion in shelter costs and cut the family homeless population living in shelter by half, a recent Win analysis found.[2]

   Notwithstanding the Mayor's commitment when he was a candidate, the CityFHEPS expansion was not included in his Executive Budget, which allocated an additional $1.64 billion in FY27 to cover the costs of the existing CityFHEPS program, not the expansion. Today CityFHEPS vouchers house nearly 70,000 households.[3]

   Therefore, we urge the Council to continue fighting for CityFHEPS reforms and allocate sufficient funding to finally begin implementing the laws passed nearly three years ago, so that homeless and housing insecure New Yorkers have the resources they need to become financially stable and to provide a better future for themselves and their families. We also urge Council to pass other reforms to improve administrative delays, such as updating the application technology, decreasing processing times, and streamlining inspections, so that voucher recipients can exit costly shelters sooner.

2. **Allocate $78 million to renovate and preserve 1,325 units of supportive housing.**

   Win supports the Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY) and the Progressive Caucus' "Rentals within Reach" campaign that calls for $78.3 million to renovate 1,000 supportive housing units and permanently preserve an additional 325 units. This funding includes a $13 million flexible expense pot to allow repairs to HRA and DOHMH units, allowing providers to re-rent.

3. **Fully fund and implement Local Law 35 requiring mental health professionals in family shelters.**

   The City must invest $40 million to fully implement Local Law 35 as intended, which mandates clinical mental health professionals in every shelter for families with children, so that families experiencing homelessness can quickly access lifesaving mental healthcare in-person or virtually. Prioritizing this investment in the upcoming fiscal year would create long-term benefits for both the families and the City, as mental health treatments lead to improved health and employment outcomes for recipients.

4. **Increase funding for immigration legal services and rental assistance programs that help long-term stayers in shelter and recent arrivals access legal pathways to work and obtain housing.**

   A significant portion of households in shelters are led by immigrants, including mixed status families, recent arrivals legally seeking asylum, and undocumented families, who tend to be some of the longest stayers in shelters due to low wages and ineligibility for federal assistance. As the Trump Administration continues its attacks on immigrants, removing legal pathways and kicking many immigrant families off federal benefits, it is critical that local governments step in and support these families' legal and housing needs.

   While we are pleased to see the Mayor's Executive Budget include an additional $32.9 million for immigration legal services, it falls short in meeting the legal needs of our immigrant neighbors facing daily and unlawful threats from federal immigration enforcement. Council should allocate an additional $85 million for immigration legal services in FY27 to better enable nonprofit immigration legal service providers and support staff to meet the ever-growing demand of legal aid for New York's immigrant community and maintain a strong City workforce of legal service providers.

   Furthermore, to alleviate shelter capacity, the Department of Social Services established the Special Housing Assistance Resource (SHARE) program, which utilizes up to $68 million in funding from New York State's Rental Supplement Program to provide rental assistance to the longest-term stayers in the shelter system, the vast majority of whom are

undocumented immigrants. Since this program began last year, 36 Win households (or 135 individuals) have exited shelter with a SHARE voucher. On average, these families had spent 4 years in shelter. Thus, the City should invest more funding into this program, so immigrant households ineligible for most housing subsidies finally have a pathway out of shelter and into permanent housing.

5. **Expand Workforce Development Programming in Shelter.**

   While workforce development programs in shelters receive some public funding, it is not nearly enough to provide the educational, financial literacy, and employment upskilling services and workshops that Win's Income Building Program (IBP) offers. Currently, DHS's employment specialist positions have little mentorship or support beyond Program Directors, and consequently little capacity to develop relationships with potential employers.

   The City should allocate more funding toward shelter workforce development programs and adopt a similar model to Win's IBP, including creating a "Job Developer" position responsible for supporting clients prepare for job or school applications and developing robust partnerships with local employers to identify job opportunities, and funding "Youth Income-Building Specialist" (YIBS) positions responsible for serving young people ages 14–21. At Win, YIBS assists clients with school attendance, GED completion, applying for the Summer Youth Employment Program and other internship opportunities, and college readiness.

6. **Continue to fund a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers in FY2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA deal commitment.**

   Win is a proud member of the JustPay campaign committed to raising the wages of hardworking human services workers. We thank the Council for signaling your commitment to a 3% raise through FY27, and we hope you see this as a minimum standard for what is needed for human services workers in future years. In addition to COLA increases, we urge Council to pass Intro 452 which would advance wage equity among human services workers in the nonprofit sector.

In addition to these budget priorities, Win's Action Plan to End Family Homelessness urges the City to: increase funding for source of income discrimination enforcement so that voucher holders can utilize vouchers without risk of refusal; fully fund the Right to Counsel program to prevent low-income households from entering shelter; invest in aftercare services for all families leaving shelter; expand the number of shelter-based community coordinators to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness; and expand direct cash transfer programs serving high risk populations, including families with children experiencing housing instability or homelessness.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

The Trump Administration and Congress have created considerable uncertainty for the nonprofit providers serving low-income New Yorkers who are concerned over the reliability of funds from the federal government. We know federal cuts to social safety net programs will have dire results for the communities we serve, including the closure of programs that serve people experiencing homelessness. Given the imminent loss of these federal programs, it is crucial that New York City, the wealthiest city in the world, allocate the necessary resources to providers and low-income households to help struggling New Yorkers obtain financial stability, and achieve our collective mission of ending homelessness.

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[1] "Facts About Homelessness," *Coalition for the Homeless*, last updated April 2026, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/.

[2] "The Cost of Inaction: How Fully Implementing CityFHEPS Expansion Reforms Could Have Saved New York City Over $ 1 Billion," *Win*, June 2026, https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/The-Cost-of-Inaction-Policy-Report-1.pdf.

[3] "Rental Voucher Expansion Absent From Mayor's Budget Plan, As City Hall Proposes Program Reforms," *City Limits*, May 18, 2026, https://citylimits.org/rental-voucher-expansion-absent-from-mayors-budget-plan-as-city-hall-proposes-program-reforms/

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TESTIMONY

Guillermina Astrid Mero Suarez
Member
Worker's Justice Project
Proyecto Justicia Laboral

Presented to:
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings - Committee on Finance
Hon. Linda Lee, Chair
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Executive Budget Hearings
Committee on Finance

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Good Morning, Chair Linda Lee and members of the New York City Council's Finance Committee.

My name is Astrid. I am originally from Ecuador and have lived in New York for about twenty-five years. I am a small business owner, a worker, a wife, and a mother. Like many immigrants, I have worked hard to build a life for my family and contribute to this city.

I am a proud member of Workers Justice Project. Their support has allowed me to continue growing professionally and take steps toward new opportunities. I hope to launch a second business, a construction company, and obtaining my OSHA and SST certifications with the organization was my first step. These trainings gave me essential skills in workplace safety and prepared me to pursue a new path in construction.

For immigrants like me, who do not inherit wealth or business connections, programs like these are crucial. They help us develop professionally, gain confidence, and create opportunities through hard work. These trainings are not just a certificate, they are a first step toward a better future and a meaningful purpose.

New York City has a responsibility to invest in and protect the immigrant workers who keep our economy running. Council-funded programs such as the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative, the Construction Site Safety Initiative, and the Support for Immigrant Workers and Women program provide critical training and resources that allow workers to succeed and support their families.

We urge the City Council to continue funding these initiatives so immigrant workers can thrive and help build a stronger, more prosperous city for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

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Buenos días, Presidenta Linda Lee y miembros del Comité de Finanzas del Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Nueva York.

Mi nombre es Astrid. Soy originaria de Ecuador y he vivido en Nueva York durante aproximadamente veinticinco años. Soy dueña de un pequeño negocio, trabajadora, esposa y madre. Como muchos inmigrantes, he trabajado duro para construir una vida para mi familia y contribuir a esta ciudad.

También soy una orgullosa integrante de Workers Justice Project. Su apoyo me ha permitido crecer profesionalmente y dar pasos hacia nuevas oportunidades. Espero lanzar un segundo negocio, una empresa de construcción, y obtener las certificaciones de salud y seguridad con la organización fue mi primer paso. Estas capacitaciones me dieron habilidades esenciales en seguridad laboral y me prepararon para seguir un nuevo camino en la construcción.

Para inmigrantes como yo, que no heredamos riqueza ni conexiones empresariales, programas como estos son fundamentales. Nos ayudan a desarrollarnos profesionalmente, ganar confianza y crear oportunidades mediante nuestro propio esfuerzo. Estas capacitaciones no son solo un certificado, son un primer paso hacia un mejor futuro y un propósito significativo.

La Ciudad de Nueva York tiene la responsabilidad de invertir en y proteger a los trabajadores inmigrantes que mantienen nuestra economía en funcionamiento. Los programas financiados por el Concejo, como la Iniciativa de Fuerza Laboral para Jornaleros, la Iniciativa de Seguridad en Sitios de Construcción y el Programa de Apoyo para Trabajadores Inmigrantes y Mujeres, brindan capacitación y recursos cruciales que permiten a los trabajadores avanzar y mantener a sus familias.

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Instamos al Concejo Municipal a seguir financiando estas iniciativas para que los trabajadores inmigrantes puedan prosperar y contribuir a una ciudad más fuerte y próspera para todos los neoyorquinos.

Gracias por la oportunidad de presentar mi testimonio.

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TESTIMONY

Lucia Montes de Oca Garcia
Member
Worker's Justice Project
Proyecto Justicia Laboral

Presented to:
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings - Committee on Finance
Hon. Linda Lee, Chair
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Executive Budget Hearings
Committee on Finance

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Good Morning, Chair Linda Lee and members of the New York City Council's Finance Committee.

My name is Lucia. I am originally from Mexico, and I have lived in the United States for the past twenty-two years. I am a proud member of Workers Justice Project, an organization that supports and advocates for immigrant workers like me. Through my active participation in its programs and activities, I have been able to grow both personally and professionally.

Not long ago, I was offered a job opportunity in the construction industry. Unfortunately, I was unable to accept the position because I did not have the OSHA and SST certifications required to work on construction sites in New York City. Thanks to Workers Justice Project, I was able to enroll in and complete both the Cleaning Technician and OSHA/SST training programs. Through these programs, I strengthened my professional cleaning skills and received critical site safety training. Upon completion of one of the trainings, I earned a certificate from Workers Justice Project and Cornell University. For me, this program was more than just a learning experience—it was a pathway to greater economic opportunity and a chance to build a better future for myself and my family.

New York City has a responsibility to invest in, protect, and support the immigrant workers who help keep our economy running. Council-funded programs and services, including the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative, the Construction Site Safety Initiative, the Support for Low-Wage Workers Program, and the Support for Immigrant Workers and Women Program, play a vital role in helping immigrants access training, resources, and opportunities. These investments enable workers to contribute to the city's growth, advance economically, and help create shared prosperity for all New Yorkers.

We urge the New York City Council to continue funding and strengthening these essential initiatives. Immigrant workers need access to the resources, training, and protections that allow them to work safely, support their families, and continue building the city we all call home.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.
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Buenos días, Presidenta Linda Lee y miembros del Comité de Finanzas del Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Nueva York.

Mi nombre es Lucía. Soy originaria de México y he vivido en los Estados Unidos durante los últimos veintidós años. Soy un miembro de Workers Justice Project, una organización que apoya y defiende a trabajadores inmigrantes como yo. A través de mi participación activa en sus programas y actividades, he podido crecer tanto personal como profesionalmente.

Hace poco tiempo, me ofrecieron una oportunidad de trabajo en la industria de la construcción. Lamentablemente, no pude aceptar el puesto porque no contaba con las certificaciones OSHA y SST requeridas para trabajar en obras de construcción en la Ciudad de Nueva York. Gracias a Workers Justice Project, pude inscribirme y completar los programas de capacitación de Técnico de Limpieza y OSHA/SST. A través de estos programas, fortalecí mis habilidades profesionales de limpieza y recibí capacitación fundamental en seguridad en el lugar de trabajo. Al completar una de estas capacitaciones, obtuve un certificado otorgado por Workers Justice Project y la Universidad de Cornell. Para mí, este programa fue mucho más que una experiencia de aprendizaje; fue una puerta hacia mayores oportunidades económicas y una oportunidad para construir un mejor futuro para mí y mi familia.

La Ciudad de Nueva York tiene la responsabilidad de invertir en, proteger y apoyar a los trabajadores inmigrantes que ayudan a mantener nuestra economía en funcionamiento. Los programas y servicios financiados por el Concejo Municipal, incluyendo la Iniciativa de Fuerza Laboral para Jornaleros, la Iniciativa de Seguridad en Sitios de Construcción, el Programa de Apoyo para Trabajadores de Bajos Salarios y el Programa de Apoyo para Trabajadores Inmigrantes y Mujeres, desempeñan un papel
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fundamental al ayudar a los inmigrantes a acceder a capacitación, recursos y oportunidades. Estas inversiones permiten que los trabajadores contribuyan al crecimiento de la ciudad, avancen económicamente y ayuden a crear una prosperidad compartida para todos los neoyorquinos.

Pedimos al Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Nueva York que por favor continúe financiando y fortaleciendo estas iniciativas esenciales. Los trabajadores inmigrantes necesitan acceso a los recursos, la capacitación y las protecciones que les permitan trabajar de manera segura, mantener a sus familias y seguir construyendo la ciudad que todos llamamos hogar.

Gracias por la oportunidad de presentar este testimonio.

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The New York City Council's Finance Committee
Executive Budget Hearing
Honorable Chair Linda Lee
June 10th, 2026

Good morning esteemed Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Janice Chong and I am a youth leader at the YA-YA Network, and I am an intern with the Dignity in Schools Campaign of New York. I was a student in the New York City public school system from K-12 and I graduated high school last year. I am an incoming sophomore at Georgetown University, but I'm still here to fight for the next generation of public school student's wellbeing.

This year's executive budget proposal threatens to cut important funding towards restorative justice, the mental health continuum, immigrant family communications, and other essential equity-based services.

These cuts will directly impact students. As a former public high school student who didn't have access to restorative justice services in her school, and who only became deeply ingrained in restorative justice practices because of external programs like the YA-YA Network and DSC-NY, I know first hand how dangerous it is to not have any restorative justice programs in schools.

Unfortunately, a student at my high school experienced a mental health crisis that involved a knife threat. Instead of seeking a restorative justice or mental health counselor to deescalate the situation, my school's administration decided to go on a shut down and use police force. The presence of police and the overall shutdown scared my classmates, and it especially scared the young person who was going through a crisis, who ended up fleeing the school. To this day I believe that if a team of counselors that were trained in trauma-informed deescalation techniques made contact with the student before the police attempted to, the students wouldn't have felt the need to flee.

This is not the only instance in public schools where restorative justice or mental health access could have helped young people in public schools. This is why it's important to fully fund restorative justice, mental health, and immigration protections in schools. By freezing the hiring of school police, eliminating vacancies, and reinvesting approximately $90 million in savings into restorative justice, mental health supports, and immigrant protections, the city will be positively impacting every student and young New Yorker.

If empowering the youth is your goal, then funding restorative justice, the mental health continuum, and immigrant protections will be your priority.

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IN THE KEY OF love

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Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
Submitted by:
Francisco J. Núñez, Founder & Artistic Director
Young People's Chorus of New York City
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Francisco J. Núñez, Founder and Artistic Director of Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC).

For nearly four decades, YPC has used the power of music to bring together young people from diverse backgrounds while providing high-quality arts education, mentorship, and performance opportunities. Each year, we serve more than 2,000 children and teens across New York City through our Performance Choruses, School Choruses, and Community Choruses programs.

Before addressing our funding requests, I would like to express our appreciation for the City Council's longstanding support of arts and culture. We are grateful that the Fiscal 2027 Executive Budget includes additional funding for the cultural sector, and we respectfully urge the Council to continue working toward fully restoring and baselining arts and culture funding. Stable and predictable public investment is essential for nonprofit organizations like YPC that provide year-round educational programming, workforce opportunities for teaching artists, and free or low-cost access to the arts for thousands of New York City families.

At a time when organizations face rising operating costs and increasing demand for services, sustained support for the arts is an investment in young people, communities, and New York City's future. Arts organizations are critical partners in education, youth development, mental wellness, and community building, and they deserve the stability necessary to plan for long-term impact.

We respectfully request the Council's support for the following FY27 priorities:

- **$150,000 Speaker Request** *(Performance & Community Choruses, including cultural exchange with China and Spain)*
- **$30,000 Cultural Immigrant Initiative** *(Programming in large immigrant neighborhoods)*
- **$30,000 Manhattan Delegation Funding** *(School Choruses – Manhattan)*
- **$20,000 Queens & Brooklyn Delegation Funding** *(School Choruses – Queens & Brooklyn)*
- **$30,000 Bronx Delegation Funding** *(Community Chorus at Kips Bay in the Bronx)*
- **$100,000 CASA Renewal** *(Councilmembers Ariola, Mealy, Sanchez & Schulman)*

These funds will support YPC's citywide programming, including free School Choruses in New York City public schools, community-based choruses serving youth and families, and performance opportunities that foster artistic excellence, leadership development, and cross-cultural understanding.

Through music, YPC helps young people build confidence, strengthen social-emotional skills, develop academic discipline, and experience the joy of belonging to a diverse and supportive community. Public investment ensures that these opportunities remain accessible to children and families regardless of financial circumstances.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. We look forward to continuing our work with the Council to ensure that all young people have access to transformative arts experiences.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Draft: testimony for New Visions portal

Dear City Council,

Please do not remove the New Visions Portal from the DOE budget. It is an invaluable tool for principals and school staff, especially for helping to support our most struggling students and to ensure that they graduate. The DOE thinks that the system, Insight, is similar, but Insight give misinformation and is vastly inferior. **As a principal for the past 10 years of a school with an economic needs index of 93% (The Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn,)** I have found that **the New Visions Portal gives much more accurate information about students and allows us to develop and track individualized supports that actually help students.**

For example, just before I wrote this, I was looking up one of my seniors and the DOE insight tool is not helpful in supporting her. It lists her as "off track" and will not register that she has a 504 plan and thus is on track for a local diploma. It also has confusing information, such as listing "unearned credits" which I have to infer are credits that she failed the first time and made up in summer school. Even though she made them up, they're still listed as "unearned." And it has no way for me or my staff to add any interventions planned for her or any notes. As a busy principal, I don't have time to use a system with bad information.

Meanwhile the information on the New Visions portal enables me to accurately support this student. It shows this same student clearly listed as being "safety net eligible" meaning she has a 504 plan and can graduate with her current Regents scores. I can see what interventions we have planned for her, as well as a comprehensive lists of years of her reading levels and other relevant, past and future information (including whether she's had an IPR and whether she's applied to CUNY and submitted her FAFSA and TAP). It's clear, formatted in a way that's easy to read, and all on the same page.
And for all students, if they really are off track, the New Visions portal lays out clearly and easily what we can do to get them back on track (in terms of Regents or credits)

There are so many other aspects of the New Visions portal that we use all the time to help us help students.

The NV portal also enables us to support individual students with attendance. It has an easy to read 1-page printout of each student's attendance with much relevant information, including comparison to past years, a list of monthly averages, and the day by day layout. We print this out 1x per week for at-risk students and conference with them! We also print it out quarterly for the entire school.

The NV portal also enables us to support students to overcome Regents as a barrier to graduation, individually through its mock regents tool. The Mock Regents tool allows us to

have high-level overview of mock Regents results, as well as detailed student-level results, in an easy to use manner, which we used to plan reteaching of key concepts AND to put students into groups based on their understanding.

Thank you,
Catherine Mitchell, Principal
Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn

FY27 Citywide Initiative: Journalism for All

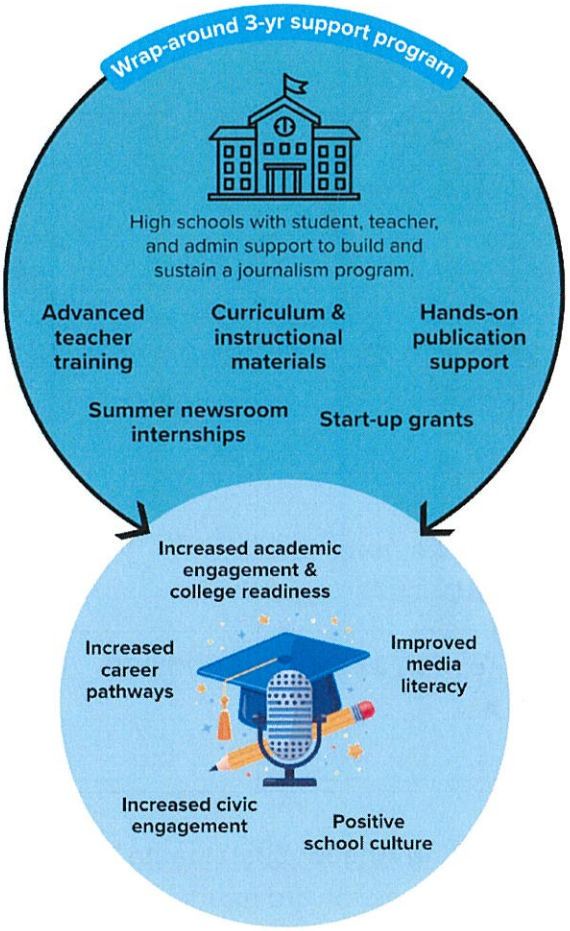
Updated: May 5, 2026

The Challenge & Civic Imperative

Despite being in the media capital of the world, **fewer than 20 percent of NYC public high schools offer journalism education**.[1] This scarcity persists amid mistrust in news sources, intense mis- and dis-information campaigns, and extremely low rates of news literacy[2]. Safeguarding critical thinking skills and creating equitable career pathways are immediate imperatives to prepare our students for their future and protect the civic health of our city.

The Solution: Journalism for All

Following 18 months of development with City Council Members, CUNY Newmark, journalism educators, and students, the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition (YJC) launched the Journalism for All pilot in 2025. Supported by over $1M in philanthropic support, the program currently supports 30 high-need schools piloting a replicable model for schools across the city.



Our schools receive:

- Comprehensive curricula & instructional materials.
- Advanced professional development & teacher coaching.
- Start-up funding and expert, tailored technical support to launch and sustain student publications.
- Paid summer internships for students at local newsrooms.

By increasing access to early, high-quality journalism experiences, Journalism for All will expand students' career opportunities, grow their representation in newsrooms and media coverage, and strengthen our democracy.

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[1] NYC Department of Education, "LL 27/2025 Student Journalism Programming Report 2024-2025," Sep. 2025.
[2] News Literacy Project, "News Literacy in America: A survey of teen information attitudes, habits and skills," Oct. 2024.

FY27 Ask

We are building a targeted public-private partnership to sustain and expand. The budget is designed to maximize every public dollar and deliver direct, high-quality school support.

Program Area	FY27 Ask	Details
Direct School Grants	$150,000	Seed funding and capacity building (e.g., essential equipment and software) sent directly to the 30 pilot schools. *This $150k public investment will be matched by private philanthropy.*
Hands-on School Support	$150,000	Administered centrally by YJC, these funds will be distributed to vetted, expert media contractors matched with schools through a competitive RFP process to provide hands-on journalistic support.
Initiative Management	$200,000	This funds the centralized personnel to manage the career pathways pipeline, ensure quality assurance, and conduct program evaluation. *This is the formal discretionary request made by Bell Voices, Inc.*
SYEP Newsroom Internships	$0	This represents a $150,000 component that is already committed through a new SYEP (DYCD) sector-focus pathway.
Curriculum + teacher training R&D	$0	Developed and implemented in partnership with the CUNY Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, entirely funded by private philanthropy.
Total FY27 City Ask	**$500,000**	*Leveraging $1M+ in private investment to sustain a 30-school cohort piloting a turnkey model for schools across the city.*

Looking Ahead: Sustainable Expansion

As we look toward future growth, our goal is to 1) integrate the program model into the DOE ecosystem and 2) continue our foundational academic partnership with CUNY Newmark through future city funding. By making this commitment in FY27, the City Council will bring us closer to closing the opportunity gap and help bring media literacy and career readiness to high schools in every District.

Contact: CJ Sánchez, Director, NYC Youth Journalism Coalition, cj@youthjournalismnyc.org
Website: www.YouthJournalismNYC.org

Sophie Mode, Program Associate, NYC Youth Journalism Coalition, NYCPS Graduate

My name is Sophie Mode. I am a New York City public school graduate (class of 2021), and I currently work with the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition to expand access to journalism education for every student in our schools.

As people who care about education and young people, it can often be hard to know where to start when it comes to addressing the plethora of concerns facing the largest school system in the nation. And there is no one solution, but we are here to speak about one that checks a lot of boxes: access to journalism education.

The students speaking after me will testify to the profound impact journalism has had on them, their peers, and their school communities at large.

You'll hear from them the urgency for journalism education in this moment.

How it fosters a culture of belonging and inclusion when divisiveness is so high.

How it builds media literacy when disinformation continues to rise.

How it gives their school leadership, the DOE, and you all, the opportunity to hear about the issues that students and teachers care about.

How it generates career pathways that are sorely needed, particularly in building a news industry that is actually representative of our city and country.

And that is all on top of the reading, writing, research, leadership, critical thinking, creativity, technical, and communication skills it develops, making it a strong answer to an upcoming challenge schools will face: the new Portrait of a Graduate framework. Journalism education is the answer to the questions of our time. Journalism is a necessity for a true democracy, and it must begin in our classrooms.

We urge you to create a Journalism for All Citywide Initiative in the FY27 Budget. Journalism for All is not a short term solution or quick fix. It is a tested, wraparound model for total support, designed to scale across the city while still ensuring support meets schools where they are instead of forcing them into a one size fits all model.

Currently, very few schools offer journalism education, as proven by Local Law 27 passed by the Council last year. And, access is starkly divided along the same equity gaps that plague our school system.

We have already seen the impact of Journalism for All in our pilot cohort, in schools like Hala's, Summer's, Jayleen's, Leair's, and Camilla's.

I am now so excited to introduce our student leaders, who can tell you firsthand about the impacts of access, and of a lack thereof. Thank you for your time.

Jayleen Mendez, sophomore, Lyons Community School

Good afternoon. My name is Jayleen and I am a 15 year old student at Lyons Community School.

I am here today to ask you to support funding for Journalism for All so more students across New York City can have opportunities like I have had.

Being part of journalism has helped me grow in so many ways. I have learned how to research, interview people, write articles, and communicate effectively. But more importantly it has helped me find my voice.

One of my first assignments was interviewing another student at my school and I was so nervous beforehand that I kept practicing my questions over and over. When the interview started they shared personal challenges they had faced and I realized how much it means when someone takes the time to listen. When I saw their story published I felt proud because I had helped tell a story that mattered.

Through journalism I have learned that every person has a story worth hearing. Journalism has allowed me to help keep my school community informed, celebrate student achievements, and give students a platform to be heard. I hope you will support funding for Journalism for All so more students can find their voice just like I did. Thank you for your time.

Summer Jara, sophomore, Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy Charter School

Good Afternoon, my name is Summer Jara, and I am a 15-year-old sophomore attending Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy, an all-girls charter high school located in the Bed-Stuy area. I am very fortunate to be given the access to raise awareness about journalism and its dire need in educational systems to you all.

I sit here today because my school stands strongly alongside a journalism program that has been embedded into our school curriculum. This program is not only mentioned within the walls of my journalism class but is also talked about amongst students and teachers in every other subject my school offers. That journalism program is Journalism For All.

Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy, also known as BELA, has only recently implemented the Journalism For All program, and the impact of this program has shown significant beneficial change.

With the help of Journalism For All, our school has officially created our own newsroom called The Hive. Our journalism class is a place where students can voice their opinions proudly and expand their freedom about any issue they desire, as it follows the policies Journalism For All has helped us produce.

Being able to say my school provides journalism shouldn't be a flaunt but an imperative. Through journalism, I have gained many experiences and opportunities that I thought were unattainable before my knowledge of journalism and program, Journalism For All. Experiences include attending an internship that provided lessons on how to work and set guidelines with the growing use of AI in journalism, and having the opportunity to participate in The School of The New York Times Summer program.

Journalism is a fundamental form of education, news, community connections, and civic liberation, all while serving as a source of entertainment for teenagers like myself.

It is essential to note that although BELA has been given this opportunity to receive funding to support journalism at our school, there are still a large number of schools that lack the accessibility to journalism, and in those schools are students who one day hope to pursue a career in journalism.

Thank you for your time.

Leair Davenport, junior, A School Without Walls

Hey y'all, my name is Leair Davenport, I'm 17, and representing A School Without Walls located near Wall St.

My school has a program through Journalism For All and I feel like journalism is important for me because I not only have a passion for photography, but also a lot of political opinions and opinions in general, so journalism gives me a medium to both publish photography through documentation, as well as get my voice out there.

Some students can struggle with finding a place to chime in, whether about their local community, or about bigger communities that go beyond a neighborhood. A lot of students also struggle with finding a place to start, gather thoughts and information, as well as having some sort of way to be involved whether involved in issues or simply spreading the news of maybe something good. Youth Journalism is what gives these people their voices. During a time of extreme discrimination, climate damage, and silencing, it's important that the people who have to pick up the systems left by the older generations– the kids– can at least have a say in what they want in the future.

Journalism For All and Youth Journalism as a whole has let me use my skills and voice for something meaningful for me, and funding Journalism For All can help allocate resources not only for the program but for the kids who can't have a voice without it. Further the medium for youth to speak up, because younger people are literally and figuratively the future.

Camilla Spillmann, Junior, West End Secondary School

My name is Camilla Spillmann. I'm 17 and I go to West End Secondary School. I'm a part of my school's journalism elective and club which are made possible by Journalism for All.

My school previously had a school paper before journalism for all, but over the course of a few years it crumbled due to a lack of funding and sizably large amount of energy that has to be put in for a paper to be maintained. This year, through Journalism for All, we've been able to revitalize it. In our elective, we've learned about what makes a good story and how to pitch one. We've talked about and practiced interviewing and how to formulate strong questions. We've talked about how best to structure an article and written many of our own. We've experimented with photography: thinking about what could make a good photo, what could fit a certain topic, what would catch readers' attention.

For our first print edition our advisor was able to get it to English teachers in every grade to share the paper with their students. We wrote about exam stress, AI in the classroom, the new state phone policy, local politics, and more. One student interviewed a vendor that sells coffee and pastries in a cart right next to our school – a figure everyone knew of but before that paper, hadn't really thought much about.

I think I speak for everyone here with me when I say that we are here before you because of a crucial belief that student papers are important. They allow students to develop writing, research, and critical thinking skills that are vital not just for college, or future careers, but life. However, they also provide something just as important, a rare opportunity for those my age: a formal outlet for students to talk about the world around them. Issues in their community, interests they care about, problems they may see in the world, or even good parts of their community – such as the impact a local street vendor – that people may otherwise gloss over. That's something I continue to have access to, something I hope more students at my school are able to do, and something I hope more students from schools across the five boroughs have access to themselves. For this reason, council members, I urge you to fund Journalism for All. Thank you.

Hala Musa, Senior, High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology

Hello my name is Hala Musa. I am a senior at the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology. My school has a journalism program through Journalism for All, and it has had a profound impact on me and my school community.

Through journalism, I have learned how to research, interview, fact-check, and tell stories that matter. More importantly, journalism has taught me how to listen to people, understand different perspectives, and use my voice to inform and advocate for my community. As a student leader who is deeply involved in issues of equity and student engagement, journalism has given me another way to create change. It has helped me develop critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills that I will carry with me throughout college and my future career.

The stories my classmates and I write highlight the experiences, achievements, and concerns of students in our school. Journalism helps ensure that student voices are heard and that important issues are brought into the conversation. It creates a stronger, more connected school community where students feel informed and represented. Access to journalism education has empowered students like me to become more engaged in our community and more confident communicators. It gives us the tools to ask questions, seek the truth, and share stories that might otherwise go untold.

I encourage you to fund the Journalism for All citywide initiative so that more students at my school and across New York City can have access to these valuable opportunities. Investing in student journalism is an investment in the next generation of informed leaders, storytellers,and community advocates. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gianna McIntosh, sophomore, Millennium Brooklyn High School

My name is Gianna McIntosh, and I'm a sophomore at Millennium Brooklyn High School. Journalism is important to me because it has become a way for me to build a legacy, to understand my community, ask better questions, and tell stories that matter.

My school doesn't offer a journalism class, but we do have a club. It only meets for an hour, and every week I leave wishing we had more time. I want journalism education to be part of everyday learning so these skills can stay with me and shape the way I see the world. By funding Journalism for All, you can show this commitment to students like me and to the future of our city's schools.

In our club, we write teacher features, club spotlights, reviews of school plays, student perspectives on political events, and opinion pieces about issues that matter to our generation. But it's difficult to fully invest in journalism when we don't have the time or resources to grow these skills. We need space, guidance, and support to make journalism education real.

Learning how to report, write, research, and ask questions has given me confidence and purpose. It has taught me that my perspective matters and that storytelling can create connection, understanding, and change.

That is why it is so important for the City Council to fund journalism education. Even if students don't become journalists, these skills still matter. They teach us to think critically, communicate clearly, and better understand the world around us. Every student deserves the opportunity to learn how to navigate media and information, not just the students who already know how to speak up.

Supporting journalism education means investing in young people's ability to participate, question, and contribute to their communities. In a time when misinformation spreads easily and young voices are often dismissed, journalism education is not optional. It is essential.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Derry Oliver, Rising Junior, Syracuse University, NYCPS Graduate

Good morning, my name is Derry Oliver. Three years ago, I sat in these same seats as a recent graduate of Cobble Hill High School, advocating for funding for the Youth Journalism Coalition. Now I'm back as a rising junior at Syracuse University, majoring in Policy Studies and Law, Society & Policy, with a minor in African American Studies — to do the same. The Youth Journalism Coalition has given high school students access to opportunities that are hard to find, and I am proof of that.

Growing up low-income, I wasn't lacking drive. I was lacking access. Journalism programs, leadership opportunities, and internships often came with a price tag that my family could not afford. Most of these opportunities also required a network that was nonexistent for me.

YJC opened doors I could not open on my own. As a student leader within the organization, I developed leadership skills I now apply as President of College Democrats at Syracuse University. Through the Youth Journalism Coalition, I had the opportunity to write for Teen Vogue about my advocacy work within the organization and to publish an article about my experience with mental health in the education system as a Black girl — which is part of what led me to write for the Daily Orange today. And just recently, I hosted the MLK Young Changemakers event at the Apollo Theater, through connections I built during my time in the Youth Journalism Coalition.

youthrepresent
JUSTICE FROM COURTROOM TO COMMUNITY

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
FY2027 Budget Testimony
Julia L. Davis, Esq. Executive Director of Youth Represent
June 10, 2026

Youth Represent is dedicated to improving the lives and futures of young people impacted by the criminal legal system. When the legal system creates barriers to success for youth, we use the law to help them leave the stigma of a criminal record behind. We provide criminal and civil reentry legal representation and mental health support to young people aged 16-26, assisting them with everything from rap sheet review to school suspensions to employment discrimination and other legal needs they identify. This is our 20th year serving 10,000 young people across New York City.

Thank you to Chair Chair Lee, members of the Finance Committee, and staff for the opportunity to provide written testimony about the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.

New York City Must Invest in Resources and Opportunities for Young People - Not Criminalization

Across New York City's five boroughs, an estimated 32,215 young people under 25–primarily Black and Brown youth–were drawn into the justice system through arrests, convictions, and incarceration in 2025.[1] This is a cycle that will not stop if the City continues to pour money into criminalizing, surveilling, and incarcerating young people before they've had the chance to thrive. Instead, the City must continually invest in community-oriented, youth-specific resources and opportunities to keep New York families safe and healthy. These programmatic and investment priorities are outlined in the 2025 Landscape of Youth Services for Young People with Juvenile and/or Criminal Legal System Involvement ("Landscape Report") which we are proud to have co-created with the NYC Youth Justice Coalition.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the passage of New York's landmark Raise the Age (RTA) law, which ended the shameful chapter in our history of prosecuting 16- and 17-year olds as adults regardless of offense. Prior to the passage of this legislation, 16- and 17-year-olds were held in dangerous conditions on Rikers Island and other adult jails across the state. Moreover, these youth were systematically locked-out of age-appropriate services in family court

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[1] NYS Arrests by County. https://mypublicdashboard.ny.gov/t/OJRP_PUBLIC/views/NYSArrestsbyCounty/CurrentData?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y. Accessed 18 Mar. 2026.
NYPD Arrest Data (Year to Date) | NYC Open Data. https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Arrest-Data-Year-to-Date-/uip8-fykc/about_data. Accessed 18 Mar. 2026.

programs designed to meet the needs of adolescents and avoid the barriers of an adult criminal record.

Despite making up half of the state's youth justice system population, New York City's young people have been excluded from accessing the Raise the Age funding since the law was enacted because the City exceeds the tax cap prescribed by state law. When RTA was enacted in 2017, the state budget both excluded New York City from Raise the Age funding *and* ended cost-sharing for the Close to Home program, placing the full financial, programmatic, and administrative burden of both youth justice programs on New York City alone.

Despite the lack of state funds, New York City made substantial investments in youth justice programming to support Raise the Age implementation as well as older youth and emerging adults, with emphasis on programs that utilized credible messenger mentoring, like ARCHES and AIM, and on alternatives to incarceration and detention.[2] During the Adams administration, many of these programs saw reduced funding or were cut entirely. Among these were programs that provided critical violence prevention and reentry services to youth.

Despite significant gaps in funding and services, youth arrests continue to decrease. Yet Crossroads and Horizons, the youth detention facilities that absorbed the custody of 16 and 17 year olds in the City, are dangerously overcrowded. Between July and September 2025, there were 329 youth detained in NYC's Secure Detention Centers,[3] despite the maximum bed capacity fluctuating between 212 and 259.[4] For over two years, ACS has been operating under a waiver from the Office of Children and Family Services which allows the agency to circumvent the state law that mandates private bedrooms for youth in secure detention. Under this waiver, young people have been sleeping on cots in hallways and classrooms at Horizon and Crossroads. Temporarily adding beds and continually renewing this waiver is a band-aid that does not adequately or sustainably address overcrowding. The time to consider and act on alternatives is now.

The total admissions to Secure Detention and Specialized Secure Detention increased by 24% from October 2024 to September 2025.[5] In 2025, 60% of youth in secure detention were Black, and 31% were Hispanic, as published by NYC's Administration of Children Services Detention Demographic Report from FY 2026 Q1.[6] Black and Brown young people are disproportionately impacted by this overcrowding because they are disproportionately represented in NYC's Secure Detention population.

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[2] Making Raise the Age Work for New York City Youth. Community Justice Collaborative, Oct. 2018. https://mcusercontent.com/9c2de0514632a20b91f239a8c/files/2df86e9d-b229-4fe5-8707-788cf7f59835/raise_the_age.pdf.
[3] "Flash Report - Monthly Indicators." NYC Administration for Children's Services, January 2025. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2025/01.pdf.
[4] Juvenile Detention Facilities - SD/SSD Census | Bureau of Detention Services | Office of Children and Family Services. https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/youth/detention/census.php. Accessed 18 Mar. 2026.
[5] *Quarterly Detention Demographics Report*. Fiscal Year 2026 4th Quarter. New York City Administration for Children's Services, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2026/detention-demographic-q1.pdf.
[6] ibid.

ACS does not provide adequate data to accurately represent the kinds and severity of charges faced by young people held in Secure Detention in NYC. More granular data on arrest charges by borough would better guide allocation of resources to specific programs in the places they are most needed. This lack of data obstructs any effort to understand the problem of overcrowding in these facilities and to develop a comprehensive decarceration plan to identify young people in each borough who could be released with supervision or moved to Alternative to Detention (ATD) / Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs while their case is open.

This is not an easy problem to solve. Many youth in Secure Detention and Specialized Secure Detention face serious charges in adult court as Adolescent Offenders and Juvenile Offenders. Substantially reducing the number of youth in detention will require a comprehensive plan and substantial investment of resources to provide robust ATD and ATI services to youth in every borough and to reduce youth arrests for serious offenses. In addition to the need for adequate services, the City has never fully reckoned with the impact of COVID on youth - the adolescents and emerging adults with the deepest system involvement today were in elementary, middle and high school during the height of the pandemic, and experienced learning loss, peer disconnection, and service disruption not to mention the trauma of family illness and death.

The City Must Implement a Comprehensive Decarceration Plan

Too often, young people only gain access to the services and supports they need *after* they have already been arrested or are in crisis. Instead of building systems that proactively meet young people where they are, we wait until they have contact with the legal system before mobilizing resources. At that point, service organizations are asked to do the incredibly difficult work of wrapping a young person in supports while also confronting the deeper challenges that may have led to system involvement in the first place—poverty, trauma, unmet educational needs, housing instability, and lack of economic opportunity.

Across New York City, the organizations entrusted with serving young people are asked to meet increasingly complex needs while operating with exceptionally limited resources. City contracts for youth services remain significantly underfunded compared to adult service contracts—contracts that are themselves insufficient—creating persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff and maintaining the continuity of care that young people need to thrive. These constraints are particularly acute as we better understand the profound impacts of mental health challenges and trauma among youth; hiring and retaining clinical professionals capable of responding to these needs requires meaningful and sustained investment.

If young people are truly our future, then we must invest in them now—by strengthening community-based services, ensuring youth providers are adequately resourced, expanding access to economic opportunity, and building a coordinated system that meets young people where they are. The Landscape Report provides a roadmap for a fully-funded, sustainable continuum of services that includes prevention, alternatives to incarceration and detention, and reentry.

Incarcerating Youth *DOES NOT* Work:

To address the overcrowding crisis and successfully redirect and depopulate Secure Detention, **the City must expand investments in youth-specific ATDs and ATIs, especially for felony charges**. We know that incarceration has disastrous effects on youth outcomes: residential placements and incarceration create obstacles to psychosocial development, making it harder for youth to learn to control impulsive and aggressive behavior, function autonomously, take responsibility for their behavior, and consider other points of view. Research indicates that confining young people increases the probability of recidivism as an adult by between 20-30%. Studies support the diversion of young people away from settings that confine them as soon as possible; for even a short period of custody has lifelong detrimental physical and mental health effects.

In response to the wealth of research that underscores the detriments of incarcerating youth, we challenge the New York City Council to adopt the goal of reaching a policy of "zero youth detention," as described in the Landscape Report. This is a widely supported goal across jurisdictions and among young people, families, service providers and advocates. "By scaling a continuum of community-based responses, New York City can provide strength-based, effective solutions that help youth remain safely in their homes and communities."[7]

Programs and Services Tailored to Young People *DO* Work:

Program models like credible messenger mentoring, family-focused multidimensional and cognitive behavioral therapy, Restorative Justice interventions targeting youth, and wraparound programs with assigned care coordinators use evidence-backed strategies to keep young people out of carceral settings and improve public safety.

Locally-designed programs can work even better than the program models listed above. "Homegrown" programs, as the Sentencing Project refers to them, that can offer a range of supports that can achieve real success with the young people in their communities when they incorporate these factors into their work:

- a trusted mentor, advocate, therapist or care coordinator who provides ongoing support and encouragement;
- rigorous and well-designed cognitive behavioral therapies;
- close cooperation with, and support for, young people's families; and

[7] Landscape of Youth Services for Young People with Juvenile and/or Criminal Legal Systems Involvement. New York City Youth Justice Coalition, 2025, https://www.lac.org/assets/images/Landscape-of-Youth-Services-for-Young-People-with-Juvenile-and-or-Criminal-Legal-Systems-Involvement.pdf.

- constructive education, employment, and recreational or community service activities.[8]

Data indicates that more non-profits targeting community needs, like those that use the strategies listed above, the more crime rates go down in that community.[9] There are excellent youth providers in communities all over New York City that already incorporate these strategies and models into their programs, but the State's investment in them is a fraction of what it spends on surveilling, policing, and incarcerating young people. The work that actually reduces youth incarceration is already happening on the ground and in our communities and needs to be adequately funded.

Snapshot of NYC Youth Justice Programs:

Drive Change supports justice-involved young people by providing culinary and hospitality training, social support, and pathways to advance their economic mobility and overall well-being. Through their fellowship program designed for 18-25 year olds, Drive Change offers a three-month paid learning and skill-building program where fellows gain skills to support life, workplace, and emotional well-being on their path to becoming agents of change. The fellowship has a 74% graduation rate and works with 60 justice-involved young people per year.

Why it works: Drive Change's workforce programming is in the culinary arts because they believe that hospitality can serve as a tool for social justice; quality employment is critical to disrupting the cycle of incarceration, poverty, and intergenerational trauma.

exalt youth works with justice-involved youth aged 15–19 at various intercept points. The program focuses on reconnections to education, career readiness and key life skills, followed by a nine-week paid internship. With structured classes, one-on-one support, paid work experience, and a strong alumni network, exalt gives young people the tools they need to stay on track and believe in their potential. Two years post-graduation from the program, 95% of exalt's young people have not been rearrested and 98% are re-engaged with education and scheduled to graduate high school or with an equivalency diploma by 20-years old.

Why it works: exalt youth provides structured support to learn key life skills while reconnecting youth to the community, giving them the tools and motivation for achievement while avoiding arrest and incarceration.

Arches Transformative Mentoring program works with 16- to 24-year-olds on probation who are disconnected from school, work, and programs and at high risk of rearrest, involving group activities and sessions based on cognitive behavioral

[8] Mendel, Richard. "Effective Alternatives to Youth Incarceration." The Sentencing Project, 28 June 2023, https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/effective-alternatives-to-youth-incarceration/.
[9] "Ideas in Action: More Non-Profits, Fewer Crimes." Vital City, 28 Mar. 2023, https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/more-non-profits-fewer-crimes/.

interventions run by credible messenger mentors, and individual mentoring to set positive goals. Arches participants were found to be less than half as likely as a matched comparison group to be convicted of a new felony 12 months and 24 months after beginning probation.

Why it works: Arches participants work with trusted mentors to develop conflict resolution skills and change thinking patterns; build new, healthy relationships with adults and peers; and identify goals.

CASES gives young people a chance to succeed as independent members of the community by providing mental health, mentorship, workforce readiness, and education services for young people who are involved or at risk of involvement with the criminal legal system. Its alternative-to-incarceration program ROAR follows an evidence-based model for young adults aged 16-27 with a case in Criminal or Supreme Courts, where they receive personalized services including gun violence prevention. 90% of participants avoid rearrest while in the program. CHOICES, an alternative-to-detention program for 12–17-year-olds with a pending Family Court matter, allows participants to avoid placement in youth detention facilities while receiving family therapy, court and school liaison services, and connections to resources that combat the socioeconomic drivers of crime.

Why it works: CASES ATI and ATD services for youth invest in their potential, building the skills necessary to realize opportunities for success in their communities while avoiding the retraumatization of incarceration.

Investing in a robust continuum of services must be complemented by extensive reforms to NYC and NYS youth justice systems to reduce the city and state's overreliance on incarceration and detention programs.

Discretionary Funding Requests: Youth Represent - Critical Services for Youth

With support from the New York City Council through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative and the Discharge Planning Initiative, Youth Represent provides reentry legal services for young people in their own communities. We are deliberate in serving Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and other youth of color who otherwise would not have access to legal services, while still prioritizing those with criminal legal system involvement. We have also expanded our age range from 24 and under to youth 26 and under. This is in response to growing research that shows our brains continue to develop into the mid-twenties,and addresses the very practical reality that our partner organizations often welcome participants over the age of 24.

We focus on young people living within New York City's five boroughs and are committed to providing inclusive and gender-affirming services to all youth. In 2025, 88% of our clients are people of color, including 49% Black, 26% Latinx, 6% multiracial, and 7% Asian. Our clients have an average age of 23, with nearly 20% being non-U.S. citizens and another 20% living in

subsidized housing. Alarmingly, only 10% are employed full-time, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive support. These statistics highlight the significant barriers our youth face in achieving stability and self-sufficiency, emphasizing the critical role Youth Represent plays in empowering marginalized young people to overcome systemic challenges and build brighter futures.

Youth Represent is seeking City Council funding, through the **Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, Court involved Youth Mental Health Initiative, Speaker Request Initiative** and the **Discharge Planning Initiative.** This funding will allow us to provide critical legal services and mental health services for youth. This year we have requested a total of $375,000–which would allow us to disrupt cycles of legal system involvement and expand access to justice. We aim to strengthen and grow our network of clients, community members and partners, ensuring that low-income youth of color have access to high-quality, culturally competent legal services, youth development, and mental health services in neighborhoods with the highest needs level. We hope that you will renew funding for Youth Represent and that you will do so in the context of a just budget–investing in the full range of services and supports that young people and families rely on.

I**nnovative Criminal Justice Initiative** - Youth Represent is seeking a restoration of $75,000 to **provide legal support to young people impacted by the criminal legal system.** We are uniquely dedicated to serving emerging adults (ages 26 and under) during pivotal moments when support can change the trajectory of a young person's life. Since 2006, we've served approximately 10,000 young people with over 20,000 services, partnering with them to overcome legal barriers and reclaim pathways to stable and sustainable futures.

Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative - Youth Represent is seeking $200,000 to support the **expansion of our social work practice, increasing access to mental health services for youth impacted by the criminal legal system.** Our model integrates our legal team with community-based organizations for job placement, case management, and support. While effective, our legal staff has increasingly been facing challenges when clients are also dealing with mental health issues. Confidentiality barriers can limit collaboration and without access to mental health professionals, referrals often go to overburdened services. Building the mental health practice within our organization ensures more continuity in care, improves young people's court dispositions, and helps in their growth and development.

Discharge Planning / Alternatives to Incarceration and Recovery Programs - Youth Represent is seeking a restoration of $100,000 to continue to **provide legal and reentry support for young people transitioning from incarceration.** This includes: RAP sheet clean-up clinics and individualized legal support including record sealing, certificates of relief, and parole/probation early termination and on-the-spot Know Your Rights (KYR) training; reentry legal navigation and wraparound services, including expanding referrals to reentry services (housing, mental health, workforce development) and offering short-term mental health support; and strengthening court and community-based reentry pipelines by deepening access to our expertise for workforce development and ATI programs.

We thank the Council for considering this testimony and for committing to bettering the futures of young people in New York City. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Julia L. Davis, Executive Director: jdavis@youthrepresent.org | (646) 503-5395.