



TESTIMONY

**Before the Council of the City of New York
Committee on Youth Services
Hearing on
Preliminary Fiscal 2023 Budget
Preliminary Mayor's Management Report**

Presented by

Deputy Commissioner Alan Cheng

March 14, 2022



Good morning, Chair Stevens, and members of the Youth Services Committee. My name is Alan Cheng, Deputy Commissioner for Administration. I am joined by Deputy Commissioners Susan Haskell and Valerie Mulligan, Associate Commissioner Darryl Rattray, and Assistant Commissioner Nevita Bailey. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget.

The budget stands at \$862.9 million, which is the highest amount of funding in the Preliminary Budget in DYCD's history. \$624.6 million, or 72.4% is city tax levy, \$92.3 million or 10.7% is federal, \$5.3 million or less than 1% is state funding and \$140 million or 16.3% is intra agency funds.

We are fortunate that despite the City's fiscal challenges, Mayor Adams' first budget makes historical investments to support young people and creates new summer opportunities for youth from kindergarten to 24. The budget bolsters DYCD's mission to invest in a network of community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish. It also is great news for the hundreds of non-profit community-based organizations funded by DYCD to operate a continuum of services that includes afterschool, community center, and youth workforce development programs; drop-in centers and residential programs for runaway and homeless youth; and fatherhood, immigration, literacy, and anti-poverty programs.

As we discussed at the March 4th hearing, Mayor Adams and Council Speaker Adams announced 100,000 summer opportunities for young people ages 14 through 24. The Mayor added an additional \$79 million for a total baseline investment of \$236 million, a record investment in the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). 90,000 of these jobs and work-based learning experiences will be available through SYEP, making it the largest number of opportunities in the program's 60-year history. This is also the earliest commitment the City has made to SYEP in recent memory, and I want to thank the Council for its unceasing support of this program.

This past Friday, Mayor Adams announced the launch of the largest New York City summer program ever - Summer Rising. Thank you, Chair Stevens, for joining the Mayor at this historic announcement.

Summer Rising will connect 110,000 elementary and middle school students to fun, culturally-relevant, hands-on experiences to strengthen their academic, social, and emotional skills. The program builds on our previous summer programs and reflects what we have heard from families, providers, and other stakeholders:

- Adding enrichment services on Fridays for middle school students, from 8am to 6pm, to ensure 5 days a week of summer programming.
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- Earlier enrollment so families, schools and providers can better plan for the summer
- Families will also have access to supportive resources and referrals to enrichment opportunities.

Combined, Summer Rising and SYEP will serve over 200,000 young people this summer with record investment of close to \$400 million in the future of younger New Yorkers.

The FY23 budget also maintains key programs including:

- \$326.9 million to support approximately 900 COMPASS programs servicing over 120,000 youth.
- \$63 million which supports 92 Beacon program serving 110,400 participants.
- \$63.9 million to support 99 Cornerstone Centers serving 20,000 participants, and
- \$47.8 million to support 813 beds for Runaway and Homeless Youth.

We are also pleased that the budget includes baselined funding of \$9.7 million to support the Council's signature Work, Learn and Grow youth employment program during the school year.

As you are aware, most City agencies were asked to identify savings in the current and out years. DYCD's Preliminary Budget achieves \$21.866 million in FY22 and \$16.864 million in FY23 and out year savings. These savings were identified in unallocated COMPASS slots and the elimination of an Adult Literacy program enhancement that was added in the prior administration's final fiscal plan. These savings do not result in cuts to existing services.

The budget also includes \$33.5 million from federal Community Services Block Grant funding. The current Neighborhood Development Areas (NDA) contracts are scheduled to expire at the end of the fiscal year, and a new set will begin on July 1, 2022. We anticipate these awards will be announced in the spring. Program areas funded through this RFP will include, Adult Literacy, High School Youth Educational Support, Healthy Families Support Services, Economic Development, Safety Awareness and Crime Prevention, Immigrant Services and Senior Services. CSBG also funds Fatherhood and Adult Literacy programs. through separate contracts. Preparations will also begin in the spring for the 2022 Community Needs Assessment. This assessment is conducted every three years to hear directly from New Yorkers in neighborhoods most in need, and document their views on what is needed to improve the well-being of their own communities. We welcome the Council's continued support to assess the needs of our community members.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to highlight the Preliminary Budget. We are pleased to answer your questions.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES
MARCH 14, 2022**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thank you to Chair Althea Stevens and the members of the Committee on Youth Services for holding this hearing today.

Firstly, I want to commend Mayor Adams for pledging to increase the number of Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) opportunities to a record 100,000, something for which my office has advocated for the past two years. SYEP not only provides income and career experience for our city's young people, but also reduces violence and incidences of arrest. I hope that jobs for young people continue to be a priority for this administration and this council.

As we continue to rebuild our city and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, DYCD's Community Development Programs are more important than ever. These programs provide invaluable services in low-income communities, including academic support, economic development, youth and adult employment programs, health care, domestic violence intervention, senior services, housing assistance, literacy instruction, and immigrant support. The mayor's preliminary budget cuts funding for these programs by almost 70 percent. Mayor Adams has made it clear that addressing gun violence is one of his top priorities; research has shown that community development programs like the ones DYCD provides reduce community violence, substance use, and contact with the criminal justice system. I urge you to continue to fully fund these programs.

Similarly, the preliminary budget cuts funding for adult literacy programs in half. These programs serve adult learners with basic education and English-language services as well as high school equivalency programs. The COVID-19 pandemic had an enormous impact on our schools. All students' learning was disrupted, and many students went without any form of education entirely for many months due to the challenges of remote learning and fears of becoming infected with COVID at school. This makes adult literacy programs critically important particularly for young people who recently graduated or otherwise left high school. We owe our young people a high-quality, complete education, even if they are no longer formally enrolled in school.

New York City is home to the largest LGBTQ+ population in the country. We have been a national leader in its work to support the LGBTQ+ community, especially LGBTQ+ youth and young adults. The Unity Project has provided vital support to these young people, particularly through Unity Works, which assists LGBTQ+ young adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with attaining work credentials, high school equivalency programs, mental health support, higher education enrollment, and workforce skills. Running this critically important program for four years would cost \$2.97 million. Additionally, this administration should commit to establishing housing vouchers for LGBTQ+ youth, a service proposed by the de Blasio administration but never

actualized. TGNCNBI youths' needs have historically been neglected based on the City's past budgets. Even though there has been an increasing gap of homelessness, poverty, and pipeline to incarceration for those within the TGNCNBI community, the budget does not equally increase to reduce these gaps. Funding in the amount of \$1.25 million would provide the means to launch a housing voucher/rental assistance program catered to LGBTQ+ homeless youth under 24. This initiative is a partnership between the city and the Ali Forney Center; with additional funding, the city could also assist LGBTQ+ adults ages 25-30 by partnering with other organizations that provide housing services such as Destination Tomorrow, Princess Janae Place, and GLITS.

Young people are the future of our city, and this budget should be a celebration of the resiliency they have shown over the course of this pandemic. I look forward to working with this administration and this council to ensure that we are prioritizing and supporting youth and young adults.



New York
Public
Library



QUEENS
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
FISCAL YEAR 2023 PRELIMINARY BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING
YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Greetings: My name is Gillian Miller, Coordinator of Early Learning Services for the Queens Public Library. I am pleased to represent the three public library systems of New York City as partners in the City Council's initiative for early literacy, City's First Readers. On behalf of the three systems, I would like to thank Speaker Adrienne E. Adams, Committee Chair Althea Stevens, and the members of the committee for their support of youth services in our city during this challenging time, and for the opportunity to testify today on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Preliminary Budget.

We are truly grateful for the Council's generous support of City's First Readers. Each year, Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library offer neighborhood early literacy programs with an annual attendance exceeding 600,000 people. Over the course of the last year, we have provided a host of digital program offerings and reconnected in-person with our youngest patrons and their caregivers in creative and safe ways. Funding from the City's First Readers initiative has been critical in helping libraries relaunch safe in-person programming, sustain virtual offerings, and continue to prioritize early literacy across the five boroughs.

As part of City's First Readers, each library system is developing and expanding its own early literacy services. Here are some highlights:

- **Brooklyn Public Library (BPL)** offered storytimes in over 12 languages and is soon to add Ukrainian and Quechua. BPL provided training to child care providers and staff in early literacy, supporting children with disabilities, talking about race with young children, and screen time balance. Children's librarians created Grab and Go activity kits available to families with hands-on supplies to promote play and learning at home. Our signature school-readiness program, *Ready, Set, Kindergarten*, continues to be offered virtually in Spanish and English. BPL created StoryWalks, full length picture books posted in outdoor locations, such as Brooklyn Bridge Park, so families can engage in reading on the go. This year, BPL launched StoryTeen, an innovative teen internship, to learn how to read with young children and discover careers in early childhood education.
- **New York Public Library (NYPL)** offered robust virtual and in person early literacy programs including bilingual storytimes, outdoor storytime in the park and STEAM storytime. The library distributed bilingual English/Spanish early learning activity booklets and take-home activity kits for families to engage in developmentally appropriate literacy activities at the library and at home. NYPL partnered with pediatric health clinics to provide library resources and over 2,000

books. Each book included a sticker with library information and a QR code to our website. We updated our storytime handbook and internal training for all children's librarians. Professional development for staff also included a variety of experts on important topics such as Anti-Racist Storytime, Woke Read Alouds, and The Social Science Behind How and When Young Children Learn about Race. We launched a storytime collection that focused on diverse representation and BIPOC authors to use in all early literacy programming.

- **Queens Public Library (QPL)** continues to reach our families through programs that are available in many ways- virtual, social, and in-person. Every week we offer a storytime in one of 9 languages. We are grateful to be able to provide take-home learning kits at all of our branches. These engage and promote higher order thinking in our youngest learners. This year we are able to offer these kits in Spanish as well as English. We have been able to offer our Kick off to Kindergarten, a dual learning literacy program, in a hybrid style. This allows us to reach families across the borough with both in-home and virtual learning. Our New Mama's group continued this year with a deeper investment in needed parenting resources at all of our branches. This group focuses on educating new mothers and caregivers about their young child's literacy needs while also addressing postpartum health, infant health, and general parenting issues.

The City's First Readers initiative has also allowed the three library systems to collaborate with program partners in unique ways:

- **Literacy Inc.** has worked with the libraries to provide programs to families citywide. Literacy Inc. staff offered virtual storytimes regularly in East New York (BPL); throughout Manhattan, Bronx, and Staten Island (NYPL); and weekly in the South Jamaica community (QPL).
- **Reach Out and Read of Greater New York** partners with the NYC libraries to purchase multilingual, diverse children's books to give to NYC families, encourage families to sign up for library cards, and attend library programs.
- In collaboration with NYC Health + Hospitals, **City's First Readers partners** sent much-needed early literacy materials to quarantining families, including books and literacy kits, through Test & Trace and vaccination initiatives.

We are aware that the Pandemic has had a significant impact on the social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children born during this time. Library early literacy programming in local neighborhoods will be essential to support early literacy and school-readiness before children enter 3K and Pre-K. City's First Readers funding will be instrumental and help us make sure we have the spaces, books, materials, and staff trained to respond. We are deeply appreciative of the Council's and Mayor's support, but know there will be a great deal of work to do to address learning loss and inequity that the pandemic has amplified across our city.

If the City Council authorizes funding for Fiscal Year 2023 for the City's First Readers Initiative, this vitally important work will only grow in NYC's libraries, as we look towards a future where we can once again provide our services in-person – at library branches, and in classrooms and child care settings. We could expand specialized family learning opportunities, grow school-readiness activities, and provide more

training, which is necessary for our staff, on working with families with very young children, both virtually and at our libraries when it is safe to do so.

Our Libraries are the first social and educational experience many of our young families have, and we want it to be the most enriching experience it can be. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.



Testimony to the Committee on Youth Services
Christopher Durosinmi, Assistant Director, Government & Community Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society
March 14, 2022

Thank you Chairwoman Stevens and members of the Committee. My name is Christopher Durosinmi, Assistant Director, Government & Community Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

Based in New York City since 1895, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which includes the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo, saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. We are proud to be a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, a diverse coalition of 34 cultural organizations across the five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York. As the City Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we are here to ask for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, and a restoration of \$35M of FY22 funding. We will also be requesting an additional \$50 million for the cultural community and look forward to meeting with the Council and the Administration about that request in detail.

Our five parks are both tourist and family destinations serving diverse audiences in some of the poorest congressional districts in the country. Funded in part by the City of New York, our living collections help save endangered species, educate and inspire tens of thousands of teachers and children in environmental science, and help us maintain our programming and interactive educational experiences for diverse constituencies. In New York City, our five parks employ more than 2,500 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. As one of the largest employers of youth in the city, and managing one of the largest youth workforce development programs in New York City, WCS employs and supports over 1,400 youth ages 14-24 in a myriad of opportunities that create life sustaining change in our surrounding communities. Much of this is possible through city support, in particular, the New York City Council.

Communicating about scientific content and conservation is at the heart of our work at WCS and a foundational skill for any STEM professional. Yet, with many people advancing into STEM careers, science communication and public engagement are rarely taught in schools and even less with diverse audiences. Our commitment to building the next generation of science communicators is exemplified by our *Discovery Guide* program, which trains over 400 youth to engage visitors across our five parks in interactive conservation learning each year. Through this program, youth ages 14-22 develop 21st Century job skills and connect to their local community by engaging thousands of families in free, educational activities throughout the Zoos and Aquarium, including online. 77% of participants in the Discovery Guide program identify as young people of color, 6% are



bilingual and collectively speak 35 different languages, providing a valuable connection to the diverse visitorship of our parks that includes over 375,000 interactions with our Discovery Guides in free engaging, educational activities throughout the zoo. All Discovery Guides receive 80+ hours of professional development that includes 20 hours of preliminary training, 65 hours of science communication experience, and ongoing skill-building and career exploration workshops. They learn generalizable workforce skills including public speaking, time management, project management, resume-writing and interviewing, and attend career and college readiness workshops. They also learn from WCS professionals about conservation science, animal welfare, and natural history.

WCS recognizes New York City youth as future change makers and leaders who reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of our city. Thanks to City Council support, WCS has been able to fully implement and expand the *WCS STEM Career Lattice*, which is an innovative tiered engagement model that provides WCS youth, ages 14-24, with paid leadership opportunities that scaffold their professional experience and prepare them to transition into paid positions in WCS and our industry. Collectively, youth earn on average \$5 million working in the five WCS parks on an annual basis. This program combines education, workforce development, networking, and outreach to increase opportunities for over 1,400 youth who work and learn at our five facilities. We focus on reaching youth from communities that are underrepresented in STEM fields. 77% of the youth who work, intern and volunteer at our parks identify as young people of color and collectively speak 46 different languages.

Realizing our collective impact on STEM career development for youth, WCS led the effort to bring together 12 science-based cultural institutions, forming the *SCI Network NYC*. Funding from the New York City Council has enabled us to create a community of practice composed of leaders and youth development professionals from across the 12 institutions. Together we collectively provide over 1,200 internships to NYC Youth. Internships have historically been less accessible to youth who identify as people of color and those from underserved communities. *The SCI Network NYC* works to provide equitable access to internships to NYC youth and ensure that these internships allow youth to gain meaningful work experience and career opportunities.

Therefore, as the City Council determines its budget priorities for FY 2023, please know that WCS stands at the ready to continue our enhanced, high-quality programming should funding be available. As the Council determines its budget priorities for FY23, we respectfully request that all Council initiatives and \$35M of FY22 funding be restored, in addition to \$50M for FY23 from the City Council and Administration for the cultural community.

Troy Philadelphia
Ali Forney Center
3/14/22 Youth Services Hearing

Good Morning Everyone. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. My name is Troy Philadelphia, my pronouns are He/Him/His. And I am the Director of Outreach and Advocacy for the Ali Forney Center. The Ali Forney Center was founded in 2002 in memory of Ali Forney, a gender non-conforming youth. AFC's mission is to protect LGBTQ youth from the harms of homelessness and empower them with the tools needed to live independently. We have 124 beds across all of our programs, which include our emergency housing program, our transitional housing program, and a transgender specific housing program. We also have a 24 hour Drop-In Center.

We stand with CHY on the following:

"Right-size" Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Provider Contracts.

While our contracts do assist, they can't possibly provide all of the funds needed to adequately run our programs. We could also use assistance with Metrocards, assistance in fine tuning residential treatment models, and creating a sustainable crisis response team. And of course, COVID has and continues to impact our organization financially. The costs of PPE, essential items, and testing have been astronomical.

5.4% COLA increase:

Human services workers in NY are some of the lowest paid workers in NYC's economy. How can we expect workers to provide adequate care to our young people if they are not making a living wage? As essential and front-line workers; especially during these trying times of COVID, they should be compensated accordingly. And when they are not compensated accordingly, they sometimes leave. This leads to massive amounts of turnover. And as a result, our young people experience disruptions in their care, which can retraumatize them and be difficult to cope with yet another change. They then must get acclimated to a new care team; after already building up trust with someone else. These disruptions in care can have negative lasting effects on the young people and how they view the services they are receiving.

Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the RHY System: \$1.481M

The new Housing Specialists have been immensely helpful since they started in our programs. They shoulder and take on the daunting task of assisting our young people with obtaining permanent housing. Before, the care manager would be doing all of the leg work required, with that process being very arduous and time consuming. The new Housing Specialists are taking on a lot of those tasks, leaving the case managers free to continue working through their ever-increasing caseloads accordingly. Housing Specialists can also help with the follow-up and dealing with the bureaucratic systems in place that aren't always the smoothest to navigate.

Fund two mental health focused Transitional Independent Living Support Program (TIL) Pilots: \$2M

We cannot stress the importance of mental health support regarding our young people and their living situations. I've seen countless situations where a young person has a negative experience in our programs because they require a higher level of mental health support than some of our staff can provide and there weren't other programs that we could refer them to that were safe. These young people find themselves in housing situations that have too many people and not enough privacy. This in- turn can exacerbate their mental health conditions, like PTSD or Flashbacks and lead to an incident.

Create 40 additional DYCD RHY beds for youth aged 21-24 years: \$2.22M

The fact of the matter is that there are just not enough beds for individuals between the ages of 21 and 24. Making them much more vulnerable. Most individuals would rather NOT go to a DHS shelter which is why the age was raised in the first place. Older youth prefer to remain in a DYCD shelter as opposed to a DHS shelter, where there is constant risk of sexual and physical abuse/assault. Those environments are not beneficial for healing and growing. 21-24 year olds should not have to wait any longer than 16-20 year olds.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak.

Hello, my name is Arthur Samuels and I am the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of MESA Charter High School in Bushwick.

Early last year, the Mayor's office put out a report indicating that up to a quarter of New Yorkers ages 18-24 are neither working, nor in school. 80% of these so-called "disconnected youth" are young people of color, like the students we serve at MESA. The financial cost to the city is hundreds of millions of dollars. The social and emotional cost of this lost potential is, of course, incalculable.

But 75% of disconnected youth have a high school diploma. That means there's an institution they're tied to. At MESA, we're working with our alumni who have struggled to help them enter high-quality workforce development programs. For example, one young man dropped out of college to stock shelves at CVS for \$15/hour. We helped him become a fellow at the Marcy Lab School. This is a free coding bootcamp for low-income students. Think of the Flatiron School but for our kids. When he graduates this fall, he'll be placed in a six-figure tech job.

Schools spend four years developing relationships with kids and building trust with families. We can leverage these relationships to develop a gradual, warm handoff from schools to post-secondary institutions, either colleges or workforce training programs. But the system tosses this relationship aside. Schools are neither funded to do this work nor evaluated on our outcomes. In other words, your high school is the most important institution in your life for four years, but once you get your diploma, you're someone else's problem. This is an inefficient, ineffective setup, and it's hurting our youth.

Schools can play a major role in supporting young people after graduation, but we need the resources to staff this work, and institutional partners within the city. I encourage the council to think more about how high schools can play a greater role in re-connecting our youth. Thank you.



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**Ballet Hispanico
City Council Testimony
Preliminary Budget Hearing: Youth Services
March 14, 2022**

On behalf of Ballet Hispanico (BH) *familia*, we would like to thank the members of the New York City Council and Youth Services Committee for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. At this critical juncture, support for cultural and youth serving organizations like Ballet Hispanico as they work to expand access to arts resources for underserved BIPOC youth and communities is more important than ever. As the nation's largest Latinx cultural organization and one of America's Cultural Treasures, Ballet Hispanico depends on the City Council's continued support in order to fulfill its mission of service to BIPOC communities. We appreciate this opportunity to advocate for expanded resources to organizations and cultural and educational institutions like ours which provided crucial artistic resources.

For fifty years Ballet Hispanico has been the leading voice intersecting artistic excellence and advocacy. Ballet Hispanico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance productions, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences. Ballet Hispanico provides the physical home and cultural heart for Latinx dance in the United States. Ballet Hispanico has developed a robust public presence across its three main programs: its Company, School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships.

National Medal of Arts recipient Tina Ramirez founded Ballet Hispanico in 1970, at the height of the post-war civil rights movements. From its inception Ballet Hispanico focused on providing a haven for Black and Brown Latinx youth and families seeking artistic place and cultural sanctuary. By providing the space for Latinx dance and dancers to flourish, Ballet Hispanico uplifted marginalized emerging and working artists, which combined with the training, authenticity of voice, and power of representation, fueled the organization's roots and trajectory. In 2009, Ballet Hispanico welcomed Eduardo Vilario as its Artistic Director, ushering in a new era by inserting fresh energy to the company's founding values and leading Ballet Hispanico into an artistically vibrant future. Today, Ballet Hispanico's New York City headquarters house a School of Dance and state-of-the-art dance studios for its programs and the arts community. From its grassroots origins as a dance school and community-based performing arts troupe, for fifty years Ballet Hispanico has stood as a catalyst for social change.

Through its exemplary artistry, distinguished training program, and deep-rooted community engagement efforts Ballet Hispanico champions and amplifies underrepresented voices in the field. For fifty years Ballet Hispanico has provided a place of honor for the omitted, overlooked, and oppressed. As it looks to the next fifty years and



beyond, Ballet Hispanico seeks to empower, and give agency to, the Latinx experience and those individuals within it.

Approximately 27% of all New Yorkers identify as Latinx; more than half of all children born in NYC are born to immigrant families. Yet research shows that immigrants and Latinx individuals in particular are grossly underrepresented in popular culture. Latinx individuals rarely see themselves or their families' stories reflected on stage or screen, a reality reflected in the fact that in 2019, only 7% of films featured a Latinx/Hispanic lead. Through Ballet Hispanico's public programming, many not only have access to excellent artistic programming and instruction, but through Ballet Hispanico see themselves and their stories reflected in culture for the first time: the ripple effect across these New Yorkers' lives is profound. Ballet Hispanico community programs feature not only culturally relevant pedagogy, but culturally sustaining educational practices as lived experiences are fortified, identities are strengthened, and voices are encouraged. Thanks to City Council support and initiatives, through Ballet Hispanico communities programs we can continue uplifting New Yorkers of all backgrounds and breaking down barriers to the field of dance.

COVID-19: Impact & Recovery

The current crisis has had a negative impact on all creative and educational initiatives, in particular BIPOC-led organizations such as Ballet Hispanico, which have often borne a disproportionate economic and humanitarian burden reflecting that of the communities they serve. The full financial ramifications continue to threaten the survival of these institutions. Yet throughout the pandemic, the digital doors of Ballet Hispanico remained open to the public and welcomed new audiences through our virtual educational and community programming featuring classes, performances, behind-the-scenes artist takeovers, inspirational messages, and more. Thanks to the resolute support of the City of New York, and enforcement of local health mandates along with the rollout of vaccines, Ballet Hispanico began welcoming dancers, students, and audiences back in-person gradually over the course of 2021, and continues to take a measured approach to in-person gatherings per the recommendations of local health guidelines.

Thanks to this rapid growth in digital programs, Ballet Hispanico grew its social media following of 28.4K Facebook followers (representing a 12% increase over 2021); 14.5K+ Instagram followers (23% increase) and 9.7K followers on Twitter. Continuing its efforts to engage Latinx communities and reflect their voices and stories for posterity, Ballet Hispanico maintains active collaborations with Google Arts & Culture as part of the Latinx Cultures in the U.S Exhibit, and with the New York Public Library's Library for the Performing Arts. Prior to COVID-19, the annual viewership of BH was approximately 75,000. In FY21, thanks to the expansion and quality content of our virtual programming, we reached over 314,000. Ballet Hispanico's media and PR plan looking forward will continue to promote virtual programming as complementary to the return to in-person programs for the Company, Community Arts Partnerships, and the School of Dance September registration. Programs will be advertised through e-newsletters, NY MetroParents/Big Apple, New York Family and Dance/NYC and weekly e-blasts, and distribution of flyers, and posters displayed outside of Ballet Hispanico.



New Initiatives

Thanks in large part to the stability Ballet Hispanico managed to maintain throughout the pandemic thanks to City Council support, leadership was able to launch and grow several new programs in recent months:

Pa'lante Scholars

In fall 2021 Ballet Hispanico launched the Pa'lante Scholars program, a tuition-free, career-centered professional studies program for emerging young adult dancers age 18-25. Pa'lante Scholars immerses dancers in a professional intensive focusing on artistry development through full-day, comprehensive curriculum including: daily ballet/contemporary technique, Spanish dance, screen, Latin rhythms, floor work, modern dance, acting, voice, and professional development seminars (topics include nutrition, personal advocacy, financial planning/literacy, other life/work skills coaching). BIPOC dancers are underrepresented on American professional dance stages, with nearly 70% of professional classical dancers identifying as white (Data USA). With its tuition-free model, Pa'lante Scholars embodies the Ballet Hispanico vision of uplifting young dancers of color, ensuring a pipeline of dance training toward successful careers in the field.

Latinx Dance Institute

The newly formed Latinx Dance Institute encompasses the "Diálogos" conversation series, the "Instituto Coreográfico," and the Latinx Leaders Summit. "Diálogos" explores the interconnections of the arts, social justice and Latinx culture. Several events held each year are open free to the public. A panel of leaders in the field participate in a moderated discussion and Q&A. Recent topics have included "Colorism in the Arts and anti-Blackness within Latinx communities" and "The Stereotypes of Machismo in Dance." "Instituto Coreográfico" is a residency program for emerging Latinx choreographers. Each year, two under-recognized Latinx choreographers spend two weeks at Ballet Hispanico, working with the Ballet Hispanico Company on creating, developing, and/or strengthening new work. At the conclusion of the residency, the work-in-progress is presented during a free showing open to the public. A panel of dance leaders discuss the work and audience members participate in a Q&A session. The Latinx Leaders Summit likewise brings together dance leaders for an annual conference aimed at strengthening representation and recognition of dancers of color.

Bienvenidos Ticket Program

In spring 2022 for its return NYC Season Ballet Hispanico leadership offered, for the first time, the Bienvenidos Ticket Program to provide free and nominal cost tickets to underrepresented members of the Ballet Hispanico community, including and especially members of the NYC immigrant community. As the nation's largest Latinx cultural organization, reflecting the diversity of lived immigrant experiences, Ballet Hispanico is proud to ensure access across the socioeconomic spectrum to its artistic programming. Ballet Hispanico artistic programs celebrate immigrant narratives, stories from Latinx cultures, and provide a prominent platform for voices which are too often ignored in mainstream American culture. In FY23 the Bienvenidos program will be central to ensuring accessibility to the Ballet Hispanico Company's NYC Season artistic programs.



Existing & Proposed City Council Support

For the past five years Ballet Hispanico has received City Council support for CASA programs, in FY22 serving 13 schools across as many districts. Ballet Hispanico has also been honored to receive support under the Coalition Theatres of Color initiative. In FY21 all CASA programs were conducted online. In FY22 CASA activities were initially conducted virtually and gradually transitioned to in-person classes as schools reopened. In FY22 the Ballet Hispanico School of Dance launched its tuition-free professional studies program, Pa'lante Scholars:: Ballet Hispanico currently has twelve Teaching Artists (TAs) on its roster, and additionally anticipates twelve new TAs will join its ranks thanks to the launch of the Pa'lante Scholars professional studies program, who each teach 2-3 dance classes. Thanks to our dramatically increased capacity in teaching artist staff, Ballet Hispanico is thrilled to be expanding its CASA programming in FY23.

City Council support for BIPOC-led organizations, such as CASA, Coalition Theatres of Color, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and Speaker's Initiative programs, will enable Ballet Hispanico and organizations like it to reach a larger number of communities of color throughout the City than ever. For Ballet Hispanico's part, continued and expanded City Council youth services support will allow us to administer critical artistic programs from our W. 89th St. space, helping to fulfill our goal of reaching underserved New York City communities of color.

Looking Forward

Through City Council initiatives like CASA, Coalition Theatres of Color, the Cultural Immigrant Initiative, the Speaker's Initiative, and more, the City has indicated that it deeply values services to its youth through cultural programs. Furthermore, programs like these have allowed Ballet Hispanico to successfully navigate and thrive despite the many ramifications of the pandemic over the last two years. The ability of our organization and other BIPOC-led institutions to survive and thrive in a post-pandemic ecosystem will be dependent on continued city support: **More than ever, organizations like Ballet Hispanico will need robust public support in order to continue championing and amplifying underrepresented voices in the field.** The expansion of critical city-funded programs ensures our ability to continue to provide crucial arts access and education to communities of color. And in an era of stark division the voices of BIPOC-led cultural organizations like Ballet Hispanico, founded on the principles of bringing people together through art, are essential to our city. As a community of dancers, artists, and human beings, we have adapted time and again to incredible challenges. Ballet Hispanico was founded upon and has always believed in the importance of reaching and servicing our community through dance and culture. We thank the City of New York for making that possible.

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Good Afternoon and thank you Chair Stevens and the Youth Services Committee Members. My name is Brian Carmichael. I am an activist, organizer and a member of Freedom Agenda. Like most of you, I believe in an equitable budget. However, for too long our city budgets have not been equitable, especially when it comes to youth services.

The Department of Corrections budget is bloated and the agency needs to be right-sized. The DOC has 1 and a half uniformed staff for every one incarcerated person. This is 2 times more staff per capita than they had 8 years ago, and 7 times more than the national average! DOC has an extraordinarily high number of officers who call out sick on any given day. From July - December 2021, an average of 1,638 officers (21%) called out sick each day, and about another 12% (1,000 officers) are out on long term sick leave. We believe there are tens of millions of dollars being squandered in waste, fraud and abuse by the DOC that could otherwise be invested in our young people, and a future free from incarceration.

I urge the City Council to strategically divest from the Department of Corrections budget in key areas, so that those resources can be redirected to expand programs and services in those communities that the Commission on Reinvestments in Communities Impacted by Rikers Island submitted. I urge the Council to maintain the funding of the programs and services provided to young adults in DOC custody. Redirect funds to meet community needs like programs and services for youth that will reduce the flow of young people into the criminal legal system.

Further, the Commission reported that “There is a lack of quality spaces for young people, and community centers located across housing developments

are often under-resourced, underutilized, or inaccessible. The City should increase capital fund investments to ensure young people have access to safe, quality spaces to participate in programs and engage in prosocial activities. Capital plans should be designed in partnership with young people and community organizations, and priority should be given to community centers across housing developments.”

Lastly, I urge this committee and the entire City Council, to have the strength and wisdom to remain visionary, and not reactionary, in ongoing and future analysis of how successful these new spending priorities are. Every time there is a spike in crime, or some violent crime featured on local news channels, many politicians immediately begin to second guess policies that support decarceration. But the status quo has been built over hundreds of years, and the changes that Freedom Agenda believes in and advocates for are transformational, and can only be fairly judged by years, even decades of analysis, before the effects can be measured fairly. Truly, a generation of freedom.

Please consider these recommendations, fund them and remain resolute in your support.

Thank you for your time and allowing me this opportunity.



**Testimony of Kaveri Sengupta, Senior Policy Coordinator for Education
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)**

**Committee on Youth Services Remote Hearing
March 14, 2022 at 10:00AM**

Good afternoon. My name is Kaveri Sengupta, and I am the Senior Policy Coordinator for Education at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Youth Services for giving us this opportunity to submit testimony.

Founded in 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization and leads the fight for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services to support those in need. The Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) population comprises nearly 18% of New York City. Many in our diverse communities face high levels of poverty, overcrowding, uninsurance, and linguistic isolation. Yet, the needs of the AAPI community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood, and uncounted. We are constantly fighting the harmful impacts of the model minority myth, which prevents our needs from being recognized and understood. Our communities, as well as the organizations that serve the community, too often lack the resources to provide critical services to the most marginalized AAPIs. Working with over 70 member and partner organizations across the City to identify and speak out on the many common challenges our community faces, CACF is building a community too powerful to ignore.

AAPI New Yorkers are the fastest growing population in New York City and State, and face the highest rates of poverty, linguistic isolation, and overcrowded housing. For far too long, our community has been overlooked and under-resourced. Nearly a quarter of AAPIs in NYC live in poverty - the highest poverty rate across all racial/ethnic groups. AAPIs in NYC also have the highest poverty gap or intensity of poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a time of immense fear and uncertainty that has shed light on the unique challenges facing AAPI New Yorkers. Since the start of the pandemic, unemployment claims by AAPIs spiked 6,900%, by far the largest percentage increase experienced by any racial group in New York City. The COVID-19 pandemic has also brought with it an alarming rise in anti-Asian hate, discrimination, and harassment. In 2021, there were over 9,000 reported incidents of anti-Asian violence and a 361% increase in Anti-Asian related hate crimes in NYC alone.

CACF leads the 18% and Growing Campaign, a group of over 50 AAPI-led and -serving organizations that work together to fight for a fair, inclusive, and equitable New York City budget that protects the most vulnerable AAPI New Yorkers. Unfortunately, current levels of public funding for the Asian Pacific American community remain disproportionate to our community's needs. Although we were pleased to see that the dollars given to AAPI-led and



-serving organizations increased In FY 2022, as did the number of organizations receiving funds, the overall percentage of discretionary dollars allocated to the community decreased, from 4.65% in 2021 to 4.46% in 2022.

18% and Growing campaign members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Many provide essential youth services around college and career readiness, mental health, social emotional learning, in the form of mentorship, college advising, afterschool and summer programming, and other services to the 27.9% of all AAPIs in New York City who are under the age of 18. Our organizations and young people need investment in culturally responsive and language accessible youth services, without which many immigrant young people in particular can find themselves isolated and marginalized, facing continued barriers to navigating systems and accessing critical services that would put them on the path to becoming competent and responsible adults. These needs have only intensified as a result of the pandemic, which has further isolated so many of our AAPI young people, who have contended with an enormous disruption to their education, heightened mental health challenges, and ongoing fears regarding racism. They deserve a budget that prioritizes them. This means investing in them, by fairly and equitably funding programs developed by CBOs that provide them with comprehensive supports and opportunities.

We are grateful to last year's City Council for creating a new citywide initiative titled **AAPI Community Support**. The AAPI Community Support Initiative is a citywide initiative that funds Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) serving community-based organizations (CBOs) providing community-informed social services and programming to address the severe rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it funds critical programming, including mental health support, youth programs, racial literacy, hate crimes intervention, gender-based violence intervention and prevention, and other culturally responsive services needed to build long-term care and healing for AAPI New Yorkers. The initiative builds capacity, amplifies existing community-based efforts, and supports CBOs in reaching underserved AAPI communities through the power of culturally responsive and language accessible programming.

With funding received from the AAPI Community Support Initiative, about thirteen 18% and Growing campaign members serving diverse AAPI communities across New York City planned to do the following youth-related programming:

- Provide scholarships to extremely low income families (many single mother households with children cared for by grandmothers, often recently immigrated from Fuzhou, China) in District 1 for afterschool and a full day summer program. Provide enrichment programming with trips to cultural sites, and bringing in cultural programs into the program sites. Hire consultants for professional development to train youth work staff and to develop



curriculum materials for our use and to disseminate for others on diversity of BIPOC communities.

- Develop curriculum and implement at least 2 learning cohorts (reaching 20-40 individuals and organizations) composed of Asian American youth, parents, and community organizations across NYC. Each cohort will engage in a month-long workshop series aimed at building racial literacy and understanding, and equipping people and organizations with skills and knowledge to be build collaborations and be leaders in their communities and across communities of color, so they can support healing, recovery, and positive changes for all New Yorkers, including Asian Americans and especially those who struggle the most.
- Partner with CBOs, schools, and city agencies across all 5 boroughs to implement DEI/Racial Justice initiatives toward changing school, community and agency culture with particular focus in addressing anti-blackness white supremacy, sexism and misogyny. Offer discussion platforms for understanding the historical roots of Asian-Hate and building strong and safe community spaces, and continues to serve as a touch point for many young people during the COVID-19 pandemic through counseling and multi-social service assistance referrals when needed.
- Support mental health programs for AAPI young adults who are predominantly first-gen/low-income, as well as Chinese-American families of individuals with mental illness who are low-English proficiency and low-income. Provide AAPI young adult mental wellness programs and workshops including the Fellowship program, which mostly serves first-generation, low-income students who are struggling with the impact of the pandemic.
- Support the housing organizing of our base of 1000 Chinese tenants and young people in rent stabilized housing in Chinatown, Manhattan and Bangladeshi tenants in Western Queens, including a political education and leadership development training for intergenerational members across bases and in up to four different languages.
- Integrate Asian American history, culture, and heritage within a social justice and social-emotional learning framework into programs for children, youth, and families. In conjunction, develop and deliver a professional development education, coaching, and support program for frontline staff, the majority of whom are young adults (age 18-26) and young professionals whose lived experiences often reflect the children and families we serve.
- Develop programming to build community leadership and equip Asian American youth, community workers, and parents with the racial literacy and healing needed to be a strong voice in the dialogues around racial equity in New York City: Engage 300 youth and parents in targeted dialogue and workshops to increase awareness of racial literacy and their role as Korean/Asian Americans in New York. Hold a town hall with our youth and their parents to engage and identify the needs and concerns of our community members, following up the town hall with workshops on racial literacy, to include a focus



on Asian American history and how to bring racial healing to our diverse Asian American community in New York.

- Register 500+ Bangladeshi immigrant womxn and youth to vote in local and national elections from Norwood, The Bronx, including leading and creating a 30-week curricula focusing on 9 different political sectors (including health, economics, education, immigration, land) and the current policies at play in English and Bangla.
- Equip Southeast Asian youth, older adults, and community members to be a strong voice in dialogues around racial equity. This will develop 20 community leaders.
- Supporting 100 youth in leadership programming, as they build relationships with peers and mentors and take part in conversations covering identity, culture, race, gender, social issues, and current events in an affirming space. These offerings seek to instill a deep sense of self-confidence and build belonging in our participants, increase their belief in their own potential, offer examples of a range of paths available to them, and help them become well prepared to advocate for themselves throughout their lives.
- Support afterschool and summer programming, weekend academic enrichment classes (Chinese language), extracurricular programming (painting, karate and lion dance), and a Youth Development Initiative (YDI) to help low-income, immigrant youth develop the language and leadership skills to become responsible members of their communities.
- Continue homework club which developed because of parents being unable to help their children with homework and other necessary academic skills due to the pandemic. Many parents already felt this gap because of their status as immigrants and subsequent lack of knowledge towards these skills. Start SAT and computer classes for at least 100 immigrant kids in order to help them develop real world computer skills and prepare them for college. Restart Humanitarian Aid Academy program, which was paused due to the pandemic, to disseminate real life political skills, such as advocacy, through meetings with officials and other advocates, and guide them through the process of becoming advocates themselves.
- Develop programming to educate both Yemeni youth and their parents with racial literacy to build bridges of understanding and healing to mitigate hate and violence in Black and Brown communities, as Yemeni immigrant communities had very little understanding of the enslavement of African Americans and the impact slavery has had and continues to have in the modern-day. Enhance youth college readiness and young women's leadership program, which incorporates training in leadership with programming around arts, college and career readiness, culture, gender studies, health and wellness, and social activism, teach about the experiences of African Americans in the US to combat racism.

To sustain and expand on this incredibly rich, comprehensive, and transformative work, the **18% and Growing Campaign is asking for an enhancement of \$5.2 million for the AAPI Community Support Initiative** to support more than 50 AAPI -led and -serving CBOs in NYC. Additional funding will allow for CBOs to execute ideas (such as some listed above) that they may have



been unable to in the previous fiscal year due to allocation amounts and build their capacity to support additional youth across the City, as well as provide Council Members with the opportunity to engage more organizations in their districts and broaden the impact of the initiative at this critical moment.

As we continue to live in a world rife with the repercussions of COVID, in which existing disparities continue to grow, we must be sure to center all of our decisions on our most marginalized students and avoid neglecting those who may have previously been ignored. Our communities are consistently overlooked in the distribution of resources, which is harmful to us as well as other communities of color who are denied the same resources due to the perceived “success” of AAPIs. This pandemic has highlighted a myriad of holes in our City’s safety net systems, and the City’s response must address root problems in addition to immediate needs. Our community will continue to suffer every day we allow these flaws in the system to exist. As always, CACF will continue to be available as a resource and partner to address these concerns and look forward to working with you to better address our communities’ needs.



**Testimony of Rebecca Charles
Policy and Advocacy Associate
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Budget Hearing
March 14th, 2022**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for New York City's children and their families.

We would like to thank Chair Stevens and the Committee on Youth Services for hosting the Budget Hearing on Youth Services. Investing in youth programming is essential to ensuring youth can access opportunities, economic support, networks, and community.

As New York moves towards recovery from the pandemic, youth services and programming are more crucial than ever to help youth restore socioemotional skills that have been lost as a result of COVID-19. Youth programming helps to maintain connections among peers and helps to bridge the gap between families and supports beyond schools. CCC, in partnership with the Campaign for Children, recommends the following investments into youth services to help support the mental health, skill building, and emotional well-being of young New Yorkers.

Youth Employment Programs

CCC applauds the Preliminary Budget's major expansions proposal for summer youth workforce programming, including plans to increase the number of baselined Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) slots from 70,000 to 90,000 and to add an additional \$57 million in baselined funding to cover this SYEP slot increase. Increasing slots for SYEP will bring the city closer to a program with universal access. To ensure that this increased funding is used as effectively as possible, the DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment (MOYE) must continue coordinating closely to ensure a successful summer.

While we celebrate this milestone for SYEP, we recognize that Work Learn Grow (WLG), SYEP's school-year counterpart, has received no baselined investment and is set to receive less than half of its pre-pandemic funding. **We urge the city to invest \$20 million to baseline funding for WLG in the FY23 budget to further increase opportunities for young people and maintain relationships and employment.**

K-8 Summer Programming

On March 11, Mayor Adams announced a historic expansion to the Summer Rising program, increasing slots by 10,000 for a total of 110,000 K-8 students. CCC applauds this proposed

expansion, which is sure to positively impact the lives of countless young people. That being said, **we urge the city to address the severe challenges providers from last year's Summer Rising programming were forced to face. This includes but is not limited to paying providers a fair wage, addressing staffing shortages, and providing mental health supports for students.**

Due to inflation and increased competition in the labor market, the city must further increase funding and rates for CBOs contracted to provide summer programming. DYCD recently announced a \$1,414 participant rate for COMPASS contracts and a \$1,320 participant rate for SONYC contracts. The COMPASS rate received no increase from last year, and though the SONYC rate was doubled, providers will still be paid flat wages once increased enrollment and extended work hours are factored in. **We urge the city to further increase the cost-per-participant rates to \$1,848 for COMPASS contracts and \$1,410 for SONYC contracts.** These rates would ensure that all summer staff would be paid at least \$21 an hour, taking into consideration a student-to-counselor ratio of 10:1 and that middle school summer counselors will now be working 300 hours throughout the summer. These rates also fall in line with the #JustPay campaign for human service workers. These increased rates will help to address the immense summer staffing shortage and to stabilize the youth development workforce.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the mental health of young people. Middle school-age children especially are experiencing high levels of depression and anxiety. **This year's Summer Rising funding must also budget for social workers, crisis intervention, and other resources, providing CBOs the ability to focus solely on the well-being of their participants.**

Address the Backlog of Comprehensive Background Checks for Youth Programs

Providers of youth services wholly rely on government partners to process background checks efficiently and promptly, but DOHMH is failing to do that. As a result, countless after-school and summer staff are unable to start work due to pending clearances, and many CBOs have been forced to shut down programming entirely. This further contributes to staffing shortages, as people waiting for their background checks to clear are forced to find work elsewhere that can pay them sooner. These issues negatively impact the children and youth who attend after-school and summer programs throughout the city, as well as their parents who are unable to find steady and reliable child care. **The city must prioritize the backlog of background checks and develop a new simplified system that will quickly and effectively clear staff to work with youth.** Otherwise, young people and the providers that serve them, will continue paying the price of complex bureaucratic processes.

Invest in Community Schools

Community schools play an integral role in youth development as well as family and community engagement. Schools partner with CBOs to run community schools that address socioeconomic, health, and mental hygiene needs of both youth and families, covering the wide range of issues

on the education spectrum. The state Education Department recommended the utilization of community schools in its reopening guidance, and New York City has leaned heavily on federal relief funds to expand the number of local community schools. That being said, there is still no long-term strategy in place to sustain funding for community schools and no baseline funding has been issued by the city.

CCC asks the city to prioritize community schools by developing a long-term strategy that includes baselined funding to ensure that community schools are able to continue offering a wide array of services to youth and families well after federal funding subsidies. Community schools are needed to support academics, enrichment, restorative justice, and mental well-being. City level investments into community schools will further support community wellness, minimized criminalization, and youth development.

Support the #JustPay Campaign and Fund a Cost-of-Living Adjustment for Human Service Workers

The human services workforce in New York City has some of the lowest paid workers in the city's economy. Human service employees provide the backbone for essential services for children and families. Without their hard work, millions of New Yorkers would be living in crisis. CCC was disappointed by the lack of investments in the human services workforce within the Preliminary Budget. We support the #JustPay Campaign, which calls for a living wage and annual cost of living adjustments for social service providers. **We urge the city to enact a budget that adheres to the asks of the #JustPay Campaign:**

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

As youth programming faces a serious staffing shortage, actions to raise the wages of summer, after-school, and year-round contracted staff are crucial.

Conclusion

Investing in youth programming through baselined funding, mental health supports, and equal pay for workers is essential for the well-being of youth, families, and communities. Youth programming can be a lifeline, as it provides needed enrichment, income, socialization, and health support. Ensuring that youth programming is funded, well-staffed, organized, coordinated, and safe is a necessity. We cannot underestimate the importance of joy, play, and community for young people, especially as we adapt to a new way of life and hope to recover from the pandemic. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

FY23 Preliminary Budget Hearing Youth Services Committee

March 14, 2022

TESTIMONY

My name is Cynthia Brackett, and I am the New York City Regional Director for The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO). Thank you to Chair Stevens and the members of the Youth Service Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony about our program model and work across New York City, and the need for increased resources to help at-risk young individuals and those coming home from prison.

CEO's mission is to provide immediate, effective, and comprehensive employment services to individuals recently returning home from incarceration and young adults who have had interactions with the criminal legal system. As the largest provider of reentry employment services in New York, our intentional focus is to serve individuals facing the most significant barriers to gaining and maintaining employment, while also returning \$3.30 for every \$1 of public investment.

Background on CEO

Our four stage program has two core components: transitional employment and vocational services. After our participants complete job readiness training, CEO hires and provides them with immediate paid employment through our transitional work crews. To provide transitional jobs, CEO operates more than 20 work crews across New York City that provide public sector agencies with a variety of general labor services. Access to immediate work on a transitional work crew helps our participants gain stability and motivation as they work with a dedicated team of staff to attain long-term employment outside of CEO, and support them to navigate any potential obstacles to employment.

Funding Priority: Youth Services

On January 24, 2022 Mayor Adams announced his "Blueprint to End Gun Violence"; and as part of this strategy, the City of New York will implement long term solutions that focus on community based intervention and prevention strategies to break the cycle of violence. A key component of prevention strategy is to provide access to and readiness for career opportunities for out of school young people ages 18 to 24.

CEO will use it's evidence based Credible Messenger Initiative to immerse enrollees in daily prosocial activities including facilitated workshops lead by Credible Messengers; job start readiness preparation through our transitional jobs program (Crew works), an experiential

learning environment where youths will learn how to take direction and regulate their responses to workplace stress; and access to a wide range of occupational skills training; and individualized job coaching and development. With more than half of our participants between 18 and 30 years old, CEO is committed to continuously building, implementing, and evaluating programming that addresses their needs and affirms their agency.

There are many reasons why an investment in additional youth services is critical for CEO and other organizations like CEO, and CEO respectfully asks \$100,000 through the DYCD Youth Initiative. The unemployment rate for young adults is almost three times higher than the rate for older adults. Additionally, about half of all young adults return to prison within three years following release. Being given the opportunity to direct funds toward our young adults returning home would provide them with the resources to gain stability and motivation so that they can ultimately succeed in long-term employment.

These are sound investments the city can and should adopt through the budget. At CEO, we don't just put young individuals to work; we help keep them out of prisons and jails.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

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Research. Development. Justice. Reform.

Courtney Bryan. Director

**Center for Court Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 14, 2022**

Good morning Chair Stevens and esteemed councilmembers of the Committee on Youth Services. Since its inception, the Center for Court Innovation (the Center) has supported the vision embraced by Council of a fair, effective, and humane justice system and building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions. The Center's longstanding partnership with Council over the past twenty-five years has helped bring this vision to life through evidence-based and racially just programming that spans the entire justice continuum, which include:

- Prioritizing the trauma-informed treatment of young people suffering from mental health issues; and
- Expanding diversion options across all parts of the justice system.

Our firsthand experience operating direct service programs and conducting original research uniquely positions us to offer insights that the Council can apply as it considers the development of initiatives that respond to needs of all New Yorkers. In each instance, our aim is to provide a meaningful and proportionate response, to treat all people under our care with dignity and respect, to prioritize public safety, and to produce much-needed cost savings for the City. And, as an anti-racist organization, to ensure the needs of marginalized New Yorkers are addressed.

The Center's Innovative Core Funding

This year, we ask the Council to continue and expand support for **the Center's Innovative Core Funding**. The Center uses this funding to flexibly respond to the immediate needs of New Yorkers by piloting novel and effective community-based pilots to test for scalable solutions. Through this work, the Center is making a deep investment in engaging individuals as far upstream as possible, to limit, and ideally prevent, justice system involvement. An increase in investments from Council would support the very issues at the heart of this committee—youth services. Support would go to further youth development programs, as well as mental health services, homelessness prevention, and community-based violence interventions, in all five boroughs.

Examples of the programming this funding supports are reflected across the City. At the Center's Staten Island Justice Center, the Youth Wellness Initiative provides robust mental health services to justice-involved youth and allows participants to co-design community engagement and service activities aimed at reducing mental health stigma. In the Bronx, the Center's Bronx Child Trauma Supports uses this funding to provide therapy sessions to young people, ages 3-15, who have been victims of or witnesses to violent crime, thereby improving community health and reducing intergenerational trauma. And, the Center's Queens Community Justice Center's Youth Impact's peer leadership program engages youth diverted from the justice system in workshop and skill-building programming. We ask the Council to expand the Center's core funding so that we can continue innovating scalable solutions in response to issues we are seeing on the ground, and effectively serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers – including those that present with issues related to housing instability and/or homelessness.

Upstream- and Court-Based Supports for Youth with Complex Mental Health Needs

The mental health of our young people and the justice system cannot be siloed; they are inextricably intertwined. Properly addressing the mental health needs of young New Yorkers—necessary now more than ever before with the stressors of COVID-19 weighing heavily on already under-resourced communities—will allow us to lessen harmful interactions with the justice system and law enforcement. And, on the flip side, ensure that contact with the system is humane, with an emphasis on providing culturally competent treatment and programming. Ideally, we address the mental health needs of individuals before they ever intersect with the justice system. The Center offers trauma informed mental health programming in communities experiencing high rates of violence in all five boroughs.

The Center launched a therapeutic model for young men of color in 2012 following a needs assessment in Crown Heights, Brooklyn designed to help inform our program services. Our research found that many young men (nearly 84% of those interviewed) had experiences with violence, were negatively impacted by systems, were underserved, and lacked adequate supports. Because of this, we set out to provide support for these young men to help them navigate communities, change the narrative around victimization and masculinity, and support them in their healing. Cultural competence and humility are core tenants of this work.

We urge Council to continue and expand support for work that brings mental health services to our communities in culturally competent ways. One such request is the Center's Queens Community Justice Center's UPLIFT Program and Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative. To address high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, the Center's **UPLIFT Program** provides trauma and healing services to justice involved male youth and young adults by offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops. UPLIFT recognizes the mental health needs of young people expand far beyond the justice system and is committed to engaging young people in non-traditional settings. Many young people don't feel comfortable in typical therapeutic settings, and UPLIFT offers programming that allows young people to speak freely about their feelings in a non-therapeutic non-mandated environment. Through case management, victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring, participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes.

Compared to the rest of the City, Staten Island has limited options for mental health services for young people. With support from Council, the Center's Staten Island Justice Center provides robust mental health services to youth participants who are justice-involved or have experienced a history of trauma through the **Youth Wellness Initiative**. The Youth Wellness Initiative offers mental health services that address trauma and promote healing for young people. Youth participate in a 10-week long workshop series focused on addressing the impacts of trauma and promoting healing facilitated by a mental health professional. In addition to group sessions, youth are offered a menu of services such as individual short-term counseling, peer mentorship, restorative justice circles, and/or civic engagement opportunities.

Additionally, this workshop series will be geared towards providing support to families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative. While there are services in Staten Island that offer familial therapy, it is a great challenge to get youth and their families to commit to this programming, when there is an unwillingness, mistrust, or there is a familial crisis that has been exasperated by past and current trauma. The Youth Wellness Initiative gives young people and their families the space to discuss these traumas.

The Center's Brownsville Community Justice Center offers programming for young women. We urge Council to support two gender specific programs: **Brownsville Girls Collaborative** (BGC) and **Young Women's Collective Entrepreneurship Institute** (YWCEI). BGC is a leadership development program for young women, focused on holistic empowerment of the mind, body, and soul. The program creates a safe space to engage young women from the Brownsville community who are at high risk of violence and justice involvement. YWCEI is a 12-week intensive business incubator program designed to invest in female-identified entrepreneurs from Brownsville, ages 19-24. YWCEI intentionally addresses the link between complex trauma and economic disenfranchisement as well as provides opportunities for financial empowerment. The Brownsville Community Justice Center works to create safe spaces in which women can address their trauma histories and understand the roots of their behavior, reducing the likelihood of future violence or justice system contact and empowering participants to become positive agents of change for themselves and the community.

The Center's **Brooklyn Mental Health Court** (BMHC) provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and represent a growing percentage of cases served. With Council's continued support, BMHC offers twice monthly programs specifically for youth, including arts programs, movie trips, and meditation classes, all designed to nurture close engagement with the youth population to help them comply with their court mandates and avoid future contact with the justice system. The court's new Youth Engagement Specialist, a bilingual member of our clinical team, ensures young people are not left behind due to language barriers. Renewed funding will enable BMHC to continue and strengthen youth-focused programs, maintain the critical Youth Engagement Specialist role, and provide meaningful activities and healthy meals and snacks to participants, fostering close relationships that help youth to lead healthy non-justice involved lives.

Reducing Incarceration: Youth Diversion for Gun Possession

The Center is committed to reducing unnecessary incarceration and justice system involvement and identifying practical paths to safely shrink the jail system. There is an opportunity for policymakers to innovate in how the system provides treatment and offramps for youth before they suffer an extended jail stay.

The Center's Midtown Community Court (MCC) is piloting a program offering diversion options for young people with gun possession and related charges – the **Youth Diversion for Gun Possession Initiative** – in collaboration with the New York City Law Department and Manhattan District Attorney's Office. Understanding the drivers of gun violence is the first step in supporting evidence-based solutions. In groundbreaking research on the drivers of gun violence, the Center surveyed over 300 young people in neighborhoods with historically high rates of gun violence to determine their reasons for seeking out firearms. The findings demonstrated widespread feelings of diminished safety and pervasive experiences of violence and trauma that motivated the 'security' of carrying a gun.¹

To appropriately respond to the complex drivers of gun violence, we seek Council support for MCC's Youth Diversion for Gun Possession Initiative. This initiative is the first holistic diversion option for young people arrested for gun possession and related charges and employs a team of case managers and a credible messenger who utilize their own experiences to connect with young people and help to change their behavior while simultaneously attaching them to meaningful services. The resulting trust, respect, and empowerment of participants are especially crucial to the success of this pilot.¹ Council support will allow MCC to continue this work as a sustained initiative that serves a greater amount of youth on expanded eligibility.

With City Council's support, we can expand access to these diversions in New York and safely provide youth with more options to adjudicate harm, maintain community safety, and produce better outcomes for the individuals otherwise facing jail or prison time, and the community at large.

Conclusion

By partnering with the Center, Council can go beyond transforming the justice system to cultivating vibrant and prosperous communities that center health, wellness, and security for all young people. We thank the Council its continued partnership and are available to answer any questions you may have.

Notes

¹Swaner, R. & White, E. & Martinez, A. & Camacho, A. & Spate, B. & Alexander, J. & Webb, L. & Evans, K. (2020). Guns, Safety, and the Edge of Adulthood in New York City. New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation. Available at: <https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications/gun-violence-NYC>



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Courtney Bryan. Director

Center for Court Innovation FY23 City Council Youth Services Proposal Summaries

Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative

Center for Court Innovation General

- **Center for Court Innovation #128665 - \$1,000,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** This is an application to support the continuation of our alternative-to-incarceration, youth-diversion, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs in New York City. The Council's support allows us to serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers with mental health services, family development, youth empowerment, workforce development, and housing, legal, immigration and employment resource services. Our goal continues to be improving safety, reducing incarceration, expanding access to community resources and enhancing public trust in government to make New York City stronger, fairer, and safer for all.

Midtown Community Court

- **Midtown Community Court: Youth Diversion for Gun Possession #128360 - \$276,482 (New)** The Center for Court Innovation's (Center) Midtown Community Court (MCC) will operate a Youth Diversion for Gun Possession initiative in collaboration with the New York City Law Department and Manhattan District Attorney's Office for young people charged with gun possession and related charges. This initiative is the first holistic diversion option for young people arrested for gun possession and employs a team of case managers and a credible messenger who utilize their own experiences to connect with young people and help to change their behavior while simultaneously attaching them to meaningful services. This proposal aims to expand a pilot currently underway at MCC into a longer-term initiative that serves a greater amount of youth on expanded eligibility.
 - **Also applied under Diversion Programs Initiative.**

Mental Health Court-Involved Youth Initiative

Brooklyn Mental Health Court

- **Brooklyn Mental Health Court: Court-Involved Youth Mental Health #126096 - \$150,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health initiative of the Brooklyn Mental Health Court provides specialized support to youth ages 18 to 24, who have unique social and cognitive needs and who represent a growing percentage of the cases we serve. Since 2017, more than 126 youth in this age range have pled into the Court. Thanks to City Council support, we now offer monthly programming specifically

for youth, including arts programs, movie trips, and meditation classes—all designed to nurture close engagement with our youth population to help them comply with their court mandates and avoid future contact with the justice system. Youth support groups are also offered on a weekly basis. City Council funding also supports our new Youth Engagement Specialist role, a bilingual member of our clinical team. Renewed funding will enable us to continue and strengthen our youth-focused programs, maintain our critical Youth Engagement Specialist role, and provide meaningful activities and healthy meals and snacks to our participants, fostering close relationships that help youth to lead healthy, law-abiding lives.

Queens Community Justice Center - Jamaica

- **Queens Community Justice Center: UPLIFT #128327 - \$100,000 (New)** To address the high levels of exposure to community violence and trauma among young men of color in Queens, QCJC piloted UPLIFT in FY22, a program that provides that provides trauma and healing services to justice involved male youth and young adults ages 18-25. By offering client-driven individual therapeutic sessions and supportive group workshops, case management and victim services assistance, and advocacy and mentoring participants are supported to recognize, process, and heal their own trauma, resulting in better life outcomes. QCJC requests funding to continue and expand this critical work.

Staten Island Justice Center

- **Staten Island Justice Center: Justice-Involved Youth Wellness Initiative #129888 - \$160,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** This is a renewal proposal for Staten Island Justice Center's Youth Wellness Initiative, a program that provides robust mental health services that address trauma and promotes healing for young people on Staten Island involved in the justice system or at-risk of justice system involvement. Participants will be provided mental health assessments by a clinician who will create engagement plans based on the needs that are identified in the assessment. Youth will also participate in a 10-week long workshop series focused on addressing the impacts of trauma and promoting healing facilitated by a mental health professional. In addition to group sessions, youth will be offered a menu of services such as individual short-term counseling, peer mentorship, restorative justice circles, and/or civic engagement opportunities as determined clinically appropriate to address underlying needs that spurred justice system involvement. Additionally, this proposal will be geared towards providing support to the families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative.

Young Women's Leadership Development Initiative

Brownsville Community Justice Center

- **Brownsville Community Justice Center: Brownsville Girls Collaborative #132070 – \$150,000 (Renewal)** The Brownsville Community Justice Center is requesting funding to support two gender specific programs under the Young Women's Speaker Initiative: Brownsville Girls Collaborative (BGC) and Young Women's Collective Entrepreneurship Institute (YWCEI). BGC is a leadership development program for young women, focused on holistic empowerment of the mind, body, and soul. The

program creates a safe space to engage young women from the Brownsville community who are at high risk of violence and justice involvement. The Young Women's Collective Entrepreneurship Institute (YWCEI) is a 12-week intensive business incubator program designed to invest in female-identified entrepreneurs from Brownsville, ages 19-24. YWCEI intentionally addresses the link between complex trauma and economic disenfranchisement as well as provides opportunities for financial empowerment. In the year ahead, BGC and YWCEI will continue to create safe spaces in which women can address their trauma histories and understand the roots of their behavior, reducing the likelihood of future violence or justice system contact and empowering participants to become positive agents of change for themselves and the community.



New York University (NYU Grossman School of Medicine)
City's First Readers: Video Interaction Project

Testimony Submitted to the
NYC City Council **Committee on Youth Services** Hearing

March 14, 2022

March 14, 2022

I, Alan Mendelsohn, MD, am writing on behalf of New York University and City's First Readers to provide testimony as to why it is absolutely critical to continue to support the **City's First Readers** Initiative, especially in the recovery of the COVID pandemic. I make this request not only as a pediatrician, professor, and scientist at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, but also as a parent of two grown children and resident of New York City.

During the height of the COVID-19, pandemic families were required to shelter in place at home; preschools, childcare centers, playgrounds, and in-person support groups have been closed or limited; and many other vital services have been cut or inaccessible. Initiatives like City's First Readers continued to provide essential services to families that are vital to their wellbeing. CFR reached over 800,000 families in FY21 with many partners actually exceeding their FY20 engagement despite providing most of their work exclusively online. Additionally, CFR distributed 380,000 books and early literacy kits to families across the city – a 41% increase from FY20. Parents have been under incredibly high levels of stress due to loss of employment and income, lack of access to food, worry about protecting their children, and grieving over deceased or ill family members. Children have experienced a significant amount of learning loss and reduction in rich learning opportunities. All families are suffering greatly, but low-income families have been impacted the most by this crisis and will struggle the most to recover both financially and emotionally. A report published by the United Hospital Fund illustrates some of the devastating ways that children in New York have been and will continue to be deeply affected by this crisis: <https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/covid-19-ripple-effect/covid-19-children-new-york-state/>

The programming offered through City's First Readers, such as my program (the Video Interaction Project - VIP), can help families cope with stressors of parenting, reduce maternal depressive symptoms, reduce early harsh discipline that can lead to child maltreatment, and prevent child behavior problems that interfere with learning. My research, funded in part by the National Institutes of Health, has shown this scientifically. **By helping parents cope with the stressors of this crisis and even maintain some possibility of normalcy in their relationships and activities with their children, City's First Readers has the potential to protect children against long-term impacts on mental health and school achievement, and even reduce large costs that the city will otherwise face to address this calamity.**

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis two years ago, all of the City's First Readers partners have quickly adapted our services in order to best meet the needs of incredibly vulnerable families during this time. My program, Video Interaction Project, continues to be offered in a hybrid format with a mixture of in-person and virtual delivery offered to families across New York City at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Woodhull, Gouverneur, Queens, and Elmhurst and at two NYU Langone Brooklyn Family Health Centers in Sunset Park, and at Children's Aid locations in the Bronx and in Harlem, reaching over 2,500 high-risk families in NYC in 2021. This is happening directly as a result of New York City Council support and **has helped support families during the COVID pandemic and will continue to do so in this crucial period of recovery.**

It is critical that we are able to continue to provide City's First Readers' services for parents and young children in Fiscal Year 2023, as we anticipate the need for both in-person and remote parent support remains at an all-time high in the aftermath of this crisis.

There are many incredibly difficult decisions on everyone's plate regarding the upcoming year and how to support our city's recovery, but my plea to you is to **maintain funding** for these incredibly important services for parents, infants, and toddlers. The economic and educational impacts of such a decision will be felt by children for their entire lives.

Please find attached some additional information on my program, the Video Interaction Project, with a two-page overview.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "A. Mendelsohn", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Alan L. Mendelsohn, MD
Professor of Pediatrics and Population Health
Director of Clinical Research, Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics
Director, Video Interaction Project
NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue
alan.mendelsohn@nyulangone.org



HASSENFELD
CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL
AT NYU LANGONE



2 in 5

Number of children living
in poverty in the U.S.

50%

Number of children living
in poverty who lack skills
needed for learning at
school entry

25

Minutes required for
each VIP session

22

Number of age-specific
VIP sessions available
between birth and age 5

~ \$250

Approximate cost of
VIP per child, per year

11

Number of locations
delivering VIP in 2021

Video Interaction Project (VIP)

VIP is a **unique, impactful, low-cost** program that uses pediatric healthcare to prevent achievement gaps before they occur. The program has grown to 11 sites in 3 states and is ready for **large-scale expansion**.

Poverty And The Achievement Gap

Decades of research all point to the same conclusion: Poverty causes significant barriers to a child's scholastic success and reduces opportunities for early learning and educational achievement. These poverty-related gaps in achievement originate in infancy, continue into early childhood, and grow wider over time in the absence of intervention. **Although the causes of disparities in school achievement among children are complex, we know that children from poor and low-income households often face two common challenges:**

1. Lack of readiness to learn (e.g. inability to pay attention or control behavior)
2. Lack of attainment of early reading and math skills

Parents Hold The Key

50 percent of disparities in school achievement in children of low-income families can be traced to fewer opportunities for early learning activities with parents, including talking, teaching, playing, and reading.

The VIP Solution

VIP reduces educational achievement gaps before children reach the classroom by **utilizing pediatric primary care** to:

1. Help parents understand their critical role in their child's development; and
2. Arm parents with the skills and confidence to engage in activities that will stimulate brain development and foster the behavioral skills needed to learn effectively

Research Findings

VIP is especially helpful for *preventing* child behavior problems that interfere with learning. For example, the percentage of families with significant child hyperactivity at school entry was *reduced* from 9.1% to 2.8% overall and from 15.8% to 0% for those at the highest risk —a reduction of between 70 and 100%. VIP has a **strong body of evidence** showing large and sustained benefits for parents and children, including:

1. Increased Reading Aloud, Play, & Talking
2. Enhanced Parent-Child Relationships
3. Improved Child Development

Roby et al., Pediatrics, 2021; Mendelsohn et al., Pediatrics, 2018; Cates et al., Pediatrics, 2018; Weisleder et al., Pediatrics, 2016; Canfield et al., J of Dev Beh Peds, 2015; Burkule et al., Clinical Pediatrics, 2014.

For a list of publications: www.videointeractionproject.org/publications.html

How VIP Works

VIP is an **individualized program** delivered at the time of **every pediatric well visit** from birth - five years.



At each session:

1. A VIP coach leads a 5-10 minute discussion of child development, including suggested activities & goal-setting with the parent
2. Families receive a developmentally appropriate toy or book to take home
3. A short video is made of the parent(s) interacting with their child during reading or play
4. The coach watches the video with the parent, reinforcing strengths and identifying opportunities for further interaction



City's First Readers
An Initiative of the New York City Council

Why is VIP Unique?

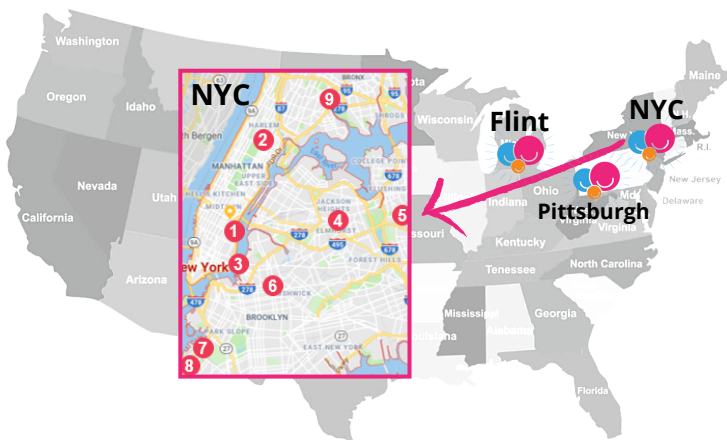


Although a host of programs exist to support early learning through enhanced parenting, *few of them have VIP's level of evidence*, and the cost of those programs can be a barrier for widespread dissemination.

1. VIP is designed to take place in **pediatric primary care**, and can seamlessly be integrated into existing clinical services and flow
2. VIP is a **primary prevention program**, which means that it prevents problems in the parent-child relationship and in child development before they occur
3. VIP is **evidence-based**, and has already been shown to have impacts in randomized controlled trials
4. VIP **costs less** than 1/10 of many home visiting programs at approximately \$250 per child per year

VIP is at an inflection point for growth with plans for widespread expansion, led by the VIP Center of Excellence.

Current VIP Locations in 2022



VIP Center of Excellence

Launched in 2016 at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, guided by a business plan for initial expansion. The VIP COE provides centralized support for all locations, including program implementation, training, supervision, and maintenance of fidelity.

In addition, the VIP COE works centrally to continuously study and optimize VIP, and adapt to the needs of new sites and populations. The VIP COE has developed a comprehensive implementation package so that VIP can be delivered anywhere with quality and fidelity.

The Road Ahead: 2022 - 2026

VIP seeks to reach
30,000 - 40,000 children
annually by the end of 2026,
by expanding to **50-100 sites**

5-year Strategic Plan includes:

- Site Expansion
- Delivery Optimization
- Financial Stability
- Infrastructure Development
- Research & Quality Improvement

Funding

VIP in NYC is supported by: NIH / Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Children of Bellevue, Inc.; Marks Family Foundation; Tiger Foundation; Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, Inc.; Rhodebeck Charitable Trust; KiDS of NYU; NYU Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI); Academic Pediatric Association; NYU Langone Community Service Plan; New York Community Trust, New York City Council Early Literacy Initiative (City's First Readers); New York City Councilmembers Stephen Levin, Antonio Reynoso, and Keith Powers; NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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New York City Council Committee on Small Business

Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Monday, March 14th, 2022

Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you to Hon. Chair Menin and the Committee on Small Business for the opportunity to offer testimony. My name is Danielle Demeuse and I am the Director of Policy for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 40-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

As one of four Child Care Resource & Referral agencies in NYC,¹ CHCF is funded by the state through federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds to support child care programs with technical assistance and intensive coaching to support quality, wrap around infant/toddler care across modalities; and to support parents/guardians in accessing child care that is responsive to their family's schedule and needs. Through our work as a CCR&R, CHCF predominantly (but not exclusively) delivers supports to licensed child care providers in residential settings (Group Family and Family Day Care), overwhelmingly providers whose primary language is Spanish, across all five boroughs of New York City. These particular providers disproportionately care for infants and toddlers, and are most able to offer non-traditional hours of care, which is particularly critical for those families who do not work Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. Our bi-lingual provider supports span technical assistance with licensing and compliance, and intensive coaching around health and safety, as well as quality and curriculum. We also offer supports and training on sustainable business model development for these unique small businesses. Citywide, these particular small businesses are overwhelmingly owned and operated by women, particularly by women of color and immigrant women. They are the backbone to the larger city workforce and economy, yet are often stigmatized and marginalized, and as a result have limited awareness of or access to existing city resources for small businesses.

We know that many small businesses struggled through the pandemic and that critical investments, resources, and supports are required to ensure that our small business community can recover and thrive. It is imperative that city leaders over-seeing efforts for small business and economic development recognize that we cannot stabilize our workforce, our businesses, or our economy without these particular small businesses. They are integral to a family's ability to fully enter and remain in the

¹Child Care Resource & Referral Site: <https://nyccrr.org>





workforce; business owners and our economy simply cannot afford the collapse of this small business community. Yet they have long-been neglected, underfunded, and under resourced and were left uniquely vulnerable to the fiscal and health impacts of the pandemic. As a result of longstanding flaws in city systems and decisive underfunding, and the exacerbating effects of the pandemic, thousands of these child care small businesses have closed their doors over the past five years, steadily growing child care deserts.²

We are excited that the call for Universal Child Care is growing across New York State and City³, among advocates, families, providers, and city and state leaders, and a growing number of folks in the business community. The necessity of accessible, responsive, quality child care options for all families has to be an integral part of any business and economic recovery planning. We know the demonstrable turnaround on investment to this particular small business sector and the families and children that they serve – not only on the ability for parents to fully enter and remain in the workforce, but also on child development and school readiness, which has long term impacts on academic, health and financial stability outcomes.^{4 5} It is critical that the city immediately and comprehensively (across multiple agencies and oversight bodies) address the systemic flaws and inequitable funding and resourcing to citywide child care small businesses and workforce, in all care settings and regardless of direct affiliation with the Department of Education. There must be specific funds set aside for these small businesses to support capital and facilities funding needs (both elements are not allowable uses of child care desert funds from the State); as well as to stabilize this workforce given that current market rates (which are state set) and contract rates (which are offered through DOE contracts) are grossly insufficient to meet the true cost of delivering these services *with* compensation and benefits to child care workers reflective of the high value of these services.

Additionally, the NYC SBS needs to strengthen its relationship with existing structures and organizations who are already positioned and delivering technical assistance to these particular small businesses, to optimize the reach and impact of existing structures of support - i.e. Child Care Resource & Referral agencies. While our state contract funding does allow for modest delivery of business supports and training, and small grants to support with some startup costs, it is insufficient to meet the critical needs of these small businesses reflective of the scale of this sector and the crisis of this moment; or to creatively expand the scope and impact of business training, technical assistance, and referral to existing funding opportunities to providers, that would not only sustain, but grow a thriving child care sector.

While the Mayor has proposed two tax breaks that would offer long term and limited child care capacity growth citywide – they target funds to business owners and developers, particularly focusing on creating child care centers, with no attention paid or resources proposed to existing child care businesses; and particularly disregarding the mostly women of color small business owners who are presently running state licensed and monitored, quality child care programs in residential settings, who have significant

² OCFS shares out these Facts & Figures each year, if you compare licensed program numbers in NYC, pay particular attention to licensed Group Family and Family Day Care programs.

³ We join the Empire State Campaign for Child Care and uplift their principles for UCC:

<https://tinyurl.com/5ayby4dt>

⁴ Heckman, J. (2012) Invest in Early Childhood: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy. Accessed on March 9, 2022 from: [Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy - The Heckman Equation](#)

⁵ The First Five Years Fund: [Make Early Childhood Education a National Priority - First Five Years Fund \(ffyf.org\)](#)





available capacity due to systemic flaws that are stagnating family enrollment. Immediate investments in the existing child care sector, in *all* modalities – with a particular, but not exclusive focus on the most vulnerable parts of the sector (home-based child care and child care programs that are independent of the DOE) would have more immediate stabilizing and capacity growth effects.

If we truly want to actualize a universal system in the long run, we must take action now to stabilize and grow upon our existing child care sector and workforce, so that we have the capacity to universally offer care that centers quality and equity, and honors family need and choice. While we are calling on the Federal and State Governments to make the necessary investments, it does not remove the City's responsibilities in designing, equitably funding and resourcing, and administering responsive systems and supports that uplift the workforce at the heart of this essential sector; a sector that NYC's families, businesses, and economy rely upon.

For any questions about our testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you.





**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Monday, March 14th, 2022**

Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you to Hon. Chair Stevens and the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to offer testimony. My name is Shamar Watson and I am the Director of Youth Development for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. We want to start by congratulating you, Hon. Chair Stevens, on your appointment as Chair of the Committee on Youth Services. We were able to listen into the Oversight Hearing on Summer Programming earlier this month and appreciate your connection and attention to community programs, and the importance of strong and valued city partnerships with community-based organizations in delivering services. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 40-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

CHCF delivers wrap around, holistic services through and beyond our state and city contracted programs and services. We know that a child's development, academic growth, and long-term life outcomes are impacted by so many intersecting circumstances that go beyond what occurs in care and educational spaces; and that access to high quality, equitably resourced, and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning spaces is critical from birth, through school-age and post-secondary education. Our team supports child care and early learning programs, and family access to child care (birth through school-age) in our work as a Child Care Resource & Referral Agency and as a Family Child Care Network under the Department of Education. We offer after school programming at two schools in the Bronx, as a part of the city's SONYC program and through state Advantage and Empire After School funding. Our Community Empowerment Department expands our general delivery of comprehensive supports in these direct program spaces/schools, and the reach of our agency services and supports beyond these physical spaces into the surrounding communities, addressing a number of issues, reflective of the shifting needs of the families and communities (i.e. housing, immigration, food access, healthcare access, etc.).

During a typical school year, our school-based programs are contracted to serve 490 students, and by extension their families: 250 students at PS 59 (about 56% of the K-5 school population); and 140 elementary students and 100 middle school students at PS/MS 279 (roughly 27% of the school population). We know the significant value-add of connecting community-based partners with schools to comprehensively meet the unique needs of students and their families. Above and beyond the academic supports we are able to offer in after school programs, we support mental health and social emotional development, interest and career exploration, and connection to additional resources and opportunities beyond the school walls. But just as importantly, spaces created with culturally and linguistically responsive CBO staff and program design offer opportunities for students to positively connect and have fun with peers and staff mentors in self-affirming ways.

We know that the desire and need for safe, quality after school and summer programming spaces far outreach the number of slots that are made available through city and state funding. CHCF has long had significant waiting lists for our programs, and we are aware of surrounding neighborhood schools that





do not have programs at all. In fact, we were introduced by our Assembly Member to another school in one of the communities that we serve, whose school leaders and parents saw a great need for after school programming. CHCF built a relationship with the school and were positioned to open up a program with the funding support of our state Assembly Member for fall of 2021, just as students would be returning to in-person learning and there was a collective focus on rapidly and effectively meeting student academic and social emotional needs. Although our Assembly Member did not ultimately come through with the funding, the need remained. CHCF took on the financial responsibility of ensuring this school community received the services needed, opening a program up with a capacity of 60 students at PS 226 (about 17% of the school population) at the beginning of this school year.

The true value of these relationships with CBOs and school-based programs was greatly underscored during the pandemic when students were physically disconnected from their peers and the supports that school and CBO staff offer. Like many CBOs, CHCF rapidly adjusted their services to ensure continuity in the delivery of essential supports remotely, going far above and beyond the scope of our contracts to ensure the school community, not just those in our programs, were supported in accessing necessary resources. Students, parents, staff, and school leaders had eagerly awaited a return to in-person programming, yet organizational partners across the city have faced numerous challenges in starting up in-person programming to capacity, and in delivering services to responsively meet so many critical needs. At a time when CBO presence could significantly expand the scope, reach, and impact of city/DOE efforts to address academics as well as mental health, bureaucratic bottlenecks, issues with clear guidance and reimbursement, as well as longstanding city and state practices that undermine the sustainability of CBO partners have stagnated our ability to deliver programs to capacity and holistically address the many challenges our students and families continue to face.

CBO contracts at both the state and city-levels have historically been underfunded, not meeting the true cost of care. This places undue financial burden on CBO partners to cover the remaining costs that go into delivering programs that truly respond to the unique needs of students, families, and communities. With significant delays in contract pay out, along with unclear or no guidance on allowable shifts in programming reflective of remote and hybrid learning in schools, CBOs already functioning on razor thin margins or in the red were faced with difficult decisions about staffing lay-offs, service reduction, and in many cases closure, ultimately harming our communities by disrupting the flow of services and minimizing resource access.

The nonprofit sector and CBO city partners are not a support of last resort. The community-based partners are essential to delivering citywide comprehensive, holistic, culturally responsive programming and services. Even beyond the fact that the city agencies do not have the capacity to do the work on their own, they should not do the work on their own through tremendously siloed agencies. CBO partners are embedded in and understand their communities, and are well-equipped to do this work, delivering intersectional supports and services above and beyond the limited scope of contracts from any one agency and their purview. As such, CBO partners should be proactively brought into planning and decision-making spaces as stakeholders, to offer insight and expertise on program design and effective delivery.

Contracting with CBOs should not be seen as a cost saving method, paying 85% of what it really costs to deliver these services. Underfunded contracts have always limited CBO ability to offer competitive salaries that reflect the true value of our program staff in parity with their city-employed





counterparts. The high value of CBO staff is not lost on city agencies, as there are consistent reports from CBO partners of city agencies recruiting CBO staff, given their ability to offer stronger salary and benefit packages compared to what our contracts allow us to offer. We cannot be seen merely as a training pool for city-agency candidates. These practices contradict the often-spoken messages of valuing CBO partnership by city agency leaders, by undercutting our financial stability, as well as our ability to recruit and invest in our staff, and our ability to consistently deliver services reflective of our communities' holistic and shifting needs through staff with long-standing relationships with our communities, families, and students.

CHCF calls on the city to improve its practices of partnership and contracting to ensure that the non-profit human services sector and their staff, who are so critical in the delivery of comprehensive, culturally and linguistically responsive services, are not only sustained, but able to thrive. We join our partners in the #JustPay Campaign in calling for the city to end the poverty-level wages that result from low contract reimbursement rates. Specifically, the city must:

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

While, these long-standing contracting issues have made it especially difficult to recruit staff this year, because our salaries can't compete with other jobs. Even if folks might be drawn to this work, they are forced to make decisions about which job they can afford to pursue. Of additional concern, even with those that have applied to work in programs, significant backlogs in background check clearances have put their start date on hold for months, at times years, and they ultimately move onto other job opportunities. Not being able to recruit and clear staff has slowed our ability to open programs and enroll to full capacity; this not only jeopardizes our ability to be fully paid out on our contract and ultimate financial stability as an organization, but is harming families who need quality care spaces for their children during after school hours, and our students who want so badly to be back in afterschool with their peers and afterschool teachers.

Through all of this, CHCF, like so many CBOs across the city, has continued to show up for our schools; working closely with school leaders and teachers, supporting families and students even beyond those we are contracted and compensated to serve. We are present in the schools all day, not just from 3-5 pm. When the city needed to rapidly expand extended day/year programming to deliver Summer Rising, CHCF was ready and willing to continue our SONYC programming for middle school students at PS/MS 279. As we move towards Summer Rising 2022, we feel it is worth noting that the city missed opportunities to truly optimize existing CBO relationships in schools by only building upon city-funded SACC programs for Summer Rising 2021. For example, because PS 59 programming is funded through state Advantage and Empire After School dollars, we were not tapped to extend our programming into the summer, building upon our existing decade+ long relationship with that school community. At PS/MS 279, even though we have run elementary afterschool programming in that school for over 25 years, we were not asked to extend those services for summer, rather the DOE brought another CBO who held COMPASS contracts to run the elementary school program, with no prior relationship to that school community.





We echo the sentiments of our CBO partners and of Chair Stevens as delivered in the summer programming oversight hearing, that the ambition of DYCD alone is not sufficient to making high quality programs that truly meet the needs of our youth and families a reality. The city must be proactive in engaging CBO partners as thought partners in program design and delivery planning from the beginning. Respect our expertise in the field and ensure that we have a direct hand in designing and actualizing programs that can have optimal impact on our communities. Honor the value of our work and the skilled staff on the ground working with communities day in and day out by funding is in sustainable and equitable ways.

In addition to after school programming, CHCF strongly supports the Community School model as a means of investing in CBO partnerships with schools. Up to July of 2021, CHCF had worked for 6 years as the partnering CBO at the Bronx High School of Business on the Taft Campus, delivering culturally and linguistically responsive, holistic services to the student population and their families. A cost-cutting decision to consolidate services on multi-school campuses to one CBO with a smaller contract award amount, made it difficult for small- or mid-sized non-profits, like CHCF, to compete with larger non-profits with more fiscal capacity to carry the funding shortfall.

Even so, we remain committed to the Community School model. Through our work at BHSB, we saw significant improvements in student attendance, graduation rates, and college and career readiness rates. We offered career exploration opportunities to our youth and saw clear evidence of the impact of youth employment programs like Work Learn Grow, Learning to Work, and Summer Youth Employment. We continue to join many across the city to not only grow the country's largest community schools initiative; but specifically, to this committee we support continual increases in funding to youth employment programs to expand access to all city youth and give them opportunities to explore career pathways, build experience, and grow networks.

We are excited about Mayor Adams' plan to expand SYEP to 100,000 job opportunities, but we call on the city to ensure true equity in access to these opportunities. Language access in marketing and outreach are critical to ensure our ELL/MLL students are aware of these opportunities. Additionally, as was noted by some of our partners in the oversight hearing, there are limitations in access to immigrant students, and particularly those without documentation. We must be ensuring that our most vulnerable students are being given access to all opportunities that will open doors for lifelong success.

For any questions about our testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you.



**Committee on Youth Services - Preliminary Budget Hearing on Youth Services
Written Testimony Submitted The Child Center of NY
March 2022**

The Child Center is a family focused multiservice organization reaching more than 41,000 children, youth, and their family members each year across 70 locations in all five of New York City's boroughs, but primarily in Queens. Its mission is to strengthen children and families with skills, opportunities, and emotional support to build healthy, successful lives. Our innovative programs guide and support children, from birth to young adulthood, through six service areas: Early Childhood Education; Behavioral Health; Child Abuse Prevention & Family Support; Health Homes and Integrated Care; Youth Development; and Residential Treatment.

The Child Center is proud to be a part of City's First Readers (CFR). CFR's cross-sector engagement reaches approximately 1 million families annually across every council district in NYC. ***The Child Center of NY's ParentChild+ (PC+) serves 160 children across the neighborhoods of: Woodside (Council District 26), Astoria (CD 26), Corona (CD 21), Far Rockaway (CD 31), and Jamaica (CD 27).***

Since 2014, The Child Center has operated ParentChild+ (f.k.a Parent Child Home) to reduce the achievement gap by building the school readiness of low-income children, ages 16 months to 4 years, so they enter kindergarten with the skills they need to succeed.

PC+ is a research-based school readiness model that teaches parents of low-income young children how to foster meaningful parent-child interactions and create rich home learning environments that optimize children's brain development. The program provides each family *two 23-week cycles of intensive, twice-weekly home visits (either virtually or in person)* conducted by trained early learning specialists (also called "home visitors"). Home visitors *bring families gifts of a high-quality book or educational toy each week and model for parents—using a non-directive, non-didactic approach—how to engage and encourage their children through play.* By empowering parents, the program continues to impact the lives of children long after home visits have concluded.

PC+ aims to improve (a) cognitive development and expressive and receptive language skills of children to age-appropriate benchmarks; (b) children's social and emotional skills and ability to handle the demands of the school environment. (c) the quality of parent-child interactions and the frequency of talking and reading in the household; and (d) parents' ability to see themselves as their children's first teachers and confidence about overseeing their education.

In the past year, our families have made great improvements – children graduating the program made the biggest gains in task orientation and emotional stability. The parent and child relationships also saw significant gains in affection and communication.

The value and benefit of ParentChild+ is supported by a large body of scientific literature, most notably two recent randomized control trials conducted by New York University that showed significant impact on child-level outcomes for children who completed ParentChild+ as compared to the control group. Another longitudinal study found that *low-income children who completed*

ParentChild+ graduated from high school at the same rate as middle class children nationally (20% higher than their peers from the same socioeconomic background, and 30% higher than the community control groups).



Testimony of Lena Bilik, Senior Policy Analyst, Children's Aid
Submitted Testimony – Youth Services Committee Hearing on Preliminary Budget
March 14, 2022

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Althea Stevens and the members of the Youth Services committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY22-23 Preliminary Budget. Additionally, I would like to thank the New York City Council for your leadership on issues that impact the youth and families of NYC.

With a mission to help children living in poverty to succeed and thrive, Children's Aid provides comprehensive support to children, youth, and their families in some of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in New York City. Since our founding in 1853, Children's Aid has been anchored in the knowledge that poverty cannot be overcome with a single service delivered at a single point in time. We are a solutions-driven, multi-service agency employing a holistic strategy that serves children and their families at every stage of development, from cradle through college and career; and in every key setting — home, school, and community. Today our 2,000 full- and part-time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth, and their families through our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and community health clinics. We work primarily in Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, the north shore of Staten Island, Bedford Stuyvesant/Williamsburg, and downtown Brooklyn. Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we are in support of their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

We were very glad to see the historic expansion of the enormously impactful Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) in this year's preliminary budget, an exciting step forward in actualizing how important youth employment is to our communities. We applaud the Mayor and the Council for this expansion, and for understanding that early, stable funding is key to the success of SYEP. And we are glad to see DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment working together to make this expansion a success.



We are also excited to see the city prioritize children and families through the announcement of Summer Rising 2.0. Together, with continued coordination and clear communication, we can ensure enriching experiences through high-quality, joyful summer programming.

Throughout the pandemic, youth serving community-based organizations like Children's Aid have stepped up as crucial partners to our schools and communities, to bridge the digital divide during remote learning, help connect families to a wide range of assistance with basic needs, as well as address children's emotional trauma and behavioral health needs triggered by illness, loss of loved ones, social isolation, economic distress, and disruption in education. On top of that, our afterschool and summer programs have offered young people a safe and fun space to be with peers and reconnect to the community after so much isolation. Youth programs have played a significant role in addressing youth and family needs and keeping our schools, communities and economy running during the pandemic, and they will be vital to an equitable and lasting recovery. At the same time, the youth services sector has long experienced inadequate and inconsistent funding in our contracts, and despite our vital role during the pandemic, youth programs are once again facing late payments, bureaucratic obstacles, and an uncertain future. In order for us to be able to reach our common goal of a successful, enriching summer program and long term recovery beyond summer, these issues need to be addressed. Many of these issues also impact our implementation of school-year afterschool programming.

Ongoing challenges facing youth programs include:

- We are very grateful that the summer model and scope was announced in early March this year, rather than following the past pattern of last minute notice. And, there are still some challenges that need to be ironed out for a successful Summer Rising 2022:
 - Since the implementation of the Comprehensive Background Check process in 2019, background checks for CBO staff working in youth-serving programs have increasingly taken more time to turn around, leading to staffing challenges in programs since before the pandemic. Labor shortages have further exacerbated these challenges.
 - Some of the labor shortage in the field is because of the overall labor shortages in all sectors right now. But some of this is because New York City and State contracts have resulted in the essential human services workforce being some of the lowest paid workers in New York's economy. Youth services are not immune to this trend, despite the fact that they are performing skilled work taking care of our city's youth.



- COMPASS and SONYC providers have not had new contracts since 2014, and a new Request for Proposals (RFP) was put on hold in 2018, leaving providers with stagnant rates even as direct and indirect costs of programs continued to rise, and all before the pandemic upended the City's economy and the sector as a result.

Some recommendations to address these challenges:

- Fully fund and baseline summer programming as soon as possible and include higher rates reflective of the increased costs of operating programs and the need to pay competitive wages to staff. We also encourage contracts that allow for flexibility in case changing public health guidance necessitates adjusted service delivery models. In order to ensure the availability of high quality programming for all NYC's youth while addressing the sector's staffing shortages, the city must pay providers for their work on time and take unprecedented measures to raise wages.
 - Summer rates - regardless of program model - across COMPASS and SONYC contracts should be increased to:
 - \$1848/child, or a 30% increase from the proposed rate of \$1414 for elementary programs
 - \$1450/child, or a 10% increase from the proposed rate of \$1320 for middle school programs
 - At the March 22 hearing on Youth Services, DYCD also announced that Beacons will not get increases. But Beacon programs should also see increases, or there will be disparities. Beacon programs need to address the impacts of interrupted learning, and because of this, last summer we had to hire more DOE-certified staff, which increased cost. We used the Child Care Stabilization Grants to offset those extra costs in Summer 2021. Because of that experience, we estimate needing \$2,060/child for Beacon programs.
 - Further reasoning behind the need for increased rates for summer contracts with CBOs:
 - The increased hours that have been announced for this coming year. In prior years, the contract was for 108 hours of services for Middle Schoolers. With Summer Rising 2022's new schedule, there will be 216 hours. Additionally, the announcement about aftercare until 6pm seems to imply this will be done solely by CBO partners, as it appears DOE teachers will not be available after 2:40pm.



- CBOs are expected to support students with special needs at a greater volume; while we welcome the opportunity, this means we need to hire staff with the appropriate credentials, which is an increased cost.
- Details of school building space for Summer Rising 2022 need to be made available as soon as possible to CBOs for planning purposes.
- Begin the procurement process for a new youth services RFP with a concept paper that would result in year-round youth services (afterschool and summer) for elementary and middle school students, with rates that ensure high quality programming and competitive compensation for staff.
- Ensure all Summer Rising providers have been paid for services rendered last summer.
- Finally, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene must be allocated enough resources to process Comprehensive Background Checks (CBC) in order for youth services providers to staff up for summer.

Conclusion

There is so much we still do not know about the impact of the pandemic on the social-emotional development, mental health, and academic growth of our city's young people. But what we do know is that isolation has been a hallmark of the last few years, and studies confirm again and again that isolation and disconnection are what often lead to serious barriers to well-being. At the center of all of this is the importance of rebuilding connection - and that is what youth serving CBO providers do best. We stand ready to work with the City to continue to provide crucial services and programming that holistically rebuild connectivity so we can all begin to rebuild as a community.

Children's Aid sincerely thanks the New York City Council and the Youth Services Committee for their staunch support of children, youth, and families in New York City. We look forward to continuing working with the City to support the recovery and revitalization of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony for the record. If you have any questions about this testimony, please feel free to contact lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org.



Testimony of

**Jamie Powlovich
Executive Director
Coalition for Homeless Youth**

Before the

**The New York City Council
Youth Services Committee**

On

**The Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Youth Services Budget and
The Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report**

**Verbal Testimony
March 14, 2022**

**Written Testimony
March 17, 2022**

Introduction

Jamie Powlovich, the Executive Director, of the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) welcome the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Youth Services and Finance Committees' Executive Budget Hearing. CHY was disappointed by the lack of attention that was given to the needs of youth experiencing homelessness and the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) funded provider by the Administration during their testimony. However, we greatly appreciate the Council's support in highlighting this issue during their questioning.

As stated during our verbal testimony on March 14, 2022, we are submitting this written testimony to amplify the needs of the DYCD Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) providers.

Who Are Runaway and Homeless Youth?

RHY are generally defined as unaccompanied young people who have run away or been forced to leave home and now reside in temporary situations, places not otherwise intended for habitation, or emergency shelters. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines the population as being between 12-24 years of age. As of April 2017, New York State redefined RHY to be anyone under the age of 25 years. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimates that between 1.3 to 1.7 million youth experience one night of homelessness within a year, with over half a million experiencing homelessness for a week or longer. Looking at this another way, one in ten young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 experience some form of homelessness in the course of a year.

Like all other segments of NYC's homeless population, RHY experience harm that disproportionately impacts their health and creates roadblocks to long-term wellness. The National Network for Youth's report on "Consequences of Youth Homelessness" details the myriad harms that confront all RHY, including increased mental health problems and trauma, substance use, exposure to victimization and criminal activity, and unsafe sex practices.¹ As is the case with so many other marginalized and system-involved populations we at CHY work with, youth of color and LGBTQ/TGNC youth are vastly overrepresented in the RHY population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the inequities homeless youth face every day and have brought those challenges into sharper contrast. It is imperative that the City continue to support our most marginalized youth and young adults who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the fallout from the pandemic both in the short and long-term.

Youth-Specific Shelters and Services Make a Measurable, Positive Difference

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has been designated the county youth bureau for NYC and is responsible for serving RHY under the NYRHYA.² While

¹ https://www.nn4youth.org/wp-content/uploads/IssueBrief_Youth_Homelessness.pdf

² New York State FY 2018-19 budget included amendments to the NYRHYA that expand the age range for RHY services and youth-centered beds to 25 years old. The amendments took effect January 1, 2018. (SFY 2018-19 Budget, Part M S2006-c/30060c; *see* https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/press/2017/pressRelease17_enactedPassage.html). Under the changes to the

many RHY also seek services within the DHS and HRA continuum of shelters, homeless youth, advocates, and RHY providers agree that the outcomes for many homeless youth improve with increased access to youth-specific shelters and services. This was proved in a groundbreaking white paper was released by the Center for Drug Use and HIV Research at NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing in with the Coalition for Homeless Youth. One of the most significant findings of the study is that high quality RHY programs not only meet basic requirements, but “address higher order relational, psychological, and motivational needs... fostering a sense of resilience among RHY” and providing long-term benefits to a youth’s functioning.³ ***In short, well-funded, high quality RHY programs make a positive impact on a youth’s ability to stabilize and successfully transition from crisis to independence.*** While more research is needed to evaluate the long-term benefits of RHY services, understanding that these programs make a proven difference to the youth they serve gives further support to why we have continued pushing for more shelter beds and services for youth experiencing homelessness.

Funding Recommendations

The City has put forth more resources over the last few years to increase the number of beds that are available to youth experiencing homelessness, including a system-changing package of bills passed by the City Council over three years ago, but overall there is still room to go. CHY understands the difficulties of this year and are grateful that funding for RHY programs are largely being kept whole by a class action settlement.⁴ However, despite baselined funding being maintained, there continues to be vital supports and services that remain underfunded or not funded at all. As such, we present the following recommendations for additional funding and related consideration:

- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Provider Contracts**
DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running the programs. We are requesting that all current DYCD-funded shelter contracts be increased to the 2019 contract rate of \$50,410, and that a 10% general contract increase be implemented for all current DYCD-funded residential, street-outreach and drop-in center RHY contracts.
- **5.4% COLA increase, echoing the ask of the #JustPay Campaign⁵**
To adequately meet the needs of any youth who enter a program, providers must ensure that all their staff are being paid livable wages.

NYRHYA, municipalities are not mandated but can opt in to providing RHY services to youth up to age 25, but this change does reflect what youth, advocates, and providers have been saying here in NYC for years: there is an urgent need for youth specific shelters and services available to youth up to their 25th birthday.

³ Gwadz, M., Freeman, R., Cleland, C.M., Ritchie, A.S., Leonard, N.R., Hughes, C., Powlovich, J., & Schoenberg, J. (2017). Moving from crisis to independence: The characteristic, quality, and impact of specialized settings for runaway and homeless youth. New York: Center for Drug Use and HIV Research, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing. *See page 16.*

⁴ On March 2, 2020, DYCD and The Legal Aid Society finalized a settlement in the class action matter *C.W. v. The City of New York*. This settlement includes provisions that protect current funding levels of DYCD-funded shelter and services for New York City’s RHY.

⁵ <https://www.justpayny.org>

- Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the RHY System: \$1.481M**
 DYCD data shows that homeless youth rarely transition from DYCD shelters into their own independent housing. However, unlike in DSS shelters or in the foster care system, DYCD does not have baselined funding for housing specialists. The current Housing Specialists at the DYCD-funded drop-in centers are temporarily funded through federal Emergency Housing Voucher funding which is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 2022). To ensure RHY successfully transition to their own apartments with DYCD/DSS issued vouchers, or other permanent housing resources, DYCD needs ensure funding to providers to maintain the 16 Housing Specialists currently at the drop-in centers. Continuing the funding for this position would support youth experiencing homelessness in successfully obtaining safe, long-term housing.
- Fund two mental health focused Transitional Independent Living Support Program (TIL) Pilots: \$2M**
 Youth often share that they wish they had better access to meaningful mental health supports. Providers continue to express that they often do not have the staff capacity or appropriate structure to support RHY who have significant mental health needs. The City should issue an RFP for two new pilot programs to serve RHY with mental and behavioral health needs that would include on-site clinical services and intensive case management to provide these youth with the services they need.
- Create 40 additional DYCD RHY beds for youth aged 21-24 years: \$2.22M**
 There is currently only 60-beds in the DYCD systems for 21-24yo; however, our providers continue to report that this is an inadequate amount to meet the overwhelming need. To ensure that older youth can benefit from the safety and security of youth specific shelter supports, we ask that funding be made available for an additional 40 beds to serve homeless young adults ages 21- 24yo.

For questions please contact:

Jamie Powlovich

Coalition for Homeless Youth, jamie@nychy.org, (347) 772-2352

The Coalition for Homeless Youth

Founded in 1978 as the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, The Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) is a consortium of 60+ agencies working to improve the housing and mental healthcare continuum for the ~50,000 runaway, homeless and street-involved youth throughout New York State. The Coalition's mission is, as a membership organization, is to use its collective voice to promote the safety, health and future of runaway, homeless and street involved youth.

CHY is primarily an advocacy organization, leveraging the expertise and experience of its members to shape the policy landscape for runaway and homeless youth in New York State. This is achieved through increasing public awareness, coalition meetings and public advocacy campaigns for pertinent legislation and funding. Notably, in 2015, CHY was instrumental in the advocacy efforts that resulted in the doubling of the State budget for runaway and homeless youth services. CHY's advocacy also contributed to the development of NYS statutory and

regulatory changes that became effective in 2018, permitting localities across the State, to extend length of stay and increase age of youth served by RHY programs in their communities.

An additional area of focus for CHY is the strengthening of service delivery for runaway and homeless youth, primarily through the provision of specialized training and technical support. Annually, CHY provides training and technical assistance for over 750 professionals working with homeless and runaway youth; the subject matter varies, but includes: mental health services, emergency housing, street outreach, crisis services, harm reduction, transitional independent living programming, immigration, and case management.

At present, the Coalition consists of 45 organizational members, and 20 affiliate members; its continuum is represented in almost every county of New York State. Program operations are concentrated downstate, but the program's reach extends throughout the State; CHY takes the broadest possible approach, engaging both traditional social service institutions and organizations that provide programming for niche populations that interact with homelessness (LGBTQI youth, trafficked youth, etc). In this, CHY brings together providers and clients to work together at every possible level to effect change, and this multi-tiered approach has fostered significant results: in the last two years, the advocacy efforts of CHY have fundamentally changed the socio-political landscape for runaway and homeless youth.

In 2017 and 2018, the New York City Council passed five pieces of legislation that will have a groundbreaking impact on the supports that the city provides youth experiencing homelessness. This includes: extending the age limit for runaway and homeless youth services from 21 to 25yo, extending the length of stay at Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) shelter programs, mandating that DYCD track youth that are not able to obtain a shelter bed due to lack of capacity, extending the time limits at DYCD shelter programs, streamlining the process for youth in the DYCD system to access shelter in the adult shelter system, and mandating DYCD to create a plan to address the needs of all homeless young people in NYC. The Coalition for Homeless Youth was instrumental in the passing of this legislation. The efforts of CHY in recognizing and upholding the plight of homelessness among young people across ethnicities, genders and orientations is at the forefront of all its initiatives

Thank you Youth Services Committee members. My name is Corrine Conrad. I'm a member of Freedom Agenda. I believe, like most New Yorkers believe, that the city budget should reflect what we value. We should value the quality of life of our youth.

In 2021, New York City spent almost 3 times (290%) more per incarcerated person than the second most expensive jail system in the country, yet people in the Department of Corrections custody are subjected to some of the worst jail conditions in the nation.

City Council must deflate DOC's budget and redistribute the urgent resources needed to all of the youth services especially in criminalized communities mostly impacted by incarceration. The Commission on Reinvestments reported that "A healthy, functioning family is the most important influence on a young person's life. Invest in two-generational models to support young people and their families. The City must continue to support, expand, and enhance programs that focus on 2-generational models, working with family units-parents/guardians (defined broadly) and young people to ensure healthy and productive family units. Family support with seeking employment, therapy, etc. is a vital investment to ensure the young person and family unit are productive and experience successful, healthy outcomes."

Implement the Commission's recommendations by making the strategic investments they have identified to prevent youth from entering the criminal legal system, to assist those with services and programs currently in the system, and to aid those returning to our communities out of the system.

Thank you!

From: Lew Bader <lew@counselingschools.org>
Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 9:23 AM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] March 14, 2022: Committee on Youth Services

Counseling In Schools is a non-profit community based organization. We have been providing services to more than 7000 students each year in New York City Schools since 1986, helping them with their social and emotional growth which is as important as their intellectual growth. This year, as you might imagine, these critical services are in high demand.

You would think that the city and the Department of Education (DOE) would treat our organization as critical as well. Instead, we are tasked with supporting the payroll of more than 100 social workers and youth workers, the supplies to assist in their efforts and the infrastructure that keeps our organization running, with VIRTUALLY NO FUNDING thus far in Fiscal 2022. We have nine major programs with the city that total \$3.7 million. Thus far two of those programs have approved, registered contracts and budgets. To date we have only received \$280,000.

On top of that, the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) approved an increase to our Indirect Rate for Fiscal 2021 and forward. This will provide us with about another \$150,000 a year in funding. To date, we have received nothing from MOCS and our DOE and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) contracts are not recognizing the rate.

The deficits we are being forced to work with are not just unfair - they are unmanageable. These are ALL of New York City's children - YOURS and OURS - that desperately need the social and emotional support we provide. These are VITAL programs that we run at THE CITY'S REQUEST. Fund them appropriately so that our people can continue to meet the needs of the children, the families, the schools and the communities of this city.

Additionally, it should be noted that we did not receive a COLA this year. The reason given was that because there were new contracts and COLA was taken into account. However, this was not the case. Funding is level with previous years.

We are proud members of the [#JustPay campaign](#), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers by demanding sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

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

The COLA is the biggest action that can be taken right now, during this budget season. We ask that the Council include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a 5.4% COLA based on the consumer price index which mirrors the State COLA included in the Governor's budget. This would be about an \$108 million investment in an essential community workforce.



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New York City Council, Committee on Youth Services

March 14, 2022

My name is John Sentigar, and I am the Director of Development and Communications at Covenant House New York (CHNY), where we serve runaway and homeless youth (RHY) ages 16 to 24. I would like to thank the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services, especially Chair Althea Stevens for the opportunity to submit testimony.

CHNY is the nation's largest, non-profit adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway and trafficked youth. During this past year, CHNY served over 1,600 young people in our programs. On a nightly basis, we provide shelter to approximately 200 young people, including, LGBTQ youth and pregnant women and mothers with their children as well as survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. Our youth are primarily people of color and over a third of our youth have spent time in the foster care system. Many of our youth have experienced abuse or neglect at the hands of parents or other caregivers, and a disproportionately high percentage of our youth struggle with the pervasive impacts of trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse. We provide young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care, mental health and substance abuse services, legal services, high school equivalency classes and other educational and job-training programs, as well as a safe house and specialized services for survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. All of

these services help young people overcome the trauma of abuse, homelessness and exploitation and move toward stability.

Right-size RHY Provider Contracts, Support DYCD-funded Organizations with a COLAs

First and foremost, we are asking that our essential workers/direct care staff, who have risked their lives every day of this pandemic caring for our young people experiencing homelessness, be paid a living wage. New York State has cut human services local aid by 5% annually since 2012. Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running RHY programs. Sadly, it is the human services workforce that bears the brunt of the reduced funding, thereby leaving the average human services employee living at or below the poverty line. It is simply unacceptable for essential workers with full-time jobs, who are jeopardizing their own health to serve others in this pandemic, to be living at the poverty line. Additionally, low and stagnant wages due to insufficient state and city funding cause staff turnover rates in parts of the nonprofit sector that are over 40%. High turnover rates are detrimental to the young people we serve as it is important that our youth develop rapport with the adult staff who act as mentors and guides as they rise out of poverty to lead self-sufficient lives. Frequent staff changes disrupt that rapport and make it more difficult for youth experiencing homelessness to leave poverty behind. **We are therefore requesting that all DYCD-funded shelter contracts be increased to the 2019 contract rate of \$50,410, and that a 10% general contract increase be implemented for all current DYCD-funded residential, street outreach and drop-in center RHY contracts. This will**

“right-size” DYCD contracts to more closely resemble the true cost of a bed for a young person experiencing homelessness in New York City.

Mental Health Care

One of the greatest needs for youth is mental health care. The experience of homelessness, especially if a youth has also experienced trafficking, can lead to PTSD, anxiety, depression, and many other mental health issues. CHNY is fortunate to have 12 social workers on staff and to have contracted with a part-time psychiatrist who is dedicated to serving young adults who have experienced complex trauma. However, we do not have a full-time psychiatrist and very few programs that serve youth in New York City do. The waitlist for psychiatric appointments for youth across the city can be long, thereby leading to unnecessary delays in care and recovery. Additionally, there are currently no specifically dedicated youth or survivor mental health beds in New York City. Our mental health staff is adept at dealing with myriad mental health concerns including, anxiety, depression, PTSD, bipolar disorder, among many other disorders. However, in recent years we have seen an increase in young people experiencing homelessness and trafficking with schizophrenia, psychosis and active suicidality. Young people with these conditions often need more mental health support than we can provide. In these cases, we will advocate to hospitalize the young person in order to ensure their safety. However, frequently the hospital will only keep the youth for 24 hours before returning them to our care. The young person is then bounced back and forth between RHY/anti-trafficking service providers and hospitals and does not receive the intensive 24/7 mental health care that is essential to their recovery. **We continue to request that the city dedicate funding for**

mental health beds for young people experiencing homelessness and human trafficking. We also request, through the Speaker's Initiative, that CHNY be provided \$100,000 in funding to support our increased needs for mental health treatment among our youth.

Transitional and Long-Term Housing for Survivors with Appropriate Wrap Around Care

One of the most significant gaps in services for survivors of human trafficking in NYC is the need for additional housing with accompanying holistic services. It is extraordinarily difficult to leave a trafficker or other exploiter when there is nowhere safe to go. It is only when a survivor is in safe place where they can stay for a significant length of time that he, she or they can have a chance to heal and reclaim their bodies, lives and futures.

Additionally, survivors need extensive wrap around services that are grounded in-trauma- informed care, including medical care, mental health care, extensive case management, legal services, and vocational and educational programming so that they can move beyond their trafficking experiences to lead independent, healthy lives. Fortunately, CHNY offers all of these services, including a safe house where female identified survivors can marshal their tremendous resiliency and strength that allowed them to survive their trafficking experiences to thrive in a life free from exploitation. However, the financial costs of operating a safe house are exorbitant, and CHNY is currently receiving little funding from the City or State to meet these needs and continue operating our anti-trafficking programing. **We are therefore asking the city for \$75,000 from the Anti Human Trafficking Initiative and \$550,000 from the Victims of the Sex Trade Initiative.**

I again thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

John Sentigar

Director of Development and Communications, jsentigar@covenanthouse.org; 646-661-7694



**New York City Council
Testimony of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)**

**2022 Hearing: Committee on Youth
March 14, 2022**

My name is Cassondra Warney, and I am a Senior Program Manager at the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). CSH's mission is to advance solutions that use housing as a platform to deliver services, improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, and build healthy communities. We have been working in NYC as a supportive housing intermediary for over 30 years.

Today, I thank you for the opportunity to speak about the immediate actions New York City Council and Mayor Adams' Affordable Housing Leadership Team need to take in 2022 to make humane, innovative, and fiscally responsible policy changes and investments in supportive housing to reduce homelessness for people impacted by the criminal legal system.

Several thousand people on Rikers Island – approximately 2,589 people in a given year – are experiencing homelessness and struggle with ongoing behavioral health needs. When released, these community members struggle to find adequate support, cycle through crisis systems (including shelter and emergency departments), and likely return to Rikers Island. This group needs an intervention of supportive housing – a combination of affordable housing with voluntary, individualized services. We know supportive housing can be solution to ending homelessness, disrupt the cycling through costly crisis system, reduce jail recidivism and, improve health comes for many populations, especially those with behavioral health needs and criminal legal histories. **There is specific supportive housing funding for young adults (18-25) and this effort will help young adults with significant behavioral health issues who are struggling with homelessness and incarceration to access supportive housing.**

In CSH's recently released report, [we outline](#) the fiscal costs of supportive housing to serve this group of people. **Today I wanted to elevate two essential budgetary elements that need to be changed this year to support the de-incarceration of Rikers Island, which include: (1) expanding Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) and (2) increasing the annual commitment to Supportive Housing.**

From a budgetary perspective, the City needs to do the following:

Increase the City's Annual Commitment to Supportive Housing:

- Increase NYC's commitment to supportive housing by 1,000 units, for a yearly total of 2,000.
 - Dedicate 500 of the 1,000 new units to individuals who do not meet the homeless chronicity requirement due to their incarceration history. *Most people who need supportive housing held at Rikers Island are not eligible for NYC 15/15, the current city supportive housing funding, because of the homeless chronicity definition.*
- Enhance rental subsidy to align with current FMR and increase service funding for scattered-site to **\$17,500** per person.

Expand rates for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH):



JISH is currently the only designated supportive housing program for people leaving Rikers Island, and there are only 120 apartments available. DOHMH has put forth an RFP to increase units to 500, however due to the contracts rates being too low, there have been minimal bids since 2019.

- Give providers current Fair Market Rent (FMR) with an annual escalator. Currently, they are receiving rates based on the FY2017 FMR that doesn't cover rent for the tenants in 2022.
- Increase service funding to \$20,699 for scattered-site and \$25,596 for congregate service. People who have experienced incarceration, homelessness, and struggle with behavioral health needs have trauma and complex needs, and these essential service providers need adequate staffing to serve this group of people. *Currently, providers only receive \$10,000 in services per person.*

New York City moving these recommendations forward will be an innovative milestone and example for communities nationwide. They will reduce significant racial disparities in the criminal legal, and homeless systems and end the cycle of homelessness and institutionalization for those struggling with complex behavioral health needs who are incarcerated on Rikers Island.

CSH looks forward to working with the New York City Council on seeing these budgetary needs reflected in 2023's Budget. Implementing these recommendations are cost-effective in the long run, and essential to helping these fellow New Yorkers while also making our City safer.

Please reach out with questions you or other City Council members may have. CSH greatly appreciates your time and attention on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Warney
Senior Program Manager, Metro Team, CSH

cassandra.warney@csh.org
c: 646-640-6069

Thank you Chair Stevens and Youth Services Committee members. My name is Darren Mack. I'm a Co-Director at Freedom Agenda. I'm also a member of the Commission of Reinvestment and the Closure of Rikers Island established by Local Law 193. This Commission is charged with ensuring significant reinvestment recommendations are made in vulnerable communities disparately and historically impacted by mass incarceration.

Research and data have shown a significant percentage of individuals incarcerated at Rikers Island and our youth impacted by the criminal legal system reside in historically underserved neighborhoods in New York City.

As a co-chair of the Youth sub-committee in the Commission, our mission is to identify investments that will prevent or remove young people from the criminal justice pipeline. The question remains, where will the city get the funding from? New York City's Department of Corrections has the highest DOC budget in the country. The proposed Fiscal Year 2023 DOC budget is \$2.679 billion dollars. We spend the most money in DOC and get the worst results. To be clear, we want the programs and services that the people held in pretrial detention rely on to continue to be funded to meet their basic needs. Therefore, we want to be strategic in right-sizing DOC's bloated budget in key areas and simultaneously strategic in reinvestments in youth programs and services.

The City has increased investments in credible messenger models but more funding is needed to support these programs expansion into schools and giving them adequate salaries to reflect the hard work and on-call nature of their work with COLA (Cost Of Living Adjustments).

I urge the City Council to deflate DOC's budget and we will be able to reinvest those resources to fund all of the organizations providing programs and services to youth and young adults testifying today.

Thank you!

TESTIMONY OF STEPHANIE NILVA, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DAY ONE,
to NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES
REMOTE HEARING
March 14, 2022

Thank you, Council Members, for your support of [Day One](#) and for the opportunity to speak to you today. We welcome the many new City Council members and we look forward to working with you. With the new leadership, diversity and majority of women in the Council, we see many exciting opportunities ahead to improve the lives of NYC youth.

This pandemic, the racial justice reckoning, the isolation, and the many transitions of the past year have been particularly difficult for youth, and more so for youth of color and specifically Black youth. As an organization focused on building healthy relationships among young people, Day One has seen the effects of skyrocketing domestic violence, technology-facilitated abuse, a mental health crisis, and the limited services tailored for this issue and this age group. Demand for our help has been as much as 70% higher in our direct services programs.

About Day One

Day One focuses all of its resources on ending dating abuse and domestic violence among youth, 24 and under. We combine preventive education for students with legal and therapeutic services for young survivors of relationship abuse and leadership activities for adolescents and teens. Every year Day One educates and assists more than 10,000 youth. We are the only nonprofit in New York that commits its full resources to addressing intimate partner abuse among this vulnerable population.

Day One ensures that all of our youth-focused services acknowledge the intersecting identities and complex dynamics of intimate partner violence, youth sexuality, and consent. Our educational programs teach middle and high school students about healthy relationships and link them to direct services, which include legal and counseling services. Our legal department routinely assists young clients with obtaining orders of protection, petitioning for custody, visitation, and child support, and criminal justice advocacy. Our social workers provide critical counseling services to young survivors, giving them the tools to heal. Year-round youth development programs help cultivate the next generation of leaders by building their transferable job skills like advocacy, organizing and public speaking.

The vast majority of our consultations have involved at least one form of technology-facilitated abuse. In one case, we provided assistance and criminal justice advocacy to a minor whose partner shared intimate photos and videos of them on social media; this incident contributed to their decision to change schools. In another case, we provided legal representation and advocacy for a client whose abuser, among other things, tracked her location and accessed the contents of her cell phone without her knowledge. Our social services team supported a student being harassed and threatened by a classmate while attending a mandated Zoom class.

Pandemic Services

Day One was able to deliver services uninterrupted during the pandemic. We converted our trainings to be online workshops and developed new downloadable teaching and parenting tools. Professional trainings pivoted to webinars and reached hundreds of health care and social workers. Our social workers provide counseling via video call and are also available by phone, text, and online. Despite the New York City Family Courts being largely closed for in-person operations for over a year, our legal team has successfully advocated for clients seeking orders of protection, custody, visitation, child support, and paternity. We have seen an increased number of referrals from the Family Justice Centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. We have also seen increased participation from people for whom travel or other barriers kept them from engaging with us in person, and we expect to retain many changes that will enhance Day One's programming, bringing direct services and educational opportunities to a wider audience.

Day One Priorities and Request

Day One has submitted requests to every City Council member for the following allocations:

- **Support for district-specific and citywide funding from the DoVE Initiative**
- **Continued Support of \$60,000 from the Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault**
- **New funding from the Young Women's Initiative, including**
 - **\$25,000 from the Initiative for Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence**
 - **\$75,000 from the Prevent Sexual Assault Initiative for Young Adults**

We are proud to be working with Council Members Stevens' and Ossé's district delivering prevention and direct services pursuant to DoVE funding, and we hope to be continuing that work and focusing services in the rest of your districts as well. We also hope to meet with your offices, Council Members Jordan, Williams, Riley and Avilès.

Launch an Initiative for Preventive Education and Teacher/Youth Worker Training

We'd also like to briefly address bigger picture issues. We shouldn't be asking schools if they need information about healthy relationships when a third of young people are consistently found to be experiencing harm in their relationships (numbers for homeless and system-involved youth are dramatically higher). We should be making sure they get the information. While New York State would have to pass legislation requiring all schools to mandate healthy relationships education in kindergarten through 12th grade - and we support that - the City can make this happen on its own.

We propose a new \$10 million Initiative that would fund preventive education for youth, in schools or wherever youth come together, and training for teachers and youth workers. It wouldn't be cheap, but domestic violence isn't cheap either; it costs the United States upwards of \$9 billion annually. Local data is hard to find, but between costs for medical care, law enforcement, interrupted education, mental health, unemployment, credit issues, housing etc., domestic violence is likely draining hundreds of millions of dollars from New York City each year.

The need is dramatic. The biannual Youth Risk Behavior Survey steadily finds that when asked about the immediate prior 12-month period, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 students in New York City report experiencing abuse while dating. In New York City, teen survivors of dating abuse are 3x more likely to miss school due to not feeling safe, and 3x more likely to carry a weapon to school,

When they experience harm do they come forward? Multiple studies say only 10-15% of them will speak to an authority figure about harm they're experiencing. And what do they find if they want to come forward? The NYC Dept. of Education does not require teachers or guidance counselors to be trained about warning signs of dating abuse or how to manage disclosures of harm. One survey of high school guidance counselors found that 81% said their school had no protocol for responding to a report of dating violence. And while 61% said they had had occasion to advise a survivor of dating violence in the previous two years, 90% said there had been no staff training in the previous two years regarding students experiencing dating abuse.

The DoVE Initiative is wonderful; it is over \$10 million and largely committed to direct services for survivors. Let's put an equal amount of funding toward prevention and improving the lives of New York City's children so that they never need those services.

We Support the #JustPay Campaign

We are proud members of the [#JustPay campaign](#), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers by demanding sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor. Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

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

At minimum, we call on the Council to include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a 5.4% COLA based on the consumer price index which mirrors the State COLA included in the Governor's budget. This would be about an \$108 million investment in an essential community workforce.

Thank you for allowing us to elevate these issues, and for the time and consideration you have given to youth and to young survivors of violence. Your legislation and advocacy play an essential role in our ability to provide necessary and life-saving services. We would be honored to partner with you in your individual districts and to improve the health and safety of youth citywide. Thank you for prioritizing preventing and addressing gender-based violence, and for your continued support of both young survivors and Day One.

Stephanie Nilva can be reached at snilva@dayoneny.org or 516.696.4628.

Day One EIN# 06-1103000

Thank you Chair Stevens and the Youth Services Committee members. My name is Edwin Santana. I'm a member and Community Organizer at Freedom Agenda. I believe, like most New Yorkers believe, that the city budget should reflect what we value. We value the youth and If we value our youth then we should invest in the programs and services that serve our youth. We need a budget that reflects the needs of our youth.

The Department of Corrections has the largest DOC staff in the country. Lack of accountability for DOC staff has created a humanitarian crisis in NYC jails. There are hundreds of officers each day who work in non-jail posts either because they are prevented from working directly with incarcerated people because of an ongoing disciplinary case, they are being 'medically monitored,' or they have been assigned to a different job like working in the laundry room, as a baker, or as a secretary to a warden. These posts have been widely used in DOC as rewards to officers favored by supervisors, but in other jail systems, these tasks are performed by civilians.

The Commission on Reinvestments recommend that "Young people who require access to a range of services often face barriers accessing them for many reasons, including a lack of awareness of available services, distrust in government, or a need for a community peer support person to help them in identifying needs and matching them with services. The City should invest in community-based navigation initiatives, hiring navigators from the communities they serve, to help make social services more navigable."

Please take these recommendations seriously. City Council must right-size the DOC, deflate DOC's bloated budget, and redistribute those resources to our youth needs to stop the stream of youth into the criminal legal system.

Thank you!



Fulfilling the promise of opportunity

TESTIMONY of FPWA

Presented to:

**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Summer Programming Preparedness Hearing
Hon. Chair Althea Stevens
Monday, March 14th, 2022**

**Jennifer Jones Austin
Executive Director/CEO**

**Prepared By:
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Good morning committee members and Chair Stevens. Thank you for hearing testimony on Summer Programming Preparedness.

My name is Jessica Cinque, and I am a Policy Analyst at FPWA. FPWA is an anti-poverty, policy, and advocacy nonprofit with a membership network of 170 human service and faith-based organizations. We have been a prominent force in New York City's social services system for nearly 100 years, advocating for fair public policies, collaborating with partner agencies, and growing our community-based membership network to meet the needs of New Yorkers. Each year, through our network of member agencies, FPWA reaches close to 1.5 million New Yorkers.

Nonprofit and community-based organizations (CBOs) have been critical to our city historically and during Covid-19. Their inherent ability to quickly adapt to the changing needs of the communities they serve has provided lifelines for residents living through these prolonged health, social, and economic crises.

As New York City continues to climb the mountain of recovery, we want to acknowledge the steps being taken to lead us in new directions, like expanding the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) and having this hearing today. We appreciate the committee acting on our request to engage early, and we applaud the mayor taking action to lift family incomes and connect youth to employment. Such steps include deepening the Earned Income Tax Credit, expanding and baselining resources for Fair Fares, and making permanent a dramatic expansion of summer youth employment. That said, the mayor's Preliminary Budget doesn't address the dismantling of the comprehensive birth to five early education system and the disinvestment in year-round youth supports such as after-school and summer camp programs that occurred during the previous administration. We are hopeful the city will make necessary investments in these desperately needed programs so that the children and families of our great city can truly thrive and recover from the pandemic.

Critical to achieving this goal is shoring up the federal funds set to erode over the course of the next several fiscal years. We must remain vigilant; ensuring program enhancements remain fully funded as temporary federal relief begins to expire in the coming years. FPWA's fiscal team conducted in-depth research into federal funding mechanisms in New York City, and calls attention to the looming federal fiscal cliff faced by the human services sector. For example, funding from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) grant is the largest contributor of federal funds to SYEP after relief funds and has seen declining federal support for three consecutive years. If the just six City programs that received the most Covid-19 relief funding had simply kept pace with inflation last year, total federal funding for New York City human services would have fallen 5.7 percent in fiscal year 2021. As temporary emergency relief spending begins to expire in the coming years, these declines in baseline federal funding may become more acute. Without longer-term baseline funding solutions, this trend is likely to place greater strain on community-based programs, negatively affecting the millions of New Yorkers they support. For further analysis, please refer to our [Federal Funds Tracker Report](#).

We have seen the Summer Youth Employment Program enrich the lives and long-term outcomes of our city's youth. But to ensure that it continues on that trajectory, we must also be strategic about where improvements can be made. Similarly, we know that thoughtful after-school and summer camp programming has the potential to be a model for the kind of radical practicality and partnership that engenders real-life impacts. If the City and community-based providers can determine a new modus operandi that is sustainable and effective for all parties, including program participants, we truly believe the potential for large-scale change is limitless. As such, **FPWA strongly encourages the City to take action that empowers CBOs to be well equipped partners both as Summer Rising providers and in making universal SYEP a reality.**

To that end, we urge the City to:

- **Summer Youth Employment Program:**
 - **Prioritize staffing needs**
 - **Transition existing summer contracts to 12-month contracts**
 - **Bolster employer engagement, and**
 - **Fund a Work Learn Grow (WLG) expansion**
- **Summer Programming:**
 - **Increase provider rates**
 - **Manage and coordinate regulatory issues and provider guidance from a central office**
 - **Pair CBOs and schools with intention**
 - **Set realistic targets**

These measures will ensure that our students receive the education and enrichment they need in a safe environment while building a viable model for continued partnership and coordination between the City and CBOs. This testimony seeks to address each request in brief detail to give the committee a contextualized understanding of the imperative of these needs.

Summer Youth Employment Program

Prioritize Staffing Needs

The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) is uniquely positioned to successfully roll out the expansion of SYEP as well as other goals to achieve universal programming. To that end, as a group of organizations deeply committed to the success of this initiative, we would like to respectfully request that, in order to scale up SYEP while ensuring the highest-quality programming for young people, the City prioritize the appointment of a commissioner for DYCD. SYEP is part of an intricate ecosystem of City- and State-funded youth programming options, and a commissioner with expertise in youth development and youth workforce development is critical to oversee this historic expansion effectively.

Transition Existing Summer Contracts to 12-Month Contracts

Currently, SYEP providers have contracts that bridge fiscal years. This means that the money available to them during planning, ramp up, and launch of SYEP (February through May) is artificially limited as providers must determine up-front what percentage of their total contract funds they will use before the fiscal year division. By giving providers flexibility to move their funds across fiscal years, the field will be more nimble and better able to respond to increased demand. This process will take dedicated staff at DYCD working quickly under thoughtful and committed leadership.

Bolster Employer Engagement

DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment (MOYE) are both essential partners to providers when it comes to engaging the business community to serve as work sites for youth; however, the business engagement divisions of both DYCD and MOYE are currently understaffed. Both institutions need permission to move forward with hiring qualified individuals to connect to high-quality employers. Savvy leadership at DYCD is essential to build up this infrastructure, which will be key to a successful summer in 2022 and beyond.

Fund a Work Learn Grow (WLG) Expansion

WLG, the year-round complement program to SYEP, allows young people who are interested in continuing their summer job to do so during the school year. WLG teaches responsibility and time management skills, while allowing young people to earn additional income. Furthermore, WLG allows providers to keep their staff year-round, improving the quality of jobs and making hiring for these positions easier, while also helping to maintain employer relationships throughout the year. WLG should be funded to cover at least 10,000 slots for FY23, and going forward, WLG should be ultimately funded to support approximately 30% of SYEP participants.

Summer Programming

Prioritize staffing needs

One of the most impactful long-term effects of Covid is the strain on an already stressed workforce. Across sectors, we are seeing record high numbers of unfilled positions and backlogs of staff clearances applications. Covid is not all to blame, however, as we have known the reimbursement rate for providers has been too low and has been compounded by no cost-of-living adjustment for several years. As we continue to rebuild, we must strive to do so equitably. Last summer, we saw a workforce reach its breaking point at a time when it was most acutely needed. Because of the tireless efforts of CBO and DOE staff, Summer Rising was indeed a success, but we feel we can aim even higher by investing where it will do the most good: in staff. In addition to ensuring that CBOs can pay their staff wages that are competitive and reflective of the appreciation for their important work, the City can further support staffing needs by ensuring the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) has the resources it needs to clear the backlog of staff clearances so those staff persons can get to work doing what they do best- caring for and educating our City's children and youth.

As such, it is absolutely critical that CBO partners be paid rates appropriate for their work and equitable to their contribution. Especially given the enormous strain under which this sector has operated for the last several years, now is the time to make an investment in this workforce that demonstrates solidarity and commitment. To that end, FPWA strongly encourages the City to compensate summer providers at the true cost of services. **Such rates are \$1848 per elementary student and \$1410 per middle school student.** These rates assume that all summer counselors would be paid at least \$21 an hour and takes into consideration that middle school summer counselors would now work 300 hours this summer instead of the 100+ from last year, given that they will now be on a full-day schedule. This also based on an assumed budget of 100 students and SACC ratio of 10:1.

Manage and coordinate regulatory issues and provider guidance from a central office

There are many agencies involved in a successful summer program--DYCD funds and supports CBOs to carry out high quality programming, the Department of Education (DOE) sites those programs and, in the case of Summer Rising, offers academic enrichment, and DOHMH licenses programs and conducts staff background checks. It is crucial that these three agencies coordinate timelines and workloads in the winter and spring so that the contracting, siting, licensing, staffing, and background check process is coordinated and less chaotic. Last summer the maelstrom of conflicting guidance and ad-hoc triaging measures was so chaotic it very nearly caused providers to withdraw from the program entirely. With advanced preparation

and coordination, Summer Rising could be implemented smoothly and without any family falling through the cracks.

Pair CBOs and schools with intention

School matches with CBOs must take place as early as possible and with coordinated communication between both DYCD and DOE. Before siting summer programs, the City should analyze neighborhoods to understand local demand and expand CBO capacity accordingly. Finally, the City should strive to match school and CBO partners that already have an existing relationship. If it is a new partnership, that pairing should be made by the winter to give both parties time to plan and prepare.

Last summer, some CBOs were put in the unfortunate position of having to turn families away due to a lack of capacity. This was difficult to reconcile with the City calling for all parents to drop their kids off at any Summer Rising location. Since CBOs already have a good relationship with families and communities, they should not be put in a position of jeopardizing those relationships in order to comply with program policy. This is but one example of the hurdles CBOs had to overcome.

Lastly, as we speak right now, we know of not a single provider who has been paid at all much less in full for their services during Summer Rising. Even still, not a single provider has indicated anything approaching unwillingness to participate this summer. This demonstrates the depth of commitment CBOs have made to providing excellent services, and furthermore, to doing so the right way. In other words, in a way that centers on radical practicality and fiscal discipline.

Set realistic targets

When Mayor de Blasio encouraged parents to sign up in early July, program infrastructure was already maxed out well before the enrollment cut-off date. Many providers were pleading to stop new enrollments as they were at capacity. Meanwhile, other providers had significant concerns about not reaching their enrollment numbers because so many of their students were enrolled elsewhere. Going forward, a better infrastructure to meet demand and direct families towards sites that can give them service is absolutely necessary. This includes a clear and simple enrollment process for families, clearly communicated registration deadlines, robust CBO and school coordination as site partners, and fair compensation for CBO staff dedicating time to enrolling families in summer programming. Without these things we will undoubtedly see a repeat of the turmoil last summer:

- Several providers reported having to walk families through the discoverDYCD application process and provide office hours to assist families. There also must be paper application forms for those who need it, and all materials should be translated into multiple languages.
- Some providers were unable to refer families they could not serve because they were unexpectedly over capacity because registration was so sporadic.
- Some school and CBO partners were working off differing enrollment lists.
- CBO staff were not compensated for time spent enrolling families in summer programs.

CBOs must be held harmless for the disorganization beyond their control. Otherwise, it puts in jeopardy the special relationship with the community into which years and years have been invested. Such a

relationship is an asset and must be treated with care and respect- much the same as anything a person wants to last for a time beyond the immediate future.

Conclusion

With these things in mind, we humbly request the City prioritize the needs of CBOs when preparing for programming this summer so that they may be empowered to prioritize the needs of our city's children and youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. FPWA hopes that you will consider our recommendations, and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure that New Yorkers of all ages receive the services they need in order to thrive.



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**Testimony of Hana Carey
New York Program Manager, Generation Citizen
March 14, 2022
New York City Council**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Generation Citizen (“GC”) at the New York City Council Youth Services Committee. I’m Hana Carey, Program Manager at Generation Citizen New York (“GCNY”). GC is thankful for the Council’s \$500,000 investment this year in our programming through the *Civics Education in City Schools Initiative*. In Fiscal Year 2023, Generation Citizen seeks an increase of \$100,000 for a grant of \$600,000 to support our major expansion of programming throughout New York City.

Last year in Fiscal Year 2021, Generation Citizen New York served 1,750 students in 70 classrooms through our “Action Civics” curriculum, in which secondary school students apply social studies learning to the real world by studying - and, more importantly, advocating for - an issue of importance in their communities. In fall 2021, Generation Citizen students advocated on a range of issues impacting youth today and called for increased services to better support their communities.

As an example, 12th grade students at Stephen T. Mather Building Arts & Craftsmanship High School in Manhattan, decided they wanted to stand up for and support peers who were victims of sexual violence and assault. They were concerned about the stigma survivors face in talking about their experiences and did not feel there was enough support or resources for survivors. The students invited a speaker and survivor from the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) to speak to their classes and took what they learned directly to their School Social Work Team. They designed a social media campaign to educate their peers about resources for survivors and advocated for the creation of a safe space at their school specifically for students who have experienced sexual violence. They plan to continue this work by raising awareness among city and state officials about the importance of supporting youth survivors.

In the current Fiscal Year 2022, Generation Citizen New York has embarked upon an ambitious programmatic expansion from 70 classes to at least 170 classrooms, serving at least 4,250 students. We have achieved this

through systemic partnerships with school districts and networks - specifically, NYC DOE D5/Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline, NYC DOE D24, the Urban Assembly, New Visions for Public Schools and CUNY Medgar Evers. Through these partnerships, we are creating lasting communities of practice that can collaborate for mutual support. In Fiscal Year 2023, we are on a trajectory to add even more classrooms through these and other systemic partnerships, and we wish to ensure sufficient funds and capacity to do so.

We've been able to achieve growth in this challenging school year by highlighting to our school partners how our work supports students' social-emotional learning - and buttresses their connection to each other and their communities - as well as contributes to culturally responsive and sustaining education practices. Throughout the pandemic during virtual and hybrid learning, we received feedback from teachers about how our work enabled interconnectedness during disrupted learning, and GC is looking forward to continuing to do this as we look to more fully emerge from the pandemic.

GC is an eleven year-old national, nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for youth by bringing civics education into the classroom through a new, engaging pedagogy: Action Civics. Action Civics is a "student-centered, project-based approach to civics education that develops the individual skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for 21st century democratic practice" ([National Action Civics Collaborative](#)). It differs from normative, knowledge-based civic education in the same way that taking any "hands-on," project-based, or experiential course differs from reading a textbook. Students learn about democratic structures and processes by directly engaging with them, as well as with each other, to address one or more issues they care about, which are impacting their community.

When faced with pandemic-related disruptions in spring 2020, GC nimbly shifted to remotely supporting teachers in implementing our programming and we look forward to continuing to leverage both in person and virtual supports to most efficiently support our educators in the field. GC also created online resources for educators and caregivers to engage young people and sustain high quality programming through the entirely online [Kick Start Action Civics](#) program. These resources are also available in Spanish [here](#).

All students - especially youth of color, socio-economically disadvantaged youth, immigrant and refugee youth for whom our public education system may be their first exposure to our democratic process, and other youth from underprivileged or otherwise underrepresented backgrounds - need meaningful and empowering engagement within our political institutions as an integral part of their core social studies education.

GC is incredibly thankful for the City Council's renewed funding despite myriad challenges and budgetary concerns in the past few years. GC hopes to continue partnering with the Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development to bring civics education to more schools as we continue safe operations of our schools moving forward.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I can be reached at hcarey@generationcitizen.org with any questions or comments, and I have attached a one-pager with more information about our programming.



GENERATION CITIZEN

DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

Mission & Vision

Generation Citizen (GC) is working to transform civics education so that young people are equipped and inspired to exercise their civic power.

We envision a **just, inclusive democracy** that is responsive to all young people.



Our Work

For over a decade, GC has been transforming how civics education is taught by bringing the subject to life for students through real-world engagement with democracy. With **Action Civics** students address local community issues and develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills to learn and practice the behaviors of active citizenship within an academic setting.

We also provide thought leadership, conduct research, and build coalitions to advocate for state- and district-level policies that ensure schools prioritize Action Civics. By investing in teachers and their capacity to activate youth voices in the classroom and beyond, GCNY is enabling a movement of young people prepared to lead in our democracy.

Who We Serve

GC New York is supporting approximately **5,500 students** in **220 classrooms** across **47 schools** statewide. To ensure that our democracy represents the voices of all people, we prioritize working with students from communities that have been historically excluded from the political process.

- Approximately **79%** of Generation Citizen students identify as persons of color
- **72%** of GC students are low-income, defined as “economically disadvantaged” by the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Education Department
- **55%** of Generation Citizen students speak a language other than English at home



Civic Education in New York City Schools Initiative

The Civic Education in New York City Schools Initiative supports civic education programs that provide educators with content and expertise to lead semester-long Action Civics programs in DOE middle and high schools.

The New York City Council first granted funding to GC in 2017, and designated \$500,000 for fiscal year 2022 in support of our Action Civics programming.





GENERATION CITIZEN

DON'T TALK ABOUT CHANGE. LEAD IT.

Impact

Academics and experts in the field agree upon three indicators which best predict a student's likelihood of future civic engagement: Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills, and Civic Motivation.

CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

81%

of students could identify the best action to make to address an issue after completing their GC course

CIVIC SKILLS

71%

of students improved use of acquired skills to effectively participate in the political process. This includes oral and written persuasive communication, group-work, and critical thinking.

CIVIC MOTIVATION

70%

of students, after GC, believe they have the power to make a difference in their community

CLASSROOM FOCUS ISSUE EXAMPLES



JUSTICE & EQUALITY: Bullying, Discrimination, Immigration, Affordable Housing & More



HEALTH: Sex Education, PTSD among Veterans, Suicide Prevention & More



ENVIRONMENT: Reducing Plastic Use, Water Conservation, Littering & More



ECONOMY & JOBS: Youth Unemployment, Job Training, Employment Opportunities & More



PUBLIC SAFETY: Police and Community Relations, Gun Violence, Safe Streets & More



EDUCATION & STUDENT VOICE: Life Skills, Equitable School Funding, College Access & More

Classroom Highlight

Focus Issue: Educational Funding in Minority Schools

School: Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women

Students found that low funding is one of the root causes of inequality in NYC public schools. The quality of education students receive in low income and higher earning communities varies greatly largely due to funding and resource disparities. To find out more about this topic students invited Nequan McLean, President - District 16 Community Education Council, NYC to gather information and tactics for action steps. After this interview, students determined their goal would be for "Community education councils to require a student to advocate for the district. Furthermore, the mayor controls how schools are funded. Ultimately, don't be afraid to speak up to your principals and legislators, your voices matter." Students were also able to gather information from Larry Woodbridge, Senior Executive Director of NYC Department of Education. Students also created surveys to get the thoughts of their community stakeholders.





Testimony for the 03.14.22 Hearing of the NYC City Council Committee on Youth Services

From the Green-Wood Historic Fund (the 501c3 organization of Green-Wood Cemetery.)

Good afternoon Chair Stevens and other esteemed members of the committee. My name is Rachel Walman, and I'm the director of education at The Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. I very much appreciate this time to speak to you today and to hear about the inspiring work of other organizations. To cut to the chase, I'm here seeking your help with funding for Green-Wood's Education and Welcome Center.

As you may know, Green-Wood is a 184 year old working cemetery that borders six Brooklyn neighborhoods: Sunset Park, South Slope, Green-Wood Heights, Windsor Terrace, Kensington, and Borough Park. Green-Wood is, literally and figuratively, an oasis in the under-resourced cultural landscape of South Brooklyn. We are Brooklyn's first large public green space *and* we're something totally new: a cemetery that is also a place of exploration and learning. Our work with youth is a vital part of what we do and is poised to grow exponentially—with your help.

Since starting a formal education department in 2019, Green-Wood has served over 12,000 youth through standards-based, guided field trips, internships, and virtual programs. And that's in addition to the tens of thousands of families that can visit us for free 365 days a year and use our self-guided learning materials.

In our guided programs, we teach kids about nature, architecture, American history, and more. Approximately 35 DOE schools are in a short walking distance from one of our four entrances, so, yes, we've been busy with field trips even during the pandemic. Two examples of our unique school programs: UPK students have come to explore century-old trees, and graduating seniors have visited the gravesites both of overlooked Black civil rights leaders- and that of a beloved teacher who had recently died. Profound learning experiences abound here, ones that every NYC student deserves to enjoy.

This summer, we will continue to work with SYEP through the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park as well as with students from Sunset Park High School, the Mather Building Arts and Craftsmanship High School, and the Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design in an expanded high school internship. In this program, up to 25 youth will fully restore, landscape, research, and interpret a section of the cemetery. This program will combine training in horticulture, soil science, and historic preservation with college-level writing and public speaking. Participants will gain so many skills while making a meaningful impact on our grounds.

We also have a Bridge to Craft Careers masonry restoration technician training program for young adults run in partnership with Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow that is in its 4th year with 14 trainees enrolled this year. Last year, upon completion of the program, 100% of participants were offered full-time employment.

And we do all of this without one square-foot of indoor classroom space.

We could, and want, to do more. **For this year's budget, Green-Wood is seeking capital support for our Education and Welcome Center.** The Pre-K-12 programs I have mentioned above could quadruple or more, and additional programming could be developed, with the resources this Center will provide. There are stories about public health history, climate change, and more that Green-Wood is best suited to tell, and that youth would be fascinated to learn, but we need indoor gallery space for this work. There are hands-on STEAM experiences inspired by Green-Wood that would absorb youth, but we need a roof, a sink, and lab equipment. Please help us create essential space for improved and expanded learning experiences for New York City youth.

We are honored to be a part of the landscape of support for NYC youth, and we look forward to working with City Council towards our shared goals.

Rachel Walman
Director of Education
Green-Wood
718-210-3060
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Ken Shelley

Atoy Wilson

2021/2022 Season

NYC Council

Testimony for the Committee on Youth Services- March 14, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am submitting this testimony as Executive Director of Ice Theatre of New York, Inc. ® (ITNY)

ITNY celebrates and advances dance on ice as a performance art and stands as the very first ice dance company to be recognized with dance program funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Through its performances in both traditional and site-specific venues, ITNY presents ice dance that allows the public, especially children and young artists to reimagine skating in new and unexpected ways.

ITNY proudly provides the New Works and Young Artists Series (NWYAS) to young people—public school students K-12 in Harlem, Brooklyn and Queens.

At these performances, the students watch a professional ice dance show and receive free skating instruction after the performance. For most students this is their first time seeing a professional ice dance show and discovering this new art form. The age-appropriate works performed include both repertory and new works performed by our ITNY professional ensemble members, young apprentice performers ages 6 to 16, and guest artists, to recorded music. Students are particularly thrilled to see apprentices their own age performing.

The 30-minute performance is followed by a one-hour skating clinic taught by our teaching professionals assisted by the junior apprentices, and ITNY volunteers who help the students lace up their skates and put on helmets and gloves. Skating teachers have been carefully vetted by ITNY and have been tested and accredited by US Figure Skating or the Professional Skaters Association. For many of the students this represents their first time skating on ice under professional mentorship.

NYC's cultural programming and specifically ITNY's programming benefits life in NYC, from our general audiences to the NYC public school children we serve. We bring joy with our free public performances to dance enthusiasts, figure skating fans and all passers-by of our performances on the seasonal ice rinks all over New York City.

In our outreach programs for NYC public school children we expose them to a new art form, introduce them to a new sport, which they can practice in their local community, in the winter outdoors, with great health benefits (physical and

mental), as well as introducing them to potential local jobs in a new industry. Even after pivoting to virtual programming these past two years, we are still engaging hundreds of children in arts activities.

Our programming engages and releases after the dreary routine of online learning. The students interact, their morale gets a boost and they learn about and begin to practice a potential lifelong healthy activity.

Culture is a small part of NYC's budget that returns great rewards. The DCLA budget and such programs as the NYC Artists Corps affect not only our constituents, but also the 40 or so artists we employ every year. These artists add to the health, diversity and dynamism of NYC. Culture is what makes NYC different from most other major cities.

Government support is especially critical to small non-profits. Ice Theatre of New York is resilient – we have been around since 1984 – but we could not do this without the support of the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Council Member Discretionary Funding. This support goes beyond the actual financial contribution in inspiring support from foundations and individuals.

Like all NYC's cultural institutions, Ice Theatre of New York has been hit hard. We have finally allowed back on the ice at Chelsea Piers to rehearse as a group. We have continued our programming with virtual classes, streaming events, and 5-10 minute-long Pop-Up performances by solo or duet performers.

Ice Theatre of New York has been helping to lead the economic recovery with its pop-up ice dance events, by creating traffic to local communities and businesses and enlivening the communities we perform in. We hope that soon – as in the past – ITNY will be part of the cultural landscape that will attract tourist back to our City.

As we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, including the Key to NYC mandates, ITNY sees it as imperative as we care for the neediest among our fellow citizens, that the overall NYC budget for culture in schools increase.

With gratitude for the City's past support and in hope of increased funding for Culture in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jirina Ribbens', with a stylized, elongated flourish extending to the right.

Jirina Ribbens
Executive Director

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL GENERAL WELFARE TESTIMONY
JENNIFER PINDER, YOU GOTTA BELIEVE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MARCH 14, 2022**

Chair Stevens and members of the Youth Services Committee.:

My name is Jennifer Pinder and I am the Executive Director of You Gotta Believe (YGB), a foster care and adoption agency with a focus on permanency.

You Gotta Believe has submitted an ask to the City Council Discretionary Fund for \$1.6M to support our mission to find permanent homes for older youth in foster care. YGB has received support from the City Council since FY15, and has used those funds to support our Nobody Ages Out Program and to provide wrap-around services for transitional-aged foster youth. Our request this year is for continued support for our Nobody Ages Out Program and wrap-around services, as well as for mental health services for LGBTQ youth.

For 27 years, You Gotta Believe has been laser focused on finding loving unconditionally committed parents specifically for kids in foster care who would otherwise age out to be essentially alone in the world. YGB is the only agency with this focus. We find people interested in becoming parents and train them to parent traumatized children who are resistant to being loved and have a way of pushing everyone away to avoid more hurt and trauma. Everyone on our program staff are credible messengers – either parents of older youth from care or survivors of the foster care system themselves. This gives the YGB staff an advantage in being able to both train and support parents and youth to help them maintain their relationship and avoid the typical disruptions that happen to older youth.

YGB primarily serves foster youth in NYC between 10-24 years old. Many have experienced unfathomable abuse and neglect and have significant trauma to work through and process. We focus our work on these “hardest to place” youth because we dedicate the resources it takes to create enduring families. Approximately 98% of the youth we work with are black or brown. We also focus on serving LGBTQ foster youth because they are overrepresented in the foster care system (15-25% of the population). Approximately 25% of the youth we serve identify as LGBTQ; 15% of our parents identify as LGBTQ.

In a time when LGBTQ fostering and adoption is under attack and illegal in many states, YGB prides itself in being a safe place for LGBTQ parents and youth to create families. Two-thirds Our training locations are at LGBTQ Community Centers throughout the city.

There are multiple efforts in place to provide various forms of support to kids aging out of the system, i.e., coaches and mentors and other “services.” These services do not take the place of a family and are time-limited. We’d like to see family incorporated into this solution. People do not stop needing family support at the age of 21.

Youth who age out alone face homelessness, continued welfare dependence, and often immediately join the pipeline to incarceration. These negative outcomes are avoidable for the youth who we connect with permanent unconditionally committed families who are there for a lifetime. Preliminary survey data from the youth and families we've worked with over the years indicate that:

- Compared to YGB youth who are placed with a permanent family (6%), those who age out of NYC foster care without a family are more than twice as likely to be incarcerated (14.7%).
- Further, those who age out at the national level are more than 10 times as likely to be incarcerated (61%) than are YGB youth who are placed with a permanent family (6%).

YGB needs the support of the City Council because we're at capacity and we're relying on you to help us reach more foster youth with our proven model. We need your help to increase our impact and prevent more kids from aging out of foster care without a permanent, loving family.

*Testimony of Christine James-McKenzie, Associate, Communications, Learning & Policy,
JobsFirstNYC*

*before the
3/14 Hearing of the City Council Committee on Youth Services
Oversight - The Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget*

Dear Council Members,

Good morning to the distinguished members of the City Council Committee on Youth Services. My name is Christine James-McKenzie and I'm the Manager of Communications and Policy at JobsFirstNYC, a nonprofit intermediary that creates and advances solutions that break down barriers and transform the systems supporting young adults and their communities in the pursuit of economic opportunities.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Youth Services Committee. We are looking forward to your leadership to address the unrelenting crises that young adults in NYC face. JobsFirstNYC is particularly concerned about the young adults between the ages of 16 - 24 years old who are out-of-school and out-of-work. We join our colleagues in the call to immediately direct resources and attention to the fact that young adults are not being provided with practical and sustainable solutions that will allow them to thrive in their communities.

Last year JobsFirstNYC published a report titled ***Equitable Recovery for Young Adults: An Agenda for Young Adult Workforce Development in New York City*** which provides a set of citywide policy priorities rooted in the real needs of young people, the perspectives of on-the-ground practitioners, and the literature on successful policies and interventions. It details the changes needed to quickly connect 18- to 24-year-olds to employment now and to effectively prepare them for the future of work in a rapidly shifting, increasingly virtual economy. It builds on JobsFirstNYC's comprehensive, system-level view of the City's young adult workforce ecosystem. Finally, it proposes an actionable, realistic, and timebound framework to foster citywide systems change in the young adult workforce development field.

We must act now to connect young adults to training, education, and work opportunities; and to advance them along educational and career pathways. To this end, our report outlines six recommendations for the city that were informed by a diverse coalition of young adult workforce development and education stakeholders and 18- to 24-year-olds. To enact these recommendations, JobsFirstNYC calls for a \$770 million increase in annual investment by New York City.

1. Collaboration: Encourage and reward collaboration across young adult workforce programs and providers.
 - a. We call for an investment of \$58 million to increase capacity building and system enhancements to improve coordination of services for young adults
2. Focus on Equity: Prioritize economic mobility and pathways to prosperity for historically under-resourced and disproportionately harmed communities.

3. Employer Partnerships: Significantly expand partnerships with employers and industry groups to create employment and career pathway opportunities.
4. Continuum of Services: Create a seamless continuum of integrated services across education and youth workforce development institutions.
5. Youth-Centered Strategies: Design youth-informed solutions that center young adults, their experiences, and goals.
 - a. We call for a \$357 million increase to support subsidized jobs, 4 times the current increase in investment for SYEP programs, focusing on structural and system enhancements so the program is youth-responsive in its program offerings, with robust wraparound support
6. Capacity Building: Build the capacity of workforce providers to deliver high-quality, culturally competent, market-aligned services to young adults.

JobsFirstNYC and young adult service providers across New York City are more committed now than ever to ensuring that all young adults, and especially those who are out of school and out of work, have the resources, skills, and opportunities they need and deserve to find success in work and in life.



City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

Committee on Youth Services – Preliminary Budget Hearing Testimony Submitted by City's First Readers March 8, 2022

Prevention Beats Intervention: The Impact of Early Literacy

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the **New York City Council's *only* early literacy initiative, City's First Readers.**^{*^}

There is a significant and solvable crisis affecting thousands of children impacted by systemic poverty. This crisis has been accelerated by COVID. **The crisis, literacy. The solution, City's First Readers.**

Across the country and in New York City, the pandemic has magnified systemic inequities in health and social services. In education, the predominant focus has been on the learning needs of school aged children. City's First Readers was founded on the knowledge that we cannot wait until children enter school to support their learning needs. Early childhood education opportunity gaps have created a significant increase in the number of students arriving at kindergarten without the foundational literacy skills needed to launch a strong academic future. Not suspending, while all children have been impacted, **"Black and Hispanic children, as well as those from low-income families... and those who are not fluent in English have fallen the furthest behind."**¹

An equitable city begins with an investment in children when it matters most. The New York City Council must focus on preventative approaches that mitigate the negative impact of poverty and nurture generations of learners that succeed academically and socially. City's first Readers is one of the most effective City Council initiatives that accomplishes this critical task.

Prevention beats intervention

Decades of research show that early literacy is key to building a positive future for children. Early literacy breaks cycles of poverty. Yet, due to persistent structural and systemic racism, our children affected by systemic poverty continue to face barriers. Child poverty rates are higher for children of color compared to their white peers. Children raised in poverty enter school less equipped to thrive. There are over a half million children under the age of five in NYC.² **44.5% of them live in low-income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$25,750 for a family of four), and **76% of children under the age of five are children of color.** The burden of poverty is particularly significant for immigrant children who by some estimates experience poverty at rates that are 11% higher than for non-immigrant children.³

Literacy levels are directly associated with improved health, economic, and social outcomes. People with low levels of literacy do not achieve economic self-sufficiency, are more likely to be incarcerated, are far less civically engaged and

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/08/us/pandemic-schools-reading-crisis.html>

² 2019 census and CCC data

³ https://scaany.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NYS-Child-Poverty-Facts_Feb2021.pdf

have decisively poorer health outcomes than people who read proficiently. Left unaddressed, the literacy crisis drains our nation of \$225 billion a year in social costs and loss of productivity and results in billions of dollars annually in health care costs.⁴ **The path out of poverty, and the single most effective and economical way to ensure proficient adult literacy is early literacy.**

Investment in early literacy is also fiscally responsible - **every dollar spent on quality programs for children from birth to age 5 delivers a 13% annual return on investment.**⁵ This investment is stable for high quality programs. City's First Reads actively evaluates outcomes and impacts ensuring that we contribute in ways that will allow this return to be realized. For too long investments have been made in communities when problems are too large, when change feels impossible. The New York City Council can enable this change from the start with strong and effective early literacy programming

The Impact of COVID

The pandemic has made the literacy crisis worse and has deeply impacted children birth-five. As if the rates of childhood poverty pre-COVID were not high enough, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of additional children have been pushed into COVID related poverty.⁶

Young children have largely been spared serious illness because of COVID. This does not mean they have not suffered. As reported by the United Hospital Fund in September 2020, in just the first four months of the pandemic (March-July 2020) more than 4,000 children in New York State had a parent or caregiver die because of COVID; 57% of these children live in New York City.⁷ Not surprisingly, given the disproportionate impact of COVID on people of color, the burden of familial loss is greatest for Black and Hispanic children. The same report indicated that "[o]ne in 600 Black children and one in 700 Hispanic children experienced such a loss compared with one in 1,400 Asian children and one in 1,500 white children."

Many children are also facing the trauma of COVID related homelessness and housing insecurity. The number of homeless New Yorkers has risen to the highest point since the Great Depression, and the largest demographic within the homeless population is children.⁸ Approximately 45% of the children in Department of Homeless Services facilities were 5 or younger prior to COVID.⁹ Many more families are on the brink of losing their homes, many because of COVID related job losses that make it impossible to continue paying rent. In public housing households alone, it is estimated that close to half of households are currently behind on their rent. These families, including those with young children, face the fear of eviction.

Families most vulnerable to poverty have been unable to benefit from many of the relief programs offered. Many immigrant families were not eligible for benefits – such as enhanced unemployment - that helped others with their financial survival when facing COVID related job losses. And even when they were eligible for programs, such as for the child tax credit, immigrant families reported significant delays in receiving the funds or simply not receiving them at all.¹⁰

⁴ <https://www.literacynewyork.org/literacy-facts>

⁵ <https://heckmanquotion.org>

⁶ <https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/covid-19-ripple-effect-impact-covid-19-children-new-york-state/>

⁷ <https://uhfnyc.org/news/article/uhf-report-4200-children-nys--lost-parent-covid-19/>

⁸ [The Children in the Shadows: New York City's Homeless Students](#) September 2020

⁹ ["NYC Has a Family Homelessness Crisis. Who are the Families?"](#) Brand, City Limits, December 2017

¹⁰ <https://19thnews.org/2021/09/undocumented-families-excluded-child-tax-credit/>

In addition, rent relief programs created to respond to COVID are out of reach for public housing residents, even though the average family income is just \$25,007.^{11,12}

Families with children who lack resources for their basic needs including food and shelter are also unable to access key educational resources, such as books and toys, that support children's foundational learning. **Considering that 90% of children's brain development takes place from birth-five the lack of high quality, age-appropriate learning supports has a profound impact on children's futures.**

City's First Readers closes opportunity gaps and contributes to equitable communities

Children facing systemic poverty are not less capable of learning. They are simply not given the same foundation and early literacy preparation. In other words, they face opportunity gaps. **Fortunately, there are proven and effective strategies that directly impact these early learning opportunity gaps and that protect children from the effects of trauma.** These are the strategies that City's First Readers has *always* used to support children and their families.

City's First Reader's cross-sector engagement reaches approximately 1 million families annually across every council district in NYC. City's First Readers comprehensive and coordinated approach includes:

- **Delivering free, high quality, and culturally relevant early literacy programming** that decades of research show position children for academic success and result in improved long-term outcomes that help break cycles of urban poverty.
- **Providing tools for parents to create safe, stable and nurturing relationships** – what the American Academy of Pediatrics coins relational health – that interrupt the experience of trauma and help children thrive.
- **Distributing books and age-appropriate educational toys and literacy kits** that support learning at home and extend the lessons delivered in community settings.
- **Facilitating coaching and professional development** that increases the capacity of educators, librarians, medical providers, childcare workers, and other literacy support staff and builds cross-sector leaders and literacy advocates in neighborhoods across NYC.
- **Leading a city-wide public education campaign** that raises awareness of the importance of early literacy and motivates families to engage deeply with the City's First Readers network.

City's First Readers has been a reliable and consistent partner for families before and during the COVID crisis. Every single City's First Readers partners continued to deliver free and high-quality programs, modifying when necessary and using learnings to continue responding to family needs as the pandemic demands.

We never slowed down during the pandemic and achieved numerous accomplishments. In FY 21 City's First Readers:

- Engaged 800,000 families and caregivers with early literacy programming and saw a 53% increase in engagement for families participating in programs with non-library partners.
- Increased by 41% the number of books distributed compared to FY20, putting 380,000 books into children's homes.
- Distributed food, technology supports and referrals to wrap around community services for 3,000 families enabling them to meet their basic needs.
- Launched a new website to connect families to programs in their language and in their neighborhood and premiered a family-focused blog to drive deeper engagement in early literacy at home and in the community.

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/08/nyregion/nycha-evictions-tenants.html>

¹² https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/NYCHA-Fact-Sheet_2019_08-01.pdf

- Evaluated our outputs and impact to ensure that our work is mission focused, high quality and meets the needs of the families we serve.

The New York City Council recognized the power of early literacy in 2015 when it initiated City's First Readers. Today, eight years later, we are an impactful coalition that **ensures children have a solid foundation to start school, thrive academically and succeed beyond their school years.**

We encourage the New York City Council to continue prioritizing early literacy with an investment and enhancement of City's First Readers with a budget of \$6.5 million allocated across 17 partners. **Funding at this level will allow City's First Readers to:**

1. Extend outreach to engage the hardest to reach families and increase the number of constituents who benefit from early literacy programs
2. Continue to deliver free, high quality and comprehensive early literacy programming and to adapt programming based on the changing external environment
3. Enhance our targeted public education campaign that uses best practices in digital and traditional strategies to connect with new families and deepen families' engagement with City's First partners
4. Conduct strong evaluation and impact assessments to inform programming and coordination across all partner organizations
5. Increase capacity-building practices for City's First Readers partners that strengthens each organization's mission driven work

Children birth-five deserve a proven and effective long-term strategy that will ensure they enter school ready to learn and have the skills to succeed.

*FY22 City's First Readers partners include: Arab-American Family Support Center, Brooklyn Public Library, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Hunts Point Alliance for Children, JCCA, Jumpstart, Literacy Inc, Literacy Partners, New Alternatives for Children, New York Public Library, ParentChild+ (delivered locally by Child Center of New York, Family Health Centers at NYU, and SCO Family of Services), Reach Out and Read of Greater New York, Queens Public Library, and Video Interaction Project.

^City's First Readers is facilitated by Literacy Inc.



For more information about City's First Readers visit our website or contact us by email or phone
citysfirstreaders.com | cfr@lincnyc.org | 212.620.5642 x147



Joy. Power. Possibility.

The Lower Eastside Girls Club connects young women and gender-expansive youth of color throughout New York City to healthy and successful futures through free, innovative year-round programming and mentoring. Together, we are building a just and equitable future filled with “Joy. Power. Possibility.”

101 AVENUE D • NEW YORK, NY 10009 • 212-982-1633 • WWW.GIRLSCLUB.ORG

The Lower Eastside Girls Club of NY Youth Services Committee Hearing - March 14, 2022

Submitted by: Ebonie Simpson, Co-Executive Director

Good afternoon to the Chair Althea Stevens and the esteemed Council Members of the Youth Services Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of The Lower Eastside Girls Club of NY. I am Ebonie Simpson, Girls Club Co-Executive Director. The Lower Eastside Girls Club (LESGC) supports young women and gender-expansive youth of color throughout New York City (NYC) in leveraging their inner power to shape a better future for themselves, their community, and the world. Founded 26 years ago by a group of community mothers and activists in response to a lack of services for girls and young women, the over 500 members we serve annually explore their passions and discover their talents in a nurturing and exciting environment.

Our 35,000 sq. ft. Center for Community, located on Avenue D in the Lower East Side includes a 64-seat dome planetarium, rooftop urban farm, mushroom farm, and state-of-art labs for Digital Media, Film, Podcasting, and Photography; Music Production & DJ; Coding, Engineering, and Robotics; Sustainability/Environmental Science; Art, Design, and Fashion; Leadership and Civics and Activism; College/Career Readiness; Culinary and Nutrition; Movement and Mindfulness; and more. Through free, year-round, innovative programming we connect young people with their passions, celebrate their curiosity, and channel their creative energy. Together, we are building a just and equitable future filled with “Joy. Power. Possibility.”

Our services extend to the family unit and community, offering wellness activities and food justice and pandemic mutual aid services. In 2017, well before the pandemic, we embarked on the effort to expand our mission and service population with the launch of our Center for Wellbeing and Happiness (CWBH). The CWBH was established with the understanding that the health and wellbeing of the girls we support is intimately connected to the health and wellbeing of her family and her community at large. The 5,000 sq. ft. CWBH, adjacent to our facility, will serve as a wellness hub for all genders and all generations to connect, collaborate, and cultivate community wellness through the lens of the social determinants of health. We are excited to complete construction this May and to fully open this fall.

We are deeply grateful for the funding partnership of the Department of Youth & Development, and applaud the expanded investment in our youth and their futures. The Girls Club receives funding through SONYC, COMPASS EXPLORE, and Adolescent Literacy grants, and has benefited from their capacity-building grants to support our expansion efforts and internal operations. The work of this agency is incredibly important to ensure our most marginalized—with the greatest potential for

impact—are fully supported, seen, and resourced. We are eager to see greater efficiencies in the agency's procurement processes. We thank you to the committee for effectively addressing these shortfalls.

I want to spend the rest of my testimony giving all our praise and admiration to the City Council. The NYC Council has been an unwavering supporter of our radically imaginative programs--especially through the championing of our local Council Member, Carlina Rivera, and the Women's Caucus. The Girls Club is deeply inspired by the new majority of the City Council, and are excited to see the continued and expanded support of young people, including non-binary, cis and trans young women through their leadership and advocacy!

Lower Eastside Girls Club has been funded through two major City Council initiatives:

- ***New Girl City: Agents of Change*** is the Girls Club's signature citywide civic leadership initiative and is supported by the Speakers Initiative. I actually created New Girl City in 2018 and the Women's Caucus championed and advocated for the Speaker to fund the program. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. New Girl City trains young women and gender-expansive youth across NYC, aged 14 to 19, to become experts in navigating public policy and civics and its symbiotic relationship with grassroots advocacy and social justice work. The Girls Club partners with like-minded organizations in all five boroughs to implement the program, and have trained young women in every single Council district since our launch in January 2019. Throughout the six-month program, they are mentored by experts in activism and social justice, as well as elected officials at various levels of government. They work together to create actionable civic action projects and cap the program by either running for office, campaigning for a candidate, or creating their own policies for their own New Girl City! Chair Stevens spoke to our members when she was a candidate, then Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul connected with the girls over Zoom after the program became virtual in Spring 2020, and almost every Councilwoman between 2019-2021 has engaged with the New Girl City participants in meaningful ways. We are so excited to deepen and expand the program with mentorship and partnership from the Women's Caucus and their teams. In FY23, we are seeking additional funding from **\$125,000 to \$200,000** to expand New Girl City from six-months to a year-long initiative and to build additional partnerships with organizations throughout the City, particularly in Upper Manhattan/South Bronx, South-East Queens and Central and East Brooklyn.
- We are also deeply grateful for our funding as a part of the Council's **STARS Citywide Initiative**. This initiative allows us to collaborate with incredible, like-minded organizations who are equally invested in giving our City's girls and gender-expansive youth the resources, experiences and skills they need to reach their greatest potential. We hope the Council will support the STARS Initiative's request for additional funding of **\$50,000 per organization** (for total investment of \$2,000,000) to support our individual and collective efforts to provide additional mental and wellbeing support for our members as they navigate the COVID-19 pandemic transition into endemic. Each of us has had to take on additional efforts to directly support our members and their families, and look for additional funding to sustain our new capacities.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for supporting and advocating for the needs of service providers like the Girls Club!



FY23 Preliminary Budget Hearings

Committee on Youth Services

March 14, 2022

The portfolio of concerns overseen by the Committee on Youth Services is broad and monitors the city departments and agencies responsible for dealing with some of our most vulnerable populations. Including young children.

Right now there is no single entity looking at city services for young children from a comprehensive, holistic perspective. There is no single agency responsible or accountable for young children. Former Mayor de Blasio's Children's Cabinet was a collegial, intra-agency forum. The Council has no counterpart to even that informal group. Council oversight is fractured - divided up among Education, General Welfare, Youth Services, and Health committees. Understandably, young children are not the focus of these committees.

Yet study after study emphasizes that the experiences of early childhood shape a person's trajectory in so many ways - both positive and negative. Additional studies demonstrate that investing in quality, comprehensive early childhood programming is socially and fiscally sound.

We have heard so much about the learning loss students have suffered because of the pandemic. But very little is being said about the COVID caused deprivation for younger children. These children will be entering 3K and Pre-K without having the preliminary socialization and learning experiences that prepare them for school. They will be taught by newly trained teachers whose benchmarks and developmental standards were set pre-pandemic. This does not bode well for the children, their teachers or rebuilding our city in a manner that promotes greater equity and access to health and education resources.

It is LINC's belief that New York City could immensely benefit from the formation of a City Council Committee devoted exclusively to early childhood. An Early Childhood Committee could provide meaningful oversight to ensure that New York City's youngest receive the attention and services they need. Such oversight could result in better coordination of programs, greater efficiency and improved stewardship of public funding.

We urge you to consider this approach as a long term goal for the Council as your review and negotiate with the Mayor this budget season.

LINC is emboldened to encourage this innovative step because of our work leading early literacy collaboratives and collective impact work.¹ We know first-hand that access to early literacy is a key building block in developing a city that promotes educational equity, itself the foundation for social justice. But early literacy is only one component of overall child well-being. Nutrition, mental health, physical health, early intervention, stable living environments - all are necessary for children to thrive. It's a package deal. This conclusion is backed by significant research.

In creating an Early Childhood Committee, you would be recognizing the importance of best beginnings and focusing the power of the Council on leading the way to a new reality, particularly for children of color or those living in poverty. We hope that members who serve on the Committee for Youth Services will advocate to create a full committee focused exclusively on the early childhood years - birth through five. This would mirror the cohort served by the Council's early literacy initiative, City's First Readers but with a holistic, comprehensive mandate to ensure the overall well-being of these children.

On behalf of the children and families who will benefit from your leadership, thank you for considering an Early Childhood Committee.

Written Testimony Submitted by

Eliana Godoy
Deputy Director
Literacy Inc. (LINC)

egodoy@lincnyc.org or (212) 620-5462 ext 103

¹ LINC is the facilitating partner for the New York City Council's 17 organization early literacy initiative, City's First Readers. NYCReads, a public-private effort located in South Jamaica, East New York and East Harlem is another collaboration managed by LINC. LINC also participates in the Staten Island Alliance for North Shore Children and Families, serving as co-chair for many years and has been designated the lead community partner in a new collective impact coalition getting underway, the Northern Manhattan Early Childhood Collaborative, joining New York Presbyterian, Columbia University Medical Center and the Citizen's Committee for Children.



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Literacy Inc.



Literacy Inc.

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When a child reads, a community succeeds!

Hello, my name is Saroya Friedman-Gonzalez, Executive Director of New Yorkers For Children (NYFC), a non-profit that works to improve the well-being of children and families in the child welfare system, with a particular focus on those aging out of the foster care system. We provide direct educational and financial support to youth, and also support other child welfare-focused organizations by developing innovative initiatives to fill gaps in the system. We do this through our long-standing partnership with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the 26 contracted foster care agencies, and many community partners.

We typically serve about 1,000 youth per year, and since 2018 we have directly supported a total of over 3,500 youth as they transition out of the child welfare system and into adulthood. This is the moment for youth who have experienced foster care when their need for support is greatest, but there are very few resources available to them. NYFC's Signature programs - our scholarships, Back to School packages, emergency financial grants, our peer mentoring program - are helping nearly 700 youth a year enter and excel in college and to take the first steps toward adulthood.

Our programs make a difference in the lives of the youth we serve: one program, which provides wraparound supports to youth in college, has seen a 78% graduation rate, compared with a 3% graduation rate nationally for youth aging out of foster care.

While NYFC has been around for more than 25 years, the past few years have proved to be an inflection point: due to significant increases in demand, and we have seen exceptional growth in every area of our work. In particular, at the height of the pandemic, New Yorkers served over 2,000 youth, distributing more than \$1.8M in direct cash transfers to youth and families. We are a key resource and trusted partner to the young people we serve. I share this to merely highlight the immense needs.

Beyond our direct services work, NYFC designs, pilots, and manages city-wide initiatives. Since our founding, NYFC has served as a longstanding partner to ACS, managing multiple grant projects that spur innovation and improve the child welfare system. Additionally, we've launched community partnerships for transformative initiatives supporting over 14 other New York City child welfare-focused organizations- big and small. We aim to improve the child welfare system by supporting organizations doing innovative work in areas such as transition age youth needing holistic community-based support, education and career development, mental health needs, permanency for youth exiting the foster care system to adoption or KinGap, parenting youth, youth who are victims of sex trafficking, and two generational caregiver support.

Notably, NYFC has a long history of collaboration with the NYC Administration for Children's Services. NYFC was founded the same year that ACS became a standalone agency in 1996. NYFC has been a longtime partner to ACS, often helping the City to fund and implement innovative initiatives including a Parent Advocate program to better equip parents involved in the child welfare system with the tools needed to navigate it and as well as another program to help survivors of sex trafficking mitigate trauma through artistic expression. Through this work NYFC has established itself as a trusted partner to both foster care agencies and community-based organizations.

I write today to advocate for additional investments in discretionary funding to both deepen our existing program service offerings that we provide directly to this vulnerable population and to support other smaller organizations in the child welfare landscape doing impactful work. Together we believe we can more effectively reach and support youth who are aging out of foster care.

NYFC focuses our service offerings on youth aging out of foster care as there is a well-established pattern of research documenting ongoing challenging life outcomes for this population. Because youth in care do not receive many of the same familial supports as their peers who have not experienced it, they face numerous hardships as shown by the following statistics: only half of youth have attained gainful employment by age 24, less than 3% earn a college degree in their lifetime, 1 in 4 will not graduate high school, and after aging out of the system 20% will become instantly homeless.

Because of this, additional investments by the city are needed to strengthen the full menu of program offerings available to these youth, including college scholarships, academic coaching, peer mentoring, emergency direct cash funding, networking events, youth development workshops, and more. Using our experience as just one example, NYFC services frequently see greater demand than our funding allows us to provide, and an increase in capacity is desperately needed. We support increasing funding to Fair Futures and we believe additional investments are needed particularly for youth who have aged out of foster care.

NYFC aims to improve outcomes across child welfare through curated and target services based on the youth's individual needs, as well as support for smaller organizations doing grassroots and meaningful work. Too few smaller organizations are represented in the service delivery continuum; it is essential to bring together multiple organization to have collective impact. As we try to navigate how to best support youth aging out of foster care- whose needs have only deepened since the pandemic- we feel that a collective approach of smaller grassroots organizations is most effective and personalized. NYC needs to better support youth who have experienced foster care as they enter and graduate college by providing them with additional financial and emotional support, such as meditation support, relationship counseling, and drama therapy to heal trauma.

Through additional investments, we hope to improve outcomes for those connected to the child welfare system and create a healthier child welfare landscape as a whole.

With funding from the city, we hope to see increased self-reported states of well-being from youth participating in these programs, increased persistence rates for youth in college, increased graduation rates for youth in college, expanded service delivery capacity for organizations, a smoother continuum of care throughout the foster care landscape, and reduced wait times for vulnerable youth accessing services.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I'm hopeful that with support from the City Council, we will be able to build a stronger child welfare landscape.



New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Monday, March 14, 2022
Committee on Youth Services- Preliminary Budget Hearing - Youth Services
Sherrise Palomino, Director of Advocacy and Programs

Good afternoon, my name is Sherrise Palomino, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Programs at New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). We are a founding member of the Play Fair Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs. Thank you to the Youth Services Committee for the opportunity to speak about our city's recreation centers. I also want to thank Chair Stevens for her leadership on this important issue. Members of this committee have a unique opportunity to push for adequate funding for our parks systems as it is critical component of supporting positive youth development.

The NYC Parks Department operates and maintains 59 recreation centers across the city to serve a population of over 1.8 million youth. Of the 59 community board districts, 26 don't have a NYC Parks recreation center meaning that 44% of community boards do not have a recreation center.

NYC's recreation centers are used to support community with programs for youth and seniors alike. They should provide critical opportunities for youth development and empowerment with free programming and sports. NYC's recreation centers should be a hub for positive youth development where young people socialize and liaise in a safe and supportive environment, which is essential to their overall well-being. Instead, NYC's recreation centers are chronically under-staffed and badly in need of repairs, with roughly one third of them closed at any given time.

We are overdue for transformative investment in our parks system – 1% of the city budget for parks could ensure that recreation centers are fully staffed and functioning to provide the programming that young people need. The NYC Parks department does a valiant job maintaining these aging resources but needs more funding to do so. This is one of the many reasons why NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition are calling for an increase in the Parks budget to 1% of the city's budget – a call that the majority of City Council Members support along with Speaker Adams.

For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. www.ny4p.org

FY23

Preliminary Budget
Hearing – Youth
Services Committee

Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE)**. I am here today to ask that you continue that support by prioritizing our FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1,200,000 under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative.

Established in 1992, New York Edge is the largest provider of afterschool and summer programs in New York City, having been created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. And as our name implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the EDGE that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life.

Students need healthy minds, bodies and relationships, as well as creative outlets, to thrive. Our programs help them develop all four. From homework support and engaging academic activities to sports and movement, to social-emotional learning and creative activities, our programs offer opportunities to develop in every aspect of their lives. NYE programs are making a world of difference in the lives of thousands of young people across the city:

- **86%** of students in our summer program advance to the next grade.
- **80%** of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their schools.
- **86%** of parents believe that our programs are helping their children succeed in school.

- Students in NYE's High School Today, College Tomorrow program have a four-year high school completion rate more than **1.5 times higher** than the citywide rate.

New York Edge is a leader in the afterschool community, well-regarded for our evidence-based approach to afterschool programming, grounded in Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

Targeting underserved communities throughout the city, New York Edge programs focus on academics, the arts, sports and health & wellness. We are also one of the city's largest providers of college access programs. **NYE's entire student population is 90% or more African American or Hispanic, with an approximately equal number of males and females. More than 85% come from low-income households eligible for Title 1 free or reduced-price lunches.**

With the NYC Council as our partner, New York Edge has become one of the largest providers of school-based programming in New York City and the metropolitan region, serving youth in ALL five boroughs. Core components of our programming include:

- **Academics/STEAM Education**
- **Social-Emotional Learning**
- **Sports & Wellness**
- **The Arts**
- **College and Career Readiness**
- **Summer Camps**
- **Learning Labs**

With funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative we annually impact tens of thousands of students in grades K-12 from over 100 sites across the city through our school year and summer programs. Programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been extremely challenging for us all but through adversity comes strength, resiliency and, often, new opportunities. **The past two years have brought us new collaborators and partners including Teach Rock, founded by legendary guitarist Steven Van Zandt, Mets on the Move, the US Olympic Handball Team, the NY Knicks and Hip Hop Heals. We have also created a Student Book Publishing Initiative, which published its first book last year (available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble), and student led podcast which is coming soon to a podcast player near you.**

I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality.

For 30 years, New York Edge has been able to substantially impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of New York's most vulnerable youth by leveraging City Council funding not only to run our flagship New York City Council Summer Camps but to bring our school year leagues, special events, weekend programs, and holiday break programming to youth across the five boroughs.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the past three decades of support from the New York City Council. We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1,200,000. ***These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!***

Thank you.



PROGRAM REPORT

2021 - 2022



1992

Over 30 Years of service

2022

History

Established in 1992, New York Edge (NYE) is the largest provider of afterschool and summer programs in New York City, having been created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

Mission

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. And as our name implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the **EDGE** that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life.

A Whole Student Approach

Students need healthy minds, bodies and relationships, as well as creative outlets, to thrive. Our programs help them develop all four. From homework support and engaging academic activities to sports and movement, to social-emotional learning and creative activities, our programs offer opportunities to develop in every aspect of their lives. NYE programs are making a world of difference in the lives of thousands of young people across the city:

86% of students in our summer program advance to the next grade.

80% of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their schools.

86% of parents believe that our programs are helping their children succeed in school.

Students in NYE's High School Today, College Tomorrow program have a four-year high school completion rate **more than 1.5 times higher** than the citywide rate.



New York Edge is a leader in the afterschool community, well-regarded for our evidence-based approach to afterschool programming, grounded in Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

NYE Programming – Who We Serve

Targeting underserved communities throughout the city, New York Edge programs focus on academics, the arts, sports and health & wellness. We are also one of the city's largest providers of college access programs. NYE's entire student population is 90% or more African American or Hispanic, with an approximately equal number of males and females. More than 85% come from low-income households eligible for Title 1 free or reduced-price lunches.

NYE Programming - What We Do

With the NYC Council as our partner, New York Edge has become one of the largest providers of school-based programming in New York City and the metropolitan region. Core components of our programming include:

Academics/STEAM Education

Social-Emotional Learning

Sports & Wellness

The Arts

College and Career Readiness

Summer Camps

Learning Labs



After-School Enrichment Initiative:

With funding under the Council's After School Enrichment Initiative we annually impact tens of thousands of students in grades K-12 from over 100 sites across the city through our school year and summer programs. The majority of youth served by our programs are children of color living in low-income and underserved neighborhoods. Programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods).

NYE School Year Programs

MANHATTAN

Site	CM	District	FY21 Enrollment
046M (ES)	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	106
046M (MS)	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	120
161M	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	162
223M	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	119
483M	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	153
499M	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	154
560M	Erik Bottcher	3	510

STATEN ISLAND

Site	CM	District	FY21 Enrollment
027R	Kamillah Hanks	49	138
051R	Joseph Borelli	51	460

BROOKLYN

Site	CM	District	FY21 Enrollment
040K	Darlene Mealy	41	188
045K	Sandy Nurse	37	179
057K	Chi Osse	36	96
061K	Rita Joseph	40	229
066K	Charles Barron	42	117
109K	Farah N. Louis	45	109
165K	Charles Barron	42	82
178K	Darlene Mealy	41	55
224K	Charles Barron	42	34
262K	Chi Osse	36	73
264K	Justin Brannan	43	490
267K	Chi Osse	36	116
285K	Farah N. Louis	45	149
308K	Chi Osse	36	64
309K	Darlene Mealy	41	121
318K	Lincoln Restler	33	536
352K	Crystal Hudson	35	88
353K	Crystal Hudson	35	93
354K	Chi Osse	36	194
362K	Alexa Aviles	38	92
376K	Sandy Nurse	37	141
381K	Farah N. Louis	45	123
382K	Rita Joseph	40	104
384K	Sandy Nurse	37	79
446K	Charles Barron	42	99
452K	Charles Barron	42	135
464K	Shahana Hanif	39	53
484K	Darlene Mealy	41	80
493K	Darlene Mealy	41	112
522K	Darlene Mealy	41	77
581K	Darlene Mealy	41	78
588K	Darlene Mealy	41	133
590K	Crystal Hudson	35	131
614K	Jennifer Gutierrez	34	80
663K	Charles Barron	42	67
664K	Sandy Nurse	37	94
Bushwick Ascend	Sandy Nurse	37	104

BRONX

Site	CM	District	FY21 Enrollment
009X	Oswald Feliz	15	174
031X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	55
083X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	357
083X (CS)	Marjorie Velazquez	13	1230
097X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	101
098X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	106
121X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	116
127X	Amanda Farias	18	264
134X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	185
175X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	65
178X	Kevin Riley	12	102
185X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	25
189X	Kevin Riley	12	105
190X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	103
225X	Oswald Feliz	15	106
242X	Amanda Farias	18	91
287X	Kevin Riley	12	208
287X/113X (CS)	Kevin Riley	12	631
301X	Althea Stevens	16	104
306X	Pierina Ana Sanchez	14	93
375X	Amanda Farias	18	161
389X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	64
449X	Althea Stevens	16	44
454X	Althea Stevens	16	141
462X	Kevin Riley	12	125
471X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	29
480X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	191
Tapco- 225X HS	Oswald Feliz	15	28

QUEENS

Site	CM	District	FY21 Enrollment
014Q	Francisco Moya	21	345
017Q	Tiffany Caban	22	73
041Q	Vickie Paladino	19	100
042Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	103
042Q (CS)	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	512
063Q	Joann Ariola	32	45
078Q	Julie Won	26	84
084Q	Tiffany Caban	22	32
096Q	Adrienne E. Adams	28	121
109Q	Linda Lee	23	523
112Q	Julie Won	26	53
116Q (ES)	Nantasha Williams	27	165
116Q (MS)	Nantasha Williams	27	124
122Q (ES)	Tiffany Caban	22	98
122Q (MS)	Tiffany Caban	22	68
125Q	Julie Won	26	126
146Q	Joann Ariola	32	100
183Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	0
193Q	Vickie Paladino	19	131
207Q	Joann Ariola	32	93
208Q	Linda Lee	23	108
235Q	Tiffany Caban	22	78
238Q	Nantasha Williams	27	106
295Q	Linda Lee	23	122
329Q	Francisco Moya	21	44
355Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	151
356Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	97
379Q	Vickie Paladino	19	50
460Q	Sandra Ung	20	190
680Q	James F. Gennaro	24	81

NYE Summer Programs

MANHATTAN

Site	CM	District	Summer Enrollment
046M (MS)	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	117
223M	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	115
499M	Kristin Richardson Jordan	9	75
560M	Erik Bottcher	3	300

STATEN ISLAND

Site	CM	District	Summer Enrollment
027R	Kamillah Hanks	49	104
051R	Joseph Borelli	51	190

BRONX

Site	CM	District	Summer Enrollment
083X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	205
097X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	140
098X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	50
121X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	160
127X	Amanda Farias	18	140
134X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	177
175X	Marjorie Velazquez	13	60
178X	Kevin Riley	12	120
189X	Kevin Riley	12	145
190X	Rafael Salamanca Jr.	17	70
225X	Oswald Feliz	15	60
242X	Amanda Farias	18	60
287X	Kevin Riley	12	220
301X	Althea Stevens	16	90
454X	Althea Stevens	16	130
462X	Kevin Riley	12	120

BROOKLYN

Site	CM	District	Summer Enrollment
040K	Darlene Mealy	41	185
045K	Sandy Nurse	37	90
057K	Chi Osse	36	50
061K	Rita Joseph	40	196
066K	Charles Barron	42	75
109K	Farah N. Louis	45	125
178K	Darlene Mealy	41	75
264K	Justin Brannan	43	350
267K	Chi Osse	36	105
285K	Farah N. Louis	45	140
309K	Darlene Mealy	41	120
318K	Lincoln Restler	33	180
352K	Crystal Hudson	35	40
353K	Crystal Hudson	35	91
354K	Chi Osse	36	105
376K	Sandy Nurse	37	125
381K	Farah N. Louis	45	120
384K	Sandy Nurse	37	91
452K	Charles Barron	42	120
464K	Shahana Hanif	39	50
484K	Darlene Mealy	41	60
522K	Darlene Mealy	41	75
581K	Darlene Mealy	41	60
588K	Darlene Mealy	41	75
590K	Crystal Hudson	35	200
614K	Jennifer Gutierrez	34	90
663K	Charles Barron	42	99
664K	Sandy Nurse	37	60
Bushwick Ascend	Sandy Nurse	37	91

QUEENS

Site	CM	District	Summer Enrollment
014Q	Francisco Moya	21	448
041Q	Vickie Paladino	19	370
042Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	60
078Q	Julie Won	26	60
096Q	Adrienne E. Adams	28	127
109Q	Linda Lee	23	380
116Q (ES)	Nantasha Williams	27	200
116Q (MS)	Nantasha Williams	27	75
122Q (MS)	Tiffany Caban	22	78
125Q	Julie Won	26	150
146Q	Joann Ariola	32	135
193Q	Vickie Paladino	19	290
207Q	Joann Ariola	32	95
208Q	Linda Lee	23	111
235Q	Tiffany Caban	22	60
238Q	Nantasha Williams	27	136
295Q	Linda Lee	23	125
355Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	120
356Q	Selvena N. Brooks-Powers	31	90
379Q	Vickie Paladino	19	50
680Q	James F. Gennaro	24	75





Digital Inclusion & Literacy Initiative

With funding under the Council's Digital Inclusion & Literacy Initiative, New York Edge is bringing its innovative **New York Edge Student Publishing Initiative** to targeted schools across the city. Unlike traditional creative writing courses, New York Edge will pair students with a children's book author and illustrators and over the course of the program not only work on writing stories, but also publish and promote the books featuring their creative efforts.

Creative writing is a vital skill that supports children's imagination, resiliency, and self-confidence. Our initiative presents an opportunity to support afterschool participants that will take place during the after school period and will help students develop and reinforce a joy of writing and creative expression that will serve them throughout their school years and beyond. Students will have the experience of becoming published authors and gain exposure to leading authors, illustrators and leaders in the publishing industry.



Working in partnership with an award-winning children's book author focused in **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** within the genre, students in our after school program will learn about the creative writing process, write their own stories and have them illustrated by artists from Pixar. The initiative will result in the students having the unique experience of producing a tangible final product--a book that is for sale wherever books are sold--while also helping them better understand the science of storytelling, writing, art, and design.

C.A.S.A (Cultural After-School Adventures) Initiative

The arts help students unlock their creativity and find their voices. New York Edge, through its variety of arts programming gives students opportunities to flex their creative muscles in new ways. With funding under the Council's CASA Initiative, New York Edge is bringing sustained visual and performing arts after-school programming to targeted schools across the city. Offerings available to designated schools include:

Studio Visual Arts

Fashion Design

Cheer

Digital Visual Arts

Dance

Step

Cosmetology

Music

CASA programming will be facilitated by a NYE professional Teaching Artist and will be delivered in person and/or remotely depending on the needs of the school. All needed supplies will be provided to each participant. In addition, each participant will be given a NYE branded t-shirt. Each NYE CASA program will end with a culminating school-based student performance or art exhibit as well as each school be invited to participate in New York Edge's 2022 Spring Art Showcase.



New & Exciting Partnerships

New York Edge continues to seek out new collaborations and partnerships in pursuit of our mission of bridging the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities.



YOUR HELP KEEPS OUR STUDENTS GROWING

Please support and advocate on behalf of New York Edge's
FY 23 citywide funding request of \$1.2 million.



GIVING STUDENTS
THE EDGE
THEY NEED TO
SUCCEED

For More Information Contact: **Laura Jean Hawkins**, Hawkins Consulting
917-402-2998 • ljhawkins4502@gmail.com or visit www.newyorkedge.org

New York City Council
FY 2023 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Youth Services Committee
Monday, March 14th, 2022

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

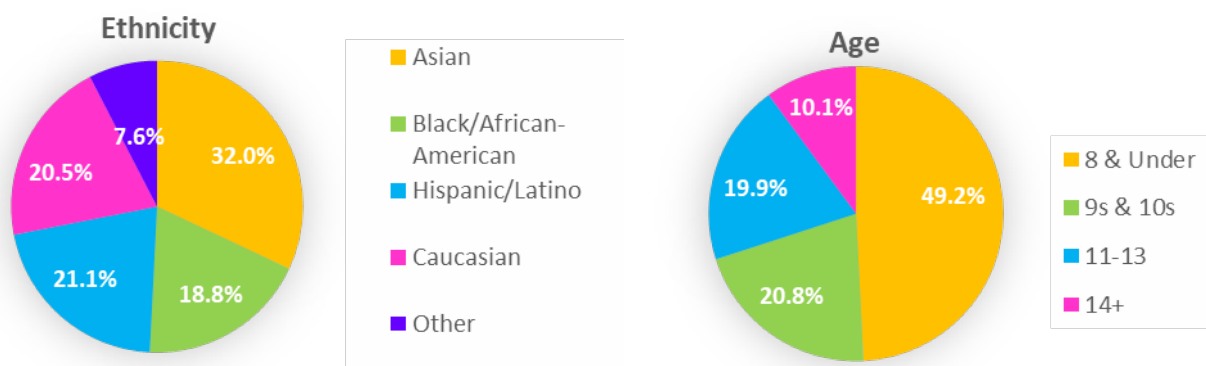
Presented by
Scott Daly
Senior Director of Community Tennis

Thank you Chair Stevens and members of the committee for allowing us to testify today. **New York Junior Tennis & Learning/NYJTL** (legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.**), as the nation's largest scholastic tennis program, looks forward to working with all of you on behalf of the youth of our city. For 50 years, with the Council as our partner, NYJTL has been a driving force for New York City's youth and tennis communities, traditionally reaching over **85,000** youngsters annually throughout the five boroughs.

It is our belief that talent is universal but access and opportunity are not. That is why we have strived over the past 50 years to introduce the sport of tennis to **ALL** children, including those with special needs. NYJTL programs offer the youth of our city much more than the chance just to learn tennis. They have the opportunity to become physically fit; the opportunity to reach new educational heights; and the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their immediate world. NYJTL helps young people build self-esteem and learn the affirmative values of perseverance, cooperation, fairness and respect.

The overwhelming majority of the young people we serve are Black, Latino, Asian, and new immigrant populations. **Nearly two-thirds of our participants are 10 and under AND virtually all come from low-income families and neighborhoods, where young people lack access to the opportunities typically available only to youth in affluent neighborhoods, suburbs and private schools.**

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS¹



CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS continued¹

Ethnicity	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	32.0%	8 & Under	49.2%	Male	48.3%	New	65.9%
Black/ African-American	18.8%	9s & 10s	20.8%	Female	51.4%	Returning	34.1%
Hispanic/Latino	21.1%	11-13	19.9%	Non-binary	0.3%		
Caucasian	20.5%	14 +	10.1%				
Other	7.6%						

¹- Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 85,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually

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 during Spring, Summer & Fall; Provides trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, & special events; Provides tennis instruction to over 1,000 Special Population/ District 75 children during the Summer; Offers educational supports, including FREE SAT Prep, as well as special Tournaments and Events, including trips to the US Open Qualifiers and to Arthur Ashe Kids Day and various pro events and tournaments.

Winter Weekend Indoor Program - Part of CTP - Enables players to continue their progress during this 20-week Indoor Season on Saturdays and/or Sundays; in addition to instruction there are 13 days of FREE tournaments for participants during the two school vacation breaks and the 3-weekend long culminating Hartman Cup tournament.

CTP+ Program – Located in Brooklyn & Queens, CTP+ is open to NYJTL participants from all five boroughs. The goal of CTP+ is to develop tennis skills of dedicated CTP participants at a higher level. It is designed for players who have demonstrated competitive ability and potential beyond the level of those at their current CTP location. At no cost to players or families, CTP+ provides extended hours of play and a smaller coach to student ratio.

School-Time Tennis Program (STP) - Physical education teachers are trained by NYJTL's professionally certified coaches on how to incorporate tennis into their school's curriculum. NYJTL traditionally holds 6 training sessions each school year serving approximately 250 teachers/schools. All teachers and school-based staff are given a tennis curriculum, lesson plans, tennis equipment (rackets & balls) and ongoing onsite support if needed and requested. NYJTL is a NYSED Approved provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit. Training participants each receive for FREE 6.5 CTLE hours.

Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school juniors & seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various times throughout the four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter).

NYJTL is seeking \$1 million in FY 23. Funding at this level will enable us to:

- Keep up with rising costs and costs associated with our COVID-19 protocols -
 - Additional Equipment – no sharing of any items between participants and staff;
 - Equipment to assist in social distancing (lines, cones, spots);
 - PPE Supplies – cleaning products, point and shoot thermometers, masks and hand sanitizers (for players and staff);
- Enables us to continue serving youth in **EVERY** borough;
- Allow us to bring programming to **new locations** throughout the city with an emphasis on **underserved** neighborhoods
- Allows us to bring **additional hours** of free tennis instruction at existing sites;
- Increase enrollment throughout the city as a result of additional program hours and new locations.

Continued funding of NYJTL in the FY 23 budget is crucial to our vision and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families.

We could not do what we do without the strong funding support of the New York City Council. 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.



**2022 Committee on Youth Services Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 14th at 10 AM**

Written Testimony of Dr. Williams,
President and Chief Executive Officer
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Darlene Williams and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT). Thank you to the Council Members of the Committee on Youth Services for the invitation to advocate for our younger generation.

I am writing to advocate for increased funding to expand our youth services through the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and echo Mayor Adams' Blueprint for a stronger recovery centered on equity and economic mobility across the City. Since 1983, OBT has been preparing New York's younger generations to find good jobs and maintain fulfilling careers with a host of wraparound services.

Our mission at OBT is to break the cycle of poverty and inequity through education, job training, and employment. Our vision is to strengthen the workforce by serving as a bridge to economic opportunity for youth, individuals, and families in underserved communities is critical for economic recovery during these unprecedented times. With programming that ranges from high school equivalency to ESOL courses to industry-certified training programs for high school graduates, we focus on meeting individuals "where they are" and work with them to meet their goals.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we encountered numerous challenges in our DYCD funded programs due to City-wide budget shortfalls. OBT received \$300,000 less compared to our previous fiscal years. We saw lower program enrollment numbers connected to social distancing restrictions and limited community outreach during peak surges.

The biggest impact has been on our Sunset Park programs where we had to cut back on the number of full-time counselors for 120 participants. We serve a high needs population that includes parents, students with disabilities, homeless youth, etc. Losing counselors affects our wraparound support services, which in turn impacts our community in detrimental ways.

The pandemic exacerbated a legacy of racial, health and environmental issues affecting our participants. The truth is that prior to the pandemic the constituencies that OBT serves were already facing barriers prior to gaining employment, such as needing to learn and master new skills, access to language services, childcare and more. The recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia will also contribute to the rising inflation New Yorkers have experienced over the last few months, further exacerbating the economic needs of our participants and their families.

We strongly believe that we can recover from the last few years and empower our youth to succeed in the future with your investment in the following:

Sunset Park

882 3rd Avenue
Suite 10-10NE, Unit 18
Brooklyn, NY 11232
Tel: 718-369-0303
Fax: 718-369-1518

Innovation Lab

87 35th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232
Tel. 718-801-8970

Bushwick

25 Thornton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206
Tel: 718-387-1600
Fax: 718-387-5005

Jamaica

168-25 Jamaica Avenue
Suite 202
Jamaica, NY 11432
Tel: 718-526-2984

1. **Improve how we evaluate, use our program data, and finally, best meet the needs of our participants and employer partners.** Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in building healthy communities by providing critical services that contribute to economic stability and mobility. Researching trends, understanding market sectors, and the needs of the communities are critical components for effective service delivery.
2. **Expand our ability to offer young people sector-based programs** in healthcare, technology, masonry, childcare, climate-based careers and more through programmatic training that is blended, flexible and industry-certified.
3. **Digital literacy and basic technological skills are essential for all workers.** The transition to hybrid and remote ways of working across sectors has further demonstrated the need to address the digital divide. We need bold investments in wraparound services that empower our participants to use an array of technologies in a fluent manner.
4. **Increase New Yorkers' ability to successfully skill and upskill by providing wraparound support.** As seen in our participants, success in our programs is contributed by a host of wraparound services we provide. To best serve their needs, we need to better understand critical barriers to labor force participation such as availability of childcare, supplemental or replacement income, food security, transportation, broadband, and tech hardware.

New York needs bold investments from its local government that supports people getting sustainable employment that pays a dignified salary with solid benefits. It is our hope and expectation that the City Council and leadership reflect the values of equity and justice in a budget that places youth, immigrants, and those who have endured the most economic hardship since 2020 at the center of this budget.

Thank you on behalf of everyone at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow for giving us this platform to testify about the challenges facing Opportunity Youth in New York City. With your support, we look forward to building our partnership, so that together we can provide our participants with the opportunity for a better tomorrow.

Best regards,



Dr. Darlene Williams
President & CEO
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow

Sunset Park

882 3rd Avenue
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**ParentChild+ Program Testimony
Committees on Youth Services and Community Development**

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

March 14th, 2022

Good afternoon: My name is Andre Eaton, and I am the New York State Director for ParentChild+.

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

Before children enter pre-k or kindergarten, many of the children living in communities furthest from opportunity and children from immigrant families and families with home languages other than English are cared for by family members or in informal settings. These are the caregivers least likely to have access to the information, materials, and activities that will enable them to build their children's school readiness skills and ensure children have the skills they need to enter a classroom prepared to be successful students. The funding provided by the City's First Readers Initiative is critical to providing the support families need to prepare their children to enter a classroom with the skills and experiences to succeed in school.

ParentChild+ provides critical learning tools, books, and other educational, interaction-stimulating materials, to families with two- and three-year-olds. ParentChild+ helps families build literacy, language, and an interaction-rich environment in their homes. They participate in two visits a week (typically in-person visits, however, during COVID all virtual) with an early learning specialist, or home visitor, who introduces the materials to the family, and models for parents how to read, talk, and play with their children to build language, social-emotional, and early literacy skills. ParentChild+ staff also connect families to other social service supports and community

resources as needed and assist parents in planning for their children's next educational step and registering their children for a pre-k or Head Start program.

ParentChild+ staff also provide similar supports to family child care providers caring for children in low-income communities. Family child care is the most common form of child care for 0 – 3-year-olds in historically marginalized communities – it is accessible, involves caregivers who speak the families' home language, and is available at the hours that parents need to work. Through twice weekly visits with providers during the day while children are in care, ParentChild+ early learning specialists support providers in building learning and interaction-rich care environments and support their group management skills and age-differentiated activities. They work with providers on family engagement and support both the care and home environments by providing high quality books that both stay with the provider and go home with the children, tips for both providers and parents, and other learning materials. The ripple effect is powerful as each of the providers will go on to bring these school readiness skills to other children in their care over the coming years.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to expand our reach, adding our work with family child care providers in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and the Bronx, supporting them in building school readiness-rich care environments for the children they care for during the day. This work is enabling us to reach families who are not able to be a part of our one-on-one home visiting model, because they work long and often irregular hours.

The pandemic forced all of us to change the way we interact with each other socially and forced ParentChild+ to adjust the way we provide services, especially to our most vulnerable populations. We pivoted from in-home visits to virtual visits using tablets and phones, making that change immediately as the virus began to spread across the city. In addition, our families and our work are located in the midst of the ongoing fight and struggle against racism and social injustice in our cities, the nation, and the world. The COVID pandemic has further highlighted the educational, social, and economic disparities experienced particularly by black and brown families in this country. As these dual pandemics highlighted the size of the disparities and depth of their impact on children and families, ParentChild+ elevated and recommitted to its stance against racism and injustice, taking a much deeper look into the entire organization in every area to provide the best services to the children, families, and staff whom we work with nationally and internationally.

We have implemented our four-pillar approach across our work as we engage with our City's First Readers' partners. This framework focused on bringing about equity for young children is an organizational commitment to:

- 1) Strengthen families, caregivers, and the parents of ParentChild+ children by providing services where they live and embedding supports in their communities.**

- 2) **Build trust and respect by providing families the best tools and educational resources to prepare their children for educational success and a better future.**
- 3) **Facilitate deep community connections with all our public and nonprofit partners so that families' needs are always upfront and met.**
- 4) **Continuing to prioritize caregiver-child interaction as critical to all children's healthy development and wellbeing.**

ParentChild+ is so honored to be part of the City's First Readers Initiative. Working with our partners in this initiative, we were able this year to provide intensive school readiness supports to more than 100 additional families in communities challenged by poverty, isolation, and language and literacy barriers across the city, 4,600 additional home visits, 2,300 additional books and educational materials in homes, which would not have been possible without this support. We were able to connect ParentChild+ families with a continuum of other school readiness services and activities in their communities, provide all the program materials through drop-offs and all the visits virtually. Throughout the pandemic we have also been able to support family's immediate needs for food, clothing, PPE, technology access, and rent assistance.

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

With support from the City's First Readers Initiative, ParentChild+ has been able to expand to seven communities, reaching families in South Jamaica and Astoria, Queens; Sunset Park, and East New York, Brooklyn; and most recently Far Rockaway; families who would otherwise not have access to these supports. Many of these communities have historically had limited early childhood school readiness programming available. With additional funding, ParentChild+ could reach more deeply into these communities and expand into additional communities. ParentChild+ could easily reach an additional 50 families across the city in the coming year. We hope to be able to expand our work in East Harlem with our current program partner MASA with additional funding.

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



REACH OUT AND READ OF GREATER NEW YORK

Testimony before the Committee on Youth Services and Community Development

This testimony is on behalf of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York (RORGNY) in support of NY City Council's early literacy initiative, City's First Readers. We want to take this opportunity to thank the Speaker and City Council Members for their ongoing commitment to ensuring that New York City children who participate in our program will begin school with the literacy skills that will enable them to succeed.

Decades of research show that early literacy skills are key to building positive futures for children and breaking cycles of poverty. Yet, children who grow up in systemic poverty face a gap in opportunities to develop these crucial skills. This gap is greatest for children of color. Due to persistent structural and systemic racism, child poverty rates are higher for children of color compared to their white peers. There are over a half million children¹ under the age of five in NYC. **44.5% of them live in low-income households** (below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level - \$25,750 for a family of four), and **76% of children under the age of five are children of color.**

It is estimated that 325,000 additional children have been pushed into COVID related poverty². The number of homeless New Yorkers has risen to the highest point since the Great Depression, and the largest demographic within the homeless population is children³. In addition to increased rates of poverty and disruption to schooling and childcare, more than 4,000 children in New York State have had a parent or caregiver die because of COVID and 57% of these children live in New York City⁴. It is abundantly clear to those of us who work with young children every day - they are not immune to the stress and trauma of the pandemic.

For over 20 years, [Reach Out and Read of Greater New York](#) has partnered with health care providers to put books and literacy resources in the hands of children and their caregivers. During regular pediatric checkups, pediatricians, family physicians, and nurse practitioners give new, developmentally appropriate books to children from birth through 5 years old and advise parents and caregivers about the importance of reading aloud. Many of the resources we provide families at these visits are connections with our City's First Readers partner

¹ 2019 Census and Citizen's Committee for Children Data

² <https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/covid-19-ripple-effect-impact-covid-19-children-new-york-state/>

³ [The Children in the Shadows: New York City's Homeless Students](#) September, 2020

⁴ <https://uhfnyc.org/news/article/uhf-report-4200-children-nys--lost-parent-covid-19/>

organizations, who we know will continue to further the early childhood education support we give at the pediatric checkups.

We partner with 144 of these hospitals, clinics, and pediatric care sites in New York City in 44 council districts. **In 2021, we served over 250,000 children** with books and literacy resources through our network of over 1,600 medical professionals. However, there is much more we can do. At our current funding rates, **we are not able to meet the book need for 31% of the children in New York City**. That means thousands of children are leaving their doctor's office without a book because we don't have the funding to support them in the way they need. We are hoping to change that with the continued and increased support of the NY City Council.

We feel honored to be a founding member of CFR whose goal is to build links between literacy resources for low-income families in a variety of contexts across New York. As a consortium of 17 strong organizations, CFR aims to reinforce messaging across platforms and provide cross-referrals of services, with the ultimate goal of increased saturation of literacy resources for parents, teachers, and other childcare providers to promote school readiness in children ages 0–5. To date, CFR has expanded services, provided additional opportunities for parent engagement and provision of books.

If the City Council authorizes funding for Fiscal Year 2023 for the CFR Initiative, this vitally important work will have an even greater effect on NYC children and families. Reach Out and Read of Greater New York will be able to expand on meeting book need at the sites we work with, increase the number of health care workers trained in the program, and revamp our book recommendations to assure families are receiving quality books.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything it is how crucial health care workers and health care systems are in supporting New Yorkers. Providing early literacy resources through this system has carried through the pandemic and is thriving through the challenges. We continue to need financial support to allow the RORGNY program to reach maximum impact, serving more families in NYC.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

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Testimony of
Jimmy Meagher, Policy Director
Safe Horizon

On the Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget

Committee on Youth Services
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

New York City Council

3.14.2022

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Jimmy Meagher, and I am Policy Director at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim services organization. Safe Horizon offers a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. We are increasingly using a lens of racial equity and justice to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the positions we hold.

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are proud to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We look forward to helping you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping survivors of all ages access desperately-needed shelter, mental health support and counseling, legal assistance, and other services.

The City Council has also championed the human services nonprofit sector. Our sector desperately needs your help to ensure that human services workers across our sector receive the compensation and support we need.

The City of New York contracts with nonprofits to deliver the essential services so many New Yorkers rely on – for food, for safety, for shelter, etc. However, the City too often asks our community of nonprofits to do more with less and to accept the bare minimum. This means that many - too many - nonprofit human services workers, the majority of whom are women and people of color, are barely surviving on the wages paid by underfunded City contracts. Because many survivors come into victim services work to help other survivors, City funding for the nonprofit victim services sector is an economic justice issue for survivors. To live up to our shared values of equity, equality, and supporting communities, our City must commit to fully funding the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA), the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative (ICR), and other fair and just investments to our sector and to fully funding city contracts at appropriate levels to allow nonprofits to offer competitive living wage salaries. Pay equity is a racial justice issue, a gender justice issue, and an economic justice issue.

My testimony today will focus on the needs of the nonprofit human services sector, with specific focus on the core asks of the #JustPay campaign. I will also highlight the City Council discretionary and initiative funding contracted through DYCD that Safe Horizon relies on to provide essential services to survivors of violence and abuse across the five boroughs. Lastly, I will highlight recommendations from the New York Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), of which we are a proud member.

#JustPay

Safe Horizon is a proud member of the [#JustPay campaign](https://www.justpayny.org/) (<https://www.justpayny.org/>), which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers. The #JustPay campaign is demanding that sector employees under contract with New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

Each year you hear from providers who are struggling due to the crisis of compounding underfunding of the human services sector as City budgets are balanced on the backs of low-income neighborhoods and BIPOC communities. This practice has resulted in poverty-level wages for human services workers, who are predominantly women (66%) and people of color (68%). To address this crisis, we ask the City to immediately adopt three core reforms:

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

The COLA is the biggest action that can be taken right now, during this budget season. We ask that the Council include an important COLA for all human services workers, as these workers haven't seen an increase from City contracts in the last two years. Ideally, we would love to see a multi-year COLA agreement, but in the absence of that, we are asking for a **5.4% COLA** based on the consumer price index which mirrors the State COLA included in the Governor's budget. This would be about an \$108 million investment in an essential community workforce.

These actions would be meaningful to organizations like ours that never stopped providing critical services during this pandemic.

Initiative and Discretionary Funding

City Council initiative and discretionary funding contracted through the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) supports the following Safe Horizon programs:

Streetwork Project

Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and so much more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 13 to 25. We work with homeless and street-involved young people to help them find safety and stability. Many homeless young people face a day-to-day struggle to survive, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. Homeless youth may have experienced family abuse, violence, rejection, and instability that led to their homelessness. We welcome these young people, help them navigate complex systems, and provide essential resources at our Drop-In Centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams.

This work can be incredibly challenging but also rewarding. Our work at Streetwork did not pause during this pandemic. Rather, our dedicated team continued to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter, services, and understanding. Streetwork has been doing this community-based work since 1984, and we will continue to do so for as long as our services are needed.

In FY21, our Streetwork Project provided services to nearly 600 clients across our drop-in centers and overnight shelter, while our overnight street outreach team engaged in over 4,300 contacts with homeless and at-risk young people. The City Council supports Streetwork Project's work through the **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative**.

The **Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative** bolsters Streetwork's ability to provide services and access to housing to young people engaged in the sex trade. With this funding, we have been able to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the Drop-In Center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade and to connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare. **Safe Horizon is seeking a restoration of \$456,697 to continue to bolster our response and offer critical services to this vulnerable population navigating a pandemic, homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.**

SafeChat

Safe Horizon's SafeChat is a live chat platform that allows victims of all forms of crime and abuse to access Safe Horizon services digitally. Crime victims utilize their computer, phone, or tablet to safely and confidentially engage in a one-on-one chat with trained Safe Horizon Live Chat Specialists by visiting safehorizon.org. Live Chat Specialists utilize a best practice, client-centered approach to engage with victims by providing information and referrals across NYC, supporting victims in fully assessing their safety, and collaborating with victims to develop comprehensive safety plans. Live Chat Specialists conduct safety assessment, safety planning, crisis counseling, supportive counseling, psychoeducation, information about and referrals to supporting resources. In FY21, SafeChat responded to nearly 2,000 chats from survivors. The City Council supports our SafeChat through a **Speaker's Initiative**.

In FY22, Safe Horizon was awarded **Speaker's Initiative** funding to launch a SafeChat microsite intentionally directed towards young men of color. The site provides educational materials related to trauma and provides access to our live chat platform. **This year, we are requesting \$200,000 in Speaker's Initiative funding to expand operations and add additional SafeChat staff positions to respond to survivors. By expanding this program further, we create accessibility and intentionally build avenues for young men of color to access supportive services and healing.**

New York Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY) Recommendations

Lastly, Safe Horizon joins the calls of Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) and RHY advocates across NYC in urging the City Council to work with Mayor Adams and all elected and government officials across our City to meaningfully support RHY, connect them to safe, stable housing, and

end youth homelessness. Safe Horizon is a proud member of the New York Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), which is a consortium of 65 agencies working to improve the lives of runaway, homeless, and street-involved youth across New York State. We work to recognize and uphold the plight of homelessness among young people across ethnicities, genders, and orientations and promote the safety, health, and future of unhoused youth across New York State. CHY has crafted a list of policy recommendations that our government partners can implement this year to meaningfully address and end our youth housing and homelessness crisis.

To meet the needs of RHY, the following must be prioritized in FY23:

- **“Right-size” Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Provider Contracts**

DYCD-funded RHY provider contracts continue to fall short of covering the true cost of running our programs. We are requesting that all current DYCD-funded shelter contracts be increased to the 2019 contract rate of \$50,410, and that a 10% general contract increase be implemented for all current DYCD-funded residential, street-outreach, and drop-in center RHY contracts.

Streetwork’s contracts either do not cover or insufficiently cover: assistance accessing housing & exiting homelessness; showers; laundry services; peer education; sexual health and peer programs; sexual health interventions; assistance obtaining HRA and SSA benefits; needle exchange and overdose prevention services; groups; food, pantry, and soup kitchen/hot meals; socks, underwear, and clothing; hygiene supplies; and baby/child/parenting supplies and services.

We need additional funding to meet the very real demands of our clients. For example, we are currently nowhere near meeting the demand for assistance obtaining housing and exiting homelessness. With funding that matches the need, we could place significantly more clients into housing. We need more funding to cover paid peer internships, job skills and job search assistance, benefits assistance, 24/7 drop-in services, and case management. Our contracts pay for these services but at rates that nowhere meet the overwhelming needs of RHY in NYC.

- **5.4% COLA increase**

To adequately meet the needs of any youth who enter a program, providers must ensure that all their staff are being paid livable wages. CHY echoes the recommendations of the #JustPay campaign discussed above. Our Streetwork Project was deemed an essential program during COVID-19 and continued to provide in-person programming during New York’s PAUSE. Our staff need and deserve a living minimum wage. This will improve staff morale and positively impact our ability to recruit and keep staff, which will allow for continuity of services and our ability to build trusting, meaningful relationships with the young people we serve.

Streetwork never closed our doors during COVID. We continued to provide services to primarily street homeless youth through not just the pandemic but the subway shutdown, the curfew, and the policing of the uprising for Black lives. Our street homeless clients experienced increased risk during these past two years, especially as businesses shut down

and fewer people were on the streets. Our clients lived at the margins of society, and when the margins shrank, many of our clients were left to navigate life and death situations. Before the pandemic, many of our clients relied on subways, 24/7 businesses, and/or panhandling to survive. When businesses closed and New Yorkers stayed home, our clients were left with fewer options to get by. Streetwork increased our services for street homeless youth and worked to build important connections to other essential services that helped our clients survive the multiple health crises happening at once.

And we did this all while facing major staffing and capacity issues. It is difficult to recruit qualified candidates and keep staff when our contracts underpay positions. This is especially heart-breaking for our programs because we know that staff turnover severely impedes continuity of services and relationship-building with youth. Our clients often distrust authority figures and have often experienced trauma related to being abandoned by caregivers. Trust is built over time, through serious work by both clients and staff members. When staff leave, the young folks we work with experience setbacks, which makes it that much harder to build further trust. If our contracts not only adequately but abundantly covered staff lines, we would not experience the staffing and capacity issues that impede this essential work.

- **Maintain funding for the 16 Housing Specialists in the RHY System: \$1.481M**

DYCD data demonstrates that homeless youth rarely transition from DYCD shelters into their own independent housing. However, unlike in DSS shelters or in the foster care system, DYCD does not have baselined funding for housing specialists. The current Housing Specialists at the DYCD-funded drop-in centers are temporarily funded through federal Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) funding, which is set to expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 2022). To ensure RHY successfully transition to their own apartments with DYCD/DSS issued vouchers, or other permanent housing resources, DYCD must ensure funding to providers to maintain the 16 Housing Specialists currently at the drop-in centers. Continuing the funding for these positions would support youth experiencing homelessness in successfully obtaining safe, long-term housing.

Streetwork was awarded funding for two housing navigators through EHV funding. However, we received the funding in September 2021 and were able to hire our first navigator in October 2021. We were unable to hire the second position immediately, and because it is a temporary position, we have been unable to fill it. If this position were permanent, we believe we could certainly hire a qualified candidate.

Currently, we have one full-time position, funded by a private foundation, that helps our clients access permanent housing. This staff person does not have the capacity to help every client who needs housing. Streetwork has one of the best reputations across DYCD-contracted RHY programs for assisting clients in accessing permanent housing. With additional housing specialists, we could place significantly more clients in housing.

- **Fund two mental health-focused Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Support Program Pilots: \$2M**

Youth often share that they wish they had better access to meaningful mental health supports. Providers continue to express that they often do not have the staff capacity or appropriate structure to support RHY who have significant mental health needs. The City should issue an RFP for two new pilot programs to serve RHY with mental and behavioral health needs that would include on-site clinical services and intensive case management to provide these youth with the services they need.

Streetwork's holistic program model specifically tries to offer as many services as possible under one roof. We know from experience that our clients are often unlikely to make appointments at outside organizations that they have not been to before, even when we help make the appointment. When we are able to offer a service on-site, more of our clients access that service, especially because our clients find our program safe and welcoming. Offering in-house mental health supports is necessary. Clients with serious mental health and/or behavioral health issues are the hardest to place into shelter, and therefore the most likely to become chronically street homeless. Many youth shelters discharge clients who have mental health issues, sometimes because they do not have the staffing or resources to support young people with increased needs. By offering TILs with on-site clinical services and intensive case management for RHY with significant mental health needs, the City would fill a gap and create meaningful opportunities for this chronically underserved population.

- **Create 40 additional DYCD RHY beds for youth aged 21-24 years: \$2.22M**

There are currently only 60 beds in the DYCD system for 21–24-year-olds; however, this is an inadequate amount to meet the overwhelming need. To ensure that older youth can benefit from the safety and security of youth-specific shelter supports, we ask that funding be made available for an additional 40 beds to serve homeless young adults ages 21-24.

Many young adults refuse to go to or return to DHS shelters because these shelters can be traumatizing and violent for them. When youth shelter placement is not available, many young people opt for street homelessness or risky housing options (like living with an abusive intimate partner). NYC must increase the number of DYCD RHY beds available for youth aged 21-24 years.

Clients across all of Safe Horizon's programs need safe, affordable, stable housing. So many victims and survivors of all forms of violence call our Hotlines and turn to our programs for housing assistance everyday. And the housing options we can offer remain too few in number. Temporary emergency shelter will always serve a purpose for survivors and RHY, but our City needs to do everything it can to connect New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, including and especially RHY, to permanent housing. **Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support, prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families, and communities.** When we say "justice for victims" we mean so much more than just criminal justice. Rather, we cannot promote justice for victims and survivors without also demanding housing justice and economic justice. Our clients, which include RHY, survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence, immigrant and undocumented survivors, trafficking survivors, and so many others, need safe, stable, affordable housing to find justice and healing.

Conclusion

As the City Council and the Administration sets the budget for the next fiscal year, it's imperative that our City expands, perfects, creates, and invests in programming that provides healing and support to people who have experienced harm, violence, and trauma. When we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of individual New Yorkers, we invest in the safety, healing, and well-being of New York City as a whole.

And it is essential that the City invest in the nonprofit human services workforce that we collectively rely on to support our safety net. We urge you and your colleagues to listen to providers and implement the three core asks of the #JustPay campaign.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony. We are available to provide more information and answer any questions you may have.



Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

Closing the STEAM Equity Divide

Success should not be determined by the color of someone's skin, their zip code, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or their family's wealth.

Success should be determined by equal access to well-rounded education, instruction that supports all learners, fair access to resources, and equal opportunities that enable each student to realize their full potential.

The events of the last few years have highlighted the enormous barriers to true equity and inclusion in the fundamental pathways to success. For decades, we've heard industry leaders from the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math (STEAM) call for greater diversity within their professions and a greater pool of qualified candidates from local communities.

Yet, for far too many of our City's students, the obstacles to success are great.

Without diminishing the importance of overcoming systemic shortfalls in fair and safe housing, nutritious food supply, and affordable healthcare, this paper will focus on the strategies and resources needed to build a strong foundation for students' success in STEAM careers.

This can be accomplished if we work together to:

- Build on the strengths of the City's in-school and after-school programs
- Provide access to affordable, accessible, and impactful STEAM education
- Leverage the resources of the private, non-profit, and public sectors

However, we need to start where resources are needed most:

- Economically disadvantaged communities
- Under-resourced after-school programs
- And wherever students struggle to see themselves as successful



“Success should not be determined by the color of someone’s skin, their zip code, gender, sexual orientation, or their family’s wealth.”

Unfortunately, there are not enough STEAM experts to go around; students need:

- Access to curricula and instruction that are easy to understand and follow
- Engaging lessons that are designed for all learning styles
- Opportunities to debate, discuss, and design solutions to real world challenges

And for far too long, after-school programs that serve our city's under-resourced communities, have lacked high quality, low cost resources. After-school providers that serve our city's students in these communities are desperate for access to reliable, consistent, and proven experts in STEAM education.

To make matters worse, the negative financial impact of the COVID pandemic hit the DOE's budget hard for both the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years.¹ And we don't yet know the longer-term impact on student learning. While all schools suffered, those without access to supplemental resources, or the volunteers to secure those resources, will be hit exponentially harder. Similarly, NYCHA and many City-sponsored after-school programs within its Community Centers, already strapped for cash, scramble to survive through the pandemic.²

Solving these challenges may seem insurmountable, but together we *can* solve them.

This white paper proposes a three-part solution to serve after-school centers in under-resourced communities. Robust underwriting through a public, private, and non-profit partnership could support:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profits for elementary students
- Stand-alone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle and high school students
- Mid-career STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM

¹ <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/7/22/21334981/education-budget-cuts-hiring-freeze>

² <https://cbcny.org/research/nychas-operating-outlook>



New York City has what it takes...

There is no better place than New York City to build the next generation of engineers, architects, designers, and other building industry professionals. The city is rich in resources, experiences, and opportunities. Our nation's financial capital, a world-renowned cultural hub, and a center for innovative technology, construction, engineering, design, and architecture, is a 21st century STEAM city.

So, it is no surprise that New York City continues to be a magnet that draws young, creative talent from all over the world. People come to New York to realize their potential, forge their futures, make their fortunes, and realize their ambitions.

But what about our children?

New York City students have just as much potential to succeed in STEAM fields as anyone else. In fact, with all New York City's resources ~ private, public, and non-profit ~ our students should have pathways to success that others can only dream of.

Our schools are filled with hardworking and dedicated teachers and administrators. Our Department of Education (DOE) produced the STEM Framework, an excellent guide to impactful STEM instruction.³ And our city has the Comprehensive Afterschool System (COMPASS)⁴ and Schools Out New York City (SONYC)⁵ programs that supplement in-school learning.

But despite our hardworking educators and the city's existing resources, too many students are missing out.

For example, because there isn't a teacher certification in STEAM, teachers must independently research and develop ways to integrate STEAM into their classrooms. More often than not, they must do this in their own time. Teachers with more free time and/or resources can create these additional enrichment lessons for students (we call them additional, but really, they are essential). Students whose teachers have less free time and resources lose out.



³ <https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/stem-framework/>

⁴ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/comprehensive-after-school-system-of-new-york-city-compass.page>

⁵ <https://growingupnyc.cityofnewyork.us/programs/sonyc/>

This disparity in access to quality STEAM education prevents a strong continuum of learning for all.

Tapping available resources to build success...

Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.

New educational initiatives must address grade-specific learning, deliver age-appropriate instruction, and create new approaches to engaging students. They must engage subject matter experts in STEAM education to provide push-in programs for younger elementary students who need a STEAM educator to guide their learning. They must provide intuitive and easy to follow independent learning opportunities for older middle and high school students. And they should partner with STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce students to college and career pathways in STEAM.



“Positive systemic change requires a team of experts working together towards a common goal.”

Vital to any successful STEAM program is a deep understanding of the NYC DOE’s STEM Framework and clear alignment with educational standards such as the Common Core math standards, Next Generation science standards, and the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Visual Arts. Programs should build STEAM literacy, place theoretical concepts in familiar contexts, and give students the opportunity to practice new skills and apply new knowledge to real-world challenges.

STEAM programs are in high demand in any after-school environment.

But many City-run after-school programs struggle to retain qualified program staff, especially at entry level. Newly trained employees often move swiftly to higher paying jobs with new employers. While this is great for employees’ individual growth, after-school programs are left with inexperienced program staff and an expensive, ongoing training cycle, while students continue to suffer.

By contracting with qualified nonprofit STEAM organizations, City-sponsored after-school

programs have regular access to highly trained educators and state of the art curricula that reinforce in-school learning through fun, engaging activities. Effective STEAM educational non-profits constantly refine and update curricula. Their educators engage in year-round professional development on best practices, classroom management, and how to communicate STEAM concepts at various grades ~ they are subject matter experts in STEAM.

While issues of access and quality can cross socio-economic boundaries, under-resourced communities always experience the greatest disadvantage.

Families in wealthier neighborhoods may have access to private and corporate support. Parents might only work one job or have a partner who doesn't have to work at all. They can afford to contribute more to their student's school, the PTA, or help obtain coveted grants to fund programs that are beyond the school budget.

But why reinvent the wheel? New York City is rich with STEAM educational organizations dedicated to developing and delivering rigorous STEAM instruction.

There are many organizations like the Salvatori Center that provide rigorous grade-specific K-12 programs to support and supplement in-school education through engaging, rigorous, and impactful age-appropriate after-school programs. Programs that help reduce the STEAM gap for students who lack access to quality STEAM education.

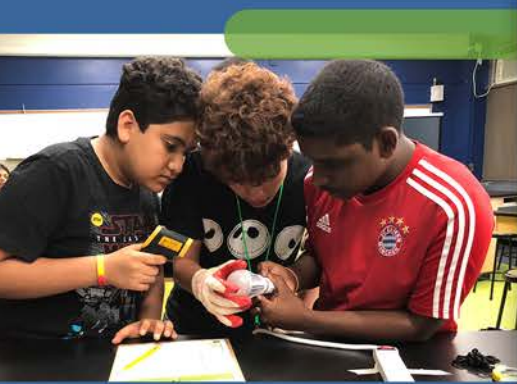
New York City has great after-school centers filled with students eager to learn. And our STEAM industries have young professionals burning to make a difference and open the world of STEAM to the next generation.

Together, through a true public/private partnership, we can help our most vulnerable communities overcome these disparities. We owe it to our children, and to the future of New York City's STEAM industries, to provide opportunities and programs that help local students see and believe that they too can excel in science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math.

We have the experts, the talent, and the desire to help all our city's students succeed.



***“We have the experts,
the talent, and the desire
to help all our city’s
students succeed.”***



“Young children are quite capable of doing, at a developmentally informed level, all of the scientific practices that high schoolers can do: they can make observations and predictions, carry out simple experiments and investigations, collect data, and begin to make sense of what they found. Having a set of practices like these that become routinized and internalized is going to really help them learn about their world.”

“Research also shows that STEM support should start early: children in disadvantaged circumstances, especially, start school lacking the foundation for that success.”

The Core Principals of Success

We all know teaching STEAM ~ science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and math ~ at an early age is important. It captures students’ interest at an early age, builds confidence, and the self-perception that they can succeed.⁶ A 2016 study, for example, examined learning experiences in more than 7,750 children from kindergarten entry to the end of eighth grade, and found that early acquisition of knowledge about the world was correlated with later science success:

Children’s early knowledge about the natural and social sciences, self-regulatory behaviors, and reading and mathematics achievement may constitute modifiable factors that, if increased through school-based interventions, may help prevent or reduce the early onset of science achievement gaps.⁷

Salvadori believes teaching STEAM also builds the 21st Century skills that all employers seek:

- **Creativity**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Collaboration**
- **Communication**

Education professionals recognize the importance of building students’ self-confidence and self-perception that they can succeed in school ~ valuable insights and integral to any STEAM education.



⁶ https://joanganzcooneycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/jgcc_stemstartsearly_final.pdf

⁷ Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2016). Science achievement gaps begin very early, persist, and are largely explained by modifiable factors. *Educational Researcher*, 45(1), 18–35. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X16633182>



Impact In Action

On a recent STEM program classroom visit, a parent described how his daughter's behavior changed during a recent family trip out of the city. Usually she sat in the back seat, eyes glued to her iPad. But this time, she was absorbed by what they drove past and wouldn't stop talking about what she saw. She pointed out the trusses on bridges, different types of beams on buildings under construction, and even described how one stone arch reminded her of Roman arches.

We can build these strengths for all students by making learning truly accessible. Yes, that means providing lessons that are fun, engaging, and tied to students' cultural traditions, daily experiences, their neighborhoods, and the city they live in. We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students' lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn.

We need to make the theoretical concrete.

For example, Salvadori ties grade-specific STEAM concepts to the built environment ~ structures built by humans. Students see math in the buildings they enter, science in the bridges surrounding the city, technology in the simple machines in their playgrounds, engineering in the structures that break the skyline, and arts/architecture in the City's landmarks, monuments, and memorials. Other organizations use our waterways, the ecosystem, or outer space.

“We need to link rigorous grade-specific learning to students’ lives and to the world in which they live so they value the relevance of what they learn.”

When programs tie new concepts to what the students experience every day, where they live, their cultures, traditions, and the world around them, students see how learning is relevant.



Creativity

Creativity is fostered by self-expression and the ability to give voice to ideas, concepts, and thoughts. This requires courage. Courage to be vulnerable. Courage to express ourselves, to take risks, and yes, the courage to fail.

However, it can be harder for students to express thoughts if they don't see themselves in what they are learning. When learning is student centered, when they see themselves and their culture contextualized in educational settings, they make connections faster. They feel part of the system and abstract concepts become concrete.

Familiar contexts can encourage students to express themselves, explore new concepts, and share ideas. As students feel safe and understood, they gain confidence to succeed, despite the obstacles that may lie ahead.

The last year has reminded us of the importance of inclusion for all students.

Responsive STEAM curricula incorporate underrepresented STEAM leaders ~ architects, engineers, builders, etc. ~ and their work. We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers.

Inclusion provides a safe environment that opens the door to risk-taking, which fosters creativity.

"We must help students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion, to see themselves reflected in the "STEAM heroes" they study so that they can see themselves in STEAM careers."



Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a vital component of any STEAM program. It is integral to problem-solving and to the creative process.

The engineering, design, and scientific methods are similar. Each identifies a problem or challenge, analyzes a situation (posing questions as part of inquiry-based learning), proposes solutions, solicits feedback, develops/refines ideas, and improves the solution. All build on new knowledge gained through experimentation, trial and error, observation, and/or data. Each repeats the process until the desired effect is achieved.

Teaching STEAM effectively incorporates one or all three methods.

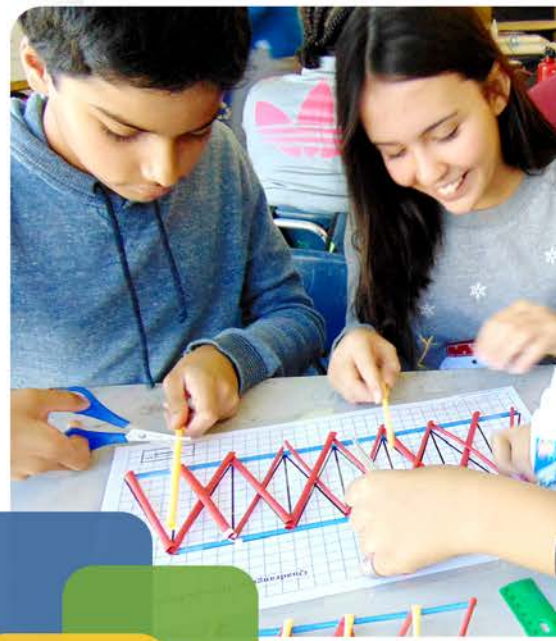
As students solve real-world challenges, they critically analyze a situation or problem. They form hypotheses and build experiments with their hands (project-based learning). And through trial and error they test and refine their hypotheses.

As you know, a hypothesis is merely an educated guess. As our knowledge grows our hypotheses become more accurate. Through trial and error ~ trying, failing, observing, analyzing, modifying the approach, and repeating until the desired result is achieved ~ students see the impact of critical thinking and learn the value of persistence and resiliency.

For many students, understanding “why they need to know this” increases engagement and improves knowledge retention.

For example, when a student is asked to form a hypothesis on which geometric shape will produce the strongest column in a building, they may wonder why it matters.

By learning that the shape of a column is based not only on its load bearing capacity (strength) but also on the amount of material used, which impacts cost and open space,



Our Impact in Action:

On a snowy icy day, I was entering a NYCHA Community Center to check-in on one of our programs. A maintenance worker asked, “What are you teaching these kids?” With some trepidation, I asked, “Why?” The maintenance worker replied in an annoyed tone, “A kid just told me to put rock slat on the handicapped ramp to increase the friction.” I couldn’t have been more proud. This is exactly what we want ~ students applying what they are learning in school to real world problems.

students ‘get it.’ Connecting school learning to the real world ~ such as columns in new construction around the city and in their schools ~ drives the concept home.

When concepts are made familiar, accessible, and relevant, students feel encouraged to ask questions and explore new concepts. Understanding why, and making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete. They understand why analysis and critical thinking are important and can begin to apply this to other areas of their life.

“making connections to students’ lives, makes the theoretical concrete.”

Collaboration

Collaboration fosters creativity through new ideas, perspectives, and points of view. And it is vital to any problem-solving process.

STEAM professionals must seek feedback and input from others. They gain perspectives beyond their personal world view. And they learn to work with and value the contributions of others ~ even people they may not know or like.

A collaborative approach to learning provides an environment where an individual student doesn’t have to have all the right answers. They can share ideas, build on each other’s insights, and work together to find the best solution. They can “think outside the box” more freely as they explore new ideas. As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.

“As students are given opportunities to practice collaborating ~ valuing the insight and contribution of others ~ they quickly see how together we are stronger and better.”



More importantly, they are learning an essential skill needed to succeed in any career, and for every relationship.

Communication

Communication is key. It isn't enough to have good ideas or to understand a problem. Students need to learn how to communicate effectively.

We need our students to develop STEAM literacy.

The confidence to express themselves, the patience to hear others, the strength to question their position, and the courage to re-formulate their ideas. They need to learn how to seek the opinion of an opposing side, to embrace contrasting points of view, and to gain the insight to improve their solutions and projects.

Talking is the smallest part of learning how to communicate.

When students work in small groups of 3 to 4 students, they can more freely express themselves. They can critically analyze problems collaboratively as they talk it through. And they can use new vocabulary as they share creative approaches and debate ideas and concepts. They are freed from the pressure of presenting to a large group, the entire class, or failing to impress their teacher. As discussions pulse between small group interactions to whole class conversations, students are given opportunities to practice communicating effectively as they learn how to express new ideas, pose thoughtful challenges, and hone new vocabulary.

Students develop STEAM literacy, become effective communicators, and acquire the ability to remold and build on each other's ideas.

STEAM learning that uses the engineering and design processes don't typically culminate in traditional "show and tell" presentations. Students articulate how knowledge gained throughout the semester informed the solution to their real-world final project. They now understand how to apply knowledge to solve new challenges.





I had the chance to see students who have difficulty in regular academic courses excel through this hands-on, interactive experience.

-MS 72 (Bridges)

The hands on nature of the projects excites all learners and gives them a chance to problem solve unlike any other class projects.

- Salvadori Starter Teacher, PS 132 (My Community)

As I have consistently stated, one of the greatest benefits of the Salvadori program is the emphasis on “hands on” activities. During my observations I was able to notice students taking on different roles during the actual “construction” process and witnessed students successfully taking on some leadership roles.

- Salvadori Starter Principal, Northeast Intermediate (Bridges)

These skills are key elements of success!

Not just in STEAM, but in life. Every employer wants people who can work with others to critically analyze a situation, pose creative solutions, and communicate effectively.

Low Tech, High Impact

Tools that cost money ~ computers, internet access, equipment ~ can empower but they can also divide. We’ve learned the hard way that the technology gap unfairly favors students whose families can afford these tools as well as access to the internet, and who have an adult with time to help their child navigate new technology. Similarly, many cash strapped schools and after-school centers struggle to keep up with the latest technology.

A fair and equitable solution may take time to achieve, time we do not have.

Low tech project-based learning can quickly reduce this divide. Research shows that project-based learning can have a positive impact on learning outcomes for all students, irrespective of their background or socio-economic status:

Students in project-based classrooms passed their AP (Advanced Placement) tests, outperforming students in traditional classrooms by 8 percentage points. Students from low-income households saw similar gains compared to their wealthier peers, making a strong case that well-structured PBL can be a more equitable approach than teacher-centered ones. Importantly, the improvements in teaching efficacy were both significant and durable: When teachers in the study taught the same curriculum for a second year, PBL students outperformed students in traditional classrooms by 10 percentage points.⁸

Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective. Materials are often affordable or even free. More importantly, students learn by doing. They don’t just listen to lectures or read texts. They experience all modes of learning ~ seeing, reading, hearing, and doing. Adding a collaborative approach to project-based learning engages classmates in discussion and discovery.

⁸ https://cesr.usc.edu/sites/default/files/Knowledge%20in%20Action%20Efficacy%20Study_18feb2021_final.pdf



Successful programs:

Design curricula so each lesson builds on content from the previous session, and engages students in activities that help them learn STEAM concepts by addressing real-world problems. Support increased student achievement by providing a coherent, in-depth learning experience that explores STEAM principles relevant to a particular theme.

Engage students as they build foundational knowledge, conduct controlled experiments, and complete projects that integrate engineering vocabulary, math skills, and design processes around a single topic, such as bridges or green design.

“Project-based learning is accessible, intellectually safe, and effective.”

Through collaboration, students learn that they don’t have to have all the right answers. Each contributes to success by seeing, thinking, and sharing ideas that the others might not have noticed. Through a collaborative process, students build communication skills as they discuss and debate ideas, explore results, and share observations on the process.

By working together, the group is more effective than the sum of its parts.

A project-based approach to experimentation, especially one with a variety of instructional methods (seeing, hearing, reading, and discussing), supports all learners. Before beginning, it is important to work with other educators to gather relevant information on individual student learning styles in order to heighten understanding, improve access to new knowledge, and form teams that naturally build on each other’s strengths.

Those who absorb information by hearing, gain through discussions and spoken instruction. Visual learners watch experiments unfold and appreciate image-based instructions. Those who learn by doing experience new knowledge through hands-on activities. And students who understand concepts through repetition gain while sharing ideas and presenting their projects.

Schools and after-school programs need hands-on, collaborative, project-based STEAM lessons more than ever, whether in-person, fully remote, or through blended learning. And while remote learning enables organizations to serve students in new ways, we must maintain a commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and providing a rigorous, transformative experience for all students, including those with special needs, such as English Language Learners, students living in transitional housing facilities (shelters), and students in hospital schools.

A collaborative, project-based approach can embrace learners of all abilities.

Call to action ~ Public Private Partnership

Laying the foundation for the next generation of STEAM professionals may seem like a herculean task but it is achievable. We can do it through a partnership between STEAM companies (architects, engineers, contractors, developers, etc.), STEAM educational organizations, and City government.

STEAM companies (engineering and architectural firms, contractors, developers, etc.) can support schools and under resourced communities by underwriting programs. They can open their doors and their project sites to the community ~ introducing students to the vast range of jobs needed to build our future. Companies' young STEAM professionals can serve as mentors, helping students see themselves in STEAM careers.



Educational non-profit organizations working in STEAM education, can work together to strengthen the pipeline of STEAM education. Starting with pre-school or Kindergarten and building a continuum of STEAM learning and success through college and beyond. STEAM educators can enhance school-based curricula, providing enriching after-school programs.

City government can provide financial, logistical, and physical support. City-operated spaces can house programs offered in collaboration with STEAM organizations. Agencies that serve our young people (NYC DOE, DYCD, DCLA, etc.) can provide access to students and teachers as well as partnership opportunities.

Independent programs, like those delivered by Salvadori and other industry non-profit organizations, are extremely valuable. But, despite quadrupling in size in ten years, Salvadori teaches only 8,500 of the NYC's 1.1 million students. Like so many organizations, we can do so much more but we need help, access, and partnerships.

A broader public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.

We support a public/private partnership to fund intensive after-school programs in select New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Community Centers across all five boroughs of New York City. Each NYCHA Community Center would receive:

- Push-in programs provided by qualified STEAM non-profit organizations for elementary school aged students ~ a reasonable start would be 100 after-school programs
- Standalone curricula that can be successfully implemented by an adult who is not a STEAM subject-matter expert for middle school students ~ starting with 1,000 classes
- Connections to young STEAM industry mentors to nurture, encourage, and introduce high school students to college and career pathways in STEAM

“A broad public/private partnership, supported by the City, corporations, and non-profits like Salvadori, can have a significant impact.”

Salvadori has a proven track record working with NYCHA on expansive programs serving students from all five boroughs.

Salvadori provided 50 STEAM programs across 25 sites (5 per borough) that reached thousands of students in public housing. Sites were selected based on need and in partnership with NYCHA leadership. To ensure a successful program, site staff were required to attend a full-day training program to establish buy-in and to develop an understanding of Salvadori’s approach, instructional merit, and partner responsibilities.

The program was a success. The funder noted the high intellectual merit and broad impact, and described the program as a “successful”, “interesting”, “unique” program that “invests in training the instructors to provide good quality delivery”. Unfortunately, sustaining long-term funding for broad City-wide initiatives is challenging for most funders even when successful.

Although the need was great and the program was effective, agencies serving students in our under-resourced communities can’t afford to self-fund the program.

But together we can improve students’ futures, and build a pathway for success!



Contributors to this white paper include:

Kenneth Jones, M.Arch. Executive Director

Executive Director



Kenn Jones started his career as a licensed architect working in New Jersey and New York City. His career as an educator paralleled his career in architecture where he taught undergraduate courses in studio art, design, and the history of art and design, as well as graduate courses in non-profit management. Kenn has substantial experience developing project-based curricula, interdisciplinary programs, and adult education/professional development. He has served as a U.S. Diplomat in the Middle East and as the Executive Director of Peters Valley Craft Education Center and the New York Foundation for Architecture; before joining Salvadori he was the Curator of Education for the New Jersey State Museum. Kenn holds a M.Arch. degree from the University of Maryland and post-graduate studies in historic preservation and design as a Rotary Foundation Fellow at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Using strategic planning and creative problem solving to achieve organizational goals and objectives, Kenn ties together his experiences in education, executive management, and philanthropy ~ an approach he brings to the Salvadori Center.

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David McGillan

Deputy Director



David joined the Salvadori Center as Operations Manager in 2010 and changed roles in 2012 to become Development Director. A British native, David settled in New York City and managed four senior centers from 2005 to 2010, after several years working for local government in England and a year spent traveling the world. David graduated with a Master's in Public Administration, in 2011, from Baruch College, where the United Way of New York City honored him with a Senior Fellowship. In 1997 David received a BA with honors in Creative Writing from the University of Derby in the United Kingdom. David is an active volunteer with Street Soccer USA – helping the homeless develop life skills through soccer.

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Malika Khalsa

Education Director

Malika is a Virginia native who moved to New York to attend St. Johns University where she received a degree in Childhood Education. After teaching for a year, Malika became a Child Protective Specialist, investigating allegations of abuse and neglect and ensuring safety for children. Later, Malika went on to work with City Year New York as a Program Manager, Program Director and Senior Program Director, managing different levels of staff whose goal was to provide academic tutoring and mentorship to students in under-resourced schools. Malika leads Salvadori's team of seven Educators in New York City region and Northeast Pennsylvania to develop curricula and deliver programs to students through in-person, fully remote, and blended learning.

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Emiliano Maghallighen

Senior Educator

Emiliano Maghallighen was born and raised in Mexico City and moved to New York to study at City College. He received a BS in Architecture in 2004 and joined Gensler as a job captain where he helped design retail stores including Apple, Victoria's Secret and Gap. While teaching at the Guggenheim museum and interning at the Museum of Modern Art, Emiliano became interested in education and the arts. In 2009 he joined Organizacion Tepeyac, a non-profit organization that provides after school programs, adult education, and immigrant advocacy to Mexicans in New York.

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Roxanne Meija

Senior Educator

Roxanne was born in New York City and grew up in Queens, NY. As a child, she always had an interest in art and design. In 2006, she received her BFA in Architecture from Parsons The New School for Design, moving on to work in the design and construction industries. In July of 2010 she joined the Salvadori Center full-time to manage an after-school program in New York City Housing Authority community centers across the 5 boroughs. Currently, Roxanne serves as a Senior Educator and helps develop new curricula for Salvadori.

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Juliana Wong

Senior Educator

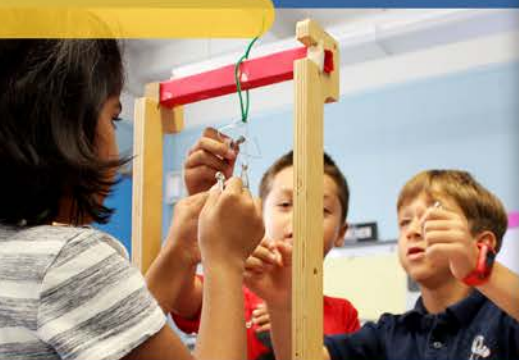
Juliana grew up in London, UK where she received her BA Honors in Interior Design at Kingston University. She moved to Hong Kong and designed for Ronald Lu & Partners on a wide range of commercial and residential projects before joining Goudie Associates as Senior Designer on the expansion offices for Credit Suisse. Settling in New York City, she worked for Lowery Design and then as an Educator for the Brooklyn Center of Urban Environment. Juliana concurrently trained with the DOE as a parent advocate for the School Base Support Team, and furthered her interest in how children learn through project-based learning whilst being an active parent volunteer at NEST+M, one of the first K-12 grade seamless public schools in NYC. She holds a Certificate in TEFL, Diplome de Langue Francais and in Danielson's Competencies. Juliana joined the Salvadori Center staff in 2009 where she has been writing and developing curricula, leading professional development, mentoring and teaching in Salvadori programs across all five boroughs as a Senior Educator.

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Additional contributions from Richa Sadana and Jessica Guice.



About the Salvadori Center



"Lessons and achievements were scaffolded to build understanding of architecture and design, even at a kindergarten level: impressive! The educator infused our themes of character and building in her lessons, giving students a feeling of belonging, evident by the personal influence/experiences seen in final product."

- *My Community, Flatlands*

"The Salvadori experience allowed my students to gain 21st century skills through collaborative and innovation. The hands-on activities kept them engaged and most importantly, the gained an understanding of how to be responsible, future citizens of the world."

- *Building Green, Belmont Preparatory High School*

About the Salvadori Center

Salvadori's in-school, after-school, and summer multi-day programs celebrate a collaborative, hands-on, project-based approach to learning through the built environment ~ buildings, bridges, parks, and communities.

Students learn new things about the city they live in. They see the math and science in the buildings they enter, the bridges they cross, and the parks they play in. They quickly understand why math and science are relevant to their lives. The teachers we coach become our strongest advocates and schools return to work with us year after year. In fact, over 75% of schools returned each year.

Salvadori Educators work with schools to build durable skills, engage all students, provide results that reflect high levels of ownership, and directly support educational standards through the (4) C's:

- **Collaboration** ~ working together to hypothesize, build, test, and solve problems
- **Critical thinking** ~ analyzing how and why things work
- **Creativity** ~ posing creative solutions to real-world challenges
- **Communication** ~ listening, learning, and articulating complex ideas and concepts

Our programs help schools:

- Make math, science, and the arts intellectually accessible for all learners
- Increase student comprehension and success at grade-level math and science
- Lay the foundation for future STEAM degrees and/or careers





"I think this is a great thing that Salvadori does. As a non-for-profit, city funded program, our funds are often limited in bringing quality educational programs, especially STEM related programs for minimal costs or free, and Salvadori does just that. We at South Beach were honored to be chosen for the program and the children are very impressed with themselves and their achievement of the "Big Bridge" as they call it, which has drawn quite a bit of attention as it is on display in our center lobby, and participants give the history of its making. This program gave participants not only engineering concepts, but built up their self-esteem and confidence to achieve. Thank you!"

**- Salvadori After School Teacher,
UAU South Beach**

Academic Rigor

All Salvadori curricula support grade-specific math, science, and arts concepts. Curricula are reviewed and updated to ensure STEAM concepts are current and applicable. And all our curricula align with:

- Common Core math Standards
- Next Generation Science Standards
- Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts

Throughout the year, our Educators engage in vibrant professional learning. They continually work to strengthen their teaching skills ~ pedagogy, communication, classroom management, etc. They participate in 'Deep Dive' exercises to develop their ability to teach with greater agility to different grade levels. This enables us to easily adapt STEAM concepts to real life situations; bringing STEAM life for students.

Additionally, we work with STEAM professionals to make sure that engineering and architecture concepts are aligned with industry standards. This diverse group of young professionals serve as mentors, sharing their journey, and helping students see themselves as successful in STEAM degrees and careers.

As a team, we have delivered programs in thousands of classrooms across the City ~ in schools, after-school centers, museums, and other cultural institutions. Working in such a broad cross-section of learning environments builds an unparalleled depth of knowledge and insight into what works and what doesn't.

Salvadori's Approach

Our hands-on approach to building projects gives students an intimate and personal experience. Working collaboratively, students learn that they don't need to have all the answers; each team member contributes to a more dynamic view. The small





group scientific approach allows students to form hypotheses, build and test apparatus, record observations, and draw conclusions. Results are shared, discussed and analyzed with the entire class.

Each multi-day residency or program includes multiple collaborative experiments that build toward a culminating activity. Individual sessions start with a re-cap activity that reinforces the previous week's session on a higher level. This reminds students where they left off and enables those who missed the previous session to catch up. The primary activity explores new concepts with hands-on, project-based experiments. Sessions end in a brief wrap-up activity, which is often a "cliff hanger" that motivates students to engage in future sessions. Students combine the design approach to problem solving with the scientific method of experimentation to explore new concepts and solve real world problems.



"We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership."

Salvadori programs help close the achievement gap for students living in poverty, such as those at NYCHA facilities. We give students what they need to succeed, promote college and career readiness, develop critical and creative thinking skills, and reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

A Culture of Assessment

Our main goals are to increase comprehension of STEAM concepts ~ particularly math and science ~ to help students feel more confident in their abilities, and to encourage students to pursue



Impact in Action:

Salvadori Educator Kaelin described the powerful impact the program had on one struggling student:

I'll never forget the day I met Erica. Her teacher told me that she was on the autism spectrum and would not be able to participate. We thought about giving her independent work. I asked if she could try – I have a special education background – and knew she could participate in some way.

I don't expect high pre-assessment scores as students haven't learned physical science concepts yet. Erica scored 27%.

Although she had a hard time communicating, Erica had amazing fine motor skills. So I appointed her as our materials manager. She measured, marked, cut, and distributed materials to each group. Erica gained a sense of purpose and began smiling. Groups that struggled appreciated her help to complete projects on time.

Erica gave her all in every session. She made friends and found she was capable of learning in a general education setting.

In the post-assessment Erica scored 97%!

“Childrens’ perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori.”

STEAM education and career choices.

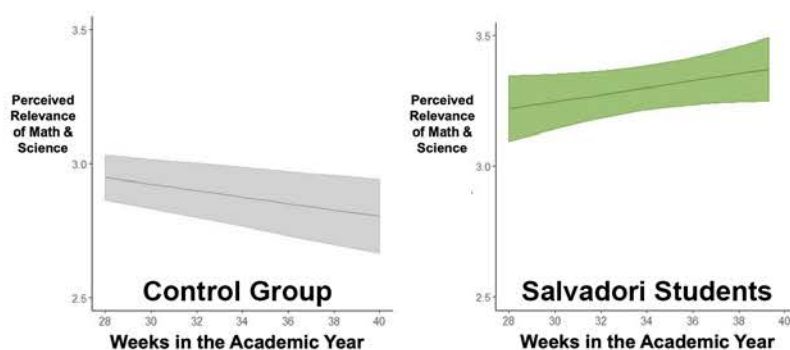
Perhaps Salvadori's greatest accomplishments over the past few years are the results of our third-party assessment reports, conducted by Youth Studies, Inc., and New York University.

Results demonstrate statistically significant increases in student ability. For eight consecutive years of Youth Studies reports, Salvadori students:

- felt more confident in their math and science ability
- were more motivated to pursue educational/career choices in STEAM fields
- improved their knowledge of math, engineering, and architecture concepts
- increased their understanding of the scientific inquiry process

And there's more good news! A preliminary study by researchers from New York University's (NYU) Department of Psychology showed promising results of Salvadori's impact on students' perception that what they learn in school is relevant to their lives. The study began with these hypotheses:

- Salvadori programs help children see how math and science are relevant to their everyday lives
- Childrens' perception of relevance increases throughout their participation in Salvadori
- This perception persists after their participation in Salvadori



Graph shows what happens after participation (for the Salvadori students) hence the initial difference in starting points.



Salvadori measures effectiveness through a six-tiered evaluation system:

- Principal surveys assess ties to school-wide goals
- Anonymous teacher surveys assess curricula impact and ties to classroom objectives
- Independent assessment measure changes in students' STEM comprehension
- Intensive year-long training of new Educators, including mentoring by Senior Educators
- NYC Department of Education vendor performance review system
- On-site evaluations assess the quality of instruction

Preliminary results were extremely positive:

- In general, students who didn't receive Salvadori's program showed a steady decrease in their perception that math, science, and art are relevant to their lives
- Students who received a Salvadori program showed an increase in their perception that math, science, and art was relevant
- More impressively, students who received a Salvadori program maintained a sense that what they learned is relevant several months after the program ended

The beauty is that hands-on, collaborative, project-based learning not only has a significant impact on a child's perception that math and science are relevant to their lives, but the perception of relevance stays with the child well after the program is complete – unlike students who didn't receive Salvadori.

We plan to be able to generalize the results by replicating the study over the next four academic years. The new study will follow students in two schools and measure the impact of Salvadori's programs on students who receive our curricula compared with students who don't.

Thankfully, the expanded study will be fully funded by our Board so the cost is not included in this request.

Qualitative and anecdotal data collected from classroom teachers, Salvadori Educators, and students complement and reinforce independent assessment findings. All of our assessment results are available at: <http://salvadori.org/wordpress/programs/testimonials-results>

Serving through the Pandemic

As soon as New York City schools closed in mid-March, 2020, Salvadori Educators went into overdrive to produce versions of our curricula that could be taught remotely. This was no small feat,



considering our model has always relied on our built environment experts delivering the program directly, in the classroom, through collaborative project-based learning.

We wanted to respond and serve while staying true to our mission.

Within two weeks, we had updated and begun to distribute new versions of our hands-on lessons so that classroom teachers and new at-home educators, could continue to educate our children. From March to June, we distributed FREE project-based Salvadori lessons every week to schools in our network and worked with city officials and our funding partners to spread the word and to share these valuable resources as widely as possible. Among those who helped spread the word were our funding partners, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

At the same time, our Educators began delivering lessons to our school partners via Google Meets for direct instruction, uploads via Google Classrooms to account for changing class schedules, and pre-recorded instructional videos for young students and supplemental resources.

Perhaps more importantly, in the last few months of the school year, we delivered free resources to “new home educators” across New York and beyond through:

- **FREE STEAM Lessons** each week for 15 weeks ~ to over 75,000 teachers and new at-home educators
- **Instructional videos** for NYC DOE’s *Lets Learn NYC!* on WNET THIRTEEN for 3 to 6-year-olds

By doing this, we helped teachers transition to remote/online learning, aided families by providing educational activities they can do at home with household materials, and reached new audiences across New York City and the tri-state region.



“This was a great experience for the kids this year. With the pandemic things have been rough. The program was done virtually and Salvadori Educator did an excellent job. She had a lot of patience with the students. Her instructions were clear and the students had no problem following them. She kept the students interested and engaged. The students looked forward to Fridays when we had the Bridges program and they were sad to see it end. It provided the students with some hands-on learning, a little diversion from our regular classwork, and a lot of encouragement and personal attention that the students need during this hard time.”

Moving forward:

As we slowly return to normal, Salvadori is already back in the classroom. We currently offer in-person, fully remote, and blended learning for in-school, after-school, and summer programs. We expanded our partnership with NYC DOE’s Lets Learn NYC! on WNET THIRTEEN to include a 20-episode series entitled My Community for 3 to 6-year-olds

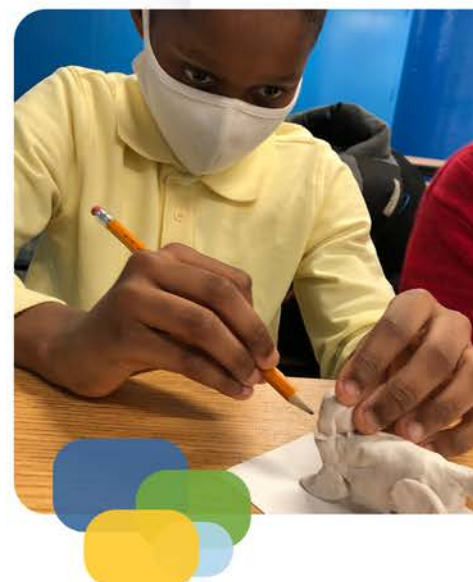
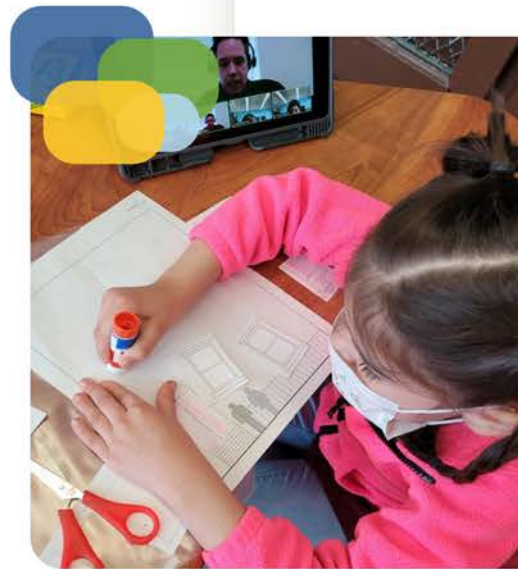
In summary, Salvadori programs:

- promote college and career readiness
- engage students through project-based exercises
- use the built environment as a vehicle for learning
- employ collaborative problem solving that involves all participants
- produce results that reflect high levels of creativity and ownership

The Team:

Salvadori’s team is as diverse as the schools we work in.

Our Educators reflect the students we serve. In fact, several were once NYC DOE students themselves and some have children currently in NYC public schools. When hiring Educators, we seek professionals who have a teaching background as well as previous professional





experience or education in related fields ~ NYC history, fine arts, design, and STEAM careers such as architecture, urban planning, engineering, construction.

Educators' backgrounds give them greater insight into our curricula and enables them to speak to our core concepts from a point of personal experience. More importantly, the diversity of our staff enables students to see themselves in their Educator ~ helping to plant the seed that they too can succeed in STEAM careers.

Our entire staff reflects the diversity that makes NYC great ~ a collection of unique voices and perspectives formed by race, gender, ethnicity, culture, age, sexual orientation, religion, and immigrant status. They know the challenges facing NYC students because they've lived it. They have been new immigrants, English Language Learners, BIPOC students, GLBTQ students, girls interested in STEAM, and so much more.

Their circumstances and experience gives them a first-hand understanding of the challenges facing NYC students today.

Full staff profiles can be found here: <https://salvadori.org/wordpress/about-us/staff/>





See it. Build it. Know it.

See what is new at Salvadori by visiting our web site and following us on social media:

- [Salvadori Web Site](#) ~ assessment reports, resources for teachers, etc.
- [YouTube](#) ~ short videos of classroom projects
- [Facebook](#) ~ news and images of student experiences
- [LinkedIn](#) ~ professional relationships and networking



Office of the President & CEO

Youth Services Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing Monday, March 14

**Testimony By
Stacey Hengsterman, President & CEO
Special Olympics New York**

Even champions need champions.

One in every 5 students enrolled in New York City Department of Education (DOE) schools has a disability. The same ratio is seen among New York State's general population.

It is on behalf of these students and citizens that I submit the following testimony for the Youth Services Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing. Thank you for the opportunity.

New York is home to one of the largest Special Olympics chapters in the country. We currently serve more than 31,000 athletes – children, youth and adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) – statewide, providing year-round sports training, authentic competition, and health screenings. We also partner with schools to offer Unified Sports, where students with and without disabilities compete as teammates. All Special Olympics New York programs are offered at no cost to athletes, their families or caregivers.

In short, we change lives. People with intellectual disabilities who never dreamed they could play a sport, be part of a team, or compete – *really compete* – are given the chance. With our help, they learn to discover and unleash the champion within themselves. And in the process, they show our communities what true inclusion looks like and why it's important.

To understand the impact of Special Olympics on someone's day-to-day life, let me tell you about a 17-year-old young man with Down syndrome who joined our program about two years ago. Before finding Special Olympics, Alex went to school every day, a public school in Upstate New York. He had some classes with neuro-typical students his age, but the vast majority of his time was spent in a self-contained environment with other students who have varying disabilities. He came home from school and spent the afternoon with his babysitter, his family and his computer. He was happy, but he was lonely. His friends didn't call him to hang out after school or on weekends.



When Alex first joined Special Olympics, it was at his parents urging. Sports had never been his thing; he didn't see himself as an athlete. So he took his time, tried a couple activities here and there. Surprising everyone who knows him, what he ended up enjoying most was powerlifting. Flash forward to today ... Alex meets his Special Olympics teammates and coaches at the gym three days a week and trains *as a powerlifter*. He works out from 7 – 8 p.m. on weeknights and at 10 a.m. on Saturday mornings. He has become so confident in his athletic abilities that he's also joined the Special Olympics Unified Bowling team at his high school.

Alex has new friends and teammates. He has coaches and an entire community of people who believe in him and support him. He has championship lifts and matches on his calendar. He is proud to identify himself as an athlete and he is even learning to tell his story, to advocate. Alex is healthier, both physically and mentally. He isn't lonely anymore. He is too busy to be lonely.

Not long ago, Alex said to me: "Mom, Special Olympics changed my life."

I am the president and CEO of the organization that changed my son's life, and I can't separate the pride that gives me as both a parent and a leader. I only wish we had found Special Olympics sooner. Like so many people living with disabilities in New York City, we were not aware of the impact that Special Olympics could have on our family. I am determined to do everything I can to make sure that kids like Alex and parents like me know what we know now: that Special Olympics New York can improve their lives.

We have a lot of work to do in New York City, and we need help. Despite being the highest populated and most diverse area of the state, New York City is home to only 1,371 Special Olympics athletes who participate in our programs outside of school, a majority of whom are adult and not the youth that this committee aims to serve. In school, 1,635 young students participated in 2021. While city funding is set aside for youth activities, too often these activities are not accessible to youth with intellectual disabilities.

Support for the Special Olympics New York Young Athletes Program can ensure that New York City youth with ID have that critical access, and that youth without ID learn the importance of inclusion when it is most impactful, at the onset of their development. Our program provides inclusive play opportunities for children of all abilities, generally ages 2-7. It engages children with and without ID in activities important to mental and physical development, such as running, balance and catching, while also teaching inclusion at a young age and preparing athletes for Special Olympics training and competition when they become eligible at age 8.

We have programs like this for children of all ages. One of our most successful is the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program, which my son and nearly 10,000 students currently participate in at more than 250 high schools statewide. In a Unified Champion School, students with and without ID compete as teammates against other schools in their section, just like any Varsity or Junior Varsity team. These students not only enjoy the physical, mental and social benefits of being on a school sports team; they lead inclusive activities that bring the entire student body together. The culture in a Special Olympics Unified Champion School is what all schools should strive for: one where every student is welcome, empowered and included.



While we are seeing the Unified movement grow quickly upstate, it has been a struggle to partner with schools in the city. In fact, of the more than 250 Unified Champion Schools we work with statewide, just 12 of them are within the NYC DOE.

Just as important as comprehensive Unified Champion Schools programming, which is the most inclusive and engaging for students both with and without intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics New York offers training and coaching for school staff interested in offering Unified Physical Education classes, health and wellness programs, youth leadership and more. We have made some inroads at this less-immersive level over the years, with approximately 140 NYC DOE schools currently involved in some way. However, this is still a small fraction: slightly more than 7%.

I know this committee will agree that the country's largest and most diverse city – and its school system – should be doing much, much better. With your help, it can.

There are tens of thousands of people with disabilities in New York City who need Special Olympics and don't know it yet. So many Alex's out there with a champion sleeping inside of them, waiting to be awakened.

Special Olympics can do that. I see it happen every day. But even champions need champions, and they need you.

###

All Special Olympics New York programs are offered at no cost to athletes, their families or caregivers. The organization has earned the Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar.com, making it one of the most



trusted charities in the business nationally. For additional information about Special Olympics New York, to learn more about getting involved, visit www.specialolympicsNY.org.



Testimony of Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center
Damion Samuels, Senior Director of Youth Services and Community Engagement
FY'23 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 13, 2022

I would like to thank Chair Stevens for her leadership and the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Damion Samuels, and I am the Associate Deputy Executive Director for Youth Services at Goddard Riverside.

Recently the Isaacs Center and Goddard Riverside Community Center merged. This alliance allows our organization to dramatically expand our impact on vulnerable and marginalized New Yorkers. We now serve communities from Lincoln Square to the Upper West and East Side and West, Central and East Harlem. Our workforce development portfolio is focused on four employment sectors: Technology, Community Healthcare, Human Services, Food and Hospitality. Within these sectors our goal is to provide meaningful onramps to careers with long term upward mobility while also providing a competitive living wage.

The portfolio that I manage serves about 1000 young people each year, many of whom are pursuing educational or professional advancement. These young people, the vast majority who are 18 – 24 and African American and Latino have suffered the most debilitating effects of the pandemic. As many studies have shown, the economic effects of the Pandemic have disproportionately affected People of Color, young people and those lacking a High School Degree, three constituencies that make up the bulk of young people enrolled in Isaacs Center Education and Workforce Development Programs. The Study "*The New Strain of Inequality: The Economic Impact of COVID-19 in New York City*" clearly describes how already marginalized groups have withstood the worst effects of the Pandemic. According to the study, 68% of those who have experienced job loss are persons of color and one-third of young adults ages 18-24 have lost jobs during the Covid-19 crisis.

Despite these unprecedented challenges, the Isaac's Center has achieved some tremendous results in the last year placing over 140 people into employment with an average starting wage over \$17 per hour. We have developed strategic relationships with several institutions within each sector that offer the promise of long term engagement which can lead to systemic change. We have partnered with Per Scholas around technology careers, with New York Presbyterian and the New Jewish Home to support candidates looking to become Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), with Metropolitan College of New York to support Human Service workers and have developed multiple relationship with Chambers of commerce and private restaurant groups to support the placement of our culinary graduates. With the Council's support we will be able to expand each of these dynamic programs.

RECCOMENDATIONS

- We are asking that the City Council fund the Isaacs Center's Workforce Development programs through the Job training and placement initiative.
- We are asking for a massive infusion of funding for paid internships to support pathways into living wage employment. These internships are essential in developing those lifeboat careers [As described in the report, *"Filling the Lifeboats Getting Americans Back to Work in the Pandemic,"* from Burning Glass Technologies, "providing job seekers with skills-level data that highlights adjacencies to available jobs allows unemployed workers to seize opportunities they might otherwise have missed and enables employers to connect more efficiently with the talent they need."]
- We believe there must be better coordination among the multiple agencies driving workforce development is essential. We need a Unified strategy to connect young people to jobs that are developing in this emerging economy. Currently workforce Development is administered through HRA, SBS (Small Business Services), DYCD (Department of Youth and Community Development) (Department of Youth and Community Development), DHS (Department of Homeless Services) (Department of Homeless Services), ACS (Administration for Children's Services) et al. A common strategy is needed to uncover and promote all meaningful employment opportunities.
- We suggest that Workforce 1 centers should operate more in concert with community boards so they can leverage that power to extract specific concessions around local hiring and training from businesses opening in the community.
- Although there has long been interest in the development of a workforce system in NYC where CBOs (Community Based Organizations), educational institutions, and employers are working in collaboration to assist New Yorkers with job training, employment, and credit and credential attainment, investments at a neighborhood level are critical to assisting New Yorkers now, and to rebuild local economies that can sustain the communities we serve. In alignment with this vision, we have begun discussions with several providers and partners (including STRIVE, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, Henry Street Settlement, and JobsFirstNYC) to **launch a workforce referral network in Northern Manhattan**, modeled on the Lower Eastside Employment Network Employment (LESEN) to serve as a centralized point of intersection, or hub, for current and future employers seeking to hire trained, prepared candidates.

The challenges we face are vast. I appreciate the time today and the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.



March 14, 2022

Dear Committee on Youth Services,

Good afternoon from The Armory!

To some, The Armory, in Washington Heights, is the home of the National Track & Field Hall of Fame, and the Fastest Track in the World. To others, more importantly, The Armory is where magic happens, both on our track, and in our classrooms.

Our mission is “Keeping Kids on Track”

WHAT: Track & Field accommodates all body types and temperaments, and running is not only the basis of many sports, but is also a sport many can do for the rest of their lives with only a pair of sneakers. Track & field also opens doors for non-runners, those who prefer the high jump, long jump or pole vault, and those who would rather throw the shot put or weight throw. Through it we are able to touch so many lives in a meaningful way from among the more than 300,000 visits each year to The Armory.

WHO: Thousands of NYC high school track athletes call The Armory home for both training and competition. For the past 30 years, on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon from mid November through the end of March, we will have up to 1500 athletes that come to train with their coaches and teams from over 80 NYC public, independent and parochial schools. More than 100 track meets happen during these months, with some of our larger high school meets involving up to 6000 athletes.

COMMUNITY: In 2017 we piloted Little Feet, a no-cost program that welcomed over 200 elementary school children from Washington Heights, Inwood and Harlem to run, jump, throw and giggle, twice a week from October through the middle of May. In 2018 it continued and expanded to now include children in grades 2 through 5. In addition to the sport programming, we punctuate the year with some “special days”. One of those days is Real Heroes Day. So often children meet the people we would consider Real Heroes (firefighters, police officers, EMTs) in situations that are scary. Every year we invite our local real heroes in to interact with our children in a safe and fun setting and this is what happens:

(please copy and paste this link into your browser)

<https://vimeo.com/271302689>

In addition to Little Feet, we have a long running program for middle school children. The CityTrack program has been offered at The Armory for 23 years, imparting the joy of moving and promoting healthy habits for children in grades 6-8. Both CityTrack and Little Feet are offered at no cost to all the families of our participants. With more than 200 children registered this year, and the return to in person programming, most sessions drew close to a hundred

KEEPING KIDS ON TRACK

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children who were all closely coached by our coaches. For many years we wrapped up our year of Little Feet and CityTrack with the Uptown Games, Uptown Games (please copy and paste this link into your browser) but have now moved it to Halloween. <https://vimeo.com/273740397>

During the time of quarantine, we ran this program four times a week live online with world class athletes as guest coaches: Olympians, World Record Holders, top high school and college athletes all have helped make CityTrack & Little Feet a fun and exciting workout. District 6 invited every District 6 student to participate. Now we are back in The Armory, in person and are delighted to be welcoming our young athletes back.

ARMORY COLLEGE PREP: So you do not get the idea that all we do is fun and games - we also work with our track & field athletes to help them gain access to great high schools and four-year colleges, with the funding to make a college degree a reality. Armory College Prep is a dynamic after-school program that puts students in grades 4-12 on track for lifelong success by helping them to and through college. College choice exploration, test prep, college visits, personal statement creation, financial aid counseling, application and testing fees are all covered by our sponsors of Armory College Prep. For the last six years 100% of our seniors were admitted to 4-year colleges. Williams, Amherst, Cornell, Haverford, and Dickenson are just a few of the colleges attended by the students of Armory College Prep. Armory College Prep (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://vimeo.com/306452431>

MODEL PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: In the 1980's The Armory was a homeless shelter. 1000 homeless men lived on the space that is currently the track. The film, The Saint of Fort Washington, with Matt Dillon and Danny Glover was filmed at The Armory. A few years ago, I was touring The Armory with a client and when I looked over tears were streaming down her face - I paused and asked if she was OK - she looked at me and said 'I was on the crew that filmed the Saint of Fort Washington and cannot believe the transformation'.

Today The Armory is a representation of a public/private partnership that has had the great privilege to be part of the development of many of the world's top track & field athletes. We call our track "the Fastest Track in the World" because more records have been set on this track than any other indoor facility on the planet. You may recognize some of these faces: Elite Athletes (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://vimeo.com/288732621>

-
A few summers ago, like much of New York, we were heartbroken at the plight of the migrant children who were being separated from their families at the southern border and relocated around the country. We learned that hundreds of children were right here in Manhattan.

We offered to show the children a day of fun and track & field at The Armory, and our invitation was accepted, both years so long as we did not alert the press or take any photos. To date, we have welcomed close to 1000 children who were separated from their families or were unaccompanied minors.

We did our best to provide them with a break from their day to day. While we could not take photos, the Care Center, who has custody of the children, did and put this short video together after the first Run Love Day. (please copy and paste this link into your browser) <https://business.facebook.com/CayugaCenters/videos/311006539476023/>

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We have now extended same the invitation to the families from Afghanistan who have sought refuge in NY State.

One of the reasons The Armory is able to provide our ongoing programming is because of the funding received through the Sports Training and Role-Models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI)

I want to be sure to thank the City Council for their tremendous support of STARS CGI for the past 8 years and to ask for your continued support – by ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY2022 budget.

The last two years have been a time of upheaval for our planet, and especially for the young woman and gender non-conforming youth of color we serve. As a collective, we have shared our talented teams, our programming, and ideas to create very strong STARS programming.

We would like to stress to the Council that our track record (forgive me!) of excellent, high impact programming will continue and we ask the Council to help make that possible.

We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by reinstating our City Council funding of \$2,000,000 in FY22.

On behalf of girls and gender non-conforming youth of color across New York City, **thank you in advance for your continued support.** We look forward to our work together ensuring the social-emotional wellbeing of our communities.

Please come visit us! We have more than 100 track meets per season showcasing the entire range of track & field from the youngest runners who will join us for the Uptown Games to the Olympians who compete at the Millrose Games. Our educational programs run year-round and we also have a list of wonderful special events outside track season.

Many thanks for your attention!

With thanks,



Rita Finkel
Co-President
The Armory Foundation

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**Girls for Gender Equity Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Budgets – Youth Services
Delivered by: Sue suilla Daley
March 14th, 2022**

Good afternoon the members and staff of the Committee on budgets. My name is Sue Suilla Daley and I am a former member of the local and national Young Women's Advisory Council (YWAC) and a current member of the Speaker's Bureau as well as a Youth fellow at Girls for Gender Equity.

Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) works intergenerationally, through a Black feminist lens, to achieve gender and racial justice by centering the leadership of Black girls and gender-expansive young people of color to reshape culture and policy through advocacy, youth-led programming, and shifting dominant narratives.

We are offering testimony today because programs like the Young Women's Advisory Council, funded by the Speaker's Young Women's Initiative, are fundamental to uplifting the voices of youth and educating young people about the importance of civic engagement. As a participant in YWAC, I helped campaign for the expansion of Title IX and ensured that more coordinators were appointed. Through GGE's programming I learned the impact that advocating can have on policy, why taking action matters and how being involved with local government can shift power. Programs like YWAC that are funded through the New York City Council, creates pathways to other programs like the Speakers Bureau and give youth the language and tools to express what issues are important to them and affect them daily and translate them into laws. If we want to build strong communities then we must invest in our young people and funding these programs is a sure way to do that.

Below are excerpt from current YWAC members:

What motivated them to join YWAC?

- I was inspired to join this program to learn about advocacy, policy, and methods of organizing in a community.
- I was also inspired because I would be able to make new friends and feel a sense of sisterhood.

Why is funding for programs like this important?

- When youth organizers can be paid for their time, it makes the program more widely accessible and teaches our youth that their time and energy are valuable.

Why is funding for programs like this important?

- To show the larger community that our government cares about Black women and girls. That we matter to our society.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



For Young LGBTQ Lives

Joint Hearing of the Committee on Youth Services

Monday, March 14, 2022

Testimony Submitted by Preston Mitchum, Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs, The Trevor Project

Chairwoman Althea Stevens and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony as well as oral testimony before the Joint Hearing of the Committee on Youth Services. My name is Preston Mitchum (he/him), and I am the Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs at The Trevor Project.

Founded in 1998, The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and mental health organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer & questioning (LGBTQ) youth, and it is the only accredited national organization focused on suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth. The Trevor Project works to save young lives by providing support through five key programs:

- **Crisis intervention.** The Trevor Project is the largest organization providing 24/7 free, confidential crisis intervention services to LGBTQ youth via phone, text, and chat.
- **Peer support.** TrevorSpace is the world's largest safe space social networking community for LGBTQ youth.
- **Research.** Our Research program supports The Trevor Project in significantly improving our crisis services and brings new knowledge to the field of suicidology.
- **Education and public awareness.** Our education program develops research-based trainings and content on LGBTQ youth mental health and allyship and increases awareness of these topics in public discourse through public relations, marketing, and strategic partnerships.
- **Advocacy.** Through legislation, litigation, and public engagement, The Trevor Project is the leading advocate for LGBTQ youth mental health in preventative efforts that address the discrimination, stigma, and other factors that place LGBTQ youth at a significantly higher risk of suicide.

With an estimated 45,000 LGBTQ youth in New York City experiencing a crisis each year, the need for suicide prevention and mental health in the city is more visible and critical than ever. Of all major cities, The Trevor Project receives the largest number of crisis contacts from New York City. Last year, The Trevor Project served approximately 4,100 youth from the

five-borough region, just over 9% of the total estimated LGBTQ youth in New York City in need.

In March 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Trevor Project entered emergency response mode in order to address the heart-breaking impact of the pandemic on LGBTQ youth. LGBTQ youth mandated to stay home may not be out or accepted in their homes, which can lead to emotional and mental trauma. Fear and sadness around not knowing when they'll be able to reconnect with support systems can further exacerbate anxiety and depression. Since the start of the pandemic, of which we are still in, the volume of youth reaching out to our crisis services has increased, at times spiking to more than double volumes earlier in 2020 (pre-pandemic).

Not only has COVID-19 created an unprecedented mental health crisis for LGBTQ youth, but the tragic events related to police violence and subsequent protests for racial justice put additional stress on all LGBTQ youth, and Black LGBTQ youth specifically. Throughout this time of uncertainty and increased need, The Trevor Project remains committed to providing exceptional, uninterrupted 24/7 service to all youth who reach out for support while we expand our reach. This critical funding will include supporting New York City LGBTQ youth during moments of crisis, recruiting additional volunteers to support the growing need, funding the training of those volunteers, and increasing awareness of Trevor's services so more youth know we are there for them when they need us.

We hope this Council and Committee restores funding for the current fiscal year and aligns funding for at-risk communities, including LGBTQ youth.

For almost 25 years, The Trevor Project has worked to ensure that LGBTQ youth, including those living in New York City, have access to the highest quality and most diverse range of services and resources. Though we are still living in a time of unprecedented social, legal, and political acceptance of the LGBTQ community, there is still much work to be done on a local and state level to ensure that our community members can successfully combat the social and economic injustice they face daily. The Trevor Project is ready as a partner to continue our life-saving services for LGBTQ youth in crisis. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact me at preston.mitchum@thetrevorproject.org or (919) 672-3328.

Sincerely,

Preston D. Mitchum

Preston D. Mitchum, Esq. LL.M.
Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs
The Trevor Project

**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Testimony Submitted by Student Leadership Network
March 14, 2022**

Good morning. My name is Drew Higginbotham, and I am the Director of Research & Innovation for the Girls' Education team at Student Leadership Network, (formerly known as Young Women's Leadership Network) where I lead initiatives to codify the TYWLS model and support our teachers with professional learning opportunities. Having spent 20 years serving the students of TYWLS East Harlem, first as a teacher and ultimately as the principal of that school, I am committed to environments of empowerment for girls, and supporting them on the path to academic achievement, post-secondary success, and lives and careers characterized by agency, self-efficacy, and leadership. On behalf of Student Leadership Network and The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), thank you to Chair Althea Stevens and all of the members of the Youth Services Committee for this opportunity to testify about youth services in New York City.

Student Leadership Network operates two programs in New York City that support a diverse pipeline of young people from underserved communities to gain access to educational opportunities that help prepare them to lead successful lives: The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), a high-performing network of single gender traditional district public schools, and CollegeBound Initiative (CBI), a comprehensive college access, persistence, and success program for young people of any gender.

In 1996, Ann and Andrew Tisch partnered with the Center for Educational Innovation and the New York City Department of Education to launch The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) of East Harlem, the first public all-girls school to open in the United States in 30 years. Their vision was to provide girls growing up in underserved communities with a high-quality college preparatory education. Today, Student Leadership Network impacts more than 2,500 students through our five single gender public schools in New York City, located in East Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens (Astoria and Jamaica). The sixth TYWLS will be opening in Staten Island this September, 2022.

TYWLS are open to girls and gender expansive youth of all academic abilities who aspire to postsecondary education. At TYWLS "whole girl education" is based upon girls' education research and is guided by the overarching goal of elevating young women's voices, confidence, and expanding their resources to thrive in college and beyond. As such, our programs are designed to support skill building in four core areas: 1) College and Career Awareness; 2) Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM); 3) Leadership Development; and 4) Health & Wellness. In these four areas, students have access to dozens of in -and -out of school enrichment opportunities that deepen their learning, broaden their exposure, and strengthen their self-regard. The four core areas permeate nearly every facet of TYWLS through our approach to service delivery called the three "Ps" for its emphasis on programs, partnerships, and professional development. As a result, TYWLS boast a 98% high school graduation rate, a near 100% college acceptance rate for graduating seniors, and an average financial aid package of \$20,000 per student annually, excluding loans. We hope that this testimony is a starting point to continue this conversation about ways that we can collaborate to deepen our support of young women and gender expansive youth in New York City.

The on-going pandemic has disrupted students' lives and learning on a monumental scale and has also had a disproportionate effect on many of our TYWLS school communities due to deeply entrenched systemic racism and chronic underresourcing of communities of color in New York City. To provide opportunities for student engagement during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 crisis, SL Network

offered our student support programming virtually for thousands of students at home. We are continuing to offer a number of mental health supports to students who are experiencing extended trauma in addition to continuing to provide critical services through on-site, in-person counseling sessions. Our team at Student Leadership Network also recently developed a suite of free [virtual college and financial aid application resources](#) that could greatly benefit students and their families navigating this process virtually during the past two years.

As the pandemic recedes, we are restarting and reimagining the early college and career awareness events we support at the five TYWLS. These events (Jumpstart To College, TYWLS in the Workplace, College Discovery Day, TYWLS Glows, and Cool Careers, Potential Paths) provide students with multiple experiences beginning in 6th grade to explore their postsecondary and career options through interactions with inspiring women.

SL Network has facilitated virtual professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders. SL Network works with TYWLS to implement the practices of our Whole Girl Education framework, which includes centering student voice in the classroom and school culture, fostering student connection to the school community, and supporting positive academic risk-taking and the cultivation of courage. A year and a half into the pandemic, teachers were very much in need of a focus on their own well-being and how to take care of oneself in order to better support others. We held a half-day of professional development sessions, facilitated by experts, focused on “Whole School Well Being.” Sessions included:

- Reconnecting to Your Why: An Act of Self-Renewal
- Mental Wellness: Managing Stress, Anxiety, & Burnout
- Healing & Thriving: A Resiliency Workshop

At TYWLS, school is viewed as an extension of one’s family. Our students see that their teachers care about them and their futures, and creating safe spaces and elevating their voices are paramount. The inequities exacerbated by COVID-19 in conjunction with the deeply ingrained and institutionalized racism in this country highlights the continual need to shift schools away from control to and towards greater freedom. Through a social justice lens, the Whole Girl Education framework used at TYWLS promotes education as a tool for liberation, prioritizing restorative practices and student-led construction of knowledge and understanding.

SL Network is deeply grateful for the Council’s support of youth services in New York City. Specifically, the programming detailed in this testimony is made possible partly through funding received through the Young Women’s Leadership Development Initiative. Continued funding from the New York City Council will support leadership development, college and career readiness, and health and wellness programming, partnerships, and professional development at our five TYWLS schools. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2023

New York City Council Committee on Youth Services Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair

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

March 14th, 2022

Thank you, Chairperson Stevens and members of the Committee on Youth Services, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

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

Nonprofit Contracting

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

According to the recently released *A Better Contract for New York*, more than 75% of contracts were registered after the contract start date in FY22. Additionally, a survey by the Human Services Council of its membership indicated that 70% of organizations reported delayed payment from the City in the last year. Nearly 46% of respondents were forced to take out loans or draw on a line of credit due to withheld or delayed payments—sometimes at significant cost. The average annual cost of interest for those loans is reported as \$223,000. Late registration forces nonprofits to begin service delivery without startup costs or payments covered. For example, all of UJA's nonprofit partners that oversaw Summer Rising programs in 2021 are still waiting to be compensated for services while they are actively preparing for summer programs in summer 2022. UJA participated in Mayor Adams and Comptroller Lander's Joint Task Force to Get Nonprofits Paid on Time, which produced *A Better Contract for New York*. **UJA encourages the City to implement these reforms promptly, which will directly support human services organizations and the communities they serve.**

Increase Wages for Human Services Workers

UJA is also a member of the #JustPay campaign, a campaign dedicated to increasing wages for human services workers. Despite the essential services that they provide their communities, human services workers are some of the lowest paid workers in New York's economy. UJA is urging the City to adopt three core reforms:

1. Establish, fund, and enforce an automatic annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) on all human services contracts.

Investing in the COLA is the most impactful action the City Council can take to support the human services workforce. City contracts have not included a COLA for two years. Ideally, human services workers could benefit from a multi-year COLA agreement. In the absence of this, the City should include a 5.4% COLA based on the Consumer Price Index and mirroring the COLA proposed in the FY23 State budget for human services workers. **UJA is urging the City Council to include \$108 million in the budget to provide a COLA for contracted nonprofit human services workers.**

2. Set a living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour for all City and State funded human services workers.

There is longstanding underinvestment in the human services sector, making it difficult for providers to keep up with the demand for services or holistically raise wages across all staff lines without increased funding. The average human services contract in New York pays only 70 cents on the dollar for direct program expenses. This chronic underfunding puts providers in the impossible position of taking contracts that neither pay fair wages nor fully fund services or turn down those opportunities—resulting in laying off employees and closing vital community programs. A living wage floor of no less than \$21 an hour is vital to helping retain and recruit a committed and talented human services workforce.

However, not all employees at human services nonprofits are paid 100 percent through City contracts. When salaries are increased for contracted workers, there is an unintended spillover effect that must be addressed. If a higher wage floor were put in place, providers would have to find the funds to increase wages for workers not paid through City contracts, which would create undue burden particularly at a time when nonprofits are struggling more than ever. We implore the Administration and Council not to overlook these workers and consider ways to support the full workforce.

3. Create, fund, and incorporate a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for government contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City and State employees in the same field.

Because the Government is the predominant funder of human services, they are also the primary driver of human services salaries. Under this system, it is the workers themselves who have borne the brunt of decades of chronic underfunding all while ensuring programs with inadequate funding meet their targets. Government contracts either directly set low salary levels or do so indirectly by establishing low rates for services along with required staffing levels on a contract. This creates low starting salaries that are often stagnant because human services contracts last five to seven years (or more) with no opportunity for cost-escalators to allow for raises. A comprehensive wage and benefit schedule is needed as workers, advocates, providers, and elected officials continue to work together to ensure that human services workers finally earn fair pay for their labor.

Investing in Summer Programs

UJA's network of nonprofit partners oversee a number of DYCD funded programs, including but not exclusive to Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP), COMPASS and SONYC afterschool and summer programs, the recent Summer Rising program as well as Beacons and Cornerstones. UJA appreciates the \$236 million baselined investment in summer youth employment programs included in the FY23 City Preliminary budget. Mayor Adams announced in mid-March that summer programs for elementary and middle school

students will largely mirror last year's Summer Rising program. While UJA is grateful that the City pledged in March to fund providers to support children and youth in summer programs, there are still a number of questions and concerns providers have that must be addressed before the start of these programs. It is important for CBOs to know what type of licenses (for example School Age Child Care or summer camp licenses) they will need to run programs. Licenses often take many weeks to secure and will determine which background checks employees will need to complete. Additionally, background checks remain a major issue across the youth and childcare services spectrum, with providers still waiting months for clearance despite these requirements being put in place in 2019. The type of license will also indicate the types of forms, including medical forms, participants will need to submit to providers. **CBO providers must be notified as soon as possible the type of licenses they will be required to obtain to oversee the 2022 Summer Rising program so they can plan accordingly.**

Last year, many Summer Rising providers were left out of the planning process and were ultimately made to oversee a program they were not involved in designing. This impacted every facet of the Summer Rising program including participant enrollment. CBOs were told to accept all children and/or youth who showed interest in participating in their programs, even when many programs were at capacity. Families found the discoverDYCD enrollment process to be confusing, resulting in many CBOs needing to assist families with enrollment, which proved to be time consuming for both parties. Many CBOs were also placed in schools that they had no relationship with making it extremely difficult to develop a summer program while getting acquainted to the school and their staff. **Moving forward, the CBOs must be able to provide feedback to DYCD on how to improve the enrollment process. There should be a registration deadline before the program starts, so CBOs know exactly how many children and youth they will be serving in their programs. When programs are at capacity, there should be processes in place that help CBOs match children and youth to programs that still have space. There should be one enrollment list that both CBOs and schools use to monitor who is in their programs. Lastly, whenever possible, CBOs should be placed with schools they already have a relationship with. If CBOs are placed with schools they do not have a relationship with, these placements should be made as soon as possible to give CBOs enough time to familiarize themselves with the school and the community they will be serving.**

The per participant rate for both elementary and middle school slots must be set at a level that offers CBOs compensation to provide high quality programs. **Summer rates-regardless of program model-across COMPASS, SONYC and Beacon contracts must be increased by 30% to \$1,848 from the proposed \$1,414 per participant rate for elementary programs and increased by 10% to \$1,410 from the proposed \$1,320 per participant rate for middle school programs.** This increase in rates would allow providers to increase compensation for summer counselors to at least \$21 an hour and ultimately attract more individuals to this work. The higher rate for middle school programs takes into consideration that counselors in Summer Rising Programs will be working 300 hours instead of the 100 hours they worked in this program in 2021.

Last year providers were promised \$1,414 per elementary age participant and \$660 per middle school participant to oversee Summer Rising programs. Many providers expressed how they struggled to oversee summer programs at that low compensation last year. Specifically, they said overseeing a program for elementary age participants at the \$1,414 per participant level would limit trips to once a week and where they could take participants on day trips. It would also require them to "get some donations" for materials. CBOs are dedicated to providing interactive and enriching summer programs for youth and children. They need to be compensated for the true costs of providing these programs in order to do so.

Comprehensive Background Checks

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

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

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

Maintaining the number of children and youth served in early childhood, afterschool or summer programs is difficult without a reliable comprehensive background check process; increasing the number of children and youth served would be impossible if the process is not expedited. **UJA urges DYCD to assist DOHMH in expediting the comprehensive background check process, ultimately making DOHMH commit to a two-week maximum timeframe to complete checks. The DOHMH must also notify providers within 48 hours when background checks have been completed.** Providers support rigorous background checks for all staff and need their partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so providers can operate programs in this constantly changing environment.

Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS)

Prospective staff who are hired to work in programs located in DOE buildings are required to be cleared through the DOE's Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS). When staff undergo the PETS background check process and a previous criminal offense is uncovered, they are required to participate in a more thorough investigation through the DOE's Office of Personnel Investigation (OPI). While they are being reviewed by OPI, employees cannot work with children or be compensated with money from DOE contracts.

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

Conclusion

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



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**Budget Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committees on Youth Services
Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair**

**Panel for the Committee on Youth Services
Submitted by Dante Bravo, Youth Policy Analyst
March 14th, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Stevens and members of the New York City Council, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dante Bravo, and I am the Youth Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 45 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a broad range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide customized professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged New York City's economy and safety net and has underscored the significant racial and economic disparities that have impacted New York City's neighborhoods for decades. Just as they did through other crises our City has faced, settlement houses have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 emergency response by continuing to deliver essential services to New Yorkers, providing emergency food, counseling, shelter, youth and family supports, and more.

Youth programming has played a significant role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by maintaining connections to youth and their families when schools closed, connecting families to other essential supports beyond after school, and helping youth navigate a challenging time. Without sufficient investment of resources into these services, our city's young people will pay the highest price despite having survived a pandemic for so long. This testimony makes

recommendations about the Department for Youth and Community Development's FY23 budget and how to best support New York City's youth going forward.

Summer Youth Employment Program

On February 15th, Mayor Adams announced a major expansion of summer youth workforce programming, including plans to increase the number of baselined Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) slots from 70,000 to 90,000. The FY23 Preliminary Budget includes an additional \$57 million in baselined funding to cover this SYEP slot increase, bringing anticipated baselined funding for the program up to \$236 million annually.

UNH celebrates this important milestone. For the last two decades, UNH has coordinated the Campaign for Summer Jobs (CSJ), a partnership between providers, advocates, and young people that has pushed for expanded access to SYEP. Since 2020, CSJ has re-branded as the Campaign for Universal Summer Jobs (CUSJ) out of a recognition that SYEP not only provides young people with valuable exposure to work and different career opportunities, but also acts as a key economic support to low-income communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Year-over-year, SYEP receives roughly 150,000 applications from 14-to-24-year-olds interested in a summer job. Despite serving a record 75,000 in summer 2021, that still meant that roughly one in two young people who applied were turned away.

Pushing SYEP to serve 90,000 will help develop key infrastructure, bringing us that much closer to a program with universal access. Still, as we learned last summer with Summer Rising, increasing funding is not enough to make a major expansion successful. A push to increase SYEP by more than 25% over the course of a few months is going to take all hands on deck, and timing is essential. The Mayor's decision to increase funding for SYEP in the preliminary budget—and baseline that funding—was critical, and we applaud the Mayor and the Council for understanding that early, stable funding is key to the success of this initiative. Further, thoughtful, careful coordination from DYCD and the Mayor's Office of Youth Employment (MOYE) has made providers optimistic that the expansion will be a success.

DYCD and MOYE have spent the last several months conducting focus groups, having meetings with providers and other system stakeholders, and developing plans to alleviate the biggest systemic barriers to expansion. They have achieved major breakthroughs, with the implementation of new technology that brings the application/enrollment process online, promises to develop and distribute an audit manual to providers so that they can streamline their enrollment processes by knowing what to expect during audit time, eliminating familial income verification document collection during the enrollment process, and transitioning the program from contracts that bridge fiscal years to 12-month contracts that run from July 1 through June 30th.

While this list may sound tangential to SYEP success, each development represents a significant burden lifted for both providers and young people, meaning that—at scale—bureaucratic processes

take less time and providers can focus more energy on cultivating stronger employer relationships to expand internship opportunities, training their own staff, and doing what they do best: Youth development. SYEP should be celebrated as an example of what can happen when Government, CBOs, advocates and youth align around a mutually-held goal and listen to each other to make achieving that goal possible. This model shows what is possible, and DYCD, the Mayor, and City Council should work to draw key lessons learned into work on summer and year-round programming for elementary and middle school.

Despite the increase in baselined funding for SYEP in FY23, funding for Work Learn Grow (WLG), the complementary school-year youth workforce program, sits at less than half of its pre-pandemic level, with no baselined investment. The City should invest \$20 million in baselined funding for WLG in the FY23 budget in order to increase opportunities for young people, help SYEP providers maintain relationships with employer partners year-round, and stabilize staffing structures for the system.

The Staffing Crisis in the Youth Development Field

Settlement house staff have consistently identified staffing challenges as a key issue facing their organization. In late 2021, UNH asked our membership how difficult it is to staff programs on a scale of 1 (least difficult) to 5 (extremely difficult). They answered at a 3.8, and cited youth programs as one of the most challenging positions to fill. We fear that this staffing challenge will continue this summer and fall without significant intervention from the City to address staff shortages. Staff to student ratios are currently 10:1 for elementary students and 15:1 for middle school students, though providers have cited that a 15:2 and 10:2 ratio are ideal for program quality and participant safety.

Last summer, staffing proved especially difficult given the high number of program participants (estimated at 200,000 participants when compared to previous years serving 90,000 young people). Despite this, providers made the impossible happen; they served more youth when many of their sites were at capacity or struggled with staffing. However, providers are concerned that Summer Rising might create a precedent where a rush to serve as many students as possible ignores the reality of the stark staffing crisis in the field.

To address staffing challenges last year, the DOE made a pool of paraprofessional substitute teachers available as more and more young people enrolled in Summer Rising. However, this was only a stopgap solution as these paraprofessional substitute teachers were technically DOE employees and were often only present for the morning section of programming; this pool of talent were also not always accountable to the on-site CBO, making it difficult for CBOs to manage staff effectively. Summer programs also leaned on SYEP participants and partnerships with local universities to help fill the staffing gap.

Some CBOs also witnessed slow paraprofessional support for children with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), which put an even greater onus on CBO group leaders to support these young people without the required resources, tools, or even background knowledge of what

support their participants needed. For example, one staff member spoke of a group leader who asked their supervisor for support in engaging a non-verbal student because that student had no other support aside from the understaffed CBO workers.

These challenges have continued to plague after-school programs across the city well into the 2021-2022 school year. Without any additional financial support from the City to pay competitive wages, staffing issues threaten to undermine providers' ability to even run basic summer programming, let alone quality programming. While UNH and the larger provider community will always support partnerships with local universities and SYEP participants to develop a pipeline for future full-time youth development professionals, this is at best a stop-gap strategy to the impressive talent needs of the field. At worst, this strategy actively contributes to the notion that jobs in youth work are temporary and therefore should be compensated at extremely low rates, despite the level of expertise our youth development staff have cultivated over decades in the field.

The only way to fix this staffing shortage is to take much-needed measures to raise wages in summer, school year, and year-round contracts so that CBOs can offer new and existing staff competitive wages. The next section of this testimony will focus on what exactly one of those measures could look like: a higher cost-per-participant rate.

Funding and Cost-per-participant Rate for Summer Rising

Traditionally, summer rates for after-school providers averaged at around \$1088 per COMPASS elementary school slot and \$600 per SONYC middle school slot; these rates were put in place in 2014 under the last COMPASS/SONYC RFP. However, last year, the FY22 Adopted Budget included an additional \$24 million for summer programming, with every DYCD contract receiving a 30% increase in their budgets. This increase in funding resulted in a cost-per-participant rate of \$1414 for elementary school students and \$660 for middle school students for Summer Rising last year.

For Summer 2022, CBOs will have to provide programming after inflation has increased 7.5% and in a more competitive labor market than last summer. UNH urges the City to increase the cost-per-participant rates to \$1848 for elementary school programming, and will analyze the proposed SONYC rate with the larger provider community. Regardless, CBOs need higher rates that set a wage floor for summer counselors at \$21 an hour, allowing providers to offer competitive salaries in the midst of a staffing crisis within the field. This is also in line with the #JustPay campaign for human service workers. Furthermore, last summer, DOE paraprofessional substitutes made a base rate of \$25 per hour, and DYCD has messaged that this pool of talent will no longer be available for providers to lean on for Summer 2022.

While we understand that these rates are higher, this increase is to help with the incredible staffing shortage and to stabilize the youth development workforce as the sector loses many of these talented individuals to other employers. These rates were also determined under the

assumption that Summer 2022 will share a similar program model to Summer Rising back in 2021; a sample budget detailing the rates is included with this testimony. It is important to note that the middle school rate will need to be adjusted in light of new programming requirements announced by Mayor Adams and DYCD on March 11, 2022. CBOs will be responsible for extra hours Monday-Thursday and all programming on Fridays. UNH also calls on the city to amend year-round cost-per-participant rates so that CBOs can access contracts that are representative of the true cost of quality programming.

Address the Backlog of Comprehensive Background Checks for Youth Programs

Since September 25th, 2019, New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has required NYC DOHMH to perform new extensive background checks for staff and volunteers in after-school programs that are listed below:

- A NYS criminal history record check with the Division of Criminal Justice Services; (new)
- A national criminal record check with the Federal Bureau of Investigation; (new)
- A search of the NYS sex offender registry; (new)
- A database check of the NYS Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) in accordance with 424-1 of the Social Services Law;
- A search of the national sex offender registry using the National Crime and Information Center ***Required at a later time (new)

If the individual being cleared has lived outside of New York State in the last five years, they will also have to undergo background checks in every other State where they have lived. This includes:

- Each state(s) criminal history repository; (new)
- Each state's sex offender registry or repository; (new)
- Each state's child abuse or neglect registry. (new)

Providers and advocates strongly support rigorous background checks for all staff and volunteers, and we rely on our partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so that programs can operate.

DOHMH has not been able to complete the background checks in a timely manner and many prospective staff members in after-school programs are unable to work due to pending clearances. In February 2020, the backlog led New York State Office of Children and Family Services to provide some relief through a temporary rule change that allows staff members to work provisionally if they have been cleared through the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) and if they are supervised for 100% of the time that they are in contact with children by a staff member who has been cleared.

While this measure has helped tremendously it is not an ideal way to operate a program. It is difficult to ensure full program coverage if a staff with a pending clearance must constantly work with a cleared staff member. Furthermore, delays have been so bad that some organizations

have had to close classrooms or programs because of a lack of cleared staff. This also leads to retention issues; staff who must wait for months for a clearance will often find other work where they can start right away. All of this negatively impacts the children and youth who attend after-school programs throughout the City, as well as their parents who cannot rely on steady childcare as they try to work.

Youth programs must have pre-cleared staff who can start working in programs quickly to ensure a continuity of care. The City must clear the backlog of staff awaiting clearances and develop processes to quickly clear prospective staff members. Having additional staff and resources at DOHMH to process these clearances quickly would help address the backlog issues.

Support Youth Mental Health Needs

During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 600 Black children and 1 in 700 Latinx children lost their parent or caregiver to the pandemic in New York State, more than double the rate of white children. More than half of those parent deaths were in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. Losing a caregiver is associated with a range of negative health effects, including lower self-esteem, a higher risk of suicide, and symptoms of mental illness. According to pediatricians, addressing the impact of family death on young people will “require intentional investment to address individual, community, and structural inequalities.” Beyond grief, the learning loss and isolation has had an extreme impact on our young people. In late 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) declared a National State of Emergency in Children’s Mental Health; and the Surgeon General followed suit by declaring a Youth Mental Health Crisis.

Mental Health Services in Summer Rising

Despite having returned to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year, young people across New York City are still reeling from the mental health impact of the social isolation and grief from the COVID19 pandemic. Settlement houses have reported high levels of depression among middle school students and need resources to meet their needs—this means the budget to hire social workers to do crisis work, family outreach work, one on one counseling, and more.

Summer Rising 2.0 must include funding, staffing, and other resources so CBOs can focus on the well-being of their participants, curriculum and other markers of program quality instead of basic elements of programming - in addition to the higher cost-per-participant rates and other investments into summer 2022.

Invest \$28.5 million in School-Based Mental Health Clinics

The City currently has 280 school-based mental health clinics, which feature community-based providers who operate satellite sites of their licensed Article 28 or 31 clinics in schools. Providers can offer group and individual therapy, clinical treatment, diagnosis, crisis mental health services, support for teachers, family support, and more. These clinics work to improve

overall school wellness. They integrate with broader community-based services to support whole families, and seek to reduce punitive measures for children experiencing mental health challenges.

The City should make a robust, \$28.5 million investment in expanding school-based mental health clinics in the FY 2023 budget. This funding would support the creation of 100 new sites over the next two years (due to the time it takes for city procurement, state licensure, and securing space and staff) costing \$150,000 per program. It would also provide increases of \$75,000 per program to the existing 280 providers. Notably, staff retention at existing school-based clinics is a challenge due in large part to a lack of pay parity between community-based providers and DOE-employed professionals, including school social workers.

While clinics receive funding by billing health insurance, this is insufficient because insurance does not cover school wellness activities like mental health education and training; Medicaid does not cover services to children without a diagnosis; and commercial insurance often does not cover the service at all, or pays a rate that is so low that it covers only half of the cost of service. Further, because school-based clinics can bill insurance, which the DOE largely cannot, an investment in clinics will result in an infusion of state & federal dollars into schools, and ultimately cost the City less than hiring a DOE school social worker.

Invest in Community Schools

To meet the growing need for quality mental health services so that we can set up young people across New York City with the tools they need to move towards a brighter future, UNH recommends that the City lean on an already established program: the community schools initiative. In FY22, a combination of funding resources (including federal stimulus dollars, City administrative funding, and Council discretionary funds) supported this initiative after the austerity measures of the previous fiscal year.

Specifically, the success of the community schools is built on the pillars of integrated student supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practices. These inextricable elements work together to address socioeconomic and health disparities in schools and communities, particularly mental health needs for both students and families through a partnership between school staff and community based organizations to deliver wraparound services.

Given their track record of success¹, the New York State Education Department recommended the community schools model as part of their reopening guidance to school districts,² and the City committed to using federal stimulus funding to expand the number of NYC community schools from 266 to 406. The community school model is the best strategy for supporting the

¹ The RAND Corporation released a comprehensive report on the impact of NYC community schools [accessible here](#).

² [Guidance accessible here](#)

education spectrum – academic, enrichment, student and family support, engagement/reengagement and restorative justice policies and practices, and have also served as a community centers of mental health through depression/anxiety screenings, in-house mental health services and referrals to larger networks of support outside of the school. Community schools are also an investment in conflict mediation, a pliable model for delivering mental health services to young people to meet them where they are, and can be spaces for families to begin the steps of accessing culturally competent care for their young people.

Unfortunately, the City has yet to develop a long term sustainable funding solution for community schools, and while federal stimulus dollars will partially sustain them until 2025, the future of these neighborhood mental health centers is in jeopardy without a commitment to baselined city funding. Securing the future of community schools before federal stimulus funding begins to taper off in 2023 is key to ensuring long-term recovery and sustained mental health support in communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Adult Literacy Education

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.

UNH thanks the city council for including \$4 million for the Adult Literacy Initiative in FY2022, including a new \$2.5M investment in a one-year Adult Literacy Pilot Project. These discretionary budget items were over and above the city's baseline of \$13.5M, which DYCD allocates to providers through a competitive procurement process.

As a whole, the city's adult literacy system provides over two hundred classes that reach New Yorkers in need of digital literacy, health literacy, and the ability for parents to independently support their children's education. The success of adult learners is often predicated on how well programs can accommodate their other social service needs. A working parent without reliable access to childcare, or an adult learner with mental health challenges, or a skilled professional from abroad in need of immediate employment, can more easily commit and benefit from classes if those needs are met. While the level of support services offered vary by provider, resources in community-based organizations like settlement houses can include: case management, workforce development programming, child care assistance, college planning guidance, legal assistance, behavioral health services, and housing assistance.

Today in New York City, there are approximately 2.2 million adults who lack basic literacy, English language proficiency, or a high school diploma. The majority of these adults are women and people of color. Over 75% are immigrants. Others were born in the United States and underserved by the public school system. Many of these adults live in poverty. Limited skills impact almost every aspect of their lives, making it difficult to support their children in school,

access health care, secure and maintain living-wage jobs, advocate for their rights as workers, and fully participate in the political process.

Yet fewer than 4% of the adults in need of adult literacy services in NYC are able to secure seats in publicly funded classes in any given year. Moreover, the city's current investment per student is so minimal, most programs do not have enough funding for the staff, resources, or full complement of wrap-around supports necessary to serve students at the levels they need and deserve.

To address the gap in funding for community-based adult literacy services, UNH calls on the Mayor and the City Council to:

- 1) **Baseline an additional \$13.5 million in Adult Literacy Funding** to double the rates for adult literacy programming to bring programs closer to the actual costs of service per student in the upcoming DYCD RFP for a total of \$27 million.
- 2) **Renew \$4 million for Adult Literacy Council Discretionary Funding** to address the immense, inequitable gap in English literacy, digital literacy, systems navigation skills, and access to information.
- 3) **Double funding for the Adult Literacy Pilot Program to \$5 million** to enhance support for 40 programs and to address growing needs for additional services, adequate teacher salaries, and increased program sustainability.

Increase Baseline for RFP

It is a critical year for the City to double its baselined investment in Adult Literacy Services to \$27 million and increase per-student funding rates before a new Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

We anticipate a new RFP for Adult Literacy Programs to be released this year for new program contracts to begin in FY24. As it stands, adult literacy programs are baselined in the budget at \$13.5 million. In order to provide programs with the resources needed to serve existing students, Mayor Adams' administration must double the city's baseline investment in adult literacy education.

Expand Pilot Program

UNH thanks the New York City Council for creating the city's first-ever Adult Literacy Education Pilot Project in the FY22 Adopted Budget. Currently funded at \$2.5 million, this investment provides community-based adult literacy programs with higher rates-per-student to cover the full cost of personnel and support services necessary to comprehensively serve their students. This gets us closer to the level of funding called for in the 2017 "Investing in Quality" report, authored by the Literacy Assistance Center and funded by DYCD, which found the average cost-per-student would be approximately \$3,700 annually, which is roughly four times DYCD's current rate of approximately \$950 per student.

UNH urges the City Council to expand the Adult Literacy Pilot Program to \$5M — up from \$2.5M — in FY23 to adequately resource high-quality adult literacy programs, including staff and personnel costs; student case management; digital technology; program space; and organizational management systems and support. This expansion would double the pilot to fund 40 programs across the city.

Fund a Cost of Living Adjustment and Raises for Human Service Workers

UNH was disappointed to see that the Mayor's Preliminary Budget proposal failed to offer any meaningful investments in the human services workforce that has been on the frontlines of the pandemic, which includes many community-based mental health workers. Last year, UNH and our partners advocated for \$48 million in the adopted budget to pay for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for human service workers. Instead, we received \$24 million to pay for one-time bonuses. These essential workers deserve better, and UNH supports the #JustPay campaign's three-pronged ask for investments for the human services workforce that includes: 1) Automatic COLAs for all human services contracts to help wages keep pace with inflation; 2) a living wage floor for human services workers of no less than \$21 per hour; and 3) the creation and funding of a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule that is compatible to similarly-qualified City and State government employees.

Human service workers were there for the City when we needed them most, and the City should be there for them now. Low wages for human service positions have contributed to a staffing crisis, and without increased budgets for City contracts to cover wage increases, nonprofits will be unable to recruit and train the next generation of human service workers, setting future New Yorkers up for significant barriers to accessing services. **We urge the Council to emphasize the needs of the human service workforce in budget negotiations.**

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today. For more information, or to answer any additional questions, you can reach me at dbravo@unhny.org. Attached to this testimony are two sample budgets for a summer program.

Mock In Person Fee for Service Summer 2022 Budget							
Elementary							
Summer Budget 07/1/22-08/31/22							
Budget is based off of 100 students total in a program.							
Assumes current SACC 10:1 ratio							
Does not incorporate potential SYEP workers. Several providers noted a preference to have 18+ SYEP students working in a program, and all have stated that SYEP workers cannot be a replacement for trained staff							
Personnel	Contract Title	Annual/Hourly Salary		Percent/ No. of Hours	No. of Staff	Total Salary	
Full-Time Staff							
Department Director	Program Supervisor	\$ 110,000.00		2%	1	\$2,200.00	
Program Director	Program Director	\$ 60,000.00		17%	1	\$10,200.00	
Fiscal	Budget Analyst	\$ 33,660.00		10%	1.00	\$572.22	
Total Full-Time Staff						\$12,972.22	
Part-Time Staff							
Data Specialist/Floater	Counselor	\$ 21.00	350 program hours plus an additional 25 hours PD, Orientation	375	1.00	\$7,875.00	
Counselor	Counselor	\$ 21.00		375	5.00	\$39,375.00	
Activity Specialist	Activity Specialist	\$ 25.00		375	5.00	\$46,875.00	
Education Specialist	Education Specialist	\$ 50.00		100	1.00	\$5,000.00	
Total Part-Time Staff						\$99,125.00	
Fringe Benefits FT 26%						\$3,113.33	
Fringe Benefits PT 16%						\$15,860.00	
Total Fringe						\$18,973.33	
Total Personnel						\$131,070.55	
Office Supplies						\$2,500.00	
Safety and Health/PPE Supplies						FREE	
Fingerprints and Clearances							UNKNOWN
Staff Transportation						\$120.00	
Staff Training						\$1,800.00	
CPR Training						\$1,200.00	
Postage						\$600.00	
Liability, Property, and Other Insurance						\$2,500.00	
Printing						\$500.00	
Youth Transportation						\$5,000.00	10 busses
Trip Admission						\$2,000.00	\$20 per child
Youth Supplies & Activities (special event, admission)						\$15,000.00	Single kits to reduce sharing among children (150*100=15000)
Prepared Meals						\$1,500.00	
Raw Food						\$2,500.00	
Mobile Phones						\$1,000.00	
Accounting Costs						\$500.00	
Audit Expense						\$250.00	
Total Personnel						\$131,070.55	
Total OTPS						\$36,970.00	
Total Personnel and OTPS						\$168,040.55	
Total Indirect (standard 10%)						\$16,804.06	
Total Budget						\$184,844.61	
						\$1,848.45	Price Per Participant

Mock In Person Fee for Service Summer 2022 Budget							
Middle School							
Summer Budget 07/1/22-08/31/22							
Budget is based off of 100 students total in a program.							
Assumes current 15:1 ratio							
Does not incorporate potential SYEP workers. Several providers noted a preference to have 18+ SYEP students working in a program, and all have stated that SYEP workers cannot be a replacement for trained staff							
Personnel	Contract Title	Annual/Hourly Salary		Percent/ No. of Hours	No. of Staff	Total Salary	
Full-Time Staff							
Department Director	Program Supervisor	\$ 110,000.00		2%	1	\$2,200.00	
Program Director	Program Director	\$ 60,000.00		17%	1	\$10,200.00	
Fiscal	Budget Analyst	\$ 33,660.00		10%	1.00	\$572.22	
Total Full-Time Staff						\$12,972.22	
Part-Time Staff							
Data Specialist/Floater	Counselor	\$ 21.00	108 program hours plus an additional 25 hours PD, Orientation	133	1.00	\$2,793.00	
Counselor	Counselor	\$ 21.00		133	3.00	\$8,379.00	
Activity Specialist	Activity Specialist	\$ 25.00		133	4.00	\$13,300.00	
Education Specialist	Education Specialist	\$ 50.00		100	1.00	\$5,000.00	
Total Part-Time Staff						\$29,472.00	
Fringe Benefits FT 26%						\$3,113.33	
Fringe Benefits PT 16%						\$4,715.52	
Total Fringe						\$7,828.85	
Total Personnel						\$50,273.07	
Office Supplies						\$2,500.00	
Safety and Health/PPE Supplies						FREE	
Fingerprints and Clearances							UNKNOWN
Staff Transportation						\$120.00	
Staff Training						\$1,800.00	
CPR Training						\$1,200.00	
Postage						\$600.00	
Liability, Property, and Other Insurance						\$2,500.00	
Printing						\$500.00	
Youth Transportation						\$5,000.00	10 busses
Trip Admission						\$2,000.00	\$20 per child
Youth Supplies & Activities (special event, admission)						\$15,000.00	Single kits to reduce sharing among children (150*100=15000)
Prepared Meals						\$1,500.00	
Raw Food						\$2,500.00	
Mobile Phones						\$1,000.00	
Accounting Costs						\$500.00	
Audit Expense						\$250.00	
Total Personnel						\$50,273.07	
Total OTPS						\$36,970.00	
Total Personnel and OTPS						\$87,243.07	
Total Indirect						\$8,724.31	
Total Budget						\$95,967.38	
						\$959.67	Price Per Participant



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Testimony of University Settlement
Before the New York City Council
FY 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearing: Committee on Youth
Services

Council Member Althea Stevens, Chair

March 14, 2022

Presented by Tyhiem Floyd, Assistant Site Director at University
Settlement

My name is Tyhiem Floyd, and I work for University Settlement as the Assistant Site Director at Ingersoll Community Center. Since 1886, University Settlement has been providing holistic services to New York families. Currently, we have over 30 program locations across Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, where we provide support ranging from early childhood education to youth afterschool programs, tenant advocacy to older adults programming.

Today, I urge the City to provide more funding for youth services, specifically for expanded youth employment and training programs. We need more job and skills-based programs that show our youth that there are possibilities for a livelihood that reflects their interests and talents. Funding these programs can provide productive alternative activities for youth in an environment often surrounded by gun violence.

Ingersoll Community Center is in Fort Greene and specifically serves NYCHA residents. I grew up at Ingersoll and attended University Settlement programming when I was younger, so I am especially proud to be speaking to the City Council today about how to support youth in this neighborhood. I remember the community center as a haven for me and other young people, and I work to create the same type of space for the young people at Ingersoll now. We offer a variety of arts, sports, and community programs like movie nights and homework assistance, but I believe our community centers can be a space for teens beyond recreation or tutoring support. Our community centers can also be spaces that help teens develop job readiness skills that interest them and map out their futures.

Teens living in NYCHA who experience more economic insecurity have less flexibility to take on unpaid internships or volunteer work over the summer. Most paid programs are focused on manual labor and skills, which are vital, but do not always capture the interest of teens. Last summer, University Settlement and Ingersoll were fortunate to receive funding from the Mayor's office to implement the VIBE program. This six-week program provided a stipend to fifteen teen participants to explore arts and music training for 15 hours/week, culminating in a final performance. As someone who has longstanding ties to Ingersoll and Brooklyn, I am aware of how teens can become pulled away from school, particularly when they feel vulnerable, uncertain, or under economic stress. The VIBE program's success was largely because the stipend financially supported youth to learn something they were interested in, making it easier for youth to put in time and effort and keeping youth in a safe environment. By investing programs like VIBE that leverage CBOs as connectors between youth and opportunities, we can find ways to support kids staying in positive environments like community center programs and in school while



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simultaneously giving them professional experiences outside of school that help them see a viable future.
Thank you for your time.

LEAD. ACT. IMPACT. 領導。行動。影響。 LIDERA. ACTÚA. IMPACTO. अगुवाई कार्रवाई असर DIRIGEZ. AGISSEZ. IMPACTEZ. يَرْشِدُ. الْتَمِثْ. اِلْتِمِثْ. لِيДІПІ́Й. ДЕЙСТВИ́Й. ВПЛИ́Й.



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March 10, 2022

Chairwoman Althea Stevens and Committee on Youth Services esteemed members, good morning. I also acknowledge our former WorldofMoney graduate, City Councilmember Chi Ossé. We are very proud of you!

On behalf of over 6,000 WorldofMoney children and their families, I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am Sabrina Lamb, the Founder and Executive Director of WorldofMoney, a 17-year New York City-based non-profit and leading provider of 120 annual classrooms and online hours of diverse and immersive financial and entrepreneurial education for ages 7-18. America's Promise Alliance and AOL Impact awarded WorldofMoney as one of America's top 10 social good organizations.

By way of this testimony, you will learn about:

- a) the need for funding to enable WorldofMoney to partner with more schools and New York City youth organizations; and,
- b) our desire to be your resource and a long-term partner with the City Council in helping to eradicate financial vulnerability in historically excluded families.

Because money influences every aspect of our lives, we believe that every New York City student should receive culturally diverse financial education - from elementary to high school. Our curriculum includes: budgeting and saving, credit, investing, insurance, ethics and so much more.

We also have leveraged the power of technology with WorldofMoneyOnline.org to teach more children with our culturally relevant lessons so that children accessing this platform will see children who look like them. Four of the videos, thus far, are translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Swahili.

Maximillian Johnson, a 13-year-old Harlem resident, shared, "*World of Money has taught me how to build financial security for me and my family's life. Saving? Investing? Compound interest? Most adults don't know these things, and my learning about finance at such a young age and how money works-- puts me at a great advantage.*"

Maximillian is correct! Because 38% of teens report feeling unprepared to manage their personal finances and fear that, they will not experience lifelong economic well-being.

The lack or inadequate financial education may lead to poor health, lack of self-worth, predatory victimization, and low college attainment.

WorldofMoney's vision is a community of youth motivated and empowered to realize their fullest potential and achieve personal and financial success so they become savers, investors, entrepreneurs and philanthropists.

There is no better time to include our curriculum in classrooms and after-school programs throughout the city. We can harness the power of our technology and deliver it to where children and youth like Maximillian, spend most of their time—in the classroom and on their mobile devices.

Remember the WorldofMoney motto: Learn. Earn. Save. Invest. Donate.

Thank you for allowing me to share the story of World of Money with you.

Sincere Regards,

Sabrina Lamb

Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Email: sabrina@worldofmoney.org

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL - YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE
KimAlysha Seligmiller, YOU GOTTA BELIEVE Advocate
MARCH 14, 2022

Good Afternoon Chair Stevens and the Youth Services Committee

My name Is KimAlysha Seligmiller. I am a former foster youth and an Advocate at You Gotta Believe, a foster care and adoption agency that believes it's never too late for family. I spent about 19 plus years in the Foster Care System and aged out in 2021. At age 22, I not only have my own independent housing, but also found a forever family through the help and support of You Gotta Believe, something that I was told I could never have growing up in the foster care system.

At 17 years old, my heart was set on finding a family. I had been in the system since I was 2 and my parents were no longer an option. During this time, I was in an all girls group home where I expressed that Family was something important to me and I wanted a chance to have it. I told my workers time and time again, and they would disregard what I had to say. My group home told me that I had to get my head out of the clouds and start focusing on finding an apartment and supporting myself. I was okay with that, but having an apartment didn't stop me from wanting to have a family. I will never forget I went to my bi-yearly court hearing and decided to speak up for myself. I told the judge I wanted adoption to be an option. The judge looked at me and said "With your age and history, you will never be able to get a family. Start looking for an apartment".

Although the judge did not specifically say it, what my teenage ears heard was that I was not worthy of a family. The amount of defeat I felt that day traumatized me even more. All my life, I had people come in and out my life who only judged me based on my actions and my paperwork. Still I knew that if I had people who loved and supported me, that I could get through anything but sadly my judge and my foster care agency had written me off as just another failure to come out of the system. However, through my experience with You Gotta Believe, not only did I have other foster care alumni teaching me the importance of family, but I had people who believed that I was more than just my behaviors, and no matter what, I deserved to be loved.

Through my years in foster care, one thing was very clear. My voice didn't matter. Minors in foster care are often spoken for and told what to say. However, once you are older and start to advocate your needs, nobody wants to listen and nobody cares because you will be aging out soon. You Gotta Believe gave me chances to speak and be heard, no matter what I had to say. In addition, You Gotta Believe helped me understand what permanency really means, not just having a safe place to stay but having people unconditionally committed no matter what, something a lot of foster care agencies lack to teach families and youth in foster care.

You Gotta Believe not only helped me find a family, who I now call my Godparents, but they helped me understand that my story has power and it should be shared to make change in the foster care system. At a young age, You Gotta Believe allowed me to speak on panels to help potential foster parents understand the meaning of commitment when taking in older kids in the system. Those panels lit a fire in me, and helped me realize that advocacy is something I want to do as a career path. Now that I am out of survival mode and have a family, I can focus on those efforts and finally make change in a system that tried to fail me.

You Gotta Believe made such a major impact on my personal and professional life and has done so for many older foster youth in New York City. YGB needs the support of the City Council to continue to work with the older youth who are about to face the worst outcomes alone. YGB knows that we can find them loving families. I, as a former foster youth and employee of YGB support its efforts in supporting older youth in care and I hope the city council will do the same.

Under the pandemic's shadow, it has become clearer than ever that the children and families served by NAC are among the most vulnerable in New York City. Many of our families were already living in poverty. Now, still struggling financially, 90% are headed by a single female caregiver, 50% caring for more than one child with special medical needs, and nearly 200 are living in homeless shelters. Over 95% of our NAC families are people of color who find themselves forced to navigate systems entrenched in racism, one of which is the education system. Many of the neighborhoods that our families inhabit lack educational support - especially with regards to early literacy.

In response, our education department, with the help of City's First Readers, has launched an early literacy workshop that meets every other week on Monday evenings. While still remote, this workshop is meant to guide and empower our parents and caregivers of 0-5 children. We highlight and celebrate the teaching that they already do as well as give them the tools to build more literary activities into their everyday routines. Our parents and caregivers eagerly participate by sharing their own experiences which allows the workshop to be a space for growth and support. Participants receive book bundles with age-appropriate toys for their children. The books have allowed the families to start their own home libraries. City's First Readers has been instrumental in the creation and promotion of NAC's first ever early literacy workshop series. With additional funding, NAC will be able to expand the program by including workshops in other languages, sponsored trips to partner sites, and additional literacy materials for our families.