

Testimony of Associate Vice Chancellor Alicia Alvero
The City University of New York
New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing on CUNY ASAP
April 20, 2023

Good morning chairperson Dinowitz and members of the City Council Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, better known as ASAP. I am Alicia Maria Alvero, Associate Vice Chancellor in CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs. I am joined today by my colleagues Christine Brongniart, University Executive Director of ASAP and ACE, and Carey Manifold, Interim Assistant Dean for Advisement at Kingsborough Community College.

ASAP History

Founded in 2007 with support from the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (Now NYC Opportunity), ASAP aims to graduate at least 50% of associate degree-seeking students within three years. At the time the program was launched, CUNY's overall three-year community college graduation rate was 13%, just shy of the national urban community college graduation rate of 16%. CUNY believed that not only *could* we do much better, we had a moral imperative to do so, and with the support of then-Mayor Bloomberg, CUNY created a comprehensive model designed to improve completion outcomes.

ASAP has consistently not only met, but also exceeded, its ambitious graduation goals. To date, ASAP has served more than 88,000 students across sixteen cohorts and has an average three-year graduation rate of 53% vs. 25% for similar students not in ASAP. The program benefits all subgroups of students, and based on CUNY's analysis, narrows existing equity gaps for Black and Hispanic males.

The program grew from an initial enrollment of 1,132 students across six CUNY community colleges to a maximum annual enrollment of 25,000 students across nine of our 10 associate-degree granting colleges. Guttman Community College is excluded because the Guttman model incorporates many of the elements of ASAP. Thanks to the generous support from the City and State of New York, who have supported the program's expansion over the years, ASAP students currently comprise approximately 42% of the full-time associate degree-seeking population. To give you a snapshot of the ASAP population this academic year, the mean age of an ASAP student is 21; 52% of the population is female, and 48% male. 83% of ASAP students receive Pell or TAP, and their ethnic diversity reflects that of our general college population: 50% are Latinos, 25% are Black, 11% are Asian and 7 % are White.

Program Design and Core Elements

ASAP offers a robust package of resources and services designed to help students gain and maintain academic momentum and create a connected community of staff and peers. ASAP financial resources include tuition and fee gap scholarships for students in receipt of financial aid, textbook assistance, and unlimited New York City Transit MetroCards.

Students make a commitment to pursue their education full-time, which is facilitated through strategic and variable course offerings designed to accommodate a variety of schedules. ASAP also encourages, and provides financial support for, winter and summer course-taking; and requires immediate and continuous enrollment in corequisite courses, as needed. Integrated support services provided by the program include comprehensive and personalized advisement, tutoring and supplemental instruction, career development services, and early pre-matriculation engagement opportunities to build a connected community.

Evolution & Looking Ahead

ASAP has garnered national recognition, most notably winning the Innovations in American Government Award from the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in 2020 and has come to be replicated in 11 institutions across 6 states. ASAP has also been well-researched – MDRC, a research organization created by the Ford Foundation and a group of federal agencies, has stated that **ASAP's effects are the largest it has found in any of its evaluations of community college reforms. They go on to state that, "the model offers a highly promising strategy to markedly accelerate credit accumulation and increase graduation rates among educationally and economically disadvantaged populations."** ([Scrivener et al., 2015](#)). Just this week, Undersecretary James Kvaal acknowledged ASAP as a "proven model" that will be supported through the DOE's next funding round of the Post Secondary Student Success grant program.

ASAP was also the subject of a [comprehensive cost-benefit study led by Dsr. Henry Levin and Emma Garcia](#) of the Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education (CBCSE) at Teachers College Columbia University. The first part of their analysis revealed that despite higher up-front costs, the average cost per three-year ASAP graduate was lower than for comparison group graduates. **The study found an average savings of \$6,500 per graduate.** The second part of their analysis looked at the benefits of timely graduation, both for the individual and the public sector, by examining increased earnings and tax revenues and reduced costs for social services such as public health, public assistance, and criminal justice. The study found that an investment in ASAP has significant financial returns for both the taxpayer and the student. For every dollar invested in ASAP by the taxpayer, \$3.50 are returned per associate degree conferred in the form of increased tax revenues and social service savings. For each dollar invested by the ASAP student, \$12.20 are returned through increased earnings. The researchers

concluded that the total net benefits for 1,000 ASAP students are \$46.5 million higher than for 1,000 comparison group students who did not enroll in ASAP. Based on these statistics, the 88,000 students ASAP has served translates to \$4,092,000,000 in net benefits.

Another way of characterizing the return on investment is that the \$3,463 cost per student represents a 25% increased investment in each student above the average cost per student, and it generates a 112% improvement in the graduation rate. So, the rate of improvement is 4.5 times greater than the increase in cost. This is 3 to 4 times greater than we see in nationwide studies of community college investments (see, for example, Demings and Walter, 2018; Chakraborti, Gorton, & Lovenheim, 2020).

Arguably, ASAP is considered a unilateral success; but we recognize that this does not mean we cannot and should not strive for more. Approximately 40% of associate-degree students are in the program – what can we do to capture more students? What is standing in their way? Are any of those obstacles within our control? The average age of ASAP students is 21, yet almost 30% of associate-degree seeking students are 25 & over and adults returning to school continue to be an increasing population in community colleges. Can we use advances in technology and advisement tools to help increase 3 year graduation rates beyond 53%? We highlight these issues because we want to assure you that we are continuously striving to achieve maximum success with the generous support the city and state currently provides, and we are continuously working to set the stage for growth and expansion of our success. To place our efforts into context, an additional \$3,463,000 would enable us to pilot expansion programs to target an additional 1,000 students while ensuring the quality and impact of ASAP's success does not waver. An additional \$118,843,234 would be required to include all CUNY community college students

I conclude by stating that ASAP is part of CUNY's proud legacy of being a powerful engine of social mobility, and we are deeply committed to ensuring that all our students have every opportunity to achieve their educational goals and increase their social mobility. Thank you for your time and unwavering continued support and commitment.

**Testimony of Interim Assistant Dean for Advisement Dr. Carey Manifold
Kingsborough Community College, CUNY
New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing on CUNY ASAP
April 20, 2023**

Thank you, Christine. Good afternoon and thank you for the chance to speak with you today. My name is Carey Manifold, and I am the Interim Assistant Dean for Advisement at Kingsborough Community College. I joined Kingsborough (KCC) when the ASAP program launched in 2007 as a lead advisor, and since then I've held additional roles as the ASAP associate director and director. Having spent more than 15 years working in higher education in various capacities, I am passionate about the mission of community colleges, its commitment to diversity, and the access it provides to high-quality lifelong learning opportunities for underserved populations.

In my current role as Interim Assistant Dean for Advisement, I provide vision, leadership, and guidance for college-wide advisement, transfer, and student support. I oversee several student success programs and departments including ASAP, CUNY Start/Math Start, transfer services, and The Advisement Academies. The advisement academy is the college's academic discipline based advising support service that provides students the opportunity to explore related majors and work with an advisor to make informed academic decisions. My work in these areas improves access, retention, student success, and equitable degree completion outcomes for all Kingsborough students.

Since joining the KCC team I have seen the Kingsborough ASAP program grow to provide comprehensive academic and financial support to approximately two thousand students each year from 247 when the program launched. As the program has grown, the team has remained committed to supporting the "whole" student. That is, understanding how non-academic responsibilities and challenges can impact students' academic performance and providing support to help students overcome those barriers. Through expansion, ASAP's proportional representation of the college population has increased substantially. Between 2015 and 2019 the percentage of KCC first-time freshman that ASAP supported grew from 13% to 35%. The program has continued to grow and supports even more students to complete their degree. KCC ASAP students' three-year graduation rate during the expansion period was on average twenty-two (22%) percent higher than the college's non-ASAP supported students' three-year graduation rate. Understanding students and building sustained relationships with them is the foundation of the ASAP model. It is what has helped our team meet students where they are and guide them to achieve their goals.

In my current role as the interim Assistant Dean for Advisement I have been focused on implementing an advising model that offers consistent college-wide advisement to all students, wherein the advising

experience for all students is similar. Until recently only new students were required to meet with an academic advisor at Kingsborough to confirm their program and select courses. In the past year I have worked to implement ASAP's best practices in providing individualized, timely and comprehensive engagement, all underpinned by utilizing real time student level data, to support student engagement, retention, graduation. One critical tool that ensures that student level, real time data is at the center of our advisement practice is the Starfish early alert system. Starfish collates information from our student information system, faculty, and campus offices and allows advisors to rapidly intervene if a student needs support. Starfish connects each student to a network of faculty, advisors, and support staff. Through Starfish, students can contact any person in their success network to get help. Faculty can use Starfish at any time during the semester to alert advisors of a struggling student. Knowing when a student is having difficulty in a class is key to providing timely support. Starfish helps to support all areas of college advising by seamlessly connecting faculty with our advisors and vice versa.

I have served as the functional lead of KCC's Starfish early alert system college-wide integration since it was first launched for ASAP in 2019. Starfish has moved the college advising community closer to developing a student support model that values and highlights all aspects of the student experience in and outside of the classroom, the central tenet of the ASAP advisement approach. Additionally, we have incorporated several ASAP-like comprehensive support services across the college's general advisement, such as promoting access to tutoring, career service and transfer planning, and connecting students to our access resource center, which help students secure resources such as health insurance and access to our food pantry. Tracking and documenting advisor-advisee engagement has been a cornerstone of the ASAP model and introducing technology to the larger KCC advising community to appropriately support students has been key to providing timely support to all students.

At KCC we are committed to drawing on the best practices of ASAP to promote a culture shift in not only our advising practices, but also in our expectations about timely graduation – through data, relationship building, and adaptable technology. We are confident that all advising areas at KCC can improve the student expedience and outcomes such as engagement, retention, and graduation.

That concludes my testimony – thank you so much for your time and we look forward to your questions.

Testimony of ASAP Executive Director Christine Brongniart
The City University of New York
New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing on CUNY ASAP
April 20, 2023

Good afternoon and thank you to the committee for calling this special session on CUNY ASAP. My name is Christine Brongniart, and I have had the distinct honor of serving as the University Executive Director of ASAP|ACE over the past five years. I am pleased to speak with you today about CUNY ASAP, a program that has made a profound and transformational impact on thousands of CUNY associate degree-seeking students and been embraced as the gold standard in evidence-based interventions by local, state, and federal policy makers.

Program Management

A critical part of CUNY ASAP's success is its operational structure. ASAP operates as a consortium in which the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs and the nine partner colleges each have a set of specific roles and responsibilities that maximize program success and efficiencies. Each college has a fully dedicated ASAP program team led by a director, who oversees an associate director, a team of advisors each of whom has a maximum caseload of 150 students, a career specialist, and other program support staff. College teams spearhead recruitment, deliver direct services to students, support program integration with other units at the college, and monitor student data. The ASAP|ACE Central Office team directs key administrative activities such as marketing and city-wide outreach; fiscal oversight; research, evaluation and data management; and program-wide staff training and professional development. The program is deeply committed to the use of data for evaluation and program management purposes and operates on a continuous improvement model. Staff across the program work towards a common set of benchmarks to help reach overall program graduation goals and use a standard home-grown data management system to produce reports and run queries to measure program efficacy at all levels. We meet regularly within and across various communities of practice, for example program directors or career specialists, across the consortium-to discuss and address common challenges, review data, and share best practices.

Data and Evaluation

All colleges are aligned around a set of standard student performance and program contact/engagement benchmarks. Student-level data pulled from CUNY's official data systems and

ASAP's own database are assessed on a timed basis and include: enrollment; semester to semester college and program retention; academic performance data such as credits attempted/earned and GPA; contacts with advisors (frequency/modality) and other program staff; participation in career development activities; and lastly, of course, graduation outcomes.

Beyond the program's core goal focused on completion, the program also monitors other longer-term outcomes. Most ASAP graduates, 93%, enroll in a bachelor's degree within one year of earning their associate degree. When longer-term completion outcomes are considered, ASAP students are more likely to earn a degree. Six years after beginning, 64% of ASAP students had earned either an associate or baccalaureate degree (or both) vs. 43% of comparison group students.

We also continue to explore employment and earnings outcomes of our ASAP students. Based on an analysis of our earliest cohorts, 71% of ASAP graduates were employed in New York State one year after graduating with their associate degree, and 82% of ASAP graduates who went on to attain their bachelor's degree were employed in NYS one year after graduation—slightly higher than CUNY overall rates. We continue to pursue analyses of earnings and wage data in order to deepen our understanding of long-term labor market outcomes, particularly for students in our more recent cohorts as the program shifted to include most majors.

Our in-house analyses are further validated by more rigorous external evaluations, most notably MDRC's five-year random assignment study of ASAP, which found the program's effects are "unparalleled in large-scale experimental evaluations of programs in higher education" (MDRC, 2015) with nearly double the graduation rate for similar students. In a follow-up study of the random assignment study cohort six years after program entry, MDRC found that "ASAP both continues to increase graduation rates and enables some students to earn their degrees faster than they would have otherwise" (MDRC, 2017).

Current Enrollment / Marketing/Outreach

In addition to continually building ASAP's evidence base, another key function of the ASAP|ACE Central Office team is to spearhead broad city-wide outreach and marketing to ensure that as many prospective CUNY students are aware of the program's supports as possible. ASAP is a post-matriculation program, so our integrated marketing strategy aims to increase program awareness to support the program's enrollment goals as well as the University's. ASAP employs standard marketing strategies like direct mail, two-way texting, and social media marketing. The program also collaborates closely with other CUNY partners, such as the Office of K-16 Initiatives and pre-matriculation programs such as CUNY Start, as well as with various offices within the Department of Education and with a

broad swath of community-based organizations. We also run print advertising campaigns. Some of you may have come in contact with our current campaign now running across the MTA through June. The campaign highlights ASAP program benefits and runs parallel to a University campaign, further highlighting CUNY's affordability. As a student accepts their offer of admission to one of our CUNY ASAP partner colleges, they are then actively engaged by our local college-based recruitment staff. College recruitment efforts are also supported by our ASAP Ambassador Program, which is a program-wide student leadership development experience that adds capacity to the college's recruitment efforts.

ASAP sets ambitious enrollment targets each year and broadly recruits new students as they are admitted to CUNY partner colleges or currently enrolled/continuing students who meet the program's eligibility criteria. Students are recruited, in both the fall and spring, until each college reaches their full enrollment capacity. To be ASAP-eligible, students must:

- Be eligible for New York City resident rate tuition – at our community colleges -- or New York State resident rate tuition at our comprehensive colleges;
- Agree to study full-time in an ASAP approved associate major. By full-time study we mean a minimum of 12 credits a semester, preferably 15, and a few majors that have degree pathways that prohibit completion in 3 years are excluded from eligibility;
- Have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and New York Stat Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) application. Students must apply for financial aid each year and accept any need-based grant aid offered; and
- If a continuing or transfer student, have no more than 21 college credits and a minimum GPA of 2.0.

ASAP met and exceeded our expansion goals in academic year 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, serving approximately 25,500 students both years. Due to the disruptions of the pandemic and compounded by the enrollment challenges across both CUNY and community colleges nationwide, ASAP has seen modest declines in enrollment over the past three academic years. This year, the program has supported 20,309 unique students (10,752 new students recruited across the fall and spring).

All ASAP programs are actively recruiting for the coming fall, and we fully intend to hit our enrollment target of 25,000 students in the upcoming academic year. This requires ASAP to recruit 14,000 new students, which, based on our analysis, means we need to successfully recruit 60% of the eligible population.

To further elaborate on the way the program is operationalized locally, I'll turn now to my colleague Dr. Carey Manifold.

Testimony for the New York City Committee on Higher Education
By Elizabeth Stevenson
April 18, 2023

Dear Committee members.

My name is Elizabeth Stevenson. I'm the Senior Advisor for the ASAP program at NYC College of Technology (City Tech), a member of PSC-CUNY, and I also received my MSW degree from CUNY's Hunter College. I'm writing to thank you for your past support of the ASAP program and urge you to continue, and even increase, your commitment to ASAP in the city budget.

As you know, CUNY is the largest anti-poverty program in New York City. Our colleges are responsible for moving tens of thousands of New Yorkers into secure and well-paying jobs every year, on top of producing cutting edge research and developing minds and fostering creativity and forging new ways of thinking. But our reputation as a driver of social mobility depends on students actually graduating. And ASAP, along with its sister program ACE, is most proven way to ensure that our campuses improve retention and graduation rates.

Within CUNY, staff like myself are referred to as HEOs (Higher Education Officers) in the union contract. HEOs are the people who serve students in advising offices, financial aid offices, career services offices, veterans programs, counseling centers, the Registrars and the Bursars, SEEK/College Discovery and ASAP/ACE. My campus' ratio of HEOs to students is worse than any other CUNY school. We have 1 HEO for every 103 students. This makes it incredibly difficult to retain and enroll students. The staff currently employed at City Tech are basically miracle workers, oftentimes covering more than one job and working unpaid hours.

We know that ASAP/ACE is an evidenced-based model. ASAP advisors work with students in smaller ratios than any other HEOs within CUNY. My caseload meets with me for advising appointments every month, and has unlimited access to me via email and text. I make sure that they know about tutoring schedules and understand how to read syllabi; I help them navigate vital technology platforms like CUNYFirst and

DegreeWorks and Blackboard; I remind them to apply for financial aid and to meet with career services; I advise them on the correct course sequence for their major and how to select general education courses; I console them during their setbacks and I normalize their challenges and I congratulate them on their successes. A college like City Tech, with its understaffed offices and bureaucratic red tape, loses so many first generation and immigrant students due to minor confusions and lack of individualized support. The students who aren't lucky enough to join ASAP, or other similar programs, don't receive the necessary level of attention and service.

Consider this [report](#), which has the following sentence: *"City Tech has just three career advisors serving approximately 17,000 students, each with office hours just two days per week."* Last year, one of our career advisors mentioned in a meeting that she and her colleagues were actually spending most of their time in the advising center because they were short-staffed and needed her assistance. I've heard a campus librarian say that she spends most of her time supervising a computer lab and signing out laptops because there's no other staff available to do that work. I've heard the director of our learning center say that she's lost all of her part-time staff and hasn't been allowed to replace them.

When students have to wait for answers to basic questions or can't access services at all, they struggle to enroll properly, to get the aid they need, to get the support they need, and to complete their degrees. That's not just bad for CUNY students, that's bad for all of New York City, which honestly couldn't function without CUNY graduates. ASAP/ACE is the best intervention we have.

**Testimony of
The Legal Aid Society
on**

Oversight: Addressing the Needs of Runaway and Homeless Youth

Intro. No. 54 - By Council Members Louis, Cabán, Yeger, Restler and Bottcher - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to financial literacy education in department of youth and community development programs

Intro. No. 976 - By Council Members Stevens, Louis, Richardson Jordan, Restler, Schulman, Hudson, Ung, Ayala and Abreu - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services and the department of youth and community development to report data on the LGBTQ homeless population

Intro. No. 977 - By Council Members Stevens, Louis, Restler, Schulman, Hudson, Ung, Abreu, Riley and Brewer - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring drop-in centers to participate in the streamlined intake process for runaway and homeless youth to transition into adult shelters

Submitted to

The New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

Submitted by

Theresa B. Moser
Staff Attorney, Juvenile Rights Practice

Hearing date: April 24, 2023

Introduction

We submit this testimony on behalf of The Legal Aid Society and thank Chair Stevens and all of the Youth Services Committee members for inviting our input regarding runaway and homeless youth (RHY) services in New York City.

The Legal Aid Society, the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal, and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform. The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 2,000 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession. Annually, our Civil Practice works on more than 52,500 individual legal matters on a wide range of legal issues affecting all aspects of our clients' lives. Our Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Court in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Last year, our Juvenile Rights staff represented more than 30,000 children. At the same time, our Criminal Practice handled nearly 220,000 cases for clients accused of criminal conduct.

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. Legal Aid, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed and settled *C.W. v. The City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in New York City. The Legal Aid Society has continued to advocate for thousands of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness since those landmark cases, including litigation to ensure their rights during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Legal Aid Society's LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit seeks to create, support, and sustain affirming and safer spaces, practices and policies for LGBTQ+ clients and staff within the organization and throughout New York City and New York State. Unit staff provide trainings on

sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to Legal Aid Society staff and are active in City and State legislative and policy reform efforts, coalition building, and public education through Know Your Rights and other presentations. The Unit also litigates issues that impact the lives of many LGBTQ+ New Yorkers. Whether it was the hard-fought victories to secure the right of transgender individuals, including youth, to receive Medicaid coverage for needed health treatments, or the ongoing fight to end police profiling of transgender women of color and the criminalization of LGBTQ+ identities, the LGBTQ+ Unit is ready to assist our clients in advancing liberation against state oppression.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload, the Society's law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York, and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

C.W. v. The City of New York

In December 2013, The Legal Aid Society (LAS) and Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. The City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in New York City.¹ The lawsuit sought, among other things, to create a right to youth shelter and increase the number of beds and services available to RHY. After years of litigation and extensive fact and expert discovery, the parties settled *C.W.*² Among other things, the settlement included provisions relating to maintaining an adequate number of youth shelter beds to accommodate the needs of 16 through 20 year-olds experiencing homelessness, and a requirement that the City “shall assist runaway and homeless youth in obtaining access to drop-in centers and residential services, including but not limited to supportive housing, rental assistance programs, and public housing programs.”³ We continue to monitor the City's compliance with the terms of the settlement, including reviewing data on bed utilization and receiving feedback from clients regarding shelter services. Most importantly, working with *C.W.* class members continues to provide us with guidance on what services are working well and where changes are needed.

Causes of Youth Homelessness

In 2013, a comprehensive survey by the New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care shed important light on the causes of youth homelessness. The top reasons for homelessness at that time were reported “fighting frequently with [] parents” (34%), being “kicked out” of the home (31%), “physical, mental or sexual abuse” (34%), “neglect or [a] parent not meeting basic needs” (26%),

¹ The amended complaint for *C.W. v. The City of New York* can be found at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/C.W.-Amended-Complaint.pdf>.

² The stipulation of settlement can be found at <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CW-filed-Proposed-Stipulation-and-Order-of-Settlement-2-14-20.pdf>. The final judgement was entered on December 11, 2020.

³ Id. at 6.

unwillingness to “live by parents’ rules” (20%), and parental use of drugs or alcohol (20%).⁴ Anecdotally, these statistics are reflected in the stories we hear from clients with whom we work and are distinct from the reasons adults become homeless. Often the choice to leave home is a survival strategy in and of itself. Remarkably, youth experiencing homelessness demonstrate incredible fortitude and resilience in the face of traumatic events, routine discrimination, and incredible systemic barriers.

Youth Experiencing Homelessness

By definition, RHY are disconnected from the very support systems that are intended to support adolescent development into adulthood, such as their families and schools. Even before a young person is considered runaway or homeless, they have likely experienced trauma. This trauma is exacerbated each day they are experiencing homelessness.

While it is difficult to explain all of the ways in which youth experience homelessness in New York City, there are common threads. Not surprisingly, homeless youth in New York face myriad dangers, obstacles, and simply frightening circumstances as they navigate the City trying to survive. Survival often involves entry into the street economy. Many homeless youth are pressured to trade sex for a place to sleep or shower and about one-third to one half of these youth exchange sex for money, food, or a place to stay.⁵ Many are victims of sex trafficking.⁶ These dangers expose them to a significantly heightened risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.⁷ For runaway or homeless youth with serious substance abuse issues, which often stem from the very chaotic and traumatic family histories that drive them to homelessness, options are limited. Programs are often abstinence based, and many of these youth need treatment, support, and time before they are able or ready to quit.⁸ RHY are at high risk of involvement with the juvenile or criminal legal system due to their homelessness.⁹ The lack of stability can also impact their ability to continue with school, or find and maintain employment.¹⁰ For these reasons, access to meaningful healthcare, including access to quality mental healthcare, and related services is particularly crucial for RHY. Despite the many challenges they face, RHY exhibit a common desire to be self-sufficient and yearn for the tools and ability to be successful in that pursuit. Because they do not share many of the

⁴ Lance Freeman and Darrick Hamilton for the New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care, *A Count of Unaccompanied Homeless Youths* in New York City, November 19, 2013.

⁵ Meredith Dank et al. The Urban Institute, *Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YSWW Engaged in Survival Sex*, February 2015; Marya Viorst Gwadz et al., *The initiation of homeless youth into the street economy*, 32 *Journal of Adolescence* 357, 358 (2009).

⁶ Ric Curtis et al., *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in New York City* (September 2008), available at http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/CSEC_NYC_Executive_Summary.pdf.

⁷ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, *The New York City Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Organizations’ State of the City’s Homeless Youth Report*, 2009.

⁸ Id.

⁹ See generally Id.; Dank, et al., supra; Youth Justice Board, Center for Court Innovation, *Homeless Not Hopeless: A Report on Homeless Youth and the Justice System in New York City*, June 2017.

¹⁰ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, supra.

characteristics of chronically homeless adults, it is critical to provide youth-specific shelter and services that increase their ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Chapin Hall's policy research initiative Voices of Youth Count has released numerous studies over the past decade to better evaluate and understand youth homelessness. Its sobering "Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America" report confirmed what previous research and anecdotal experience has shown: the longer a young person is homeless, the more difficult it is for them to rise out of this experience and "contribute to stronger families, communities, and economies."¹¹ The report goes on to support the idea that "to exit homelessness permanently, youth require housing and support services tailored to their unique developmental needs,"¹² and youth-specific shelter and services for which we have long advocated provide this opportunity.

Basic RHY Demographics and the Youth Count

Runaway and homeless youth 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 in emergency shelters. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines the population generally as being under 22 years of age for programs administered by Department of Health and Human Services.¹³ The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, on the other hand, includes unaccompanied youth under age 25 in its definitions of homelessness.¹⁴ In April 2017, New York State redefined RHY to include all eligible youth under the age of 25 and changed other portions of New York's Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which laid the groundwork for the New York City Council to pass landmark legislation in March 2018 extending the eligible age range for RHY services in New York City.

It is notoriously difficult to accurately count the number of runaway and homeless youth in New York City, and the inability of the City to reliably account for RHY has been a substantial and persistent barrier to the provision of adequate shelter and services. Currently, the only government-sponsored Youth Count is organized around the City's Point in Time (PIT) Count, also known as the Homeless Outreach Population Estimate and commonly referred to as the HOPE count, which takes place on a mid-winter night.¹⁵ Providers, advocates and young people have long argued that the PIT and Youth Counts miss substantial numbers of RHY. The reasons vary from arguments that the definition of RHY for the purposes of the count does not include significant parts of the population,

¹¹ Chapin Hall of the University of Chicago, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America, National Estimates*, November 2017, at <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Key Federal Terms and Definitions of Homelessness Among Youth*, February 2018.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Additional information about NYC's count, which is required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, is available here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dhs/outreach/hope.page>.

such as those couch-surfing or engaging in survival sex, to arguments that youth experiencing homelessness have an ability to blend into the fabric of the City and the methodology of the count was not designed to identify RHY. As Alexander Ray Perez testified during a prior Youth Services hearing in 2021, while the PIT count was designed to count adults who are unsheltered and often chronically homeless, youth homelessness “doesn’t always look like chronic street homelessness” and “if we look at how we approach helping youth in that way we are missing the mark [because] to be frank a lot of us are trying not to be seen.” Alexander added that when we force people to show up in an appropriate or “cookie cutter” way rather than let them show up as they are, we are disempowering youth and will as a result not adequately be able to include them in an accounting. At the same hearing, panelists voiced recommendations that DYCD increase street outreach to youth, and that DYCD engage with and compensate youth and young adults with lived experience to assist with outreach to young people who are invisible, or “trying not to be seen.”

Both the PIT and related Youth Count serve as an inadequate snapshot of homeless youth on a particular day rather than a census of youth with unstable housing situations who need City services. By our most reliable estimates, roughly 3,800 youth in New York City are homeless,¹⁶ and the City does not have nearly enough shelter beds—crisis or transitional independent living (TIL)¹⁷ — to serve this population.

It is also important to note that, as is the case with so many other marginalized and system-involved populations we work with, youth of color and LGBTQ/TGNC youth are vastly overrepresented in the RHY population. In the Voices of Youth Count survey, Hispanic, non-white youth had a 33% higher risk and Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk of experiencing homelessness than youth of other races.¹⁸ The risk of homelessness for unmarried parenting youth was 200% higher than for non-parenting youth.¹⁹ These results are consistent with the 2021 New York City Youth Count numbers. The 2021 Youth Count reported 71% of unsheltered youth and 36% of unstably housed youth as Latinx, while 14% of unsheltered youth and 59% of unstably housed youth identified as Black or African American.²⁰ Similarly, LGBTQ youth become homeless at a significantly higher rate than the adolescent population as a whole and are vastly overrepresented in the RHY population. Chapin Hall’s report indicated that LGBT youth have a 120% higher risk for homelessness.²¹ This is consistent with a 2011 report by the Empire State

¹⁶ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, The New York City Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Organizations, *State of the City’s Homeless Youth Report*, 2009.

¹⁷ The Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report for FY22 showed a total of 813 available residential beds for RHY. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2022/dycd.pdf>. This is certainly an improvement from 2013 when there were just 253 beds, prior the filing of Legal Aid’s lawsuit *C.W. v. City of New York*. However, it is still woefully insufficient to serve the number of RHY in New York City.

¹⁸ Chapin Hall of the University of Chicago, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America, National Estimates*, November 2017, at <https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf>.

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2021New_York_City_Youth_Count_Results.pdf.

²¹ Id.

Coalition of Youth and Family Services that cited studies showing that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth make up 25-40% of the homeless youth population in NYC and other large cities,²² compared with 3-6% of the general population.²³ In addition, the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services presented homeless youth census data showing that 5% of homeless youth identified as transgender and another 18% were unsure or chose not to answer the question about gender identity.²⁴ According to the City's 2021 Youth Count, 29% of unsheltered youth and 48% of unstably housed youth identified as a sexual orientation other than straight, and 12% of youth in unstable housing identified as transgender or gender nonbinary.²⁵ Many homeless youth are also immigrants, and like their older counterparts face additional challenges in accessing services and permanent housing, especially in the current political climate. Immigrant RHY cannot apply for financial aid and often cannot work legally, making it all the more difficult to stabilize.

Meeting the Needs of Homeless Young Adults (21 – 24 years)

In 2018, the New York City Council passed Local Law 88, which required DYCD to expand shelter services to homeless young adults ages 21 through 24.²⁶ While the law did not mandate DYCD to serve all young adults, the number of shelter beds DYCD has made available to 21-24-year-old New Yorkers is patently inadequate. Currently, while DYCD contracts with four service providers to provide a total of 60 shelter beds for this population, 15 of the 60 beds are not currently in operation. According to one DYCD provider's website "[f]or young people between the ages of 21-24, the wait can be as long as six months" for a bed in a RHY shelter.²⁷ As a result, many young adults seek shelter in the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). For example, in 2018 DHS temporarily housed 8,816 21-24-year-olds.²⁸ Additionally, the need for additional youth-specific beds for this population has increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in keeping with increased demand for all shelters across the City.

Local Law 88 expanded services to this age group because the Council understood that many 21-24-year-olds feel safer in youth shelters, as opposed to those operated by DHS. Additionally, and as we explained in our testimony in support of this bill in 2018, expanding DYCD services to include young adults is in line with brain development research and honors the nuanced needs of the

²² Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, New York City Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Organizations, *State of the City's Homeless Youth Report*, 2011 (citations omitted).

²³ http://news.gallup.com/poll/182051/san-francisco-metro-area-ranks-highest-lgbt-percentage.aspx?utm_source=Social%20Issues&utm_medium=newsfeed&utm_campaign=tiles.

²⁴ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, 2011, *supra*.

²⁵ https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2021New_York_City_Youth_Count_Results.pdf.

²⁶ New York City Council, Local Law 88 of 2018 (enacted Apr. 7, 2018), available at <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3337813&GUID=59621C3D-2453-4B95-9C04-DC32525DD602&Options=ID%7CText%7C&Search=556>.

²⁷ Ali Forney Center, Programs & Services, Emergency Housing Program, available at <https://www.aliforneycenter.org/housing-services>.

²⁸ Report of the New York City Youth Homelessness Task Force, available at Report of the New York City Youth Homelessness Task Force, page 6, available at http://youthtoday.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/09/Report-of-NYC-Youth-Homelessness-Taskforce_January-20191.pdf.

different populations. Youth shelters were created specifically for young people and are better suited to meet their needs, especially for RHY who identify as LGBTQ+ or who need mental health services. Indeed, in response to a Council Member's question during the hearing on Monday, April 24, 2023, one impacted young person stated that going to DHS shelter "was the most traumatic experience of [her] life." Simply put, more youth shelter space must be created to serve 21-24-year-olds in the DYCD continuum.

We appreciate that the Council issued a recommendation to fund an additional 40 youth shelter beds for homeless young adults in *Our Homelessness Crisis: The Case for Change*,²⁹ but we note that that report was issued in 2020, yet the number of beds for young adults has not been increased. **We applaud the Council's call for inclusion of baseline funding for 40 additional beds for homeless young adults in its FY2024 preliminary budget response;**³⁰ **we urge you to continue to fight for this funding, which in truth will only begin to meet the need.**

DYCD's 24-hour Drop-in Center Directive

Increasing the number of DYCD-funded shelter beds for young adults experiencing homelessness would also help to reduce the number of people seeking overnight refuge in DYCD 24-hour Drop-in Centers. We echo the sentiment expressed by the Coalition for Homeless Youth, RHY services provider organizations, and the Council itself that DYCD's January 13, 2023, directive requiring 24-hour drop-in centers to remove cots and prevent young people from sleeping is inhumane. While DYCD's deputy commissioner testified at the hearing on Monday that allowing young people to sleep at drop-in centers raised safety concerns, the reality is quite the opposite – young people seeking a safe place to rest will now be diverted to the subway, the streets, or other dangerous locations. Although the 24-hour drop-in centers are not licensed as youth shelters, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, the oversight agency for DYCD's RHY programs, has stated that the directive was not issued at its behest.³¹ As noted by many others, the 24-hour drop-in centers have been operating the same way since they opened; we are unaware of any injuries or other safety issues that have been caused by allowing young people to sleep. **We thank the Council for calling upon DYCD to retract its 24-hour drop-in center directive, and for demanding answers of the administration. We encourage you to continuing pushing the Adams Administration to find safer ways to ensure that young people have a safe place to sleep at night.**

Access to Permanent Housing

One way to ensure that young people have a safe place to go at night is to provide access to permanent housing. This is just as important for youth and young adults to stabilize and transition

²⁹ New York City Council, *Our Homelessness Crisis: The Case for Change*, (January 2020), available here: <https://council.nyc.gov/data/homeless/>.

³⁰ NYC Council's Response to the FY2024 Preliminary Budget and FY2023 Mayor's Management Report, p. 23, available at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/04/Fiscal-2024-Preliminary-Budget-Response-Final-1.pdf>.

³¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/25/nyregion/homeless-shelter-sleep-ban.html>.

from homelessness to independence as specialized services for young people. As youth and young adults are preparing to leave RHY programs in one of the most expensive cities in the country, it is imperative that they have access to permanent housing. Because of this, we lauded the City Council for passing Local Law 170 of 2021,³² which makes youth and young adults who have received services from DYCD RHY programs eligible for CityFHEPS rental assistance vouchers. We had long advocated for this benefit, which had been promised by the previous administration several years earlier.³³

Youth shelter is not a long-term solution, and it cannot be stated enough that providing young people in RHY programs with access to housing assistance will reduce the number of young people who are forced to transition from youth shelter to DHS, as well as the overall population of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. With the DHS shelter census at unprecedented levels, the position the NYC Department of Social Services has taken – that under Local Law 170, youth in DYCD RHY programs must enter DHS shelter to be eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers – is irrational, and it directly contradicts the intent of the law.³⁴ It is unconscionable that the Administration has taken this position, and we urge the Adams administration to revisit its interpretation and recognize that Local Law 170 provided categorical eligibility for CityFHEPS vouchers to youth experiencing homelessness, and that eligibility is not dependent on entering DHS shelter. **While we appreciate the Council calling upon the Administration to make youth leaving foster care categorically eligible for CityFHEPS,³⁵ we urge you to reiterate to the Administration that youth in DYCD RHY programs should also be categorically eligible.**

In addition, youth and young adults receiving services from DYCD RHY programs were eligible for a limited number of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) that became available during the COVID-19 pandemic. Critically, individuals receiving EHVs are also given the support of Housing Navigators to help them navigate New York City’s challenging housing market and the systems necessary to ensure their rental assistance is in place. Since housing navigators were funded through the EHV program in the DYCD system in FY21, available data shows that there has been a 350% increase in youth exiting homelessness to their own apartments. **We urge the City to fund these positions when federal funding runs out in June 2023.**

³² Local Law 170 of 2021, available at <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5146237&GUID=1A2F9094-0130-46E0-9C4A-D9A5AC55F8A5&Options=ID/Text/Text&Search=int+2405>. The Council at the same time passed Local Law 157 of 2021, providing access to CityFHEPS vouchers to youth leaving foster care to live on their own.

³³ Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City, 2017, page 20, available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/turning-the-tide-on-homelessness.pdf> (“In 2017, the City will... [e]xpand these rental assistance programs to include, for the first time, youth living in Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) youth shelters at risk of entering Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters”).

³⁴ See Grench and Maldonado, *Homeless Youth Get on Fast Track to Housing With New Council Bills*, The City, Nov. 23, 2021, available at <https://www.thecity.nyc/2021/11/23/22799621/homeless-youth-get-on-fast-track-to-housing-with-new-council-bills>.

³⁵ NYC Council’s Response to the FY2024 Preliminary Budget and FY2023 Mayor’s Management Report, p.13, available at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/04/Fiscal-2024-Preliminary-Budget-Response-Final-1.pdf>.

Similarly, in response to the priorities set forth in *Opportunity Starts with a Home: New York City's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness*,³⁶ funding was allocated for 16 full-time Peer Navigator positions across the DYCD-funded Drop-in Centers in FY23. These critical positions provide peer-to-peer support to some of the most vulnerable youth and young adults. If this funding is not maintained youth with lived experience will lose their jobs, and countless other youth will miss out on the benefit or peer-on-peer support. We appreciate the Council's call to baseline funding for both the housing navigators and the peer navigators in its FY2024 Preliminary Budget Response.³⁷

Migrant Youth in New York City

As testified to by Covenant House and others at the April 24th Youth Services Committee hearing, for the past year, the widely reported influx of migrants to New York City has included an unprecedented number of migrant youth who seek assistance from DYCD RHY services providers. However, these young people appear to go unnoticed by the current Administration. **The City must provide supports for these new, young New Yorkers, including ensuring that RHY providers have access to adequate translation services, funding for transportation to support family reunification, adequate immigration legal services, access to permanent housing and employment, and explicit policies directing supports for unaccompanied migrant youth who are minors.**

Legislation

Intro. No. 54-2022: This introduction would require DYCD-contracted youth employment programs, crisis shelters and transitional independent living support programs (TILs) to provide at least two hours of financial literacy education to all program participants. We support the Council's effort to ensure that youth and young adults participating in all relevant DYCD programs have access to financial literacy programming. We are aware that DYCD drop-in centers already receive funding to provide financial literacy education, but that crisis shelters and TILs do not. **We recommend that funding be made available to the crisis shelters and TILs to enable them to provide the same instruction that drop-in centers are funded to provide.**

Intro. No. 0976-2023: This introduction would require DHS, in collaboration with DYCD, to report quarterly on the number of LGBTQ homeless persons who inquire about or seek DHS and DYCD services, as well as the number of shelter beds reserved for such persons, and the rates and reasons, when given, that such beds are refused. We appreciate this initiative because ensuring accurate data about LGBTQ persons experiencing homelessness will enable the City to ensure that it is providing adequate and appropriate services to this population. We note, however, that the introduction

³⁶ Available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/press-releases/2022/NYC-Community-Plan-DIGITAL.pdf>.

³⁷ See fn 30, supra.

requires reporting the number of beds reserved for LGBTQ individuals, but DYCD programs are not permitted to reserve beds in this way.

Intro. No. 0977-2023: This introduction would require DYCD-funded drop-in centers to participate in the streamlined intake process when a young person ages out of the DYCD system or needs to transition to DHS shelter because DYCD programs are time limited or for other reasons. The streamlined intake process that is already in place under Local Law 81 of 2018 outlines the streamlined intake process for youth leaving DYCD-funded crisis shelters and TILs. The process was initially established due to a recognition that youth and young adults do not feel safe at DHS intake and assessment shelters, and that DYCD RHY services providers are able to provide information about them that DHS would otherwise be gathering during its intake process. Local Law 81 requires, with the consent of the youth, that the DYCD RHY services provider share demographic and social services information for a youth in advance of their presentation to DHS. DYCD-funded drop-in centers are able to share the relevant information, and allowing them to perform this service should also help to alleviate the number of youth who need to rely upon drop-in centers as a place to lay their heads. We thank the Council for putting forward this bill which will ensure that all youth and young adults who need to transition to DHS will be able to do so more easily.

Conclusion

We again thank the Youth Services Committee for its continued oversight of DYCD and the youth shelter system in New York City. We look forward to working with the larger RHY community and the Council on this and related advocacy going forward.

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Testimony of Justyna Jagielnicka, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

New York City Council's Hearing - Higher Education

April 20th, 2023 CITY COUNCIL

My name is Justyna Jagielnicka, I am a CUNY Alumna and I currently work at the Borough of Manhattan Community College as a College Discovery Program Counselor. I am a licensed mental health professional and it is because of my CUNY education I have reached a middle class status. I am very proud to work in CUNY where, I get to support students on their educational journeys. So as a former CUNY student and a current counselor in an opportunity program I know first-hand how investing in CUNY means investing in our students.

Today I am asking the city council committee to reject any cuts to CUNY's budget because CUNY students need access to well-funded academic programs and services so they can graduate! All CUNY students deserve access to academic advisement, counseling and tutoring services.

College Discovery is a student cohort program, commonly referred to as a success program. Every CUNY two-year institution has a CD Program and its equivalent SEEK in a four-year institution. CD/SEEK students on average have a greater need for housing, food security and financial stability. They are referred to as a population who otherwise might not be admitted to college; their HS average is below 80% and over 50% of them have to complete remedial courses in math, reading, and writing. When accepted into the CD program, students are assigned a counselor, they are provided tailored CD Freshmen Year Experience courses, they receive tutoring services, and a stipend every semester to purchase books, meals, pay rent, etc. Students who are accepted into CD Program receive six semesters of aid, plus four more semesters to complete a bachelor's degree when they transfer to their 4-year institution. This allows them to complete their degrees without incurring any costs. I want to emphasize that **College Discovery students, on an average present greater financial, academic and personal need; and despite this detriment to their educational career, CD students graduate at higher rates than non-CD students.** This can only be achieved with enhanced resources made readily available through appropriate funding. CD students excel when provided with well-funded resources. Access to professional counselors, academic advisors, tutoring services and enhanced financial aid is the bedrock foundation to not only the success of CD students but to CUNY students as a whole. It is my belief that EVERY CUNY student NEEDS and DESERVES this level of investment! It is unconscionable how CUNY students are facing looming cuts instead of greater investment into their success!

Unfortunately, the average CUNY student does not have access to services that CD/SEEK/ASAP programs offer. And with the looming cuts, the very services that CUNY students rely on will be reduced.

To cut CUNY's budget it means there are less advisors available to assist students in their quest to graduation. Students, especially first generation college students need essential information such as how

to enroll in classes, apply for financial aid and to generally navigate the CUNY system. Academic advisors play a crucial role: they de-mistify the higher ed experience so students can take advantage of all the resources CUNY has to offer. Cutting CUNY's budget means there are no academic advisors to help students file re-admit paperwork, complete financial aid appeals, provide pre-law and transfer advisement.

Without academic advisement services, students experience major delays in receiving assistance with registration. Students on academic probation are at a greater risk to get dismissed from college. Cutting funding for those crucial academic services is detrimental to students' experience in CUNY. It results in students stopping out of college and never receiving their college degree.

If "it takes a village to raise a child" then it takes a 'CUNY village' to help a student graduate. For poor New Yorkers the decision to go to college can both stressful and exciting. Many CUNY first year students are committed to their academic career but need wrap-around services that are being cut with the mayor's proposed PEGs. Without accessible academic advisement services students are less likely to graduate and transfer to a senior college. Our communities, and local economy, need students to graduate; and to graduate on time.

I urge you to recognize the need to FUND CUNY and NOT cut our funding! THANK YOU!

Berkis Cruz-Eusebio

Hostos Community College

I am the only ASAP staff member who has worked through the multiple changes and program expansions in 16+ years. **I have been in the ASAP Program since it started in 2007.** I started as a Job Developer with **100 students in my placement caseload**, and in 2009, the program exceeded its graduation projections: We graduated 50% of our cohort in two years—even though the goal was 50% in three years.

My current caseload is 940 students with a projected 550 new students starting college in Fall 2023. My position no longer involves job placement as it is a conflict with academic retention and degree completion, nonetheless students' basic needs need to be covered. If there are cuts to the budget, **What kind of quality service am I expected to provide to 1400+ students in 35 hours per week?** In fact, **ASAP needs more career specialists that prepare students to join the workforce as opposed to the benefits' dependent rolls.**

ASAP provides a comprehensive model to help students succeed and its results are proven. The program has been replicated in Westchester County, Ohio, California, Tennessee, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. **Why cut funding to a program that is good for 6 others states and one county to replicate? ASAP students graduate within three years at more than double the rate of non-ASAP students.**

Besides achieving a degree, programs like **ASAP offer low-income students a unique opportunity: Become part of something successful, positive and that opens doors for their future careers.** You heard this before, our **students don't come prepared for college life**, usually are first generation students with no support with educational goals, have financial constraints and need jobs to support their families, and the complex issues they need assistance resolving; **however, they have the right to receive a quality education just like any kid in the suburbs.**

Budget cuts should really be applied to programs that do not meet their targets or don't produce measurable results. Our students don't have the time or taste to wait another four years to get a degree. **They want to continue in an Accelerated program that helps them break out of the poverty cycle.** How much is the city willing to shell out in benefits for **the 25,000 students ASAP helps annually? THEY ARE POTENTIAL TAXPAYERS.**

The mayor should not be looking at education as an expense: it is an investment. He should look to cut "pork", like funding for politician's organizations that are under investigation for inappropriate behavior or crimes; non-essential services for the high salaried administrators—**why should the city pay the rent and chauffeur services for someone making \$360,000 per year?** They should be able to cover their own rent—*like every other New Yorker.*

The Mayor needs to look somewhere else to cut funding. Successful higher education programs should not be in the chopping block because

We DO stuff in NYC. "WE GET MORE DONE BY 8 AM THAN OTHERS GET DONE IN A DAY."

This was the best life changing experience for me! There was a flyer in my building hallway lobby by NYCHA REES offering FREE construction training and I signed up right away. Being that I was unemployed, I had time to apply myself to the 8 weeks program while earning FREE certifications and I did just that. I've learned so much in that short time frame such as how to drill, nail, saw, read blueprints, build a drywall with a light fixture, lay tiles, paint an entire room etc. I also had the greatest instructors that made sure I succeeded and did as well as I wanted to do while reaching out to different unions and employers on my behalf while I was working on my certifications so I could start work when I completed. I got my OSHA 30, SST, flagger, scaffolding, paint, mold & bedbug awareness, cpr, and more. About 2 months after receiving all my FREE certifications I received a call from union local 79 offering to sponsor me into the union AND giving me a job. I work full time Monday thru Friday and the pay is GREAT!!! I've been with them for 9 months and counting working on a NYCHA project in Linden houses. I'm a general laborer so my assignments switch from day to day which I love because I get to learn different things. Being that I'm new in this field, I make sure to network with the contractors, learn as much as possible, go to my union meetings/classes, and just basically anything I can do to evolve in this industry. But I couldn't have done any of this without the NRTA NYCHA REES PROGRAM! Not only do I have a great job with benefits, I have a career because of them! Oh and if for any reason I wasn't working right now NYCHA REES would help me find employment without hesitation as to why they check up on me still to this day. I'll never be able to thank them enough but THANK YOU GUYS SO MUCH!!!

kokobenz718@icloud.com

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Mary Achi. I am an alum at Young Invincibles. I want to thank the New York City Council, especially the Committee on Higher Education, for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I am here today to share my support for ASAP Programs at CUNY.

We all can agree that college is hard, It takes a great toll on our mental, physical and financial skills. College can be a challenging time for any student. Between balancing coursework, extracurricular activities, and jobs. College students have a lot on their plate.

One of the biggest struggles a college student faces is financial burden. Many students take on debt in order to pay for tuition, room and board, and textbooks. This debt can impact a student's finances well after graduation, making it difficult to establish themselves financially in the years to come. Additionally, the cost of college can make it difficult for students to pursue their passions, as they may be forced to choose a more financially stable career rather than pursuing their dream job.

Established in 2007 in the City University of New York, the ASAP program provides comprehensive support services to low-income students, with the goal of helping

them complete their associate degrees as quickly as possible. The program has been incredibly successful, with students enrolled in the program graduating at a rate more than double the rate of their peers.

So what makes the ASAP program so effective? For starters, the program provides a range of financial and academic support services to students. This includes tuition waivers and textbook vouchers, as well as academic counseling and tutoring services. These resources can be critical for students who may be struggling with academic, financial, or personal challenges, and they can help to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

I am currently attending Laguardia college and in the Asap program. Personally, This program has helped me deeply. I have received a metro-card, which has helped my commute to school, textbooks, tuition waiver, which has left me debt-free, tutoring on all subjects, which has helped me in keeping up in class & understanding materials. And academic counseling, where I meet with my assigned advisor, who advises me on what classes are best for my

major, and talks about any issues I have., every month. With such benefits, it makes college less stressful and worry-free and lets me focus on studying and understanding better. Without the ASAP program, I wouldn't know what to do and I know some other students feel the same way too. The Asap Program is an extra hand, I didn't know I needed.

The program aims to increase graduation and transfer rates by providing financial, academic, and personal support to students. The ASAP program offers a range of benefits, including priority registration, financial assistance, dedicated advisors, and career services. Since its launch in 2007, the program has shown significant success, with graduation rates of ASAP students doubling compared to their non-ASAP peers. The ASAP program has been proven to increase graduation rates among students. According to a study by the Community College Research Center, students in the ASAP program are 15% more likely to graduate within three years than students who are not in the program. This is a huge improvement, as graduation rates for community college students in general are often quite low.

One of the most impressive aspects of the ASAP program is that it is not only helping students complete their degrees, but it is also helping them achieve greater success after graduation. ASAP graduates have gone on to earn higher salaries and achieve higher levels of educational attainment than their peers who did not participate in the program.

In conclusion, the Asap program is an important initiative that can have a significant impact on the lives of college students. By increasing graduation rates and providing students with the support they need to succeed, the program is helping to ensure that every student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential. So if you are a student, I highly encourage you to consider participating in the Asap program and taking advantage of the resources and support it offers.

Thank you for your time.

My name is Salvatore Pisciotta, and I have worked at Queensborough Community College since July of 2015. I began work as an English tutor and then moved into Academic Advisement, where I served as an advisor from March 2016 until February 2020, when I began work as an advisor with the ASAP program.

In my time in working with ASAP, I have worked with hundreds of students, and I have seen these students grow in their confidence, their abilities and critical thinking skills, and their understanding of the world around them. The ASAP program has played a vital role in the success these students have experienced.

Many of our students are first-generation college students. For such first-generation students, ASAP provides a vital service in helping students acclimate to college life, stay on track, develop professional skills, and graduate.

I have worked with many students who have begun their journey doubting whether college was for them or feeling like they did not belong. By the time of graduation, these students felt that they not only belonged in college, but they also saw vast improvements in academic achievement, interpersonal skills, and confidence. Many of our students go on to study for their Bachelor's degrees, they take part in internship experiences, and they obtain admission into competitive programs. They leave ASAP with a plan and a direction.

With our personalized advisement and one-on-one meetings, these students are able to make connections and build rapport at Queensborough. The community-building is a vital part of keeping students enrolled in college and moving forward. Our conversations are holistic, ensuring students not only are doing well academically, but that they are receiving necessary services within the community as well. Many students report never having had the kind of support that ASAP offers.

Compared to non-ASAP students, we see greater levels of retention, graduation, and academic achievement. While the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly hurt enrollment figures, Queensborough ASAP is still serving thousands of students. As of 2020-2021 data, Queensborough is one of the most diverse campuses in the United States, with 31% of new students identifying as Black, 29% Hispanic, and 23% Asian/Pacific Islander, and the campus overall representing 111 countries and 67 different languages. To cut ASAP funding is to hurt our students, many of whom are members of under-represented groups in higher education, low-income, or first-generation students.

ASAP is a lifeline for these students.

In e-mails and messages I have received from students over the years, they have thanked me for my work as an advisor, under the guidelines of ASAP advisement practices. While anonymized, selections read as follows:

"If it wasn't for all of you, I wouldn't be able to be here after all the hardship and medical challenges I've faced these past three years. "

"I would like to thank you for all of your help and guidance throughout my two year college experience. [...] I hope that you continue to do the great things you are doing."

Stephanie Jerome

ASAP Cohort 4 QCC

ASAP Recruitment Specialist

When I entered community college I was so uncomfortable with the idea of being a community college student because of the stigma surrounding community college. When I got to ASAP I was welcomed by the ASAP staff with open arms. At that time, my father was ill and had recently went blind and had his leg amputated all within the same time frame of me starting my journey as a college student.

When I got to ASAP, I didn't just feel like I was a part of a program, I felt like I was family. The guidance that I received from ASAP was unlike any other. I wasn't an academically achieving student in high school and thought that would translate into college. However, with the assistance from ASAP, my books, transportation, my tuition, personalized advisement, support resources and priority registration I excelled in college.

If it wasn't for this program I do not believe I would have been able to believe in myself. I graduated on the Dean's List with multiple scholarships and continued to do my bachelor's and my masters at Baruch College and am currently finishing my Doctoral E.d.D.

My passion for this program grew by the day and I made it my mission to encourage and inspire all students across ASAP entering community college. This led me right back into the arms of the ASAP program as an employee and it felt like home.

ASAP has not only given me the equitable opportunity to succeed but gave me purpose. Working for this program now I am practicing my purpose daily and I get to be the first face to introduce thousands of students into ASAP.

I went from a student to ASAP student ambassador to recruitment coordinator to student advisor and now the recruitment specialist. I have seen all facets of the program and have seen a transition in ASAP the last 13 years. The budget cuts that have been inflicted to CUNY have already made an impact. I would like to continue to work with students to inspire their purpose.

I have been working for the ASAP Program since 2012 and have seen how budget cuts over the years have already dwindled this program down to a shell of what it was. It has become increasingly more difficult to meet our goal of graduating 50% of our students within 3yrs, primarily because we are incapable of providing the support & opportunities that we once did. When I started working for ASAP, we were able to provide numerous activities for students, including Broadway show trips, trips to a variety of businesses (so students could learn about different types of careers), ASAP sections of classes (smaller size & meetings with professors), ASAP orientations with outside groups, as well as numerous on campus activities. What this provided was exposure to experiences that students may not normally have and a more hands-on college experience.

With the decline of funding over the years, we have seen a significant drop in student graduation rates. Without the extra experiences and events, students lack the connection to the college, peers, and the ASAP program. Where we once easily graduated 50% within 3 years, has now become a struggle where we are often falling short of our goal. This is despite our best efforts to provide opportunities and activities with a reduced budget.

With the reduction in our budget in December 2022, we were unable to provide funding for all students taking Winter section courses and were unable to provide book stipends or Metrocards for these students as well. For several students, this led to them being unable to successfully complete their Winter course(s). We've already begun to tell our students to expect the same for Summer.

The ASAP Program has been studied and replicated across the country & has been touted as a means by which to reduce student loans, increase graduation rates, and actually save the government millions of dollars every year. Sadly, like nearly every government funded program that actually improves the lives of it's citizens, funding has been reduced to drastic levels, rendering the program ineffective. One has to wonder why our government continues to diminish the opportunities for it's citizens, especially one who was designed to help our minority populations.

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Appearance Card

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Name: Berki Cruz-Eusebio

Address: Protona Avenue

I represent: PSC / ANP Housing

Address: Broadway

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Name: Penny Lewis

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I represent: PSC / CUNY

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Name: Matthew Arrers

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I represent: CUNY City Tech

Address: 300 Jay Street

H5AP

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Name: Dr. Carol Manifold
Address: Assistant Dean for Administration
I represent: CUNY L. nysboro CC
Address: 2001 Oriental Blvd Brooklyn NY

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Name: Christine Brongniart
Address: University Executive Director - CUNY ASAP
I represent: CUNY - Central Office
Address: 16 Court Street, Brooklyn NY 11241

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Name: Alicia Alvero
Address: Associate Vice Chancellor - Academic
I represent: Affairs Office
Address: CUNY Central Office 205 East 42nd Street