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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

NEW YORK ALLIANCE FOR
NY4ECP
EARLY COLLEGE PATHWAYS

11 June 2026

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

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

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members:

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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

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

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee,

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

Sexual Assault Initiative (SAI)

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

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

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

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

Sexual Assault Examiner Training Institute

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

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

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

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

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

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

OutSmartNYC

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

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

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

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

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

Closing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER
Building a Better Bronx

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

May 13, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Shaniqua Saxon

Shaniqua Saxon, LCSW

Changing Futures Program Director

North Brooklyn COALITION

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Board Officer Member

Dana Christensen
Secretary

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

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

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

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

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

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

info@northbrooklyncoalition.org
Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

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

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Leana Pardo

info@northbrooklyncoalition.org
Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

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

June 10, 2026

Ensuring Access to Support for LGBTQ+ Survivors of Violence

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

aray@avp.org 917-334-8618

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

AVP's Support from City Council

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Major Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Client stories

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Looking Forward to Fiscal Year 2027

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

NEW YORK CITY ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT (AVP)

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

Who we are

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

Programs and Services

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

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

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

AVP is requesting the follow City Council support for FY27

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

thank you!

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

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

EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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

JUNE 10, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I. BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

III. THE EEOC ABANDONS DISPARATE IMPACT LIABILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[17] N.Y.C. Admin. Code § 8-107(17).

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

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

IV. THE ROLE OF THE CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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

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

V. UNDERFUNDING CCHR UNDERMINES CITY GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[25] *Id.*

[26] *Id.*

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

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

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

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

VIII. CREATING A MORE RESPONSIVE AND BETTER RESOURCED CCHR

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

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

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[27] *Id.*

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

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

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

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

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

June 2026

Contact
Raabia Qasim, Associate Policy Counsel | 212.382.6655 | rqasim@nycbar.org

Testimony Submitted by:

Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director, New York Common Pantry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SNAP

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maintain Funding for the NYCBenefits Program

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

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

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

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

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

Maintain $15M for Feeding Our Communities

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

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

Increase Support for SNAP Case Management Services

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

Support Collaborative, Community-Led Solutions

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

Fund SNAP-Ed Continuation with $10M

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

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

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

New York Common Pantry

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

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

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

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

# # #

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

DeafBlind Inclusion: Economic and Social Justice Starts with Workforce Development

Image One



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

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

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

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

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

Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

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

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

The Budget as a Justice Document

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

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

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

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

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

Governing Audaciously for Bicyclists

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

Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

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

Economic Exclusion Is an Economic Justice Issue

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

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

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

Workforce Development Cannot Exclude Disabled New Yorkers

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

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

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

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

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

Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

Safman consulting

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

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

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

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

A Modest, Comparable Investment

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

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

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

What $10 Million Would Build

Ten million dollars invested in disability infrastructure could support:

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

Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

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

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

1. Stacia Bach, Nathan Thomas & Megan Henly, Inst. on Disability, Univ. of N.H., *American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 Data on People Who Are DeafBlind* (2024), prepared for Marc Safman, using American Community Survey 2022 1-Year and 5-Year Estimates
2. United States Enters Into a Settlement With New York City Housing Authority to Resolve Alleged Violations of the Americans With Disabilities Act, U.S. Attorney's Office, E.D.N.Y. (Mar. 3, 2026), https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/united-states-enters-settlement-new-york-city-housing-authority-resolve-alleged (announcing settlement requiring NYCHA to provide interpreters, auxiliary aids, accessible devices, and communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents).
3. Emma Delk, Menin Wants Mamdani to Give DCWP $32 Million More, City & State N.Y. (May 29, 2026), https://www.cityandstateny.com/policy/2026/05/mamdani-has-placed-dcwp-front-and-center-menin-wants-him-give-it-32m-more/413836/.
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5. Dave Colon, Locked In: Mamdani Proposes $25M for Long-Sought Secure Bike Parking, Streetsblog N.Y.C. (Mar. 5, 2026), https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2026/03/05/locked-in-mamdani-proposes-25-million-for-long-awaited-secure-bike-parking; Streetsblog N.Y.C., The City Wants To Know Where You Want Secure Bike Parking (May 4, 2026), https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2026/05/04/the-city-wants-to-know-where-you-want-secure-bike-parking.
6. N.Y.C. Council Fin. Div., supra note 4, at 5.
7. Id.

Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

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

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

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

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

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

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Exhibit 1 Marc
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Marc Safman
[redacted]
marc@safmanconsulting.com
www.safmanconsulting.com

newyorkedge.org

My name is Aaron Culver and I am a student at City-As-School.

I attend New York Edge's Beacon Program at my school where I participate in weightlifting, Music Production, open studio, internships, and help the elementary after-school program.

New York Edge has helped me to become a more outgoing, patient, and responsible person. It has helped me step out of my comfort zone and taught me to be ready for new challenges and opportunities, as well as to expect the unexpected no matter what. My favorite New York Edge memories have involved the support of the staff, and how we help the community with events and services.

The staff at New York Edge and these experiences have helped me shape who I am today and to see my future more clearly. It has given me the confidence to plan for it. It has also helped my parents by giving me a safe and supportive place to go after school. I am very grateful for the opportunities New York Edge has given me, and the positive impact it has had on my life.

Please vote to increase funding to New York Edge in the upcoming city budget. Investing in New York Edge means investing in students like me.

Thank You.

My name is Ophelia Lei and I am a student at City As School.

During my time here, I have been a part of the New York Edge Beacon program. This program gives students many great things to do. I have taken part in music production, cooking classes, professional internships, gym activities, and the community food pantry. I have also gone on educational trips, toured different college campuses, and helped with neighborhood block parties.

New York Edge has truly helped me grow into a better and more mature person. It taught me how to talk to all kinds of different people, try new things, and welcome new opportunities. Most importantly, it gave me a chance to work with younger kids. This experience is very important to me because my dream is to become a child psychologist in the future. My favorite memories from New York Edge are the times I spent helping the younger children and working together with the staff to make our events successful.

New York Edge has helped me so much with my education and my goals for the future. The staff really care about my success. Plus, it gives my parents peace of mind knowing I have a safe place to be every afternoon.

Please vote to increase funding for New York Edge in the upcoming city budget. This program does so much to help local families and keep kids on the right track. When you invest in New York Edge, you are really investing in the growth and success of students like me.

Thank you.

newyorkedge.org

NYC Council
FY 27 Executive Budget Hearings
Public Session

Hon. Linda Lee, Chair
NYC Council Finance Committee

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

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

New York Edge is New York City's longest-standing and largest school-based provider of afterschool and summer programming, serving almost 33,000 students across 134 schools in 37 of the 51 Council Districts, including 4 Beacon Centers and 21 Community Schools. We also operate 4 food pantries in Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. We proudly offer culturally responsive programming rooted in academic enrichment, sports, health & wellness, visual and performing arts, STEM, leadership and college & career readiness – with social emotional learning intentionally woven throughout everything we do.

Our testimony today is in support of our FY 27 citywide funding requests:

- **$1.5M under the Council's After-School Enrichment;**
- **$250,000 under the Council's Social & Emotional Supports for Students initiative.**

For over three decades, the New York City Council has been a vital partner in helping us to fulfill our mission. Council citywide funding allows us to enrich our programs, to operate when schools are in recess and to offer special trips and events on Saturdays.

Since 2020, we have tripled in size and have significantly increased the number of students served. Our Council citywide funding, however, has remained flat at $1M. My team and I ask for your help and support as we seek increased funding in the upcoming budget in alignment with this growth and in alignment with our impact and scale.

New York Edge was created 34 years ago 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 Education Team, comprised of educators with expertise in curriculum, professional coaching, and program development with a focus on leadership, integrated technologies, literacy and STEAM, take learning beyond the traditional classroom walls. Core components of New York Edge programming include:

- STEM Education
- Social Emotional Learning and Leadership
- Visual & Performing Arts
- Sports, Health & Wellness
- Academics and College & Career Readiness
- Summer Programs

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

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

- 98% of school principals would recommend New York Edge;
- 96% of New York Edge parents say that New York Edge programming prepares their child for success;
- 80% of school principals see stronger SEL behaviors (leadership, decision-making, goal setting) in their students as a result of New York Edge programming.

Our success is due to the New York Edge Difference:

- A Whole Child Approach;
- Prioritizing Social & Emotional Learning;
- High-Quality Curriculum;
- Close Partnership with School Leadership and Parents;
- Flexibility & Adaptability;
- Capacity & Infrastructure;
- Experienced, Culturally Competent Staff.

All of us at New York Edge are proud to serve New York City's K-12 students of all ages, races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Our offerings are culturally relevant programs, tailored to students' needs and interests, and rooted in social-emotional learning. SEL is integrated into every element of our programming.

Our model for aiding social emotional learning includes robust academic and personal wellness support, and trauma-informed strategies. We blend the critical elements that support an appreciation of cultural diversity with the core SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness, social capital and decision-making into all academic curriculum and extracurricular activities. We are, as identified by Mosaic by ACT, the largest after-school provider in the nation offering SEL supports.

New York Edge school-based programs run before or after the school day, year-round (including Saturdays, over the summer, and holiday periods). City Council citywide funding has enabled New York Edge to enrich and expand our school year and summer programs and provide students with opportunities that expose them to real-world experiences and major stages.

Through this support, students participate in innovative programs such as our award-winning student-led podcast Formative, our Book Publishing Program, Read Across New York Edge, our Music Industry Program with Republic Records, creative technology experiences through our

Animation Studio and Makers Club, our ballet dance program inspired by Misty Copeland, and culinary learning through collaboration with Jamie Oliver and the Food Explorers program. These are just a few examples of how City Council support allows us to bring high-quality, engaging opportunities to thousands of young people across New York City.

Our programs are designed to put young people on the biggest stages and in real-world environments so they can see what is possible for their future. New York Edge students perform at Radio City Music Hall and compete in flag football championships at MetLife Stadium. These experiences help our students see themselves as the next generation of leaders, athletes, artists, and innovators, expanding their vision for what they can achieve in school and in life.

Funding under the *Social & Emotional Supports for Students* Initiative will enable us to support our current SEL programming providing high quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning assessments, curriculum and resources to all of our partner schools, the students we serve and their families. At New York Edge, social-emotional learning helps students feel a real sense of belonging and connection. When students feel safe and supported, they are more confident participating in class and in afterschool programs.

Our programs help students build positive peer relationships and learn how to work through conflicts in healthy ways. This creates a more respectful environment where students can focus on learning. SEL helps students develop self-awareness and emotional regulation, giving us tools to manage stress, frustration, and challenges that can otherwise distract us from our schoolwork. Through our programs, students build motivation and engagement in learning, which leads to better attendance, stronger participation, and improved academic performance.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the Council's past support. The time has come, however, where increased funding is vitally needed. Unlike contracts with DYCD and other agencies, Council discretionary contracts are not eligible for COLA increases. This is making it increasingly difficult for New York Edge to attract and

maintain quality staff and to continue to offer the wide array of STEM, SEL, Visual & Performing Arts, Sports, Health & Wellness and College & Career Readiness programs that we are known for.

We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 27 citywide funding requests. These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New York City Council
Committee on Finance

FISCAL YEAR 2027
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING

Testimony of the New York Immigration Coalition
June 10, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

★ Protect All New Yorkers from Federal Overreach

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

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

★ Ensure Civic and Political Inclusion of All

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

★ Advance Economic Justice for Immigrant New Yorkers

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

★ Foster Healthy Communities for All New York Families

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

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

★ Invest in Quality Education for Immigrant Students

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:

Vladimir Tlali
Senior Policy Strategist
New York Immigration Coalition

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

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

Udai Tambar
President and CEO

Presented by
Scott Daly
Senior Director
Community Affairs

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

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

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

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

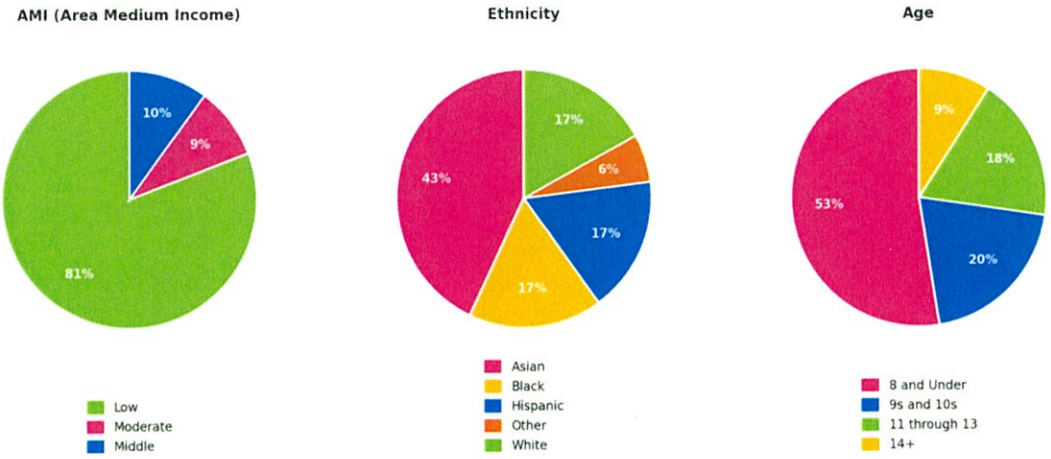
School-Time Tennis Program (STP) - Physical education teachers are trained by NYJTL's professionally certified coaches on how to incorporate tennis into their school's curriculum. NYJTL traditionally holds 6 training sessions each school year serving approximately 200 teachers/schools. All teachers and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

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

<u>Impact through CTP</u>

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

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS



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

** This data is from Fiscal Year 2025.

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

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

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

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

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

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

NYLPI
JUSTICE THROUGH COMMUNITY POWER

New York Lawyers
for the Public Interest, Inc.
151 West 30th Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001-4017
Tel 212-244-4664 Fax 212-244-4570
TTY 212-244-3692 www.nylpi.org

Testimony of Justin Wood
Director of Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
to the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Hearing on the FY27 Executive Budget
On June 10, 2026

Good morning, my name is Justin Wood, and I am the Director of Policy at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to comment on the proposed FY27 Executive Budget. New York's immigrant communities, disability communities, community-based organizations, and environmental justice communities have been under increasing strain in the past year. The federal administration has marginalized groups with political attacks, revocation of funding, and other hostile tactics intended to chill advocacy, and cut services to people in need. We are grateful for the Council's support of NYLPI's work on Immigrant Health, Nonprofit Defense, and Mental Health Peer Support, and respectfully request enhancements of these initiatives for FY27.

We share your deep concern that lifesaving services and infrastructure are under severe threat from federal cuts to Medicaid, education, renewable energy programs, and infrastructure enacted in H.R. 1 in 2025. We appreciate the efforts of this Council and the Mamdani Administration to protect New York City's most vulnerable communities. In that spirit, we offer a number of specific budget priorities (grouped by City Council Committee) to advance health justice, environmental justice, and disability justice in New York City.

1. Civil and Human Rights

New York City Commission on Human Rights

New York City Commission on Human Rights ("CCHR") provides unique services not available anywhere else: prosecuting violations of the New York City Human Rights Law on behalf of *pro se* litigants and conducting CCHR-led

investigations regarding systemic issues based on a report of discrimination in an individual matter. While this agency has always been critical for all New Yorkers, the urgency of fully funding CCHR has rapidly increased under a federal administration that has continued dismantling decades of anti-discrimination law.

As a result of years of budget cuts, CCHR is now operating well below capacity. Justice requires a significant budget and staffing increase to adequately protect New Yorkers. We ask that the final FY27 Budget restore all proposed cuts and fully fund CCHR at $25 million.

2. Education

Special Education

We commend the Administration for recognizing the need to strengthen special education services and for proposing significant investments in staffing and support for students with disabilities. We are encouraged by recent significant declines in due process cases.

We agree with the Council that expanding special education capacity within New York City's public schools is an important and morally necessary step. Any effort to reduce expenditures associated with private school placements, however, must be accompanied by meaningful improvements in the educational options available to students with disabilities within the public school system.

The most effective long-term strategy for reducing reliance on private school tuition payments is to expand and improve public school options, particularly inclusive programs that allow students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers, whenever appropriate. For many years, families have reported that there are simply not enough seats in highly sought-after inclusive programs such as AIMS, NEST and Horizon, which support students with autism. While

these programs demonstrate the success of inclusive educational models, limited capacity leaves many students without access to placements that meet their needs.

3. Environmental Protection and Waterfronts

Building Decarbonization and Energy Affordability

We applaud the Administration's new policies and funding to continue moving us toward a net-zero future. Funding the decarbonization of NYCHA housing, expansion of public transit and bike lanes, modernizing a critical bus terminal, shifting waste disposal from truck to barge, establishing Local Law 97 reporting platform and increasing electric vehicles are all among NYLPI's and our Environmental Justice partners' priorities. This is the leadership we need at a moment when federal and state leaders are retreating from climate action.

We enthusiastically support the City's pilot program to engage the public in utility rate and regulatory proceedings. This is of critical importance to combat the misinformation driving the public away from renewable energy, and NYLPI looks forward to collaborating with the City in this work.

Addressing Inland Flooding

Up to 1.6 million people in the New York City region live in flood-exposed areas and as many as 82,000 housing units could be lost due to flooding by 2040. This crisis directly threatens the safety, financial stability, and health of Black and Brown communities that experience disproportionate rates of flooding and lack of access to capital due to historic redlining, and poor sewer infrastructure. Home resiliency and sewer infrastructure improvements save money and save lives. In disadvantaged, flood-prone communities, every dollar spent on flood mitigation yields $13 in recovery savings.

We are encouraged that the FY27 budget includes $208 million for projects in heat- and flood-vulnerable communities. We urge that this funding prioritize repairs of shared and private sewer lines in disadvantaged communities suffering from chronic inland flooding and protecting our city's most vulnerable in extreme heat events.

We Council's passage of Local Law 70 of 2025, creating a Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan and Dashboard, and Local Law 87 of 2025, creating a Southeast Queens Flooding Adaptation Assistance Task Force, and urge continuing oversight of program implementation by DEP. We also hope to ensure that the $2.6 billion authorized for the Southeast Queens Mitigation Plan in 2018 is properly and rapidly implemented.

4. Government Operations

Implementation of the Close Rikers and Renewable Rikers Acts

Rikers Island is infamous for inhumane conditions and excessive violence and has become a symbol of a broken criminal legal system in which most detainees are men of color from low-income communities around the City. NYLPI strongly supports legislation requiring the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to submit a detailed master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes, including wastewater treatment, and renewable energy generation and storage by the end of 2026. We urge that the FY27 budget fund the completion of this plan.

Energy Demand Response

We are pleased to see that FY27 budget includes substantial revenue generated by the City's energy demand response (DR) program. This program has enrolled agency offices, schools, museums, and other public buildings in reducing air

conditioning, lighting, and other unnecessary electricity usage during summer peaks. This reduces strain on the electrical grid, saves money, reduces reliance on highly polluting and expensive fossil fuel peaker plants sited in environmental justice communities.

While DCAS has reported that the program achieves 120 MW in peak electricity reductions and earns about $15 million annually for various agencies, these energy and cost savings appear to have plateaued. We recommend that the FY27 budget include ample funding and staffing to expand this program, to ensure that the agency can assess and report on the successes and challenges of the current program and assist utilities and commercial and residential ratepayers in rapidly expanding similar demand response programs.

Fleet Electrification

We strongly support the City's ongoing transition to zero-emissions light, medium, and heavy vehicle fleets, and to electric school buses. Electrification can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce fuel and maintenance costs, and reduce tailpipe emissions in environmental justice communities where diesel fleet and fossil fuel infrastructure is unfairly concentrated. We urge the Council and the Mamdani Administration to ensure that the $28.9 million included in the FY27 budget is adequate to achieve the necessary pace to meet the 2035 fleet electrification goal established by Local Law 140 of 2023.

5. Health and Mental Health

Mental Health Crisis Response

We appreciate the Mamdani administration's focus on nonpolice mental health and substance abuse crisis response. We note that in the proposed FY27 budget, funding for the B-HEARD pilot program is increased from $35 to $43 million, and FDNY will assume greater control of the program and operate additional B-HEARD teams. However, we remain greatly concerned about the effectiveness of the B-HEARD program and the large number of mental-health related emergency calls that continue to be routed to the police.

We are also troubled by the lack of access to the B-HEARD mental health crisis response for all city residents because one is unable to request B-HEARD services and because the program is still not available in many parts of the city and is only available 16 hours a day. It is problematic that all calls regarding mental health and substance use crises must go through 911, where all calls and response dispatch are handled by the police. This is antithetical to a non-police response and is wholly unnecessary given the availability of the nationwide 988 crisis response number. We further urge the City to ensure that nonpolice responses include peers with lived mental health experience, who, once trained, are best positioned to provide such responses.

6. Higher Education

Accessibility at CUNY

We are deeply concerned about the experiences of students with disabilities across New York City's public higher education system.

Recent testimony presented by City University of New York (CUNY) Chancellor Matos Rodríguez highlights encouraging enrollment numbers, with 13,800 students now receiving disability services, but raises serious questions about what those numbers reflect on the ground. Students with disabilities at CUNY campuses regularly experience significant delays in having their accommodations approved, and even when the accommodations are granted, they are too often not meaningfully implemented by faculty, leaving students without the support to which they are legally entitled.

In addition, when students reach out to CUNY disability services offices for help, particularly after the fact when a professor has failed to honor an accommodation, they are frequently met with inadequate responses or no response at all, and in some cases are being pushed toward involuntary leaves of absence, rather than provided with the in-the-moment support they need.

CUNY's request for $2.6 million for disability services in FY27 raises serious questions about how this funding will be allocated and whether it is in any way sufficient to provide the nearly 14,000 students with meaningful, individualized support. Before allocating the requested funds, we urge the Council to demand a full accounting of how CUNY's previous funding was allocated, including whether it supported appropriate staffing levels at disability services offices, faculty compliance and accountability mechanisms, and disaggregated outcome data beyond enrollment numbers. We must be able to assess whether CUNY is meeting not just its aspirational goals, but its legal and moral obligations, to students with disabilities.

7. Hospitals

NYC Care

The budget for the City's NYC Care Program increased from $17 million in the preliminary budget to $21.5 million in the Executive Budget. Following the state

legislature's failure to fund Essential Plan coverage for those earning 200-250% of the Feral Poverty Line, thousands of New Yorkers now face the immanent loss of health coverage on June 30. We strongly support funding NYC Care budget increases necessary to provide lifesaving health access to all residents, regardless of immigration or insurance status.

8. Sanitation

Commercial Waste Zones

We strongly support the continued citywide implementation of the landmark Commercial Waste Zones system, which has the potential to eliminate millions of unnecessary truck miles, improve worker safety, and divert far more of the vast quantities of edible food, organic waste, and recyclable materials generated by New York City's businesses. To realize the transformational vision of Local Law 199, DSNY must have an ample budget and personnel to begin enforcing commercial recycling rules, and ongoing capacity for rigorous traffic and worker safety enforcement.

Marine Transfer Stations

We are concerned that the FY27 budget does not appear to include a pilot program to begin processing commercial waste at city-owned marine transfer stations, as called for in the current 2006 Solid Waste Management Plan. These state-of-the-art facilities were intended to process commercial waste in addition to DSNY-managed waste to reduce reliance on diesel truck-intensive private transfer stations, and city-owned transfer stations are efficiently located near large commercial districts. As the citywide implementation of commercial waste zones is completed next year, we urge the City Council to advocate a pilot program to make these facilities available to private haulers currently utilizing transfer stations and incinerators concentrated in outer borough and New Jersey environmental justice communities.

Organics Recycling

We are encouraged by DSNY's public education campaign on organics recycling and resumed enforcement of residential organics recycling rules. However, we are concerned that New York City continues to deliver source-separated organic food waste to waste water treatment facilities, where it is co-digested with sewage. This is an expensive process that includes fugitive greenhouse gas emissions, the flaring of methane into the atmosphere, and a solid digestate that is often landfilled rather than used as a fertilizer for local soils.

We recommend the inclusion of funding for planning and development of additional medium-and large-scale composting sites, replicating the success of DSNY's Fresh Kills compost facility.

9. Transportation

Fair Fares

We support expansion of the Fair Fares program and urge that it be extended to include Access-A-Ride (AAR) users over the age of 65. Currently, Fair Fares is the only discount program available to AAR customers, since the MTA does not offer them the fare discounts available to subway and bus riders, including OMNY fare-capping and Reduced-Fare program.

We further recommend that Fair Fares be extended to Express Bus service. Express buses are particularly valuable to the disability community because they provide intra-borough travel that is otherwise not available to them via mass transit due to the inaccessibility of the subway system. Additionally, the MTA's Reduced-Fare program only applies to express bus riders during off-peak hours, which further supports the need to extend Fair Fares to all transit buses so that low-income riders, many of whom are seniors and people with disabilities, can access travel discounts during peak hours.

Taxi and Limousine Commission

We are concerned by the recent loss of the Accessible Dispatch Program, which served as a dedicated lifeline for disabled New Yorkers seeking to order a taxi without using an app, pressing additional buttons, or working through a complicated phone tree. We urge that the FY27 budget include ample funding for the TLC to ensure that the new Accessible E-Hail system offers the same universal accessibility as the previous 24-7 phone dispatch system.

We also continue to support the rapid development and adoption of for-hire vehicles (FHVs) and taxis that are both zero-emission and wheelchair accessible. As these models become available, TLC drivers must provide ample access to affordable, fast charging infrastructure throughout the city, including publicly-owned chargers operated by DCAS and DOT.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and look forward to working with you, Speaker Menin and the members of this Council to implement a budget that reverses the austerity cuts of the last two years, and advances our shared vision for a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy New York City.

Respectfully,

Justin Wood
Director of Policy
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
Jwood@nylpi.org
(212) 244-4664

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Founded 50 years ago by leaders of the bar, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) is a community-driven civil rights organization that pursues justice for all New Yorkers. NYLPI works toward a New York where all people can thrive in their communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. In NYLPI's vision,

all New Yorkers live with dignity and independence, with the resources they need to succeed. NYLPI's community-driven approach powers its commitment to civil rights, including disability, health, immigrant, and environmental justice. NYLPI seeks lasting change through litigation, community organizing, policy advocacy, pro bono service, and education.
For more information visit: www.nylpi.org.

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

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

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

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

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

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

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

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

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

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

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

In accordance with the Forest for All NYC Coalition:

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

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

NYC Department of Buildings & NYC Fire Department

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

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

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

NYC Department of Transportation

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

NYC Streets Plan

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

<u>Fair Fares</u>

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

<u>Vision Zero</u>

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

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

Micromobility & Electrifying Our Transportation System

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

NYC Department of Sanitation

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

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

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

NYC Department of Environmental Protection

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

Additionally, for FY27, NYLCV supports the following:

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

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

NYC Department of Citywide Administration Services

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

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

NYC Department of Education

- NYLCV urges the City, specifically DOE, to fully commit to the timely implementation and funding of Local Law 120 of 2021, which mandates an all electric school bus (ESB) fleet by 2035 to cut harmful pollutants, improve public health and air quality, and fight climate change. It is incumbent on the City to prioritize the rollout of ESBs and charging infrastructure. The City must work with school bus vendors and utility companies to plan, develop, and fund school bus charging infrastructure throughout the City, especially at school bus depots located in disadvantaged communities, and ESB workforce development programs since bus fleet personnel will require training for driving, properly

maintaining EVs, and optimizing charging for electric bus routes, energy needs, and intra-day energy price fluctuations.
- For FY27, NYLCV is advocating for $2.2 billion for clean energy upgrades in NYC Public Schools. This includes solar installation on schools and electrification projects, insulation repairs and upgrades to HVAC systems, and exploring projects that utilize thermal energy networks.

NYC Office of Emergency Management

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

NYC Housing Authority

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

Additionally, NYLCV supports the following:

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearings

June 9, 2026

Chair Lee, Council Members, and staff, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the FY27 Executive Budget. NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence survivors, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services.

NYLAG's work touches many areas of the city budget, including general welfare, housing, immigration, aging, health, veterans and more. Supporting access to justice is fundamental in preserving human dignity. Organizations like NYLAG help low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers protect their basic needs, such as housing, food, healthcare, and personal safety. With the current federal administration's policies targeting immigrants, stripping access to benefits to vulnerable individuals, and threatening the LGBTQ+ community, the need for legal services is at an all-time high. NYLAG is grateful to the NYC Council's partnership and support of **legal services**, and are asking the Council to increase support for these critical services for FY27.

IMMIGRATION

NYLAG is advocating for the Council and the Mayor ***to allocate $188 million for immigration legal services***. We are very grateful to the Council for the increased investment in immigration legal services in FY26. As ICE agents continue to detain immigrants inside New York City's immigration courts and threaten to ramp up enforcement, and as pathways to status in place for decades become increasingly shut off, we urge the City to continue to show its longstanding commitment to immigrant New Yorkers by ensuring that funding for legal services meets this moment. City funding supports NYLAG's rapid response initiative, Pro Se Plus Project, removal defense work, services for immigrant survivors sexual and gender-based

violence, and more. Through this, NYLAG has supported thousands of New Yorkers navigating unjust, rigged systems, facing unlawful detention, and fighting to achieve stability.

The FY26 increase allowed NYLAG to expand our **Rapid Response** programming, which has been critical in the wake of increased immigration enforcements and detention, helping us build our habeas practice and getting individuals who were wrongfully detained released. This funding was also essential in supporting the Pro Se Plus Project, which allows us to provide robust pro se assistance and community education to individuals. This past year, NYLAG's **Pro Se Plus Project** team has maintained a steady presence at 26 Federal Plaza, providing legal support to individuals and families appearing for routine hearings as the risk of detention at these hearings increases. It's because of a commitment to ongoing funding, that NYLAG has not had to switch our attention from longstanding community need, from our work with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, supporting newly arrived New Yorkers with our pro se plus partners, and sitting in community sites including hospitals and community-based organizations to help seek permanency and stability in the United States.

The numerous immigration council initiatives are all critical, and all work together to protect NYC's immigrant communities and help them access pathways to stability in the US.

GENERAL WELFARE/ACCESS TO BENEFITS

NYLAG's Public Benefits Unit ("PBU") serves clients facing barriers to accessing and maintaining public benefits, including Public Assistance, SNAP, appropriate shelter, Medicaid, homecare, Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans' Benefits, and we prepare medical and financial advance planning documents for clients in need. In New York City, where the high cost of living is coupled with a level of benefits insufficient to meet basic needs, we serve clients with overlapping needs related to food scarcity, housing instability, and homelessness.

Every day, PBU sees firsthand how systemic barriers in the public benefits and shelter systems translate into real harm for low-income New Yorkers. The challenges described below include delayed applications, inaccessible phone lines, lost documentation, wrongful denials, and gaps in shelter placement. These are not abstract issues. They are the very obstacles that push families toward eviction, prolong homelessness, and prevent individuals from accessing basic subsistence.

NYLAG's PBU plays a critical role in bridging these gaps. Our advocates work directly with clients who are navigating multiple, intersecting challenges, including housing instability, food insecurity, disability, aging, and chronic health conditions. We regularly assist individuals who have been improperly denied cash assistance or SNAP and appropriate shelter. We represent clients at Administrative Fair Hearings and conduct advocacy with the Department of Social Services ("DSS"), Benefits Access and SNAP centers, and bring impact litigation to ensure that our clients are obtaining and maintaining an adequate level of benefits.

Importantly, our work often makes the difference between stability and homelessness. In partnership with our Tenants' Rights Unit ("TRU"), we have a TRU Benefits Project that works to prevent eviction by addressing the public benefits issues that often place tenants at risk of losing their housing. We provide direct advocacy, guidance, and training to ensure clients can access critical supports such as cash assistance, rental subsidies (e.g. FHEPS and CityFHEPS), and emergency grants so they can remain stably housed.

PBU's Shelter and Economic Stability Project provides legal services and advocacy to low-income people in and trying to access homeless shelter placements in New York City. For clients who are street homeless or unable to access traditional shelter, we provide legal assistance and advocate for placements that are appropriate to their needs, including low-barrier options. We work to ensure that every New Yorker has a safe place to sleep by offering legal advice and representation throughout each step of the shelter application process. Once clients are in shelter, we continue to support them in navigating transfers, securing adequate conditions, and pursuing pathways to permanent housing.

PBU's work also reveals the cumulative impact of system failures. When benefits are delayed or denied, clients are forced into repeated application cycles, miss Housing Court deadlines, lose access to rental subsidies, and face cascading legal problems. Our advocacy not only resolves individual cases but also identifies systemic barriers that require reform.

Sustained investment in legal services like those provided by NYLAG's Public Benefits unit is essential to ensuring that public benefits systems function as intended. Without this support, too many New Yorkers fall through the cracks of complex bureaucracies, and case churning, even when they are fully eligible for assistance. Our work demonstrates that when barriers are removed and systems function properly, clients are able to stabilize their housing, meet their basic needs, and avoid continued involvement in the homelessness system. We appreciate the opportunity to offer the following comments.

Improving Access to Benefits Administered by the Human Resources Administration: NYLAG continues to fight for the rights of low-income New Yorkers in need of Public Assistance and SNAP benefits and shelter placements. The settlement in our case, *Forest v. City of New York*, has been submitted to the court for preliminary approval, and we continue to fight for the rights of our clients who encounter problems completing their applications and recertifications because of barriers outside of their control. These include phone interview wait times and documents that are not timely indexed and added to their case. Both persistent issues lead to improper denials. With this settlement agreement we will hold the Agency accountable, and we hope to continue to work together and see improvements to these systems for our clients. We also urge the Agency to take seriously the testimonials of advocates who work with clients in need every day, and direct resources necessary to effectively serve clients on the phone and in person.

The cash assistance application timeless rate of 67% reported in the Mayor's Management Report[1] is an improvement from prior years, but it is still insufficient. We know that HRA can improve processing times when ordered by the court, and we remind the agency of its legal obligation to process applications within 30 days.

NYLAG clients continue to wait far too long for rent arrears grants needed to prevent eviction, and they face numerous barriers throughout the process. Our clients routinely apply for this emergency assistance, upload all required documents, and complete their phone interviews, yet they are often denied for allegedly missing a step they did in fact complete. Many wait more than 30 days for a decision. These delays put our clients up against Housing Court deadlines and dangerously close to eviction. They frequently wait without updates they must provide to a judge, or they are forced to restart the process running up against court deadlines.

Finally, NYLAG clients are also experiencing extremely long wait times on DSS One Number (718-557-1399). One Number, as distinguished from the Interview Line, is the phone number clients are directed to use to contact the Agency for anything other than completing a phone interview. Some clients must use this number to obtain a temporary Client Identification Number ("CIN") needed to complete their applications for benefits. NYLAG attorneys and clients have reported extremely long wait times on One Number. Advocates have sounded alarms about iterations of this phone line over the past several years, and the Agency restructured and rebranded, but the inadequate service is mostly the same. We urge the agency to work on improving service and wait times on One Number.

We appreciate that the city is working hard to process a high number of benefit applications, but it must maintain functional systems that allow clients to complete the steps required for applications and recertifications. Improving staffing, training, and attention to detail is essential to prevent wrongful denials. When these systems fail, they create administrative churn, causing clients to lose these critical subsistence benefits and forcing many to submit multiple applications before being approved. In the meantime, clients are missing deadlines in Housing Court, losing out on rental subsidy programs, and facing serious risk of eviction. The city must address the failures to administer these benefits properly.

Finally, recent changes to SNAP eligibility have increased DSS's administrative responsibilities. The Agency must now enforce and verify compliance with Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents ("ABAWD") work rules, and the rollout has placed hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers at risk of losing critical food assistance. DSS reported that approximately 342,000 New Yorkers were impacted, and although the Agency has made efforts to mitigate the harm, such as granting exemptions through data matching and extensive outreach, more than 40,000 individuals are still expected to lose benefits. As of this week, thousands of New Yorkers are experiencing discontinuances each day. NYLAG is deeply concerned about whether the system is effectively protecting vulnerable individuals. For many clients, navigating exemptions, documentation requirements, and program

participation is extremely challenging. Clients report significant difficulty getting through on the designated phone line they have been instructed to call to resolve issues, whether to demonstrate eligibility for an exemption, report compliance, seek assistance meeting requirements, or simply understand how the work rules apply to them.

In addition to ABAWD implementation, DSS is now required to review additional documentation to determine the appropriate Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) levels and implement new rules affecting immigrant eligibility. Without adequate resources, these added burdens increase the likelihood that eligibility individuals lose benefits due to procedural barriers rather than true ineligibility. To prevent unnecessary benefit loss, DSS must invest in additional staffing, training, and system capacity to meet these expanding demands.

CityFHEPS: We continue to support the City Council's efforts to expand access to CityFHEPS vouchers, and we recognize the challenges posed by current budget constraints. However, we are disappointed that the necessary funding has not been allocated and that key CityFHEPS expansions have not yet been implemented. The current funding level only sustains the existing costs of the program. Without fully implementing the CityFHEPS expansion law, families who should be eligible for assistance remain unable to exit shelters, prevent eviction, or secure permanent housing.

The City must plan to invest in the expansion of CityFHEPS so more households can qualify for the voucher without needing a shelter history or current placement in the DHS shelter system. Expanding CityFHEPS is both fiscally responsible and humane. Right now, households are being evicted from stable and affordable apartments simply because there are not enough programs that help them maintain their housing. When people are not eligible for rental assistance, they face a far greater risk of eviction and may ultimately be forced into the shelter system, where they often remain for extended periods before obtaining a shopping letter and finding a new apartment.

Providing the voucher earlier would prevent unnecessary shelter entries and reduce overall costs to the City. In addition, shelter stays can be traumatic. Making the voucher available to more households in the community would help preserve their homes and avoid that trauma altogether.

In addition, we urge attention and funding needed to address administrative delays at the Agency. Our clients report a frequent breakdown of information between their shelter caseworkers, DSS, and the landlords. If a willing landlord makes a mistake on the CityFHEPS application (as often happens), it can take many days or even weeks before that information is relayed from DSS to shelter caseworkers and then back to the landlord. The landlords do not work directly with DSS, and information is often lost in the process. Clients report situations where forms are filled out incorrectly multiple times and landlords are not able to obtain clarification on how to correct issues with the forms. This confusing and time-

consuming process creates significant delays in exiting shelter and serves as a deterrent for landlords.

NYLAG urges the Council to be cognizant of the ways in which the expansion of case management services can be overseen and further resourced to ensure that these services are helpful to our clients. Providing more case management to homeless clients, including housing specialists and public benefits specialists, is another step in ensuring that shelter is an accessible and helpful resource on the path towards permanent housing. Increased staffing at all levels of the bureaucratic chain will bring internal and external relief: allowing DSS to be more responsive to issues and more communicative to their clients and community partners. Similarly, a digitized document system, which provides voucher-holder access to information about which documents have been accepted and rejected, would work to simplify the communication morass that currently plagues the CityFHEPS benefit system.

Finally, strengthening CityFHEPS administrative processes is needed. A key component of the stability that permanent housing can provide is the reliability of rental assistance programs. NYLAG represents clients in Housing Court and people who are existing the shelter system with CityFHEPS. Once approved, problems persist for our clients with the administration of the benefit itself. Clients report being unable to reach anyone at HRA to report changes and missing benefits. Our clients who rely on CityFHEPS vouchers report that HRA often does not pay their rent on time and sometimes will discontinue rental payments without notice to the landlord or fail to recertify a client who submitted their recertification paperwork on time. We routinely represent clients who are in months of arrears without being made aware that CityFHEPS payments were not being made. For some, the problems persist for so long that they end up back in Housing Court and at risk of homelessness once again. The CityFHEPS voucher program can only provide meaningful support if attention is paid to its administration.

Department of Homeless Services: Despite the critical role that on-site social service support plays for families experiencing homelessness, access to these services within DHS shelters remains deeply uneven. While DHS provides licensed social workers in some family shelters to conduct behavioral health assessments, developmental screenings for children, and link families to mental health services, only 43% of families received these services in the first months of Fiscal 2026, a decline from 47% in the same period of Fiscal 2025 apparently due to a shortage of available social workers to administer the screenings, and because different shelters receive different funding for these services. This already troublingly low rate is compounded by the fact that access is entirely dependent on the shelter to which a family is randomly assigned. Families in shelters without dedicated social work staff receive no comparable support, leaving many children without essential screenings and parents without help navigating complex systems.

The Mayor's Management Report highlights another deeply concerning trend: families with children are spending an average of 401 days in shelter, according to data from the first four months of Fiscal 2026. This is a 7% increase from the previous year. Four hundred and one days is not simply a statistic; it is more than an entire year of a child's life spent in a temporary placement that is not designated for such a long term. These prolonged stays reflect the systemic barriers families face in securing permanent housing, including insufficient access to affordable units, delays in rental subsidy processes, and the lack of supports that help families transition out of shelter. A system with a family's "temporary" stay routinely exceeds twelve months is one that is not functioning as intended, and it signals an urgent need for stronger, more coordinated efforts to shorten shelter stays and accelerate pathways to permanent, stable housing.

Safe Haven Beds: The City reports that an average of 3,048 low-barrier safe haven and stabilization beds were occupied during the first four months of Fiscal 2026, representing a seven percent decrease from the previous year, driven largely by temporary capacity in fluctuations such as facility changes and maintenance. While this decline is explained as a technical adjustment, the underlying reality is a far more urgent need. Even at 3,000 beds, the system falls dramatically short of meeting the true level of need. Although DSS/DHS notes that approximately 97 percent of people experiencing homelessness are sheltered, this statistic obscures the critical reality that the remaining unsheltered population often consists of individuals with the highest needs, those who cannot or will not access traditional congregate shelters. For this group, low barrier "safe haven" options are the most effective tools for engagement, yet current capacity barely scratches the surface of demand. As a result, far too many individuals remain on the streets simply because there is nowhere appropriate for them to go. The modest year-to-year fluctuations distract from the core issue, which is that the City needs a substantial expansion of safe haven and stabilization capacity, not just to maintain current levels, but to meaningfully address chronic street homelessness.

VETERANS

NYLAG's Veterans Practice is a community-based Veteran program, funded by the City Council's Legal Services for Veterans Initiative and Department of Veterans Services Discharge Upgrade Legal Assistance Services grant. The Veterans Practice provides comprehensive assistance to Veterans and their families, regardless of discharge status, with the aim of increasing eligibility and access to the numerous federal and state benefits available to the Veteran community. Veterans face all the same legal concerns as the civilian population but also experience issues unique to their military service and Veteran status. NYLAG's Veterans Practice focused on specialized issues, while simultaneously utilizing the expertise of NYLAG's 400+ attorneys, paralegals, and financial counselors to address any other civil legal needs presented. NYLAG's goal is to provide critical assistance and resources to Veterans and their families when they are dealing with challenges and crises that require experienced and knowledgeable legal experts.

One of the specialized issues that NYLAG prioritizes is assistance with discharge upgrade applications. More than 15% of Veterans will leave the military will a less-than-Honorable discharge. This status means that a former service member will not be entitled to the full range of benefits that their military service would otherwise grant them. Veterans who receive a General discharge will not be entitled to educational benefits, which are crucial for servicemembers transitioning back to civilian life. A conservative lifetime valuation of a discharge upgrade for a Veteran with a General discharge is between $75,000 and $150,000, but for Veterans who maximize the federal and state housing, tax, and employment benefits, it could be worth $500,000 or more. Veterans who receive an Other Than Honorable or Bad Conduct discharge often find they have a complete bar to all VA benefits including disability benefits and VA healthcare. For these Veterans a discharge upgrade is even more valuable with a conservation lifetime estimate being between $150,000 and $250,000, but for Veterans who need disability benefits and utilize the VA for healthcare, it can easily exceed $1 million.

The misconduct that leads to a less-than-Honorable discharge can be the result of undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions, discrimination, and/or retaliation. Studies have found a direct correlation between mental health issues and less-than-Honorable discharges, which makes the barriers to disability benefits and healthcare for this segment of the Veteran population even more dire. Veterans with a PTSD diagnosis are eleven times more likely to have a less-than-Honorable discharge and Veterans who reported sexual trauma are more likely to have a less-than-Honorable discharge as a result of retaliation. There are significant racial disparities in the military justice system, as minority veterans across the different branches of service are substantially more likely to face disciplinary actions, which often lead to less-than-Honorable discharges. Sadly, the reality of Veteran clients seen by NYLAG would suggest that the rates of mental health and disparities among minority Veterans are even worse than the statistics suggest. 68% of Veterans who sought assistance with a discharge upgrade from NYLAG stated they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, while 80% of NYLAG's discharge upgrade clients identified as non-white. A less-than-Honorable discharge and the critical benefits it cuts off leave Veterans in a situation in which they are seven times more likely to deal with housing insecurity, 50% more likely to face incarceration, and experience triple the risk of suicide.

A discharge upgrade can have a transformative impact on a Veteran. It opens the door to countless benefits, it serves as an acknowledgement of injustice from the military, and it can remove a major stigma for the Veteran. However, the process of getting a discharge upgrade is difficult, slow, and near impossible to navigate without a legal advocate. Successful applications require extensive record collection and analysis, which has increased in difficulty as a result of massive backlogs and shifts in procedures about where records are held. Veterans dealing with serious mental health conditions may need to obtain detailed medical opinions explaining how their conduct in-service was a consequence of the mental health condition. This may involve finding consistent and culturally competent healthcare options for the Veteran to feel able to

open up about their issues. Applications also require detailed legal arguments explaining the errors or injustices that may have occurred during the servicemember's military service and discharge. Once a discharge upgrade application is submitted, the veteran must then wait for a decision, which depending on their branch of the service, dates of service, and whether they requested a hearing, may take several years.

NYLAG's discharge upgrade work for Veteran clients is critical, but it is only one piece of our advocacy. It is rare for Veteran clients to present with only one issue, or to work with NYLAG for years on a discharge upgrade without needing assistance with other benefits, housing, healthcare, or advance planning issues. Advocacy with complex issues like discharge upgrades requires a client to have enough stability and security in their life to meaningfully focus on the issue. Our clients benefit knowing there are experts behind them who understand the challenges of the process they are undertaking as well as the resources that are available to help them see it through.

Results only happen thanks to strong investment in Veteran specific legal services like the Legal Services for Veterans Initiative and Department of Veterans Service Discharge Upgrade Legal Assistance Services funding. NYLAG is extremely grateful to the City of New York for its investment in legal services for Veterans, which has allowed us to work with thousands of Veterans on discharge upgrades, Veteran's benefits, public benefits, housing, consumer protection, advance planning, and much more. In times of uncertainty and economic concern, it is increasingly important to support programs that uplift New York City Veterans. We must find new ways to affirm our commitment to the Veteran community and strive to ensure that no Veteran faces their crises alone. New York must continue to focus on wrap-around resources for Veterans such as mental health treatment, housing support, and free legal services.

PUBLIC HOUSING

NYLAG works closely with community organizations, agencies, and elected officials, and operates numerous legal clinics in locations such as community centers, courthouses, and hospitals. With the full implementation of Right to Counsel at the NYCHA Office of Impartial Hearings ("OIH"), NYLAG created the Public Housing Justice Project ("PHJP") within its Tenants' Rights Unit ("TRU"). NYLAG's PHJP is the first team of attorneys in New York City solely dedicated to representing NYCHA tenants. PHJP represents tenants in both Section 9 and Permanent Affordability Commitment Together, known as PACT, developments. We urge the City Council to take decisive action to prioritize and protect PACT tenants' rights by conditioning this year's PACT budget funding on.NYCHA promulgating robust policies, procedures and protections on par with Section 9. We further urge the city to equitably fund Section 9 capital repairs and operations in order to ensure that NYCHA tenants have access to safe, sanitary housing.

NYCHA is the largest landlord in New York City. It is responsible for approximately 7% of New York City's rental stock and is home to 1 in 17 New Yorkers. NYCHA apartments are

family homes: tenancies are intergenerational and long term, averaging approximately 26 years. As NYCHA correctly notes in its 2025 Fact Sheets, these deep-seated communities are the equivalent of a city unto themselves, with more residents than Miami or Atlanta.[1]

However, while analogies to prominent big cities around the country are helpful for illustrating the sheer size of NYCHA, it is not actually a city itself. Public housing residents are integral members of our communities: they are our neighbors, colleagues, friends, and classmates. The success of New York City is bound up in the success of NYCHA. For this reason, we are calling on City Council to ensure that NYCHA is fully funded, with safeguards put in place to ensure greater accountability to tenants in order to increase efficiency.

NYLAG applauds the investment that has been allocated for Section 9 developments, including the funding set aside to upgrade and modernize heating systems in Beach 41st Houses. NYCHA tenants deserve to live in safe, sanitary, and well-managed housing. Fully funding NYCHA's capital repairs and operations is necessary to make that a reality.

The budget also adds additional funding for the PACT program, bringing the total budget for PACT conversions to $1 billion. To date, 92 developments have already been converted to RAD-PACT, with dozens more slated to convert. However, PACT is not popular among tenants, and most tenants living in PACT developments did not choose to do so. When they are given an opportunity to vote on whether to convert to PACT, most developments, and the overwhelming majority of voting residents, do not choose PACT. Out of the eight developments that have had a chance to vote on the matter, only one chose PACT. At Stanley Isaacs Houses, which is the most recent development to vote, among tenants who voted in person, PACT only received 12 votes, compared to 280 votes for Section 9 and 200 votes for the Preservation Trust. That means that after outreach and community education, only 2.4% of the votes were in favor of PACT.

Many people want to attribute PACT's unpopularity to misinformation and, while there is certainly some misinformation surrounding PACT, that is hardly the entire picture. PACT conversions destabilize public housing families. Year after year, the eviction filing and actual eviction rate in PACT outpaces that in NYCHA Section 9. On average across the city, actual eviction rates in PACT are about 5 times higher than in traditional Section 9, and close to that in private housing. In housing that is supposed to have some of the strongest protections, it is staggering that so many tenants are called into housing court and are unable to resolve the matter and avoid eviction. When this is the case, something is failing.

We submit the following testimony because NYCHA is home to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers and the health and preservation of these homes and communities matters. While PACT seems to be necessary for the fiscal stability of public housing in New York City, NYCHA residents also deserve stability, and that stability does not come through alternate forms of funding, but through clear, reliable management by NYCHA. We call on the City Council to place conditions on PACT funding that require NYCHA overhaul its procedures and ensure

that anyone living in a PACT development has exactly the same rights and protections as their neighbors living in NYCHA Section 9 public housing.

CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Employment Law Project (ELP) at NYLAG provides client-centered community based legal advocacy for low-wage and immigrant workers facing exploitative labor practices, discrimination and harassment. Through court and agency-based litigation, fierce negotiation, public education, policy advocacy and strong community partnerships, ELP strives to build the power of working-class communities across the city. NYLAG strongly supports increased funding for the New York City Commission on Human Rights (the Commission), which is needed now, more than ever, in a political climate where employees face greater federal hostility to their rights.

An approximate 10% cut to funding for the Commission would be a blow to the already besieged agency, and its attendant staffing shortages. We ask the City Council to support an increase to the Commission by 10 million dollars, to a total of 25 million dollars. This revision to the budget would be miniscule, comprising only .02% of the city budget; however, the impact would be vast.

The Commission has been operating on a shoestring budget, and further staff attrition will continue to deprive many low-income New Yorkers a means to vindicate their rights. It has, at times, only been equipped to hire one staff member for every two who depart. Despite these hardships, its employees valiantly work to enable New Yorkers to find justice in cases where they have faced discrimination in the workplace. Further cuts will not only harm the employees at the Commission but would diminish their ability to provide services to so many workers in need.

New York City law has more expansive protections than nearly any jurisdiction in the country and permits complainants to bring claims that cannot be pursued in state and federal administrative forums. These cases must, therefore, be brought to the Commission absent undertaking the significant hardship of finding an attorney and filing in court. The law offers greater opportunities for relief for more protected classes in addition to more favorable standards for finding probable cause on behalf of complainants. There are simply not enough employment attorneys in the city to represent every working-class client, and it is even more difficult to find advocates where damages may be low due to the employee's meager wages and lower backpay awards. Therefore, one of the most significant assets of the Commission is its ability to support pro se employees.

Gone are the days when we could confidently advise clients that their complaints would be adequately addressed in that forum, causing some clients and advocates to rely on the New York State Division of Human Rights. While the State Division can be a great

forum for some, its legal protections are not as substantial, and damages awards can be less favorable than city law provides.

Now cases languish for years at the Commission as each time a staff member departs; it can take six months to reassign a new employee to a case, leaving clients in the lurch and without consistent support. There are few means to resolve cases absent the advocacy of the Commission.

And where cases cannot be settled, clients may wait a literal decade before they are able to be heard at an OATH hearing. While there are some opportunities to mediate where both parties are represented, the staffing is miniscule and unable to support the needs of so many complainants. An expansion of that program is much needed and will ensure more cases can be resolved without protracted investigatory processes and the further use of staff resources.

The Commission has also enabled advocates to bring cases with more novel claims of discrimination. For example, NYLAG represented a client who experienced sexual harassment wherein she was subjected to someone physically blocking her path when she attempted to enter or exit workspaces, but was never subjected to verbal or direct physical harassment. At the time, this form of discrimination was not addressed in case law; however, with the help of the mediation program, we were able to come to a substantial settlement, which allowed my client to obtain much needed housing stability.

In this climate where the EEOC also has diminished capacity and is now prioritizing reverse-discrimination in areas such as national origin and race, support for workers in the city is all the more essential. This is particularly true of undocumented employees, who are protected against discrimination by law, as the EEOC is unable to assure them that their immigration status will not be shared with other agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security. As a result, they will have even fewer options for seeking justice.

In addition to claimants whose cases are deprioritized, the current EEOC posture is downright hostile to the rights of some employees, such as those in the LGBTQ community, particularly transgender workers. We, as New Yorkers who value diversity and equal rights, must do our part to uplift these employees and ensure that their voices are heard and respected, and their rights vindicated. But, in order to do this work, we need an empowered and financially secure agency to represent their interests.

The New York Legal Assistance Group therefore urges the Council to advocate for a budget to support these vulnerable communities who have nowhere else to turn.

Divorce Proceedings Representation for Domestic Violence Survivors

NYLAG, in partnership with the Legal Aid Society and Sanctuary for Families, was very grateful to launch the Divorce Proceedings Representation for Domestic Violence Survivors Initiative, providing low-income survivors of domestic violence seeking to obtain a

divorce. This initiative was developed in response to the recommendations made by the working group created in response to Local Law 5 of 2022, recognizing the increased obstacles that survivors of domestic violence face in obtaining a divorce. Domestic violence survivors have unique needs resulting from the trauma and abuse they experienced, and often have unequal access to information regarding marital assets and finances due to economic abuse. Divorce helps survivors achieve final separation from their abusive partner and move forward as they reclaim their lives. Despite the demand for legal representation and the unique needs of domestic violence survivors, many survivors do not or cannot obtain private legal representation, particularly those who are low-income or who have suffered financial abuse. New York City survivors are not guaranteed appointed counsel for financial or other aspects of a divorce proceeding. Generous funding from the NYC Council gave NYLAG (as well as partner agencies) the ability to begin this crucial work last year. In FY26 NYLAG is on track to provide 120 consultations, and full representation services to 30 survivors in contested matrimonial proceedings and 60 survivors in uncontested matrimonial filings. For FY27, we are requesting increased funding to expand the project which has been thoughtfully built and already seeing positive impacts as survivors of domestic violence hope to access justice. NYLAG specifically is asking for $1.1 million in FY27 to continue and to expand this work.

FY27 NYLAG Requests:

For FY27, NYLAG has submitted the following initiative requests, for which we are asking to be renewed. It is funding through these City Council initiatives that allows us to provide critical legal services to low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers and remain nimble as needs shift. We thank you for your continued partnership and consideration of these requests.

Legal Services for Low-Income and Working Class New Yorkers: $1,100,000

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative: $500,000

Immigrant Health Initiative: $500,000

Low-Wage Worker Support: $500,000

Legal Services for Veterans: $125,000

Rapid Response Legal Collaborative: $1,000,000

ASLAN/Pro Se Plus: $300,000

Unaccompanied Minors and Families: $200,000

Estate Planning and Resolution: $100,000

Respectfully Submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group

NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

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Lynn Bodnar Kelly

New York Restoration Project

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

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

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

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

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

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Lynn Bodnar Kelly

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

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

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

Thank you.

Committee on Finance June 10, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Committee on Finance June 10, 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF)

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

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

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

New Yorkers Are Facing Sustained Economic Insecurity

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

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

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

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

Human Services Sector Is Critical to Economic Well-Being

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Supporting Human Services Workers Is a Smart Economic Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Equitable Funding Starts with Understanding Full Cost

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

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

Full-cost funding is essential to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Together, these policies represent important steps toward:

- Improving nonprofit financial stability
- Ensuring fair compensation for workers

- Strengthening the delivery of essential services

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

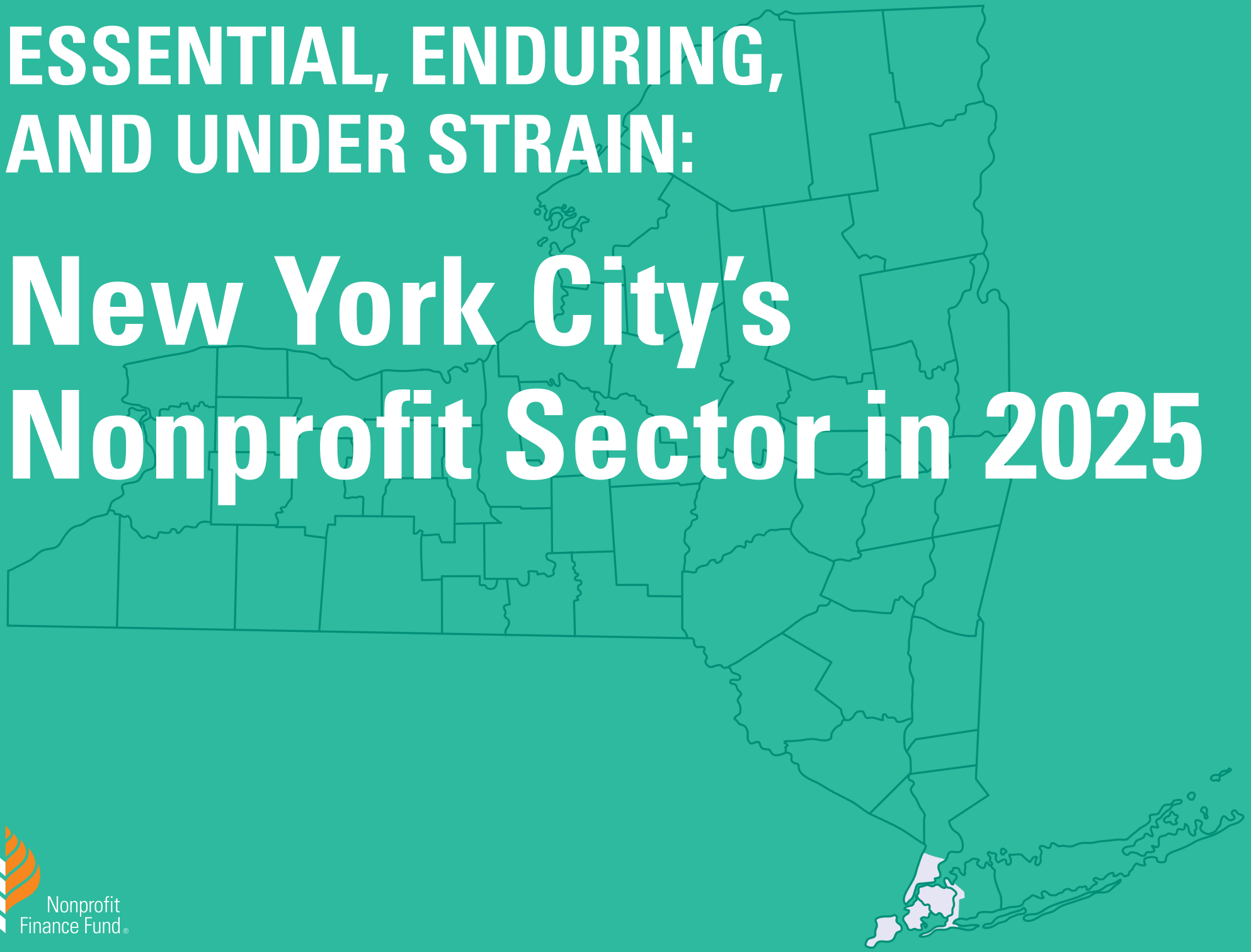
Thank you.

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

Appendices Below

ESSENTIAL, ENDURING, AND UNDER STRAIN:

New York City's Nonprofit Sector in 2025



Nonprofit Finance Fund®

WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

A SNAPSHOT OF THE NYC NONPROFIT SECTOR



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

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

KEY SAMPLE DIFFERENCES: NYC VS. NATIONAL

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

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

ABOUT THE 2025 NATIONAL STATE OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR SURVEY

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

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

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

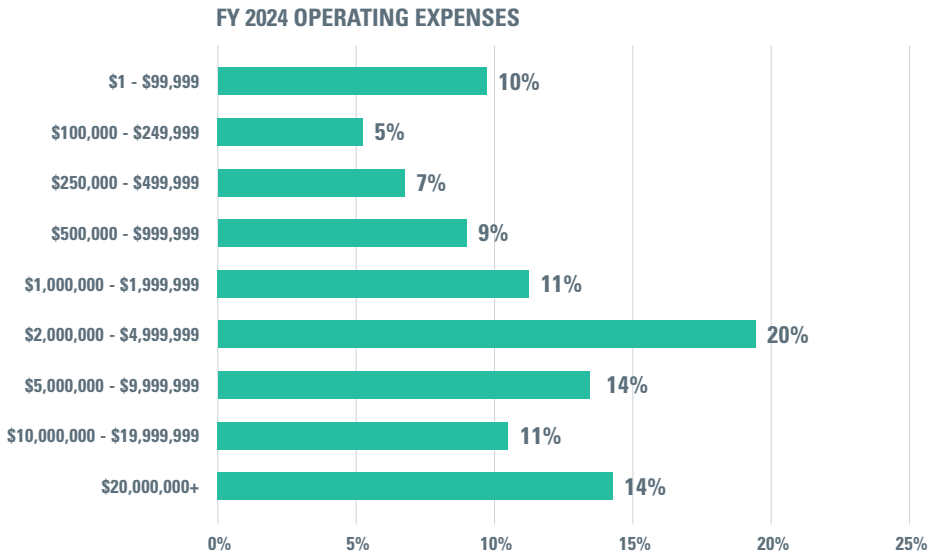
Note: Due to rounding and to questions that allowed respondents to select multiple answer choices, not all numbers in this report may appear to add up to exactly 100%.

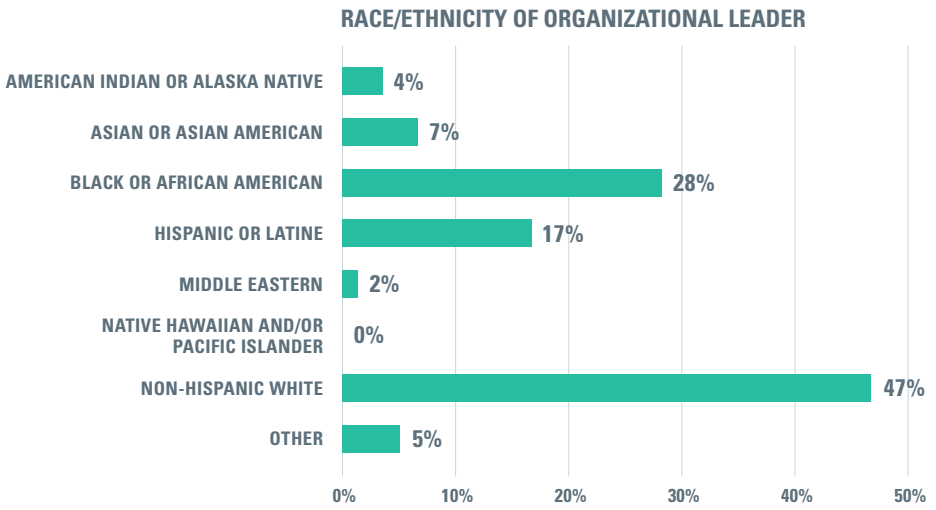
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> Our organization is intergenerational and through a process of deep listening, reflecting and celebrating the people in our community, we build trust and cohesion which translates into meaningful programs that resonate with our constituents and bring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

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

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



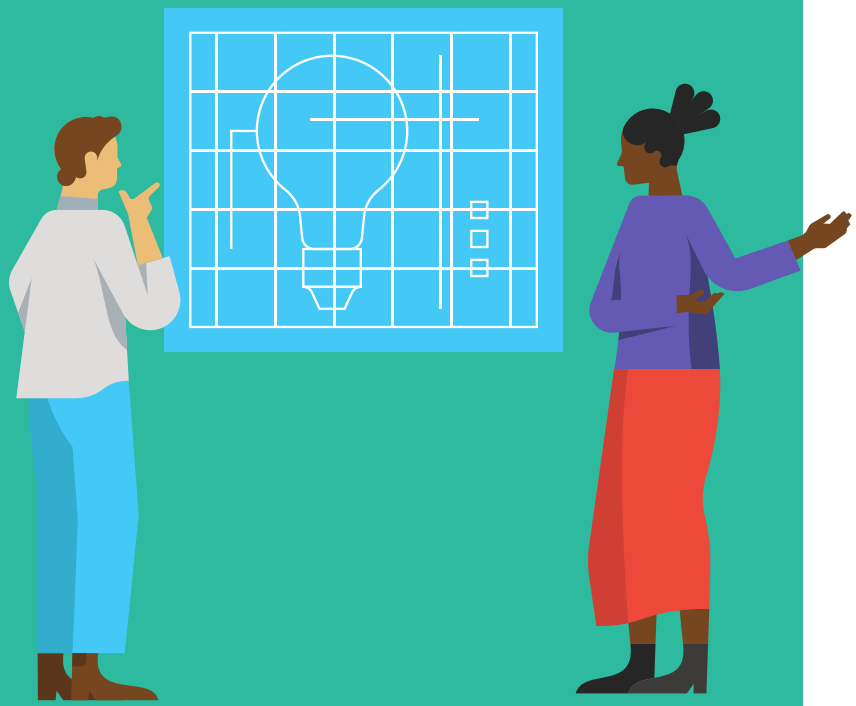


Over half of respondents (53%) are from organizations led by people of color. In addition, 55% of respondents said that half or more of their leadership team identify as people of color. Two-thirds (66%) of organizations are female-led and 20% have a leader who identifies as LGBTQIA+.

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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

NONPROFITS ARE THE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT POWERS AND SERVES NYC COMMUNITIES



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

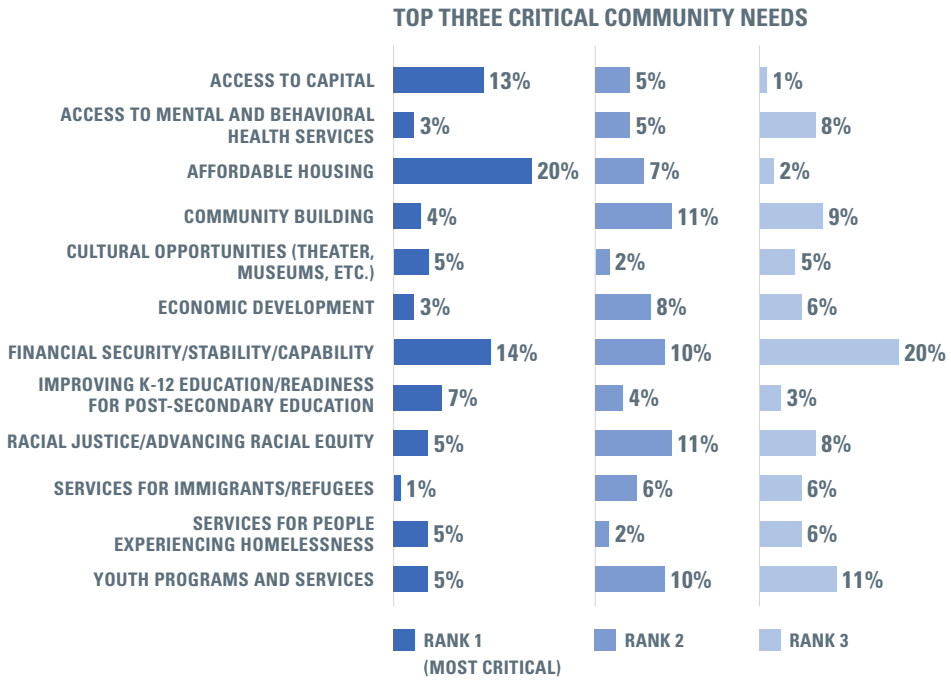


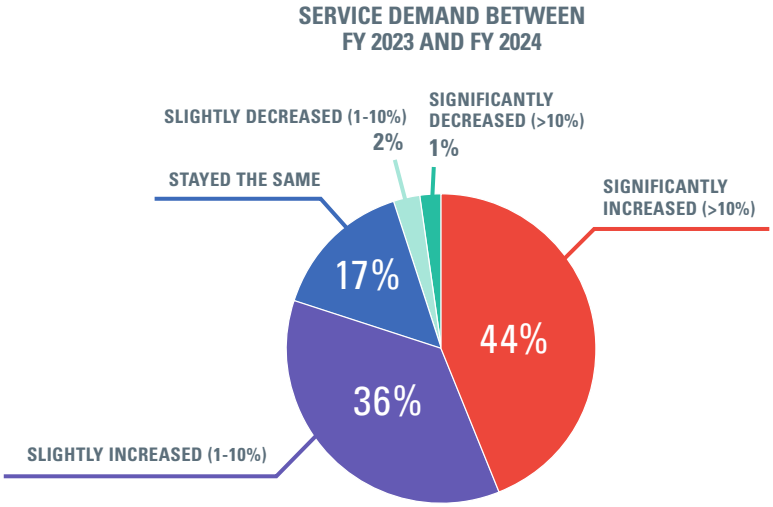
> We provide guaranteed income and work to 8,000 people coming home from prison every year.
>
> Social justice/civil rights/community organizing survey respondent in New York City

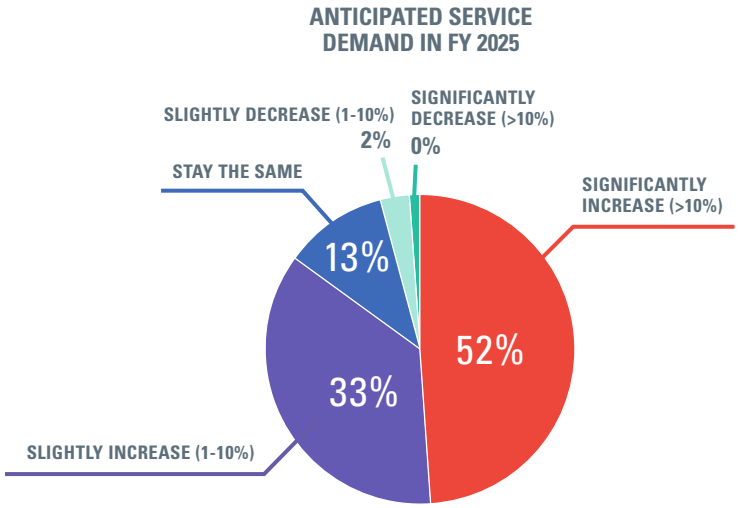
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Demand for services is rising, with housing and financial security identified as top community needs in NYC.

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





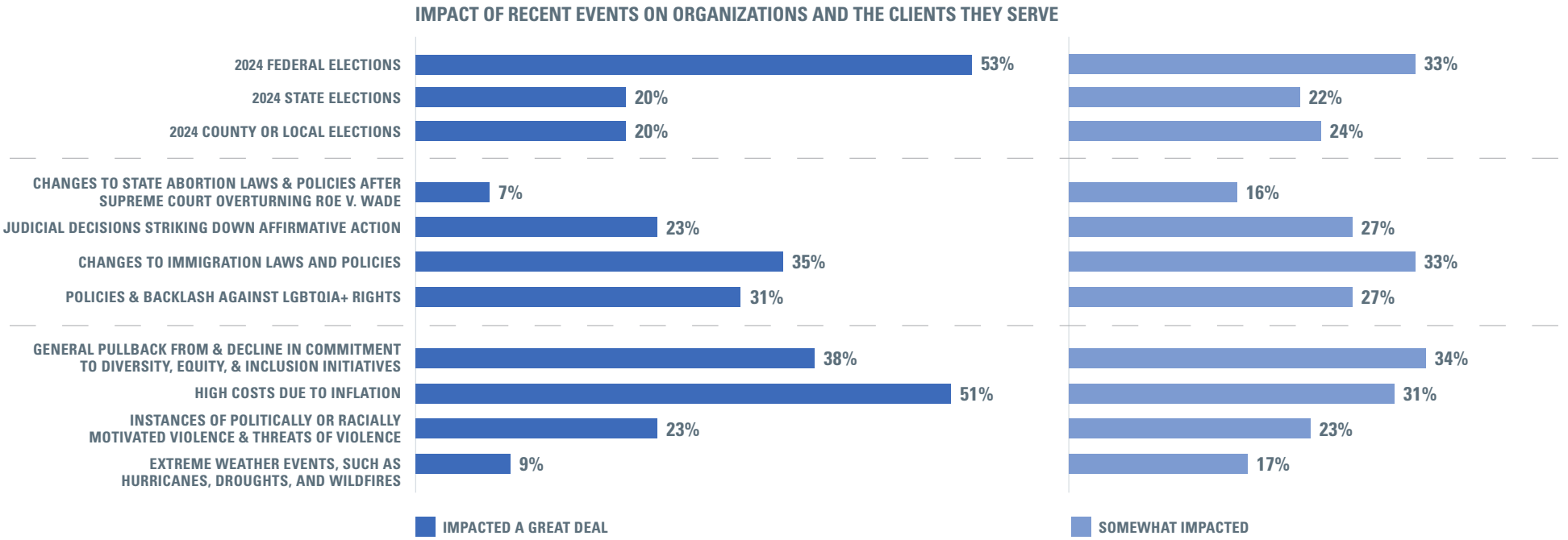


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With elections, inflation, and policy shifts, 2024 was a year of change for many NYC nonprofits.

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

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



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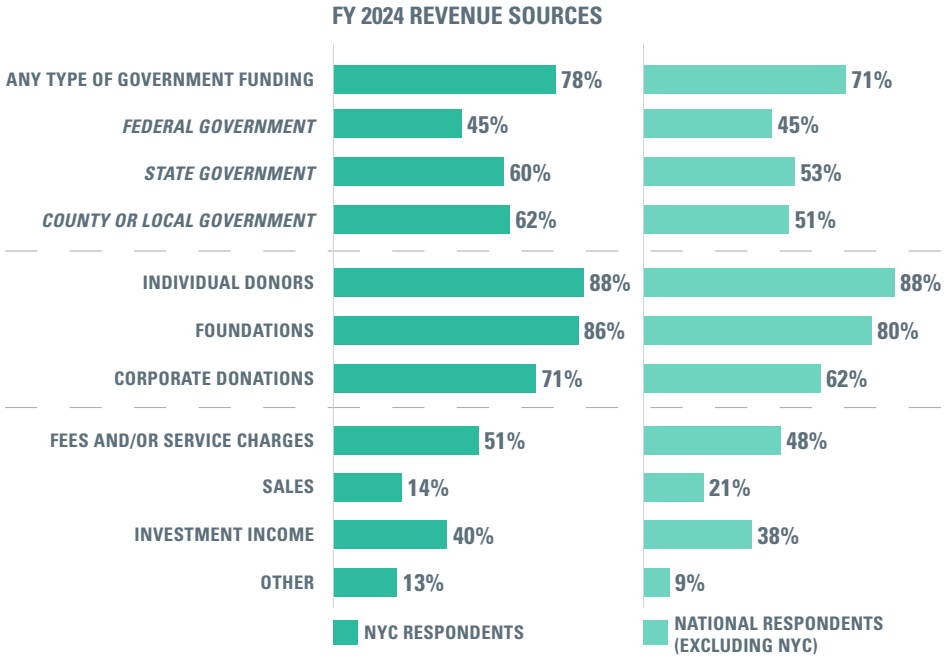
WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

NONPROFIT FUNDING DYNAMICS



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

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



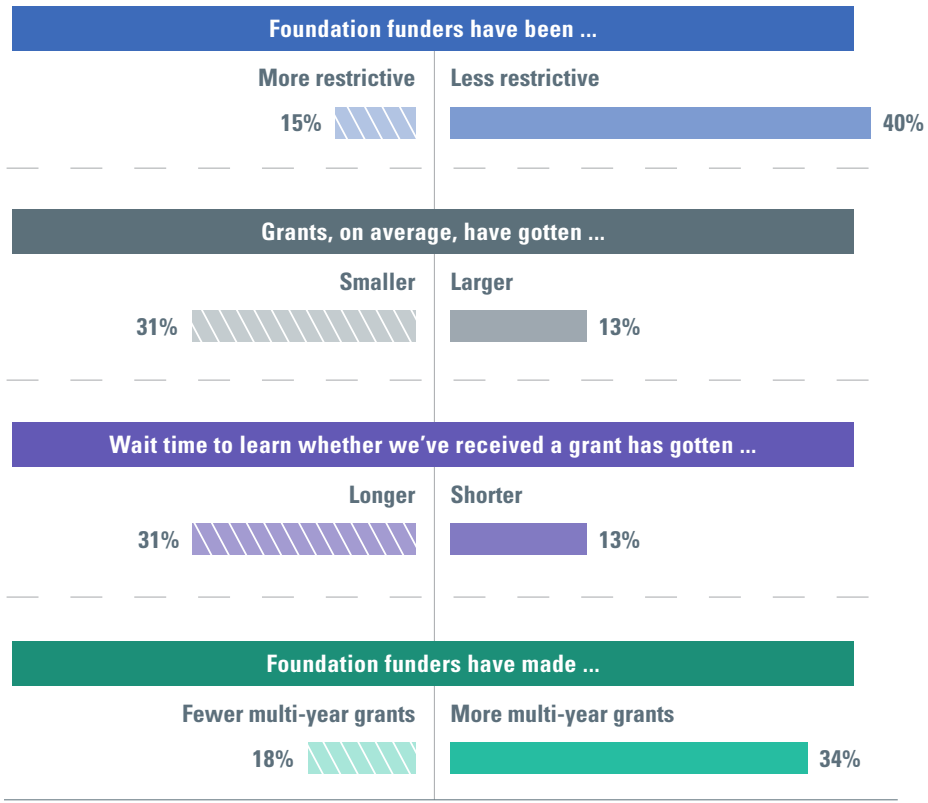
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A CLOSER LOOK AT FOUNDATION FUNDING

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

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

CHANGES IN FOUNDATION FUNDING PRACTICES SINCE LATE 2022



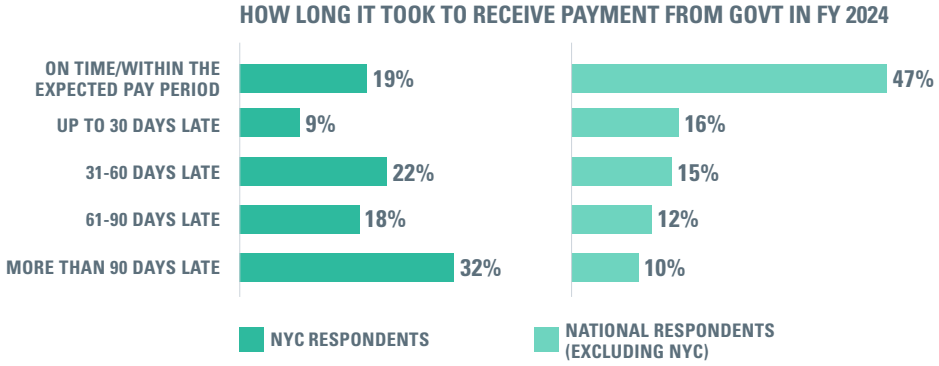
> We are preparing for Federal, State, and City funding to become unavailable. Or much more competitive. We are aware that Foundations may be shifting their funding priorities away from the needs of the constituents we serve. We are working to identify individual donors with deep pockets who can make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



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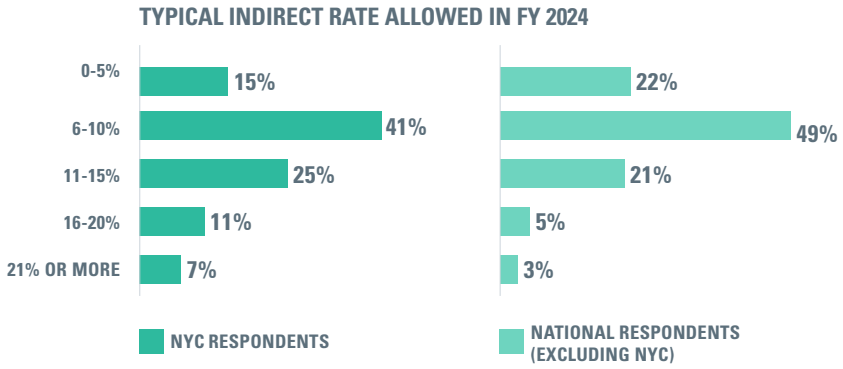
A CLOSER LOOK AT GOVERNMENT FUNDING

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



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

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



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



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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

NONPROFIT FINANCIAL HEALTH



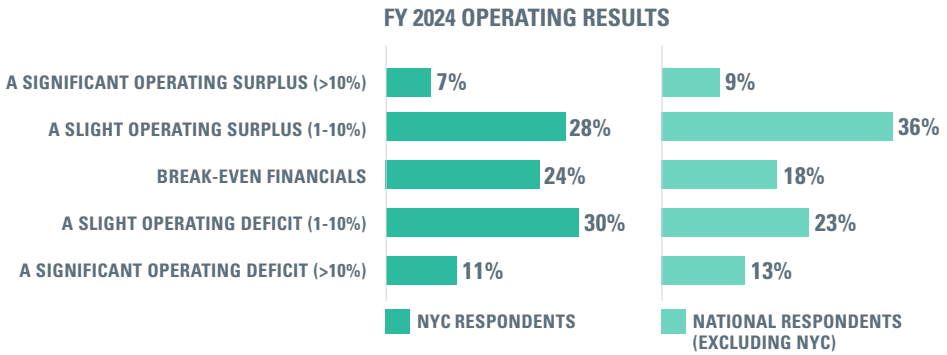
NYC nonprofits entered 2025 with fragile financial health.

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

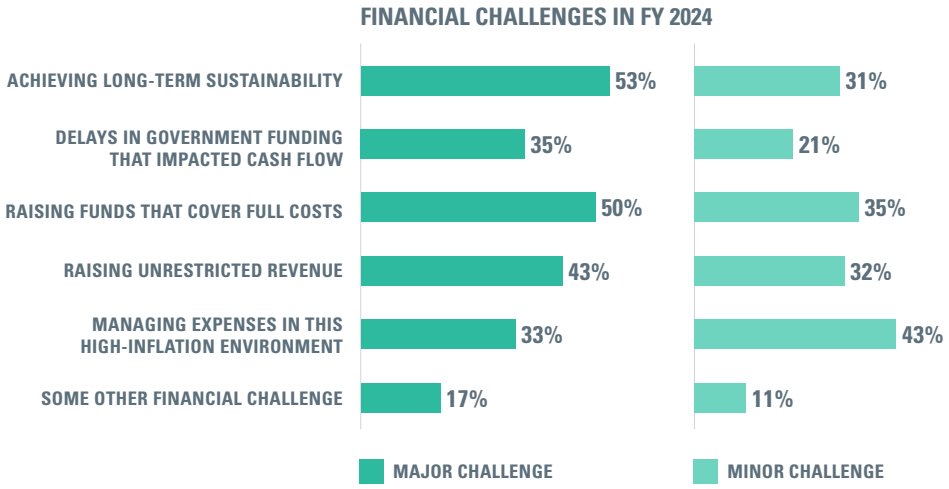
METRIC	WHAT IT MEASURES
Operating Surplus or Deficit	Whether your organization ended the year with more revenue than expenses (surplus) or less (deficit). A surplus supports stability and growth. A deficit limits flexibility, increases risk, and makes it harder to respond to urgent needs or invest in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

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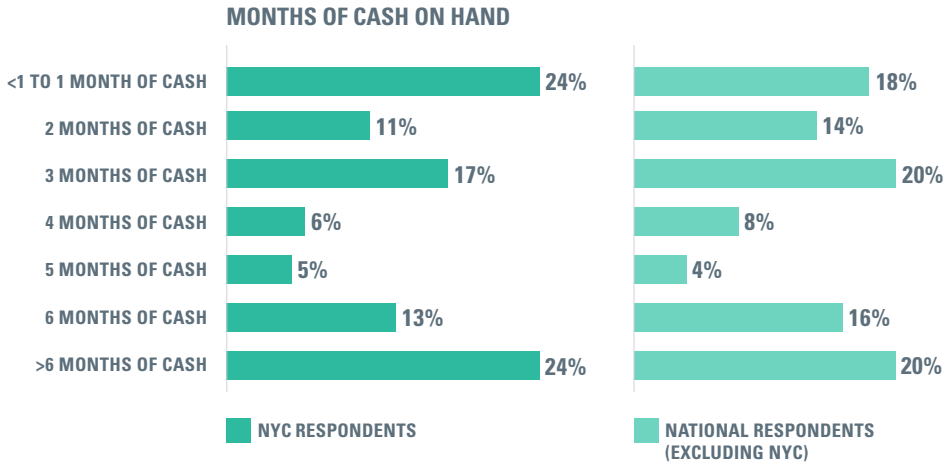
Many local nonprofits are struggling to cover their costs and don't have the cash on hand to manage delays or emergencies, or to make strategic investments. 41% of NYC respondents reported an operating deficit in 2024 – an even higher percentage than reported by nonprofits nationally (36%). In 2025,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

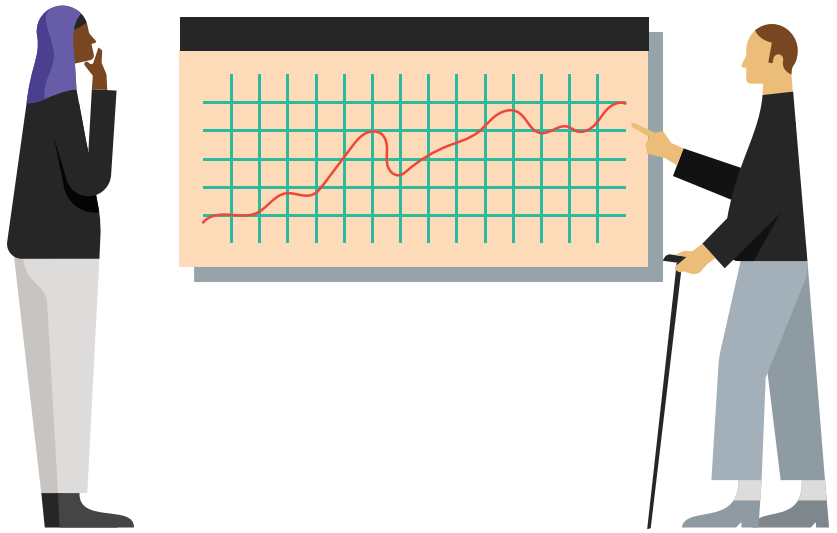


More than 80% of NYC nonprofits reported challenges raising funds that cover full costs and achieving long-term financial sustainability in 2024.



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





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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

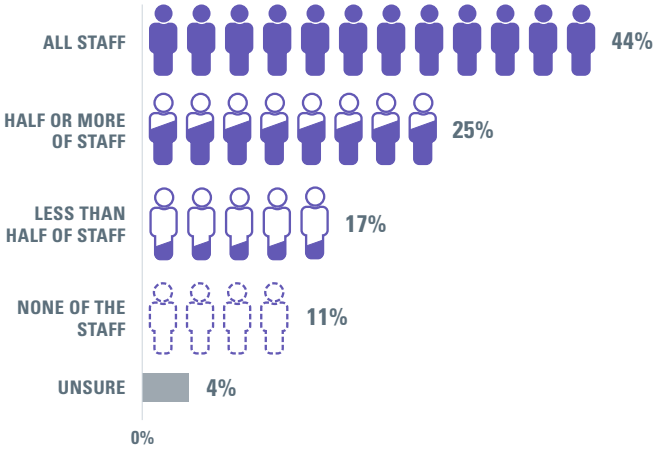
NONPROFIT WORKFORCE DYNAMICS



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

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

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



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

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

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

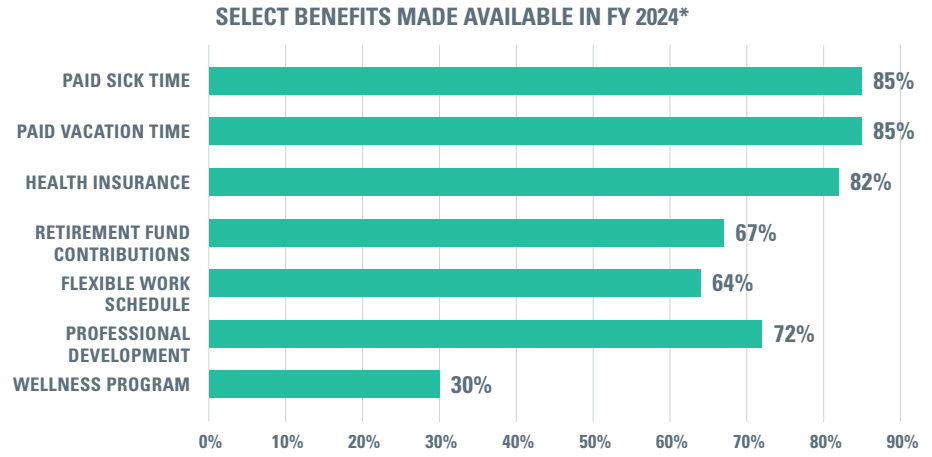
Social justice/civil rights/community organizing survey respondent in New York City

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

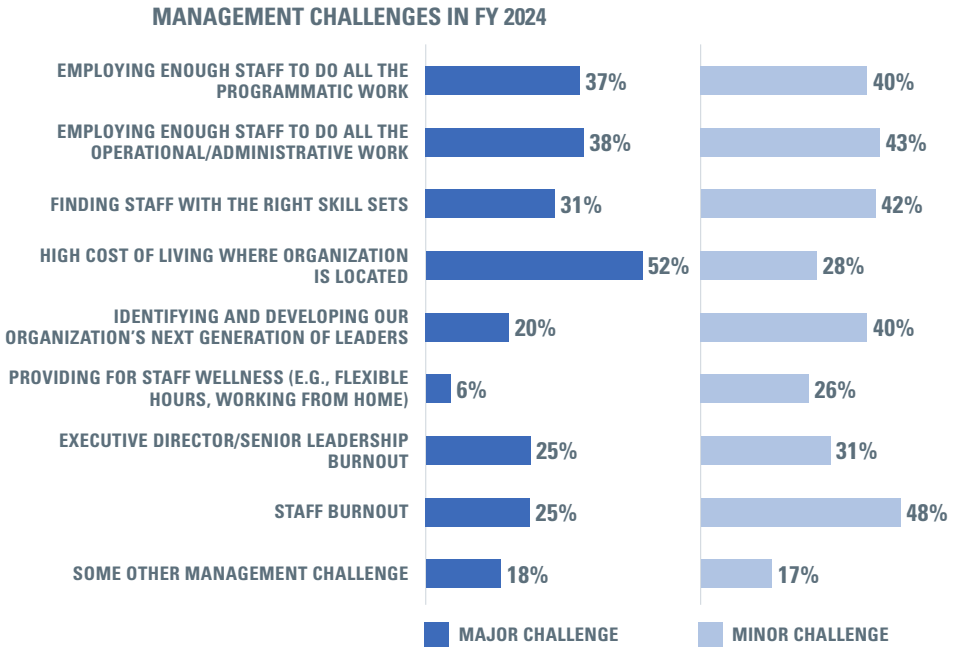
Community development survey respondent in New York City

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

Arts/culture survey respondent in New York City



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



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GETTING THROUGH, AND BUILDING WHAT'S NEXT

WHAT WE CAN DO TO EMERGE STRONGER AS A SECTOR



Recommendations from our National State of the Sector Survey Report

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

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

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

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Additional Recommendations for NYC Government

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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



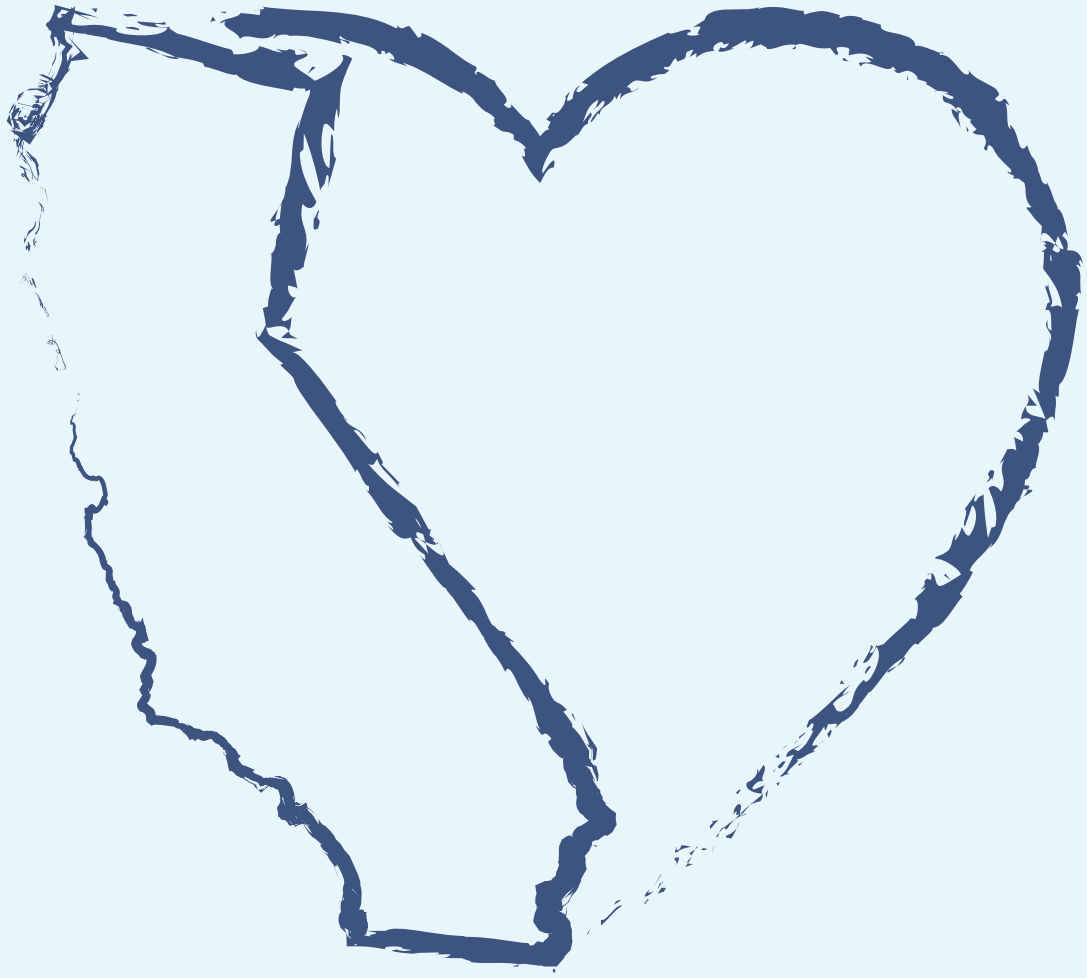
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The Heart of the Sector

How Funders Can Support Nonprofit Worker Well-being

Investing in nonprofit staff + Building thriving communities

Strategies for lasting impact



Nonprofit Finance Fund®

The Heart of the Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofit workers keep communities strong.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Defining Worker Well-being

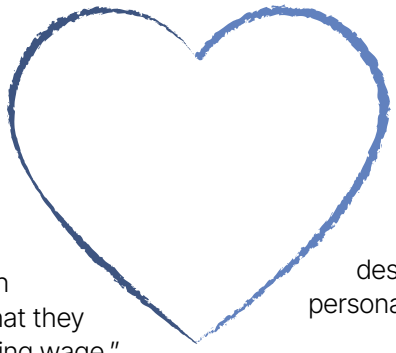
Worker well-being does not have a single definition; it can mean different things to different people, depending on their experiences and the nature of their work. Across interviews, leaders described worker well-being in ways that were practical, actionable, and deeply personal. While definitions varied,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

Economic Security

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

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

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



Thriving Personally and Professionally

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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



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

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

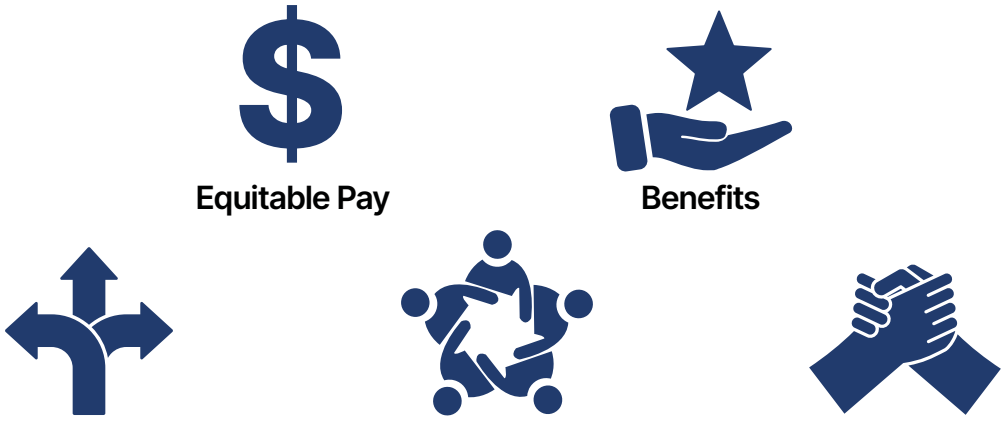
> "Particularly in the kind of work that we do, there is such a personal connection and tie to the work and the outcome of the work. We don't have deliverables like a bottom line; the outcome is a child's life, literally life and death."
>
> —Nonprofit leader

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Promising Practices Nonprofits Are Implementing to Improve Worker Well-being

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

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



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

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

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Equitable Pay

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

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

Examples of equitable pay strategies from our research include:

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

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

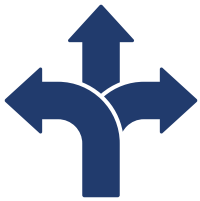
Benefits

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

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

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Flexible Work Schedules and Locations



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

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

—Nonprofit Leader

Collaborative Leadership and Decision-Making



No matter where they work or how much they earn, workers want to feel that they can effect change in their workplace and job. In nonprofits, this may be even more pronounced: Workers want a real voice in shaping their organization's direction. In recent years, there's been movement away from traditional workplace hierarchies and top-down decision-making. One strategy for increasing worker involvement in organizational decisions is the creation of formal internal structures that distribute decision-making power across a broad, representative swath of staff. From what we saw, these types of structures are typically focused on a particular aspect of organizational operations, for example, budgeting. The involvement of staff from all levels is key, as is the inclusion of staff from all functional areas of the organization – not just those whose roles are directly connected to the committee's focus.

"We have a commitment that all of our decisions are made by the people who are impacted by them. So all staff-impacting decisions are discussed with the full team."

—Nonprofit leader

Nonprofit Staff Unionization



A union is a formal way for workers to share power and shape workplace decisions. Unionized workers tend to have higher wages, more benefits, paid leave, and control over their schedules, and use fewer public benefits than their non-unionized peers. Unionized workplaces have fewer occupational fatalities and smaller internal gender and racial wealth gaps than non-unionized ones. The issue of unionization in nonprofits is increasingly visible, and drawing interest from workers, leaders, and funders, even while only a small number of nonprofits are unionized. Unionization comes with its own challenges and may not be right or possible for all nonprofits. But as more nonprofits explore the approach, it can raise overall expectations and standards across the sector, and – even for non-unionized organizations – the model can offer important practices and ideas for supporting well-being.

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How Funders Can Support Improved Nonprofit Worker Well-being

Most nonprofits operate with constraints such as limited budgets and restricted funding. While there are promising ways organizations are supporting well-being without new dollars, funding often plays a critical and decisive role. How nonprofits are funded can either enable or limit their ability to pay equitably, offer benefits, and create healthy and sustainable work environments.

This section outlines practical ways philanthropic funders can support worker well-being, including both financial and non-financial tactics, taking into consideration multiple levers funders may be able to access. Examples we highlight include:



Starting the Conversation



Grantmaking Strategy



Well-being Programming and Initiatives



Research



Learning and Advocacy

Our goal is not to suggest a single approach, but to encourage funders to take intentional steps – even seemingly small ones – to strengthen the nonprofit workforce serving the communities they care about.

Starting the Conversation



One of the simplest things funders can do is ask grantees about how their staff are doing. This can be a powerful signal that funders understand the connection between a healthy workforce and mission impact, and can open doors for leaders to invest in their staff.

In light of the power imbalance in funder-grantee relationships, it's especially important for funders to initiate these types of conversations rather than waiting for nonprofits to raise them. These conversations can help grantees to understand that funding can go toward worker well-being and doesn't automatically mean an expectation to expand the work.

> "We've made it a point to ask, 'What is the organization doing to advance wellness and sustainability?' People appreciate that we ask about it. The general operating support that we provide doesn't have to be used on wellness, but the conversation allows them to think about and be more intentional about how they use unrestricted dollars."
>
> —Foundation leader

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Grantmaking Strategy



The good news is that philanthropy already has a key tool for supporting worker well-being: grants. Prioritizing well-being does not always require bigger grants – although it certainly can – but it does require intentionality and thoughtfulness about how funding is structured. Funders can provide:

Full cost funding

Full cost funding allows organizations to cover all of their programmatic and operational expenses, build reserves, and plan for future change. In some cases, this means bigger grants. When that is not feasible, funders can also adjust expectations of what is realistic with their existing support. Organizations may also need support in figuring out their full costs, amid a system that has conditioned them to undervalue their work and conform with arbitrary and outdated standards about minimizing compensation and overhead.

Multiyear and unrestricted funding

Multiyear and unrestricted funding give leaders the flexibility to decide how they best invest in their staff and plan for the future, while reducing some of the pressure of annual fundraising. Even when unrestricted funding isn't possible, funders can look for ways to offer greater flexibility and make their funding "unrestricted-like" – for example, by allowing generous overhead and reducing rigidity around budget line items.

> "Unrestricted funding is the best strategy; it allows us to maximize funds, to have the most impact, and to take care of our workforce who is moving the work forward. I was able to build relationships and have direct conversations with funders about having a more trust-based approach, including the need to move toward multiyear, unrestricted funding. I was able to get some funders to transition program restricted funds to unrestricted funds. This allows us to be nimble and pivot when the time calls for it."
>
> —Nonprofit leader

One-time or supplementary grants

Additionally, funders can provide one-time or supplemental funding alongside a grantee's core grant for well-being initiatives or investments identified by the grantee. This supplemental funding should come with choice and flexibility in how grantees use it to support their workforce, based on staff needs and priorities. When provided on top of core support, these grants allow nonprofit leaders to not have to make trade-offs between worker well-being and other critical organizational needs. Staff Operating Support grants have emerged as one tool for funders to flexibly invest in the well-being of nonprofit staff.

> "It can be hard for nonprofits to use the general operating support for self-care or worker well-being; it's in the DNA of the nonprofit mentality that staff sacrifice – and suffer. I often make an [unrestricted grant] that I know they will use for programs, and another small grant that is for worker well-being. Even if I encourage them to use the [unrestricted grant] for well-being, it's hard for them to do that. That second grant feels like 'permission' to them to use it to invest in their staff."
>
> —Foundation leader

Grantmaking Strategy in Action

Examples of foundations providing flexible and/or long-term support include The California Endowment and The California Wellness Foundation through their general operating support grants, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund through the Endeavor Fund and WE Initiative, and The James Irvine Foundation through the Better Careers Initiative.

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Well-being Programming and Initiatives

In addition to direct grantmaking, a number of foundations are investing – individually and collectively – in nonprofit worker well-being through dedicated programs and special initiatives focused on well-being. These efforts provide resources or supplemental support that organizations might not be able to provide on their own. And they often have the added benefit of creating connections and shared learning between staff from different organizations. Examples we heard include:

- **Sabbatical programs**, which provide financial support for nonprofit leaders to step away from work, contributing to organizational sustainability by reducing burnout and providing a chance for other team members to step into leadership roles while their colleagues are on sabbatical.
- **Cohort-based initiatives**, which bring staff from multiple organizations together for well-being programming and/or provide space for collective reflection, professional development, and rest.
- **Support for professional development**, which contributes to individual growth and job satisfaction over the long-term.

Funding Rest, Connections, and Professional Development

Several California funders offer sabbatical programs, leadership fellowships, and professional development opportunities that prioritize worker well-being and organizational sustainability. These programs are often flexible, trust-based, and designed to strengthen both individuals and their organizations.

Examples include sabbatical programs offered by The California Wellness Foundation and The Durfee Foundation, The John W. Mack Movement Building Fellowship funded by The Weingart Foundation, and The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation's funding of leaders to participate in executive learning and professional development programs.

> "You can't get at the impact of what happens when you invest in well-being without these real-world examples. People don't hear these stories very often, and ... [the value of well-being efforts] can be such a squishy thing. Funders are often all about return on investment and that's hard to measure [in this space]. Case studies can help demonstrate how the squishy, invisible stuff elevates the work and the organizations."
>
> —Foundation leader

Research

Another important role for funders is supporting research related to worker well-being. In general, the nonprofit field is understudied and suffers from a lack of data that limits our understanding of how workers are doing, and what works when it comes to improving well-being in the nonprofit context over time. This is especially important given the resource constraints of the field; better data can help both funders and nonprofits target their investments in worker well-being on efforts that will have the greatest impact.

Opportunities for funder support include:

- Case studies of effective practices that organizations have employed to improve worker well-being.
- Research and resources related to nonprofit unionization.
- Longitudinal studies of worker well-being, including how to create effective paths for career advancement.

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Learning and Advocacy

Funders can also support worker well-being by creating spaces for learning, sharing, and advocacy. When foundations create platforms for nonprofits to speak candidly about their experiences supporting their staff, it reinforces for the field that worker well-being matters and has a place within funder-nonprofit relationships. Convening is also a way for both nonprofits and funders to amplify their work and promising practices, and to catalyze additional investment in worker well-being.

Funders can also advance nonprofit worker well-being by supporting public education and advocacy campaigns that highlight the essentiality of nonprofits and call for needed changes in the policy and public funding landscape to address endemic challenges in the sector, such as delayed reimbursements and funding that does not cover full costs.

Raising the Profile of the Nonprofit Sector through Public Campaigns

Several recent campaigns highlight the importance of the nonprofit sector and call attention to the structural challenges that impact both organizational health and worker well-being.

In October 2025, Trinity Church Wall Street launched the #TheHeartofNY campaign to bring attention to the issues of underfunding and delayed payments to nonprofits in New York City. The campaign features portraits of nonprofit workers and emphasizes that "nonprofits are the heart of NY" and that "when nonprofits struggle, essential programs vanish and the burden falls hardest on low-income communities, immigrants, and people of color."







The Nonprofits Get It Done campaign, sponsored by the National Council of Nonprofits, urges advocacy around proposed changes to the charitable tax code, federal funding, and regulatory frameworks for nonprofits, describing nonprofits as "neighbors helping neighbors" and providing "urgent, even life-saving services where government and business can't."

Campaigns like these elevate the roles of nonprofits and help to connect nonprofit worker well-being to community well-being, and are key to countering longstanding and damaging narratives about the nonprofit sector. But they don't happen for free; rather, they require dedicated resources to both seed and sustain.

Other Practical Ways Funders Can Support Worker Well-being

There are a number of relatively low-cost, high-impact tactics funders are employing to help nonprofits address worker well-being, including:

- **Streamlining or reducing reporting requirements** – for example, allowing grantees to only submit updated budgets in the case of grant renewals or to use reports created for other funders.
- Instituting **automatic cost-of-living adjustments** in grants or other across-the-board increases that address the impact of inflation.
- Providing **grants to cover gaps in public funding**, making workers "whole" for the work they are already delivering.
- **Talking with grantees** about how salaries compare to local living wages.
- **Offering stipends** for mental health or other wellness needs.

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Moving Forward

Improving worker well-being is complex work.

Meaningful change takes time, money, and an ongoing commitment to dialogue and partnership, both within organizations and between nonprofits and their funders. It is not something that individual nonprofits or funders can fully address alone. Rather, sustained investment in worker well-being calls for greater collaboration across the entire nonprofit ecosystem.

With this report, we hope to give a sense of what is possible when worker well-being is treated as central to – not separate from – nonprofit missions and community impact. Change starts with the recognition that the well-being of nonprofit workers is inseparable from the well-being of the communities they serve – even more so given that many nonprofit workers come from the communities they serve – and it is carried forward through strong leadership, dedicated resources, trust, and collaboration. By taking practical steps, including actions highlighted in this report, together nonprofits and funders can strengthen the nonprofit workforce, and with it, the communities they are dedicated to serving.

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Acknowledgements

This work was supported generously by the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, in alignment with the foundation's focus on community well-being and its idea that nonprofit workers are a key pillar of a community's "social immune system," and The James Irvine Foundation, whose mission is to ensure that low-income workers in the state of California have the power to achieve economic advancement.

NFF is deeply grateful to the 47 nonprofit, foundation, and government leaders; researchers; and consultants we spoke to as part of this project who generously shared their insights, experiences, and recommendations investing in and supporting nonprofit worker well-being. Thanks as well to the 506 California-based respondents to NFF's 2025 State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey.

Please visit nff.org to learn more about this work and read our detailed research report.

Report Authors

Dana Archer-Rosenthal, Dana Archer-Rosenthal Consulting

Alex Chan, Senior Director, Consulting

Annie Chang, Vice President, Community Engagement

Chris Lisée, Director, Marketing & Communications

Elise Miller, Senior Director, Community Engagement

Jen Talansky, Vice President, Marketing & Communications

Report Contributors

Jackie Doherty, Manager, Consulting

Soyoung Jung, Manager, Consulting

Ben Smith, Associate, Consulting

Dr. LaShawn Taylor, Director, Consulting

About NFF

Nonprofit Finance Fund® (NFF®) is a nonprofit lender, consultant, and advocate. Since 1980, we've helped organizations access the money and resources they need to realize their communities' aspirations. Alongside others, we're working to build community wealth and well-being and put affordable housing, essential services, quality jobs, and excellent education within reach of more people.

NFF's research advances knowledge of key issues facing the social sector. Find all our reports, including our State of the Sector Survey on nff.org.

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

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

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

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

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

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

info@northbrooklyncoalition.org
Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

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

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Leana Pardo

Leana Pardo

info@northbrooklyncoalition.org
Tel: 718.302.4073 Fax: 718.302.9090

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (NMIC)

Written Testimony

Regarding

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2027

EXECUTIVE BUDGET

SUBMITTED TO:

New York City Council

Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) is a settlement house that was founded in 1979 to protect low-income and immigrant families in Upper Manhattan. Since then, we have expanded into adjacent Bronx neighborhoods and support 14,000 New Yorkers annually. The Settlement House model requires organizations provide their community with services and supports that address both immediate needs and help them to move towards long term stability. NMIC provides our community with a wide array of programs to address Housing, Immigration, Benefits Access & Finance, Education & Career, Health, and Holistic needs. We provide crisis intervention with legal or social services through our legal, organizing, and advocacy initiatives and empower community members with academic and vocational certification classes necessary to access living wage employment.

NMIC plays a critical role in the delivery of necessary human services to our community comprised of immigrant, low income, and Spanish speaking populations – some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Support from the City Council makes it possible for NMIC to offer many of our most in demand programs – NYC Benefits, Immigration Services, Adult Education classes, and YouthBuild. We thank City Council for continuing to invest in our communities and programs that keep New Yorkers stable, healthy and housed. While we are grateful for the City's support, the growing needs of our communities make clear that sustained investment in

vital programs remains essential.

NYC Benefits is a lifeline for New Yorkers that must be protected and preserved. At NMIC, we see the need in our communities outpace the resources already available. With funding from NYC Benefits, NMIC's Benefits Access Unit served over **5,000 residents across several Districts in 2025** alone, **attaining over $4,012,752 in benefits assistance**. Community members frequently line up outside our offices before opening hours to meet with our Benefits Access Unit to navigate complex benefits applications and access essential benefits they need to meet their basic needs.

Additionally, NMIC has seen a rising demand for immigration legal services, specifically for complex cases. As immigrant communities face increasing uncertainty and hostility, access to legal representation is more critical than ever. In the past year alone, **NMIC's immigration team has served over 1,150 residents across multiple Districts in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx, with a total of 494 clients requiring full legal representation.** These numbers demonstrate the growing need of our immigrant communities at a time where funding is being threatened for these services. While we are thankful for the Council's support, the need of our immigrant New Yorkers continues to exceed the available resources, causing many to turn to unqualified "notarios" and bad actors in desperation. We increasingly see clients expose themselves to detention and removal by ICE by filing baseless applications through notarios or by otherwise receiving incompetent services.

While the need for expanded immigration legal services is great, we must emphasize that funding for this work cannot come at the expense of existing immigration funding. The City must strengthen its commitment to immigration services across the board and create a sustainable infrastructure of funding that NMIC and other providers can rely on to assist and protect our communities.

There are over 2.2 million adults in New York City with limited English language proficiency or who do not have a high school diploma, making it nearly impossible for them to navigate City systems and services, or to find living wage employment to stabilize themselves and their families. **In FY 26, 401 community members enrolled in NMIC's adult basic education (ABE), GED, or English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. More than half have demonstrated progress towards their educational goals, and eight clients have earned their GED unlocking new post-secondary and employment opportunities.** Through the Adult Literacy Forward Initiative, NMIC provided nearly 400 additional hours of instruction across our Adult Education Programs, supporting more learning and greater progress for participants.

NMIC's YouthBuild program has opened similar doors for out of work and out of school young adults (17-24). OWOS Youth are uniquely at risk as they face complex and

interconnected economic, emotional, and academic needs. YouthBuild participants engage in academic instruction towards their high school diploma, vocational training, social and emotional skill building, and leadership opportunities. **In FY 26, NMIC's YouthBuild enrolled 30 clients, 10 of whom have earned their high school diploma and seven earned a vocational certification.** Over the next nine months, these clients will continue to receive support to find employment and enroll in post-secondary education, as well as case management to address challenges, to ensure they continue to make progress towards prosperous futures. **As such, we respectfully request the City Council renew our current funding allocations of $240,000 for Adult Literacy Forward and $350,000 for YouthBuild for FY 27.**

The ability to provide clients with wraparound services, such as access to benefits, legal, educational, and mental health services, is critical to NMIC's work as a Settlement House but is rarely funded at adequate levels by standard City and State contracts. Each of the essential services described here- NYC Benefits, Immigration, Adult Education, and YouthBuild – utilize City Council funding to support additional case management capacity. **In FY 26, NMIC case managers have helped clients access childcare, food pantries, immigration services, employment and training, and mental health services.** As our community faces cuts in services and attacks from the federal government, the work of our case managers is more essential than ever.

Demand for these services continues to grow, exhausting and exceeding the resources available. Community based organizations struggling to meet the existing demand are now also tasked with preparing for the possibility of funding cuts. We should not be forced to plan to reduce vital programs for the community while responding to growing demand for services. Now more than ever, it is essential for the City Council to continue to invest in these essential programs, so organizations like NMIC can continue to be the lifeline that New Yorkers need.

The City has prioritized an affordability agenda that aims to help New Yorkers with the rising cost of living. These investments are not separate from that same affordability agenda; support for programs such as NYC Benefits and immigration legal services are fundamental to stable communities while Education and workforce development are necessary to access employment. As such, the City must protect and expand support for these services so that organizations like NMIC can continue to provide New Yorkers with the essential service they rely on. NMIC urges the Council to continue to invest in programs that keep our communities whole at a time when New Yorkers need it the most.

Thank you to the members of the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your leadership.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
New York City Council
Committee on Health
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
June 5, 2026

Paula Magnus, President
Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good morning, Chairpersons Schulman and Lee, and members of the Committees.

Mayor Mamdani's first Executive Budget follows New York State's major new investments in mental health and early childhood. Those commitments flow through community-based providers. We appear today to report what we see on the ground.

My name is Paula Magnus, and I am President of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc. Founded in Harlem in 1946, Northside serves over 6,500 children and families across Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. As a New York State licensed Article 31 outpatient mental health clinic, we deliver therapy to children from birth through age 21, the majority from low-income communities of color. Our programs include our main clinic in East Harlem, mental health services embedded in 23 New York City public schools, a Therapeutic Early Childhood Center serving 72 children, and three Head Start/Early Head Start sites serving 181 children. Every child in those programs receives clinical services from Northside staff. We also operate a Home-Based Crisis Intervention program, court-involved youth services, preventive family services, and educational supports including tutoring, after-school, and summer programming.

This testimony addresses the funding shortfall between what DOHMH community-based mental health contracts reimburse and the true cost of delivering those services. That shortfall appears across three DOHMH-funded programs Northside operates:

- Home-Based Crisis Intervention
- Perinatal and early childhood mental health
- Children Under Five and Court-Involved Youth mental health programs

The Council has the authority to address this funding shortfall for all DOHMH providers delivering these services in the FY 2027 adopted budget.

The Core Problem

New York City is home to 57.8 percent of the state's Medicaid enrollees, who, by definition, are low income.[1] Because most children receiving publicly funded mental health services in New York are covered through Medicaid, the City bears the largest share of the state's community mental health need.

While the Mayor's FY 2027 Executive Budget commits $40 million to increase rates for child care and K-12 providers,[2] community-based mental health providers under

DOHMH contracts need a similar funding increase, but the Mayor's budget did not fund it. As such, clinical positions will stay vacant because contract revenue cannot support competitive salaries and experienced clinicians will leave for better-paying jobs. I note that since 2020, New York City CPI has risen 20 to 25 percent.[4] Municipal unions received cumulative raises exceeding 16 percent over that period. Nonprofit providers contracted with DOHMH received less than half the raises of municipal workers over five years.[5] Inflation-adjusted wages for the clinical workforce have declined.[5,6] The Council's own Mental Health Road Map identifies the result: a clinical workforce crisis, with some sectors reporting 30 to 40 percent vacancy rates post-COVID.[3] Through April 30, 2026, Northside carries a combined unreimbursed cost of $250,637 across four DOHMH-funded programs: Home-Based Crisis Intervention ($12,968), ECMH Perinatal ($188,413), ECMH Expansion ($28,652), and Community Mental Health ($20,604). That figure is not a fundraising success story. It is the size of the public subsidy New York City's children are depending on Northside donors to cover.

Three Programs Illustrating the Gap

Home-Based Crisis Intervention

This DOHMH-funded program delivers intensive in-home services to families when a child is at immediate risk of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. In FY 2026, Northside served 66 families through this program year to date. Of those, only 3 required inpatient hospitalization. Through April 30, 2026, the gap between true delivery cost and the DOHMH contract reimbursement is $12,968, covered by private donors rather than public funds. The Council has the authority to direct DOHMH to close that gap in FY 2027.

Perinatal and Early Childhood Mental Health

This DOHMH-funded program reaches families before problems escalate. In FY 2026, Northside served 181 children and families through this program in East Harlem and the Bronx. Through April 30, 2026, the combined gap across ECMH Perinatal and ECMH Expansion is $217,065: ECMH Perinatal ($188,413) and ECMH Expansion ($28,652).

The years from birth through five are when untreated trauma and developmental disruption carry the longest downstream consequences.[9] A provider whose contract rate falls short of true delivery cost cannot hire or retain the clinicians those children need.

Children Under Five and Court-Involved Youth

The Council's own Mental Health Road Map identifies the Children Under Five Initiative as a Council priority, documenting that base DOHMH contract rates do not reach every population in need.[3] 181 children across Northside's three Head Start/Early Head Start sites in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx receive clinical mental health services because the Council funds them. Every family qualifies for free and reduced lunch. The services are embedded in the Head Start settings where those families already are, removing the access barrier that keeps low-income families from traditional clinic settings. Through April 30, 2026, the gap between true delivery cost and reimbursement under Northside's Children Under Five and Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative contract is $20,604, covered by private donors rather than public funds.

The same logic applies to court-involved youth. Clinical engagement is a proven protective factor against reincarceration. The City spends $507,000 per person incarcerated annually.[8] Community-based mental health services cost a fraction of that. In FY 2026, Northside served 37 court-involved youth through this program year to date.

Recommendations

Northside recommends the following:

- Direct DOHMH to implement a meaningful cost-of-living adjustment for all community-based mental health contracts in FY 2027 that begins closing the gap between reimbursement and true delivery cost.
- Direct DOHMH to protect FY 2027 funding for perinatal and early childhood mental health services at levels that reflect true delivery costs.
- Direct DOHMH to set Home-Based Crisis Intervention contract rates at the true cost of delivery. Northside's current contract carries an unreimbursed cost of $12,968 through April 30, 2026, a gap covered by private donors rather than public funds.
- Direct DOHMH to report annually on clinical vacancy rates across its contracted provider networks and develop a funded workforce pipeline strategy.

The children in these programs are zero to five years old, or they are seventeen and trying not to return to Rikers. Their clinicians are funded by private donors because contracts fall short. The Council has both the authority and the responsibility to fix this structural failure in the FY 2027 budget.

Thank you.

Paula Magnus
President
Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.
1475 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10029
www.northsidecenter.org

Notes

[1] New York State Office of the Comptroller, Medicaid: Federal Funding and New York, citing February 2025 enrollment data. https://www.osc.ny.gov/reports/budget/fed-funding-ny/medicaid

[2] City of New York, FY 2027 Executive Budget Summary, Mayor's Office of Management and Budget, May 2026. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/exec26/sum5-26.pdf

[3] New York City Council, Mental Health Road Map, Mental Health Workforce Shortage section. https://council.nyc.gov/mental-health-road-map/

[4] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics / FRED, New York-Newark-Jersey City CPI Series CUURA101SA0. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUURA101SA0

[5] NYC Independent Budget Office, Employees of Human Service Nonprofits Under Contract With New York City Set to Receive Less Than Half the Raises of NYC Employees Over 5 Years, November 2023. https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/employees-of-human-service-nonprofits-under-contract-with-new-york-city-set-to-receive-less-than-half-the-raises-of-nyc-employees-over-5-years-november-2023.pdf

[6] JustPay NYC Campaign, Facts & Research, citing BLS Employment Cost Index data. https://www.justpayny.org/facts-and-research

[7] Center for New York City Affairs, The Road to and from Salary Parity in New York City, January 2020. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53ee4f0be4b015b9c3690d84/t/5e222c2ab457e7527ddc6450/1579297836053/SalaryParity_Parrott_Jan2020_Jan17.pdf

[8] NYC Office of the Comptroller, $507,000 per person incarcerated figure, July 2024. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/

[9] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Administration for Children's Services
and Department of Youth and Community Development
May 28, 2026

Paula Magnus, President
Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good morning, Chairpersons and members of the Committees.

We are grateful for the opportunity to testify today on the FY 2027 Executive Budget proposals for the Administration for Children's Services and the Department of Youth and Community Development. At a combined proposed allocation of approximately $4.6 billion within an overall city budget of $124.7 billion,[1] these agencies determine the strength of services for our city's most vulnerable children and families. This is Mayor Mamdani's first Executive Budget, and we see it as an important opportunity to lock in durable commitments to children's mental health and youth development from the outset of this administration.

My name is Paula Magnus, and I am President of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc. Founded in Harlem in 1946, Northside serves over 5,500 children and families across Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. As a New York State licensed Article 31 outpatient mental health clinic, we deliver therapy to children from birth through age 21, the majority from low-income communities of color. Our programs include an East Harlem clinic, mental health services embedded in 23 New York City public schools, a Therapeutic Early Childhood Center, and three Head Start/Early Head Start sites serving 253 children. Every child in those programs receives clinical services from Northside staff. We also operate a Home-Based Crisis Intervention program, court-involved youth services, preventive family services, and educational supports including tutoring, after-school, and summer programming.

This testimony addresses two things: a specific funding gap in our ACS-contracted Family Connections preventive services program, and the rate and workforce pressures Northside faces under contracts with both agencies. Funding decisions made in a first budget tend to get baselined, and that makes FY 2027 the right time to lock in commitments that will serve children for years to come.

Administration for Children's Services

Family Connections: Prevention That Pays for Itself.

Northside's Family Connections program, funded by the Administration for Children's Services, serves families facing domestic violence, substance abuse, and neglect. It works. Families stay together. Children who would otherwise enter foster care do not.

Paula: there are two ways to present the dollar shortfall below. Please pick one option and delete the other.

OPTION A

Northside's Family Connections program is funded on a per-slot basis at a contracted capacity of 72 slots. The ACS contract reimburses approximately $23,818 per slot annually against a true delivery cost of approximately $24,715 per slot, a gap of $897 per slot that multiplies across 72 slots to a documented annual shortfall of $64,559 that Northside absorbs through private fundraising.

OPTION B

Northside's Family Connections program serves 72 slots of contracted capacity. ACS reimbursement falls short of true delivery costs by $64,559 annually, a gap Northside absorbs through private fundraising.

Of the cases Northside closed in the most recently tracked period, not one child entered foster care within six months of completing the program. A program that prevents foster care placements is being partially subsidized by Northside donors. The Council can correct that.

Department of Youth and Community Development

The New York City Comptroller's April 2025 report, Nonprofit, Nonpayment, documents that 90.72 percent of human services contracts in FY 2024 were registered late, and that the median time from procurement to registration was 355 days.[2] Northside routinely begins delivering services months before a contract is executed or a first payment is received. That is not a Northside problem. It is a structural problem that the Council has the authority to fix by directing both ACS and DYCD to shorten execution timelines and establish advance payments as a standard feature for providers with strong performance histories.

The City spends $507,000 per person incarcerated annually.[3] Employment is a proven clinical protective factor for justice-involved youth. We recommend the Council create a formal pipeline from court-involved youth into SYEP placements.

Systemic Barriers Facing Providers and the Clinical Workforce

ACS and DYCD contract rates have fallen so far behind actual costs that providers across the sector can no longer sustain a licensed clinical workforce. Since 2020, New York City CPI has risen 20 to 25 percent.[4] Municipal unions received cumulative raises exceeding 16 percent over that period. ACS and DYCD contracted providers received 7.3 percent, less than half.[5] Inflation-adjusted wages in health and social services have declined approximately 4 percent in real terms.[6] Northside currently covers the gap with approximately $300,000 in private philanthropic revenue across our ACS and DYCD contracts combined. The Council has the authority to require that FY 2027 contracts reflect what the work actually costs.

The workforce gap is equally documented. Across New York City's human services sector, organizations are reporting vacancy rates of 30 to 40 percent, in some cases higher.[7] Human services workers with postgraduate degrees earn 37 percent less than the private sector median and 29 percent less than the public sector median for their education level.[8] These are not abstract statistics. They mean children wait longer for therapists.

Conclusion

The Council has the tools to make that possible for the next generation.

Northside recommends the following:

- Bring contract reimbursement rates for Family Connections in line with actual delivery costs, closing the documented $64,559 annual shortfall that Northside and providers like us are currently absorbing through private fundraising.
- Require a meaningful FY 2027 cost-of-living adjustment across ACS and DYCD contracts that begins to close the documented gap between City reimbursement and actual costs. Municipal workers received 16 percent in raises over five years. Nonprofit providers received 7.3 percent.[5]
- Direct both agencies to shorten contract execution timelines and establish advance payments as a standard feature for providers with three or more consecutive years of satisfactory performance, as the Comptroller's Nonprofit, Nonpayment report makes clear is long overdue.[2]
- Create a structural, guaranteed pathway from court-involved and clinically referred youth into SYEP placements.
- Direct ACS and DYCD to report annually on clinical vacancy rates across their contracted provider networks and develop a funded workforce pipeline strategy to address the documented 30 to 40 percent vacancy rates across the sector.[7]

Northside's founders believed this city would show up for its children in Harlem. It did. We are here today because we believe this Council will too.

Paula Magnus

President

Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

1475 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10029

www.northsidecenter.org

Notes

[1] NYC Office of the Mayor, FY 2027 Executive Budget Summary. https://www.nyc.gov/site/omb/publications/publications.page

[2] NYC Office of the Comptroller, Nonprofit, Nonpayment, April 2025. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nonprofit-nonpayment/

[3] NYC Office of the Comptroller, $507,000 per person incarcerated figure, July 2024. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/

[4] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics / FRED, New York-Newark-Jersey City CPI Series CUURA101SA0. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUURA101SA0

[5] NYC Independent Budget Office, Employees of Human Service Nonprofits Under Contract With New York City Set to Receive Less Than Half the Raises of NYC Employees Over 5 Years, November 2023. https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/employees-of-human-service-nonprofits-under-contract-with-new-york-city-set-to-receive-less-than-half-the-raises-of-nyc-employees-over-5-years-november-2023.pdf

[6] JustPay NYC Campaign, Facts & Research, citing BLS Employment Cost Index data. https://www.justpayny.org/facts-and-research

[7] JustPay NYC Campaign, Facts & Research, citing NYC Human Services Council survey data on vacancy rates. https://www.justpayny.org/facts-and-research

[8] NYC Independent Budget Office, November 2023, op. cit.

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

New York City Council

Committee on Education

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing: Department of Education

June 8, 2026

Paula Magnus, President

Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz and members of the Committee.

Chair Dinowitz, thank you for visiting Northside's East Harlem campus on March 24. Your time with our children and staff meant a great deal to us.

My name is Paula Magnus, and I am President of Northside Center for Child Development, Inc. Founded in Harlem in 1946, Northside serves over 6,500 children and families across Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. As a New York State licensed Article 31 outpatient mental health clinic, we deliver therapy to children from birth through age 21, the majority from low-income communities of color. Our programs include our main clinic in East Harlem, mental health services embedded in 23 New York City public schools, a Therapeutic Early Childhood Center serving 72 children, and three Head Start/Early Head Start sites serving 181 children. Every child in those programs receives clinical services from Northside staff. We also operate a Home-Based Crisis Intervention program, court-involved youth services, preventive family services, and educational supports including tutoring, after-school, and summer programming.

Northside holds two DOE-funded contracts: (1) Universal 3k/Pre-K sites, one in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn, and (2) special education services at our Therapeutic Early Childhood Center in East Harlem. This testimony reports what those two contracts reveal about conditions facing every early childhood provider in this city: contracts that register months late and rates that no longer cover what the work costs.

New York State has committed $4.5 billion to universal pre-K and child care, including the new NYC 2-K program.[1] Albany made that commitment. Whether it reaches New York City's children depends on the city's contracting process working right: timely registration, prompt payment, and rates that match true delivery costs. When that process fails, the state's commitment fails with it. The Council has the moral compass and the power to make this right.

The Core Problem: Late Contracts and Inadequate Rates

Late Contract Registration: In FY 2024, 90.59 percent of nonprofit human services contracts were registered late. The median time from procurement to registration was 355 days.[2]

Providers delivered services for nearly a year before contracts were legally enforceable.

Inadequate Funding Rates: Early childhood funding through DOE dropped by roughly $125 to $130 million in FY 2025 and a further roughly $150 million in FY 2026, compared to prior levels.[3]

Since 2020, the New York City CPI has risen about 20 percent.[4] Municipal unions are set to receive cumulative raises of about 16 percent over five years. Employees of human service nonprofits under City contract are projected to receive less than half that increase.[5] Salaries fell behind. Positions went unfilled. Children waited.[6]

Those numbers have consequences at the provider level. Northside is one of those providers. Our experience this fiscal year shows what both problems cost in practice.

Therapeutic Early Childhood Center: 4410 Enhancement Contract

Northside's Therapeutic Early Childhood Center holds a DOE-funded contract for Article 89 Enhancement services under the DOE 4410 program, valued at $891,088, for the term ending June 30, 2026. In FY 2026, 24 of the 72 children enrolled in the Therapeutic Early Childhood Center received Enhancement services under that contract. These children have a legal entitlement to appropriate educational placement.[7] Through April 30, 2026, that contract left ($312,861) unreimbursed: School Age ($57,075), Preschool ($230,053), and Preschool Integrated ($25,733). The contract rate has not kept pace with what those placements actually cost to deliver.

New York State places students with disabilities in approved non-public school settings when the public school system cannot meet their needs.[8] These are the children with the highest support needs in the public school system. Since 2012, state aid to public school districts has increased 46 percent. Over that same period, 4410 preschool providers received a 10 percent tuition increase while facing the same rising costs of labor, facilities, and clinical staff.[9] The Council has the authority to ensure that DOE's Enhancement contracts reflect what those services actually cost to deliver.

Teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, and instructional support staff who serve the city's highest-needs children deserve contract rates that support competitive compensation. That is within the Council's reach in the FY 2027 budget.

Universal Pre-K

DOE pays UPK providers per enrolled child. A classroom staffed for fifteen children costs the same to run whether every seat is filled or not. Teachers are hired, and administrative staff and supervision and occupancy costs are fixed each year regardless of enrollment. At Northside's current contract rate of approximately $15,350 per child, one vacant seat means $15,350 in fixed costs with no reimbursement. The FY 2027 budget is the Council's opportunity to change that.

At Northside's two UPK sites, 87 children enrolled in FY 2026. At $15,350 per child, the combined funding gap at the two UPK sites through April 30, 2026 is ($13,732). That figure is not a management failure. It is what a per-enrollment payment structure costs a provider whose fixed expenses do not fluctuate even at near-full enrollment. The Council has the authority to ensure that FY 2027 rates reflect what delivery actually costs.

Northside's two UPK contracts for FY 2026, each valued at $592,476, were registered on February 26 and April 2 of this year, eight and ten months into the contract term. Northside delivered services without a registered contract and without payment.

The state's $4.5 billion commitment to universal pre-K will bring more young children into structured early childhood settings. The providers who serve them must be funded at rates that cover what delivery actually costs. Without that, the teachers and clinicians those children need will not be there.

Through April 30, 2026, the combined **unreimbursed cost** across all DOE-funded programs is ($326,593). That figure is not a fundraising success story. It is the size of the public subsidy New York City's children are depending on Northside donors to cover.

Recommendations

Northside recommends the following:

Shorten Contract Timelines: Direct DOE to implement Local Law 156 of 2025, which took effect January 1, 2026 and requires advance payment of 50 percent of contract value upon registration, and to accelerate contract registration so that no provider enters a second quarter of service without a registered contract.

Adjust UPK Rates: Direct DOE to ensure that FY 2027 UPK contract rates reflect the true cost of delivering early childhood education services, including the fixed costs that enrollment-based payment does not cover.

Fund 4410 Enhancement: Direct DOE to ensure that FY 2027 4410 Enhancement contract rates reflect the true cost of delivering clinical services to students with disabilities in approved non-public settings.

The children in these classrooms are zero to five years old, or they are children with disabilities whose legal entitlement to appropriate educational placement depends on a contract rate that covers what that placement actually costs. Their teachers and clinicians are subsidized by private donors because contract rates fall short. The Council has both the authority and the responsibility to fix that in the FY 2027 budget.

Thank you.

Paula Magnus

President

Northside Center for Child Development, Inc.

1475 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10029

www.northsidecenter.org

Notes

[1] Governor Kathy Hochul, "Governor Hochul Announces Investments to Deliver Universal Child Care for New York Children Under Five," January 8, 2026. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-investments-deliver-universal-child-care-new-york-children-under

[2] NYC Office of the Comptroller, Nonprofit, Nonpayment, April 2025. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nonprofit-nonpayment/; New York City Council, Challenges for Nonprofits to Receive On-Time City Contract Payments, April 17, 2025. https://council.nyc.gov/press/2025/04/17/2846/

[3] NYC Comptroller, Spotlight: NYC's Publicly Supported Child Care Programs, September 2024. https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-nycs-publicly-supported-child-care-programs/

[4] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics / FRED, New York-Newark-Jersey City CPI Series CUURA101SA0. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUURA101SA0

[5] NYC Independent Budget Office, Employees of Human Service Nonprofits Under Contract With New York City Set to Receive Less Than Half the Raises of NYC Employees Over 5 Years, November 2023. https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/employees-of-human-service-

nonprofits-under-contract-with-new-york-city-set-to-receive-less-than-half-the-raises-of-nyc-employees-over-5-years-november-2023.pdf

[6] NYC Council, City Council Holds Hearing on Early Childhood Educator Pipeline, April 16, 2026. https://council.nyc.gov/jennifer-gutierrez/2026/04/16/city-council-holds-hearing-on-early-childhood-educator-pipeline-warns-of-looming-staffing-crisis-without-coordinated-workforce-plan/

[7] New York Education Law § 4401 et seq. (Article 89).

[8] NYSED, "Approved Nonpublic Schools for Students with Disabilities." https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/approved-nonpublic-schools-students-disabilities

[9] NYS Legislature, Joint Budget Hearing on Elementary and Secondary Education, Testimony, February 2020. https://nyassembly.gov/write/upload/publichearing/001105/002354.pdf

Testimonial Statement to the New York City Council
Hearing on FY '27 Executive Budget
Andrea B. Williams, Manager of Programs
and Tikii Trenzil Smith, Member
College and Community Fellowship (CCF)
June 12, 2026

As a member of the NY ATI Reentry Coalition, the College and Community Fellowship applaud the restoration of funding for Alternatives to Incarceration programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, including increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments represent an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

For over 25 years, CCF has empowered justice-impacted women and gender-expansive people through higher education access, community support, and collective advocacy to breakdown systemic barriers to opportunity. Through our academic support and member civic engagement programs, we help women and gender-expansive people pursue higher education and develop leadership skills that enhance their self-efficacy and collective civic engagement.

To date, CCF has a 637-membership base with 140 active members from across the five boroughs. This month seventeen members will graduate with degrees and certifications from fifteen of New York's colleges and universities and two out-of-state institutions.[1] CCF's support included academic counseling, academic stipends, and connections to community support resources. Many, if not most, rely on the supportive services of our Coalition's member organizations and their community partners to meet their personal and professional community reintegration goals. These supports, which start behind prison walls and continue in the community, include: visiting and family assistance; court advocacy; GED and college classes; supportive housing; at-home alternatives to incarceration; food pantry and nutrition assistance; employment services; health, mental health, and wellness; trauma recovery; substance use treatment; specific reentry legal assistance to address arrest and conviction barriers; and, college access program for justice-impacted individuals.[2]

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[1] Our 2026 members are graduating from Baruch College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Bronx Community College, Columbia University, Fordham University, Hofstra University, Hostos Community College, John Jay College, LaGuardia Community College, Lehman College, The New School, SUNY Empire, Yeshiva University, as well as the out-of-state institutions Simmons College and Tallahassee State University.
[2] There are approximately eight prison college programs inside New York's women correctional facilities: including Bard Prison Initiative (Albion CF), Marymount Manhattan College (Bedford Hills, Taconic); Union

Additional investment is needed to bring our Coalition's critical programs to scale, and especially to ensure culturally responsive services for women, LGBTQI, and gender-expansive people.[3] Recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the Coalition's services generated more than $60 million in savings for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.[4] CCF's own internal programming audit reveals persistent needs for our members in the areas of housing stability, financial literacy and mental health.[5]

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable our twelve coalition organizations to serve more New Yorkers and further expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity, rooted in compassion, understanding, and healing. Current CCF Member and 2026 graduate Tikii Trenzii Smith states it best.

My name is Tikii Trenzil Smith, and I stand before you as a graduate of Baruch College, earning my Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies. While receiving this degree is an incredible accomplishment, what it truly represents cannot be measured by credits, grades, or a diploma. It represents survival, healing, redemption, and the unwavering belief that our lives can become greater than our circumstances.

There was a time when many people looked at my life and saw limitations. Some saw my mistakes. Some saw my struggles. Some saw statistics. Few saw the possibility. In 2009, I was convicted of assault in the first degree and sentenced to a lengthy period of incarceration. I spent years separated from my family, my children, and the life I dreamed of having. During that time, I was forced to confront myself, my choices, and the environments that had shaped me. While I take full accountability for my actions, I also recognize that I was a person carrying trauma, pain, and wounds that I had never learned how to heal. But prison

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Theological Seminary (Bedford Hills), and Columbia University Center for Justice (Taconic, Rikers Island Rose M. Singer Center). The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity assists women in reentry through their College Initiative program.

[3] See Legal Action Center, NYC LGBTQI ATI Reentry Working Group, and Take Root Justice report, *Alternatives to Incarceration for LGBTGNCNBQI+ Community: Research Findings, Best Practices, and Recommendations for the Field*.

[4] See p. 38 and 28, *Women InJustice: Gender and the Pathway to Jail in New York City* noting the need for improved facilitation to community connections in the jail discharge phase, as well as how education access improves women's personal and professional prospects, "Education can help women and their families achieve greater economic self-sufficiency through access to higher paying jobs."

[5] *College and Community Fellowship 2025 Audit*, September 2025 (Internal Use Only)

did not define me. What defined me was the decision I made while I was there. I decided that if I was given another chance, I would become someone my children could be proud of. I earned my GED. I began taking college courses. I started to see education not simply as a way to earn a degree, but as a pathway to freedom, purpose, and transformation. Yet incarceration was only one chapter of my story. I am also a survivor of domestic violence. For years, I endured situations that chipped away at my confidence, my peace, and my sense of self. I am a survivor of sexual abuse and sex trafficking. I have experienced homelessness and poverty. I have battled mental health challenges while trying to navigate life, parenthood, work, and school. There were moments when I questioned whether I was strong enough to keep going. There were nights when I cried in silence. There were days when showing up was a victory. There were moments when I felt broken. But every single time life knocked me down, something inside me refused to stay there. That strength came from many places. It came from faith. It came from the incredible mentors and advocates who poured into me when I needed it most. It came from organizations like the College and Community Fellowship and the Osborne Association, who continuously supported me throughout my journey. Most importantly, it came from my children Nzinga, Tahir, and Tahirah. My children became my reason for pushing forward when I wanted to quit. They became my reminder that generational cycles can be broken. I wanted them to see that no matter what life throws at you, you can choose growth. You can choose healing. You can choose a different future.

As I continued my education through BMCC and later Baruch College, something unexpected happened. Professors began seeing something in me that I did not always see in myself. They challenged me. Encouraged me. Held me accountable. They spoke life into me when I was still learning how to believe in my own potential. Many of those professors remain mentors, supporters, and people I still communicate with today. Their words helped change my trajectory and showed me that education has the power to transform lives.

It was during my educational journey that I discovered my own passion for teaching. I realized that I wanted to do for others what so many educators had done for me. I want students to feel seen. I want them to know that their circumstances do not define their capabilities. I want them to understand that their voices matter. Today, I am continuing my journey by pursuing a master’s degree in education through the Empire State Teaching Fellowship Program. My ultimate dream is to earn a Ph.D. and become a college professor. I want to stand in front of future generations and show them what is possible when resilience meets opportunity.

As I reflect on this moment, I think about everyone who helped me get here--my family, my mentors, my professors, my friends, my support systems, and even those who doubted me.

Every challenge, every setback, every disappointment became part of the foundation that brought me to this stage.

This degree is not just for me. It is for every person who has ever felt counted out. Every person who had ever believed their mistakes were too big to overcome. Every survivor who has had to rebuild their life piece by piece. Every parent sacrifices for their children. Every person is fighting battles that no one else can see.

Today, I stand here as living proof that your past is not your destiny. This achievement means reclaiming my narrative, breaking cycles, and turning pain into purpose. And I want others to know that no matter how dark your chapter may seem, it does not have to be the ending of your story. Keep believing. Keep fighting. Keep growing. Your greatest comeback may still be ahead of you. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea B. Williams, Manager of Programs **Tikii Trenzil Smith, Member**

College and Community Fellowship

New York City Arts in Education Roundtable
Written Testimony: Executive Budget Public Hearing
Hon. Chair Linda Lee
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Thank you to Chair Lee and the City Council for hosting today's hearing and for your support for arts education in NYC! My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am proud to be the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable.

I'm testifying as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on our city to restore funding to DCLA and invest in arts education via the Support for Arts in Instruction Initiative.

In NYC, arts education is a cross agency effort — employing a workforce of 11,000 artists (known as Teaching Artists) and 2,887 certified arts teachers. Cultural organizations and teaching artists work in partnership with in-school arts teachers — filling the gaps where schools lack an arts teacher altogether in addition to contributing to the economic and cultural vibrancy of every neighborhood in NYC.

But our city doesn't make this easy – contract and payment delays mean late or unrealized start dates, loss of employment for artists, and lost educational opportunities. Inconsistency of year-over-year funding across agencies makes it difficult to maintain stable employment and build sustainable education partnerships.

This in turn has a trickle-down impact on the workforce, where many teaching artists only earn a median individual gross income of between $35,000 – $50,000[4], with no access to health insurance through an employer. As a result, 79% of Teaching Artists do not feel their work sufficiently supports living in or near NYC[3].

72% of schools have at least one CDF-funded program in their school. 1 in 4 schools relies on external funding from cultural organizations to fund arts in their schools. Funding from DCLA helps make this possible.

This work is also supported in partnership with the Council via the Support for Arts Instruction Initiative – a citywide initiative that gives students in schools with limited or no arts exposure to arts education via arts partnerships, trips to museums and performances, and teacher professional development.

For the 2026-2027 school year, the Roundtable hopes to extend the Support for Arts Instruction

initiative to additional schools and to 3K and 4K students for the first time. A $2 million enhancement would extend the Support for Arts Instruction to approximately 250-275 schools and pilot the initiative with an additional 60-75 3K and 4K sites. This means engaging artists in employment that supports their sustainability in the field while offering improved educational opportunities that support cognitive growth, brain development, communications skills, motor skills, and so much more.

Therefore, I join my colleagues in urging our City to take action to protect our workforce and invest in our students. This includes:

- $30M RESTORE + BASELINE: Restore and baseline an additional $20 million for DCLA in the Adopted Budget to ensure sustained investment in arts and arts education (adding to the $10M baselined increase in the Executive Budget).
- FUND CULTURAL INITIATIVES: Restore and enhance Support for Arts Instruction Initiative ($2M).
- RESTORE EDUCATION PROGRAMS: We also stand with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling on the City to restore and baseline funding for essential education programs such as Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED) ($8.5M); restorative justice ($6M); the Mental Health Continuum ($5M); immigrant family outreach ($4M); and Student Success Centers ($3.75M)

The future of NYC **starts with the arts**. This is a future where every student has access to arts education and every arts education worker can afford to call New York City home.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sources

Testimony on Cultural Development Fund Programs in NYC Public Schools:
https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/arts-education-funding-testimony-april-2025_final.pdf

Paying for Professionalism 2025 - A Report on New York City Teaching Artist Compensation & Employment (published July 23, 2025):
https://nycaieroundtable.org/advocacy/paying-for-professionalism-2025/

New York City Arts in Education Roundtable
Live Testimony: Executive Budget Public Hearing
Hon. Chair Linda Lee
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Thank you to Chair Lee, CM Wong, and City Council staff for hosting today's hearing and for your endurance! My name is Kimberly Olsen, and I am proud to be the Executive Director of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable.

I'm testifying as part of the It Starts with the Arts coalition — calling on our city to restore/baseline $30M funding to DCLA and invest in arts education via the Support for Arts Instruction Initiative.

The future of NYC **starts with the arts**. This is a future where every student has access to arts education and every arts education worker can afford to call NYC home.

In NYC, arts education is a cross agency effort — employing a workforce of 11,000 artists (known as Teaching Artists) and 2,887 certified arts teachers. Together artists and educators deliver arts instruction and contribute to the economic and cultural vibrancy of every neighborhood in NYC.

But our city doesn't make this easy – inconsistent year-over-year funding coupled with contract and payment delays mean late or unrealized start dates, loss of employment for artists, and lost educational opportunities.

This teaching artist workforce is earning on average $35,000 – $50,000 annually (less than benchmarks in the city's True Cost of Living Report). Teaching Artists can't afford more of these bureaucratic hurdles or to wait to see if their program's budget will be kept/cut.

Yet our city relies on this workforce. 72% of schools have at least one CDF-funded program in their school. 1 in 4 schools relies on external funding from cultural organizations to fund arts in their schools. Funding from DCLA and the Support for Arts Instruction Initiative helps make this possible.

Therefore, I join my colleagues in urging our City to take action to protect our workforce and invest in our students. This includes:

- Restore and baseline an additional $20 million for DCLA in the Adopted Budget to ensure sustained investment in arts and arts education (adding to the $10M baselined increase in the Executive Budget).
- Restore and enhance Support for Arts Instruction Initiative ($6M) to meet increased demand and extend to early childhood students.
- Increase transparency on the MTAC contracting process and arts education in our schools.
- We also stand with the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding in calling on the City to restore and baseline funding for programs such as restorative justice ($6M); immigrant family outreach ($4M); Student Success Centers ($3.75M), and more.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sources

Testimony on Cultural Development Fund Programs in NYC Public Schools:
https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/arts-education-funding-testimony-april-2025_final.pdf

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NY ATI REENTRY COALITION

FY27 Request: The Coalition requests $15.027 million, an increase of $2.4 million to support the 12 organizations and restore one member's funding. The increase represents an additional $200,000 for each coalition member. In FY26, the coalition received $12.225 million in discretionary dollars.

ABOUT THE COALITION

The New York City Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Reentry Coalition is composed of 12 service provider organizations with decades of experience in a broad range of alternative to detention and incarceration programs as well as reentry services. The Coalition operates as a supportive ecosystem to ensure participants receive robust, individually-tailored services that support treatment, long-term stability, and shore up public safety. Collectively, we serve upwards of 62,000 justice-involved individuals each year.

Decades of research demonstrate that ATIs are more effective than incarceration at improving public safety outcomes, decreasing the chance of future convictions, improving employment rates, and generating significant savings for taxpayers. Across New York City, ATI and reentry programs yield reductions in homelessness and psychiatric hospitalizations as well as increases in health-seeking behavior and relational connections, and overall desistance from crime. With support from the City Council, the Coalition has innovated and grown the portfolio of services available to people involved in the criminal legal system.

PROGRAMS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES: Pre-employment job readiness training, paid transitional work, job placement, post-placement support, and industry-specific training.

HOUSING SERVICES: Emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing as well as developing relationships with landlords and management companies to identify safe and affordable apartments.

LEGAL SERVICES: Legal advocacy to help individuals overcome barriers by working with the courts, parole, and probation to correct conviction record errors, fight employment discrimination, and offer representation at eviction proceedings.

EDUCATION SERVICES: Literacy classes, high school equivalency prep, tutoring, health and HIV/AIDS prevention education, and college/career planning.

FAMILY AND YOUTH SERVICES: Case management, family supports/reunification/preservation, visiting and recreational activities for children of incarcerated parents, crisis intervention services, and positive youth development initiatives that are strength-based and promote goals.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT SERVICES: Clinical screening, assessment, treatment, and referrals to treatment for mentally ill individuals and clinical screening and assessment, treatment, and referrals to treatment at community-based providers.

WOMEN'S SERVICES: Gender-specific services including jail and prison-based education, pre-release services, family reunification assistance, family support services, reentry case management, and other targeted assistance and supports.

Contact:

Megan French-Marcelin
mfrenchmarcelin@lac.org

exalt elevating expectations for youth · Greenburger Center for Social and Criminal Justice · Osborne Association · The Fortune Society Building People, Not Prisons · ceo Center for Employment Opportunities · LAC Legal Action Center · CASES · Center for Community Alternatives · WPA Women's Prison Association · Bronx Connect · EAC Network Empower. Assist. Care. · College & Community Fellowship

NY ATI REENTRY COALITION

Alternatives to Incarceration Deliver Public Safety & Fiscal Savings

A recent cost-benefit analysis of programs operated by members of the NYC Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Coalition demonstrates that investments in community-based alternatives generate substantial savings for New York City and State while reducing reliance on incarceration.

Key Findings

$60.2 million in avoided jail costs + **$71.7 million** in avoided prison costs = **$131.9 million** in total savings

Net Savings: $103.6 million in estimated net annual savings after accounting for program costs

Strong Return on Investment

For every $1 invested in alternatives to incarceration, taxpayers realize approximately $4.70 in savings.

Savings Per Participant

The analysis found average net savings of approximately $33,000 per ATI participant, reflecting reduced use of costly jail and prison beds and improved outcomes through community-based interventions.

Why It Matters

Alternatives to incarceration provide accountability, supervision, treatment, employment services, behavioral health supports, and other interventions that address the underlying factors driving justice system involvement. These programs improve public safety while avoiding the high fiscal and human costs of incarceration.

At a time when policymakers are seeking cost-effective strategies that promote safety and reduce unnecessary incarceration, community-based alternatives represent a proven investment that delivers measurable returns for taxpayers and communities alike.

ATI programs generated more than $103 million in net annual savings while returning $4.70 for every public dollar invested.

NYC BIRD ALLIANCE
A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL AUDUBON

71 W 23RD STREET
SUITE 1523
NEW YORK, NY 10010
212.691.7483

NYCBIRDALLIANCE.ORG
@NYCBIRDALLIANCE

SCIENCE | ENGAGEMENT | ADVOCACY

June 10, 2026

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
New York City Hall
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Testimony of Saman Mahmood, Director of Advocacy and Engagement, NYC Bird Alliance to the NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for the Committee Hearing on the FY27 Preliminary City Budget

Dear Committee Chair Lee and distinguished members of the City Council Committee on Finance:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I will highlight the critical role the NYC Parks budget plays in supporting healthy ecosystems, protecting bird habitat, and enhancing the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

NYC Bird Alliance (a chapter of National Audubon) is a nonprofit organization that works to protect birds and strengthen urban biodiversity across New York City through science, advocacy, and community engagement. Through this work, we protect more than 500 species of birds that live in and migrate through New York City's beaches, wetlands, forests, and grasslands, and engage tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year with our public programs and volunteer opportunities across the City's parks. We work closely with NYC Parks and partner organizations to advance conservation practices across the five boroughs. NYC Bird Alliance is a member of Play Fair for Parks, Forest for All, and Parks & Open Space Partners coalitions.

Birds Are Essential to a Healthy Urban Ecosystem
Birds are a critical part of a healthy ecosystem: they control pests, pollinate plants, and disperse seeds. When we make New York safer for birds, we strengthen urban biodiversity and climate resilience for people, too. Yet birds are in steep decline across North America, so the work we do to protect birds is more important than ever.

Parks are Vital for Biodiversity

Parks in New York City provide critical habitat for birds – for migratory stopovers, nesting, and wintering. An important example is the Black-crowned Night Heron, a striking wading bird which depends on coastlines and parks. NYC Bird Alliance has been conducting annual surveys of the wading birds of New York Harbor for decades and our data shows an alarming trend: over the past 20 years, we've lost more than half of the harbor's Black-crowned Night Heron's breeding population. Our data also show that the species could disappear from New York Harbor by 2037 if we don't take conservation action including protecting their critical breeding habitat from human disturbance and improving the foraging habitat -– the saltmarshes, swamps, pond and stream edges.Nearly half of the Black crown night heroin population nest on NYC Parks land.

Natural areas of the city are critical for biodiversity. In particular, the beach in the Edgemere section of the Rockaways is a biodiversity hotspot with one of the East Coast's most significant breeding populations of the endangered Piping Plover. NYC Parks' Wildlife Unit and Parks Enforcement Patrol (PEP) officers are critical to ensuring these birds' survival.

Parks Need Increased Funding and Support

We call on the City Council and Mayor to allocate $150 million to restore hundreds of Parks Department staff positions that have been lost in recent years, including restoring $23 million in baseline funding for 276 critical parks positions, such as Parks Enforcement Patrol officers currently funded through one-year contracts.

These positions should be permanently funded to ensure the long-term health, safety, and stewardship of New York City's parks. Adequate staffing is essential to protecting wildlife habitat, enforcing park regulations, reducing human disturbance, and maintaining the natural areas that support biodiversity across the city. We urge the City Council and Mayor to invest in these positions to help address the decline of the Black-crowned Night Heron and protect the many endangered and threatened species that rely on our parks and waterways.

By investing in our parks workforce, New York City can protect wildlife, strengthen public spaces, and ensure a healthier future for both people and nature. What is good for birds is good for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the need to protect parks. Should you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 347.267.8612 or smahmood@nycbirdalliance.org.

Respectfully,



Saman Mahmood
Director of Advocacy and Engagement
NYC Bird Alliance

Written testimony submitted to the Committee on Finance
on the Executive Budget Proposed Funding for Libraries
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the executive library budget. I will focus on the need for investment in libraries as a key component of family support infrastructure, and the potential of libraries to contribute to reductions in child welfare involvement in New York City.

Founded in 2021, NYC Family Policy Project (FPP) explores and builds evidence—through original research, policy and data analysis—for the policy visions of parents and youth impacted by the child welfare system. Policy visions developed by the parent and youth advocacy groups Rise, YouthNPower: Transforming Care, Black Families Love and Unite and Narrowing the Front Door to NYC's Child Welfare System emphasize the need for a limited child welfare system and expansive and reparative investment in families and communities. FPP focuses on economic investments that can strengthen family well-being and reduce child welfare involvement; investments in community conditions that support healthy family life; and policy and practice efforts to move toward a more limited child welfare system with a narrow front door.

FPP is in support of the NYC Public Library Action Network's (NYC PLAN) call for 0.5% of the city budget to be committed to libraries as a baseline commitment– a request which Mayor Mamdani committed to throughout his campaign. Unfortunately, the proposed budget falls short of that promise. While Mayor Mamdani has guaranteed stable library funding at $526 million for three years that represents just 0.42% of the city budget, and is down from 0.45% committed last year.

Significant research shows that where a family lives influences a wide range of outcomes, including health and mental health, economic mobility, crime and child development. Even side-by-side communities with similar demographics can have very different family health and well-being profiles. In short, neighborhood conditions shape family stress, safety, connection and access to resources in ways that can safeguard against or compound hardship.

For decades, a small number of NYC neighborhoods have borne the brunt of child welfare system involvement. Hotline calls, investigations and family separations are highly concentrated and segregated in NYC, where the 15 neighborhoods that drive involvement have remained largely the same for two decades. While poverty is a significant driver of child welfare involvement, and child poverty is high in these neighborhoods, decades of research shows that neighborhoods exert their own influence on family life, safety and well-being.

Parents understand intuitively that raising children can be made easier, or harder, by the conditions that surround families. A playground down the block, a local library with 'mommy & me' classes, or a nearby

grocery store with healthy food options—simple neighborhood amenities can make everyday life feel more supported.

Public libraries serve as a vital resource for families, promoting health and well-being and connecting patrons to needed resources. “Libraries don’t just provide free access to books and other cultural materials,” NYU sociologist Eric Klinenberg has written, “they also offer things like companionship for older adults, de facto child care for busy parents, language instruction for immigrants and welcoming public spaces for the poor, the homeless and young people.”

One study found that summer educational services at the New York Public Library created a “safe haven” for learning, supporting community connection, resilience-building and the formation of reading and learning habits, especially for low-income children.

These impacts likely extend to parents, too. In a study interviewing caregivers to understand how they thought a neighborhood’s built environment could be affecting child maltreatment, parents described shared public places like parks, libraries and community centers as “relief valves” that give children outlets and allow caregivers to rest and connect with others. As one parent explained: “Community centers, playgrounds, libraries…things that the children can do that are positive, so parents can kind of get that reprieve…maybe be at home prepping dinner or just having a moment to relax.”

Social infrastructure and civic organizations like libraries play a distinct role in supporting collective efficacy. Neighborhoods with high collective efficacy consistently have lower crime, reduced child welfare involvement, stronger local engagement and greater resilience during crises. On child welfare, one study in Chicago found that neighborhoods with a stronger social fabric had lower substantiated cases of neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. In NYC too, neighborhood collective efficacy appears to have an effect on child welfare involvement. An analysis by the Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy found that, controlling for other factors, higher rates of collective efficacy are associated with lower rates of indicated investigations and foster care entries at the zip code level.

As Mariame Kaba, NYC PLAN member shared with FPP, “Families, or anybody who’s part of the library, can learn from library workers. The workers get to know you, and your kids have another adult in the world that they can count on. My librarian became a trusted friend and confidant—somebody I saw all the time who was always there. For people that are struggling to be single parents for example, or that don’t have a community of folks, this is another way we’re building community.”

The city has made progress reducing child welfare system involvement since 2019, with investigations and foster care placements declining by 10% or more. Sustaining these gains however, especially in the face of federal cuts, will require that the city and state adopt new policies and broader public health approaches that invest in family support infrastructure and buffer families from hardship.

FPP supports NYC PLAN’s request that public library funding be increased to at least 0.5% of the total city budget in this upcoming fiscal year. This would translate to $97 million more in public library funding for the FY27 cycle.

NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees

www.nycretirees.org

June 11, 2026

Dear Speaker Menin, Chair Lee and City Council Members,

Our Organization has been listening to the budget hearings and wishes to correct the record. On June 9th, Comptroller Levine testified during an exchange with Council Member Brewer, when asked about retiree healthcare. He said, "first of all, advantage is gone and not coming back. I get asked about it constantly, still. So I want to reassure people there, there we still have some work to do to achieve some of the savings that we have hoped for in previous agreements, but I want to emphasize that that does not put the health care of individual retirees in jeopardy. This is a problem for us to work out to make sure our budget squares, but that is not a problem for retirees."

I want to make crystal clear – that is NOT accurate. There is no current protection from Medicare Advantage and that is why we MUST have legislation protect us from it EVER being brought back. At any time, any Mayor can implement it, including Mayor Mamdani. If the intent is not to do it – pass a law to prevent it! It is not dead – just not being implemented at this moment!

Lastly, Comptroller Levine references they "have some work to do to achieve some of the savings that we have hoped for in previous agreements, ***but I want to emphasize that that does not put the health care of individual retirees in jeopardy.***" THIS IS VERY FALSE! It absolutely has, and continues to put our healthcare and health in jeopardy. Many of our retirees make pensions less than $35,000 a year. The copays assessed on our Medicare-eligible retirees for the first time in 60 years have put my members in medical debt. Many cancel doctor appointments because they cannot pay all the costs, some upwards of $65 a visit including for chemo, PT, dialysis, etc., multiple times a week.

On Thursday, June 11th, 2026, you welcomed past Council Members and Chiefs of Staff. I don't think you invited former COS to Lew Fidler, Reeves Eisen. She is a retiree whom this impacts every day. Her auto-immune disease requires multiple visits to the doctor. Because she cannot afford them due to the copays, she has been forced to cancel them. Larisa Wayne, a retired City engineer, has cancer and due to the copays imposed on Medicare-eligible retirees by the last Mayor and Unions that do not represent her, she had to stop going to the oncologist. Why were the copays imposed? As Comptroller Levine stated, "previous agreements" the UFT/DC37 made with the MLC and City. They are financing those literally on our on backs and yes, it is impacting retirees' healthcare.

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I gave you just a few examples, but there are tens of thousands more that are like Margaret, who has a small pension and is in medical debt of about $5,000. She has to go to a food bank for the first time in her life – this is not retirement with dignity. Or Sallee who can only eat potatoes and onions and can't afford to fill a full prescription because of the copays. She too has cancer.

Remember, the administrative code says, "The city will pay the entire cost of health insurance coverage for city employees, city retirees, and their dependents" up to "the full cost of H.I.P.-H.M.O." on a "category basis" of individual or family. The cost of our Medicare supplement to the City today is about $230/month per individual. By comparison, the employee plan is $1,177/month per individual. Medicare-eligible retirees are the least costly to the City and well under the HIP-HMO cap as the courts made clear in our case (*NYC Org. v. Campion*). But the "agreements" Levine refers to are savings agreements made by unions that retirees are not in, to fund active worker raises and those copays were assessed on us to create a funding stream off retirees and reduce the cost of premiums of our Medicare plan. It was a punitive measure imposed when the court blocked them from forcing us into Medicare Advantage.

Below is evidence of this. From FOIL, we obtained this document and dozens of others. Unions even gave us documents, as they are fed up with the practice.

The chart below shows that the City and the MLC have imposed copays on Medicare-eligible retirees to avoid having to pay for their health insurance premiums (which the City is statutorily required to do).

Recent cost-cutting deals struck by the City and the unions (who do not represent retirees) are not being funded by active members (who are represented by the unions) – they are being funded on the backs of retirees.

It is dangerous for the Comptroller to testify that cost-cutting efforts are not impacting retirees. That is patently incorrect and my members are suffering every day that this body blocks our legislation (Intro 1096) from being introduced. Every day the council makes us wait, you put our members further into medical debt or force them to forgo medical care and medication. We have sought the introduction of our legislation, but it appears to face one bottleneck after another.

Retirees need a City Council that protects a promise made. The City never charged us anything after our deductible was met, because the cost of our plan was dramatically less than the cap. While the administrative code prevents the City from charging premiums, this cost transfer is a backdoor premium negotiated by people we have nothing to do with – except they want access to our wallets.

Speaking of wallets; The pension amortization plan that the council supports is a bad idea. Retirees have been used repeatedly as funding sources. On fixed incomes, we struggle with the cost of groceries, utilities, rent, medications, medical visits and more. The country is at war with Iran, fuel is high and that increases the cost of most everything. The NY Times reported the third consecutive month of increasing inflation due to the Iran War. If the market drops and funding does not come to fruition, the City keeps using its rainy day funds and retiree health benefit trust as a slush fund, then the City will come after us again and increase copays,

deductibles, and other costs on us. While my pension is protected from reduction up front, it will be reduced on the back end when the City and state come after our wallets. So is our pension really protected? No.

We keep asking you to protect retirees because we have no other protection. We urge you to pass our legislation (Intro 1096) to protect retirees from these predatory practices coming out of the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations.

EmblemHealth

55 Water Street, New York, New York 10041-8190

SENIOR CARE	Avg Allowed			Utilization Per 1,000		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
PR - Ambulance	$37	$40	$45	509	517	512
PR - Anesthesia	$42	$38	$37	485	498	513
PR - DME	$18	$19	$22	1,962	1,966	2,070
PR - Lab	$8	$6	$7	4,139	5,247	4,654
PR - Lab-Covid Testing	$5	$1	$1	38	82	44
PR - MATERNITY	$129	$183	$226	0	0	0
PR - Medical Drugs	$6	$4	$5	467	580	490
PR - Medical Injectibles	$116	$114	$122	1,241	1,261	1,313
PR - Office Visit-PCP	$20	$20	$20	5,093	5,482	5,587
PR - Office Visit-SPECIALIST	$21	$20	$20	14,321	15,263	16,048
PR - Other	$7	$7	$9	5,956	6,516	5,658
PR - Radiology	$20	$19	$19	5,241	5,557	5,821
PR - PT/OT/ST	$8	$8	$8	7,794	8,437	10,009
PR - Surgical	$27	$24	$24	6,471	7,605	7,948
PR - Urgent Care Center	$13	$11	$11	302	422	684

Note that the Senior Care product is a 'cob' program, with Medicare being primary and making the initial determination as to whether the incurred benefit is a covered service. Upon Medicare's payment of the benefit, EmblemHealth coordinates the initial payment with the Senior Care benefit plan design.

The proposed premium rate increase for CY 2025 under the current benefit structure is 19.1%. If the City and its Unions implement the $15 copay change effective 1/1/25, the proposed premium rate increase for CY2025 would be 2.5%. The implementation of the $15 copay on physician services is estimated to reduce claim costs by $45.6M. Additional details can be found in the attached exhibits.

Respectfully, submitted,

Marianne Pizzitola
President

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee, Chair Dinowitz, and Members of the Committees on Education and Finance,

Please find enclosed a compilation of written testimony submitted on behalf of the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition (YJC) in strong support of creating a Journalism for All citywide initiative in the FY27 citywide budget. This packet contains individual testimonies from New York City public school students, teachers, youth journalism professionals, and community members.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued partnership in fighting for our students.

In partnership,
NYC Youth Journalism Coalition

Enclosed: 45 testimonies in support of Journalism for All

CJ Sánchez
Director, NYC Youth Journalism Coalition
Resident of District 8

My name is CJ Sánchez, and I am the Director of the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition (YJC). I submit this testimony alongside students, teachers, and industry professionals in our coalition to strongly urge the City Council to champion educational equity, media literacy, and press freedom by investing in Journalism for All in FY27.

Right now, fewer than 20% of New York City public high schools offer a journalism program. And, like most other educational opportunities in our city, that lack of access is deeply stratified by class and race. According to a 2022 survey by Baruch College, in the 50 schools with the lowest poverty rates, 72% have a paper. Meanwhile, in the 50 schools with the highest poverty rates, only 6% do. This gap in access is a fundamental gap in workforce readiness and civic education. In an era characterized by mis- and dis-information, our youth are systemically deprived of the practical media literacy skills needed to navigate it.

Building the Movement and Our Council Partnership
To tackle this, we formed the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition. We were founded under the non-profit organization Bell Voices, known as The Bell. Since 2018, The Bell has been running audio journalism after-school internships for public high school students. They've had to turn away hundreds of qualified student applicants from their programs, as have other afterschool programs in our Coalition who collectively cannot meet the sheer demand for journalism education. Over these last few years, we have grown into a trusted network of nonprofits, working journalists, higher education institutions, educators, and students working to expand equitable access to youth journalism opportunities.

We've gotten this far in large part because of the leadership of the City Council. This movement was built hand-in-hand:

- In April 2024, the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus co-sponsored our first J-Day at City Hall, where we heard remarks from Council Members Dinowitz, Joseph, Riley, and Narcisse.
- By August, the Council passed Resolution 0372, calling on the DOE to support a student publication at every high school.
- While the City Council laid the legislative infrastructure, we were building the Journalism for All model. Council Members Abreu, Brewer, Cában, Hanks, Hudson, Feliz, Gutiérrez, Narcisse, Nurse, Restler, Salaam, Sanchez, Schulman, Ung, and Won nominated schools in their respective districts to be part of our pilot cohort.
- At the beginning of 2025, the City Council unanimously passed Local Law 27 requiring the DOE to annually report the availability of journalism programs in their high schools. We worked with Council Member Joseph and her colleagues to pass this law, so we could guide our targeted interventions to support schools that need it most and close this opportunity gap.
- Council Members De La Rosa, Farías, Hanif, Hanks, Joseph, and then-Speaker Adams got on the ground early with us by allocating FY26 discretionary funds to Journalism for All schools in their respective districts to start up their programs.

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The Five Core Needs of Journalism Education in NYCPS

YJC spent a year conducting deep listening sessions with educators and school leaders, and from that we developed and now implement the Journalism for All initiative. We wanted to learn exactly what it takes for a New York City public high school to build and maintain a high-quality program, what is now Journalism for All. We heard it comes down to these five things:

1. **A credit-bearing course**.
   By offering a credit-bearing course during the school day, students don't have to decide between their education and after-school responsibilities or graduation requirements. To solve this, CUNY Newmark became a founding partner by developing a standards-aligned curriculum that includes a full year of adaptable instructional materials.
2. **Support and training for teachers**.
   Journalism is not a traditional reading or writing course. The team at CUNY Newmark developed a specialized professional development program for new journalism teachers that complements the curriculum.
3. **Hands-on technical assistance**
   This is where the strength of the YJC comes in. As the hub connecting media experts with the next generation, we are perfectly positioned to source these direct, tailored services for schools.
4. **A direct career pipeline**
   Thanks to the innovations of our team and the team at DYCD, we've pioneered a new sector focus for SYEP directly matching students from the Journalism for All courses to internships at local newsrooms across the city.
5. **Direct funding**
   This covers immediate, tangible needs such as publishing software, news-gathering equipment, and travel for reporting. Without these funds readily available, the establishment of these programs significantly slows down, impacting the quality of the student experience from the outset.

The Pilot School Cohort & Program Evaluation

We know this model works because we are already doing it. Through a rigorous application process confirming student interest, teacher commitment, and administrative support, we selected 30 schools for our pilot. These 30 schools are currently offering a credit-bearing course, training a journalism teacher, and building a student publication. Our cohort mainly serves students of color facing economic hardship, creating pathways for youth most underserved in schools and underrepresented in media. Our schools are in all five boroughs and serve a variety of specialized communities, including transfer schools, schools with bilingual education programs, and schools with specialized programs for students with disabilities..

To capture the impact of this model, we are conducting a robust independent program evaluation. We have secured approval from the DOE Institutional Review Board (IRB) to measure student outcomes, including confidence in researching, writing, and assessing the credibility of news articles. The evaluation will also measure shifts in career interest and civic engagement, as well as the program's broader impact on school culture.

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The FY27 Budget Proposal: $500,000

Because the foundation is already built and running, our proposal for the FY27 budget is lean yet has a high impact. We are proposing an initial $500,000 budget to power the next phase of the pilot and build infrastructure for citywide expansion. Here is where it goes:

1. **Direct School Funding**
   First, straight to each of the Journalism for All pilot schools for tools to start-up their course and publication. Council Members Marte, Brewer, Encarnacion, De La Rosa, Salaam, P. Sanchez, J. Sanchez, Farías, Krishnan, Won, Hankerson, Restler, Gutiérrez, Hudson, Ossé, Hanif, Joseph, Mealy, Santosuosso, Hanks, and Carr: schools in your Districts stand to immediately, directly benefit from this in FY27.
2. **Initiative Management & Technical Assistance**
   Next, Bell Voices for centralized initiative management (coordinating the career pipeline, managing school support, and program evaluation) and contracting expert, hands-on support directly within the schools to strengthen the publications for long-term sustainability.

The academic foundation requires no city dollars this year, as CUNY Newmark's work was philanthropically supported to develop the curriculum and deliver the teacher training. Also requiring no “new” public dollars this year are the new SYEP newsroom internships. We're leveraging existing city resources to create this pathway, a cross-agency collaboration that is core to a citywide initiative.

Hyper-Local Impact & Conclusion

We are building the infrastructure to bring high-quality journalism education to high schools in every single district. What that practically means for your communities is the creation of trusted, hyper-local communications channels. Where there is a school, there is potential to build trusted news outlets that cover the neighborhood issues mainstream media doesn't reach, directly for and by the community.

The students have organized, the curriculum is written, the pilot schools have hit the ground running. We're ready for a public financial commitment to sustain and scale this vital work. We urge you to create a Journalism for All citywide initiative, so together we can close the opportunity gap and help bring media literacy and career readiness to high schools in every District.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Jeremiah Dickerson
NYCPS high school student in District 34

As a current high school student in Brooklyn attending a school without access to journalism programs, I believe Journalism for All is an essential investment in New York City's students. Although I will graduate soon, one opportunity I wish I had throughout high school was the ability to gain experience in the career field I hope to pursue: journalism. Journalism for All helps address that gap by ensuring students have access to meaningful journalism education and opportunities regardless of the school they attend.

New York City is often considered the media capital of the world, yet many students across the city have little or no access to journalism programs. That reality is not only inequitable, but also reflects how often journalism is overlooked despite being a vital public service. Journalism plays a critical role in our democracy and our daily lives. Journalists inform the public, hold powerful institutions accountable, document history as it unfolds, and share stories that might otherwise go unheard.

Whether reporting from conflict zones, interviewing elected officials, covering local communities, or investigating issues that impact everyday people, journalists help ensure that the public has access to accurate information. Their work strengthens civic engagement and helps communities stay informed.

As decision makers with the ability to invest in the future of New York City's students, I urge you to support Journalism for All. By expanding journalism education, you are not only creating pathways for future journalists, you are investing in an informed public and a stronger democracy. I hope you will take this opportunity to demonstrate a meaningful commitment to the future of journalism in our city.

Sincerely, Jeremiah Dickerson

Charlotte Arzouian
NYCPS high school student journalist in District 2

Journalism is where I learned that students' voices matter when they speak up and engage thoughtfully in their communities.

A few years ago, I was writing an article about a nonprofit. After signing up for one of its events, I realized the location listed on the website was wrong. When I found the right place, I was so nervous that I stood outside for ten minutes before going in. Once I did, however, the event was very helpful for my article.

Afterward, I wanted to interview the organization's leaders, but they stopped responding to my emails. Over the next few days, I would try to get in touch in any way I could: attending more events, visiting their main office, and sending more emails, all of which didn't work. On the final day the story was due, I called them one last time. They picked up the phone and I interviewed them. This story encapsulates why journalism is so important to me. As someone who's naturally shy, these skills like learning to go up to new people, strike conversations with them, relentlessly question and chase them down in pursuit of the truth are all ones that I've honed through journalism. In this way, journalism remains a huge part of what I value and who I want to be: someone who listens and questions.

That's why expanding Journalism for All now. It's a strange thing to be a student in high school, even stranger to feel like I'm caught up in things that I can't control. Reporting has let me interrogate issues impacting my community. From these experiences, I've developed grit, and felt like I'm a part of something bigger. In an age where I am constantly exposed to biased media and opinions online, knowing how to evaluate sources and understand issues through reporting and research is more important than ever.

I urge you to fund Journalism for All. By giving students the resources to create their own newspapers, you are empowering them to develop the same skill and confidence journalism has given me.

Charlotte

Noreen Fitzgerald-Makar
NYCPS high school teacher in District 24

Hello, my name is Noreen Fitzgerald-Makar and I am from Thomas A. Edison CTE High School in Jamaica, Queens, represented by Councilmember James F. Gennaro

Thank you for convening this hearing. I'm testifying as an NYCPS educator and a member of the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition. Today, I would like to discuss the importance of student journalism and how the Council can improve equitable access to these opportunities.

As a journalism adviser for the last fourteen years, I can say that, without a doubt, I have seen the positive impact that youth journalism has had on my school community and on my students, both in high school and beyond.

In my program I have seen a boost academic performance, improved writing skills, and enhanced civic engagement. They empower students to share their voices, build community, and develop critical media literacy, which are essential in today's world. By teaching skills, like writing and research, journalism prepares students for college and careers in all fields and professions. These kids can write, communicate, take direction, plan, are confident and can lead; they really are the total package and that is, in large part, to being given a voice through student journalism.

Students, empowered by their student journalism experience and the validation of their voice, have gone on to be active members in community-based organizations, specifically South Queens Women's March, an all-volunteer multi-generational, intersectional platform working to foster women's empowerment; Amelia Inderjeit is an alumna that makes me proud to work with The Edison Light. Naz Seenauth LMSW, who has gone on to help LGBTQ+ youth at the Ali Forney Center. Other alumni, such as Yulini Persaud, Harvey Garcia, and William Burgos, have pursued careers in journalism and related fields after having their interest piqued in my journalism class. Not all students may go on to pursue journalism, but they have all left my classroom feeling like they could make a difference.

My school is fortunate to have a long-standing journalism program, but many schools in less affluent districts either lack the funding for these programs or face neglect from administrators who fail to recognize their value. This is where you can make a difference.

This year, I worked with the Journalism for All program as a mentor supporting teachers implementing journalism curricula. Many of these educators are the sole journalism teachers in their schools and have limited access to professional support. The Youth Journalism Coalition helps fill this gap by providing training, mentorship, and resources while expanding journalism opportunities to schools that otherwise could not sustain them.

I urge the Council to support the Youth Journalism Coalition's work. Investing in youth journalism means investing in informed, engaged, and empowered young people. Every student deserves the opportunity to develop their voice, tell their story, and discover that they have the power to make a difference in their community.

Julius Marinov
NYCPS high school student journalist in District 6; resident of District 5

Dear City Council,

As a NYC high school student, I politely encourage the city council to support the Journalism for All program. Journalism is important not only to our city as the media capital of the world but it benefits students greatly. Many say that we are in the midst of a literacy crisis, that students don't want to read or they can't make words . And they make leagues of scapegoats to put it on students. The reality is students are tired of curriculums that do not engage them. I have personally seen the excitement and determination students have for programs such as journalism through their appearance in movements such as J-Day, which many of you should be familiar with. If we are willing to improve the lives of students and our communities, implementing journalism courses should be welcomed, not scrutinized.

Lauren Crowe
NYCPS high school journalism teacher in District 36

Being the journalism advisor at Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy has completely changed my life. Journalism has opened up a door for my students to express themselves, work independently to write stories that are important to them, and is an integral part of our school community. With funding, we would be able to provide more opportunities for our students to attend conferences, become stronger writers, and get the items needed to be successful in their writing careers. All NYC schools deserve to have the funding for successful journalism programs but many, like my own, cannot provide this with our own budget. I believe that the next New York Times columnists and editors for CNN are in our classrooms and they deserve the resources that can help them shine bright and grow as journalists.

Summer Jara
NYCPS high school student journalist in District 36

Good Afternoon, my name is Summer Jara, and I am a 15-year-old sophomore attending Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy, an all-girls charter high school located in the Bed-Stuy area. I am very fortunate to be given the access to raise awareness about journalism and its dire need in educational systems to you all.

I write to you today because my school stands strongly alongside a journalism program that has been embedded into our school curriculum. This program is not only mentioned within the walls of my journalism class but is also talked about amongst students and teachers in every other subject my school offers. That journalism program is Journalism For All.

Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy, also known as BELA, has only recently implemented the Journalism For All program, and the impact of this program has shown significant beneficial change.

With the help of Journalism For All, our school has officially created our own newsroom called The Hive. Our journalism class is a place where students can voice their opinions proudly and expand their freedom about any issue they desire, as it follows the policies Journalism For All has helped us produce.

Being able to say my school provides journalism shouldn't be a flaunt but an imperative. Through journalism, I have gained many experiences and opportunities that I thought were unattainable before my knowledge of journalism and program, Journalism For All. Experiences include attending an internship that provided lessons on how to work and set guidelines with the growing use of AI in journalism, and having the opportunity to participate in The School of The New York Times Summer program.

Journalism is a fundamental form of education, news, community connections, and civic liberation, all while serving as a source of entertainment for teenagers like myself.

It is essential to note that although BELA has been given this opportunity to receive funding to support journalism at our school, there are still a large number of schools that lack the accessibility to journalism, and in those schools are students who one day hope to pursue a career in journalism.

Thank you for your time.

Ashlee W.
NYCPS high school student in District 36

Journalism programs effectively share information within the school environment. Allowing everyone to access the information.

Jay C.
NYCPS high school student in District 36

I believe that the journalism program is essential to help students be informed, keep up with the school, and to allow the students' voices to be heard outside of these halls.

Aliya F.
NYCPS high school student in District 36

We have a voice, when we spread the news and information, we talk about what people need to hear about and it makes me feel good inside because when people are going to read my articles I think about how I am spreading awareness. When I was a kid, I didn't talk that much so I started writing and it gives me a voice which makes me feel like I have something to say.

Lawreal W.
NYCPS high school student in District 36

We should have journalism programs because they make people more politically aware, and improve vocabulary. I like journalism because it helps me be more politically informed.

Katina Paron
Independent journalism educator, editor and author of “A NewsHound’s Guide to Student Journalism”; resident of District 39

I’ve been working in journalism education for over 30 years and I know first-hand how journalism can transform lives. When we inform people about what is happening around them, we unite them through a common interest. This is how student-created media can unify a school community. It can help students feel seen and represented in the school and helps them learn how to use their voice on issues that affect them.

Student journalism is participatory civics. It is civics in action. Journalism not only helps students understand how their school works, it makes them part of the solution for community engagement. Journalism gives student reporters a role in helping make their schools a positive learning environment and develop valuable life skills while doing so–writing, reading comprehensive, verbal communication, critical thinking, problem solving, media literacy and more.

In 2024, I was enlisted by Newmark Graduate School of Journalism to create the groundbreaking Journalism for All curriculum and train the selected teachers with funding from the Charles H. Revson Foundation. Together with the Youth Journalism Coalition, we have launched 30 journalism courses at NYC public schools in the 2025-26 school year through the Journalism for All initiative.

Every teacher in this cohort has multiple stories of students who have been transformed by the Journalism for All course. The students become more aware and more attached to school policies, decisions and initiatives. They feel more confident when talking to their classmates or to school administrators. They learn that they like writing. They find reporting fun. They feel proud that they can ask questions to those in power. They see how fun learning can be when it has a practical, hands-on, real world application. They love being part of a team and working for a common cause.

I believe the City Council wants this for every high school student in New York City, which is why I urge you to fund the Journalism for All initiative for FY27.

There’s a reason why students are explicitly granted the right to “publish school newspapers reflecting the life of the school and expressing student concerns” in the NYC Public Schools Student Bill of Rights. It’s because educators know the importance of journalism education on enhancing, shaping and guiding student voice and student action in school communities. As a model of public education in the state and throughout the county, New York City needs to create pathways for success for every single student in its school and the best way to do that is through Journalism for All.

Pierce Malter
High school student

I'm a graduating senior, and in so many ways, I owe nearly everything I accomplished during high school to the school newspaper. Although I wrote many articles for it, honing my writing and research skills, I am also grateful for student journalism for other reasons. In paper staff and persons whom I covered in my articles, I found new friends, many of those being upperclassmen who I wouldn't have connected with otherwise. I built relationships with busy teachers, and learned about various extracurricular activities I would later elect to join myself. It was the finger on the pulse of the student body that my time on the newspaper afforded that pushed me to leadership roles later on in high school. Researching articles forced me into currency with global events and made me consider how they impacted me and my comparatively smaller communities. Every kid should have the opportunity for a similar experience.

Ocean Hiller
NYCPS high school student journalist in District 9

My student newspaper has been my most vibrant learning experience of high school. Unlike in most traditional classes, I've had the opportunity to explore issues that truly matter to my school community and create new knowledge, constantly strengthening my communication and leadership skills.

I've learned life lessons that extend far beyond reporting and editing: enduring through the difficult parts of the process, bridging my peers' many perspectives, pushing myself out of my comfort zone to grapple with real-world issues, and so much more.

As someone considering a career in journalism, I am outraged at the current attacks on press freedom in the US. Yet I also believe they are a testament to journalism's capacity to transform the world for good—and this transformation begins with giving future generations outlets to contribute to the narratives conveying and shaping our lives.

Every student in New York City deserves the chance to find their voice, engage with their community, and learn about the world through journalism. I strongly urge the City Council to fund the Journalism for All initiative. Thank you for your consideration.

—Ocean Hiller, senior at HSMSE and co-editor-in-chief of The Echo

Wyatt Mollod
NYCPS middle school student journalist in District 6

School Newspapers should receive funding from New York City. I am Wyatt Mollod, the Editor-In Chief of the Center School gazette and an eighth grader at the Center School. Journalism education is critical right now in NYC. A school newspapers creates a space for students to talk about what is going on in the world, have a safe space to show their true identity, and write about what they think is important whether it is my article I wrote in fifth grade on Roe V Wade Being Overturned or an opinion article my friend wrote on Why Queer Media Is Important. Even though I am not in High School, I am about to go to Eleanor Roosevelt where I will immediately join the school newspapers. Funding for school newspapers is important because it gives students a pipeline to the journalism world where they can pursue a career. If you don't give funding to High School newspapers, you are potentially spoiling a possible journalism career. Please listen to our pleads and fund School Journalism to allow students across NYC to pursue careers in journalism and have a positive community.

Khamani Mitchell
NYCPS high school student in District 40; resident of District 41

Hello everyone,I'm Khamani Mitchell,I'm a sophomore at the Brooklyn Institute of Liberal Arts. My school has a small journalism club at our school with zero funding for it.This led to a very limited amount of opportunities to grow as a journalist. My own opportunity came at The youth journalism coalition and I'm very glad to have it.

There were hardly any more opportunities for anyone else who wanted to become better. In my club,we only ever had time to learn a very rough crash course on how to even write an article and never got to get the buddy gritty of how to actually write like an actual journalist as the program we used to have was taken away due to funding issues.

This leaves the massive question of how are we going to have the next generation of journalists? So few schools in New York have a journalism club to begin with,many of which aren't programs with funding and thus the means to better students for a career in journalism. Journalism is very important as it is what keeps people informed on what's going on in the world, whether it is,sports,local or global news. The people have the right to be informed and good journalists are needed for that.

In short,I believe you should fund Journalism for all as good journalists are what keep the people in the loop on what's going on, political or not. If journalism isn't taken seriously and funded,we will have fewer and fewer journalists in the foreseeable future. Thank you

Denisse Merino
Student at Baruch College, recent NYCPS alum

My name is Denisse Merino, and I am a student at Baruch College and a college intern with the Youth Journalism Coalition. I am writing in support of funding the Journalism for All initiative in FY27.

Journalism has had a significant impact on my life. As a high school student journalist with The Bell, I had the opportunity to report on issues affecting students across New York City. One of my most meaningful projects was producing a podcast about the inequities of the Regents exams, which allowed me to interview educators, conduct research, and explore how education policies affect students. That experience strengthened my communication skills and inspired me to pursue a degree in Business Communications.

Today, through my work with the Youth Journalism Coalition and as a tutor with Teach For America, I continue to see how important it is for young people to have spaces where their voices are valued. Journalism teaches students how to think critically, ask questions, communicate effectively, and engage with their communities. These are skills that help students long after they leave the classroom.

The reality is that many students still do not have access to journalism programs in their schools. Access to journalism education should not depend on a student's ZIP code. Every young person deserves the opportunity to tell their story, develop media literacy skills, and learn how to navigate an increasingly complex information landscape.

Funding Journalism for All would help expand those opportunities to more students across New York City. I urge the City Council to support this initiative and invest in journalism education as a tool for educational equity, civic engagement, and student empowerment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yelena Dzhanova
Candidate for PhD in Media and Communication; alum of NYCPS and CUNY

Journalism for All has the power to change the way young people learn to consume news in this city. As a journalism educator at the undergraduate level, I see students come in with low media literacy levels and a deep antipathy toward and low engagement with news. We are at a critical juncture that demands our undivided attention: Young people need access to quality journalism and media literacy education. We needed this program 10 years ago, and we really need it today.

Cait Hagan
Former NYCPS elementary school teacher

Dear Chair Dinowitz and Members of the Committee on Education,

My name is Cait Hagan, and I am a Manhattan resident and former NYC public school teacher. I am writing to urge the City Council to fully fund the *Journalism for All* proposal in the NYC Department of Education budget.

Having taught in both District 12 in the Bronx and District 2 in Manhattan, I have witnessed our city's educational equity gap firsthand. In both classrooms, digital media completely shaped my students' lives, but their tools to navigate it were vastly unequal. Recently, I served as a Leadership for Educational Equity fellow with the New York City Youth Journalism Coalition during the *Journalism for All* pilot year. I have met students whose lives were fundamentally changed by access to these courses, discovering a newfound passion, sharper critical thinking skills, and a direct voice to amplify the stories of their community.

Journalism education is a critical necessity for our democracy's future, but the current landscape is deeply unjust. Students in well-funded districts enjoy robust student newspapers and access to journalism courses throughout their four years. Meanwhile, students in historically marginalized, low-income communities of color are systematically denied these platforms.

By funding *Journalism for All*, you ensure that every New York City student, regardless of their zip code, has the power to uplift their communities through storytelling and reporting. I urge the Committee on Education to explicitly allocate funding for *Journalism for All* in this budget. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to our students.

Sincerely,
Cait Hagan
Former NYC Public School Teacher

Nadav Zeimer
Former NYCPS school principal and teacher

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Committee on Education,

My name is Nadav Zeimer, and I am a former New York City public school principal. I am writing today to urge the City Council to fully fund the *Journalism for All* initiative in the FY27 budget. This funding is a vital down payment on the structural future of NYC graduation requirements and a necessary intervention against the growing inequality in our schools.

As an educational leader, I am deeply concerned by what I call the **"K-shaped classroom."** Just like our economy, our schools are hollowing out. In affluent communities, students are treated as *producers*—they design experiments, build arguments, and publish work for real audiences. But in under-resourced public schools, students are too often treated as mere *consumers*—sitting in factory-style rows, drilling for standardized tests, and interacting with mechanical edtech feeds.
AI and the digital economy are rapidly accelerating this divide. The students trained to produce original thought will use new tools to amplify their creativity, while students trained only to repeat and recall will be left behind.

We must intentionally flatten this K-shape, and youth media is the tool to do it. ***Journalism For All* shifts students from consumers to producers.** When a student reports a story, they conduct primary research, interview sources, integrate their own cultural perspectives, and publish verified work for a public audience.

This shift is no longer optional. With New York State phasing in the **Portrait of a Graduate** framework, students will soon be asked to demonstrate proficiency as *Effective Communicators* and *Critical Thinkers* to graduate. Youth media is the most rigorous, ready-made vehicle we have to join NYS leadership in expanding performance-based assessment across the curriculum.

Funding *Journalism for All* this fiscal year is a critical first step to build the school-level infrastructure necessary for this transition to portfolio assessment. However, the City Council must view this as a multi-year runway. As we approach the full implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate, the city must prepare to scale this model as they have previously done with *AP for All*. We must increase funding in future years to ensure that youth media pathways are embedded across the core curriculum of every single NYC high school.

Our schools are ready for an assessment revolution that lifts up every student, not just the privileged few. I urge the City Council to take a forward-looking stand for educational equity by fully funding *Journalism for All* in FY27.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to the future of NYC's students.

Sincerely,
Nadav Zeimer
Founder, HSCred, Inc.
Foster Parent
Former Transfer School Principal, NYC Public Schools
Former Vocational Physics Teacher, NYC Public Schools

Allison Milewski

I am proud to support funding for Journalism for All because I have seen firsthand how transformative journalism education can be for young people and communities. Research consistently shows that participation in student journalism strengthens critical thinking, communication, media literacy, civic engagement, and academic success. Students who engage in journalism learn how to evaluate information, ask thoughtful questions, understand perspectives different from their own, and participate more actively in civic life. At a time when misinformation is rampant and trust in institutions is declining, these skills are not optional—they are essential.

Unfortunately, access to journalism education remains deeply inequitable. Despite being the media capital of the world, only about one-quarter of New York City public high schools currently have student newspapers or journalism programs. The NYC Youth Journalism Coalition was formed to change that reality and ensure that all young people—not just a privileged few—have access to meaningful journalism opportunities. Through Journalism for All, the Coalition has already helped launch and strengthen journalism programs in 30 public high schools across all five boroughs, reaching more than 800 students and 30 educators during the 2025-26 school year. These schools include transfer schools, schools serving newcomers and multilingual learners, career and technical education schools, and schools serving students with disabilities. Together, they are building a sustainable model for expanding journalism education citywide.

The Coalition's impact extends beyond individual classrooms. Under The Bell's leadership, the YJC successfully advocated for legislation requiring the Department of Education to report annually on the state of journalism education in New York City, helping bring long-overdue visibility and accountability to this issue. The Coalition has helped mobilize more than $1 million in public and private support for journalism education, created partnerships among schools, universities, news organizations, and nonprofits, and helped establish a new journalism sector within the Summer Youth Employment Program that will place 40 students in paid internships at 11 local newsrooms this summer. Most importantly, Journalism for All is ensuring that more young people have opportunities to tell important stories, develop career-ready skills, and contribute meaningfully to their communities and our democracy. I urge the City Council to continue investing in this work and make journalism education accessible to every student in New York City.

Daniel Broderick
Media industry professional

As someone who has spent more than two decades working in journalism, publishing, and digital media content development, I know firsthand that strong journalism depends on strong pipelines of talent. Yet far too many young people—especially those from communities historically underrepresented in media—never have the opportunity to develop journalism skills, explore media careers, or see themselves reflected in our industry's future. Journalism for All is helping to change that by expanding access to high-quality journalism education in New York City public schools.

The benefits of journalism education extend far beyond preparing future reporters. Students learn how to research, evaluate information, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and think critically about the world around them. These are essential skills for success in college, careers, and civic life. At a time when misinformation spreads rapidly and trust in institutions continues to erode, helping young people become informed consumers and producers of information is more important than ever.

The NYC Youth Journalism Coalition has already demonstrated what is possible. Through Journalism for All, 30 public high schools across New York City's five boroughs are building sustainable student journalism programs that reach hundreds of students each year. The initiative is creating pathways into journalism careers while strengthening media literacy, civic engagement, and youth voice. As both a media professional and New Yorker, I strongly support continued investment in Journalism for All and its vision of ensuring that every student has the opportunity to tell important stories, develop valuable skills, and contribute to the future of journalism and our democracy.

Mira Gordon
Youth journalism professional; resident of District 39

As Senior Manager of New York City Programs at The Bell, I'm lucky to witness the life-changing impact of journalism education every day. I help run out-of-school internships that provide public school students with the skills to report stories about the issues that matter most to them. Through their reporting, our students have ignited conversations in their schools and communities about issues ranging from the stress of high-pressure academic environments to how schools can more effectively respond to racist incidents. Time and time again, our students tell us that these opportunities help them find their voice, improve their confidence, and increase their sense of agency. No matter what future career our students choose to pursue, these are lessons they'll carry for a lifetime. The overwhelming demand for these kinds of meaningful journalism opportunities is apparent every time we begin a new program cycle and unfortunately lack the space to accept dozens of qualified and passionate candidates. It only emphasizes the disappointing reality that too few New York City public school students even have the chance to try journalism and reap its many benefits. The Journalism for All initiative is bringing journalism programs to schools that previously lacked the resources to offer them, reaching hundreds of students across the city. I urge the City Council to invest in equitable access to journalism education by funding Journalism for All in FY27.

Sabrina DuQuesnay
Youth journalism professional; alum of NYCPS and SUNY

I didn't have access to journalism opportunities in high school. It wasn't until I joined The Bell as an intern in 2017 that I discovered the power of journalism. Through reporting and storytelling, I learned that journalism beyond its definition, is a way to elevate voices, build understanding, and serve the people around us.

Yet in New York City, the media capital of the world, stark disparities still exist in who gets access to journalism opportunities.

Every New York City high school student deserves the chance to discover the power of journalism. They deserve the opportunity to investigate issues that matter to them, amplify their voices and those in their communities, and develop the critical thinking, communication, and civic engagement skills that journalism nurtures.

As Student Program Manager at The Bell, I have seen firsthand how access to journalism opportunities can change lives. I have watched students grow into confident reporters, stronger writers, thoughtful leaders, and engaged citizens.

Journalism is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. When young people are given the opportunity to become journalists they become more informed participants in civic life.
That is why I urge the City Council to fully fund Journalism for All. This investment would help ensure that every young person, regardless of zip code or background, has access to high-quality journalism education and opportunities. New York City's students have stories worth telling. And their communities do too. We need to give them the tools, training, and support to tell them. Journalism for All will do this for students who would otherwise not receive this opportunity.

Kerssy Hernandez
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism is essential for keeping people informed about what is going around. If we stop informing people about their communities and the world, then it creates a danger for society. People can get hurt if they aren't aware of anything harmful. Whether that is a dangerous event or something that poses a health risk, like Covid. There's also the fact that journalism can be used to also inform people about the good happening within. There's many reports on community events and social spots to gather around which can strengthen bonds between individuals. Journalism can report on family owned businesses that need help, or places to get help or food if you're struggling financially. Not to mention, journalism is incredible for letting people know what is happening government wise. Journalism lets us know who is up for election and what their agenda is. This way we can decide which candidates we align ourselves best with. Without journalism, vital information would go unseen and can be twisted into something harmful. Journalists expose the truth and do their best to get all the facts out to the people so they are aware of the reality behind the scenes. This is extremely important because not all people are good people. Some are willing to go the extra mile to hide what they don't want others to know.

Leolyn Link-Ruiz
NYCPS high school student in District 14

It's important because it builds our media literacy and helps us be connected to our community and news. NYC council should fund journalism because it helps young teens be more open minded and aware about the media and news.

Eleden Gonzalez
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism in NYC schools are important because they provide insight on how journalists operate in the real world and they provide knowledge and skills required to organize a news article.

Alesha Cabral
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism in schools is important because I personally don't want to be a journalist most people do, and knowing how to get started the rules you have to follow and knowing how the world uses journalism is important as well as the impact that they have on the world should be known.

Leah Echavarria
NYCPS high school student in District 14

I believe that school journalism is really important in New York City Schools. This is because it gives students a chance to share their ideas. It also tells stories about what is happening in their schools and communities. It helps students improve their writing, speaking, and teamwork skills. Students can also learn how to find reliable information and tell the difference between opinions and facts. These skills are important because they can help them in school and later in life. The New York City Council should provide funding for school journalism. I believe so because many schools do not have enough money for newspapers, websites, cameras, or other materials. With more funding students would have more opportunities to create articles and other projects. It would also allow more students to participate in programs centered around journalism. School journalism can help students stay more informed about important issues. School journalism gives students a voice in decisions that have an effect on them. It can bring students and teachers together by sharing the news. Journalism teaches responsibility because students must make sure the information they publish is accurate. Overall, funding school journalism benefits students and school communities.

Makayla Russell
NYCPS high school student in District 14

I believe that journalism is an important and useful class for teens to have because it serves as a great source of civic education. it teaches a lot about the duty of the people and how citizens have a roll in holding those in power accountable and how news and government work. aside from that, it also teaches students to discern bias, fact from fiction, and different kinds of speech. learning to do accurate research from reliable sources is very important, especially with the ever present fake news flooding the media. in journalism, reading and writing was obviously a heavy focus and with the poor literacy rates i think its more important than ever to not only make kids read in class, but to make them analyze and understand what they're reading beyond just what the words directly say. Journalism feels like a great class to connect with government because most news we consume, in some way or form, connects back to politics. the bias of news sources pushing certain political agendas, news stations being directly connected to public leaders, or news stations reporting on government leaders and worldly affairs are all just a few important examples of things we see often in the news and need to be able to fully understand. understanding journalism is important for all of us in our daily lives and i feel that it is deeply benifitial to have journalism as a class in schools.

Maimouna Doumbia
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism is crucial for youth to understand the importance of understanding today's world through a form of expression. I believe that journalism is the art of reporting, and it's essential for young people to be able to report on issues that matter most to them. I'm extremely grateful that I've been part of a journalism class that not only taught me about media, but social problems like bias, stereotyping, racism and more. When we learn about how narrative is made and crafted, then we begin to change our perspective on others and the world around us. Journalism programs and curriculums in NYC should be better funded so that students can begin to understand narratives, and hopefully catch bias in the media. Additionally, Journalism is an engaging class to be in, as there's other avenues of academic subjects that weave into the course. Subjects like government, english, and art, can all be mentioned in journalism, and this makes it more meaningful for students, so they can find their own personal connection to journalism and their interests. On the other hand, journalism teaches the importance of youth voice, as they'll learn how to express themselves and the issues they care about. Funding more journalism programs helps students exercise their right to speech, and understanding of our society.

Serenity De Los Santos
NYCPS high school student in District 14

The NYC Council should provide funding for school journalism because it helps students become more informed, thoughtful, and engaged citizens. In Journalism class your learning something new everyday about real world problems and media in general, so funding this class would help more younger people be more engaged with real important media and help younger people get better at really fact checking what they are engaging with. School journalism teaches young people like me how news is created, and how media affects our society today. In a time when misinformation spreads easily online, journalism helps students develop important skills such as research, fact-checking, communication, and critical thinking. Funding these programs would give more students the opportunity to learn how media works while also helping them stay informed about issues that affect their schools, communities, and the people around them. As a student who's actually in a journalism class I have learned a lot about journalism and gained new skills that I can use in my everyday life like fact checking, researching, spotting fake news and much more, so funding journalism is very beneficial especially for younger people. Overall, the NYC Council should fund school journalism because it helps students develop important life skills, understand how media works, become better thinkers, and have a voice in their schools and communities. By supporting journalism programs, the NYC Council would be investing in students education and helping prepare the next generation to be informed, responsible, and engaged citizens.

Harborjah Gonzalez
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism in NYC schools are important because they teach us kids what is happening in the world and what important politics are happening. The NYC Council should provide funding for school journalism for many reasons. Like for example, the media bias and media consolidation. Mrs. Lawlor has taught us a lot about the perception of media. The media bias, the censorship, the fake news, and Code of Ethics. When we talked about Censorship, I have learned that the government can and will censor anything that seems to harm or criticize them. This can ruin our viewpoint in how we see the media and it will lead to media bias. This has genuinely taught me so much about people who violate or support it. Just like in the film, "She Said", it showed us how journalists were trying their best to find justice who were sexually assualted by Harvey Weinstein. Coming back to the topic of Journalism, we were taught about different current events that happened each month. Furthermore, students can feel impacted by the way our government acts. In conclusion, Journalism is a class that educates students about the media, politics, and news. Sinclair is an important figure in which can impact the media and it's news. Thank you.

Christal Paredes Atariguana
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism in New York City schools is important as it gives students insight on current events happening in or out of the city. Journalists are essential to inform others in a truthful and non-bias manner. Due to there being a lot of times where information is false, a class like journalism allows students to know about tools that can assist them in distinguishing what is real vs. fake. This is necessary especially as we are living in a world where there is easy access to creating false news with resources such as AI and deepfakes. Our daily news is mostly sourced through journalists, giving students an introduction to this field allows them to discover trusted sources where they can locate their everyday information. Today's society involves a lot of politics and it is extremely important that students are aware of the current situation of the world around them. Journalism is an opening for the students to exercise and recognize their first amendment rights of freedom of speech. Journalists are a great example of people exercising that right. A field as important as this one being implemented to New York City schools is extremely helpful for the new generation. This is a great step to start us off strong.

Xaira Ogando
NYCPS high school student in District 14

What makes journalism important is that it helps us stay informed, whether the news is real or not, or because it keeps us up-to-date with current events. I believe the City Council should provide the necessary funding for school journalism so that children are informed and learn to report accurately. Journalism would also help students identify fake news early on so that it doesn't mislead the reader and spread untrue information. Although there are journalists who say false or misleading things and still earn a lot of money without considering whether they harm others. What makes journalism important in schools is the array of dangers that arise in the city; journalism helps us become aware of significant events—such as the arrival of a new virus in a country, or the outbreak of a war.

Keysi Ciprian Corporan
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism in NYC schools is important because it helps us understand more about the media and the different biases. Also it teach us how to respond in situations and how to act. Journalism have teach me stuff that I never knew like how to write a review how a journalist had to follow a ethics code and the right we have a people.

Sherida Jafar Bright
NYCPS high school student in District 14

NYC council should provide fundings for school journalism because it helps students have hands on more opportunites, fun and creative elements, and a chance for students to particpate and focus more on journalism.Thank you

Citlali Xoyatla
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism in NYC schools is important because it gives students a way to talk about things happening in their school and lets other people know whats going on. Students learn about things like the Code of Ethics and how journalists are supposed to be honest, accurate and respectful when reporting stories. We also learned about satire and how some media is meant to entertain while other media is meant to inform people. Learning these things can help students understand the news better and not believe everything they see online. The NYC Council should provide funding for school journalism because a lot of schools dont have enough money for journalism programs newspapers or other activities. More funding would let more students participate and learn important skills. Journalism can also help students become better writers and critical thinkers. It teaches responsibility because journalists have to make sure the information they share is correct. Overall school journalism is worth funding because it helps students learn about media ethics, communication and how to be informed members of their community. It also gives students a chance to share their ideas and have their voices heard.

Iris Espinobarros
NYCPS high school student in District 14

Journalism makes NYC schools important because in journalism class students get to learn about things that happen around our surroundings like the news and how journalist brodcast the news we see and how that can impact us.

This testimony was delivered in-person

Sophie Mode
Program Associate, NYC Youth Journalism Coalition; NYCPS alum; resident of District 33

My name is Sophie Mode. I am a New York City public school graduate (class of 2021), and I currently work with the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition to expand access to journalism education for every student in our schools.

As people who care about education and young people, it can often be hard to know where to start when it comes to addressing the plethora of concerns facing the largest school system in the nation. And there is no one solution, but we are here to speak about one that checks a lot of boxes: access to journalism education.

The students speaking after me will testify to the profound impact journalism has had on them, their peers, and their school communities at large.

You'll hear from them the urgency for journalism education in this moment.

How it fosters a culture of belonging and inclusion when divisiveness is so high.

How it builds media literacy when disinformation continues to rise.

How it gives their school leadership, the DOE, and you all, the opportunity to hear about the issues that students and teachers care about.

How it generates career pathways that are sorely needed, particularly in building a news industry that is actually representative of our city and country.

And that is all on top of the reading, writing, research, leadership, critical thinking, creativity, technical, and communication skills it develops, making it a strong answer to an upcoming challenge schools will face: the new Portrait of a Graduate framework. Journalism education is the answer to the questions of our time. Journalism is a necessity for a true democracy, and it must begin in our classrooms.

We urge you to create a Journalism for All Citywide Initiative in the FY27 Budget. Journalism for All is not a short term solution or quick fix. It is a tested, wraparound model for total support, designed to scale across the city while still ensuring support meets schools where they are instead of forcing them into a one size fits all model.

Currently, very few schools offer journalism education, as proven by Local Law 27 passed by the Council last year. And, access is starkly divided along the same equity gaps that plague our school system.

We have already seen the impact of Journalism for All in our pilot cohort, in schools like Hala's, Jayleen's, Leair's, and Camilla's. I am now so excited to introduce our student leaders, who can tell you firsthand about the impacts of access, and of a lack thereof. Thank you for your time.

This testimony was delivered in-person
Jayleen Mendez
NYCPS student in District 34

Good afternoon. My name is Jayleen and I am a 15 year old student at Lyons Community School.

I am here today to ask you to support funding for Journalism for All so more students across New York City can have opportunities like I have had.

Being part of journalism has helped me grow in so many ways. I have learned how to research, interview people, write articles, and communicate effectively. But more importantly it has helped me find my voice.

One of my first assignments was interviewing another student at my school and I was so nervous beforehand that I kept practicing my questions over and over. When the interview started they shared personal challenges they had faced and I realized how much it means when someone takes the time to listen. When I saw their story published I felt proud because I had helped tell a story that mattered.

Through journalism I have learned that every person has a story worth hearing. Journalism has allowed me to help keep my school community informed, celebrate student achievements, and give students a platform to be heard. I hope you will support funding for Journalism for All so more students can find their voice just like I did. Thank you for your time.

This testimony was delivered in-person

Leair Davenport
NYCPS student in District 1

Hey y'all, my name is Leair Davenport, I'm 17, and representing A School Without Walls located near Wall St.

My school has a program through Journalism For All and I feel like journalism is important for me because I not only have a passion for photography, but also a lot of political opinions and opinions in general, so journalism gives me a medium to both publish photography through documentation, as well as get my voice out there.

Some students can struggle with finding a place to chime in, whether about their local community, or about bigger communities that go beyond a neighborhood. A lot of students also struggle with finding a place to start, gather thoughts and information, as well as having some sort of way to be involved whether involved in issues or simply spreading the news of maybe something good. Youth Journalism is what gives these people their voices. During a time of extreme discrimination, climate damage, and silencing, it's important that the people who have to pick up the systems left by the older generations– the kids– can at least have a say in what they want in the future.

Journalism For All and Youth Journalism as a whole has let me use my skills and voice for something meaningful for me, and funding Journalism For All can help allocate resources not only for the program but for the kids who can't have a voice without it. Further the medium for youth to speak up, because younger people are literally and figuratively the future.

This testimony was delivered in-person

Camilla Spillmann
NYCPS student journalist in District 6

My name is Camilla Spillmann. I'm 17 and I go to West End Secondary School. I'm a part of my school's journalism elective and club which are made possible by Journalism for All.

My school previously had a school paper before journalism for all, but over the course of a few years it crumbled due to a lack of funding and sizably large amount of energy that has to be put in for a paper to be maintained. This year, through Journalism for All, we've been able to revitalize it. In our elective, we've learned about what makes a good story and how to pitch one. We've talked about and practiced interviewing and how to formulate strong questions. We've talked about how best to structure an article and written many of our own. We've experimented with photography: thinking about what could make a good photo, what could fit a certain topic, what would catch readers' attention.

For our first print edition our advisor was able to get it to English teachers in every grade to share the paper with their students. We wrote about exam stress, AI in the classroom, the new state phone policy, local politics, and more. One student interviewed a vendor that sells coffee and pastries in a cart right next to our school – a figure everyone knew of but before that paper, hadn't really thought much about.

I think I speak for everyone here with me when I say that we are here before you because of a crucial belief that student papers are important. They allow students to develop writing, research, and critical thinking skills that are vital not just for college, or future careers, but life. However, they also provide something just as important, a rare opportunity for those my age: a formal outlet for students to talk about the world around them. Issues in their community, interests they care about, problems they may see in the world, or even good parts of their community – such as the impact a local street vendor – that people may otherwise gloss over. That's something I continue to have access to, something I hope more students at my school are able to do, and something I hope more students from schools across the five boroughs have access to themselves. For this reason, council members, I urge you to fund Journalism for All. Thank you.

This testimony was delivered in-person

Hala Musa
NYCPS student journalist in District 47

Hello my name is Hala Musa. I am a senior at the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology. My school has a journalism program through Journalism for All, and it has had a profound impact on me and my school community.

Through journalism, I have learned how to research, interview, fact-check, and tell stories that matter. More importantly, journalism has taught me how to listen to people, understand different perspectives, and use my voice to inform and advocate for my community. As a student leader who is deeply involved in issues of equity and student engagement, journalism has given me another way to create change. It has helped me develop critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills that I will carry with me throughout college and my future career.

The stories my classmates and I write highlight the experiences, achievements, and concerns of students in our school. Journalism helps ensure that student voices are heard and that important issues are brought into the conversation. It creates a stronger, more connected school community where students feel informed and represented. Access to journalism education has empowered students like me to become more engaged in our community and more confident communicators. It gives us the tools to ask questions, seek the truth, and share stories that might otherwise go untold.

I encourage you to fund the Journalism for All citywide initiative so that more students at my school and across New York City can have access to these valuable opportunities. Investing in student journalism is an investment in the next generation of informed leaders, storytellers,and community advocates. Thank you for your time and consideration.

This testimony was delivered in-person

Derry Oliver
Recent NYCPS alum

Good morning, my name is Derry Oliver. Three years ago, I sat in these same seats as a recent graduate of Cobble Hill High School, advocating for funding for the Youth Journalism Coalition. Now I'm back as a rising junior at Syracuse University, majoring in Policy Studies and Law, Society & Policy, with a minor in African American Studies — to do the same. The Youth Journalism Coalition has given high school students access to opportunities that are hard to find, and I am proof of that.

Growing up low-income, I wasn't lacking drive. I was lacking access. Journalism programs, leadership opportunities, and internships often came with a price tag that my family could not afford. Most of these opportunities also required a network that was nonexistent for me.

YJC opened doors I could not open on my own. As a student leader within the organization, I developed leadership skills I now apply as President of College Democrats at Syracuse University. Through the Youth Journalism Coalition, I had the opportunity to write for Teen Vogue about my advocacy work within the organization and to publish an article about my experience with mental health in the education system as a Black girl — which is part of what led me to write for the Daily Orange today. And just recently, I hosted the MLK Young Changemakers event at the Apollo Theater, through connections I built during my time in the Youth Journalism Coalition.

This testimony was delivered in-person

Gianna McIntosh
NYCPS student journalist in District 39

My name is Gianna McIntosh, and I'm a sophomore at Millennium Brooklyn High School. Journalism is important to me because it has become a way for me to build a legacy, to understand my community, ask better questions, and tell stories that matter.

My school doesn't offer a journalism class, but we do have a club. It only meets for an hour, and every week I leave wishing we had more time. I want journalism education to be part of everyday learning so these skills can stay with me and shape the way I see the world. By funding Journalism for All, you can show this commitment to students like me and to the future of our city's schools.

In our club, we write teacher features, club spotlights, reviews of school plays, student perspectives on political events, and opinion pieces about issues that matter to our generation. But it's difficult to fully invest in journalism when we don't have the time or resources to grow these skills. We need space, guidance, and support to make journalism education real.

Learning how to report, write, research, and ask questions has given me confidence and purpose. It has taught me that my perspective matters and that storytelling can create connection, understanding, and change.

That is why it is so important for the City Council to fund journalism education. Even if students don't become journalists, these skills still matter. They teach us to think critically, communicate clearly, and better understand the world around us. Every student deserves the opportunity to learn how to navigate media and information, not just the students who already know how to speak up.

Supporting journalism education means investing in young people's ability to participate, question, and contribute to their communities. In a time when misinformation spreads easily and young voices are often dismissed, journalism education is not optional. It is essential.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

NYC YouthBuild Collaborative

Testimony of Adam Reyes before NYC Council Finance Committee

Executive Budget Hearing—June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Adam Reyes, and I am proud to be part of DREAMS YouthBuild. I am here today to support the NYC YouthBuild Collaborative's request for $2.1 million to continue supporting opportunity youth across New York City.

This program has truly changed my life. Through YouthBuild, I have gained certifications, job skills, confidence, communication skills, and support from people who believed in me and pushed me to do better every day.

Programs like this do more than help students prepare for careers. They give young people opportunities, guidance, and hope for a better future. I know firsthand how important that support can be.

This funding will help more youth across New York City gain the same opportunities I was given and continue helping students grow into successful and confident individuals.

Thank you for your time and for continuing to support programs that truly change lives.

NYC YouthBuild Collaborative

Testimony of Imani Davis Brown before NYC Council Finance Committee

Executive Budget Hearing—June 10, 2026

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Imani Davis Brown, I am 25 years old, and I am a graduate of the YouthBuild program. YouthBuild has truly changed my life for the better. Before joining the program, I was struggling to find work. I applied to many jobs, but no one called me back. I also wanted to earn certifications and build a career, but many training programs were expensive, and at the time I simply could not afford them.

Coming into YouthBuild was a rewarding experience for me. Through the program, I earned my CNA/PCT certification along with my CPR certification from the American Heart Association at no cost. I also gained valuable hands-on experience through my internship and was connected to job placement support after completing the program. YouthBuild gave me more than certifications. It gave me confidence, guidance, support, and meaningful relationships with both the staff and other young people in the program. While attending YouthBuild, I also earned my GED, and now I plan to continue my education and become a nurse in the future.

If it was not for YouthBuild, I honestly do not know where I would be today. This program gave me a real opportunity and helped me build a brighter future for myself.
That is why I support the NYC YouthBuild Collaborative's request to restore and baseline its historic funding level of $2.1 million in the City's FY2027 budget. This funding will help continue providing education, workforce training, civic engagement, and supportive services to hundreds of young people across New York City who deserve the same opportunity that I was given.

Thank you again to YouthBuild and to everyone here for listening.

NYC YouthBuild Collaborative

Testimony of Jasmine Craddock before NYC Council Finance Committee

Executive Budget Hearing—June 10, 2026

Good morning Chair Lee and Members of the Committee. My name is Jasmine, and I am 18 years old. I attend DREAMS YouthBuild in Brooklyn. Before joining the program, I felt lost and unsure about my future. DREAMS YouthBuild gave me structure, self-discipline, and confidence in myself.

Since joining the program, I earned my CPR certification, completed my 30-hour Construction Safety and Health training, graduated with my high school diploma, was accepted into the University of Maryland Global Campus, became a Behavior Technician, and passed my RBT exam. I am continuing to grow in my career from there on out.

I would love for other young adults who feel lost or confused about their future to know that there is still hope for them. Programs like DREAMS YouthBuild give young people the support, encouragement, and opportunities they need to believe in themselves and build a better future. I hope more youth can be given the same opportunity I had.

I urge the Committee to support the NYC YouthBuild Collaborative's request for $2.1 million so more youth across New York City can continue receiving these opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

OKIN BARNEY P.C.

Testimony to be Presented at NYC Council
Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings

June 10, 2026

My name is Jaclyn Okin Barney, and I speak today as the coordinator of Parents for Inclusive Education, as well as a private special education attorney practicing in New York City for nearly twenty-four years. I also serve as a Commissioner with the City's Human Rights Commission. I am here today to address issues related to students with disabilities in NYC.

First, I want to discuss an area of the Mayor's executive budget, which aims to decrease the number of students who attend private special education schools at the City's expense. I understand and respect the Mayor's initiative and agree that more community public school should serve an increased number of students with disabilities. However, the Mayor's budget only does half the work, without investing substantial resources into the City's public schools to serve students in the special education system, the Mayor's goal cannot be achieved.

I recognize that the Mayor's executive budget proposes an investment in preschool special education as well as allocating money to serve students who attend private schools at their parents' expense. Yet, there is no additional funding for school-aged special education students in community schools. This is a problem.

As a special education attorney, a significant part of my practice is tuition reimbursement cases. Families do not pursue tuition reimbursement because they are seeking a particular program or placement. They pursue it because their children are not receiving the individualized supports, services, and instruction they need to learn and succeed in school

I have observed students with disabilities succeed in learning alongside their peers when schools have the capacity to provide flexible instruction, integrated related services, effective behavioral and social-emotional supports, assistive technology, and meaningful collaboration among educators. However, too often, these conditions do not exist in public school. As a result, families are left searching for options outside the public system, not because their children require or want segregation, but because their needs are not being met.

A few examples of students with disabilities who seek private school placements that I encounter most often include:

High-Achieving Students with Attention and Executive Functioning Needs: I represent many students who are intellectually capable of succeeding in rigorous academic courses, but who need support with attention, organization, planning, and self-management. These students need schools that are equipped to provide executive functioning supports, flexible instructional practices, integrated related services, and coordinated collaboration among general education teachers, special educators, and service providers. Too often, these supports are unavailable or inconsistent in public schools, leaving families to seek alternatives outside the public system.

2585 Broadway, #255 | New York, NY 10025
Jaclyn@jaclynokinbarney.com | (347) 559-5098

Students with Social-Emotional and Serious Mental Health Needs: Many of my clients are students whose learning is interrupted by anxiety, depression, trauma, or other social-emotional challenges. These students are often fully capable of meeting grade-level expectations when provided with timely support, counseling, and responsive classroom practices. Yet many schools lack the integrated systems, staffing, and partnerships necessary to provide support when students need it most, which includes appropriate support in the moment when a student encounters a psychosocial issue in the classroom. As a result, students who could succeed in inclusive settings are often left without the interventions that would allow them to remain engaged in learning alongside their peers.

Students with Significant Physical Disabilities and Complex Communication Needs: I have represented many students who use wheelchairs, assistive technology, and alternative forms of communication. Too often, these students are presumed to require highly restrictive settings rather than being provided meaningful access to general education environments with the supports they need. When schools are equipped with accessible facilities, assistive technology, related services, and collaborative instructional teams, students with significant physical disabilities can participate in rigorous academic experiences alongside their peers. The challenge is not the students' potential; it is the system's capacity to provide inclusive educational opportunities.

These are just a few examples of students whose families often feel they have no choice but to turn to private schools to secure an appropriate education. It is simply illogical for the Mayor to set a goal to decrease tuition funding cases without investing in our public schools so that they can meet the needs of a broader range of learners.

I recognize that NYCPS has invested in expanding specialized pathways for students with disabilities, including programs such as NEST, ACES, AIMS, and Horizon. While these models may be appropriate for some students, expanding specialized pathways cannot be the primary strategy for meeting the needs of students with disabilities across a system as large and diverse as New York City. When access to supports depends on placement in a specialized setting, many students are left without meaningful options. As a result, families often turn to private schools not because they are seeking a particular program, but because they are seeking the supports and services their children need to succeed.

Additionally, specialized pathways are not a scalable strategy for integration, outcomes, or fiscal responsibility. The more sustainable approach is to build the capacity of community schools to provide individualized supports, integrated services, and rigorous instruction so that a broader range of students can succeed in inclusive settings.

The supports many students with disabilities require are not separate from the skills New York State now expects all graduates to develop. Executive functioning, communication, collaboration, self-advocacy, problem-solving, and resilience are central to the State's Portrait of a Graduate and increasingly necessary for success in college, careers, and civic life. Investments in inclusive practices, integrated supports, and collaborative instructional models benefit far more than students with disabilities—they build the capacity of schools to prepare all students for the future.

The City needs to allocate money into community schools so that all students with disabilities have inclusive opportunities for education. This would fall directly in line with Chancellor Samuels'

priorities, which include integration as a key tenet. To do this, the City needs to put funding and significant training into community schools to provide every student with a disability an individualized education and move away from a "one size fits all" approach. Schools need to learn to support students' needs while also challenging their strengths. Encouraging and educating schools to adopt practices such as universal design for learning, data-informed instruction, integrated service delivery, and multi-tiered systems of support will help all students—those with and without disabilities—and lead to truly inclusive opportunities.

Building capacity is also the most fiscally responsible investment. It creates lasting infrastructure that strengthens schools across the entire system, reduces reliance on costly private placements, and allows more students to attend their neighborhood schools rather than requiring separate programs and transportation.

Please consider investing more into our public school system

Additionally, please commit to adding $450 million to the 2025–2029 Capital Plan to make more schools ADA accessible for students with physical disabilities. Currently, only one-third of our school buildings are fully accessible, which means students with physical disabilities simply do not have the same opportunities and choices as their peers. Equality for these students does not exist.

Furthermore, school accessibility is an issue that not only affects students with physical disabilities, but also parents, teachers, and administrators with disabilities who need equal access to our schools.

Thank you for considering my testimony today.

Jaclyn Okin Barney Esq.
[redacted]
jaclyn@jaclynokinbarney.com
www.parentsforinclusiveeducation.com

Testimony on 6/10/26 Executive Budget Hearing,
Finance Committee

Open Plans writes today in regard to the Executive Budget hearing on 6/10. Open Plans believes in a livable and affordable New York City, and below are our budget priorities that would work towards that aim:

- **The Mayor's campaign commitment of $20 million for the Open Streets for Schools: Full Closure (School Streets) program should be realized, and further funds should be allocated for School Plaza Blocks.** The School Streets program closes streets in front of schools to keep kids safe from traffic, and to unlock outdoor recreation space for schools that may not have enough or any at all. However, insufficient resources (as well as a lack of cross-agency collaboration) result in less participation than is possible. During the campaign, Mayor Mamdani pledged to provide $20 million to the School Streets program for operational expenses. We believe this money is essential and can be used to hire more staff to manage the program, conduct outreach to potential schools, and provide assistance during the application process and throughout the life of their School Street. This should be included as a $20 million line item; we are requesting that the Council fund the School Streets program as an important step toward expanding access for students across the city. Additionally, we know that plaza blocks deliver results for communities: a safer place to gather and experience joy. We believe that the Council should allocate capital dollars to create School Plaza Blocks on some existing School Streets. We discuss the potential of the School Streets program, and further details about School Plaza Blocks, in our report School's Out in the Streets.
- **Invest $25 million to pilot five Public Space Teams to foster local public space management.** In our city, some neighborhoods receive better public space management — better street cleaning, public programming, and planning — than others. To remedy this issue, in our report Framework for the Future, we proposed the idea of Public Space Teams. These Teams would operate in Community Districts, and consist of two DOT employees — a Public Space Facilitator to coordinate the Team and the evolution of the space, and a Public Space Coordinator to perform public outreach — as well as a group of paid contracted Public Space Stewards to perform supplemental sanitation. In our report, we performed a financial analysis and found that $25 million would be sufficient to pilot five of these teams, one for a neighborhood in each borough, to bring more equitable public space management.

- **Allocate $15 million for implementation of hardened daylighting.** Daylighting saves lives by removing obstructions from the curbspace at intersections, providing increased visibility for pedestrians and drivers alike. To ensure these spaces aren't occupied illegally, hardened infrastructure like planters, boulders, or bike racks is essential. A $15 million allocation would be the first step to make universal daylighting a reality.
- **Fund implementation of five low-traffic neighborhoods, one in each borough.** The majority of traffic in many residential neighborhoods is "cut-through traffic," meaning the drivers who drive through a neighborhood do not stop; they use neighborhoods as throughways to get to their true final destination. To avoid increased congestion and air pollution, we can use low-cost strategies to divert traffic out of neighborhoods and onto main roads. These strategies have been shown to be effective in cities like London, cutting down on congestion in residential neighborhoods while still allowing for local access for residents. The Council should allocate funding for the implementation of five low-traffic neighborhoods, one in each borough, as further described on our website.
- **Provide Open Streets partners operational support through staffing, allocating $30 million to DOT over three years.** This allocation would bring the City back in line with previous allocations. Far too often, Open Streets partners are overburdened and lack systemic support. This money would give them a lifeline and additional support at DOT. We also raise up Open Streets partners' calls for further funding.

Respectfully,
Open Plans

Sara Lind
Co-Executive Director
sara@openplans.org

Jackson Chabot
Director of Advocacy and Organizing
jacksonchabot@openplans.org

Michael Sutherland
Senior Policy & Legislative Analyst
michael@openplans.org

June 11, 2026

To:
Transportation Committee Chair Council Member Shaun Abreu, and Council Members Christopher Marte, Eric Dinowitz, Pierina Ana Sanchez, Justin Sanchez, Shekar Krishnan, Julie Won, Phil Wong, Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Shahana Hanif and Farah N. Louis

Re:
Transportation and Infrastructure Budget Hearings and Fully Funded Open Streets Program

Dear Chair Abreu,

As Mayor Mamdani recently put it, "Open Streets is one of the best tools we have to reclaim public space for the public." Yet despite the praise from City Hall, the future of its finances is currently unclear, with no dedicated line in the latest budget for the support and operation of Open Streets citywide. It's time to fix that.

We, the undersigned volunteer committees and organizations who facilitate Open Streets throughout the city, call on lawmakers to fully fund the program, expand the New York City Department of Transportation's (NYCDOT) capacity for supporting it, and provide more funding directly to the organizations operating these programs.

For years, the Open Streets program has faced funding challenges. The program relies on countless hours of labor by volunteers who stretch inadequate grants and deal with NYCDOT reimbursements that can take up to a year to arrive. Each day, across the five boroughs, groups do a whole lot with very little—and have done so for years.

Obstacles aside, the program yields a diversity of benefits. It allows community-based organizations to make our streets safer; provide free programming and outdoor dining; maintain public plazas and streets; and support local businesses. And it cuts costs for the City by lowering injuries and traffic emissions, all while boosting tax revenue.

The economic benefits of Open Streets are well documented. For example, a 2026 report from the State Comptroller found Open Streets lead to significant local job growth. According to a 2024 Department of City Planning report, Open Streets correlate with "considerably lower [vacancies] than their surrounding neighborhoods as a whole". Various other City-run studies over the past several years have shown similarly positive findings, including a 2022 report on the Fifth Avenue Open Street that revealed the

program generated an additional $3 million in spending along that corridor and a 6% increase in spending on adjacent corridors. Another NYCDOT report from 2022 found Open Streets corresponded to a 10% increase in new business during the pandemic compared to a 20% contraction on non-Open Street corridors.

Beyond that, the Open Streets program makes our streets safer. By creating temporary open space, pedestrian plazas, shared streets, protected bicycling corridors and implementing traffic calming, crashes and injuries are greatly reduced along Open Streets corridors. In 2021, injuries dropped dramatically along 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights—home to the city's longest daily Open Street, at 26 blocks—compared to pre-Open Streets numbers. Similar trends have been seen along other Open Streets corridors across the city, like Berry Street in Williamsburg, which saw a 71% reduction in injuries since its transformation, and Underhill Avenue in Prospect Heights, which saw injuries plummet following the implementation of an Open Street.

A rich tapestry of organizations, big and small, help execute the City's Open Streets program. The landscape spans Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), schools, arts and cultural nonprofits, restaurants, and groups like ourselves, which are entirely volunteer-run. **The work relies on countless organizers who provide hours of free labor every week and work with miniscule grants from NYCDOT—at most $20,000 per year, but usually less—to run robust community programs.** These grants, which cover a fraction of the funding required to adequately run this initiative, can take months, sometimes a year, to process, further threatening the program's equity and sustainability. Progress has been made through a recent partnership with Citizens Committee for NYC to provide partners with advance funds, but this exciting opportunity is limited to existing partners and only applies to a portion of funding.

Open Street partners are all running sparse budgets today. **A properly funded program requires at least 10 times the current funding allocation.** New York is an outlier here: similar initiatives in other cities around the world receive substantially more funding. For example, Montreal recently committed to extend their pedestrianized street program through 2028. This investment allocates CA$12 million for its operation, including up to CA$700,000 made directly available to each merchants association running one of these programs. This amount—more than 25 times the amount being provided to New York City's Open Streets partners—aptly shows the value of these programs and the level of investment that our city should strive for, especially if we're going to make our streets "the envy of the world" as the Mayor has said.

While the Open Streets program is a transformative approach to rethinking public space, relying on provisional equipment and volunteer labor is not sustainable. **To ensure**

long-term stability for Open Streets sites, programs need physical infrastructure supporting them. Initially, this comes in the form of "light-touch" streetscape changes (i.e. paint and planters) and ultimately via capital infrastructure work. These improvements, otherwise known as Street Improvement Projects (SIPs), greatly reduce the amount of labor required to run the Open Streets and their operating costs. And more importantly, redesigns double down on the street safety gains provided by Open Streets. That's why it's critical that the City provide NYCDOT with the funding, resources, and staffing required to realize this work.

Furthermore, funding must be dispersed directly to the community partners operating the Open Streets. Many volunteer organizations assume the brunt of the work of executing Open Streets programs—everything from planning and fundraising to operations and outreach. Over the years, disappearing city dollars have jeopardized the program's future, forcing sites to downsize and cut hours (e.g. Vanderbilt Avenue).

The Mayor is right: the Open Streets program is one of the best tools the City has to make positive change happen on its streets. But more must be done to ensure that its immense benefits are truly realized and sustained. A modest investment in Open Streets would make that a reality.

Therefore, we urge the City Council to fully fund Open Streets with three specific actions:

- ***Staffing NYCDOT positions that support Open Streets work, and continuing operational support at the previous level of $30 million over 3 years including providing a portion of this funding directly to partner organizations that have steep operational costs;***

- ***Directly funding community organizations that operate Open Streets by increasing the available funding from $20,000 to $200,000 per partner;***

- ***Fast-tracking the implementation of redesigns for Open Streets corridors by allocating $100 million* to infrastructure work.**

Thank you for your time and continued support. We couldn't do this work without you.

Sincerely,

Prospect Heights Open Streets (Vanderbilt Avenue Open Street), Brooklyn — City Council District 35

31st Avenue Open Street Collective, Queens — City Council District 22

34th Ave Open Streets Coalition, Queens — City Council District 25

Neighbors for A Safer Austin Street (Austin Street Open Street), Queens — City Council District 29

Caldwell Enrichment Program Inc. (Jennings Street), The Bronx — City Council District 17

North Brooklyn Open Streets, Brooklyn — City Council Districts 33 & 34

Troutman Open Street, Brooklyn — City Council District 34

Park Slope Open Streets, Brooklyn — City Council District 39

Loisaida Open Streets, Manhattan — City Council District 2

ParkToPark103.nyc The West 103rd Street Shared Street, Manhattan — City Council District 7

Open Streets Network

Open Plans

Transportation Alternatives

Street Lab

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Criminal Justice

Preliminary Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Tanya Krupat,
Vice President of Policy and Advocacy

Osborne
ASSOCIATION

My name is Tanya Krupat, and I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at the Osborne Association. As many of you know, Osborne is one of the oldest and largest criminal justice service organizations in the state. Our services reach over 18,000 individuals each year, assisting them and their families in navigating arrest, courts, incarceration on Rikers and in state prisons, and reentry. Through advocacy, direct service, and policy reform, Osborne works to create opportunities for people to heal, grow, and thrive. We are grateful for the Council's ongoing support and look forward to continued collaboration.

Osborne is a longstanding member of the NYC ATI & Reentry Coalition. We applaud the restoration of funding for alternatives to incarceration programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, including increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments represent an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

At the same time, additional investment is needed to bring these programs to scale. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the **coalition's services generated more than $60 million in savings for New York City** by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable the 12 organizations in our coalition to serve more New Yorkers and expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

Osborne is also a member of Fair Chance for Housing Coalition, and we are deeply concerned about the proposed $1.5 million in funding cuts to the New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR, or the Commission). Without robust public education and the enforcement that only CCHR can provide, the Fair Chair for Housing law will be an empty promise to the people with conviction histories whom we serve. The fiscal impact of the law was reported to be $1.4 million to conduct public education and hire ten new staff; instead of ever receiving this funding, CCHR is now facing an even greater cut. We know this kind of housing discrimination is alive and well in our city, because housing providers either do not know their responsibilities under the law or do not believe they will face any penalties for flouting it.

We urge the Administration and Council to correct course and instead increase CCHR's budget by $10 million in the FY27 budget and exempt CCHR from hiring freezes to ensure the Commission can carry out its mandate. Even with this increase, CCHR's total funding would represent less than 0.02% of the City's overall budget. For our participants and thousands of

other New Yorkers, CCHR is one of the only places they can turn to for relief without a lawyer to seek redress for discrimination in housing and employment based on race, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, and importantly, conviction history. At a moment when federal civil rights protections are being eviscerated, the City must fully fund CCHR to meet this moment and continue to protect all New Yorkers.

Our testimony in March highlighted the urgent need to reduce the number of people who are on Rikers Island and improve conditions for those who are there, including improving the visiting process and experience. Our longstanding Court Advocacy Services (CAS) program continues to achieve remarkable results and we want to highlight two stories of recent clients that illustrate the importance of court mitigation services to support people's well-being, promote community safety, and as a critical component of decreasing the numbers of people detained and suffering on Rikers.

Case Study One:

Twenty-seven-year-old SB was arrested and charged with Assault in the Second Degree and she was detained on Rikers Island. CAS accepted the case and in talking with SB, learned that she had a very unstable childhood, moving from home to home and eventually entered into the foster care system, which separated her from her siblings. When she was 12, her brother was incarcerated. These experiences led her to become more withdrawn and angry, and to struggle to handle her emotions.

After years in many foster homes, SB aged out of the foster care system at 19 and moved into supportive housing, which dramatically improved her life. She secured employment, attended college courses, and did not have any new arrests until this one. When she was arrested, CAS recognized the detrimental effects any length of incarceration could have on SB's promising life and connected her to The Women's Project (TWP), an alternative to detention and incarceration program that offers case management services, connection to benefits, employment assistance, and group therapy. CAS and defense counsel presented a written and oral bail application, to which the judge agreed, and SB was released from detention on February 18, 2026. In the past two months, SB has worked tirelessly to find employment, engaged in therapeutic and case management services, avoided interaction with law enforcement with no new arrests, and attended every scheduled court appearance.

Without the assistance of CAS, SB would face a sentence of two to seven years. Her underlying childhood trauma is unlikely to be addressed or healed by a prison sentence, and, in fact, is more likely to be exacerbated, triggered, and worsened.

Case Study Two:

Thirty-four year-old LF was arrested and charged with Robbery in the First Degree and was detained on Rikers Island. CAS accepted the case from the defense attorney and upon meeting LF and building trust, she shared her struggle with addiction and her experience with prescription opioids. Her drug use began at 15, when she was prescribed oxycodone for a tooth extraction. LF's mother died shortly thereafter and her addiction escalated. By 19, she was using oxycodone, cocaine, and Xanax daily; by 21, she started using heroin. At 23, LF entered her first residential substance use program, where she remained sober for six months, but after her father's death she relapsed. For the next several years, LF's drug use led her to become entangled in the legal system. Still, she demonstrated potential for growth and recovery as she voluntarily sought substance use treatment, maintained sobriety for months, and secured employment.

LF shared that she felt ready to address her history of grief and recognized this as a vital step to her recovery journey. CAS collaborated to carefully develop a comprehensive service plan for LF that aligned with her needs and goals and was satisfactory in meeting the court's requirements. With CAS' advocacy, the court agreed to release LF from detention to engage in residential treatment at El Regreso. In her two months at El Regreso, LF has complied with treatment, courageously addressed her past trauma and grief, and grown in self-awareness, all of which have helped her maintain sobriety. She has attended all scheduled court appearances and has not had any interactions with the law since her release.

These are the kinds of outcomes that truly promote public safety, while supporting healing, thriving, and transformation, and saving taxpayer dollars.

Osborne has also submitted additional discretionary funding requests and these are attached. We have received a letter of support for one of these funding requests which focuses on supporting the NYC Department of Correction to strengthen their efforts to engage, interact with and support the children of those in custody. Commissioner Richards' letter of support is attached.

We applaud the Council's ongoing commitment to closing Rikers and urge an all-hands-on-deck approach to reducing the population there, including women, older people, and those diagnosed with serious mental illness. Osborne has been focusing on the intersection of aging and incarceration since 2014, when we launched the first-ever elder reentry case management program. Over the past few years, we have been monitoring the numbers of older people on Rikers, and also providing services to many of them through our Elder Reentry Services. We are dismayed that the numbers of older people are increasing (there are now close to 1,000 people age 50 and older in DOC custody). We urge an inter-disciplinary effort to examine the reasons behind this trend. Given research on aging out of crime, we must question why people age 65 and older are being arrested

and detained on Rikers. A better understanding of these cases could lead to more effective and more humane solutions.

We also welcome the day when our City's budget invests more in schools, housing, health, young people, seniors, and supporting NYC's families than it does in police and corrections. The safest communities are the ones with the most resources.

Thank you.

Tanya Krupat
tkrupat@osborneny.org

Osborne Association FY27 Discretionary Funding Requests

Program	Description	FY27 Request	FY26 Funding
Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Services (Ref. 2155808)	Osborne's portion of the ATI & Reentry Coalition request, which will support multiple programs: (1) court advocacy and mitigation services; (2) video visiting and family strengthening activities; (3) expansion of job training and placement; (4) elder reentry services; and (5) the Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations.	$2,152,074	$1,952,074
Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention Program - BOGAP (Ref: 2242267))	To support BOGAP—an innovative diversion program developed with the Bronx DA. Funds will be used to provide hot meals to program participants, stipends for internships, and additional support services to participants to increase their chances of success in the program.	$25,000	$20,000
Elder Reentry Initiative Services and Advocacy (Ref: 2242507)	To support two related program areas: (1) The Elder Reentry Initiative's participant screening, intake and assessment, reentry service plans, community case management, and technical assistance; and (2) Osborne's advocacy and public education on behalf of incarcerated and returning older adults.	$125,000	$65,000

Health and Wellness – Ending the Epidemic (Ref. 2241903)	To support formerly incarcerated people who are living with or at high risk of contracting HIV and come from low-income communities of color, with a focus on LGBTQIA+ people. Osborne will provide sexual health education, prevention/treatment, trauma support, and other supportive services.	$110,000	$83,461
Safeguarding Children Initiative (Ref: 2239478)	To support the implementation of Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests parents/ caregivers. Osborne will provide necessary training and collaborate with NYPD on numerous aspects of implementation, and engage and train a network of CBOs that can provide post-arrest support to children. Expanded funding also allows for safeguarding children's work with NYC DOC.	$500,000	$265,000
Improving Behavioral Health and Wellbeing for Youth (Ref: 2192640))	For assessing and addressing mental health and trauma in youth impacted by the criminal legal system through treatment options that alleviate stress, improve functioning, and reduce trauma symptoms. Targets: 70 assessments; 60 referrals.	$308,000	$158,000
Kinship Reentry Housing Initiative (Ref. 2243156))	To sustain and expand the Kinship Reentry Housing Program, which provides financial assistance, case management, and peer support to families housing a loved one returning from incarceration. By addressing economic and logistical barriers to stable reentry housing, the program reduces reliance on the shelter system, strengthens family reunification, and lowers the risk of recidivism.	$250,000	N/A

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
Stanley Richards, Commissioner
Nell Colon, Deputy Commissioner
75-20 Astoria Boulevard, Suite 305.
East Elmhurst, N.Y. 11370
Tel: 718 • 546 • 0890
Fax: 718 • 278 • 6022

Honorable Julie Menin
Speaker of the New York City Council
250 Broadway, Ste. 1880
New York, NY 10007

May 6, 2026

Dear Speaker Menin:

The Osborne Association has applied for New York City Council discretionary funding to expand its Safeguarding Children initiative, building on its ongoing collaborative work with the NYC Police Department to implement the Child-Sensitive Arrest protocol delineated New York City Administrative Code § section 14-181, including considering the needs of children whose parents are arrested. To create a continuum of consideration and care from arrest through detention (for parents who are detained post-arraignment), Osborne has proposed extending this work to the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) to collaborate with us to strengthen our work to support parents in our custody and their children in the community. While DOC currently has many initiatives underway to consider and support children, and Osborne currently provides a variety of services to those on Rikers Island, we welcome the opportunity to expand and strengthen this work and partnership, and we support Osborne's application for discretionary funding to do so.

Osborne's funding application would allow them to have the staff needed to work with us to:

- Strengthen our existing visiting training curriculum and train the trainers;
- Ensure our interagency protocol for arresting visitors with children reflects best practices and to develop a training on this newly updated protocol;
- Examine the continuum of a parent's journey through our system to ensure access is provided for parents to check on and make arrangements for the care of their children, including working with us on signage and coordination with other City agencies, including the NYC Children's Cabinet.

In addition to assisting with various training and technical assistance, we welcome support from partnering agencies like the Osborne Association with the implementation of Local Law 40 which establishes a children's visiting program at each of our facilities.

The expanded City Council funding Osborne is requesting would allow them to make staff available to DOC to assist with the above critical initiatives. We respectfully request that you give the Osborne Association's funding application favorable consideration for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. This work directly advances the public safety and child welfare interests of the City, and the mission and current vision of DOC.

Sincerely,

Stanley Richards
Commissioner
New York City Department of Correction

PCAC
PERMANENT CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MTA

2 Broadway, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10004
(212) 878-7087 mail@pcac.org

RANDOLPH GLUCKSMAN CHAIR · MTA BOARD MEMBER · MNRCC CHAIR
ANDREW ALBERT NYCTRC CHAIR · MTA BOARD MEMBER
GERARD BRINGMANN LIRRCC CHAIR · MTA BOARD MEMBER

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KARA GURL PLANNING & ADVOCACY MANAGER
JESSICA SPEZIO ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Expanding Fair Fares Can Deliver Affordability Now

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

Good afternoon, I'm Henry Mei, Research and Advocacy Intern at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. For nearly 50 years, PCAC has served as the official voice of riders on the MTA system. Thank you, Chair Lee, for the opportunity to testify.

Fair Fares can literally change people's lives. It expands access to jobs, education, and more, but far too few people qualify under the stringent eligibility threshold: if you make minimum wage, you make too much.

My family's story is emblematic of this problem. There are three people in my household: myself – a part-time intern, my mother – a home health aide, and my father – recently retired. We are a quintessentially working-class New York family, and yet we take home too much annual income to qualify for Fair Fares.

You can change this. We are asking the mayor to unlock its full potential by:

1. Expanding Fair Fares to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
2. Making it fully free for households under 150% of the FPL
3. Expanding half-fares to Express Buses and CityTickets on the railroads
4. Implementing Automatic Enrollment and
5. Expanding half-fares for qualifying Paratransit users aged 65 and older

In my part of Queens alone, the 25th Council District, over 54,000 people would qualify for Fair Fares under these changes – that's almost 35 percent of the district. Over 30,000 of my neighbors would be eligible to ride transit for free. I am testifying today not just for myself, but for my mom who takes the bus every day to care for her elderly client, and for all of us in the five boroughs who depend on transit yet feel its burden on our tight budgets.

As the council's excellent oversight hearing last month brought to light, HRA badly needs to reform its enrollment and renewal processes to increase participation. Around 200,000 New Yorkers receiving other HRA benefits are not receiving Fair Fares, depriving them of up to $910 per year in transit savings.

An abysmal 50 percent of enrollees drop out of Fair Fares each year due to how difficult HRA makes it to renew. PCAC will do everything we can to ensure automatic enrollment and renewal is passed and implemented.

Thank you again for making Fair Fares a priority this year. With your help, we can change Fair Fares from just a good idea into one that will transform how New Yorkers get around their city.

Planned Parenthood of Greater New York
44 Court St, 4th Fl, Brooklyn, NY 11201
ppgreaterny.org 212-274-7200

Fiscal Year 2027 Discretionary Budget Request Testimony to the

NYC Council - Executive Budget Hearing

June 10th, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Maryam Mohammed-Miller, and I am the Director of Government Relations and Policy at Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (PPGNY). We would like to thank the entire Council for the opportunity to discuss PPGNY's programs, services, and fiscal year 2027 funding requests. Thank you, too, Speaker Julie Menin, for your continued support of PPGNY's work to provide health care to all New Yorkers in need.

PPGNY is a trusted provider of sexual and reproductive health care and education programs for communities throughout New York City. In 2025, we conducted over 67,000 patient visits through our virtual health center and at our NYC health centers, providing care to all those in need regardless of immigration status, identity, or ability to pay for services. We engaged over 28,000 individuals through our education and community engagement programs--including over 4,400 young people in middle and high school. Our Project Street Beat program (PSB), through their offices and Mobile Health Center, engaged over 650 individuals who are at high risk of HIV exposure, may be unstably housed, or suffer from substance abuse disorder. And in 2025, we helped enroll over 3,700 individuals in health insurance programs.

PPGNY is deeply committed to providing care, no matter what. Over these past several years, we have weathered many attempts to severely restrict sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion care. Years of under-investment in reproductive health care, rising health care costs, and workforce shortages have made it increasingly difficult for us to provide the care New Yorkers depend on. In fact, we were forced to close our Manhattan health center last year to help sustain patient care throughout the city. Patients seen in Manhattan are able to continue to receive care at our three remaining NYC health centers and through our virtual health center.

And now, a series of relentless attacks from the Trump administration on Planned Parenthood and sexual and reproductive health care providers throughout the country could lead to millions losing access to the care they deserve. In its first year back in office, the Trump administration along with House Republicans forced through a harmful budget reconciliation bill that included a provision that essentially "defunds" Planned Parenthood. The provision bars Planned Parenthood providers — including PPGNY — from receiving federal Medicaid funding for one year. After months of legal maneuvering in federal courts, including a preliminary injunction that paused enactment of the provision; the courts ultimately allowed the provision to go into effect. PPGNY specifically was poised to lose almost $20 million, potentially leaving thousands of New Yorkers who rely on Medicaid without access to cancer screenings, birth control, HIV testing, STI screening and treatment. and other essential services at our health centers.

Thankfully, Governor Kathy Hochul took decisive action and committed to funding Planned Parenthood providers. That means that nearly 100,000 Planned Parenthood patients across the state who rely on Medicaid coverage can continue to receive the care they depend on. This includes approximately 37,000 patients who seek care in our NYC-based health centers. Unfortunately, we expect these attacks to continue, threatening our ability to provide the care New Yorkers depend on.

Despite this challenging reality, PPGNY remains committed to providing quality health care services and educational programs to communities, no matter what. We appreciate that the City Council has continued to support PPGNY so that we can remain a critical source of care, particularly for thousands of patients who qualify for health services for free or at reduced cost.

Safeguarding Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Care in NYC

PPGNY requests increased funding of $600,000 from the Reproductive and Sexual Health Initiative, which would enable us to maintain and expand essential health care services and educational programs throughout New York City. Amid escalating federal hostility that continues to threaten access to critical resources for sexual and reproductive health care providers, support from the Council is more important than ever.

Funding from this initiative helps PPGNY provide the full range of sexual and reproductive health care services that includes gynecological care, STI treatment and testing, contraception care, cancer screenings, and LGBTQ+ health care at all three of our NYC health centers. In 2025, PPGNY conducted over 67,000 sexual and reproductive health care patient visits via telehealth and at our New York City Health Centers. This care includes 55,000 STI tests, over 20,000 HIV tests, over 39,000 family planning visits, and over 700 PrEP/PEP care visits provided to New Yorkers last year

This funding also supports trainings for staff at youth serving agencies on how to support access to sexual and reproductive care, youth sexual development, birth control and pregnancy options, and sexually transmitted infection (STIs) and HIV prevention.

Additionally, this funding will support our Youth Health Promoters (YHP) program. The YHPs are highly trained peer educators who engage other young people and conduct interactive workshops to educate youth about teens' rights and access to sexual and reproductive health care.

PPGNY also seeks enhanced funding of $500,000 from the Dedicated Contraceptive Fund Initiative to provide long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) care, to patients who are uninsured or under-insured, ineligible for public insurance coverage, facing financial hardship, or unable to use their health insurance due to confidentiality concerns. LARC devices such as IUDs and implants are safe, effective, and allow New Yorkers who rely on this care with the ability to

make sound decisions about their lives and futures. In 2025, we provided over 8,000 LARC care patient visits at our NYC health centers. Ensuring New Yorkers have access to long-acting contraception is of critical importance, especially since the SCOTUS decision overturning Roe v. Wade and the growing hostility towards sexual and reproductive health care nationally.

Specifically, increased funding will help provide comprehensive contraception counseling, including access to LARC devices, insertion, and removal. This is provided free of charge to patients who are uninsured, ineligible for public insurance coverage such as Medicaid, and struggle to pay for their services out-of-pocket. Funds will also be used for patients who cannot use their insurance due to confidentiality concerns and would otherwise not have access. Increased funding will also offset the rising cost of providing this care due to inflation.

We also request funding $150,000 from the Trans Equity Programs initiative to help empower trans and gender non-binary (TGNB) communities to lead healthy lives by expanding access to sexual and reproductive health services and gender affirming care at our health centers. The importance of this funding cannot be overstated, especially during a time when the federal government has chosen to repeatedly threaten access to trans-related health care. Increased funding will allow PPGNY to provide this critical care to a community that has been historically marginalized and denied access to the health care they deserve. PPGNY offers trans/nonbinary care to all via telehealth and at all three of our NYC health centers. In 2025, we conducted over 3,100 gender affirming hormone therapy patients visits, providing care to over 1,500 transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming individuals.

PPGNY is ready to provide care to all individuals in need of this critical care as states across the country enact anti-gender affirming care policies that primarily target young people. The millions of Americans who depend on these services will look to NYC to secure the care they deserve.

The cost of medications associated with this care can also be burdensome, even for those who are insured. We will use Council funding to screen clients, expand the sliding scale system that helps offset the costs of gender-affirming hormone medications at all our New York City facilities, and expand culturally competent sexual and reproductive care to TGNB communities. Additionally, we will use funds to bolster access to Patient Navigators to help our TGNB patients comprehensively access care at PPGNY health centers, build relationships with partner organizations, and raise awareness of our culturally competent care throughout communities in need.

PPGNY is also seeking $200,000 from the Speaker's List and $100,000 from the Abortion Access Fund to help support our abortion patient navigation work. PPGNY bolstered our patient navigation team in response to the SCOTUS decision overturning *Roe v. Wade,* which ended the constitutionally protected right to abortion care. We help individuals forced to travel to or living in NYC secure the care they need from a trusted provider. Specifically, the team

guides patients through the abortion care system and works to remove obstacles they face while working to improve the systems and processes that shape access at the clinical and ecosystem levels. Patient Navigators help patients book appointments, utilize existing abortion funds to cover the costs of care, travel, and lodging; and understand payment and insurance options. They work with external stakeholders and organizations to build and strengthen relationships, systems, and processes that support access to abortion care to ensure individuals can safely secure care. Funding for PPGNY's patient navigation work is more important than ever. We expect to continue to see individuals from other states seeking care in New York, which can continue to grow in response to expanding abortion restrictions nationwide. In fact, we provided care to over 2,100 out-of-state patients and over 2,900 New Yorkers who live outside of the city through telehealth or at one of our NYC health centers in 2025.

Ending the Epidemic through Project Street Beat

Another program that allows us to continue serving vulnerable New Yorkers, including our immigrant populations, is Project Street Beat (PSB). **We ask for continued funding support of $200,000 from the Speaker's list and and $700,000 from HIV/AIDS Pathways to Care to support Project Street Beat (PSB).** PSB provides targeted outreach and services to communities most in need through our Mobile Health Center (MHC) and our PSB office in the Bronx. PSB currently provides mobile services in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Services on the MHC are available regardless of ability to pay.

The only program of its kind in New York City, since 1988, PSB has provided innovative client-focused, street-based HIV prevention and linkage-to-care programs that provide a range of services to some of the hardest to reach populations at high risk for HIV. PSB's MHC services include rapid HIV testing, linkage to HIV primary care, HCV screening and referral to care, STI screening and treatment services, referral services, opioid overdose prevention, and support groups. PSB also distributes Narcan to people living and working on the streets of NYC and trains them on how to reduce the harm of opioid abuse.

In 2025, PSB conducted over 700 Mobile Health Center visits, providing PrEP/PEP, HCV testing, birth control, pap smears, and routine gynecologic. We provided over 630 STI tests and over 680 HIV tests. Additionally, we provided over 600 intimate partner violence screenings, connecting those in need to trauma-informed care.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Education for New Yorkers

We also request $200,000 from the Speaker's List to support our Education and Training (E&T) team, which includes our Youth Health Promoters (YHP) program and youth serving programs. Our E&T team provides a holistic approach to our programs supporting youth and the adults who work with them daily. In 2025, the E&T team engaged over 6,800 individuals through our programs at schools and in the community, 5,498 of which were young

people under 21 years old. Our E&T team collaborates with stakeholders across NYC to provide evidence-informed and evidence-based workshops for young people. These workshops are provided by both our adult sexuality educators and our YHPs. The YHPs are highly trained peer educators who directly engage other young people. They conduct interactive workshops to educate their peers about their rights, including how to access sexual and reproductive health care, as well as overcome barriers and stigma that teens may experience when accessing care. In 2025, our YHP program engaged over 1,000 young people throughout New York City. We also provide professional development to youth-serving adults on sexual and reproductive health topics to support their capacity in engaging young people at their community-based organizations and in schools.

Funding from the City Council will allow PPGNY to continue our youth engagement work to ensure more young people have access to the care they need. It will also help expand our ability to support young people whose health and academic needs often go unsupported. This includes young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Trauma Informed Sexual and Reproductive Health Care

Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (PPGNY) requests funding to increase our work with victims and survivors of domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), especially those who experience language barriers, lack of access to health care or immigration status, living under the federal poverty level, and other systemic challenges. In 2025, we provided IVP screenings at all 67,000 patients visits at our New York City health centers and identified over 300 individuals at risk of IVP. With the support of the Council's Domestic Violence Initiative (DoVE), our Community Engagement team hosted over 27 targeted outreach events and engaged over 488 individuals, connecting them to care at our health centers last year. Our objective is to connect individuals to the sexual and reproductive health care and services provided by PPGNY, in collaboration with community organizations serving these individuals. Funding will allow our Community Engagement team to receive further training, reach victims and survivors, and build partnerships with additional agencies through the presentation of workshops, participation in events, appointment making, and other channels of engagement best suited to reach the communities they serve.

Conclusion

PPGNY remains steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that all New Yorkers can access the care they need and deserve, no matter their background, income, or immigration status. Throughout my time working alongside the New York City Council, I have seen firsthand the impact of strong partnership in addressing the most urgent challenges in our health care system. In this moment of heightened need and uncertainty, it is especially critical that the Council continues to invest in programs and services that reach our most vulnerable communities.

We look forward to working with the Council to continue to ensure healthcare access to all.

Thank you.

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Planned Parenthood of Greater New York (PPGNY) is a leading provider, educator, and advocate of sexual and reproductive health care in New York State. PPGNY offers a wide range of services across 65% of NYS - including gynecological care; birth control; cancer screenings; pregnancy testing; STI testing and treatment; HIV prevention, testing, and counseling; transgender hormone therapy; and vasectomy. PPGNY is also proud to provide abortion services to anyone who needs compassionate, non-judgmental care. PPGNY is a trusted source of medically accurate, evidence-based information that allows people to make informed decisions about their health and future. As a voice for reproductive freedom, PPGNY supports legislation and policies that ensure all New Yorkers have access to the full range of reproductive health services and education

POWER OF TWO

June 10, 2026

Council Member Althea Stevens
Children and Families Committee
The City Council of the City of New York

Dear Madam Chair:

I am writing as the Executive Director of Power of Two, a nonprofit organization that harnesses the power of the foundational parent-child bond to help children thrive and lead healthy, productive, and successful lives.

Since 2015, from our offices in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and Hunts Point in the South Bronx, we have delivered the Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC) home-visiting program to more than 6,500 children and 6,000 moms, dads, and other caregivers across New York City. Developed more than 25 years ago by child development experts at the University of Delaware, ABC is a rigorous, evidence-based intervention endorsed by the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare.

We have been informed that Power of Two's Administration of Children Services (ACS) contract is proposed for complete elimination. We want this Council to understand what that means in plain terms: it is not a budget line being trimmed. It is the end of a proven program that works and a decision that will cost this city far more than it saves. The prevention organizations facing cuts are not duplicating each other's work, but collectively forming the infrastructure that keeps families stable before crises erupt. These are not redundant services. They are the first line of defense, and they are being dismantled piece by piece. Each cut will affect vulnerable families, the kind Power of Two partners with day in and day out. Together, these prevention cuts systematically erode a family support system that took years to build and cannot be quickly rebuilt once it is gone.

Prevention is proactive by definition. It is what happens before the emergency call, before the child welfare investigation, before the foster care placement, before a child struggles in daycare and later in school. Our program works with the youngest New Yorkers infants and toddlers to prepare them for the childcare and early education programs this City has invested so heavily in building. Cut prevention now, and those downstream investments will be squandered.

One in five mothers experience some form of pregnancy-related depression or anxiety. Black and Latina mothers experience these mental health challenges at twice that rate. Since 2015, we have eliminated depressive symptoms in 64% of the caregivers we serve, as measured by the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, a result that is both meaningful and life-changing.

A mother's mental health directly shapes her child's development. When a mother is struggling, her child is affected. Caregiver depression is associated with delays in language and cognitive development, increased behavioral problems, and deficits in social and emotional skills that follow children into the classroom and beyond. The health and wellbeing of mother and child are inseparable. When we invest in mothers, we invest in their children.

POWER OF TWO

At a time when parents and caregivers across New York City are contending with unaffordable housing, reductions in federal food assistance, economic instability, and growing stress on family systems, our program is often one of the few consistent, relationship-based supports available to families with very young children. Without Power of Two's preventive services, families who lose access will not be redirected to equivalent care. They will go without.

We have worked in these communities for a decade. We have seen conditions improve. New York's City's investment in early childhood has enhanced early learning opportunities, socialization, and kindergarten readiness, while also reducing financial stress on families that can affect children's wellbeing. **We can say with confidence, and with evidence, that prevention cuts will reverse that progress.** These cuts will squander the progress we have all fought so hard to achieve and, mor importantly, progress that has benefitted so many families across New York City.

As Nobel Prize-winning economist Dr. James Heckman and others have demonstrated, reducing investments in high-quality early childhood prevention does not produce long-term savings. It shifts far greater costs downstream into child welfare, special education, healthcare, mental health systems, and the criminal legal system. Cutting preventive programs is not fiscal responsibility. It is a false economy and the children of this city will pay the price.

Power of Two is an established, trusted, evidence-based provider with more than a decade of experience serving New York City families. We are meticulous stewards of public investment, as evidenced by multiple city contracts over the years. Our work aligns directly with the City's broader goals around early childhood care and education, child and human development, maternal child health, and prevention.

It is imperative that current prevention funding be maintained, whether through Administration for Children's Services (ACS) or the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), at $3.1MM, and modestly expanded over the next several years as the administration and City Council continue shaping the City's long-term strategy. At such time as the City is ready to move toward broader procurement, we would welcome an RFP that embeds ABC and early relational health into New York City's long-term maternal-child health and prevention framework. Power of Two would be well-positioned to respond.

We respectfully ask that you urge the Mamdani administration, including First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Helen Arteaga-Landaverde, Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner, Rebecca Jones Gaston, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Commissioner Alister Martin, MD, MPH, to fully restore and protect preventive services funding in the FY27 budget. The window to influence this budget is rapidly closing. The consequences for families, children, and this city will be profound if these cuts move forward. Thank you for this consideration.

Sincerely,

Coleen Stevens Porcher
Executive Director, Power of Two
Partner Project of the Fund for the City of New York

Dear Madam Chair and Committee members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify at this Committee hearing. My name is Laura Ensler. I have worked in the prenatal and early ed space for almost 40 years in NYC. I am the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Power of Two, a nonprofit organization that harnesses the power of the foundational parent-child bond to help children thrive and lead healthy, productive, and successful lives.

Power of Two is based in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and Hunts Point in the South Bronx, and since 2015 we have delivered a home-visiting program called Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up (ABC) to more than 6,500 children and 6,000 moms, dads, and other caregivers across New York City.

Our Executive Director, Coleen Stevens Porcher, is also testifying today.

Our organization has been informed that Power of Two's Administration of Children Services (ACS) contract is proposed for complete elimination. This is a catastrophe and I am here today to tell you why.

We have worked in these communities for a decade. We have seen conditions improve. At Power of Two, we **can say with confidence, and with evidence, that prevention cuts will reverse the progress NYC has made to improve outcomes for NYC families.** These cuts will squander the progress we have all fought so hard to achieve and, more importantly, progress that has benefitted so many families across New York City.

If we want universal child care to succeed, we must begin at birth and stop trying to build this system from the fourth floor down. Po2 begins at birth, to support caregivers and children in strengthening and securing their attachments so the children can move into 2K slot ready to participate fully in an early education setting.

It is imperative that current prevention funding be maintained, whether through ACS or the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, at $3.1MM, and modestly expanded over the next several years as the administration and City Council continue shaping the City's long-term strategy.

We respectfully ask that you urge the Mamdani administration to fully restore and protect preventive services funding in the FY27 budget. Thank you.



POWER OF TWO

June 10, 2026

Council Member Althea Stevens
Children and Families Committee
The City Council of the City of New York

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We have worked in these communities for a decade. We have seen conditions improve. New York's City's investment in early childhood has enhanced early learning opportunities, socialization, and kindergarten readiness, while also reducing financial stress on families that can affect children's wellbeing. **We can say with confidence, and with evidence, that prevention cuts will reverse that progress.** These cuts will squander the progress we have all fought so hard to achieve and, mor importantly, progress that has benefitted so many families across New York City.

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Sincerely,

Coleen Stevens Porcher
Executive Director, Power of Two
Partner Project of the Fund for the City of New York

PREGONES / PUERTO RICAN TRAVELING THEATER
Two Great Stages, One Great Theater!

NYC Council Committee on Finance
FY27 Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

This testimony is submitted on behalf of **Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater**, named to the **Cultural Institutions Group** in 2025 and recently recognized for sustained impact by the Drama Desk Awards, the Obie Awards, and the Bronx Tourism Award. We are a multigenerational theater ensemble, multidiscipline presenter, and steward of renowned bilingual facilities in the South Bronx and Manhattan's Theater District. Our theater company took root in these neighborhoods back when both were sites of blight. Our enduring presence and enhanced menu of activities today are testament to collective tenacity and the embrace of community, history, and belonging. Year-round performances, artist residencies, educational workshops, master classes, and digital programs employ upwards of 350 creative workers, serve upwards of 20,000 direct participants, and reach more than 350,000 area households each year.

For close to six decades, our organization labors to realize its full potential in three ways: **as a theater company** managing the development and empowerment of a multigenerational Latinx ensemble, nurturing relevant relationships with a wide range of visiting, associate, and collaborating artists; **as a creative workforce hub** caring for a growing mix of full-time, part-time, and adjunct staff and volunteers, many with long tenures in our service; and **as a cultural anchor and legacy arts organization** catalyzing and contributing towards lifelong learning and participation in the arts, and overall gains in quality of life for all New Yorkers.

We believe arts and culture are not a line item apart from the daily life of the city. They are woven into its economic fabric, its workforce, its neighborhoods, and its public health. The cultural sector generates substantial economic activity, anchors local economies, and drives foot traffic to restaurants and small businesses. Organizations like Pregones/PRTT serve as workforce engines, providing training, gainful employment, and career advancement within the rich Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Off-Off-Broadway ecosystem that makes New York City the theater capital of the world. We also engage community members in free and low-cost live arts interactions, empowering intergenerational and community-led wellness, creativity, freedom of expression, and pro-democracy initiatives and building culturally competent bridges to relevant public and private services and providers. These contributions speak directly to the Council's priorities of affordability, economic justice, and quality of life for all New Yorkers.

We are proud to have built our work through **sustained partnership** with the City of New York, and we remain firmly committed to leveraging every public dollar with private support. The investments described below are matched by the trust, generosity, and participation of foundations, individual donors, earned revenue, and the communities we serve every day.

For the FY27 Executive Budget, we join the CIG in asking the New York City Council to support cultural institutions and organizations in three ways:

1. **Baseline Restoration:** We thank the administration for its intention to baseline $10 million of arts and culture funding in the FY27 Executive Budget. We ask the Council to go further and fully restore and baseline the **$30 million** added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector. The remaining $20 million gap must be closed. Baselining the full amount is critical to ending the budget dance and supporting sustainable culture and culture jobs. Swings in annual funding levels impede staffing, planning, and programming, and are most damaging to small organizations.

2. **Annual Increases:** We ask the city to consider annual cost adjustments year over year to support staff wages and increased costs connected with inflation for arts and cultural organizations. Costs continue to increase for institutions like ours, and we ask the city to consider a system for sustainability that will allow organizations to retain, expand, and provide fair pay for the cultural workforce.

3. **Improve and Reform the Capital Project Process** to support success

    a. **Create transparency.** Update the open data portal for capital projects at cultural institutions, which has not been updated since 2021, and hold a hearing on capital projects so that Council Members understand the issues.

    b. **Plan responsibly.** Develop a capital infrastructure plan for culture to allow all organizations to build and maintain infrastructure more efficiently.

    c. **Identify key process improvements.** Consider improvements that may shorten time to completion and help culturals meet capital needs more effectively.

We also join fellow recipients of Coalition of Theaters of Color (CTC) Initiative funding in asking the New York City Council to support in two ways:

1. **Allocation and Grant Increases:** We ask the city to increase the CTC available funds to **$8 million** in the FY2027 Budget. This modest increase over FY2026 can significantly boost CTC grants by an estimated 30%, helping recipients meet escalating costs.

2. **Restore Flexibility:** Restored flexibility in use of CTC funds to include general operations, capacity building, workforce development, and/or programs validating the proven rigor of both CIG and CDF recipient organizations.

In closing, we invite elected officials and agency representatives alike to be in dialogue with the Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LxNY), a network of over 50 Latinx-serving cultural entities, and the Cultural Equity Coalition of New York (CECNY), dedicated to ensuring the cultural sector truly reflects and serves our lived diversity. We value their labors and cherish their aspirations.

Submitted by: Arnaldo J. López, Ph.D., Managing Director, ajlopez@pregones.org

Kristina Garrity
Pro Se Plus Project Coordinator
City Council Testimony
June 10, 2026

To whom it may concern:

My name is Kristina Garrity, and I am the Project Coordinator for the Pro Se Plus Project, which received discretionary funding through the Council in FY2026 through its support of the Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network (ASLAN). ASLAN is a network of experienced immigration legal service providers and community-based organizations that was started in 2023 through MOIA to meet the legal needs of newly arrived New Yorkers navigating the immigration legal system *pro se*. The Network includes the Pro Se Plus Project (which includes African Communities Together, Catholic Migration Services, Masa, and New York Legal Assistance Group), CUNY Citizenship Now!, Catholic Charities, and Lutheran Social Services.

In its early days, ASLAN providers assisted community members with asylum applications, work authorizations, changes of address, and changes of venue in a way that went beyond application assistance alone. This included offering substantial follow-up, repeated services for various individuals, more comprehensive submission support, interpretation and translation in a diverse range of languages, access to non-immigration legal services, and more. ASLAN has thus long straddled the world between light touch *pro se* and full representation. The intention behind providing this innovative form of what ASLAN partners refer to as *pro se* plus service was - and to continues to be - to ensure that community members receive continuous support in their efforts to navigate the immigration legal system without full representation, and to expand our collective capacity to respond to the ongoing humanitarian crisis as it unfolds through adapting quickly to changes within the legal landscape and sharing the expertise that such adaptation develops.

As experienced *pro se* plus providers whose workloads are organized to respond in real time, ASLAN members are able to take on complex applications, provide preventative services, and adapt to meet immigrant community members' emergent needs. ASLAN providers need consistent funding in order to provide this type of ongoing, responsive service for the City's most vulnerable immigrants. While other City-funded services such as the MOIA Legal Support Centers and the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative provide critical support to immigrant community members, ASLAN - by virtue of its capacity to be nimble and adaptive - finds itself at the frontlines of new developments and often fills in pre-existing gaps. This has become increasingly critical at a time when immigration policy has become particularly hostile, when individuals with viable asylum claims are now subjected to pretermission, when the appeals process has been functionally overturned, and when asylum case law is deliberately narrowing to exclude immigrants from any form of relief.

With the aforementioned shift in immigration policy and enforcement under the second Trump administration, ASLAN has further expanded the *pro se* plus services it offers in order to best

support immigrant community members with whom providers - through the Network's community-grounded approach – have developed deep relationships of trust. In addition to offering initial application and general legal support (asylum, work authorization, changes of venue and address, Temporary Protected Status, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and Notices of Appeal), ASLAN partners also assist with individual hearing preparation (evidence collection and submission, declaration drafting), pretermission (asylum amendments and Motions to Oppose Pretermission), and post-detention support (habeas petitions, emergency planning, courtwatching, and accompaniment). This list, which reflects the needs of the communities we serve, is constantly changing as experienced ASLAN providers continually pivot and expand the breadth of *pro se* services offered.

While other pre-existing programs might provide *pro se* services, what distinguishes ASLAN partners is their capacity to provide multiple services to a single individual. The following three case studies that exemplify the *pro se* plus services offered by ASLAN. First, A young, newly arrived New Yorker, who had been assisted by the City-funded Asylum Application Help Center with a *pro se* filing in Family Court, came to an ASLAN partner looking for support with next steps. After a quick screening, the ASLAN partner determined that the person, originally from Mauritania, was eligible for SIJS but would be turning 21 in just 3 days. In order to prevent this person from aging out of this form of relief, their team immediately prepared a Form I-360 for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and went to the USCIS Field Office at 26 Federal Plaza to file it. This same community member, who was also in removal proceedings, returned to this ASLAN partner for assistance with a *pro se* Motion to Continue. A navigator from this ASLAN partner accompanied this person to his court hearing, where the *pro se* Motion was granted.

Another ASLAN partner supported a woman who came to New York from Nicaragua, which she had fled out of fear for her safety. A victim of immigration fraud, this woman had paid thousands of dollars to an individual posing as an attorney, only to discover that documents had been falsified and the "hearing" she attended had been staged with a fake judge. The ASLAN partner she visited after facing this emotional and financial devastation was able to provide her with a mini-consultation, where it was confirmed that she had a deportation order. The team then filed an emergency Motion to Reopen, notified ICE of the Motion to Reopen - which granted her an automatic stay of removal and thus protected her from detention at the ICE check-in she had scheduled the next day – and put together an asylum application. The team also created an emergency plan that included guardianship and travel documents which would allow for someone else to take care of her 8-year-old son and take him back to Nicaragua in the instance she or her husband were detained.

A third ASLAN partner supported an indigenous Ecuadorian asylum seeker, who they had met in immigration court. One of this partner's attorneys provided *pro se* assistance at her hearing by appearing as Friend of the Court (FOTC). That day, the DHS attorney made a motion to pretermit her asylum application based on Matter of H-A-A-V-, which requested that the immigration judge terminate on the grounds that her claim for asylum was legally insufficient. Because the ASLAN attorney had appeared as FOTC, he was able to collect this person's

contact information. The attorney's team members completed a screening and scheduled her for a pretermission clinic, where a written opposition to DHS's motion to pretermit, a declaration, and supporting country conditions were prepared. After filing the person's *pro se* opposition and evidence, the ASLAN attorney appeared as FOTC for her next hearing, where the motion to pretermit was denied and the community member was scheduled for a final hearing. This asylum seeker is now scheduled to participate in a pro bono EAD clinic where her EAD fees will be fully covered and in a workshop on how to prepare for her final hearing.

As these three cases demonstrate, ASLAN providers have developed significant expertise in assisting community members with a wide range of highly complex immigrations applications *pro se*. Indeed, much of the program's strength stems from the fact that ASLAN providers have developed a breadth of skills and the discernment necessary for identifying when to apply these skills, particularly when supporting community members who have fallen through the cracks in the legal system. They have proven their capacity to adapt and learn new skills in a rapidly evolving, increasingly hostile policy environment.

To provide these services, ASLAN partners require the following levels of funding in a single year:

ASLAN Partner	**FY27 Request**	**Note**
African Communities Together	$340,000.00	
Catholic Migration Services	$188,475.00	
Masa	$398,815.25	
New York Legal Assistance Group	$296,050.00	
Lutheran Social Services	$2,222,971.00	*Note that this is an update from the initial request of $3,062,476.00.*
CUNY Citizenship Now!	$845,591.00	
Catholic Charities	$550,000	
Total	**$4,841,902.25**	

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter. We are deeply grateful for the support we have received from the Council in FY2026 and hope to continue our partnership in the coming year.

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718-448-1544 Fax: 718-720-5476
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New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings

Testimony from Rev. Dr. Darlene Williams, PhD, DRE
Chief Executive Officer, Project Hospitality

To the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

June 4, 2026

"In Staten Island, Project Hospitality is not just part of the system—it represents a significant portion of the system itself."

Introduction

My name is Rev. Dr. Darlene Williams, PhD, DRE, and I am the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Project Hospitality (PH). I would like to thank Chair Hudson and the other members of the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to submit testimony.

I assumed the role of CEO for Project Hospitality on June 1, 2026, and therefore will begin my first statement to this Committee by introducing myself before turning to Project Hospitality – a Staten Island social services institution you know and support, our community's needs, and a request for increased support.

I am a lifelong New Yorker whose personal, professional, and family life has been deeply rooted in service, faith, and community. I am married to a retired Assistant Chief of the New York City Police Department, who served with distinction for nearly 30 years, and our family's commitment to public service continues through our son, who currently serves as a detective. That legacy of service is also grounded in my faith heritage. My late parents were devoted members of the faith community and served through ministry, pastoral leadership, and care for others, values that continue to shape my own calling as clergy and as a leader in the NYC Community. Together, these experiences have given me a deep respect for public servants, faith leaders, families, and communities working every day to strengthen the well-being of New Yorkers.

My work has been centered on helping leaders and organizations strengthen their connection to community—ensuring that people are not only served, but seen, heard, and empowered to move forward. I have consistently focused on building systems where individuals and communities can

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use their voices and experiences to create meaningful and lasting change. I have served senior roles in:

- New York City government, including Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Administration for Children's Services, and Department for Veterans Services
- Non-profits, including Women In Need, Inc., Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Union Settlement, and East Harlem Community Alliance
- Education, including as Adjunct Professor, Long Island University, School of Health Professionals, CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College, Shekina Charities Seminary, and Metropolitan College of New York

My leadership is grounded in a simple but deeply held belief: community is a commitment. It requires us to show up with consistency, restore dignity where hardship has taken hold, and ensure that no individual or family is left to face crisis alone.

I chose to serve as Chief Executive Officer of Project Hospitality because its enduring mission of dignity, compassion, service, and hope deeply aligns with the values that have guided my life, leadership, faith, and commitment to community. For more than four decades, Project Hospitality has been a pillar of care, stability, and restoration for individuals and families facing some of life's most difficult circumstances. This is sacred and necessary work, and I am honored to help carry it forward with vision, integrity, and deep respect for the legacy already established.

Project Hospitality's continued impact is made possible through the support of this Council and the dedication of the staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, funders, and partners who sustain this work every day, in every season, year after year. As I step into this role, I recognize the strength of the foundation already built, and I am committed to expanding our impact and further strengthening Project Hospitality's role in serving Staten Island. My immediate priority is to listen, learn, and ensure our work continues to respond effectively to community needs. I look forward to meeting members of this Administration whom I have not yet met and reconnecting with those I have had the privilege of working with in the past.

Project Hospitality is more than a service provider—it is a community anchor for individuals and families facing hunger, homelessness, and instability. It delivers coordinated care, restores stability, and creates pathways to hope. **I am confident that I have an extraordinary opportunity to build on that legacy while positioning the organization for its next chapter of growth, impact, and excellence.**

Continued and increased investment is critical to advancing this work. Funding Project Hospitality is not simply supporting programs—it is sustaining a community-based system of

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care that stabilizes lives, strengthens neighborhoods, and advances a more just and compassionate New York City.

Project Hospitality: Background and Mission

Project Hospitality (PH) was established in 1982 as a volunteer effort and has since expanded to become the **largest social services provider on Staten Island, serving one in ten Staten Islanders annually.**

The agency's mission is to reach out to community members who are hungry, homeless, or otherwise in need of work with them to achieve their self-sufficiency—thereby enhancing the quality of life in our community.

The organization seeks to realize its mission both by advocating for those in need and by establishing a comprehensive continuum of care that begins with the provision of food, clothing, and shelter and extends to other services which include health care, behavioral health, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, HIV care, education, vocational training, legal assistance, and transitional and permanent housing. Project Hospitality's public mission materials likewise describe a continuum of compassionate care that begins with street outreach, shelter, and food assistance and extends to treatment, clinical supports, and transitional and permanent supportive housing.

PH's programs promote economic opportunities for low-income individuals and communities by providing essential basic needs such as food and shelter. The organization meets clients where they are by helping them through challenging life situations such as homelessness, hunger, mental health issues, and addiction. In this way, PH has been able to help thousands of low-income Staten Islanders escape the brutal cycle of poverty and reintegrate into the workforce and society at large.

Project Hospitality exists to ensure that individuals and families are supported within community, not left to struggle beyond it. Project Hospitality is a pillar of hope, healing, and stability" who daily turn from crisis to clarity, instability to resilience, and from survival to purposeful restoration.

Staten Island Context and Need

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Staten Island faces significant need alongside a more limited service infrastructure, with fewer providers and access points than other boroughs. Residents experiencing hunger, homelessness, and instability encounter real barriers to care. At the same time, the borough receives only about **3% of the city's emergency food distribution**, placing increasing pressure on a small and already strained network of providers.

Within this landscape, Project Hospitality plays a uniquely critical and stabilizing role. Serving more than 47,000 individuals annually—approximately one in ten Staten Islanders—Project Hospitality is not only the borough's largest social services provider, but also its only comprehensive homeless services organization. Its integrated, borough-wide model spans street outreach, food access, shelter, behavioral health services, and housing pathways, creating continuity of care in ways fragmented systems often cannot.

New York City has previously recognized Project Hospitality as one of the few providers operating both street outreach and shelter programs. This distinctive position allows the organization to serve at multiple points across the continuum of care: at the front door of the system through outreach and food access, and within the system through shelter, supportive services, behavioral health care, and pathways to housing stability.

Project Hospitality has demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach—delivering coordinated, compassionate care at scale, while also **partnering with and strengthening other community-based organizations to expand reach** and impact across Staten Island. This is a system that is not only working but adapting in real time to rising need.

As demand continues to grow—driven by rising costs, food insecurity, and reductions in federal supports—this infrastructure is under increasing strain. The question is no longer whether the need exists—it is whether the systems already serving tens of thousands of Staten Islanders will be resourced to keep pace.

Alignment with Mayoral and Council Priorities

Project Hospitality aligns with the housing and food vision of Mayor Mamdani and the New York City Council.

Mayor Mamdani has emphasized that systems must keep people connected to food and benefits. On June 1, 2026, the Mayor announced a whole-of-government initiative to help New Yorkers maintain SNAP access and said that new federal work requirements "make it harder for people to access food." He also said, "Here in New York, we refuse to stand by while Washington takes food away from our families."

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On homelessness, the Mayor has emphasized connection to housing rather than displacement. He said that if the City is "not connecting homeless New Yorkers to the housing that they so desperately need, then you cannot deem anything you're doing to be a success."

Project Hospitality delivers on this vision every day by:

- Serving as a direct point of connection to care,
- Ensuring continuity across services rather than fragmentation, and
- Maintaining pathways from outreach to shelter, services, and housing. Project Hospitality's public continuum-of-care materials describe exactly this integrated progression from food and shelter to clinical supports and transitional and permanent housing.

Similarly, the New York City Council has affirmed that **food is a human right** and that government bears responsibility for ensuring access. The Council's food equity agenda states that "the primary responsibility for ensuring the right to food lies with government" and emphasizes supporting emergency food providers across the city. Council oversight on hunger and food insecurity has also focused on increasing demand at food banks and pantries, improving access to benefits, and the impact of federal cuts on local providers.

Project Hospitality operationalizes these priorities every day by ensuring access to food, connecting individuals to benefits and services, and delivering integrated care at scale.

FY2027 Discretionary Funding Requests

Project Hospitality respectfully submits the following FY2027 discretionary applications. **These requests reflect our most minimal programmatic needs**—funds that New Yorkers on Staten Island are already relying on for access to food, housing support, health services, and stability.

Given the organization's unique and outsized role in the borough—**1 in 10 Staten Islanders will benefit from these funding requests**—we respectfully urge the Council not only to support these requests, but to consider **increasing funding** where possible to meet rising demand and ensure continuity of care.

ID Number	Project Title	Requested Funding	Meeting the New Need
2165982	HIV Pathways	$150,000	$150,000

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2210825	Older Adults Mental Health	$100,000	$100,000
2211724	Children and Families in NYC Homeless System	$79,550	$79,550
2211731	Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education for Vulnerable Staten Islanders	$50,000	$100,000
2211737	Food Access and Benefits	$75,000	$125,000
2211739	Food Pantries (Speaker's Initiative)	$50,000	$100,000
2211743	Food and Nutrition Services for Homeless and Hungry Staten Islanders	$15,000	$25,000
2211754	Mid-Island Mobile Food & Nutrition Program Serving Seniors	$10,000	$20,000
2211759	South Shore Mobile Food Pantry & Nutrition Program Serving Seniors	$15,000	$25,000
2211774	LGBTQIA+ Youth Support and Services	$100,000	$100,000

Closing

Investing in Project Hospitality is not about supporting a single program or a temporary intervention. It is about sustaining a proven community-based infrastructure that keeps vulnerable New Yorkers connected to care, stability, safety, food, shelter, services, and pathways forward.

Project Hospitality is one of Staten Island's most essential access points for individuals and families facing hunger, homelessness, housing instability, behavioral health challenges, and crisis. In a borough with limited alternatives, continued investment is not optional—it is fundamental to maintaining the safety net that residents depend on every day.

At a time when community need is increasing and access to support is under continued pressure, New York City has both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that every borough, including Staten Island, has the infrastructure required to care for its residents with dignity. The Mayor has emphasized the importance of keeping New Yorkers connected to food assistance and housing, and the Council has affirmed the City's responsibility to support food access, emergency response, and community-based providers.

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Sustained and increased investment in Project Hospitality is not the launch of a new idea. It is a strategic decision to strengthen a trusted system that is already delivering results at scale. It protects critical access points, preserves continuity of care, supports frontline response, and ensures that residents facing hardship are not left to navigate crisis alone.

This investment is also a statement of values. It says that New York City will continue to stand with its most vulnerable residents, strengthen the organizations closest to the community, and ensure that compassion is matched with the resources required to deliver care effectively. Project Hospitality is ready to continue doing this work with excellence, accountability, and partnership. With sustained and increased support, we can strengthen this vital system of care and help ensure that Staten Island residents have access to the dignity, stability, and hope they deserve.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to the communities we serve.

Prospect Park Alliance
95 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718) 965-8951
info@prospectpark.org
prospectpark.org

Written Testimony of Morgan Monaco
Prospect Park Alliance President
New York City Council Committee on Finance
Oversight – Executive Budget Hearing
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee on Finance:

My name is Morgan Monaco, and I am the President of Prospect Park Alliance and the Prospect Park Administrator. I am testifying as a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, representing more than 450 organizations that believe our city's parks are not a luxury, but essential public infrastructure.

I often speak of Prospect Park as Brooklyn's Backyard, and it truly is. We welcome more than 10 million visits each year from every zip code in the borough. But as any homeowner knows, a backyard is only as good as its upkeep. Parks support public health, climate resilience, recreation, and community connection, but they can only fulfill that role when they are adequately staffed and maintained.

We appreciate Mayor Mamdani's inclusion of funding in the FY27 Executive Budget to baseline 161 critical Parks positions. This investment recognizes the importance of the workforce that keeps our parks safe, clean, and accessible.

However, the Executive Budget fails to provide permanent funding for 115 additional Parks employees whose one-year contracts are set to expire at the end of this fiscal year. These positions include 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers and 15 GreenThumb staff. These workers provide essential services to New Yorkers every day and should not face annual uncertainty about whether their positions will continue to exist.

PEP officers help ensure public safety, assist park visitors, and support the welcoming environment that New Yorkers expect in their public spaces. GreenThumb staff provide critical support to hundreds of community gardens across the city, helping local volunteers steward green spaces that strengthen neighborhoods and improve quality of life.

At the same time, the Parks Department continues to face the cumulative impact of years of disinvestment. Since 2023, NYC Parks has lost more than 600 staffing lines. While non-profit partners, volunteers, and community organizations contribute enormously to the care and activation of public spaces, they cannot replace the core workforce required to operate and maintain a park system that serves millions of New Yorkers each year.

The lack of operational funding creates a maintenance gap that undermines the City's capital investments and wastes taxpayer dollars. While funding is often available to build or renovate facilities, there is frequently insufficient funding to maintain them over time. As a result, the City is forced into a costly cycle of rebuilding infrastructure that could have been preserved through routine care and maintenance. It is fiscally irresponsible to invest in new assets while failing to adequately support the workforce needed to protect existing ones.

In Prospect Park, we see the consequences of this challenge every day. Most of our 10 million annual visitors arrive during afternoons, evenings, and weekends, placing tremendous demands on park operations, maintenance, and public safety. At the same time, climate-driven challenges—including severe storms, flooding, drought, and extreme weather events—continue to place additional strain on our public spaces and the workers who care for them.

To begin rebuilding agency capacity, we urge the Council to fund an additional 276 Parks positions, including:

- 100 Parks Enforcement Patrol Officers;
- 100 City Park Workers, Associate Park Service Workers, and Gardeners;
- 50 Forestry staff; and
- 26 Playground Associates.

These investments would help ensure that parks remain safe, clean, welcoming, and accessible for all New Yorkers while beginning to reverse years of staffing losses throughout the agency.

Funding our parks is one of the most effective ways to improve quality of life and affordability for New Yorkers. Parks provide free access to recreation, nature, community, and respite in every neighborhood. They are among the City's most valuable public assets, but they cannot thrive without the workers who maintain them.

I urge the Administration to permanently baseline the remaining 115 Parks workers currently funded through one-shot contracts and ask the Council to fund the additional 276 positions needed to rebuild agency capacity. Together, these investments will move New York City closer to the long-overdue goal of dedicating 1% of the City budget to NYC Parks.

Thank you for your time and your continued advocacy for New York City's parks.

June 12, 2026

Dear Chair and Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of **PURR RBNY (PURR)**, a nonprofit cat rescue based in Far Rockaway, Queens. While our work is fueled by compassion, our request today is rooted in a hard reality: New York City's animal welfare crisis is an affordability crisis. It is with this belief in mind that we urge you to allocate dedicated funding in the city's FY27 budget to support Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs and to establish community pet food pantries.

At a time when there is an affordability crisis in this country, and doubly so in New York City, animals often pay the price. Families cannot afford pet food so cats wind up in city shelters or worse, abandoned on the streets. Far too often these abandoned cats are also unfixed due to exorbitant veterinary costs, leading to a neverending cycle of overpopulation and suffering on the city streets. One need only take a short walk down the Rockaway boardwalk to see firsthand the large population of community cats living on this peninsula.

By allocating funds for TNR, the city would be investing in long-term humane population control that will end the needless cycle of suffering. This will also help ease the burden on small rescues like PURR who rely solely on donations and volunteers. Without meaningful investment from the city, rescuers will continue to struggle, often to the point of exhaustion and personal burnout. Dedicated rescue groups and individuals are already doing the legwork, but need the financial backing and partnership of the city to truly move the needle.

An investment in community pet food pantries would also make a huge dent in the animal welfare crisis. New Yorkers should not have to decide between feeding themselves, or feeding their pet. The cost of living is quite simply too high for many New Yorkers, especially in the geographically isolated Rockaways where the poverty rate is far higher than the city average. For those struggling financially, affordable pet supplies are not easily accessible, especially for seniors and individuals without cars. The Rockaway peninsula lacks big-box retail options that typically offer lower prices, forcing many residents to rely on local convenience stores where prices are often marked up significantly.

CIty funded community pet food pantries would help keep pets in homes with their families, rather than facing surrender to already overcrowded city shelters. For many hardworking New Yorkers facing financial hardship, these pantries would simply bridge the gap in times of need. The cost to provide supplemental pet food support to those in need would surely be far less

www.purrrbny.org
PURRRBNY@gmail.com
929-224-2926

than the cost to house and care for an animal who is surrendered to a city shelter. The return on investment is abundantly clear.

New York City spends far less per resident on animal welfare than many other large cities in the U.S., and the consequences are clear. We respectfully urge the city council to invest in preventative measures that are more likely to create systemic changes improving animal welfare. In a city of such immense wealth, there is surely room for improving animal welfare in the budget. We respectfully urge the city council to approve $1.5 million in funding for low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary care and $2 million for pet good pantries across the city. Funding for TNR and community pet food pantries would be a pivotal first step in addressing the underlying causes of cat overpopulation and pet abandonment in New York CIty.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Donna Cornett — Founder & Director

Nicole Melhado — Co-Founder and President

www.purrrbny.org
PURRRBNY@gmail.com
929-224-2926

NYC Council – Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

I am writing to urge the City Council to honor the commitment made during the One LIC negotiations by including funding for a lighting study in the Long Island City IBZ in the executive budget. Inadequate street lighting has created serious safety concerns — and an equally serious perception of unsafety — that make it increasingly difficult for businesses and their employees to operate in the neighborhood.

Pursuit is located at 47-10 Austell Place and has been in there for nearly a decade.

We are a workforce development organization promoting economic mobility for low-income New Yorkers by providing an AI-Native training program and connecting participants with high paying jobs. Participants dedicate 600+ hours of training in their pursuit of better jobs, and we make our facility available 24/7 so that they have reliable access to tech, wifi, and whatever tools they need to further their education. Most classes run during nights and weekends, and safety has been a top concern of ours for years.

The Long Island City IBZ lacks the retail presence that typically provides natural lighting, foot traffic, and informal street safety. As a result, streets and sidewalks remain dangerously dark — and because most business activity occurs inside the buildings themselves, sidewalks receive little of the foot traffic that would normally deter crime. This becomes especially concerning during evening hours, when employees arriving and departing are left vulnerable in poorly lit conditions. These concerns are not unfounded: over the past three years, the IBZ has seen documented incidents including verbal and physical assault, grand larceny, and illegal dumping. A comprehensive lighting study is a critical and overdue step toward addressing these conditions.

Our need for improved lighting is well-documented and long-standing. We have advocated through 311 submissions and in partnership with the Long Island City Partnership (LICP), the area's local economic development organization. Through that process, NYC DOT reviewed our submissions and approved eight lighting installations across the Long Island City IBZ — a determination made over four years ago. Yet despite that approval, not a single light has been installed. When LICP followed up with DOT, they were told that no contract is currently in place to carry out the work. The approved lights exist on paper; what is missing is the commitment to fund and execute their installation.

We have tried reaching out to our local elected officials through LICP, but there has been no traction. We were encouraged when this became part of the agreement with

One LIC thanks to Councilmember Julie Won, but was extremely disappointed when it was left out of the draft executive budget. It has been clear that without the City Council's advocacy, these lights will not be installed, nor does the opportunity for new lights exist at all.

Pursuit is very happy operating in LIC, but the perception of safety concerns has hurt our business multiple times over the past couple of years alone. We have had multiple physical assaults on students coming or going from our office, had a student stalked and threatened with their life, a hate crime with perpetrators threatening to pull a student onto the overpass on Skillman where there is no lighting and it would be very difficult to see any incident, multiple threats of violence with a firearm, harassment, stalking, and theft. We've reported these incidents, requested police presence, tried to organize with other tenants, and have ultimately found support and solidarity through the LIC BID team. We are grateful to them for hanging lights during the holiday season, but feel we are severely overdue for the city's investment in safety in our area - the presence of street lights would be an obvious first step.

We hope that you consider our testimony and include the funding for the lighting study in the budget.

Sincerely,

Victoria Mayo

Workplace Experience Lead at Pursuit Transformation Company

victoriam@pursuit.org

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321, DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
125 Barclay Street New York, NY 10007 • 212-815-1188

Queens office: 54-22 Skillman Avenue Woodside, NY 11377 • 718-779-0787 (p) • 718-779-0788 (f) • local1321@gmail.com • www.local1321.org • @local1321

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Abigail Goldberg
Carol Rance-Fisher

Queens Library Guild, Local 1321
DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
FY 2027 Executive Budget
Testimony
June 10, 2026

Speaker Julia Menin, Deputy Speaker and Libraries Committee Chair Dr. Nantasha Williams, Finance Committee Chair Linda Lee, and fellow City Council members, thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify on behalf of the over 840 Local 1321 Queens Library Guild members, that include librarians, clerical, IT, motor vehicle drivers, maintainers, custodians, public safety officers, and other titles.

Local 1321 members are disappointed.

In 2016, with great fanfare and many news articles, Mayor De Blasio and the City Council touted their agreement to "baseline" funding across the three library systems. From an August 26, 2016 City Council Press Release, these are their words "Working alongside the Administration, they were also able to secure $43 million baseline funding which was adopted through negotiation in the FY 17 budget. This funding will help with more staff hires, extended hours on open days, continue 6 day service, more classes offered to the public and more materials."

Mayor De Blasio's baseline did not stop him from proposing cuts in successive preliminary budgets. Mayor Adams continued this strategy and proposed cuts in his preliminary budgets. Mayor Mamdani continued the decades' long library budget dance and proposed cuts in his preliminary budget. With great social media fanfare, he celebrated the 10th Anniversary of Mayor De Blasio's baselining, by announcing his proposed underwhelming baseline.

As we have experienced, these mayoral declarations are not guaranteed baselining. Local 1321 is calling for our elected officials to guarantee baseline funding and legislate or amend the City's Charter to allocate 0.5% of the City's budget to New York City's public libraries, which would be an amount that provides substantial financing for the library system. With a predictable and adequate funding source, libraries can plan for the future, hire additional staff, provide sustainable six-day service, modernize library infrastructure, maintain clean branches, provide robust

IT, and offer additional programs and services. Furthermore, having baselining will prevent unnecessary conflicts between Local 1321 and the Library's Administration. Currently, the Administration refuses to recognize and pay a vital group of public service library workers for their invaluable work.

Mayor Mamdani, this country and our City needs you to succeed. That success comes with a strong foundation of public institutions including libraries.

Mayor Mamdani and the City Council, if you are serious about supporting public libraries, amend the City's Charter or legislate baselining of library budgets, and allocate 0.5% of the City's budget to the three public library systems.

Queens Museum
New York City Building
Flushing Meadows Corona Park
Queens, NY 11368

Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
Submitted by:
Debra Wimpfheimer, Executive Director, Queens Museum
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Debra Wimpfheimer, and I am the new Executive Director of the Queens Museum.

First, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of our local Queens Councilmembers for your continued support and leadership. We are deeply grateful for the Queens Delegation's longstanding partnership and support of the Queens Museum.

Before turning to the Museum's specific capital and operating requests, I would like to join my colleagues across the Cultural Institutions Group in urging the Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million for arts and culture in the Fiscal 2027 Adopted Budget. We are grateful that the Executive Budget includes $10 million for the sector, but a significant gap remains. Stable and predictable funding is essential to sustaining the cultural organizations that serve millions of New Yorkers each year through education programs, workforce development, public programming, and free community access.

As New York City's cultural institutions continue to face rising operating costs, inflationary pressures, and increased demand for services, baselining this funding would provide the stability necessary for long-term planning, staffing, and program delivery. Cultural institutions are not only centers of creativity and learning; they are vital civic infrastructure, supporting jobs, tourism, economic activity, and community wellbeing across every borough. For institutions like Queens Museum, predictable operating support allows us to maximize the City's substantial capital investments and ensure those investments translate into meaningful public service. We also encourage continued efforts to improve the City's cultural capital process so that institutions can more efficiently steward public investments and deliver projects that benefit New Yorkers.

With the completion of our $42 million capital renovation, the Queens Museum will be significantly strengthened in its ability to serve children, teens, families, and seniors across the borough. The Museum of the future will be greener, more sustainable, and fully accessible.

This renovation will:

- Address long-standing accessibility challenges;
- Establish the Suna Children's Museum at Queens Museum — the borough's first dedicated children's museum for arts and culture;
- Create a World's Fair Archive, Exhibition Galleries, and Study Center honoring Queens' global legacy;
- And introduce a new outdoor playscape designed for broad public use.

We have several requests before the Council, including $4 million in capital funding to fully replace the Museum's roof.

Since approximately 2016, the Museum has documented more than 45 roof leaks impacting galleries, collection storage, the auditorium, and back-of-house areas. Nearly 50% of the roof has experienced active or recurring leaks, despite repeated repairs and coordination with the Department of Design and Construction, the Department of Cultural Affairs, manufacturers, and contractors.

The persistence of these leaks indicates a systemic failure—not isolated maintenance issues.

Replacing the roof before the larger renovation proceeds is essential to protecting the City's $42 million capital investment. Without full replacement, new construction, finishes, and building systems would remain vulnerable to water damage, potentially resulting in delays, change orders, and avoidable future capital costs.

We are seeking:

- $1 million from the Queens Borough President;
- 1 million from the Queens Delegation of the New York City Council; and
- 2 million from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Together, this funding will allow us to move forward responsibly and safeguard the long-term success of this transformative project.

In addition to our capital request, we are seeking the following operating support:

- $50,000 in Queens Delegation funding; and
- $150,000 from the Speaker.

This funding will support educational capacity-building as we prepare for this next phase of growth. As we expand our physical footprint, we must also expand our outreach to schools, senior centers, and community-based organizations across Queens. Our Education team, led by Chief Learning Officer Kimaada LeGendre, will continue conducting focus groups and piloting programs informed directly by community needs, with a strong emphasis on equity, access, and inclusion.

The roof replacement, combined with strategic investment in educational capacity, will ensure the safety, accessibility, and long-term vitality of the Queens Museum—and will allow for the successful launch of Queens' first Children's Museum for arts and culture.

We thank you for your continued partnership and for your consideration of this request. With your support, the Queens Museum will be fully equipped to meet the growing needs of our borough.

Thank you for your time and leadership.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

New York City Council Committee on Finance

In Support of Funding the New Visions Data Portal

June 10, 2026

Submitted by: Marina Galazidis

Date: June 10, 2026

Good morning, Chair and members of the Committee on Finance. My name is Marina Galazidis, and I am the Principal of Quest to Learn, a New York City Public School serving grades 6–12 in Chelsea, Manhattan, operating within the New Visions District. I appear before you today to urge the City Council to fund the New Visions Data Portal.

This is not a request for something better or more convenient. This is a request to preserve something irreplaceable.

No Existing NYCPS System Does What the Portal Does

New York City Public Schools maintains many data systems, and I use them. But none of them — individually or combined — comes close to what the New Visions Data Portal offers. The Portal is centralized, transparent, interactive, and collaborative. It is customizable and adaptive, so that any member of a school team can see exactly what they need to see about a student in a way that is both broad and immediately actionable.

The difference is not a matter of degree. It is a matter of design. The Portal was built for school teams — for the counselor checking credit accumulation, the special education team tracking post secondary milestones and CUNY applications, the teacher identifying which students are on the edge of failing a course that determines graduation eligibility. Losing that system means losing intentional integration, real-time responsiveness, and a coherent view of the whole student.

Data That Gets Put to Use in Real Time

At Quest to Learn, we serve a high-need population, including a multilingual learner community that has grown from 3 percent to 25 percent of our school over the last four years. Our students carry complex needs. Catching problems early, and acting on them immediately, is not aspirational. It is the equity work that our students demand of us.

The Portal gives us what we need to do that. It is data put to use in real time: for programming decisions, for intervention targeting, for identifying students who qualify for opportunities they might otherwise never know about. It is the mechanism by which no student falls through the cracks. And crucially, it is useful not just for staff, but for students and families — something no other NYCPS tool achieves in the same integrated, accessible way.

I Have Seen This Work at Scale

Before becoming a principal, I served as the Director of Leadership at New Visions for Public Schools, where I guided dozens of school leaders in using the Portal as a core tool for decision-making. The outcome, year over year, was exceptional results for students. The Portal was not incidental to those outcomes. It was central to them.

I have now seen both sides: the school network level and the building level. The conclusion is the same. The Portal is how school leaders lead with data rather than around it.

Graduation Is the Finish Line. Equity Is the Journey.

Under my leadership, Quest to Learn's graduation rate has risen from 74 percent to 86.7 percent. I am proud of that number. But graduation is the finish line, not the whole race. The Portal is what ensures equity along the way — that the student who is falling behind in October does not become the student who does not graduate in June. It closes gaps before they become crises.

This Tool — Not Tools Like It — Is Essential

I want to be precise in my language here. I am not asking the Council to fund a category of tools. I am asking you to fund this tool. The New Visions Data Portal has been built, tested, refined, and integrated into the daily practice of schools like mine over many years. That institutional knowledge, that functional coherence, that trust from school teams — it cannot be replicated quickly or cheaply.

I cannot imagine my work without it. More importantly, I cannot imagine the work of the students and families my school serves without it. Losing the Portal does not create a gap in our tool set. It creates a gap in our ability to serve children.

I urge this Committee to fund the New Visions Data Portal in full. The return on that investment is measured in students who graduate, families who are partners in their children's education, and schools that can do the equity work the City expects of us.

Thank you.

Marina Galazidis

Principal
Quest to Learn
351 West 18th Street
New York, NY 10011

QUEST TO LEARN

5306 Third Avenue, Second Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11220
Tel: (212) 256-9036 | Email: info@raisinghealth.org | Website: www.raisinghealth.org

Testimony on the New York City Fiscal Year 2027 Budget
for the Committee on Mental Health & Substance Use
June 5, 2026

Hewett Chiu

Good afternoon. My name is Hewett Chiu, President & CEO at RaisingHealth Partners. Thank you, Chair Cabán, for the opportunity to testify about the importance of continuing to fund the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative, Peer Specialists Support Initiative, and other initiatives that ensure vulnerable immigrant populations receive equitable access to mental health services.

RaisingHealth is a public health nonprofit in Sunset Park that helps close the mental health care gap faced by immigrant New Yorkers. Since 2020, our Mental Health Program has provided bilingual, culturally tailored mental health counseling, peer support, and community psychoeducation and destigmatization, free of cost and without regard to legal status and insurance. We work primarily with undocumented immigrants who suffer high risks of behavioral health issues due to legal barriers to health care access, financial challenges, language barriers, and cultural stigma.

One such individual is Winnie, an immigrant from China. She sought our support while undergoing chemotherapy, raising children as a single parent, and experiencing overwhelming anxiety. Through in-language sessions with our Licensed Mental Health Counselor, she learned strategies for emotional regulation, coping, and drawing on personal resilience.

Upon completing her course of therapy, Winnie told us, “Thank you for helping me find ways to cope. My life feels more empowering, and I’m able to cherish my relationships with my children. I feel grateful and hopeful, looking forward to the future for both myself and my family.”

The incredible impact we made on Winnie was made possible by discretionary funding from NYC Council that supports our health services for immigrants, including our Mental Health Program.

Winnie is just one of many community members we serve each year who have their own unique, complex mental health needs. Our community members, many of them

undocumented and speaking little to no English, struggle to navigate healthcare systems and do not know where to seek services. Due to low health literacy and/or limited financial resources, many do not know how to take care of their mental health or have to prioritize finding employment and providing for their family. Now, in the midst of the federal administration's significant increase in immigration enforcement activities, with NYC as one of the top targets, many immigrant community members are unwilling to leave their homes to access critical mental health care to address their heightened anxieties. It is more important than ever to adequately fund immigrant-serving community-based organizations like RaisingHealth that have built trusting relationships with the community and continue to reach these individuals who are struggling to live their daily lives.

RaisingHealth is one of many such organizations uniquely rising to the occasion to address the ever-growing needs of immigrant New Yorkers. Our team members are linguistically and culturally competent to ensure every community member we serve feels comfortable sharing the full scope of their needs so we can support them appropriately.

For our Mental Health Program specifically, our bilingual Peer Specialists conduct psychoeducational outreach and workshops and connect individuals in need directly with our in-house bilingual therapists. Together, our therapist and the participant determine a plan to address their needs, which typically includes joining individual and/or group mental health counseling and receiving continuous follow-up peer support from our Peer Specialists.

We also inform all program participants of our other in-house services, including health care enrollment, food pantry, ESOL classes, and safety trainings, ensuring their full range of needs are met. We operate within a network of over 100 community-based partners, and together, we are building the infrastructure to identify immigrant community members with health, mental health, and social needs and address those needs in a prompt and culturally sensitive manner.

I would like to thank the City Council for its support of the Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative, Peer Specialists Support Initiative, and other mental health initiatives. I urge the Council to both continue and enhance funding in FY27 for these initiatives, which have been crucial to sustaining much-needed health and social services for immigrants across NYC. This moment of crisis for immigrant New Yorkers calls for even greater investment in these services. We ask that the Council increase its funding for these initiatives to uphold the value that healthcare is not a privilege but a basic human right.

June 09. 2026

RECESS ART

Testimony of **KT Kennedy (kt@recessart.org):**
Associate Director of Youth Organizing
On Behalf of Recess Art: Assembly
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing on Cultural Affairs

Good afternoon Chair Rivera, Chair Joseph, and members of the Council,

My name is KT Kennedy, and I serve as the Associate Director of Youth Organizing at Recess Art. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Recess Assembly, the program I lead, a decade-long arts-based alternative-to-incarceration and youth leadership program serving system-impacted young adults with felonies, misdemeanors, and mental health mandates, ages 18–26 across New York City.

I want to begin with a simply profound truth: The work we do saves lives.

Every week, young people walk through our doors carrying the weight of systems, criminal legal system involvement, housing instability, foster care placement, family separation, poverty, violence, discrimination, and profound isolation. Many have internalized who they are, what they are worth, and how far they can go. At Recess Assembly, we offer something increasingly rare in New York City: a place where system-impacted young people can grow into leaders, artists, visionaries, and community members with something deeply valuable to contribute.

For the last ten years, Assembly has provided an alternative pathway. Through paid fellowships, leadership development, mentorship, community care, mental health support, and creative practice, we help young creatives and leaders build the relationships, skills, confidence, and stability necessary to thrive. We have watched hundreds of participants return to school, secure housing, gain employment, reconnect with their communities, become mentors, become teaching artists, and become advocates for others navigating the same systems they once faced alone.

This is why funding arts and culture is not separate from funding youth development, public safety, workforce development, or community wellness. It is all connected. This is public safety, we are a part of the daily programs that create safety every day for all New Yorkers.

When a young New Yorker has access to an intentional trusted community space, meaningful relationships, creative expression, and paid opportunities to lead, they are less likely to become disconnected from school, employment, and community. Assembly participants are more likely to envision a healthy and safer future for themselves and those connected to them, and have the support necessary to reach it.

Far too often, organizations like Recess Art are asked to address the consequences of systemic disinvestment while operating with limited and uncertain resources. Yet community-based arts organizations consistently fill gaps that other state and city systems cannot. Recess Assembly provides

belonging where there is isolation, opportunities where there are barriers, and care where there has been harm.

Arts and culture are not a luxury. They are essential civic infrastructure, and it is essential to community safety. They strengthen neighborhoods, support local neighborhoods, improve mental health outcomes, foster connection, and create pathways for young people who have too often been excluded from opportunity.

As you finalize the Executive Budget, I urgently encourage the increased investments in the Department of Cultural Affairs and protect funding for community-based cultural organizations serving New York City's most vulnerable young people. We need sustained, long-term investments in programs that are proven to keep young people connected, safe, engaged, and alive.

Young new yorkers deserve places to belong, create, to heal, and they need places to imagine a future. But most importantly, they deserve a city willing to invest in their futures. Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to New York City's young people who are always excluded.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.
Thank you,

KT Kennedy

REGINA OPERA COMPANY

P.O. BOX 150253
BROOKLYN, NY 11215
Email: info@reginaopera.org
718-259-2772

PRESIDENT
Francine Garber-Cohen
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT/ SECRETARY
Linda Cantoni
TREASURER
Joseph Delfausse

Testimony for June 10, 2026 - 9:30 AM Hearing at NYC Council

I am Francine Garber-Cohen, president of Regina Opera Company.

Thank you for listening to the testimony today explaining why NYC and NYC arts request that $30 million be added to the Baseline funding for Arts and Culture in the Budget . Rather than recite all of the reasons given by others, I'd like to single out 1..

Do you enjoy music? Whether it means going to Lincoln Center to hear the NY Philharmonic, or visiting the Metropolitan Opera to enjoy an opera by Mozart or Puccini or a new opera, or attending a Broadway show?

And don't you feel proud hearing your child or your niece or nephew play in the school band or sing in the Chorus? Well…how do you think these players, singers, teachers get their training and experience? From your small, local arts organizations which depend on NYC funding.

For example, Regina Opera's recent performance of Haydn's Trumpet Concerto featured our long-time trumpet player Nathan Mckinstry. Because of the experience and training he received playing in Regina Opera's 35-piece orchestra, he was able to "score" an audition for the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. When he was asked to sight-read some trumpet parts of several operas, they were operas that he had already just studied, rehearsed, and performed with us in Brooklyn. He "aced" the audition and is now a full-time trumpet player in the Met Opera Orchestra.

Nathan's professional career is the result of your funding. Baselining the $30 million will make funding more predictable and stable which is so important for small orgs like ours which depends on public funds to keep going. Please help us to continue training more professional musicians, singers, dancers, and teachers, so YOU and NYC can enjoy yourselves.
Thank You,
Francine Garber - Cohen

FY27 Executive Budget Testimony to NYC Council

Re: Council Must Restore Funding for Front-Line NYC Ethics Oversight Agencies – Department of Investigations, Conflicts of Interest Board

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony about the budgets of the Conflicts of Interest Board (COIB) and Department of Investigation (DOI). Reinvent Albany advocates for transparent and accountable government in New York.

First, we thank the City Council for holding budget hearings on the FY 2027 Executive Budget for both DOI and COIB, responding to a joint letter from Reinvent Albany and other watchdogs urging the City Council to restore funding to both agencies. Both DOI and COIB are operating at historically low funding and staffing levels despite their increasing responsibilities. The Council's hearing was very illuminating about the effect this has had on their ability to fulfill their missions.

While Reinvent Albany fully supports the funding requests from both agencies, we caution that these requests only stabilize the agencies and meet their needs for FY2027. This is not a "once and done" budget need. The Council must ensure that the FY2028 budget continues the progress in restoring them to past staffing levels, as well as meeting other technology and contracting needs of the agencies.

1. **DOI – total of $10 million for staffing**
    a. $4 million for mandated 9/11 investigation
    b. $6 million to stabilize the budget
        i. $4.53 million for Other Than Personal Services (OTPS) costs
        ii. $1.14 million to reverse 50 percent vacancy reduction plan
        iii. $290,520 for five new, entry-level investigators
2. **COIB – total of $395,000 for staffing**
    a. $95,000 for legal advice attorney
    b. $300,000 for pay equity, so COIB staff salaries are more competitive
        i. $230,000 for senior staff
        ii. $70,000 for junior staff

3. **Additional COIB needs**
    a. **$1.5 million in capital for new financial disclosure system** – COIB stated at its hearing that it is seeking a new financial disclosure filing system, and a budget line should be provided for OTI for $1.5 million in capital expenditures. The current system does not allow COIB to search the data – it only produces PDF reports, and they are unable to edit the questions. Additionally, COIB is unable to provide elected officials' responses in an open data format. The current system is both antiquated for COIB and does not provide the public easy access to disclosure statements of the elected officials that represent them.
    b. **Auditor needed for legal defense trusts** – COIB also stated that it does not have funding or current staff expertise to perform the audit requirements of the Legal Defense Trusts Law. Under the law, biennial audits using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) are required. These audits have not taken place for any of the reported trusts.
    c. **Case management system upgrade** – Lastly, COIB noted that it has to annually seek approval for upgrading its outdated, 2013-era case management system from OMB. Because COIB is a small agency, it has been at the back of the line for this upgrade, and as a result, it has had to annually reapply.

Department of Investigation down more than 100 staff since FY17

DOI has been decimated by repeated Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) initiatives from the Adams administration. DOI has also been tasked with new responsibilities, in particular a mandated 9/11 investigation pursuant to Resolution 560-A of 2025 that must be funded. The next page shows a chart and table of DOI's full-time staffing and budget levels from FY17 to FY27, compared to adjustments to reflect the growth in the overall NYC budget and inflation. More than 100 positions have been lost in this time period.

It is clear that despite the growth in the NYC budget and complaints made to DOI, the agency has not been given adequate resources to oversee City agencies. According to the Mayor's Management Report for DOI:

- Complaints increased from **12,128** in FY17 to **14,435** in FY25.
- It took **152 days** to complete an investigation in FY17, compared to **251 days** in FY25.
- **1,346** investigations were closed in FY17 vs **806** in FY25.
- **765** arrests resulted from DOI investigations in FY17 vs **220** in FY25.
- **498** policy and procedure recommendations were issued to agencies in FY17, compared to **158** in FY25.

COIB's staff has not increased, despite much larger responsibilities

While COIB does not report to the MMR, it is clear that they also have experienced challenges meeting their goals. At the hearing, COIB noted that they had 21 staff in 1991 when they were first created, and were responsible for overseeing 240,000 NYC employees. Today, they have 22 staff members and oversee more than 300,000 employees, in addition to former NYC staff who must abide by revolving door limitations.

While COIB has done remarkably well in handling a large volume of inquiries and filings, their enforcement efforts have been strained. For example, in 2019, COIB issued 86 findings of violations. In 2024, this dropped to 46, according to their 2024 annual report (2025 report not yet available).

Independent budgeting needed for DOI and COIB

We strongly urge the City Council to not only meet COIB and DOI's funding requests, but also ensure that they are permanently protected from budget cuts. We ask that you support a charter amendment to provide independent budgeting to both agencies via a fixed formula, as proposed by the 2025 NYC Council Charter Revision Commission.

Joint Testimony to the NYC Council for
Executive Budget Hearing, Public Comment

Modest $255,000 investment in OpenRecords portal will encourage better NYC FOIL performance, fully implement Local Law 11 of 2025

June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the Executive Budget as relates to the budget of the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS). Our organizations were strong supporters of Intro 1235 of 2025, which codifies the NYC OpenRecords portal for Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests, and requires all city agencies to use it. We thank the City Council for passing this transformative transparency legislation, and again urge you to ensure that it is fully funded.

We continue to support DORIS's $255,000 funding request so that the agency can have the resources necessary to fully implement the law. This includes the following:

- $105,000 annually for a permanent new developer for DORIS;
- $110,000 in OTPS funding for a systems architect and UX designer, likely under the citywide Microsoft contract; and
- $40,000 annually for Azure cloud storage to support the OpenRecords portal.

This is an extremely modest amount in the context of a proposed $124.7 billion NYC budget, but will mean a great deal for DORIS as it implements Local Law 11 of 2025 while fulfilling its current responsibilities.

We ask that the City Council ensure that the final budget includes this important funding.

Thank you for your consideration.

RENAISSANCE

New York City Council - FY 27 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Testimony of Ximena Pena, Renaissance Economic Development Corporation

Good afternoon. I am Ximena Pena, Director of Business Development at Renaissance Economic Development Corporation. Thank you, Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and members of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

Renaissance was founded by Asian Americans for Equality nearly 30 years ago to provide affordable capital and free training and resources to underserved entrepreneurs. To date, we have deployed $70 million in low-interest loans, creating and retaining more than 7,000 jobs across New York City. As a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) certified by the U.S. Treasury, we play an essential role in helping our diverse NYC neighborhoods thrive.

For many years, the City Council's Chamber on the Go Initiative has been vital to our work, allowing us to provide counseling and education in English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish. Two years ago, we partnered with the Council as well as BOC Capital and Accompany Capital to launch the CDFI Small Business Initiative, which provides crucial support to emerging solo-entrepreneurs.

As new federal policies and challenging economic conditions threaten struggling small businesses, these Council programs are more important than ever. They are crucial funding streams, allowing Renaissance to continue helping immigrant entrepreneurs survive.

Rising interest rates and operating costs are squeezing small businesses, while consumers are pulling back on their spending. Meanwhile, the U.S. Small Business Administration is now restricting its loan programs to U.S. citizens. Many green card holders - lawful permanent residents - are now effectively locked out of federal capital funding. Additionally, CDFI-funded technical assistance is limited to only U.S. citizens, preventing us from offering critical support to green card holders and other legal permanent resident clients.

These new restrictions have caused an unprecedented spike in demand for Renaissance's services, pushing our resources to the breaking point. At the same time, our own costs for

capital are rising, but we are doing everything in our power to avoid passing these higher costs on to our low-to-moderate clients. It all adds up to an unsustainable situation for both Renaissance and our clients, which will undoubtedly limit lending opportunities to spur new small businesses. More than ever, we need the Council's support to fill the gaps left behind by restrictive federal policies.

We urge the City Council to fully fund its small business initiatives, and to provide even more robust resources to Renaissance and other CDFIs. By investing in our capacity today, you are providing a lifeline to the hard-working entrepreneurs who are being left behind.

We also ask for your support and advocacy for a new version of the NYC Small Business Opportunity Fund, an essential program that, in partnership with nonprofits like Renaissance, helped keep many businesses running in the aftermath of the pandemic. The current crisis facing our small businesses mirrors the darkest days of the pandemic. If our neighborhood mom-and-pops - the backbone of NYC's economy - are to survive, they need immediate, accessible and affordable capital and technical assistance. A program like this one could be their last hope.

Renaissance and AAFE are grateful for your steadfast support through the years and we are eager to partner with you to make sure small businesses continue to be the lifeblood of our immigrant and working class neighborhoods.

Thank you.

June 10, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Finance, Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by Em Ruby, Policy Specialist, Riverkeeper

My name is Em Ruby, and I am the New York City Policy Specialist at Riverkeeper. Riverkeeper is a member-supported watchdog organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Hudson River, including its tributaries, expanding recreational access in waters throughout New York City, and safeguarding drinking water supplies, through advocacy rooted in community partnerships, science and law. Thank you, Chair Lee and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify today.

New York City is on the frontlines of climate change, and New Yorkers today face serious, overlapping threats from rising sea levels, coastal storm surge, extreme rainfall and extreme heat. According to the most recent New York State Climate Impact Assessments, total annual precipitation in New York State is projected to increase by 6% to 17% by the end of the century, with the largest increases projected for New York City, the Catskills, and the lower Hudson River Valley[1]. At the same time, the city's critical water infrastructure systems, many of which were built decades ago, require significant investment to maintain current levels of service and to expand capacity in order to meet the challenges posed by today's changing climate.

The federal government's unprecedented attacks on climate mitigation and resiliency, on clean air, clean water, and environmental justice, are upending decades of work to improve public health and the environment. Now more than ever, we need bold leadership from the New York City Council and this Administration to ensure that adequate funding and resources are provided to critical agencies to protect existing ecosystems and to prepare our city for a changing climate.

Riverkeeper applauds Mayor Mamdani and the administration for showing a strong commitment to tackling the climate crisis in the FY27 Executive Budget. The administration is making a meaningful investment in flood resiliency, committing $10.6 million to fully staff the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency, and $95 million to expand the Cloudburst program

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1 https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-the-assessment/new-york-states-changing-climate/nysc-precipitation/

Em Ruby, Advocacy Policy and Planning Coordinator · eruby@riverkeeper.org
· 20 Secor Road · Ossining, NY 10562 ·

to help prevent flooding from extreme rainfall in Homecrest, Brooklyn. We are also pleased to see funding for the FiDi Coastal Resiliency Plan, and investments in a city climate adaptation plan for 2027, and $3 million in permanent funding for critical forest management staff to support the care of our natural areas included in the Mayor's Executive Budget.

As the final budget takes shape, Our testimony calls for the Council and Administration to support the following additional priorities in this year's budget:

1. Eliminate the $313 million NYC Water Board Rental Payment, in which the City plans to charge the Water Board more than $1.3 billion in rent from 2026 through 2029, taking money away from DEP water-related infrastructure improvements. Already this year, the NYC Water Board has proposed raising rates by 6% and the water rental payment is attributed to the proposed increase.

2. Dedicate $3 million to support full implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule

3. Allocate $10 Million for DEP to complete the comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan, as mandated by Local Law 70 of 2025.

4. Allocate $10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan.

5. Fully fund the Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the Ashokan headworks project that is needed to repair the Delaware Aqueduct, and the Supplemental EIS for water discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek.

6. Dedicate $150 million to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, including baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff positions and funding to support other City agencies that will expand tree canopy under their jurisdiction.

7. Provide $4.5 Million to protect New York City's Wetlands to invest in natural and nature-based solutions that protect residents from coastal and inland flooding and improve water quality.

I. Reject the $313 million rental payment from the NYC Water Board

Riverkeeper strongly urges the City Council to reject the proposed $1.3 billion rental payment from the NYC Water Board over four years, from FY27-FY29, including $313 million in FY27. This rental payment is the legacy of an outdated agreement that allows the Mayor to request payment from the Water Board, taking funds generated by water ratepayers intended to fund and maintain the city's water and sewer operations, and

transferring them to the city's general fund. Originally, the rental payment was used to pay off bonds issued by the City for water and sewer purposes, but since 2004 those bonds have been paid off – and administrations have continued to take a rental payment at the expense of water ratepayers.

At a time when the rising costs of rent, groceries, and utilities are making New York unaffordable for many, increasing water rates to pay for a rental payment is a blow that hits low-income home owners particularly hard. In 2024 alone it was estimated that the rental payment taken by the Adams Administration resulted in an 3.1% increase in water rates for the public. This amounts to a regressive water tax on everyday New Yorkers, who pay for water not based on income or ability but based on usage. Looking ahead to May 2026, and through at least 2028, New Yorkers can expect continued yearly impact on their water rates as a result of the rental payment.

Capital funding for water infrastructure is urgently needed to address critical stormwater flooding, support coastal resiliency, improve water quality and strengthen drinking water infrastructure in New York City. In the 10-year Capital Improvement Program released by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) last year, there was an estimated need of $33 billion dollars for wastewater, stormwater and drinking water programs. By taking billions of dollars in the form of a rental payment, the administration is taking desperately needed funds and threatening the long term resilience of the city. This especially impacts parts of the City that have historically been neglected and will suffer the brunt of more frequent extreme weather events due to the ongoing climate crisis.

The rental payment is further hampering infrastructure investment by weakening the city's ability to go after state funding. Eliminating the rental payment will help New York City better leverage its fair share of NYS Environmental Bond Act funding. We cannot advocate in good faith for more state funding while our City continues to give away $1.3 billion in rental payments over the next four years for non-water purposes.

While we work to find a legislative solution to end the rental payment, Riverkeeper calls on the Council to reject the $313 million proposed rental payment in FY26.

II. $3 Million to fully fund implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule

Riverkeeper urges the City to support efforts to manage stormwater and rain induced flooding by providing $3 million for implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule (USWR). This funding will support 15 additional staff to support implementation of the rule. Riverkeeper applauds the Mamdani administration for providing $1 million in the FY27' Executive Budget to develop a new IT application platform to speed up permitting.

The USWR is a key 2021 rule that updated and aligned water quantity requirements in the city's combined sewer drainage areas with water quality requirements in separately sewered drainage areas, providing a comprehensive, citywide stormwater management

policy for public and private development. It facilitates residential and industrial development in a sustainable way that prepares the city for major storms. The rule mandates that newly developed or redeveloped properties disturbing 20,000 square feet or more of soil, or creating new impervious surfaces of 5,000 square feet or greater, must manage stormwater more effectively on-site. These properties must adopt a green-infrastructure-first strategy, utilizing methods such as rain gardens, permeable pavers, and green roofs.

By increasing the retention of stormwater on-site, the USWR aims to prevent the city's drainage system from becoming overwhelmed during heavy rain, which can cause flooding, backups into homes and businesses, and combined sewage overflows (CSOs) into waterways. Projections suggest that the rule will also reduce CSOs citywide by around 360 million gallons annually by 2030, improving harbor water quality.

When the USWR expanded from separately sewered areas of the city to include the combined sewer areas of the city, DEP never received additional staff or funding to staff the office. This has significantly impacted the implementation of the rule, leading to a longer timeline for permitting approval of new development – threatening the success of the program.

The Unified Stormwater Rule is key to ensuring the city is able to manage stormwater, reducing street flooding and improving water quality–and it is critical to meeting the city's nonnegotiable regulatory requirements. To support the effective implementation of the rule, $4 million in funding is needed for additional staff.

III. Allocate $10 million for DEP to complete the legislatively mandated comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan

Under Local Law 70 of 2025, DEP is mandated to create a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan that will recommend how much rainfall NYC's stormwater system should handle per hour, and identify projects necessary to achieve those levels and reduce flooding. However, DEP has not been funded to complete the Master Plan. This Master Plan is key to ensuring that DEP can respond effectively to increased stormwater flooding from extreme rainfall, and will help direct capital investment in stormwater management for the future. Riverkeeper urges the City to fully fund the Stormwater Masterplan, and provide $10 million for three contracts.

IV. Allocate $10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and Department of Environmental Protection to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan

As a member of the Renewable Rikers Coalition, Riverkeeper urges the City to include an additional $10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan in the FY27 Budget.

The Renewable Rikers Coalition seeks to address the historic and ongoing injustice on Rikers Island by closing the jails in August 2027, as required by Local Law 16 of 2021, and transforming the island into a sustainable center with renewable energy sources, wastewater treatment infrastructure, and food scrap and yard waste. Feasibility studies on Renewable Rikers released by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice and the Department of Environmental Protection in the spring of 2024 illustrate the promise that Renewable Rikers provides, finding that :

- A wastewater treatment plant would save New Yorkers $10 million over the lifetime of the plant, allowing for four nearby wastewater treatment plants to be used to treat high volumes of CSO during wet weather events. The new, energy-efficient treatment plant on Rikers Island would serve as the cornerstone for water quality improvements in the Upper East River, Harlem River and tributaries by reducing combined sewer overflows and restoring waters for safe swimming and fishing. The Renewable Rikers project is essential if the city is to achieve the goal as expressed in PlaNYC to eliminate sewage overflows by 2060.
- Solar energy production, an offshore wind energy converter station, and battery storage housed on the island could significantly increase the renewable energy produced by the city while potentially leading to the phasing out of five peaker power plants in the South Bronx and Eastern Queens. These peaker plants emit exorbitant levels of local pollutants like nitrogen oxides (NOx) and sulfur oxides (SOx), which contribute to bad local air quality and exacerbate health impacts on surrounding environmental justice neighborhoods.
- Organics processing could process over 365,000 tons of organic waste per year, 34% of NYC's total organic waste stream, and generate biogas increasing on-site renewable energy production for the island.
- A recycling hub could generate green jobs, remove polluting trucks from the road, and activate urban ecologies.

While these studies give us a sense of what the possibilities are, additional comprehensive planning will be needed to develop an actionable implementation plan for Renewable Rikers. Intro 1038 will require the City to take on this master planning process, and Riverkeeper stands with the Renewable Rikers coalition in urging the City to include $10 million in funding in the FY27 budget.

V. Fully fund Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the Ashokan headworks project that is needed to repair the Delaware Aqueduct, and the Supplemental EIS for water discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek

As DEP looks to retain the FAD in 2027 and ensure our drinking water source infrastructure is functioning properly, funding is required to initiate the Ashokan Headworks Project, part of the Century Program. This project will upgrade and modernize valves, release works and other infrastructure at the Ashokan Reservoir, which is necessary for a successful

repair of the Delaware Aqueduct which carries drinking water from the Catskill-Delaware system downstate.

The Ashokan Reservoir, while key to protecting drinking water for New York City residents, has had negative impacts on the Lower Esopus Creek and the communities that rely on it. Along with investing in the Ashokan Headwaters Project which will improve the health of the Lower Esopus, funding is needed to complete the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the state Catalum permit which allows for water discharges from the Ashokan. DEP has been working with communities in Ulster County for years to address concerns about the releases of water from the Ashokan Reservoir to the Lower Esopus Creek and this funding will create needed enforceable release protocols to balance the needs of the water supply with the needs of downstream communities and stream ecology.

VI. Dedicate $150 million to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan

New York City parks are home to 5 million of NYC's 7 million trees, they absorb 22% of its stormwater and 70% of its carbon, and can also be up to 13 degrees cooler than nearby streets during extreme heat events. Forested natural areas make up 24% of the city's parkland portfolio, but receive an annual average of 0.7% of the Parks Department's expense budget, and 0.84% of staff resources to manage it.

As a member of Forest for All NYC, Riverkeeper is committed to helping the city reach 30% tree canopy cover citywide by 2035 in an equitable manner. The proposed $3 million in funding for forestry staff is a great start by the Mamdani administration, but additional funding is needed to maintain and expand our urban forest to respond to climate change and extreme heat. To address this, Riverkeeper urges the city to provide $150 million to fund the initial implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, including baselining and expanding NYC Parks forestry staff positions and funding to support other City agencies that will expand tree canopy under their jurisdiction.

VI. Provide $4.5 Million to protect New York City's Wetlands

New York City is a city of water. Our over 520 miles of shoreline boast over 6,000 acres of tidal marshes, swamp forests, and streams across all five boroughs, and half of NYC's wetlands and streams can be found in New York City parks. These wetlands support more than 325 species of birds, 315 species of plants, and 200 species of fish and shellfish. They play an invaluable role in mitigating the harmful effects of climate change by capturing and storing floodwaters, sequestering carbon, and creating resilient shorelines. And, wetlands protect the quality of waterways by retaining stormwater, absorbing nutrients and filtering sediment and contaminants, and reducing flood risk for coastal communities.

As climate change impacts to our city grow every year, we should be investing in and expanding wetlands across our coastal communities. Instead, we are struggling to protect our existing wetlands from threats from development, rising sea level and extreme heat, and we continue to observe over 6 acres of salt marsh wetlands lost per year. Further, mitigation funds from large-scale resiliency and renewable energy projects are intended to benefit tidal wetlands in the city – however we are running out of project areas within the five boroughs where those funds can currently be used.

As a result, more oversight and staffing will be needed to ensure that the Parks Department can maximize the benefits of this funding, and increase the restoration and protection of our vital wetland resources. To address these challenges, Riverkeeper urges the Council to approve $4.5 million in funding to support 45 staff at the Parks Department in FY27 for wetland restoration and protection.

Conclusion

The climate crisis is here, and New York City needs to adapt quickly to ensure that our communities and infrastructure are prepared for this generational challenge. In the last 12 years, Superstorm Sandy exposed the threat to New York City's coastlines from storm surge, Tropical Storm Ida underscored the vulnerability of inland communities to flash flooding from extreme rainfall, and rising summer temperatures have endangered the health of thousands of New Yorkers living in urban heat islands underserved by green infrastructure.

Riverkeeper urges the City Council and the Administration to take bold action now, and lead our city forward toward an equitable, climate ready future that reimagines our waterways as critical resources for recreation, ecological health, and climate adaptation. To accomplish this, we urge the City to include the above priorities in the FY27 Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of Riverkeeper's testimony. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council Members, DEP staff, and our partner organizations to create a climate resilient New York, restore our waterways, and increase access and swimming for New Yorkers in their natural waters.

Em Ruby, NYC Policy Specialist · eruby@riverkeeper.org
· 20 Secor Road · Ossining, NY 10562 ·

June 10, 2026

New York City Council

Committee on Finance
Hon. Linda Lee, Chair

Testimony of Jimmy Meagher, LMSW, Senior Policy Director, Safe Horizon

On the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jimmy Meagher, and I am Senior Policy Director at Safe Horizon, the nation's largest non-profit victim assistance organization. Every year, 250,000 people seek safety through our services. Our mission is to stand with those who have experienced violence, abuse, and exploitation. We offer unwavering support and advocate for systemic change. We envision a world where safety is a universal human right.

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 are here to help 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, housing, legal assistance, counseling, and wraparound services and supports.

The City Council has also championed the human services nonprofit sector. Our sector desperately needs your continued help to ensure that human services workers across our sector receive the compensation and support we need. To be frank – our sector continues to operate in a perpetual state of crisis. Nonprofit human services organizations are suffering as a result of delayed contracts and payments – preventable and solvable problems. We are dismayed to hear that the Administration is considering delaying payments to the community-based nonprofit organizations that serve as lifelines to New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. Budgets are moral documents, and we urge our City leadership to meaningfully invest in the sector and in our communities.

Initiative and Discretionary Funding

We urge the City Council to restore and increase Initiative and Discretionary funding in the FY27 budget. Citywide Initiative funding supports the following Safe Horizon programs:

Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative

Since 2006, the New York City Council's DoVE Initiative has provided critical resources to communities impacted by domestic violence. Recognizing that survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence have varied needs and may not always access the criminal justice system, the City Council partnered with Safe Horizon to create the DoVE Initiative to provide a neighborhood-based response to survivors and their families. The DoVE Initiative was funded at $12,010,000 in FY26, with Council Members then allocating funding to local providers in their district.

Currently, 170 organizations across NYC use DoVE funding to address domestic violence in the community by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, counseling, support groups, outreach, education, and training. **Safe Horizon oversees and administers this entire project and ensures program compliance.** We provide in-depth training to help organizations stay competitive in future funding environments, as well as networking opportunities to help DoVE-funded organizations learn from each other and coordinate services. DoVE has always been important, but it has literally been a lifesaver for New Yorkers in every neighborhood and every community who continue to navigate these scary times. As we advocate for options for victims and survivors both inside and outside traditional criminal justice responses, DoVE is pivotal. DoVE directs funds to the organizations rooted in community that provide necessary and lifesaving supports to survivors. This is especially critical for survivors who are immigrants and/or LGBTQI+ who may fear seeking help from government systems under the current federal Administration.

We are very grateful to the City Council for supporting the DoVE Initiative for many years. We are seeking **a restoration of $12,010,000** so our network of CBOs can continue to reach survivors in every neighborhood and every district across New York City.

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs)

Safe Horizon's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are at the heart of New York City's response to child abuse. At our CACs, child victims of sexual and/or severe physical abuse receive the help they need quickly and in one location. The police, prosecutors, medical professionals, victim advocates, clinicians, and child protective caseworkers work together under one roof in a child-friendly environment that minimizes trauma and facilitates healing. This allows us to facilitate a swift, comprehensive, coordinated investigation and multi-disciplinary team response that significantly reduces the number of times children must disclose details of their abuse. This coordinated, trauma-informed response to abuse helps to prevent the re-traumatization of the child during each re-telling of the violence that took place. We connect children and their families to the mental healthcare and services they need to heal.

Prior to the creation of the CAC model, child victims would be asked to repeat their story over and over and relive their trauma and pain. Many child victims were left feeling as if no one believed them and felt to blame for causing disruption to their families. And many would recant their story. This method of investigating incidents of abuse was traumatizing, stigmatizing, and unjust. The CAC model is a gamechanger and the gold standard for investigating reports of child abuse. We are grateful for the Council's continued financial support through the **Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault.**

In FY25, our CACs provided services to over 8,521 children and 3,550 caregivers throughout the five boroughs. We are requesting **a restoration and an enhancement to $1,000,000** in FY27 to sustain general operations in our CACs across the five boroughs. This will allow the CACs to continue to provide healing and support to child victims and their families. Additionally, we are seeking for this core funding to be **baselined** to ensure the City's continued investment in the CAC model.

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, connect them to community, and provide essential resources at our drop-in centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams. 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. Over the past several years, Streetwork has experienced an increase in the number of migrant young people seeking help who have nowhere else to go.

In FY25, Streetwork Project provided services to 1,139 clients across our drop-in centers and overnight shelter, while our overnight street outreach team engaged in 15,277 contacts with homeless and at-risk young people. The City Council currently supports Streetwork through the **Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative**, **LGBTQIA+ Youth Support and Services**, the **Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative**, and a **Speaker's 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 and enhancement to $500,000** to continue to bolster our response and offer critical services to this vulnerable population navigating homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Support and Services supports Streetwork's work addressing the needs of LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults, including navigating housing options and accessing long term safety. **We are seeking a restoration of $455,000**.

The **Viral Hepatitis Prevention Initiative** helps Streetwork increase our capacity to connect potentially Hepatitis C-affected clients to testing, medical care, treatment, and infection control services. We are seeking **a restoration and enhancement to $50,000** - so we can link runaway and homeless youth to the medical supports they need and deserve.

The **Speaker's Initiative** enhances Streetwork's ability to address the complex immigration and social services needs of undocumented and noncitizen young people when they have nowhere else to turn. Streetwork has experienced an increase in the number of undocumented and migrant young people seeking our support and our assistance. We believe that when young people are connected to legal assistance, long-term representation, and wraparound services, we help to prevent them from experiencing further exploitation, trafficking, and violence. **We are seeking a restoration of $250,000**.

Immigration Law Project

Safe Horizon's Immigration Law Project (ILP) provides expert legal advice and representation to victims of crime, violence, abuse, trafficking, and torture. ILP staff help guide their clients through complex immigration proceedings and assist them in VAWA self-petitions, petitions for U nonimmigrant status and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), applications for asylum, adjustment of status and citizenship, as well as in removal defense. ILP receives referrals internally from Safe Horizon's other programs, as well as externally from the immigration courts, law enforcement agencies, other community-based organizations, legislators, and from former and current clients. ILP strives to provide the highest quality services to a very vulnerable population. Clients live in all five boroughs and experience a multitude of victimizations including domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes. As a result of the settling of recent arrivals in New York City and the anti-immigrant policies emanating from Washington, Safe Horizon's ILP has seen an increase of survivors seeking our immediate assistance. In addition, overwhelmed government systems have left countless in tenuous circumstances—food and housing insecure and desperate for work—making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and in need of our support and services.

The Adams Administration prioritized assisting migrants with completing asylum applications, not comprehensive legal screenings and long-term representation and assistance. We were grateful to see that the Council invested heavily in nonprofit civil legal assistance in the FY26 budget, and we urge the Council to continue to do so this year.

In FY25, ILP provided full representation, advice, and consults to nearly 600 clients and provided over 5,100 telephonic information and referral services. The City Council supports ILP through **Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence & Gender Based Harm**, the **Culturally Specific Gender Based Violence Initiative**, the **Protect NYC Families Initiative**, and the **Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)**.

City Council Initiative funding increases ILP's capacity to assist noncitizen survivors across NYC who have experienced violence here and abroad, including survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, with a wide range of immigration relief. We are seeking **a restoration of $200,000 in Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence & Gender Based Harm funding, a restoration of $175,000 in Culturally Specific Gender Based Violence Initiative funding, a restoration and enhancement to $50,000 in Protect NYC Families Initiative funding, and a restoration of $20,000 in Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) funding.**

Domestic Violence Law Project

Safe Horizon

Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence Law Project (DVLP) provides expert legal services and guidance to at-risk New Yorkers seeking relief on family and matrimonial law matters. Our team of attorneys and paralegals help their clients access orders of protection, custody, visitation, child support, and divorces. In FY25, DVLP provided services to nearly 1,400 clients and offered telephonic helpline services to over 1,600 callers seeking assistance. The City Council supports DVLP through the **Safe Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative**.

Our Domestic Violence Law Project utilizes funding through the **Supportive Alternatives to Violent Encounters (SAVE) Initiative** to provide direct legal services to indigent victims of domestic violence in Family, Supreme, and Integrated DV Courts throughout the city. We are seeking **a restoration and enhancement to $300,000** so our Domestic Violence Law Project can continue to provide survivors with the legal services they require to find safety and healing.

Counseling Center

Safe Horizon's Counseling Center has provided mental health treatment to adult and child victims of violence and abuse since 1988. We provide ongoing support and counseling services during victims' recovery and healing journey. We offer supportive counseling without judgment, and we work with survivors to develop coping strategies. Our Counseling Center is one of the only New York State-licensed mental health clinics focused solely on treating trauma reactions that many victims of crime and abuse experience. Our Counseling Center provided 5,521 therapy sessions to 294 clients and 1,565 intake case management services to 752 clients in FY25. The City Council supports our Counseling Center's work through the **Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative** and the **Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative.** Both initiatives support our mental health work with the youngest survivors of violence and abuse.

The City Council's **Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative** allows us to address the impact of traumatic experiences that are so often at the root of behaviors that precipitate involvement in family court of children and youth aged 7 to 17. Our project involves the enhancement of trauma-informed care for youth by creating and providing training on short-term trauma-focused interventions. We are seeking **a restoration of $240,000**.

The City Council's **Children Under Five Mental Health Initiative** supports our work with infants and toddlers who are survivors of crime, as well as their families, through training of clinicians and staff in evidence-based treatment. By training a greater number of individuals who come into contact with child survivors to recognize signs of trauma, we can prevent lifelong developmental consequences while providing healing and relief. We are seeking **a restoration and enhancement to $150,000** to continue supporting young children who have been victims of or witnesses to crime.

Community Programs and SafeChat

Safe Horizon offers a continuum of services for all victims of crime through telephonic, live chat, and/or in-person supports. With sites that serve all five boroughs, our compassionate Community Program staff provide safety planning, advocacy, case management, information and referrals, supportive counseling, and support groups. Safe Horizon's 24/7 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. In FY25, our Community Programs provided services to 828 clients and assisted 614 client family members. SafeChat responded to 2,522 chats from survivors.

The City Council supports our Community Programs and SafeChat through the **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative** and a **Speaker's Initiative**.

The work of the **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations Initiative** aligns with Safe Horizon's commitment to working with young Black and Brown men who have experienced harm and violence. One of Safe Horizon's main goals is to increase accessibility to needed services for young men of color. Research shows that young men of color are more likely to experience harm, yet boys and young men of color are not accessing our services at comparable rates. This funding increases our capacity to connect community members who have experienced harm, with a particular focus on young men of color, to our continuum of services, including counseling and mental health supports. Our Hotlines and SafeChat serve as first points of contact, linking to Community Programs for ongoing coordination within Safe Horizon and beyond. Our services are offered telephonically, remotely, and in-person at our Community Program offices, ensuring that survivors have options. We are seeking **a restoration of $150,000** to support this essential healing work.

For several years, the Council has awarded **Speaker's Initiative** funding to support the salary of a SafeChat Live Chat Specialist to enhance our ability to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help. We are seeking **a restoration of $100,000 in Speaker's Initiative funding** to continue to support SafeChat's operations and the salary of this SafeChat Live Chat Specialist. This support allows us to respond in particular to young men of color seeking help and intentionally build avenues for young men of color to access supportive services and healing.

Late Contracting Issues

We are grateful to the City Council for understanding the systemic late contracting issues that impact the nonprofit human services sector. Late contracts have a detrimental effect on community-based organizations and the communities we all serve. Great progress has been made because of the Council's movement on these issues through legislation to provide advances on contracts (LL156 of 2025, LL11 of 2026). However, much more needs to be done to address the millions still owed to providers across the city.

Frequent government contract payment delays put providers at risk of eviction and worsen deficits by forcing organizations to borrow to pay rent and salaries. Safe Horizon has, on many occasions, been forced to borrow money to sustain service provision to survivors while waiting months or even years for a contract to be registered so that we could receive payment.

The City's delays cost providers real money and jeopardize quality of services by diverting funds away from programs to pay interest on lines of credit, for which we are not reimbursed.

In addition, when nonprofits are owed money, we cannot respond to emergencies effectively because of limited cash flow to meet urgent needs. For example, during the pandemic, we needed to purchase supplies, like masks and cleaning equipment, and were forced to utilize our credit line for that purpose because of the city's payment delays.

Support Int. 0452

Additionally, we urge the Council to support wage equity legislation that will bolster the nonprofit human services sector.

We are grateful for the multi-year COLA investment, which was a major victory for the nonprofit human services sector. We are happy the executive budget includes the final year of the COLA going into place July 1, 2027. Next year, the Mayor and Council will need to prioritize lifting salaries for human services workers with another COLA and ideally, a multi-year investment. There are still challenges, however, in that the COLA funding is implemented by agencies in ways that are overly restrictive. This investment ends next year so now is the time to push for true wage equity, where nonprofit workers are not paid up to 30% less than their government counterparts. To that end, Safe Horizon enthusiastically supports Intro 452, which would be a huge step forward.

Government is not just the predominant funder of human services but also the main driver of human services salaries. Government either directly sets salary rates on contracts or does so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract.

New York City has relied heavily on the nonprofit human services sector to house, shelter, safety plan, and provide other critical services for survivors of violence. However, our government partners too often ask our community of nonprofits and community-based organizations 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 contracts. Because many survivors come into victim services work to help other survivors, government 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, New York must commit to funding contracts at appropriate levels to allow non-profits and community-based organizations to offer competitive living wage salaries. Pay equity is a racial justice issue, a gender justice issue, and an economic justice issue.

The human services nonprofit sector is dealing with a sustainability crisis. Organizations across the sector continue to lose staff because wages are not comparable to wages in the government and private sectors. Hiring and staff retention continue to be major issues across the field. Vacancies and staff turnover directly impact our clients – survivors of domestic violence, runaway and homeless youth, and victims and survivors of violence and abuse across New York City. When staff leave for a better paying job in the private, for-profit sector, our programs must reassign cases, which is disruptive to the survivors coming to us seeking safety and healing.

Intro 452 is a significant step towards ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts. By establishing a clear wage requirement system, this legislation promotes transparency in compensation, ensuring that every worker is paid solely based on their qualifications and experience.

CityFHEPS and Investments in Shelter and Housing

Safe Horizon is a member of the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC), and we echo the budget priorities expressed in their testimony.

Safe, stable, affordable housing remains the number one need among survivors we serve across all programs. Housing is a key foundation for safety and healing and for a safer city. That is why New Yorkers need a fully funded and fully implemented CityFHEPS voucher program. CityFHEPS has been essential in connecting New Yorkers to a pathway out of homelessness - especially New Yorkers that have no other options, like Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY). It would be unconscionable for this Administration to turn its back on the very New Yorkers that need help the most. We urge Mayor Mamdani and the City Council to fund the CityFHEPS expansion and end the cycle of homelessness that plagues New York City.

Additionally, thousands of New Yorkers, including survivors of domestic violence and formerly homeless youth, are about to lose their homes as a result of the Trump Administration prematurely ending the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Program. At Safe Horizon, we believe that safety is a human right. And to the New Yorkers we serve, housing *is* safety. With EHV ending, survivors and formerly homeless youth need our City government to ensure that they aren't forced again into dangerous, unsafe situations. We implore Mayor Mamdani and the City Council to extend CityFHEPS eligibility to NYCHA EHV families and fund it in the FY 2027 Budget as part of the larger expansion of CityFHEPS, allowing survivors and formerly homeless youth to stay in the homes where they have rebuilt their lives and begun to heal

Conclusion

As the City Council and the Administration sets the budget for the next fiscal year, it's imperative that our city expand, perfect, create, and invest 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 housing and 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, our dedicated workforce, and survivors. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Testimony of Rachel Jordan, Safe Passage Project
NYC Council Committee on Immigration
NYC Council Committee on Children & Youth
NYC Council Committee on Finance
May 28, 2026

Thank you to the members of the Committees on Immigration, Children and Youth, and Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Rachel Jordan, and I am the Managing Attorney for Partnerships and Advocacy at Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We currently serve over 1,600 children and youth, most of them unaccompanied minors, who live in the five boroughs of New York City and on Long Island.

I write to you today because immigrant children, the young people that our organization aims to serve and protect, are directly in the crosshairs of a federal government that seeks to strip them of rights, safety, and dignity. We are deeply grateful for the NYC Council's funding support through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative, the Special Immigrant Juveniles Initiative, the School-Based Immigrant Rapid Response Legal Access Initiative, the Speaker's Initiative, and the Domestic Violence Empowerment Initiative. Yet we are facing a new reality in which the City Council's current level of support is no longer sufficient to keep up with the attacks on due process rights that our clients and staff now face on a daily basis.

The current hostile federal environment has altered the operational baseline for legal representation, driving up our yearly per-case cost due to new and increased mandatory federal filing fees and direct attorney hours. Under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," (H.R. 1) filings that were previously free now include a $250 fee for a petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), a $100 initial asylum application fee, and a $102 annual fee for pending asylum applications. Initial asylum-based work permits require a $560 fee, while subsequent renewals cost $275 every 18 months. Under H.R. 1, these fees are non-waivable for humanitarian relief. In addition, fees to reopen and appeal removal orders before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have soared to over $1,000, with mandated annual increases.

To navigate the systemic barriers created by new federal practices, policies, and case law, direct attorney hours have also significantly increased as a result of several factors, including the following:

- **Federal Litigation to Fight Unlawful Arrests and Detention of Clients:** Since November 2025, ICE has conducted aggressive enforcement actions, including the unlawful arrest and detention of our clients. Clients with approved SIJS have been stripped of their deferred action and work authorization. Defending these clients requires extensive extra hours for specialized training, registration with local federal district courts, and complex, time-consuming briefing for petitions for writs of habeas corpus.

- **Increasing Hostility of Immigration Courts, Appellate Preparation, and Court Purges:** Since January 2025, the federal government has executed an unprecedented purge of experienced Immigration Judges, replacing them with personnel lacking immigration law experience or holding documented anti-immigrant records. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has issued a record number of restrictive precedential decisions that allow the dismissal of asylum claims without hearings and accelerate the deportation of children with pending or approved SIJS. To counter these biased administrative forums, Safe Passage Project attorneys must expend significant additional hours litigating motions, while preparing every single removal case for eventual review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Safe Passage Project staff remain committed to preserving our clients' rights and delivering necessary social services to unaccompanied youth. However, when each individual case requires a surge of additional legal work hours and mandatory fee coverages, our organizational capacity is reduced–yet the number of unaccompanied children and youth in need of legal representation remains high. To maintain the scope and quality of our vital legal services in this incredibly hostile federal environment, Safe Passage Project Council requests that the Council grant our total finance request of $5,100,000, representing a necessary increase of $674,944 from our FY26 allocation.

This moment is a historic one, and it demands a historic response. We ask the NYC Council to be our partner in rising to meet it.

###

Testimony of Rachel Jordan, Safe Passage Project
NYC Council Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Thank you to the members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Rachel Jordan, and I am the Managing Attorney for Partnerships and Advocacy at Safe Passage Project, a non-profit legal services organization that provides free representation to immigrant children facing deportation. We currently serve over 1,600 children and youth, most of them unaccompanied minors, who live throughout the five boroughs of New York City and on Long Island.

I write to you today because immigrant children, the vulnerable young people that our organization aims to serve and protect, are under attack by an emboldened federal government determined to strip them of rights, safety, and dignity.

Over the years, the NYC Council has proven itself to be a leading champion for the legal rights of immigrant youth, and we are deeply grateful for the Council's funding support through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative, the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Initiative, the School-Based Immigrant Rapid Response Legal Access Initiative, the Speaker's Initiative, and the Domestic Violence Empowerment Initiative.

Today, however, as we face a persistent and mounting federal assault on the due process rights of children, the City Council's current level of support is no longer adequate to defend our clients. As a result, we are asking the City Council to increase its funding, so that NYC can continue to lead the charge on protecting the legal rights of immigrant children. Below is a brief account of the challenges we and our clients are facing, and why we are asking for your continued support to fight back against those challenges

- **Exorbitant Federal Fees for Humanitarian Relief and Increased Attorney Workload**
  The current hostile federal environment has altered the operational baseline for legal representation, driving up our yearly per-case cost due to new and increased mandatory

federal filing fees and direct attorney hours. Under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," (H.R. 1) filings that were previously free now include a $250 fee for a petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), a $100 initial asylum application fee, and a $102 annual fee for pending asylum applications. Initial asylum-based work permits require a $560 fee, while subsequent renewals cost $275 every 18 months. Under H.R. 1, these fees for humanitarian relief are non-waivable. In addition, fees to reopen and appeal removal orders before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) have soared to over $1,000, with mandated annual increases.

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- **Increasing Hostility of Immigration Courts, Appellate Preparation, and Court Purges:** Since January 2025, the federal government has executed an unprecedented purge of experienced Immigration Judges, replacing them with personnel lacking immigration law experience or holding documented anti-immigrant records. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) has issued a record number of restrictive precedential decisions that allow the dismissal of asylum claims without hearings and accelerate the deportation of children with pending or approved SIJS. To counter these biased administrative forums, Safe Passage Project attorneys must expend significant additional hours litigating motions, while preparing every single removal case for eventual review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

- **End of SIJS Deferred Action**: The federal government has ended deferred action for Special Immigrant Juveniles, leaving a large number of our clients without access to employment authorization and at heightened risk of removal while they wait to apply for lawful permanent residence. This increases our client's vulnerability to food insecurity,

housing instability, and labor exploitation. As a result, our Safe Passage social workers need to spend more time connecting clients to food assistance programs, navigating shelter processes, providing mental health support, and connecting clients to city and state agencies for alternative forms of government-issued identification.

Safe Passage Project staff remain committed to preserving our clients' rights and delivering necessary social services to unaccompanied children and youth. However, when each individual case requires a surge in additional legal work hours and mandatory fee coverages, our organizational capacity is reduced, even while the number of unaccompanied children and youth in need of legal representation remains high. To maintain the scope and quality of our vital legal services in this incredibly hostile federal environment, Safe Passage Project Council requests that the Council grant our total finance request of $5,100,000, representing a necessary increase of $674,944 from our FY26 allocation.

This moment is a historic one, and it demands a historic response. We ask the NYC Council to be our partner in rising to meet it.

###

sage | Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders
We refuse to be invisible®

National Headquarters
305 Seventh Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10001
T: 212-741-2247
sageusa.org
lgbtagingcenter.org

Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Finance

FY 27 Executive Budget Hearing – Finance Public Testimony

June 10th 2026

Good Afternoon Chair Lee and members of the New York City Council, my name is Bryan Ellicott-Cook (They/He) and I serve as Director of Government Relations at SAGE, the nation's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults.

Since our founding in 1978, SAGE has worked tirelessly to advocate for policies and programs that empower LGBTQ+ elders, ensuring they can age with dignity, security, and support. From leading national advocacy efforts to providing direct services, we have remained at the forefront of combating social isolation, housing insecurity, and healthcare disparities among LGBTQ+ older adults.

New York City has long failed to prioritize the programs and services that help older adults remain in their communities as they age. We are optimistic that our new Mayor will begin to address some of these challenges, especially at a time when older adults already make up 1 in 5 New Yorkers, a number projected to grow to 25% by 2040. Over the past few decades, the city has underfunded and undervalued older adult programs, making it nearly impossible for providers to meet the growing needs. Without further investment, we risk center closures and the reduction in core services at a time when demand continues to rise.

More and older New Yorkers, including LGBTQ+ elders, who are already disproportionately at risk, have to navigate more holes in an ever-weakening safety net. Now, more than ever, SAGE continues to remain a steadfast source of support, connection, and security for LGBTQ+ older adults in these challenging times.

With an actively anti-LGBTQ+ administration in Washington stoking a hostile political climate, many LGBTQ+ older adults face heightened fear and uncertainty about their rights, healthcare, and overall well-being. For thousands, SAGE is a lifeline to critical services, advocacy, and a supportive community, ensuring they do not face these challenges alone. Considering the needs and the climate, SAGE is seeking increased support to serve this important population of queer elders.

LGBTQ+ elders are often invisible, disconnected from services, and severely isolated without traditional biological familial supports. They are far more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving. In fact, 25% of SAGE's constituents have reported not having anyone else to call during an emergency. Because of these thin support networks, LGBTQ+ older people need

to rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age. Yet, they're often distrustful of mainstream providers based on historical and ongoing discrimination and mistreatment. The services, community, and support system provided by SAGE are designed to address these gaps and serve as a lifeline for LGBTQ+ elders in New York City.

The elders whom SAGE serve also have unique healthcare needs. For example, in 2023 New York State reported over 2,000 new HIV diagnoses, with 12.6% occurring among individuals aged 50 and older. This age group now comprises 57% of New Yorkers living with HIV. Furthermore, older adults are more likely to receive a concurrent AIDS diagnosis, with 36% of new HIV cases among those over 50 also being diagnosed with AIDS within 30 days of their initial diagnosis. About 14% of LGBTQ+ New Yorkers over 50 report frequent poor physical health and transgender New Yorkers of all ages are nearly 50% more likely to report being in fair or poor health when compared to non-transgender respondents.

Many of our constituents may also delay or avoid seeking care in typical settings since LGBTQ+ adults are twice as likely as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts to report experiencing discrimination from a healthcare provider, including instances of unfair treatment or disrespect. Our SAGE Center network serves as a safety net for LGBTQ+ elders and older people aging with HIV. We provide programming that reduces isolation and improves access to services, by offering benefits counseling, legal and financial planning, educational workshops, health and wellness programs, support groups, and nutritious meals.

These vital services are made possible from our partnership with the New York City Council, and they have been funded by the LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough Initiative (formerly the LGBTQ+ Senior Services in Every Borough Initiative) since its creation in FY15.

In FY27, SAGE requests the restoration of our New York City Council funding at FY26 levels, along with additional support to sustain and enhance our vital services. City Council funding enables SAGE to serve residents of **Stonewall House and Crotona Pride House** and their surrounding communities, maintain our **citywide network of SAGE Centers** and their extensive virtual programming, provide **comprehensive case management**, reinforce services for **LGBTQ+ older veterans**, and support **mental health services for homebound LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected elders.**

Specifically, SAGE requests:

- Renewal with an enhancement of **$1,255,000** in Council Initiative LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough to fund programs and services at our network of SAGE Centers—LGBTQ+-affirming older adult centers—reaching over 5,000 LGBTQ+ elders and older New Yorkers living with HIV with 100 virtual and 200 in-person programs each week. This year, SAGE is requesting an enhancement to implement Know Your Rights initiatives and comprehensive training programs for both older adults and staff, ensuring they are equipped to navigate their rights and access critical resources.

- Renewal of **$250,000** from the LGBTQIA+ Caucus to provide holistic, LGBTQIA+-affirming, and HIV-competent care management for those 60+ (50+ if transgender, a veteran, or living with HIV). Services include benefits enrollment, crisis intervention, caregiving, counseling, friendly visits, legal aid, and

mental health referrals. With evolving federal policies, ensuring access to these essential services is more crucial than ever.

- Renewal of **$275,000** from the Trans Equity Programs Initiative to expand our SAGETrans Support Group and Services Program, which offers culturally responsive, trauma-informed support for transgender and gender nonbinary (TGNB) older adults (50+) across New York City. This funding will also support the SAGETrans Emergency Fund, which provides direct financial relief to TGNB elders experiencing housing insecurity, food scarcity, community workshops, legal guidance or crisis health-related needs.

- Renewal of **$100,000** under the Older Adults Mental Health Initiative to support crucial mental health services for LGBTQ+ elders and older adults living with HIV who are frail and homebound, including comprehensive screening for mental health and substance abuse issues, home visits, support groups, and referrals to partner health care and substance abuse programs.

- Renewal of **$100,000** from the Citywide Initiative of Legal Services for Veterans to fund SAGEVets, New York City's only program designed to address the unique needs of older LGBTQ+ military service veterans. SAGEVets helps older LGBTQ+ veterans access Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, supports their overall health and wellness, and provides referrals for discharge status upgrades.

- Renewal of **$36,868** through the Senior Centers, Program, and Enhancement Initiative to support care management services offered at SAGE Centers, including crisis intervention, care assistance, caregiving services, individual and group counseling, friendly visiting for homebound elders, legal services, and mental health referrals.

Bryan Ellicott-Cook

Bellicott@sageusa.org

(929) 458-2095

Written Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing, FY2027 - June 10, 2026

Submitted by: Tan Hayat, Manager of Advocacy & Impact Strategy Sakhi for South Asian Survivors

On behalf of: Sakhi for South Asian Survivors, The Collective, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), and The 18% & Growing Campaign

Introduction

Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance, for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Tan and I am the Manager of Advocacy and Impact Strategy at Sakhi for South Asian Survivors. I submit this written testimony on behalf of Sakhi, The Collective, and the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families in support of critical FY27 budget priorities for immigrant survivors of gender-based violence and AAPI communities across New York City.

About Sakhi for South Asian Survivors

Sakhi for South Asian Survivors has worked with South Asian and Indo-Caribbean survivors of gender-based violence across New York City since 1989. We provide a comprehensive and holistic range of culturally and linguistically specific services including crisis intervention, safety planning, housing advocacy, immigration legal services, mental health counseling, and economic empowerment programming. In 2025, Sakhi worked with 710 survivors across all five boroughs, engaging more community members than at any point in our history.

The survivors we work with navigate compounding barriers: language, immigration status, cultural stigma, and deep distrust of systems that have historically failed them. For many, Sakhi is the only organization equipped to help them in their language and within their cultural context.

Priority Ask 1: Renew and Increase the Culturally Specific Gender-Based Violence Services Initiative — Minimum $3 Million

I testify today on behalf of The Collective, comprised of Sakhi for South Asian Survivors, Womankind, the Korean American Family Service Center, Sauti Yetu Center for African Women and Families, and the Violence Intervention Program. We are the only coalition of culturally specific, gender justice organizations working exclusively with immigrant and BIPOC survivors in New York City.

Last year, through the sustained advocacy of The Collective, the City Council created the Culturally Specific Gender-Based Violence Services Initiative, investing $3 million to fund organizations providing multilingual, culturally responsive GBV services to immigrant survivors. This was a historic and necessary recognition that the city's GBV system contains structural

gaps, and that closing them requires dedicated, sustained investment in the community-based organizations that survivors already trust.

This initiative is not baselined in the FY27 Executive Budget. Without Council action, it will not survive into the coming fiscal year. The Collective urges the Council to renew this initiative at no less than $3 million and commit to a path toward permanent, baselined funding.

The need is urgent and well-documented:

- Roughly 60% of NYC Council Districts see more than 1,000 NYPD reports of domestic violence per year. Those figures reflect only what gets reported. In immigrant communities, survivors routinely do not contact law enforcement due to language barriers, immigration fear, and distrust of systems. Culturally specific organizations fill that gap.
- At any given time, between 10 and 40 percent of clients at culturally specific GBV organizations arrive as referrals from other providers, meaning these organizations serve as essential infrastructure for the broader GBV system citywide.
- Federal cuts under H.R. 1 are restricting benefits eligibility for immigrant survivors and increasing demands on already under-resourced organizations.

Sakhi's own data reflects this growing pressure. In 2025, our Anti-Violence Program saw a 65% increase in rapid response support from 2024. Our Housing Program worked with 272 survivors, a 21% increase from the prior year, securing nearly $1 million in rental assistance, security deposits, and broker fees. In our Counseling Program, 100% of survivors reported feeling better equipped to manage trauma symptoms at the one-year mark. In our Economic Empowerment Program, 90% of clients gained the tools needed to become financially self-sufficient, and 85% of those seeking employment support achieved at least one professional goal.

These outcomes depend on sustained, predictable city funding. Renewing and growing this initiative is among the most direct investments the Council can make in the safety and stability of immigrant survivors across New York City.

Priority Ask 2: CACF 18% and Growing Campaign

I also submit this testimony on behalf of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, which unites over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across New York City. AAPI New Yorkers represent nearly 18% of this city's population and remain among the most chronically underserved communities in the city's budget. The inequity is structural: AAPI communities face well-documented gaps in health access, linguistic accessibility, child care, legal services, housing, and gender-based violence support, and the burden of filling those gaps has consistently fallen on community-based organizations rather than city government.

Sakhi, CACF, and the 18% and Growing Campaign urge the Council to advance the following priorities in the FY27 adopted budget:

- **Expand the AAPI Community Support Initiative to $7.5 million** to sustain and grow community-based organizations providing direct services to AAPI New Yorkers across the five boroughs.
- **Expand the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to $10 million** to provide critical operational support to BIPOC-led nonprofits that have faced years of structural underfunding relative to the populations they work with.
- **Expand the Access Health Initiative to $4.5 million** to improve health access and health outcomes for AAPI communities, which face persistent disparities in insurance coverage and culturally competent care.

Conclusion

The FY27 budget is being finalized at a moment of compounding pressure for immigrant and BIPOC communities in New York City. Federal policies are restricting access to benefits, immigration enforcement is generating fear that keeps survivors from seeking help, and demand for culturally specific services is rising across every program Sakhi operates. The City Council has historically stepped up when the city's most vulnerable communities needed it most, and we are grateful for the leadership this body has shown on these issues.

We urge the Council to renew and increase the Culturally Specific GBV Services Initiative, and to advance the CACF 18% and Growing Campaign priorities in the final adopted budget. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Council toward a city that truly serves all of its residents.

Sincerely,

Tan Hayat | tan.hayat@sakhi.org
Manager of Advocacy & Impact Strategy
Sakhi for South Asian Survivors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Testimony presented to the

New York City Council Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Catherine Thurston, LCSW,
Chief Executive Officer
Service Program for Older People (SPOP)
www.spop.org

Thank you, Chairman Lee and members of the Committee on Finance for this opportunity to share our concerns about the well-being of older adults in New York City.

I am CEO of Service Program for Older People (SPOP), the city's only agency entirely dedicated to offering community-based age-affirming mental healthcare for older adults. We provide professional services to over 1,000 older New Yorkers each year, including individual and group therapy, psychiatry, group-based psychiatric rehabilitation services, and linkages to social health services and support for housing, emergency meals, and socialization opportunities.

SPOP's client population is generally low-income, medically frail, and isolated. Our goal is to reduce mental health symptoms while teaching coping and independent living skills that enable older adults to live as they choose. Client outcomes include improved health, decreased social isolation, reduced hospitalizations, and increased ability to manage daily challenges.

Older adults are the fastest-growing segment of New York City's population, which has led to a 20% increase in referrals and inquiries for SPOP over the past five years. We receive referrals from hospitals, older adult centers, and aging services providers and, while we make every effort to connect incoming clients to services promptly, there are times when we are unable to keep pace with demand.

Mental healthcare is a critical factor in supporting the emotional health and overall well-being of older adults. I urge the Committee on Finance to support renewed funding in FY2027 for vitally important initiatives relating to aging and mental health, including the Older Adult Mental Health

Initiative, Older Adult Center Improvements, Support Our Older Adults, and Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations.

SPOP works in coordination with NYC Aging, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and dozens of aging services providers, with a goal to make New York City the best place in America for older adults. I hope that the FY2027 New York City budget will include robust support for mental health services and other programs for older adults.

Thank you.

Autistic Adults NYC • Bronx Independent Living Services • Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled • Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York • Civics League for Disability Rights • Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York • Downstate New York ADAPT • Greater New York Council of the Blind of the American Council of the Blind of New York State • Harlem Independent Living Center • Hearing Loss Association of America, New York City Chapter • Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association • National Federation of the Blind of New York State • New York City Black Deaf Advocates • New York DeafBlind Advocates • New York Lawyers for the Public Interest • One Heart, One Vision • Staten Island Center for Independent Living

June 12, 2026

Council Member Linda Lee
Chair of New York City Council Committee On Finance

Sent Online at https://council.nyc.gov/testify/
Emailed to: testimony@council.nyc.gov

Re: T2026-1913 New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings – Hearing Held On Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee On Finance,

We, the undersigned disability organizations submit this testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on behalf of disability advocates and New Yorkers with disabilities who rely every day on the services, infrastructure, and programs funded through the City's budget.

New Yorkers with disabilities represent one of the most diverse populations in New York City, spanning all races, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, national origins, religions, and communities. Despite this diversity, people with disabilities continue to face systemic barriers to economic opportunity, including limited access to affordable housing, education, employment, transportation, and civic participation. Further, we continue to face systemic barriers to affordable supports to live in our homes and not institutional settings such as unsafe, highly expensive nursing homes where a person is told when to rise, when and what to eat, when to sleep, and loses all independence and autonomy—a prison for the crime of being a New Yorker with a disability.

We recognize that the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget seeks to maintain services while addressing significant fiscal challenges. However, a budget is ultimately a statement of priorities. For New Yorkers with disabilities, the measure of this budget is whether it advances equal

access, independence, safety, and full participation in city life. The FY 2027 Executive Budget totals approximately $124.7 billion and emphasizes affordability and core service preservation for some New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, many of the barriers faced by New Yorkers with disabilities remain unaddressed. We therefore urge the City Council to use its oversight and budget authority to strengthen investments across all city agencies.

The Chronic Underfunding of MOPD: A Crisis of Priority

Before addressing systemic infrastructure, we must address the literal devaluation of disability governance within City Hall.

The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) is tasked with protecting and advocating for nearly one million New Yorkers with disabilities. Yet, within a massive $124.7 billion city budget, MOPD’s proposed FY 2027 budget is a stagnant, microscopic **$678,657**.

The systemic neglect of this office is staggering when compared to the broader city apparatus:

- **The Microscopic Fragment:** MOPD’s budget constitutes roughly **0.0005%** of the total New York City budget.
-
- **Historical Erosion:** MOPD’s funding remains severely depressed below its historical levels. It has never recovered from the deep 24% cuts implemented during the Fiscal Year 2025 PEG (Program to Eliminate the Gap) reductions.

- **A Staffing Shell:** While MOPD officially has a meager budgeted headcount of just six positions, persistent underfunding has left it operating with a **50% vacancy rate**—meaning a mere *three full-time employees* are tasked with overseeing disability inclusion and agency coordination for the entire city of New York.
-
- **National Disparity:** MOPD operates with millions of dollars less than per capita funding designated for equivalent disability agencies in other major American cities.

We cannot talk about "meaningful consultation" or "accessibility across all agencies" when the primary city office responsible for enforcing those rights is funded like a rounding error. The Council must baseline MOPD’s budget immediately, fill all critical vacancies, and expand its baseline staffing.

Educational Resources, Literacy, and Communication Access

True accessibility must recognize that disability communities are diverse, and that language and full communication access are essential for equal participation in education, employment, civic life, and the arts and entertainment.

To achieve this, the City must fully support institutions that guarantee the fundamental right to information.

Supporting the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library

The Andrew Heiskell Library has a vital mission to provide free, accessible reading materials and technology to people in New York City who are blind, visually impaired, or have reading disabilities. Operating under the motto "That All May Read," it provides braille books, talking books, mail delivery services, and essential assistive technology training. These services ensure that thousands of disabled New Yorkers—ranging from toddlers to senior citizens from diverse backgrounds—can access literature, information, and educational resources that many others take for granted. The City Council must protect and expand funding for this indispensable resource.

Bridging Gaps in Sensory and Communication Accessibility

However, critical gaps in accessibility remain within our city's resource landscape. Currently, available library and educational resources do not include services and programs specifically designed for New Yorkers whose first or only language is American Sign Language (AS). Furthermore, there is an unfulfilled need for DeafBlind New Yorkers regarding Tactile ASL/ProTactile services.

Without intentional budget allocations and inclusion of those with sensory and communication disabilities—such as those who are blind, deaf, deafblind, or have a visual and/or hearing disability, or other print disability—many

talented New Yorkers will remain excluded from information, services, programs, and activities that others access with ease. We urge the Council to fund targeted expansions for ASL and ProTactile programming citywide.

Today, access to information is not a luxury—it is a necessity, especially to be employed. It is therefore critical that New Yorkers with disabilities have equal access to knowledge, data, and digital resources. Libraries play a central role in ensuring that this access is available to everyone, regardless of income, disability, or background.

Of course, all our public libraries deserve and require increased funding. However, funding for the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library has a particularly profound impact. For many New Yorkers with disabilities, this library represents the difference between access to knowledge and living in an informational desert.

Thus, we urge the New York City Council Committee on Finance to increase funding dedicated to the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library so it can expand accessible services for New Yorkers with disabilities.

Now more than ever, increased funding for the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library is essential.

Significantly, New York City is experiencing a critical shortage of qualified sign language interpreters, Deaf interpreters, captioners, tactile interpreters, and ProTactile practitioners. These shortages create significant barriers to employment, education, mental health, healthcare, civic engagement, emergency preparedness, and access to government services. Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing are unable to obtain qualified communication access providers when and where they need them.

The City Council needs to provide more funding to strengthen and expand the following:

• ASL and Deaf studies programs throughout New York City,

• RID-certified interpreter education and training programs, including support for programs at LaGuardia Community College and other institutions,

• Certificate programs in Tactile ASL (TASL) and ProTactile communication to address the growing shortage of qualified providers serving DeafBlind New Yorkers, and,

• Workforce development initiatives to recruit, train, retain, and advance ASL interpreters, Deaf interpreters, captioners, tactile interpreters, and ProTactile practitioners.

Additionally, funding needs to be provided to create and fund a citywide DeafBlind Co-Navigator Program, to expand DeafBlind support services and community-based resources throughout the five boroughs, as well as to support ASL-based library collections and ASL-accessible educational programming within the City's public library systems.

In sum, significantly more funds need to be provided to the Mayor's Office for People With Disabilities so it can coordinate communication access policies across city agencies and ensure all New Yorkers with disabilities receive effective accessible communication.

Investing in New Yorkers is our best investment. Strengthening this institution will ensure that New Yorkers with disabilities have equal opportunities to learn, communicate, and fully participate in every aspect of life in New York City.

Transportation Accessibility

Transportation remains one of the greatest barriers to equal opportunity.

Access-A-Ride

The City now funds approximately 80 percent of Access-A-Ride costs. Because of this substantial investment, the City Council must increase oversight of the program and demand measurable improvements in service quality. We urge the City Council to:

- Expand the E-Hail Pilot Program to all eligible Access-A-Ride users.
- Remove arbitrary limits on the number of E-Hail trips available.
- Increase funding so that riders are not forced to pay significant out-of-pocket costs.
- Permit taxi authorizations across boroughs.
- Improve driver training and enforce strict accountability for chronic lateness, inaccurate trip information, and unsafe driving practices.
- Ensure all wheelchair-accessible vehicles have functioning securement systems and properly trained drivers.

People with disabilities should not have to wonder whether they will arrive safely, arrive on time, or be able to communicate with the driver assigned to their trip.

Buses and Express Buses

The City Council must require the MTA to improve accessibility on express buses and provide ongoing training resources for operators. The City's disability community continually encounters broken lifts, inadequate driver training, and inaccessible service that blocks access to employment, healthcare, and community participation.

Taxi and For-Hire Vehicles

The City Council needs to:

- Restore a fully functional Accessible Dispatch program featuring live customer support.
- Increase funding for wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV) conversions.
- Require all new electric for-hire vehicles operating under Taxi and Limousine Commission’s authority to be wheelchair accessible.
- Establish an aggressive, binding pathway toward 100 percent wheelchair accessibility throughout the for-hire vehicle fleet.
- Establish and fund a robust monitoring and enforcement program to ensure that taxis and for-hire vehicles comply with accessibility requirements and provide passengers with disabilities the same quality of service provided to all other passengers. Equal access must include timely pickups, ride

availability, proper seatbelts and restraints, secure wheelchair tie-down systems, and effective accessible communication. New Yorkers with disabilities should not have to fight for transportation services that others receive automatically without a second thought.

Accessibility cannot be optional simply because transportation technology changes.

Safer Streets and Sidewalks

For many New Yorkers with disabilities, simply crossing a street remains inherently dangerous. We strongly urge increased funding for:

- Accelerated installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS).
- Rigorous repair and maintenance of existing APS installations.
- Comprehensive pedestrian curb ramp construction and repair.
- Sidewalk reconstruction to remove barriers created by broken pavement and tree root damage.

The City has reported progress in installing APS devices, but the need remains enormous, and maintenance data is entirely insufficient. The City Council should require regular reporting on APS failures, repairs, and response times. Additionally, all bus stops must be fully accessible and equipped with shelters, seating with backrests, and sufficient turning space for wheelchair users.

Housing and Independent Living

Economic opportunity begins with housing. The City Council must expand investments in:

- Fully accessible affordable housing units and universal design standards.
- Robust home modification programs and supportive housing for people with disabilities.
- Targeted funding for community-based programs that explicitly prevent institutionalization.

Too many New Yorkers with disabilities remain trapped in inaccessible housing or are forced into nursing homes and congregate settings because community-based alternatives are starved of resources. Housing policy must recognize that accessibility is not a premium feature; it is a fundamental civil right.

Home Care and Healthcare

New Yorkers with disabilities cannot participate in the workforce, attend school, volunteer, or engage in civic life without adequate home care and healthcare. The City Council should:

- Protect funding for home care services from any budget cuts.
-
- Support workforce recruitment and retention by advocating on the state level for improved funding for wages and training for direct support professionals and home care workers.

- Restore funding for care coordination and a dedicated program providing services for New Yorkers with physical disabilities, similar to OPDD and several other special State Offices.

- Provide such funding on the city level since the state has failed to do this in its most recent budget.

- Expand accessible community-based healthcare services to ensure people can remain safely in their homes and neighborhoods.

Investments in home care are direct investments in independence, human dignity, and economic participation.

Disability Inclusion in Economic Development

True economic opportunity requires removing systemic barriers rather than segregating and siloing populations into separate, underfunded systems. We urge the City Council to:

- Explicitly include disability-owned businesses in city procurement and contracting opportunities.
-
- Expand participation by disability-owned firms in the City's Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) framework.
-
- Strengthen accessible workforce development initiatives and small business assistance programs.
-
- Make all websites easily usable and accessible to New Yorkers with disabilities as well as provide alternative ways for New Yorkers with disabilities to access resources without having to rely solely on websites, especially providing more than one way to apply for city jobs and grants.

People with disabilities are workers, entrepreneurs, professionals, consumers, taxpayers, and voters. Disability inclusion must be woven into the fabric of every economic development strategy.

Meaningful Consultation: "Nothing About Us Without Us"

Finally, we urge every city agency receiving capital or operating funds to consult with disability organizations *before* projects are designed and implemented. Far too often, accessibility problems are identified only after construction is complete, resulting in costly retrofits and avoidable barriers.

Recently, a group of New Yorkers with disabilities learned that the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) had purchased new ticketing information machines for the ferry service. After, not before, making this significant purchase EDC contacted some New Yorkers with disabilities for their feedback without any hands-on, in-person demonstrations – another example of the city's attitude and approach where access is concerned.

We are aware of certain accessibility issues with respect to the new ticketing information machines for the ferry service. We identified theses accessibility issues to the EDC, some which it indicated it will consider implementing, such as improving the contrast, others it indicated cannot be implemented in the ticketing information machines already purchased, such as user-controlled font enlargement on the touchscreen - a function that even the present ballot marking devices have had for more than fifteen years. This is just another example of treating our civil rights as an afterthought

and wasting our tax dollars on not purchasing fully accessible new ticketing information machines. This and other issues could easily have been avoided if only the disability community had been consulted before the EDC purchased these machines.

Further, we strongly urge the Mayor and City Council to make it a priority to change the attitude now held "how can we NOT provide equal access to New Yorkers with disabilities" as well as STOP forcing New Yorkers with disabilities to have to fight and expend their energy and resources to enforce their basic rights under federal, state and city laws and regulations.

A very recent example of this attitude to ignore laws and regulations is the EDC's narrow reading of the Americans With Disabilities Act regarding Personal Care Assistants (PCAs). Under the EDC's present policy disabled passengers are forced to pay a separate fare for their PCAs, a disability tax to ride ferries overseen by the EDC - the EDC is imposing an illegal surcharge in violation of the law. See, 49 CFR Section 37.5 (d); 28 CFR Section 36.301(c).

Further, the New York City Ferry system requires urgent overhauls:

- **Safety:** Install 4-point wheelchair securements and keep these areas completely unobstructed.
- **Staffing:** Train staff to proactively offer securement help and assist blind passengers boarding vessels.

- **Communications:** Provide all information both visually and auditorily.
-
- **Navigation:** Update the app, fix broken pathfinding, and overhaul largely inaccessible kiosks.

Moreover, we urge the EDC to adopt the National Federation of the Blind of New York State's accessibility resolution, hire a qualified independent accessibility consultant, and consult our community *before* buying infrastructure.

In sum, this attitude throughout many in the city that New Yorkers with disabilities needs are "special" or an unnecessary burden and optional must change. It is time for our city to treat us with dignity and respect and acknowledge that we are a powerful untapped resource and STOP vilifying us with disabilities the largest diverse and intersectional minority.

"Nothing about us without us" must remain the guiding principle of New York City policy.

The Fiscal Year 2027 budget presents an opportunity to build a city that works for everyone. A city that is accessible for people with disabilities is safer, more efficient, and more equitable for all New Yorkers.

We ask the Council to aggressively prioritize funding for:

- Access-A-Ride oversight, APS installations, and curb/sidewalk repairs.
-
- Accessible, affordable housing and protected home care services.
-
- Accessible educational resources.
-
- Disability-inclusive economic development and procurement.
-
- Effective accessible communication throughout all city departments, agencies, including but not limited to, all offices of the Mayor and City Council. This includes but not limited to, (a) providing of ASL, (b) Tactile ASL/ProTactile services, (c) Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services, and (d) all print material provided to the public provided in several alternative formats, including but not limited to, (i) Braille, (ii) large print, (iii) ASL, (iv) Tactile ASL/ProTactile, (v) online in an accessible format, and (vi) audio format.
-
- Accessibility throughout all facilities owned, operated, controlled, managed, maintained, or used by the city or a third-party receiving funds or other support from the city.

- The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities to expand its programs, services, and activities for New Yorkers with disabilities as well as significantly increase the staffing of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities.

Accessibility is not a luxury, and it is not a special interest. Accessibility is a fundamental civil right and a necessary investment in the future of New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City Council to ensure that the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget advances full participation, equal opportunity, and independence for all New Yorkers with disabilities.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments.

Sincerely,

Autistic Adults NYC

Bronx Independent Living Services •

Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled •

Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York

Civics League for Disability Rights

Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York

Downstate New York ADAPT

Greater New York Council of the Blind of the American Council of the Blind of New York State

Harlem Independent Living Center

Hearing Loss Association of America, New York City Chapter

Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association

National Federation of the Blind of New York State

New York City Black Deaf Advocates

New York DeafBlind Advocates

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

One Heart, One Vision

Staten Island Center for Independent Living

June 8, 2026

Re: FY'2027 Budget Hearing

Testimony by Heidi Henderson, Esq., MPA, Executive Director & CEO

Good afternoon,

Thank you, Chair Lee and Chair Schulman and the members of the Committee on Finance and Health Committee for the opportunity to address you today regarding SHARE Cancer Support and the important impact this organization has for those at risk and in treatment for breast and gynecologic cancers in New York City.

ORGANIZATION MISSION AND DESCRIPTION

SHARE Self Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer, Inc. (SHARE Cancer Support) is a peer-led nonprofit organization established in 1976, which provides free linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive programs for individuals diagnosed or at increased risk for breast or gynecologic cancers (e.g. cervical, ovarian, and uterine) and those living with metastatic breast cancer.

Our programs and services include information and education that has been developed in partnership with medical professionals and researchers, referrals, and navigation to care and support services, facilitation of support groups, outreach, multi-lingual peers and mentors, and a national Helpline staffed by peer volunteers and available in English and Spanish,, as well as other languages, as needed, upon request. We have also recently translated our materials into Chinese, Korean and Bangla.

Our mission is to help all individuals diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancer effectively address the emotional and practical issues that arise from a cancer diagnosis and provide the support they need to feel less isolated, better informed, and more empowered as healthcare consumers. No one should go through cancer alone.

BACKGROUND/NEEDS STATEMENT

Breast cancer in this country is epidemic: 233,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women; 63,000 new cases of carcinoma in situ (CIS) will be diagnosed; 40,000 women will die this year from breast cancer, and 1 in 8 women will develop invasive breast cancer during her lifetime. According to the CDC, “Black women have the highest death rates of all racial and ethnic groups and are 40% more likely to die of breast cancer than white women.” This difference results from many factors, including limited social and economic resources.

Latina women are about 20 percent more likely to die of breast cancer than non-Latina white women diagnosed at a similar age and stage, according to the American Cancer Society. Latinas

are significantly more likely to present at a later stage with larger tumors that are hormone-receptor negative, which are more challenging to treat. These disparities are exacerbated by barriers to treatment and lower rates of mammograms in the Latina community.

Gynecologic cancers – ovarian, cervical and uterine – are on the rise, particularly among women of color. Black women in particular, continue to experience late diagnosis and poor treatment outcomes due to a number of disparities in access to care, treatment, and support services.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT

Through our outreach programs, we have teams of multilingual Ambassadors who conduct hundreds of visits to community organizations, consulates, older adult/senior centers, community centers, health fairs, food pantries, health centers, and other venues annually. They provide education on the signs, symptoms, testing, and treatment options for breast, gynecologic, or metastatic breast cancer. We reach over 50,000 New York City residents each year.

Through our national programs, including support groups, online educational programs, educational materials, and our toll-free national Support Line, we reach over 350,000 patients, caregivers, and allies throughout the US with critical, potentially life-saving information on these cancers annually.

Our Ambassador services are available primarily as a result of the NYC discretionary funding received through the Cancer Health Initiative, Support for Older Adults, and individual discretionary awards from about a dozen City Council members. We are so grateful.

In addition to renewal funding for our Ambassador Programs, we seek additional funding to support our Patient Navigation Program. Patient Navigation is a proven, evidence-based best practice for addressing health disparities caused by race and other social determinants of health. Patient Navigators have been shown to effectively support patients with severe, high-risk, longer-term conditions, illnesses, or diseases. When Patient Navigators are recruited from historically excluded and unsupported communities, they can successfully engage and support members of those communities.

In 2025, through our Patient Navigation Program, we served over 300 breast and gynecologic patients, identified 1,932 concerns, provided 655 interventions, and provided over $209,000 in financial assistance for the navigated patients. Our Patient Navigation Program is open to all patients who are diagnosed with breast or gynecologic cancer. We have a particular focus on serving low-income Latinas and Black women from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Our Patient Navigation team offers ongoing, intensive support to help connect patients with the resources they need. The majority of our patients are from low to middle-income families and are experiencing financial, physical, or psychological crises due to the impact of treatment, including financial toxicity.

SHARE
CANCER SUPPORT

The challenges that our patients face during and after treatment are many and complex – often extending far beyond their healthcare needs. Below are brief case studies that demonstrate the level of need among our patients.

One of our patients was a 56-year-old woman who was diagnosed with Metastatic Breast Cancer. She was undergoing chemo and bone therapy. She experienced severe side effects that caused her to be hospitalized. The patient was experiencing extreme weight loss - she weighed less than 80 pounds when we met her and was barely eating because of the side effects of chemotherapy. The only thing that kept her from losing more weight was Ensure. However, faced with the high cost of Ensure and limited funds, she was forced to choose between buying groceries for her 14-year-old autistic son and 76-year-old mother or buying Ensure. She chose to feed her family rather than prioritize her own health. SHARE's Patient Navigation team was able to provide a broad range of support services for this patient, including securing funding for Ensure, and she now is on the road to recovery.

Our Navigation team experiences stories like this far too often. We know that our Patient Navigation Program is greatly needed and has the potential to be incredibly impactful in the lives of breast and gynecologic cancer patients – particularly those who are vulnerable, disconnected from care, and historically marginalized.

FULL RANGE OF SERVICES

SHARE Cancer Support provides a broad range of programs and services all of them are free.

- Multilingual Helplines answered by knowledgeable, trained volunteers with their own cancer experiences
- On Demand Educational Webinars with up-to-the-minute information led by some of the world's leading medical professionals that are attended by over 185,000 people each year, providing previously inaccessible expertise for everyone who wants it.
- Support Groups for those who have been diagnosed, led by professionally trained survivors in English and Spanish.
- Novelas in English and Spanish that bring cancer signs, symptoms, treatment options and personal experiences to life, to help educate broader communities with culturally sensitive content.
- A robust Patient Navigation to provide one-on-one support for those in need of overcoming barriers to their healthcare and financial toxicity relating to their treatment.
- On-the-ground outreach to many of New York's most vulnerable populations with information about signs, symptoms, myth, facts, and free screenings from members of the community who have faced their own diagnoses.

- Groundbreaking conferences that convene patients, healthcare providers, community organizational partners, pharmaceutical executives, and elected officials to determine and address key obstacles to equitable healthcare.
- Wide distribution of research projects that explore important topics such as older women's experiences with breast cancer diagnoses, and Black women's experiences with TNBC.

PATIENT TESTIMONIAL

"When I found out I had stage three breast cancer I wasn't sure what to do. I called SHARE's Support Line and they helped me find the resources I needed to understand my diagnosis. Then I started to attend one of their breast cancer Support Group meetings. The ladies shared a lot of personal information and best strategies with me. They taught me how to ask questions and empowered me to communicate with my medical team about my treatment.

SHARE has meant so much to me. First, they held my hand throughout my treatment and now, when new members join our group, I'm one of the ladies who helps them get perspective and build their confidence. I've become part of the support system that helped me!"

– Jocelyn Shao

FUNDING REQUEST

In order to continue SHARE's critical services, we are requesting funding from the City Council. Our funding requests this year include the following:

- $248,969 through the Cancer Services Initiative
- $20,000 through the Support Our Older Adults Initiative
- $30,0000 through the Food Pantry and Access Health Initiative
- $10,000 through Member Items
- $10,000 Older Adults Across Boroughs
- $125,000 through the Speakers Initiative for the SHARE Cancer Support Ambassador Outreach Program

Thank you for your consideration and support. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Should you have any questions, I can be reached at hhenderson@sharecancersupport.org.

Sincerely,

Heidi Henderson
Executive Director & CEO

SHARE Cancer Support
315 West 39th Street,, Ste. 910, New York, NY 10018
sharecancersupport.org | 212.719.0364

SBIDC

Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation

4223 1st Avenue, Suite 2
Brooklyn, NY 11232
718-965-3100 fax: 718-577-5858
SBIDC.org

Jesse Solomon
Executive Director

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Eileen Vázquez Thornton
Flushing Bank

June 10th, 2026
Re: Committee on Economic Development Executive Budget Hearing

Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC) thanks Chair Maloney and members of the Committee on Economic Development for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Executive Budget and on the future of New York City's industrial sector.

SBIDC has served the industrial businesses and workers of Sunset Park, Red Hook, and Gowanus for over 40 years. We assist 250 businesses yearly through direct technical assistance and advocacy. Since 2017, leveraging our deep connections with industrial employers, we have helped place more than 2,000 New Yorkers into quality, family-sustaining jobs.

Across these neighborhoods, more than 2,000 industrial firms anchor these local economies, from food production and garment manufacturing to film and television, fabrication, wholesale, logistics, utilities and transportation.

SBIDC has deep, decades-long relationships with these businesses. We know the pulse of these sectors. We are the local intermediaries who connect them to government, to resources, and to opportunity. As a proud member of the Industrial Jobs Coalition, we are one of nine Industrial Business Service Providers (IBSPs) operating across all five boroughs, together the only coordinated public infrastructure the City has ever built to support its industrial economy.

We write to ask this Committee to use its budget and oversight authority to protect that infrastructure before it is gone.

The Budget Cuts Industrial Business Service Provider (IBSP) Funding

The Mayor's Executive Budget proposes reducing funding under budget code 0390 to $1.29 million, cutting the program that funds IBSP contracts across all five boroughs. This is not a future risk. It is a decision already on the table, and this Committee has the authority to reverse it in the adopted budget.

The cut arrives alongside a structural change that compounds the damage. The SBS RFP, re-issued on April 7, 2026, eliminates the standalone industrial services program entirely. In its place: a borough wide model in which Business Solution Centers (BSCs) serve all businesses, commercial and industrial alike, with no additional funding to support the expanded scope. A single pool "Industry Expertise" contract, at $300,000 citywide, would coordinate industrial outreach. This does not include delivering direct services to businesses; the primary role is to oversee the BSC delivery of industrial services.

Together, the budget cut and the RFP restructuring represent a 77% reduction in dedicated industrial investment. **And none of the IBSPs or industrial businesses were consulted before SBS designed this new model.**

Existing contracts have been extended through next year. That buys time. It does not change the trajectory. If the new model proceeds, the City will enter the next contract cycle without the organizational capacity, the neighborhood relationships, or the sector specific expertise needed to serve industrial businesses at scale. That capacity, built over decades, cannot be rebuilt once it is lost.

Why This Committee's Work Depends on a Functioning Industrial Sector

New York City's industrial economy is not a footnote. It is civic infrastructure. Across the five boroughs, the sector supports approximately 500,000 jobs, generates $1.7 billion in annual tax revenue, and pays an average annual wage above $57,000. Seventy percent of workers in this sector do not hold college degrees. Sixty seven percent are people of color. In Southwest Brooklyn alone, more than 37,600 residents work in the industrial sector.

These are not legacy jobs in a declining economy. They are among the most reliable pathways to the middle class in a city where that path has narrowed dramatically. A progressive affordability agenda, one serious about housing, wages, and working-class stability, must also be an industrial agenda.

The Executive Budget reflects significant ambition on housing and affordability. But a city planning to build 200,000 homes cannot do it without the contractors, fabricators, and suppliers already operating in its industrial districts, the firms that produce and install windows, doors, millwork, and building components, and that train the workers who will build those homes. Cutting services to these businesses undercuts the very economic development goals this Committee exists to advance.

What IBSPs Do That No Generalist Program Can Replicate

IBSPs have block by block knowledge of their industrial districts, built over decades. They help businesses navigate city agencies and utilities, address quality of life concerns, connect companies to workforce and training resources, and serve as the trusted intermediary when agencies like DOT and DCP need to reach local businesses. A single $300,000 citywide coordinator serving an estimated 47,000 businesses cannot replicate that relationship infrastructure.

The clearest way to explain what is at stake is to show what this work looks like on the ground.

When Workspace 11, a Gowanus fabrication firm, faced displacement through eminent domain, SBIDC was the first organization to reach them, canvassing every company on their block by name, guiding them through negotiations and relocation, and ultimately helping them stay in the neighborhood and preserve more than 30 jobs. That outcome did not happen because someone made a phone call. It happened because we had been present on that block for years, and every agency involved in the process knew our name.

When Button Down Factory risked defaulting on payroll during the pandemic, SBIDC helped them access emergency capital, government procurement, and a sustained growth path. Today they hold a multi million dollar government contract and anchor a revitalized garment manufacturing ecosystem in Sunset Park. That is not a coincidence. It is what sustained, specialized support produces at exactly the right moment.

These are not outliers. They are the daily work of every IBSP across the five boroughs, work that no rotating generalist, however capable, is positioned to replicate.

Requested Actions

We urge the Committee on Economic Development to direct SBS to take the following actions, in order of priority:

1. **(Preferred) Halt the RFP entirely.** The proposed model represents a structural dismantling of industrial support, not a reform of it.
2. **Remove industrial services from the current RFP scope.** If the RFP proceeds, industrial business services should be addressed through a separate, adequately funded process that reflects the sector's complexity and scale.
3. **Postpone the RFP** until the City Council has worked with the incoming administration to develop a comprehensive industrial policy that reflects the sector's economic significance and has been developed in consultation with IBSPs and the businesses they serve.

The industrial businesses of this city have operated through recessions, superstorms, pandemics, and waves of displacement. They have kept New York fed, supplied, built, and moving, without fanfare and without adequate recognition. The community-based organizations that support them have earned the trust of government agencies, private employers, and working class communities in ways that take decades to build and cannot be quickly reconstructed.

We are not asking the City to preserve the status quo. We are asking it not to dismantle the infrastructure that makes improvement possible.
Thank you for your consideration.



Jesse Solomon
Executive Director
Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation
4223 1st Ave 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, New York 11232

The mission of Special Olympics NY is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-style sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, peer athletes and the community.

Member Items

Special Olympics NY (SONY) is respectfully requesting $10,000 from Districts 2, 3, 11, 23, and 50 to support programs that allow people with intellectual disabilities (ID) to prioritize their health and wellness.

Our community training clubs provide training and competition experiences for athletes of all ages in 22 different Olympic-style sports. Popular sports include track & field, basketball, bocce, bowling, floorball, soccer, and softball.

Athletes are placed in training clubs based off several considerations including geographic location, age, ability level, and sport interest. Clubs train for the duration of a sport season, 8-12 weeks, attending weekly or bi-weekly practices and seasonal competitions. Athletes learn from certified volunteer coaches who teach inclusive and adaptive athletic curricula to accommodate individuals at any ability level. Training clubs also have opportunities to represent their hometown while competing at Special Olympics' highest levels: State Games, USA Games and World Games.

The requested funds will be used to cover the cost of facilities for weekly or bi-weekly Special Olympics sports practices or competitions and transportation to and from Special Olympics competitions.

SONY serves 28,000 individuals with ID across New York City. With councilmember support, we hope to grow this number to 30,000 by 2027. SONY's services and activities are offered at zero cost to our athletes, their families, and caretakers.



STATEN ISLAND CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
1000 Richmond Terrace,
Staten Island, NY. 10301-1161
Tel
718.273.2060
Fax
718.273.2836

Written Testimony of Dina Rosenthal
Executive Director, Staten Island Children's Museum
Member, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

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

The Staten Island Children's Museum respectfully urges the New York City Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million needed to reach the full $30 million commitment for arts and culture funding in Fiscal Year 2027.

As a member of the Cultural Institutions Group, SICM joins cultural organizations across the city in supporting this request. Baseline funding is essential to ending the annual cycle of uncertainty that makes long-term planning difficult for institutions that provide year-round public services. Cultural organizations cannot effectively manage staffing, programming, educational partnerships, and facility operations when critical funding must be restored year after year.

The Staten Island Children's Museum serves a distinct role within New York City's cultural landscape. We are not a destination institution primarily serving tourists. We are a hyper-local cultural resource serving the families, schools, and communities of Staten Island and the adjacent South Brooklyn shoreline. Approximately 90 percent of our audience comes from Staten Island and Brooklyn, mirroring the communities that make up Congressional District 11.

In a typical year, SICM reaches approximately 125,000 children and adults through museum visits, school partnerships, community programs, and outreach activities. Approximately 65 percent of our audience consists of families visiting on their own time, while 35 percent participate through school programs delivered at the museum, in schools, and in the communities where children live and learn.

For many families, SICM is their most accessible cultural institution. We provide affordable educational and cultural experiences close to home, eliminating the need for families to travel elsewhere in the city to access high-quality enrichment opportunities. Parents and caregivers rely on us during weekends, school holidays, and school breaks. Teachers rely on us to reinforce classroom learning through hands-on experiences that support science, literacy, art, and creative problem-solving skills.

For many young children, SICM is their first museum experience and their first encounter with arts, culture, science, and informal learning. Through exhibits, performances, workshops, and educational programs, children develop curiosity, confidence, and a lifelong connection to learning. These experiences are not extras. They are part of the educational ecosystem that helps children succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

Our impact extends beyond traditional museum programming. Each year, SICM hosts New York City's largest Pre-K Enrollment Fair, connecting more than 1,000 families with schools, government agencies, and community

organizations. We partner with City agencies and nonprofit organizations to deliver programs and resources directly to families. These initiatives succeed because families already know and trust our institution as a welcoming community space.

This work is particularly important on Staten Island, where residents have fewer nearby cultural resources than many other New Yorkers. Local cultural institutions ensure that children and families have access to high-quality educational and cultural opportunities within their own communities. Investment in Staten Island's cultural organizations helps ensure that cultural funding reaches every borough and that all New Yorkers benefit from the City's commitment to arts and culture.

At the same time, cultural institutions continue to face increasing costs associated with staffing, utilities, insurance, maintenance, supplies, and facility operations. We support the Cultural Institutions Group's request for annual cost adjustments that recognize the impact of inflation on nonprofit cultural organizations and help preserve services for the communities we serve.

The Staten Island Children's Museum respectfully urges the Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million for arts and culture in the Fiscal Year 2027 Adopted Budget. Stable funding allows cultural institutions to plan responsibly, retain experienced staff, maintain affordability, and continue serving as trusted community resources for New York City's children and families.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of New York City's cultural sector.

Dina Rosenthal
Executive Director
Staten Island Children's Museum

STATEN ISLAND
MUSEUM

1000 Richmond Terrace, Bldg A
Staten Island, New York 10301
StatenIslandMuseum.org

TEL 718 727 1135
FAX 718 273 5683

Cultural Institutions Group Testimony for
Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026
Staten Island Museum
Member, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

I'm Janice Monger, President and CEO of the Staten Island Museum. I am here today to add the voice of the Staten Island Museum to the request of City Council to restore and baseline $30 million of funding for arts and culture organizations in the FY2027 New York City budget. Arts and culture are essential infrastructure to New York City and a major reason why people want to live here and visit here. Arts and culture organizations face rising costs to keep our cultural staff employed at living wages and keep museum programs accessible and affordable for all New Yorkers. It is essential that New York City provides sustainable funding levels to help cultural organizations meet the community need for our services.

Founded in 1881 and a proud Cultural Institutions Group member, the Staten Island Museum is the only remaining general interest museum in New York City, stewarding collections of over 1 million items spanning art, science and history. Staten Island Museum delivers interdisciplinary exhibitions, school and public programs annually. We are open by suggested admission and offer free and low-cost community events throughout the year. The Staten Island Museum partners with more than 70 community organizations for programming, internships and space use. Our timely current exhibition, *Here You Are: Staten Island Triennial,* highlights seven artists exploring identity and place, and the museum provides stipends to the artists. For America 250, the Staten Island Museum is opening the exhibition, Staten Island: Making History, highlighting our borough's contributions to national events as part of NYC's history. The Staten Island Museum offers school group field trips, in-school lessons, and CASA programs that serve 12,000 students per year, 53 percent from Title 1 schools. For many students, it's their first time visiting a museum.

The Staten Island Museum is in the process of undertaking a major NYC capital expansion as a pilot project under the new DDC CM Build program to renovate a currently vacant landmarked building into a state-of-the-art STEAM Education Center.

Thank you for making culture a priority for NYC in FY27 to safeguard NYC's cultural institutions, especially as federal priorities have shifted. The Staten Island Museum supports the cultural sector's requests for **baseline restoration of $30M; consideration of year-over-year cost increases; and capital process reform that are essential** to the stability of NYC's cultural organizations to fulfill our missions, contribute significantly to the wellbeing of New Yorkers, and make our city a sought-after global destination.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Monger, President & CEO, Staten Island Museum
P: 718.483.7113 JMonger@StatenIslandMuseum.org

Laborers' Local 1010 Testimony
Max Barton
Strategic Research, Laborers Local 1010, LIUNA
New York City Council Committee on
Finance – Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chair Linda Lee, members of the committee, and members of the City Council. My name is Max Barton, and I serve in Strategic Research for Laborers' Local 1010, LiUNA. On behalf of our members, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in full support of the Play Fair Coalition.

Our members build New York City's streets, sidewalks, bridges, airports, and parks. Our work helps ensure the city's infrastructure remains strong so New York can continue to serve as a beacon of opportunity for Americans and immigrants alike. Our members also have a deep connection to the City's parks. In union meetings, job sites, and training sessions, when I ask what New York City parks mean to them and their families, the response is overwhelmingly positive and often accompanied by thoughtful suggestions for improvement.

Laborers' Local 1010 strongly supports the core priorities advanced by the Play Fair for Parks Coalition. We appreciate the mayor's inclusion of $15 million in the FY27 Executive Budget toward baselining 161 critical positions. However, we remain concerned that the Executive Budget fails to protect City Parks workers, PEP officers, Urban Park Rangers, forestry staff, maintenance crews, and playground workers who continue to face recurring uncertainty despite providing essential services.

At first glance, one might ask how we arrived at a point where so many essential roles in the parks system are under-resourced. The answer is not a single event or scapegoat, but rather years of budget cuts, hiring freezes, and underinvestment in a public resource that all New Yorkers rely on and enjoy.

This is not a request for a handout—it is a call to "Play Fair." Other cities are doubling, tripling, and even quadrupling their parks' investments, and the effects of underinvestment here are increasingly visible.

New Yorkers are eager for greater investment in parks. NYC's 30,000 acres of parkland remain one of the city's most valuable and accessible public resources, providing free spaces for recreation, community gathering, and connection to nature. Yet these spaces

cannot thrive without the staff who maintain them, protect them, and deliver essential services to the public.

This is where I want to emphasize a key point of evidence that Laborers' Local 1010 will be sharing with Council members this summer: a forthcoming Cornell University study that directly evaluates the outcomes of public infrastructure delivery under project labor agreements. The findings are significant.

The study shows that projects delivered under PLAs are associated with measurable cost savings, improved project efficiency, and stronger long-term performance outcomes. In urban forestry work specifically, the research identifies higher tree survival rates and improved maintenance outcomes when work is performed under PLA conditions. These are not marginal improvements. They are structural efficiencies that translate into better stewardship of public resources and more durable public investment.

We believe this research strengthens the case that investing in a stable, well-supported public workforce, paired with proven labor standards, produces better outcomes for both taxpayers and the city's long-term infrastructure needs.

With that in mind, underinvestment in staffing and maintenance is not just a budget issue, it is a performance issue. NYC Parks cannot meet its mandate without the workforce required to sustain these outcomes.

In closing, NYC's parks system is one of the city's most valuable public assets. But these spaces cannot thrive without the people who maintain them, protect them, and keep them accessible for all New Yorkers. We urge the Council and Administration to act on the Play Fair for Parks Coalition's recommendations and make the investments needed to restore and sustain our parks system.

Thank you.

Testimony to the New York City Council City Council
Committee on Finance

June 10th, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Mohamed Attia, I am the Managing Director of the Street Vendor Project. I would like to thank Chair Lee and the Committee members for the opportunity to testify today.

The Street Vendor Project (SVP) is a membership-based organization with more than 3,400 vendor members. We strive to support street vendors across the 5 boroughs by providing direct services such as small business consultations, legal representation, and access to a wide variety of resources. We also organize to build power to the vendors community across the city and ensure that their voices are heard, and they have a seat at the table when policies and rules are being developed that will impact their livelihoods. Vast majority of our members are immigrants who hail from across the globe. Given the diversity of our membership, our services are offered in 7 different languages, Arabic, Bangla, English, French, Mandarin, Spanish and Wolof, thanks to the diversity of our small team.

We respectfully request that the council consider our funding applications for this fiscal year, since SVP is almost the only entity providing education, outreach and small business services to street vendors in NYC.

As you know, 96% of street vendors are immigrants, and we're seeing immigrants' communities being under attack and threats from the federal government. Yesterday the Trump administration threatened to send more ICE agents to NYC. What would that mean? More attacks on our communities which call for more resources to fight back.

Last year was the first time we received funding from the City to conduct a citywide outreach effort to educate immigrant vendors on their rights and how to deal with federal law enforcement. We hope to see this funding growing this year! We don't have the luxury to slow down.

Also, street vendors are non-traditional workers running the smallest businesses in our city, and they need the city's support to thrive.

Earlier this year, the City Council passed a historic landmark package of legislations, including Local Law 54-2026, that will create a total of 21,500 new licenses for street vendors.

11,000 of which will go to food vendors as Supervisory Licenses, a system that is still new to the vendors community, that has created a lot of confusion with the existing system that has been in place for decades.

10,500 of the new licenses will be offered to merchandise vendors as General Vendor Licenses. A substantial change to a 47-year-old law that a lot of vendors don't know about.

We respectfully request that the City Council prioritize allocating $5 Million for **Worker Rights Organizing and Education initiative** to ensure sufficient resources for all workers across our city.

Street vendors, delivery workers, laundry workers, and many others need support from the city to make sure they are aware of the new systems, protections, and laws that the city has created.

The laws and reforms are as good as they're followed and implemented, and we have to do our part to ensure workers are aware of the reforms taking place, so they can benefit from them.

We also urge the Council to ensure that there's adequate funding to the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection this coming fiscal year, so they have the capacity needed to implement the local laws recently passed and release the 10,500 licenses for vendors.

We're looking forward to working with the City Council to deliver the reforms and changes to the hardest working people who call NYC home.

Thanks

Mohamed Attia

Dear Members of the City Council,

My name is Jon Roure, and I am the Executive Vice President and Chief Innovation Officer at **Student Leadership Network**. Our Directors of College Counseling are embedded as staff inside partner high schools across the city. I am writing in support of continued funding for the New Visions Data Portal.

The portal gives those communities a shared, real-time picture of where students stand, so principals, counselors, teachers, and our own staff can coordinate support rather than work in isolation. That coordination is how schools move students toward graduation and college.

I understand the Executive Budget identifies the contract as a savings opportunity, and that the Chancellor has said he values the Portal and is seeking a sustainable path that avoids disrupting service. I write to support that effort. The right outcome is a durable, funded path forward, not elimination of a tool these school communities rely on every day.

I respectfully ask you to maintain this funding.

Sincerely,

Jon Roure

Executive Vice President & Chief Innovation Officer

Student Leadership Network 322 Eighth Avenue, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10001
T 212-207-3221 **F** 212-207-8814 www.studentleadershipnetwork.org

Student Leadership Network is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Your donation will enrich our students' academic and extracurricular experiences and help more students from under-resourced communities achieve their highest education potential.

Charity Navigator FOUR-STAR

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Dear Members of the City Council,

My name is Sarah Boldin and I am the Managing Director of Girls' Education at **Student Leadership Network**, a 501c3 nonprofit organization that works in partnership with NYC Public Schools on behalf of its students, teachers, and administrators. I am writing to ask you to preserve funding for the New Visions Data Portal.

In my role managing the Girls' Education team at Student Leadership Network, I work very closely with The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), schools that serve communities of high economic need. I know from partnering closely with our TYWLS principals that the New Visions Data Portal is a highly valued resource that is utilized daily by counselors and advisors to map graduation pathways, track attendance, and record and share critical, individualized student interventions. Essentially, the Portal has simplified the processes by which our educators can bring real-time data into conversations with students and families, which are essential to our model that features college and career awareness and success for every student.

Our schools have invested deeply in the Portal, because it has supported meaningful results for students. Teachers have been trained to use the Portal's mock Regents exams to prepare students for the tests, because they have proven so helpful in using data to identify concepts for reteaching and intentional student grouping. Additionally, attendance is a district-wide area of focus, and the Portal has eased the tracking process for our schools with color-coded reports that keep educators and families informed.

The technological alternatives that exist cannot compare with the efficiencies and innovations that the Portal has brought into the work of our schools. I understand that the Chancellor and NYCPS value the Portal, and that New Visions is mobilizing its network to be collaborative and sustainable. Considering the meaningful success that our schools have experienced with the Portal, we want to deepen our use of it in the future. I respectfully ask you to maintain its funding, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Sarah Boldin

Managing Director of Girls' Education
Student Leadership Network

Dear City Councilpersons,

I write to you to urge you to revisit how New York City approaches Animal Welfare. There is no central authority in nyc regarding animals at all. Some pet issues go to nypd, who have bigger fish to fry, ACC is under the Dept of Housing so they are also not a priority there.

When there is no one in charge, nothing gets done. Currently, nothing is getting done. The city routinely rejects lost pets at ACC - if the city shelter is not "the place where lost pets go" what is it exactly? Just the place where people surrender animals. Not enough. We are in a crisis.

I recently had an ACC employee tell me "put the [very clearly a lost pet cat that was so injured it died] back outside, Sunset Park has a culture of community cats" perhaps the council can explain to me why Dumbo and Tribeca, Midtown, the Upper West, don't have a "culture of community cats" exactly? Which culture is it. The ones with money?

There is no one to appeal to there, because animal welfare is not their mission. They take any animal off the streets of Tribeca, so it is tidy and nice and no animals suffer, and reject cats from poor areas because they can, because who cares, there are already lots of animals suffering there. But if Tribeca Doctor Person finds a cat, right this way, sir.

The city funds (does not offer, which is inane btw) 3500 spay/ neuter surgeries when 200k are needed, minimum. And they are unevenly distributed to the areas that need them least. And there is no one to speak to about this. If poor schools got less because, who cares, there's already lots of poor kids there, we have people who are passionate about equality in education to appeal to. For animals? We go to the 3rd sub-department of people who are passionate about housing.

Because there is no animal welfare authority in nyc.

Fund spay/neuter. It's the only thing that will make a difference. 200,000+ spay/neuter appointments must be offered. Mobile vans must be reinstated also since acc and aspca

intentionally build far from public transport to discourage people in need from accessing their services (but Tribeca Doctor Man who has an Escalade, right this way sir). This is called “managed intake” where the letter of the law can be met without the spirit being fulfilled (because this isn't people who are passionate about animals, they seem to be passionate about spending as little as possible on animals so they can keep their budget for their real passion). Far away, inconvenient hours, rude staff, are all intentional ways to keep intake numbers low without technically breaking the law.

Even within the umbrella of Housing, nycha properties are among the most neglected/ abused animal areas in nyc. Because they have different priorities.

There is a central authority in nyc for potholes. For cable television. For the temperatures at restaurant refrigerators.

Why is there no central authority for animal welfare in New York City?

Rose Martin
President, Sunset Park Cats
[redacted]
rose@sunsetparkcats.org

Francis Yu
Director of Supermarket Access
Community Food Advocates

New York City Council Committee on Economic Development
Hearing on City-Owned Supermarkets
May 29, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Maloney and members of the Committee:

My name is Francis Yu, Director of Supermarket Access at Community Food Advocates. On behalf of our organization and the broader Groceries for All Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

Community Food Advocates works to ensure all New Yorkers have access to healthy, affordable, and culturally affirming food. We lead research and coalition-building efforts focused on addressing systemic inequities across our food ecosystem, including longstanding campaigns around universal school meals, cafeteria modernization, and Good Food procurement. In recent years, we have also led research and advocacy efforts focused on supermarket access and affordability.

The Groceries for All Coalition represents a broad and growing alliance of community-based organizations, food justice advocates, labor partners, cooperative leaders, researchers, and neighborhood stakeholders who share a common belief: the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers demands bold structural intervention. Importantly, we hold an expansive view of supermarket access solutions. We believe public, cooperative, and private sector models all have important roles to play in strengthening New York City's food system.

We also want to express our strong support for the City's continued exploration and advancement of this initiative. **We believe city-owned supermarkets represent one of the most ambitious and potentially transformative affordability interventions currently under consideration in New York City**. At a moment when rising grocery costs are placing increasing pressure on low-income, working-class, and middle-class households alike, New Yorkers are looking for bold solutions that materially lower the cost of everyday living. We commend the Council and Administration for engaging seriously with a public model that has the potential to reshape food access, reduce household expenses at scale, and establish a new national benchmark for food affordability policy.

As discussions move from concept toward implementation, we want to emphasize several critical considerations that we believe are necessary to make this initiative a success.

First, **City-owned supermarkets must be supported by substantial and sustained operating investment.** If the City's goal is to create stores that meaningfully lower grocery bills for New Yorkers, operational funding is not optional, it is foundational.

Our coalition's research has consistently pointed to the importance of a military commissary-style model, where public subsidy is used to offset operating costs in order to pass savings directly to consumers. This is the mechanism that allows commissaries to maintain consistently low prices across the store. Without this type of operational support, City-owned supermarkets risk becoming conventional retailers operating within the same market pressures and razor-thin margins that already constrain the private grocery sector.

We believe the City should plan for operating support at a scale of approximately $20 million annually per store in order to achieve meaningful affordability outcomes, particularly in the early years of operation. While this level of investment is significant, it should be understood in the context of the scale of the affordability crisis facing New Yorkers and the public resources already devoted to other forms of economic infrastructure. If implemented correctly, City-owned supermarkets could function as one of the most direct and visible forms of cost-of-living relief available to working families.

Second, **meaningful affordability must extend across the entire supermarket**, not simply within a narrowly defined "core basket" of discounted goods.

While targeted discounts on staple items provide benefit, New Yorkers do not shop exclusively from a limited basket of essentials. Families purchase culturally specific foods, fresh produce, household goods, proteins, snacks, prepared items, and other everyday necessities. A model that only subsidizes a small subset of products risks creating a two-tiered shopping experience that fails to materially change household food costs.

For City-owned supermarkets to build public trust and become genuine community assets, consumers need to experience broad, noticeable savings throughout the store. The goal should not merely be to create a handful of cheaper items, but to shift the overall economics of grocery shopping for working-class New Yorkers.

Finally, as the City explores potential operators for these stores, **we urge openness to values-aligned operating models, particularly cooperatives and mission-driven entities** with demonstrated commitments to community accountability, democratic governance, and equitable food systems.

To be clear, we are not suggesting that the City pursue a traditional member-owned grocery cooperative model that requires individual buy-in or membership fees for access. Rather, we believe the City should remain open to nonprofit, worker cooperative, and other mission-driven

operating entities whose business and governance structures are aligned with public goals around affordability, equity, and long-term neighborhood stability.

Traditional supermarket operators bring important operational expertise, but the City should not assume that conventional for-profit chains are the only viable partners for this initiative. Cooperative and community-centered models often prioritize affordability, worker wellbeing, local economic circulation, and community accountability in ways that align deeply with the public goals of this project.

As the City develops its operator selection process, it is critical that evaluation criteria extend beyond financial capacity alone and include demonstrated commitments to equity, workforce standards, community responsiveness, and public benefit outcomes. If these supermarkets are intended to function as civic infrastructure, then the operating model should reflect those civic values.

New York City has an opportunity to create a national model for publicly supported food access. But success will depend on whether the City is willing to fully embrace the structural conditions necessary to make these stores genuinely affordable, community-centered, and mission-driven.

We urge the Council to continue advancing this work with ambition and urgency, and to ensure that operational investment, whole-store affordability, and values-aligned governance remain central to the development of this initiative. Please see materials attached to this testimony that further explain various public supermarket factors and dynamics.

Thank you for your time and leadership. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Council and Administration to advance an equitable and transformative vision for food access in New York City.



WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD SUCCESSFUL CITY-OWNED SUPERMARKETS

City-owned supermarkets represent a bold opportunity to address food access and affordability, but only if they are designed to succeed. Achieving meaningful savings requires a system built for scale, supported by centralized distribution, sustained through public investment, and designed for operational efficiency. As the City develops this initiative, it is essential that the model is designed to build and sustain a network of stores that provide deeply affordable food for New Yorkers.

New York City has an affordability problem, and you don't have to look any further than your most recent grocery bill to see it. Grocery bills in NYC increased by 56.2% from 2012-2023 and by 25% since 2021.[2] New Yorkers are feeling the strain when it comes to feeding themselves and their families.

Following his election, Mayor Mamdani is advancing a policy to make food more affordable with the announcement of the first City-owned supermarket at La Marqueta in East Harlem, marking a critical first step toward a new model of public food infrastructure. The vision is to leverage City resources to maximize affordability and access for New Yorkers by "buying and selling goods at wholesale prices, centralizing warehousing and distribution, and collaborating with local neighborhoods on product selection and sourcing."[3] At its full potential, this model is designed as a network of City-owned grocery stores that establish affordable food as a public good.

THE INITIAL PHASE

AN IMPORTANT STARTING POINT TOWARD A LARGER NETWORK OF STORES

- **startup capital to build and outfit five grocery stores**, one in each borough;
- **baselined funding to cover ongoing operational costs** for each store.

This initial rollout establishes the foundation. A five-store network alone will not generate the purchasing power needed to maximize low prices. Achieving meaningful affordability requires expansion into a larger, coordinated 20+ store network.

DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Brooklyn Packers
Catskills Agrarian Alliance
Cooperative Economics Alliance of NYC (CEANYC)
Community Food Advocates
Compassion Coalition, Bargain Grocery
CUNY Community & Worker Ownership Project
CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute
Equity Advocates
Forgotten Foods
Institute for Policy Studies Inequality Program
New Amsterdam Market
New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYC NOWC)
WHEDco
Washington Heights-Inwood Food Council (WHIN)

1 SCALE MATTERS MOST

SCALE IS WHAT MAKES LOWER PRICES POSSIBLE

Wholesale pricing improves with volume. The larger the network, the greater the purchasing power, a primary factor in how savings are passed on to consumers. The type of purchasing power that unlocks maximum affordability requires a system built for volume. A five store pilot can demonstrate feasibility, but expansion to a 20+ store network maximizes affordability and ensures sustainability.



IN PRACTICE

A twenty-store network would receive lower wholesale prices for peanut butter because of the larger volume it will need to purchase to stock every store. This results in a significantly lower price for consumers.

2 ONGOING PUBLIC FUNDING

WITHOUT ONGOING FUNDING FOR OPERATIONS, PRICES WILL RISE

Startup capital funds are essential to get stores up and running. However, the success of a City-owned model that maximizes affordability structurally depends on the City providing sustained funding to cover operating costs. This is essential to keeping retail markups minimal and therefore goods as affordable as possible.[4] Affordable groceries require ongoing public investment, not just public ownership.



BUILDING STORES IMPROVES ACCESS

FUNDING OPERATIONS IS WHAT LOWERS PRICES

IN PRACTICE

Supermarket chains often rely on margins of 30% or more to cover operating costs. If the goal is to keep prices close to wholesale with little-to-no mark up to consumers, those costs must be covered through sustained public funding in the City budget—otherwise, they will ultimately be passed on to consumers through higher prices.

3 INTENTIONAL INVENTORY

WHEN THE GOAL IS LOWER PRICES, STREAMLINED INVENTORY BEATS ENDLESS CHOICE

Each product (SKU) carries its own wholesale price, logistics requirements, inventory risk, and labor cost. Stocking larger quantities of a well rounded, but more limited assortment of products enables deeper wholesale discounts compared to maintaining a wide variety of products at lower volumes.



IN PRACTICE

Costco and Aldi maximize savings by limiting products and optimize a higher sales volume per product, again contributing to the importance of scale.

4 STORE DESIGN

LOWER-COST OPERATIONS MAKE LOWER PRICES POSSIBLE

Classic supermarket design means aisles and shelves of products displayed individually requiring a considerable amount of labor, maintenance, and storage. A well designed warehouse-style model allows for streamlined shelving and merchandising, reducing labor and capital expenses. This softens the need for a large employee base, while ensuring unionized, well paying, and high quality jobs.

IN PRACTICE

Warehouse-style retailers like Costco use simpler layouts and pallet-based stocking, which reduce staffing needs and overall operating costs compared to traditional supermarkets that rely on highly labor-intensive shelving models (e.g., ShopRite).

5 CENTRALIZED, CITY-CONTROLLED DISTRIBUTION

CENTRALIZED BUYING POWER LOWERS COSTS & STREAMLINES LOGISTICS

One buying entity and one logistics system lowers costs dramatically by maximizing and concentrating purchasing and distribution power. This allows for a purchasing economy of scale, and a coordinated in-house distribution that not only allows for savings and efficiencies, but strengthens the broader food infrastructure for the City.

THE DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY: THE PREMIERE PUBLIC GROCERY MODEL

Established in the late 1800s, ***the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) provides affordable groceries to military personnel, veterans, and their families through a network of nearly 250 stores worldwide****. Commissaries operate on a cost-plus-5% model, pricing goods at cost (i.e., wholesale price) plus a small margin to support operations. Additional federal funding, totaling approximately $1.5 billion annually, further reduce prices, enabling DeCA to deliver average savings of approximately 23.7% compared to traditional retailers—a level of affordability that is explicitly mandated and built into the system's design.*

Like all public goods, City-owned supermarkets will require sustained public investment to deliver a high-quality experience, reliable service, and—most importantly—affordable food. Fortunately, there is an existing model: the military commissary system. The City's charge, rather than reinventing the wheel, is to build a model based on critical elements learned through the long established, highly successful, and well regarded military commissary model.

Like DeCA, New York City will need to establish and maintain a clear benchmark for affordability. Above all, scale will determine the level of savings that can be achieved. Without sufficient scale, savings will remain limited. Finally, sustained operational subsidies will be a critical lever for maintaining and deepening affordability over time. Together, these pillars offer a roadmap for the success of New York City's supermarket initiative.

SOURCES

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3. Capellini, Jeff (2025) *Zohran Mamdani is pushing for New York City-run grocery stores. Here's what he envisions.*CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/zohran-mamdani-new-york-city-run-grocery-stores/
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What It Takes to Deliver on Affordable Food
UNDERSTANDING THE COST STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC SUPERMARKETS

The Mayor's $70 million capital investment is a critical step toward building public supermarket infrastructure and expanding food access. But capital funding alone will not achieve affordability or long-term sustainability, public supermarkets also require ongoing operating support. **Funding for Operational Costs must be baselined in the City budget for New York City to deliver affordable groceries as a public good.**

Checking the math:

EXPENSE BREAKDOWN

WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN A GROCERY STORE

Every grocery store, public or private, must cover three core categories of costs:

1. the cost of **food**,
2. the cost of **occupying and maintaining space**, and
3. the cost of **running day-to-day operations**.

COST OF FOOD AND PRODUCTS (COGS)

The wholesale cost supermarkets pay to stock their shelves with products.

OCCUPANCY COSTS

Rent, utilities, taxes, and facility-related expenses.

OPERATING COSTS

Staffing, systems, operations, and other day-to-day expenses.



How these costs are funded ultimately determines grocery prices.

Checking the math:

REVENUE BREAKDOWN

WHO PAYS FOR WHAT?

A conventional grocery store model and a public supermarket model differ in one major way: **who absorbs the cost of running the store.**

In a conventional grocery model, these operational costs are recovered through product markups, increasing the price consumers pay at checkout. If operating costs are not publicly funded, those costs will be passed on through food prices.

CONVENTIONAL GROCERY STORE

Consumers pay for:
- Food
- Occupancy costs
- Operating costs

All folded into grocery prices

Higher grocery prices are needed to cover the full cost of running the store.

PUBLIC SUPERMARKET MODEL

Consumers pay for:
- Food at or near wholesale cost

City funds:
- Occupancy costs
- Operating costs

Lower grocery prices are possible because wholesale savings are passed directly to consumers.

TakeRoot Justice *provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression.*

Testimony Concerning:

Executive Budget Hearing – Committee on Finance
June 10, 2026

Presented Before:
Chair Linda Lee and the City Council Committee on Finance

Presented By:
Keriann Pauls (she/her)
Executive Director
TakeRoot Justice
123 William Street 4th Floor New York, NY 10038
(646) 459-3029
kpauls@takerootjustice.org

Thank you to Chair Lee and the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit my written testimony. My name is Keriann Pauls and I am the Executive Director at TakeRoot Justice. Our incredible staff provide legal and technical support for more than 70 community-based groups organizing for systemic change, and we assist immigrants, low-wage workers, tenants & NYCHA residents, consumers, community land trusts, worker cooperatives, and more!

I submit this testimony to amplify TakeRoot's budget priorities that align with our value of working in coalition with our community partners and allies. The need for legal and technical support continues to increase, and for the following initiatives the coalitions we work with seek enhancements to meet this need and address rising costs associated with doing this essential work.

TakeRoot is the coordinating member of **Stabilizing NYC** and the coalition seeks an enhancement to $5.3 million to expand the coalition and increase the organizing impact against Tenant harassment, displacement, and the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity and speculative investors. We are in a moment of powerful alignment across leadership in City Council, the Mayor's Office, and HPD to do portfolio-based Tenant organizing, and we need the resources to fuel the work.

TakeRoot is a member of the **Community Land Trust Initiative** and the consortium seeks an enhancement to $3 million for 23 organizations. This urgently needed funding will provide essential support to 19 active CLTs and four citywide organizations providing capacity-building training and tailored legal and technical assistance.

We are also members of the **Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative** – seeking an enhancement to $5.09 million. This funding will support the WBCDI coalition's

projected work of starting 30 new small businesses, providing pathways to worker ownership for 100 New Yorkers

Additionally, TakeRoot is a founding member of the **Legal Services for the Working Poor** coalition along with CAMBA, HCC, MFJ and NMIC. We provide life changing legal support for New Yorkers who are just above the poverty line, but still unable to afford private attorneys. Each of our organizations seeks an enhancement to $600,000 in FY27 under the Legal Services for Low Income and Working New Yorkers Initiative.

TakeRoot also seeks the council's support for our impactful work under the **Low Wage Worker Support Initiative**, and the **Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative.**

Attached to my testimony are one-pager overviews of the importance of these initiatives and additional details regarding the FY27 requests.

Thank you to Chair Lee and the Committee on Finance for your leadership and for partnering with us as we fight for equity and justice for all New Yorkers.

TakeRoot collaborates with 70+ groups organizing low-income, BIPOC and immigrant communities throughout NYC to serve 2100+ New Yorkers per year and share $20 million+ in support for work toward racial, social and economic justice. We are proud to work with the following organizations:

TAKEROOT JUSTICE

Growing a more just and equitable NYC



FY27 Funding Requests

City-wide Initiative	FY26 Award	FY27 Request
Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CPHS)	$3,651,000	$4,950,000
Community Land Trust (CLT)	$1,500,000	$3,000,000
Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP)	$2,275,000	$3,000,000*
Low Wage Worker Support (LWWS)	$2,173,000	$3,000,000
Worker Cooperative Business Development (WCBDI)	$3,768,208	$5,146,789
Stabilizing NYC (SNYC)	$3,700,000	$5,300,000

** $600,000 each for original 5 members: TakeRoot, HCC, NMIC, CAMBA, MFJ*

We are committed to several citywide council funding initiatives that deliver essential services throughout NYC. Communities are facing unprecedented, targeted attacks from the federal administration. Coupled with ongoing contracting delays, this has created both political and financial instability. **It is crucial the council preserve these vital programs and implement overdue cost-of-living increases across all initiatives.**

Contact: **Keriann Pauls**, Interim Executive Director
kpauls@takerootjustice.org | (646) 459-3029
www.takerootjustice.org

Our Partners

TakeRoot collaborates with 70+ groups organizing low-income, BIPOC, and immigrant communities for racial, social, and economic justice.

Manhattan

East Harlem El Barrio Community Land Trust
CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities**
The Residents to Preserve Public Housing
Chinese Staff and Workers' Association
Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)
Movement for Justice in El Barrio
African Communities Together**
Asian Americans For Equality**
Little Sisters of the Assumption
Cooper Square Committee
Harlem Solidarity Defense
University Settlement

The Bronx

Bronx Organizing Neighborhoods & Development (BOND)
Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
Pan-African Community Development Initiative
Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA)
Mary Mitchell Family & Youth Center
Green Worker Cooperatives**
South Bronx Tenant Movement
Crotona Community Coalition
New Settlement Apartments
Bronx Community Land Trust
Mothers on the Move

City-wide

Supportive Housing Organized & United Tenants (SHOUT)
Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development
National Mobilization Against Sweatshops
Damayan Migrant Workers Association
NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives
Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project
National Domestic Workers Alliance
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
Right to Counsel NYC Coalition
Participatory Budgeting Project
Asian Americans for Equality
Arab American Association
Domestic Workers United
Sylvia Rivera Law Project
Laundry Workers Center
Tenants and Neighbors
Make the Road NY
Urban Upbound
VOCAL-NY
Rise

Queens

Chhaya Community Development Corporation
New Immigrant Community Empowerment
Rockaways Neighbors Helping Neighbors
MinKwon Center for Community Action
Desis Rising Up and Moving**
Ridgewood Tenants Union
Woodside on the Move
Project Hajra
Adhikaar**

Brooklyn

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees**
East New York Community Land Trust
Center for Family Life in Sunset Park
Carroll Gardens Nanny Association
Carroll Gardens Association
Worker's Justice Project /
Proyecto Justicia Laboral**
Brooklyn Movement Center
Neighbors Helping Neighbors
Flatbush Tenant Coalition
Fifth Avenue Committee
Equality for Flatbush
Red Hook Initiative
IMPACCT Brooklyn
Cypress Hills LDC
St. Nicks Alliance

Staten Island

La Colmena

**Indicates an organization that also serves other borough(s)

fighting predatory equity and tenant harassment

STABILIZING NYC

organizing nyc tenants for the right to stay in our homes and communities

FY 2027 Initiative Funding Request For $5,300,000

Stabilizing NYC requests $5.3 million in City Council initiative funding for the twelfth year of our highly successful program to combat harassment, evictions, and the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity and speculative investors.

Stabilizing NYC (SNYC) is a citywide coalition combining legal, advocacy and organizing resources to organize tenant associations and landlord coalitions. SNYC members organize tenants to build power through outreach, tenant rights education, leadership development, and legal defense and support.

Safe, affordable housing continues to be under threat in NYC. Real estate speculation runs rampant and the landlord lobby is working to dismantle the tenant protections won in the NYS legislature.

The cycle of predatory equity has ravaged our communities for too long. Lenders make large loans to ill intentioned landlords whose businesses are predicated on reducing services and raising rents, especially in low income communities of color.

The recently collapsed Signature Bank, who lent to NYC's worst landlords, has further destabilized affordable housing and underscores the need for strong tenant organizing and protections.

Courts have been overwhelmed with eviction cases since the moratorium was lifted and tenants struggle to pay rent. It has been reported that there have been over 100,000 eviction cases in NYC since the moratorium was lifted in 2022.

SNYC tenants grapple with landlords who use a variety of harassing tactics to displace tenants to flip buildings out of regulatory status to maximize profits over people

- ★ aggressively pursue eviction cases
- ★ refuse to make repairs, forcing tenants to live in dangerous & unhealthy conditions
- ★ warehouse vacant apartments, hoping to ultimately circumvent rent regulations

Impacts & Highlights over past 12 years

Grew from 12 to 20 groups, $1 mil to $3.7 initiative

Provided **Brief Counseling** for over **7,000 people**

Door-knocked almost **3,000 buildings**

Held over **5,000 Meetings, Trainings and Workshops**

Built over **200 Tenant Associations**

Tenants participated in almost **500 Direct Actions**

Across all boroughs, groups built trusted networks which were lifelines during the pandemic- and have built back organizing programs

Supported and trained dozens of organizers

Developed a Scope of Work with HPD to quantify the building blocks of organizing

Tenants organized and represented by the SNYC members have won in courts and in the streets and work with the City Council to pass stronger laws and policies.

Protecting our NYC communities from landlord abuse and rampant speculation is all the more critical under the current federal administration.

Our work results in an improved and well-maintained NYC housing stock that's kept affordable for our working-class families and seniors.

For the past several years, the City Council generously awarded us $3,700,000 to continue our work. *With the additional increase of $1.6 million, we can protect more homes, win more building improvements and strengthen community organizing across the City.*

Our current leadership at the Council, the Mayor's Office and HPD has never been more aligned with SNYC's mission to do portfolio-based organizing and target long-standing bad-acting, corporate landlords. **This is a moment for us to expand our coalition.** The additional funds will allow each SNYC group to expand and to bring in 2-4 new groups.

Further, the coalition has not seen an increase in funding in over 7 years, despite inflation and cost of living increases. We are in the last year of our multi-year contract, and ***SNYC members have not had their contracts registered and are still waiting on FY24 and 25 funds.*** The contract delays experienced by the nonprofits groups have made the need for COLA and inflation increases all the more critical along with an opportunity to grow for FY27, which will bring a new multi-year contract.

STABILIZING NYC MEMBERS:

Manhattan:	CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities ● Cooper Square Committee ● Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) ● Housing Conservation Coordinators ● Met Council on Housing
Bronx:	Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) – New Settlement ● Mothers on the Move ● Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition ● Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association
Brooklyn:	Fifth Avenue Committee ● Flatbush Tenant Coalition ● IMPACCT Brooklyn ● Neighbors Helping Neighbors ● St. Nicks Alliance ● Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB)
Queens:	Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) ● Catholic Migration Services ● Chhaya CDC ● Woodside on the Move
Citywide:	TakeRoot Justice

Housing justice is racial justice. Predatory Equity & Speculation disproportionately forces out tenants in BIPOC communities. Decades of government disinvestment in communities of color has been exacerbated by redlining, speculation, and overleveraging. Landlords & Lenders continue to benefit from systemic racism by going unpunished, face little accountability, and are rewarded for their negligent behavior. Landlords & Lenders wield power over communities through denial of services, neglecting repairs, illegal construction, etc and are rarely held accountable by city and state agencies. Private equity companies and speculators are working every day to find "opportunities" in this crisis as they commodify housing and seek to displace our communities for their profit.

Please contact SNYC Coordinator Jackie Del Valle at jdelvalle@takerootjustice.org or (718) 877-6689 for more information.



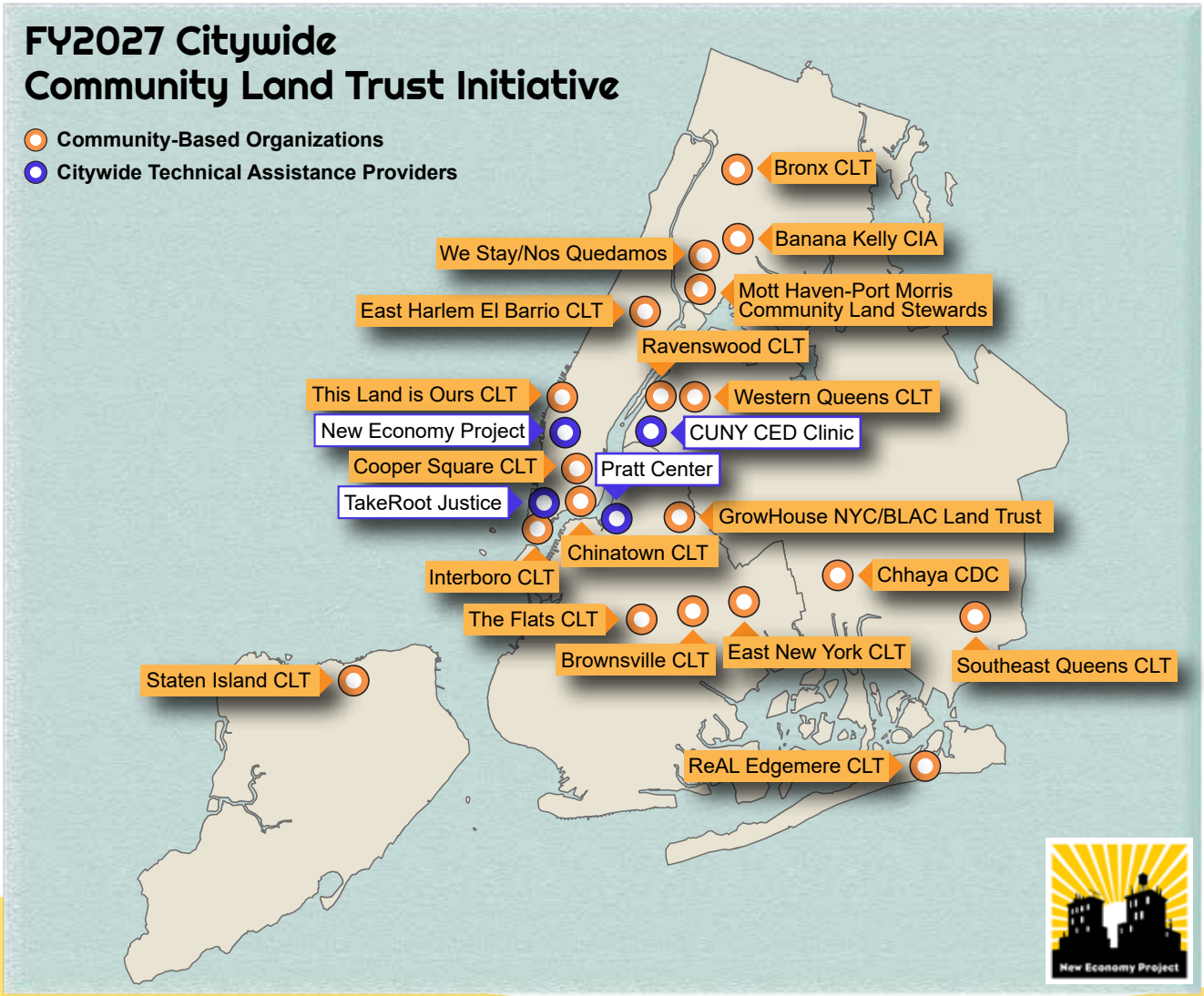
Community Land Trust Initiative

FY2027 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust Initiative** seeks **$3 million** in FY2027 City Council discretionary funding to support 23 organizations working to develop community land trusts (CLTs) as vehicles for creating and preserving permanently affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. The CLT Initiative combats displacement and addresses root causes of NYC's affordability crisis, by delivering comprehensive community education, organizing, and legal and technical assistance to incubate and expand CLTs.

Launched in FY2020, the CLT Initiative has catalyzed the growth of grassroots-led CLTs in low-income, immigrant, and Black and brown communities. Groups have organized and educated thousands of New Yorkers; brought land and housing into community and tenant ownership; and created and preserved lasting community wealth.

➡ **Explore our interactive map of CLTs, including properties and communities served: neweconomyproject.org/cltmap.**

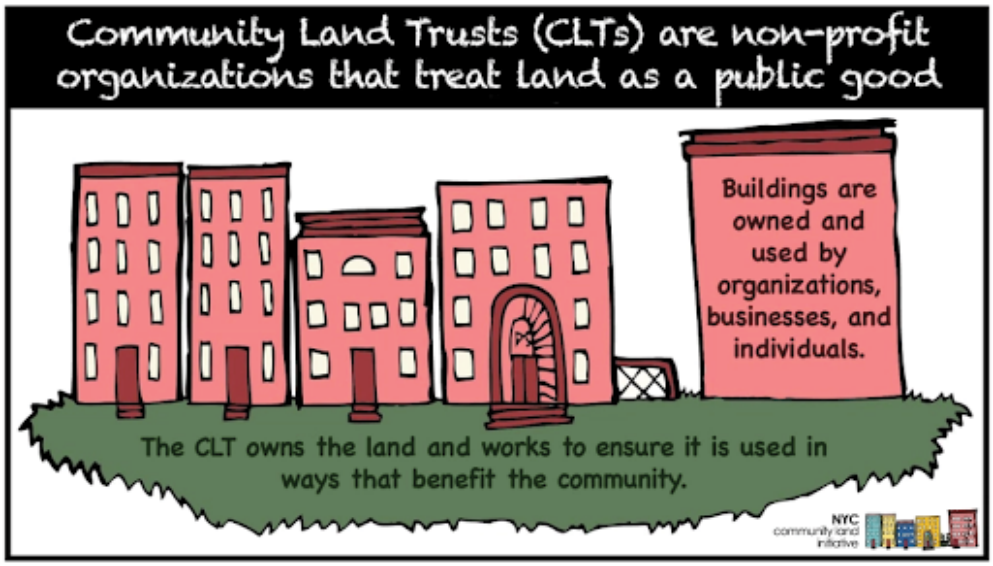


Enhanced funding of $3 million will help us expand the initiative to meet the growing demand for CLTs. In FY2027, the initiative will:

- Support the growth of 19 CLTs acquiring, developing, and stewarding for deeply affordable housing and other needs.
- Engage four citywide technical assistance providers delivering legal, training, organizing and research support to emerging and established CLTs.
- Provide 100+ legal and technical assistance engagements to CLTs on matters such as incorporation, bylaws, property acquisition, developer partnerships, and financing.
- Conduct 200+ organizing, education, and community planning sessions – in multiple languages – for tenants, homeowners, small businesses, and other stakeholders.
- Train 100+ CLT leaders and residents on community and tenant governance, and produce popular education material to support intergenerational organizing.
- Organize with tenants seeking to take collective ownership of buildings, in partnership with Stabilizing NYC and other coalitions.

The CLT Initiative is urgently needed to address New York's deepening affordability crisis. With Initiative support, CLTs will continue to create and preserve thousands of permanently affordable homes, as well as community and cultural spaces, affordable storefronts, community solar, and other community-serving infrastructure. CLTs will protect land from speculation, ensuring long-term community control.

CLTs preserve public investment and housing affordability over generations. Manhattan's Cooper Square CLT and East Harlem El Barrio CLT steward more than 400 deeply affordable apartments, as well as storefronts for two dozen small businesses. East New York CLT, Mott Haven Port Morris Community Land Stewards, Bronx CLT, ReAL Edgemere CLT, and others have acquired their first properties – stabilizing multifamily buildings, creating affordable homeownership opportunities, developing vacant City land, and more.



New Economy Project coordinates the citywide CLT initiative.
For more information, contact Will Spisak at will@neweconomyproject.org.
Learn more about NYC's CLT movement at nyccli.org

FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 PROPOSAL

NEW YORK CITY WORKER COOPERATIVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Enhancement to $5.09 million

Building Good Jobs and Vibrant Essential Businesses in New York City Through Cooperative Enterprise

Contact
Melat Seyoum, NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives
(917) 336-0605 | melat@nycworker.coop

The Need: Amidst ongoing economic volatility, low-income and immigrant New Yorkers are in need of support more than ever. Small businesses continue to struggle, shedding jobs and leaving skilled workers without confidence to find employment that affords stability, let alone upward mobility. All New Yorkers should have quality employment opportunities. Our initiative provides critical support to small business, workers, and recent migrants, connecting them to business ownership and employment opportunities, including when alternative routes to employment and business ownership are unavailable. We create and support resilient employment and business ownership opportunities unlike any other in New York. *Our work puts agency and assets in the hands of workers and their communities.*

A Successful Solution for Upward Advancement: Worker cooperatives—businesses owned and managed democratically by the people working in them—offer workers greater control over job conditions and the fruits of their labor. Workers are empowered by shared ownership to determine wages, benefits, and job stability for themselves. This characteristic helps worker cooperatives be more resilient in economic downturns and enables the model to be useful for immigrant workers and other workers facing barriers to employment.

FY25-26 Achievements: Thanks to City Council's investment over the last eleven fiscal cycles, the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) has provided significant benefit to aspiring business owners and small business cooperatives. Our small business support has helped scale and strengthen the cooperative ecosystem in NYC. In COVID times, we expanded services, grew our membership in alignment with increased demand, and moved more than $20M in emergency funding to help small businesses thrive. Over the past year, our services have been in high-demand and especially impactful as a tool for providing services to the city's population of migrant workers.

Building on Success: In FY27 we are requesting a funding enhancment to meet the growing demand for the services WCBDI has provided to businesses and driving the increased growth and resiliency of worker-owned small businesses through innovative strategies. We will deliver essential financial assistance and increased business skills development services, focus on support to conventional businesses for conversion to cooperative structures, build worker-owned small businesses in the new cannabis industry, provide an increase in legal support to small businesses, connect businesses to clients, and strengthen sector-specific work. WCBDI partners also provide mentorship to a growing number of nonprofits developing worker cooperatives, amplifying best practices and resources. We project a total of 30 new small businesses will be created, providing work and pathways to ownership for to 100 NYC workers.

Scope of Services: We will commit resources to three areas of work: (1) business creation and conversion, (2) technical assistance to sustain businesses and create jobs, and (3) education and outreach to entrepreneurs, communities, and allied organizations.

Allocations: The table below lists organizational allocations for FY27.

Creation of new cooperatives in low-income areas through startup incubation and conversion to worker ownership	*Center for Family Life* *The ICA Group* *Mothers on the Move* *Urban Upbound* *Workers Justice Project* *The Working World*	$600,000 $524,405 $450,144 $348,115 $95,000 $520,000
Technical assistance to sustain businesses and create jobs; and education and outreach to communities, entrepreneurs, and allied organizations	*Business Outreach Center Network* *CAMBA* *Main Street Legal Services, Inc., CUNY Law* *Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition* *Take Root Justice* *Democracy at Work Institute* *New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives*	$298,662 $50,284 $340,000 $497,692 $324,567 $305,503 $482,711
Regrants to non-WCBDI organization developing cooperatives	*Democracy at Work Institute* *ICA Group*	$40,000 $175,000

City Council Must Renew and Expand Low Wage Worker Support for Fiscal Year 2027

For FY27, NYC needs the Council to renew and expand the Low Wage Worker Support (LWWS) initiative to $3 million to support vital legal services to New York City's low wage workers.

The **Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative (CILEC)** is comprised of legal service providers and community-based organizations that work throughout New York City. Through organizing and legal representation, CILEC members TakeRoot Justice, Catholic Migration Services, and Make the Road New York have helped strengthen low-income immigrant communities through the citywide LWWS initiative.

LWWS enables nonprofit legal service organizations to provide thousands of low-wage workers across NYC with a range of free employment-related legal services, including individualized legal advice and full legal representation in pre-litigation settlement negotiations, unemployment insurance hearings, and individual and group cases before state and federal courts and administrative agencies.

LWWS is unique: it is the only city funding stream dedicated to fighting wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and workplace rights violations. It is also unique because it funds community-based, holistic legal services and advocacy that provide low-wage workers access to economic justice.

Since FY25, as a result of our LWWS funding, we've been able to:

- **Conduct 54 community trainings** on workplace rights;
- Advised & represented NYC workers in **969 cases** to recoup unpaid wages and enforce laws relating to paid sick leave, unemployment benefits, discrimination, and retaliation; and
- **Obtained more than $6.3 million** in settlements and judgments for workers.

LWWS is necessary: nearly $1 billion in wages are stolen from low-wage workers in New York City every year, with devastating consequences for low-income communities, and the City's economy as a whole.

In FY26, LWWS was awarded to TakeRoot Justice, Catholic Migration Services, Make the Road New York, Legal Aid Society, Legal Services NYC, NICE, NYCOSH, NYLAG, and Third Sector New England.

TAKEROOT JUSTICE

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing

My name is Emi Montenegro. I am the CILEC-IOI Coalition Coordinator at TakeRoot Justice and I am submitting this testimony today as a member of the Citywide Immigrant Legal Empowerment Collaborative ("CILEC"), a consortium of several NYC legal services providers and community-based organizations supporting immigrant workers through the Low-Wage Worker Support initiative.

Low-Wage Worker Support is unique in that it is the only dedicated City funding that ensures that the City's low-wage and immigrant workers have redress from workplace injustices. In the last few years, the funding has supported our work in representing immigrant workers with claims of sick leave violations, sick leave retaliation, and wage theft. **We request that the Council renew and increase LWWS funding from $2 million in FY26 to $3 million in FY27.** LWWS funding has remained the same for nearly 10 years, and an increase is needed to cover increasing costs and the escalating demand for services supporting immigrant workers.

Since Fiscal Year 25, CILEC LSPs recovered approximately $6.3 million in unpaid wages and damages. In this time period, CILEC LSPs advised and represented nearly 1,000 workers and conducted over 50 Know Your Rights trainings. LWWS funding makes this work possible providing financial recovery, education, and empowerment for low-wage and immigrant workers.

This crucial funding has lagged behind other priorities, requiring last-minute saves from workers' rights advocates and the City Council to work to renew the funding. **We respectfully request City Council to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the City's low-wage and immigrant workers by renewing and expanding Low-Wage Worker Support Initiative for employment-related legal services funding from $2 million to $3 million.** This expansion will stabilize the funding so low-wage and immigrant workers can continue to receive this essential advocacy through vital civil legal services and community outreach. Failure to renew and expand this funding will have a devastating impact on low-wage and immigrant workers, leaving them without high-quality and culturally sensitive representation in their efforts to obtain economic and worker justice.

123 William Street, #401 / 4th floor
New York, NY 10038
T: 212-810-6744

Now, more than ever in this dangerous time of attacks on immigrants' rights and on our democracy, low-wage and immigrant workers need champions from advocates such as TakeRoot Justice and our allied CILEC partners. But our ability to retain and hire staff and maintain and expand crucial administrative infrastructure to continue this life-sustaining work under Low-Wage Worker Support requires expanded and sustainable funding.

We thank the City Council for your continued support for low-wage and immigrant workers through this essential funding.

Thank you for making time for my testimony today.

Emi Montenegro
CILEC-IOI Coalition Coordinator
Resource Management Team

TakeRoot Justice
123 William St, Suite 401, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10038
Tel. | 646.923.8381
Fax | 212.619.0653
https://takerootjustice.org/

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ABOLISH THE NYC TAX LIEN SALE COALITION

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

My name is Paula Segal. I am Senior Staff Attorney in TakeRoot Justice' Equitable Neighborhoods Unit and am here today representing the Abolish the NYC Tax Lien Sale Coalition, which has organized and advocated since 2020 to abolish the current lien sale system and replace it with a just and equitable system of City debt collection. TakeRoot is a founding member of the Coalition.

The Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget includes revenue from a tax lien sale while providing no funding for outreach to owners and residents of lien sale-eligible buildings. This is unacceptable.

The City Council must pass a budget that includes $3 million in outreach funding for residents of lien sale-eligible properties, even if the sale is suspended in 2027.
Struggling homeowners will only see their City debt increase if they don't have the support they need to evaluate their options and find a pathway to staying in their homes. Tenants in buildings with outstanding debt need to be informed of their rights and connected with groups that can help them improve their living conditions; tax lien sale-eligible buildings are in greater physical distress than comparable buildings without debt.

The City Council must use all tools at its disposal to ensure that outreach funding is distributed in a timely manner.
The Fiscal Year 2026 budget allocated $2 million for outreach, but those funds were reduced by half and only released in May. This means that fewer at-risk households will get the support they need, increasing the risk of displacement and the loss of the home equity they've built.

In addition to funding timely outreach to support property owners who fall behind on their municipal charges, we are calling on the Council to urge the Administration to suspend the lien sale in FY27 and to end sales to privately-managed Tax Lien Trusts entirely.
The harms of the lien sale—including displacement and predatory real estate speculation—are disproportionately placed on the backs of residents in BIPOC communities across the City. The small amount of revenue the lien sale generates is far outweighed by the costs it imposes on struggling homeowners and tenants living in buildings owned by delinquent homeowners. Even with significant reforms put in place in 2024, the lien sale continues to harm vulnerable New Yorkers. Last year, the Coalition

documented the impact of the 2025 lien sale, the only one that was conducted incorporating these reforms. Our resulting report, "Beyond Reform: Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale," was release last month and can be found online: https://www.eastnewyorkclt.org/publications. A report brief is attached to our testimony today as well.

Mayor Mamdani has rightly pointed out that the lien sale is "predatory," and during his campaign committed to "stop the Lien Sale on Day One" and create a new system of debt collection. The City Council passed legislation last year, and overrode the former Mayor's veto of the legislation, for a new system with a land bank at its core.

The Council must work with the Administration to implement this new system as quickly as possible.

A new system can be designed to mitigate the harms of the current system while increasing compliance. Establishing the new system promptly, combined with suspending the 2027 lien sale and providing sufficient outreach funding in a timely manner, will limit the negative impacts the current system has on at-risk homeowners and tenants. The Coalition is looking forward to the timely appointment of individuals to the working group that will form and become the initial board of the New York City Land Bank, per Local Law 56 of 2026,[1] and stands by to support the work of that group in any way it can. We urge the Council and administration to submit the required State application for the formation of the land bank as soon as practical after appointments are made, and not to wait until the 2029 deadline is upon us.

Thank you so much for making time for my testimony today.

Paula Z. Segal, Esq.
Senior Staff Attorney
Equitable Neighborhoods
psegal@takerootjustice.org
(646) 459-3067

TakeRoot Justice
123 William Street, #401
New York NY 10038
takerootjustice.org

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[1] The working group appointments are due to be completed by July 29, 2026. The appointments are to be made as follows:
(a) The mayor or their designee;
(b) The commissioner of finance or their designee;
(c) The commissioner of housing preservation and development or their designee;
(d) Three persons appointed by the speaker of the council; and
(e) One person appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the council after a public hearing.

REPORT BRIEF

Beyond Reform

Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale

May 2026

New York City's method of handling municipal debt since 1996—a Tax Lien Sale to investor-backed Trusts—has been racially unjust and inequitable. This Sale harms homeowners and tenants alike. Homeowners, many of whom have owned their homes for decades, risk losing their homes to unscrupulous, predatory real estate investors and through tax foreclosure. Tenants are exploited by landlords who collect rent but fail to pay their City charges and don't properly maintain their buildings. *These harms are not experienced equally: Black and Brown communities bear the brunt of the harms perpetrated by this misguided policy.*

Despite changes implemented for the 2025 Sale—including more frequent notifications, increased outreach to at-risk households, and programs to help people get their properties out of the Sale—the outcomes were no different than in years past.

The Trust-based Lien Sale is beyond reform. The Administration and City Council must halt all lien sales and fund extensive community-based outreach until a new system is in place.

Key Findings

from our report *Beyond Reform: Evidence from the 2025 Lien Sale*

The Tax Lien Sale encourages real estate speculation

Publicly posting lists of lien sale properties serves as a 'roadmap' for speculators. Residents, both homeowners and tenants, were frequently skeptical of canvassers, often thinking they were scammers or speculators. Numerous canvassers noted that when they arrived at properties they would often see flyers that said "Sell Your House for Cash" or "We Buy Homes for Cash."

Any new system must not include an annual directory of the City's most vulnerable owners

Long-time homeowners in Black and Latine neighborhoods were disproportionately impacted

In majority Black community districts, 1 - 3 family Tax Class 1 **properties owned for more than 10 years were 10 times as likely to have a lien sold** than in majority white districts and **3 times as likely in majority Latine districts** compared to majority white districts.

The Lien Sale disproportionately affects Black and Latine neighborhoods

1 - 3 family Tax Class 1 properties in **majority Black neighborhoods were 6 times more likely to have a lien sold on them** than properties in majority white neighborhoods, while majority **Latine neighborhoods were 1.6 times more likely to have liens sold.**

Uncertainty and confusion about the Lien Sale

Despite efforts to increase outreach to at-risk households, tenants and homeowners living in at-risk properties revealed a deeply concerning pattern of confusion, administrative delays, and financial hardship. Homeowners reported being unaware of outstanding charges, did not know that side lots and driveways may have separate tax bills, or were overwhelmed by the amount owed and their ability to pay. Tenants often had no idea that they could potentially be displaced by the lien sale and that their landlords were not paying their taxes, water, and other City charges.

Outreach efforts by agencies and community-based organizations to owners with City debt must be bolstered and sustained year-round.

Most properties were rental and in poor condition

Most of the properties Coalition members visited were rental properties and tenants reported unresponsive landlords, persistent problems with their homes, and concerns about losing their homes due to landlord harassment or being on month-to-month leases. Landlords across the City use nonpayment of City charges as a way to increase their income and when the bill comes due tenants pay in deteriorating living conditions.

Tax Class 2 rental properties, excluding condominiums and cooperatives, eligible for the lien sale averaged 1.3 open Class B & C Housing Maintenance Code violations per unit and those that had a lien sold averaged 2.1 open violations. **The average violation rate is 7.5 times higher for properties with liens sold** on them than buildings unaffected by the lien sale, which had 0.27 violations per unit.

Tenants must be supported in holding their landlords accountable and taking steps towards ownership if they are interested.

Challenges with exemptions

Many homeowners, especially aging adults, were unaware that they may have been eligible for exemptions or other programs that would have prevented their homes from being at-risk of the lien sale. Others had previously been granted exemptions but were unaware that they needed to be renewed. Retroactively applying for an exemption is not possible — with no exemption, once the charges are levied they are legally obligated to pay. If they can't pay, they risk losing their homes.

The City must work with the State to make retroactive exemptions possible.

DOF created barriers & offered poor guidance

DOF staff counseled homeowners to enter into standard payment plans and discouraged use of the "Easy Exit" program, regardless of an owner's ability to make payments.

Heirs need particular support to protect their homes. In 2025, heirs with title issues were eligible to apply to be removed with a Probate Removal application if they were pursuing a case in Surrogate's Court but starting such a proceeding is often a difficult barrier for families to overcome.

ABOLISH THE NYC TAX LIEN SALE COALITION

Contact: jakobs@eastnewyorkclt.org

City Council Members
New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

June 2026

Nadia Swanson, LCSW
Senior Director of Advocacy and Global Programs
nswanson@aliforneycenter.org
(929) 357-1407

FY27 City Council Budget Testimony

RHY programs are a place of extremes: In one hour, underpaid staff could be assessing someone for suicide, serving lunch, putting a new youth at ease after their parents kicked them out, having a kiki, breaking up a fight, administering narcan, and caring for a youth experiencing psychosis.

And at the end of that day we have tell all of those youth, there is no bed , but you can have this chair in this drop in center.

No one should be on a waitlist for safety. No young person should spend six months trying to sleep in a drop-in center chair while their physical and mental health deteriorate. For those with serious mental illness they have no appropriate RHY placements. LGBT unhoused youth are more than 2x more likely to have an early death. This is our reality and it is abhorent to ignore and not ensure adequate funding to stop it.

NYC has 913 DYCD funded beds, AFC alone serves more than 2,000 young people each year and we currently have 400 youth on a waitlist for a crisis bed — last year that number was 300. When youth could access housing vouchers through DYCD, that waitlist dropped below 100.

RHY Budget Cuts: The Mayors Exec cut RHY by 1.7M .The State cut RHY funding by 3.5M and now the due to the federal and state cuts the upstate RHY beds they will close and more youth will come to NYC.

DYCD RHY current bed rates are around $50K/bed/year, the true cost is $75K to $80K . To close that gap it would be an $18M budget increase. If you did just the 293 crisis beds would be only a $6M increase.

The system is bottlenecked. Youth can't get in or out since youth lost access to all vouchers and only have 80 lgbt youth supportive housing spots. We have gone backwards, the services youth are provided now are very similary to what it looked like 10 years ago. Progress was made and then taken away. The way the system and the funding are set up is only perpetuating homelessness. Youth need real long term independent housing options and the ability to access a crisis bed the same night. Because youth homelessness is less visible then adult homelessness they are forgotten about, left out of government housing plans and wildly underfunded.

NYC should be investing in care not criminlization. LGBTQIA+ youth are disproportianitly incarcerated and most often for survival. It is egregious to pay $500K per year at Rikers when youth are criminalized for homelessness instead of $80K to give youth stability, services and opportunities. They are only in this situation because the system and society failed them in the first place.

Without raising the bed rates , RHY programs cant afford to take on new beds. When we were given 100 new 21-24 year old beds in FY26 programs were hesitant to expand despite the clear need because they could not afford to. That is a failed system.

The City must step up: New York City cannot call itself a sanctuary for LGBTQIA+ youth while hundreds wait for shelter.

Youth should not be homeless, this is not hard or expensive. We don't need pats on the back, we need funding and resources.

1. Increase bed rates per bed to accurately reflect the true costs of beds
    a. The real cost is $75K/year/bed for Transitional Independent Living (TILs) and $80K/year/bed for Crisis Beds
    b. Total budget increase to fill the gap is $18M. Crisis beds alone would cost $6M
2. DYCD needs to release a new RFP for the full system (Street Outreach, Drop Ins, TILs and Crisis) before Fiscal Year 2027. We have not had a new RFP or rate increase in over 8 years.
3. Baseline $1.6 million for Peer Navigators
4. Baseline $1.6 million for Housing Navigators
5. Increase beds for older youth 21-24.
6. Competitive wages to help maintain staff. Programs experience high turnover rates and that has a direct impact on youths progress.
7. Ensure youth can access CityFHEPS and all vouchers through DYCD
8. Expansion of Supportive Housing beds: Currently applications are only valid for 1 year and there are times that the application has expired or very close to expiring before the youth is interviewed for a vacancy.
9. Include RHY providers, youth and advocates on the Homelessness roundtables and forums. DYCD RHY system has historically been an after thought, leaving providers to have to spend years advocating for inclusion in current policies while youth suffer.

NEW YORK CITY TRANS & QUEER COALITION

Contact: **nyctqc@gmail.com and nswanson@aliforneycenter.org**

The New York City Trans & Queer Coalition (NYCTQC), is a citywide coalition of trans-led and LGBTQIA+ missioned organization advocating for safety, housing, healthcare, education, and diginity for ALL LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers.

A $38.5M investment across all five of these critical funding areas is urgently needed to close gaps in care, housing, legal support, and community infrastructure for LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers. All five asks work together—because our communities can't afford to pick and choose between safety, survival, and thriving.

Ask 1: $10M for the Trans Equity Initiative Fund

The Trans Equity Initiative is a lifeline for trans and gender-expansive New Yorkers, yet current funding at $6.5M falls short of meeting the growing need—especially for trans-led, BIPOC-led organizations doing frontline, community-rooted work. As the need grows the funds are depleting.

$10M will:

- **Expand funding for trans-led and BIPOC-led organizations**
- **Provide coalition-aligned technical assistance to strengthen capacity and sustainability**
- **Ensure culturally competent, affirming services reach those most impacted**
- **Stabilize community-based organizations delivering critical care, housing, and support**
- **Trans communities deserve sustained investment—not short-term survival**

Ask 2: $15M for the Gender Affirming Care for Youth Fund

At a time when federal attacks are threatening access to care, New York must step up to protect and expand life-saving gender affirming care for young people. The current $3.5M investment falls far short of the growing need.

$15M will:

- **Expand access to critical gender affirming medical and mental health care for youth**
- **Offset rising costs for providers and ensure continuity of care despite federal rollbacks**
- **Support trusted, affirming providers serving trans and gender-expansive youth**
- **Reduce barriers so young people can access care safely, regardless of income or insurance**
- **No young person should be denied the care they need to survive and thrive.**

Ask 3: $10M for the Supports for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Fund

New Yorkers involved in the sex trade—especially LGBTQ+, trans, and gender-expansive individuals—face high rates of violence, housing instability, and criminalization, yet current funding at $3.5M is not enough to meet the need for safe, affirming support. Everyone deserves safety, dignity, and support—without stigma or criminalization.

$10M will:

- **Expand access to housing, legal services, and harm reduction programs**
- **Fund sex worker led community-based organizations providing non-judgmental, trauma-informed care**
- **Support pathways to safety, stability, and economic opportunity**
- **Reduce reliance on criminalization by investing in care, not punishment**

Ask 4: $15M for a NEW LGBTQIA+ Immigrant Fund

LGBTQIA+ immigrants in New York face compounded barriers—from legal insecurity to housing instability and lack of access to affirming services—yet there is currently no dedicated funding stream to support their unique needs. No one should be left behind—regardless of immigration status or identity.

$15M will:

- **Provide legal services, Know Your Rights trainings, and immigration support**
- **Fund community-based organizations serving LGBTQIA+ immigrant communities**
- **Expand access to safe housing, healthcare, and social services**
- **Ensure culturally competent, language-accessible, and affirming care**

Ask 5: $4M for the Mayor's Trans Emergency Care Fund

Trans and gender-expansive New Yorkers continue to face urgent crises—from housing instability to gaps in immediate care—yet current funding at $2M is not enough to meet the demand for rapid, life-saving support.

$4M will:

- **Provide immediate, flexible funding for urgent needs like housing, healthcare, and safety**
- **Support rapid-response services for trans individuals in crisis**
- **Stabilize community-based providers delivering emergency care**
- **Ensure no one is left without support in moments of highest vulnerability**
- **Emergency care should be immediate, affirming, and accessible to all who need it.**

Invest in LGBTQIA+ Immigrant New Yorkers

This is a moment of crisis: Transgender immigrants sit at the intersection of the federal administrations most vicisious and dehumanizing attacks. TGNCNB immigrants need access to specialized legal services

Proposal Overview

This policy proposal to City Council and the Mayor's Office outlines a strategic, transformative investment in legal services specifically designed for LGBTQ+ immigrants in New York City.

The proposal calls for the creation of a dedicated LGBTQ+ Immigrant Legal and Justice Fund allocating $15 million annually to address critical gaps in immigration legal services, cultural competency, accessibility, and community-centered legal advocacy for this uniquely vulnerable population.

The Crisis

LGBTQ+ immigrants in New York City face a converging legal crisis:

- **Estimated 150,000–200,000 LGBTQ+ immigrants in NYC, with approximately 60– 70% unable to access needed legal services.**
- **Only 1 immigration attorney per 1,000 undocumented immigrants nationwide; NYC faces acute provider shortages, particularly in LGBTQ+-affirming representation.**
- **LGBTQ+ asylum seekers face significantly slower processing times and lower approval rates than heterosexual/cisgender counterparts.**
- **Language barriers prevent 60% of undocumented immigrants from accessing legal help.**
- **Cost barriers: immigration legal services range from $1,000–$5,000+; most LGBTQ+ immigrants cannot afford representation.**
- **Fear of immigration enforcement prevents help-seeking, despite acute legal needs.**
- **Current legal service funding does not prioritize LGBTQ+-affirming capacity or cultural competency.**
- **LGBTIQA+ youth are already overrepresented in homelessness, For queer youth seeking asylum, the rapid rule changes, limited access to legal services, and loss of housing vouchers further endanger a vulnerable population.**

(Caribbean Equality Project, 2026)

LGBTQ+ Immigrant Youth

Youth come to NYC with complex trauma. Many have fled their home countries as a result of systemic persecution, abuse, neglect, or violence from community members and families

unaccepting of their gender identity or sexual orientation. This is even more significant for transgender refugees and asylum seekers who are often visible in their gender nonconformity and therefore particularly vulnerable to violence and persecution. But the trauma does not stop when they leave their home countries, with LGBTQ+ asylum-seekers facing disproportionate rates of violence in transit zones and lacking financial resources upon arrival to the United States.

Without the proper mental health, immigration, and housing support, LGBTQ+ youth are increasingly vulnerable to mental health crises. Many immigrants are currently ineligible for forms of shelter or housing assistance that might be available to citizens or those with lawful status such as green cards. Without access to Section 8 or CityFHEPS benefits folks find themselves forced into homelessness, exacerbating pre-existing trauma and creating additional life stressors.

Rapid Changes

The financial difficulties of navigating an increasingly expensive immigration system play a key role in shaping our clients' experiences with housing, employment, and mental health. Most notably, the constant changes to federal filing fee waivers, Employment Authorization, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.

In order to best serve youth need lawyers that understand the legal landscape for unaccompanied youth and receive increase funding to cover the rise in legal fees currently being covered by non-profits with no extra support.

(Free to Be Youth Project, Urban Justice Center, 2025)

Invest in LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers

$15M for a NEW LGBTQIA+ Immigrant Fund and Increased Specialized Legal Services

LGBTQIA+ immigrants in New York face compounded barriers—from legal insecurity to housing instability and lack of access to affirming services—yet there is currently no dedicated funding stream to support their unique needs. No one should be left behind—regardless of immigration status or identity.

$15M will:

- **Provide legal services, Know Your Rights trainings, and immigration support**
- **Fund community-based organizations serving LGBTQIA+ immigrant communities**
- **Expand access to safe housing, healthcare, and social services**
- **Ensure culturally competent, language-accessible, and affirming care**

Fund Diverse Entrypoints to Services

$7.5M to create a new Speaker City Wide Initiative to be allocated to non-profits that applied for City Council discretionary funding.

$7.5M allocated to expand the Mayors Office of Immigrant Affairs existing services to include additional LGBTQIA+ specialized attorneys and social workers.

By increasing individual non-profits capacity to hire in house legal staff while also increasing existing City programs, LGBTQIA+ immigrants will have much greater access affirming legal services that understand their specific legal and personal needs.

Mamdani Administration's Commitment

Mayor-Elect Mamdani's platform champions immigrant rights, racial justice, LGBTQ+ liberation, and equitable resource allocation. Your commitment to "making New York safe and affordable for all" must include ensuring that LGBTQ+ immigrants—one of the city's most marginalized populations—have access to the legal services, protection, and dignity they deserve. This proposal aligns with the Administrations stated values and offers a concrete, evidence-based pathway to advance immigrant justice and LGBTQ+ equity in your administration.

There is an incredible shortage of immigration attorneys and supervising attorneys to provide adequate care to all immigrants in NY. That number is even lower for those that understand the specfic needs of LGBTQIA+ immigrants adults and youth. For example the Free to Be Youth Project provides legal services to 8 different non-profits, with extremely high case loads that require constant rapid response. We cannot lose the limited amount of attorneys we have because of burnout. It is life or death.

Testimony Regarding Priorities for the New York City Executive Budget, Fiscal Year 2027

June 10, 2026

The Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) thanks Speaker Menin, Council Finance Chair Linda Lee, and the committee members, for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Proposal. **About the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development**

ANHD is one of New York City's lead policy, advocacy, and technical assistance and capacity-building organizations. We maintain a membership of 80+ neighborhood-based and citywide nonprofit organizations that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. We are an essential voice, bridging the power and impact of our member groups to build community power and ensure the right to affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We value justice, equity, and opportunity, and we believe in the importance of movement building that centers marginalized communities in our work. Across 5 decades and 5 boroughs we have consistently focused on addressing New York's housing affordability crisis, displacement, and economic inequity to build community power.

ANHD's work directly supports the needs of our members who develop, manage, and organize to preserve affordable housing, and who fight to bring equity into low-wealth communities in New York City—especially communities of color. Our groups rely on us for technical assistance and capacity-building resources that allow them to maximize their resources, skills and impact. The support services, research, analysis, public education, and coalition building we do helps to identify patterns of local neighborhood experiences and uplift citywide priorities and needs. Our work translates into the capacity to win new programs, policies and systems that ensure the creation and preservation of deeply and permanently affordable housing, and economic justice.

The Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) Initiative

We are grateful for the Council's longstanding commitment to the Community Housing Preservation Strategies (CHPS) Initiative, which has served as a lifeline for the city's most vulnerable tenants and homeowners for more than fifteen years. Through CHPS, over 45 community-based organizations provide preservation services in neighborhoods most at risk of displacement, particularly among low-income, BIPOC, and immigrant communities. However, despite this essential work, our CHPS partners continue to face significant challenges: over a decade of flat funding that has ignored a ~38% rise in the cost of living since FY16, growing community need, and systemic delays in city contracting and payment processes that place enormous strain on service providers.

In light of the escalating housing crisis, we call on the City Council to increase CHPS funding to $5.37 million in FY27. The program's funding has remained flat at $3.65 million since 2016, despite skyrocketing demand and increasing costs. New investments would enable CHPS groups to scale their services, provide cost-of-living adjustments for staff, and expand their capacity to address evictions, poor housing conditions, and tenant harassment across the city.

Displacement Alert Project (DAP)

DAP is a critical resource for affordable housing advocates, helping users to proactively identify and outreach to those at risk of displacement and do in-depth research of individual building histories. The tool has scaled since inception and has the capacity to continue expanding in New York and beyond to support unit, building, and area level strategies that prevent affordable housing displacement. We gained over 450 new registered users in 2025, bringing the total to 1,842 users. Additionally, the spike in DAP engagement from 2023 to 2024 (when the total number of users doubled from 20,000 to 40,000) was sustained over the past year, with over 40,000 total users in 2025. Importantly, DAP users are using the site more consistently as well, rising from 76 active users per day in 2023 to nearly 150 in 2025. In addition, ANHD provided two introductory training sessions to DAP to help organizations and advocates leverage data tools, build organizing strategies, and advance tenant protections, while providing direct troubleshooting support to CHPS-funded groups responding to housing crises in real time.

We urge the City Council to continue their crucial funding of this work through our application for $218,171 for ANHD's Displacement Alert Project and our Capacity Building Training and Technical Assistance for the CHPS program. This will allow us to maintain and expand DAP, provide technical assistance and training to CHPS-funded organizations to improve housing stability efforts, and produce research and data tools around housing risk and affordability, to support housing advocacy and policy solutions

Housing Capital Funding

Preservation

ANHD urges the Administration and the City Council to prioritize preservation of our existing affordable housing in the Housing Capital budget for FY27 and beyond. Over the past several decades, New York City has rightly invested billions of dollars to develop and preserve affordable housing throughout the five boroughs. Much of this government subsidized and regulated affordable housing is now financially unstable due to rising operational costs.

Utilities and insurance costs have risen 20–35%, squeezing budgets already stretched thin by mortgage payments, payroll, and regulatory compliance. Meanwhile, tenant incomes have stagnated, resulting in decreased rent collection rates. Pandemic-era tenant delinquencies have worsened the problem, as many non-profit owners of subsidized housing were never able to access programs like ERAP that prioritized private landlords.

ANHD has called for a minimum of $1 billion per year in housing capital dollars to be

devoted specifically for preservation for the next 4 years - the Administration's executive budget proposal meets this goal for FY27. We commend their commitment of resources to the critical need to preserve our existing affordable housing for both current tenants and those to come, and urge the City Council to support this allocation.

Public Land

ANHD has long supported the use of public land for public good, and we commend the Mayor's effort to identify city-owned sites across agencies' portfolios that would be suitable for affordable housing development. We urge the Mayor to commit to a policy that any housing developed on city-controlled sites be 100% affordable, and permanently affordable, with as high a percentage of deeply affordable units as financing terms can enable. Public land presents one of the clearest opportunities to deliver deeply affordable housing at scale, and continued investment in these projects will be essential. We also believe the public interest is best served by prioritizing mission-driven non-profits as developers for public sites, as they are more accountable to and engaged with the needs and priorities of local communities, and use any available income from their development projects after costs to provide essential services to their communities.

Deep affordability

While ANHD maintains the need to prioritize preservation in our current moment, we also agree that increased affordable housing supply is needed. However, it's important that our public investment in new affordable housing matches the need, which is heavily concentrated at the lowest income levels. ANHD's analysis shows that households making 50% of AMI or below made up more than three-quarters of rent burdened renter households in NYC. Yet in 2024, the overwhelming majority of the new housing units built in NYC were affordable only to households with incomes of 80% AMI and above. Public resources for new housing development must be targeted to help correct this imbalance. Mayor Mamdani's recently released housing plan takes steps in this direction, with a specific commitment for 30% of homes financed by the city to serve ELI households, and 20% to serve VLI households. While this allocation still falls short of the need, it is a step in the right direction and a commitment for which we encourage the City Council to hold them accountable.

Code Enforcement

ANHD is heartened by the new Administration's expressions of commitment to prioritize safety, affordability, and dignity for NYC's rent stabilized tenants. New York City's tenants have organized for years to preserve their homes and defend their right to live in safe, healthy conditions. But for too long, known bad actors have continued to harass and displace tenants, have been responsible for horrific living conditions and threats to public safety - and have not been properly held accountable by city government.

Organizing is an essential tool to uplift the challenges many tenants are facing in their homes and their buildings due to deteriorating physical conditions and tenant harassment. The Partners in Preservation program represents a powerful collaboration between the city and community groups that should continue to be robustly funded. Together, by forming tenant associations and accessing education on their rights under New York law, tenants are taking

charge of their living conditions.

ANHD supports continued funding for Partners in Preservation, new requests for code enforcement staffing, and calls for strengthened funding to the Emergency Repair Program to adequately meet the need – much of which will be self-funding, if the City collects the penalties it is owed.

For numerous reasons, including language barriers, problematic inspection scheduling, and more, tenants with clear violations of the City's Housing Maintenance Code face difficulty navigating the complaint process to establish a violation. If a tenant is successful in securing an inspection with an inspector who can communicate in their language and who correctly identifies the presence of a violation, they still face the core challenge: getting their landlord to perform meaningful repair work. A particular challenge is landlords who abuse their ability to self-certify violations as corrected. Since 2019, HPD has conducted an annual audit of self-certifications of the most hazardous violations (Class C) – in each of the past five years, at least 30% of audited certifications of corrections have been found to be falsely certified (HPD Audits of Certification of Correction 2019-2025). And when repairs are done, too often they do not address the underlying condition causing the issue—for example, when a property manager abates the surface-level mold on a bedroom wall but doesn't repair the leak in the pipe behind the wall causing the mold.

Although landlords are supposed to face penalties when they fail to make proper repairs, for years, the City has routinely forgiven or deferred penalties in favor of negotiated agreements. While this may be an appropriate strategy to get violations corrected in the case of good actors with limited numbers of serious violations, tenants often find themselves going back to housing court numerous times over the course of years, only to see the pattern of broken agreements repeat. This Mayoral administration has repeatedly signaled that it will change this policy, and, moving forward, the City must emphasize the collection of penalties in order to ensure that they actually act as a deterrent. And increased collection rates would have additional financial benefits for the public. As the City faces budget shortfalls, it is essential that we hold negligent landlords accountable for what they owe. Looking exclusively at false certifications of Class C violations, there is significant room to raise revenue: in 2025, we collected only $60,000 in penalties for falsely certified violations ($3.37 per known false certification). If the City had merely applied the lowest penalty amount ($500) to each of these, it could have raised $8.9 million – in other words, the City collected **less than one percent** of what it was owed in this realm alone (ANHD analysis of HPD Audits of Certification of Correction 2019-2025).

To tackle these problems holistically will require major investments, which start to materialize in this budget proposal. Partly to staff up the new "Fix the City" initiative aimed at tackling conditions in problem portfolios, the Executive Budget and the administration's housing plan propose new investments in code enforcement staff – $2.9 million for 14 positions (Expense, Revenue, Contract Budget - FY27 Executive Budget). ANHD strongly supports these new positions and urges the Council to do the same. **Continuing to grow HPD's capacity to robustly enforce housing maintenance laws is critically important, and we see this as an important and significant step forward.**

In the interim, in situations where violations create hazardous situations that threaten their

health, safety, and wellbeing of tenants, the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) is an absolutely critical backstop. The Executive Budget also increases funding for the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) by $4.5 million and $3.7 million in FY27 (Financial Plan Reconciliation - February 2026 Plan). The Council should support this increase and push further – trends in recent spending indicate that, despite the increase, this program is still underbudgeted relative to the need. Currently, contractors do much of the emergency repair work, but directly engaging city staff to do this work may be a path toward cost savings while maintaining high quality (Budget Function Analysis - FY27 Executive Budget).

Right to Counsel

Since New York City established the Right to Counsel program in 2017, it has become clear that it works as intended – when they have representation, New Yorkers are nearly always able to fend off eviction and stay in their homes. And yet, as we approach 10 years since the program was first piloted, it is underfunded and in crisis. Nearly all tenants facing eviction are eligible for Right to Counsel, yet since the end of the eviction moratorium in January 2022, only 40% have received representation. Over time, as eviction caseloads have steadily climbed and courts have moved through cases faster, funding has lagged behind: from 2022 to 2024 the number of tenants facing eviction who were eligible for RTC more than doubled but spending grew by only 33%. In tandem, the percentage of tenants with representation has fallen, declining by 40% over the same time period, with less than 1 in 3 tenants receiving legal representation in recent months (NYC Eviction Crisis Monitor; Independent Budget Office).

Although the law was slated to be fully implemented by 2022, RTC has never been adequately funded (City Limits). Today, this chronic underfunding threatens to erode the promise of the program. With a contract structure that covers less than 60% of the real costs of eviction defense – which has become increasingly complex as courts sift through positive but significant changes to housing law in the wake of 2019's Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act and 2024's Good Cause Eviction Law – providers are stretched thin (Legal Aid). Funding has hovered around $136 million per year on average, which is woefully inadequate. The Executive Budget takes steps toward closing the gap (with funding increasing to $198.2 million in FY27 and $222.4 million in FY28, up from an adopted FY26 budget of $180 million) but continues to fall well short of the need (City Limits).

ANHD supports the Right to Counsel coalition's call for an investment of approximately $500 million in total to fully fund the program, which will ensure adequate staffing to meet the rising need and full compensation for the attorneys and organizations defending clients from eviction.

When we invest in eviction prevention, it pays off for all of us – in reduced shelter costs, lower demand for public assistance, and more resilient communities.

CityFHEPS

ANHD was proud to work with our members, allies, and the City Council to pass legislation in

2023 expanding eligibility for CityFHEPS vouchers. We are disappointed in Mayor Mamdani's decision to continue the previous administration's lawsuit against this legislation, and urge the Mayor to follow through on the promises made by Mayor Zohran Mamdani on the campaign trail and fully implement the 2023 CityFHEPS expansion. CityFHEPS is a proven way to help get New Yorkers into safe and permanent housing while also providing a steady and reliable income to our affordable housing providers. While expanding the program to cover families facing eviction is projected to cost the city approximately $8 billion dollars, it is also expected to save $5 billion from reduced shelter and rehousing costs–resulting in a net cost of about $3 billion over five years (CSS). **The expansion of CityFHEPS will make great strides in alleviating the increasing homelessness crisis and we strongly urge the Administration to act quickly to implement the law.**

Source of Income Discrimination

We urge the City to strengthen our current laws to prevent the discrimination we often see voucher holders face in their search for housing. Even after New Yorkers have gone through various obstacles to obtain their voucher, they face more hurdles as they begin their search for a safe and affordable home. These New Yorkers are too often faced with discriminatory practices, given excuses that are often proxies for race and class. We urge the Council to quickly pass Council Member Krishnan's MOVE Act (Intros. 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, and 269 of 2026) to ban credit checks and income requirements for voucher holders and end this culture of discrimination. ANHD further recommends increasing staffing of the NYC Commission on Human Rights to 2018 levels to support voucher holders who have faced discrimination.

Agency Staffing

Increased capacity at key housing agencies, including HPD and HRA, is critical to addressing New York City's housing crisis.

HPD must have sufficient staff capacity to support nonprofit developers working under regulatory agreements across all stages of preservation and asset management. Many of ANHD's members manage portfolios of HPD-financed affordable housing and are facing significant financial distress driven by rising operating costs and an inflationary environment. The urgency is underscored by the City's own data: HPD's asset management rental portfolio grew 17 percent in a single year to nearly 2,500 projects, and the share classified as high risk has risen steadily to 16 percent. A growing portfolio with increasing financial distress demands more staff capacity, not less — yet the personal services budget for the Office of Housing Preservation stands at $59.3 million in the FY27 Preliminary Budget, less than the previous fiscal year. Delays in updating preservation term sheets, processing subsidy renewals, and approving program applications put these buildings in jeopardy. **We urge the Council to prioritize new hiring in HPD's preservation and asset management divisions and to establish clear processing time standards so that nonprofit developers can plan and execute with greater certainty.**

HPD's code enforcement and litigation units require additional staff to address the needs of tenants. Increasing staff capacity for inspections and for oversight through programs like the

Alternative Enforcement Program, the Underlying Conditions program, the Certification Watchlist, and the Certificate of No Harassment is necessary to ensure that the agency can respond promptly and thoroughly to tenant complaints and conduct routine inspections, as well as engage in proactive, holistic measures like roof-to-cellar inspections. Additionally, the new commitment in the Mayor's housing plan to investigate every heat complaint individually will require more staff time. There is a corresponding need for additional funding for litigation – the Mayor's earlier proposal to significantly increase staffing at the Law Department was a good start and will support the larger lawsuits the City is pursuing, but dedicated litigation support at HPD is essential to adequately enforce the housing maintenance code and keep tenants safe. ANHD is glad to see that the Executive Budget builds upon this earlier investment, with a specific request for 14 new positions for Code Enforcement and the Housing Litigation Division. **The Council should prioritize this proposal for increased staffing within the Code Enforcement and Housing Litigation Division.**

Delayed Contracts and Stalled Projects

The failure of NYC's contracting process is now well known, but unfortunately persists. Non-profit organizations that carry out essential services are being forced to lay off staff, reduce programming, and decline new city funding, and take out loans because of long delays in receiving payment for city contracts.

ANHD members working in low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities across the city that depend on timely City contracts to sustain their operations. This includes nonprofit housing developers, who need reliable funding to preserve and build affordable housing. When contract approvals are delayed, projects stall, forcing nonprofits to absorb financial losses they cannot afford. Every CHPS organization has reported delays in registration and payment, forcing them to front costs for essential services while waiting months or even years to be reimbursed. These delays significantly hinder program operations and staff retention, placing strain on frontline teams and putting tenant protections at risk.

We urge the City to address the systemic contracting backlog by advancing reforms and ensuring timely contract approvals and payments.

Homeownership

Low- and moderate-income homeowners, especially older adults, are also increasingly at risk of displacement in neighborhoods throughout New York City. ANHD commends the Council for its support of the Foreclosure Prevention Initiative, which leverages loans, counseling and education to keep New Yorkers in their homes. We support increasing this initiative to $6.29 million in FY27. Additionally, ANHD supports increasing funding for the Home Loan Program Initiative, the CLT Initiative and the Estate Planning and Resolution (EPAR) Initiative to keep families in their homes, expand permanently affordable homeownership opportunities, and protect generational assets as homeowners age.

Merchant Organizing for Commercial Tenants

Every New Yorker knows the value that small businesses bring to their neighborhoods– whether it's their corner bodega or fruit vendor, favorite restaurant or barbershop, locally owned yoga studio or accessible financial services. Every New Yorker also knows the reality of a less and less affordable city, where low-income tenants are being pushed out of their homes and hard-working people are struggling to pay for basic necessities like groceries and utility bills. Our favorite small businesses also endure this reality.

In order to keep their doors open, small business owners are struggling against landlords, corporations, and banks that threaten to push them out. Despite the myriad challenges, small business owners remain committed to their communities and continue to play a vital and unique role. They not only provide goods and services that we rely on, but also act as cultural beacons, social glue, and safe spaces for all New Yorkers.

Since 2021, ANHD has been analyzing and collecting data about the state of storefronts in New York City. Our analysis of changes in storefront rents from 2019 to 2022 showed that in much of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens, rents had been rising year over year since 2019, while in Manhattan storefront rents that dipped in 2020, likely due to the economic impacts of the pandemic, were again on the rise. Our 2023 analysis showed that threats to small businesses are consistently higher both in communities of color and for small business owners who are people of color and immigrants themselves.

In order to combat those vulnerabilities, small businesses need protections. While New York City has some policy frameworks and technical assistance programs in place, these alone are not enough. For example, the commercial tenant anti-harassment law and the business owner bill of rights establish foundational protections, but without adequate enforcement of such policies, small business owners are left to fend for themselves. City programs like the Commercial Lease Assistance Program and the Business Express Service Team provide access to legal support and technical assistance, but these programs have very limited reach. In order to protect small businesses, we urge you to:

- Expand the Commercial Lease Assistance Program: The CLA Program is a vital resource for small businesses and other commercial tenants who may not otherwise be able to consult with a lawyer before signing a potentially predatory lease agreement. Such lease agreements put commercial tenants at risk of losing income and even their entire businesses due to factors like landlord harassment, structural issues, unforeseen rent increases, and more. In order to counterbalance the currently unchecked and unregulated power of commercial landlords, tenants need free and accessible legal assistance.

- Fund community-based organizations (CBOs) engaging in merchant organizing and outreach efforts: Local CBOs can work alongside the existing community of small businesses in a corridor or neighborhood to provide support that would otherwise not reach them. Such organizations continuously do outreach in order to make sure every single small business receives the information and services it needs. Especially in a regulatory environment that can be confusing and punitive, having a trusted source of information in the neighborhood can be a lifeline.

These partnerships and resources will ensure that our small business can remain the foundation of thriving New York City communities.

Industrial Business Service Providers

The industrial sector plays a crucial role in creating a more equitable, thriving, and functioning New York City. **Industrial businesses pay higher wages and offer more career opportunities to a workforce that is 67% people of color and 70% of whom do not have a college degree. Preserving and growing these jobs lies at the heart of a true equitable economic development strategy.**

- The industrial sector provides over 500,000 jobs in New York City, making up nearly 15% of our city's workforce, while contributing over $1.7 billion annually in tax revenue.
- 33% of all NYC jobs that pay over $50,000 and do not require a college degree are industrial jobs.

In addition, the industrial sector is essential to the functioning of New York City's services and infrastructure and is critical to addressing our climate resiliency and climate adaptation needs now and into the future.

As a convener of the Industrial Jobs Coalition (IJC), a city-wide coalition of IBSPs, non-profit developers of industrial space, and industrial policy advocates, ANHD and our member organizations have long advocated for increased support for the industrial sector and IBSPs. IBSPs play a crucial role in supporting the industrial sector. Every year, IBSP organizations collectively serve hundreds and hundreds of industrial businesses across the city, providing the specialized expertise and hands-on assistance that manufacturers and industrial firms require. For decades, these IBSPs have been the connective tissue between city government and the industrial businesses that make New York run — the manufacturers, distributors, and freight operators who move people, goods, and food through every borough. These are not transactional service providers. They are long-standing community institutions with deep roots in industrial neighborhoods, cultivated over years, often generations. They know their businesses

by name. They show up when a lease is threatened, when a permit is stuck, when a loan falls through.

For these reasons, we oppose the Department of Small Business Services (SBS)'s new policy to dismantle the only business support program for small manufacturers via their recent RFP (Business Solution & Industrial Business Zone Centers; EPIN:80125P0049) and its amended versions. **Eliminating funding for the IBSP program would end a more than 40-year commitment by the City to retain and grow industrial jobs**—and it would do so at the very moment when those businesses face some of the greatest pressures in decades.

The amended RFP assumes the Business Solutions Center model that serves all NYC small businesses will serve small and medium-sized industrial businesses. This is not only a deeply flawed assumption but is at variance with the city's own recommendations from the New York Industrial Plan report, which finds that industrial firms require specialized expertise, long-term relationships, and consistent on-the-ground presence. The report clearly identifies the need for specialized support for industrial businesses that addresses the evolving needs of industrial businesses with high quality services at scale. It also emphasizes the importance of sustained engagement with businesses located in Industrial Business Zones. Yet the amended RFP threatens to effectively dismantle the city's existing Industrial Business Service Provider network and replace it with a generalized small-business service model in which a single rotating staff member is expected to serve multiple industrial neighborhoods across an entire borough**.** While we acknowledge the amended RFP does offer a new, 3-year contract to one, citywide provider to provide more intensive services to small and midsized industrial firms, this still does not preserve the existing network of place-based Industrial Business Service Providers that many of NYC's industrial firms rely upon at a resource level commensurate with service need. By eliminating the very infrastructure that currently provides that support, the RFP does not advance the recommendations of the Industrial Plan—it makes a mockery of them.

At a moment when industrial businesses are already facing rising rents, shrinking industrial space, workforce shortages, and increasing regulatory complexity, this is **the worst possible time to dismantle the infrastructure that helps these businesses survive and grow.** This infrastructure is made of organizations that exist not just to help new businesses open. They exist to keep existing businesses alive, to ensure this city remains a place where durable things are made, where neighborhoods stay employed, where the industrial legacy of New York is not merely preserved as history but grown as a diverse and resilient economy.

Modest Investment for Outsized Economic Impact

Although the IBSP program represents only $1.2 million in citywide funding, it supports businesses with over 500,000 jobs, making up nearly 15% of our city's workforce, and contributing over $1.7 billion annually in tax revenue. That represents only $2.40 per job of investment. This funding is critical keystone support for the nonprofit community economic

development organizations that support these businesses. For many of these organizations, IBSP funding represents a significant portion of their operating budgets. Eliminating it would severely weaken the capacity of community-based economic development organizations that serve underinvested industrial neighborhoods across New York City and undermine the Mamdani administration's goals of creating a more equitable and affordable city for all.

What We Recommend to Grow Industrial Businesses

ANHD urges the Administration and City Council to increase critical funding for IBSPs, which hasn't increased since 2016 despite record inflation, and to make it a multi-year commitment to help ensure the stability of the non-profit organizations that use this funding to serve industrial businesses across the city.

We also strongly believe that this program needs to remain distinct from other SBS programs that are more targeted to other types of small businesses.

We are asking the City to:

1. Remove industrial business support from the Business Solutions Center RFP.

Industrial firms require specialized support that general small business programs are not designed to provide.

2. Provide a two-year extension for existing Industrial Business Service Provider contracts.

This will ensure continuity of services while the City works with stakeholders to design a stronger program.

3. Collaborate with industrial organizations to develop a modernized IBSP program that better meets the needs of industrial businesses.

A future Industrial Business support program should:

- Address rising industrial real estate pressures
- Support manufacturing growth and retention
- Connect firms to green economy and infrastructure opportunities
- Strengthen workforce pipelines for industrial jobs
- Provide resources for nonprofit-managed affordable industrial space to prevent displacement of small businesses.
- Reinvest in the Industrial Developer Fund (IDF) to give nonprofits throughout NYC the means to develop affordable industrial real estate for manufacturers in their communities

We ask the City Council to work with us to ensure SBS makes these necessary changes to their amended RFP, extends IBSPs existing contract, and works to develop a modernized IBSP support program.

We look forward to continued engagement as the budget process moves toward adoption and thank the Committees for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Emily Goldstein: emily.g@anhd.org.

THE BILLIE HOLIDAY THEATRE

Testimony to the New York City Council Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and Intercultural Intergroup Relations Committee & Finance Committee on the Fiscal 2027 Executive Plan for the Department of Cultural Affairs

Wednesday, June 10, 2026

My name is Shadawn Smith, I am the Executive Director of The Billie Holiday Theatre, located in the legendary neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant and serving the residents of Central Brooklyn and beyond for 54 years. Congratulations to Deputy Speaker & Chairman Williams, Chairman Lee, and the members of the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, & International Intergroup Relations for the successful budget hearings on the Mayor's FY27 Executive Plan.

The Billie Holiday Theatre ("The Billie") is a state-of-the-art creative campus and the only multi-platform performing arts center with presenting, institutional residency, and education programs designed for and led by the nation's most prominent African American community — Central Brooklyn. Our mission is to convene unapologetic, authentic voices to make American Black Theater and other performing arts a rigorous space to disrupt and foster social change. Located in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant at Restoration Plaza, The Billie has long served as a cultural hub, providing an open, creative space that amplifies diverse voices and addresses social justice issues. We tackle socioeconomic inequities head-on, producing programming that inspires and reflects the African American and diasporic experience, offered at accessible times, locations, and costs for low- and moderate-income audiences and those with disabilities.

The Billie is the home for storytellers in every artistic sector and the launching pad for some of today's iconic artistic iconic voices like Debbie Allen, Samuel Jackson, Vanessa E. Williams, and Omari Hardwick. We are the home for Bed-Stuy's own, Ronald K. Brown, and his EVIDENCE, a dance company. We are one of the few remaining theatres forged during the Black Arts Movement, and the only one in the borough of Brooklyn. Over the years, we have expanded services from theatre to all performing arts, visual arts, top notch arts education programs, and premier residency programs.

Thanks to the robust support from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs, The Bille has been able to survive and remains a beacon of hope for our communities. *We are one of the original recipients of the Coalition of Theaters of Color initiative when the total funding was under $1 million for about eight theaters. While we are proud to witness the continued support of this imitative where the total funding is now $5.7 million and now includes approximately 63 theaters, performing arts*

venues, and other cultural centers, ***we are adding our voices to the call for funding to increase to $8 million to adequately support these organizations. This modest $2.3M increase will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30%, which is a minimum of what is needed to increase capacity and stabilize these vital organizations.***

We are also proud recipients of the Council's Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Speaker's Fund, and the Department's Cultural Development Fund and Equity Initiative. *These local resources allow us to bring world-class art to Central Brooklyn, support primarily Black and brown creatives across the City, develop and maintain a talent pipeline, bolster local businesses, and serve over 25,000 community members annually through our core programming in education, performing arts, and visual arts.* **We demand that the Mayoral Administration add $20 million back to the department's baselined budget, and we are grateful to the City Council for advocating for the full restoration of this baselined funding.** Organizations like mine need every dollar granted to them through the Council initiatives and departmental allocations. With the cultural sector losing millions of dollars from the federal government, every public sector dollar from the City and State is a precious commodity. It is my hope that the City will once again be a nationwide leader by increasing its support of the cultural sector, particularly those organizations that historically serve Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian communities.

I have been leading The Billie for three years and am proud of the work we are doing to uplift, amplify, and nurture artistic storytelling for Bed-Stuy and all of Central Brooklyn. *The cultural corridors of Fulton Street and Eastern Parkway are vibrant footprints that make New York City, a global cultural capital. I am equally proud to serve alongside the other cultural leaders of the Brooklyn Arts & Cultural Kollective (BACK): 651 Arts, BRIC, BAC, Brooklyn Children's Museum, Cool Culture, Drive Change, Ifetayo, Laundromat Project, MoCADA, Prospect Park, Recess, and Weeksville.*

In conclusion, **we respectfully request a modest $2.3M increase, which will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30%, which is a minimum of what is needed to increase capacity and stabilize these vital organizations, demand the restoration of $20 million to the Department of Cultural Affairs baseline budget, and continue the support of The Billie through the Speaker's Fund and the Cultural Immigrant Initiative.** Thank you for all that you do to support and uphold the NYC cultural sector. I hope to welcome you all home to The Billie this summer for our free outdoor programming on Restoration Plaza!

Submitted by,
Shadawn Smith
Executive Director
The Billie Holiday Theatre
ssmith@restorationplaza.org
website: billieholidaytheatre.org IG: billieholidaytheatre

THE BRONX MUSEUM

New York City Council - Committee on Finance
FY2027 Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

Shirley Solomon, Deputy Director
The Bronx Museum of the Arts
Member, Cultural Institutions Group (CIG)

On behalf of The Bronx Museum of the Arts, I am pleased to submit testimony to urge the City to invest in culture in the FY2027 Adopted Budget.

Founded in 1971, The Bronx Museum was built on a belief that everyone deserves access to exceptional contemporary art, artists, and cultural programming. In 2012, we made that vision permanent by eliminating admission fees. Today, we're proud to be an essential New York City art museum offering multi-generational community members with free, year-round exhibitions, arts education, and community programs.

Our City's arts and culture sector includes 1,800+ nonprofit theaters, zoos, performing arts groups, museums, botanical gardens, historical and preservation societies, the 39 Cultural Institutions that make up the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) – of which we are a member – and the 1,000+ organizations that receive support through the Cultural Development Fund (CDF). We deliver critical public value by providing free and low-cost programming, creating welcoming third spaces, and expanding access to education, science, and civic dialogue across all five boroughs. Sustained investment in culture gives all New Yorkers affordable access to cultural programs and services.

The Bronx Museum and our cultural colleagues are grateful for the Council's leadership in advancing arts and culture funding. We are also grateful for the $10 million baseline increase in the Executive Budget, but this leaves a $20 million gap. In the FY2027 Adopted budget, we respectfully ask the City to consider the following to ensure the long-term stability and strength of our cultural institutions.

Restore and Baseline $30M
Restore and baseline the full $30 million that was added in the FY2026 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector. This will provide stable, predictable funding of our institutions and sustain investment in our cultural programming.

Budget Cost Adjustments
We request year-over-year funding adjustments to support rising operating costs connected with inflation and wages of our cultural workforce.

Council Initiatives

Finally, we urge the City to continue to fund cultural organizations through critically important Council Initiatives, including CASA, SU-CASA, Cultural Immigrant Initiative, Coalition Theaters of Color, and Violence Prevention and Intervention for Youth and Young Adults (formerly known as Anti-Gun Violence – Art a Catalyst for Change), among others.

We thank the City for its incredible support and partnership. Sustainable investment will ensure that our organizations have deep impact, and our affordable programming are enjoyed by as many individuals, families, youth as possible.

www.clcny.org

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Empowering Young Voices

6/10/26 Written Testimony for City Hall's Executive Budget Hearing

Good morning. I would like to express my gratitude to the committee for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Tatiana Wolkowitz, and I am a Youth Guardianship Paralegal at The Children's Law Center ("CLC"), a legal services organization in New York City that has represented more than 185,000 children in child protective legal proceedings in the New York City Family Courts and the New York State Supreme Court Integrated Domestic Violence Parts since 1997. Through our work in the courtroom and the community, we empower young people through legal representation and support, reduce the harms of family dissolution and court involvement, and promote well-being and equity for children and youth.

This year, CLC succeeded in expanding our capacity to represent vulnerable youth by creating our Youth Guardianship Project – an initiative focused solely on the representation of undocumented youth as they petition U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (or "SIJS") in Family Court.

With IOLA funding this year, we were able to build a specialized SIJS team by hiring two dedicated Youth Guardianship Paralegals, including myself, and shifting one staff attorney into a role focused exclusively on this work.

Through in-depth interviews, document and hearing preparation, and ongoing support, we help ensure our clients feel informed, empowered, and connected to the resources they need.
When appropriate, our social workers assist youth in accessing mental health care, medical services, and other forms of support. I am proud to say that every SIJS client we have represented has successfully obtained guardianship and SIJS findings orders from Family Court. This means that with the support of CLC's SIJS initiative, over 200 children have completed the first step towards obtaining permanency and stability in this country.

44 Court Street, 11th Fl.
Brooklyn, NY 11201
TEL 718 • 522 • 3333
FAX 718 • 522 • 7376

820 Concourse Village West, 5th Fl.
Bronx, NY 10451
TEL 718 • 741 • 3400
FAX 718 • 741 • 9658

118-21 Queens Blvd., Suite 417
Forest Hills, NY 11375
TEL 718 • 544 • 3499
FAX 718 • 544 • 4450

36 Richmond Terrace, Suite 304
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Empowering Young Voices

As you are likely aware, Congress created Special Immigrant Juvenile Status ("SIJS") as a humanitarian protection for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, abandonment, or similar forms of parental maltreatment. To qualify, a young person must be under twenty-one years old, unmarried, unable to reunify with one or both parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, and unable to safely return to their country of nationality. These are not simply undocumented youth; they are children who have already experienced significant trauma, instability, and family disruption before ever entering the immigration system. Accordingly, the young people we serve are uniquely vulnerable and require specialized, holistic representation.

For nearly three decades, CLC has represented children in Family Court proceedings involving issues like custody, domestic violence, guardianship, and child protective matters. This expertise uniquely positions us to represent youth seeking SIJS because their SIJS processes begins in Family Court, where young people must first obtain findings that demonstrate their SIJS eligibility before they can seek SIJS status from USCIS. Because advocating for vulnerable children in Family Court has been at the core of CLC's mission since our founding, we are uniquely equipped to help young people navigate this critical first step toward safety, stability, and lawful status.

Through the SIJS Initiative, CLC works alongside our partners in the ICARE coalition to ensure that undocumented youth do not have to navigate these complex legal systems alone. Together, ICARE providers bring complementary expertise to secure Family Court findings, file and monitor SIJS petitions with USCIS, provide removal defense when necessary, and coordinate services that ensure young people receive continuous support and representation throughout every stage of the process. Without sustained investment, many youth risk remaining in legal limbo even after establishing their eligibility for protection. The impact and importance of sustained representation becomes clear when we consider the experiences of the youth behind these cases.

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Empowering Young Voices

I would like to share the story of one of our clients. Ibrahima, whose name has been changed to protect his privacy, is a minor from Guinea. His mother abandoned him when he was only three years old, and he never heard from her again. He grew up in a home characterized by abuse and instability. His father physically abused him, and his older brother was also abusive.

As a child, Ibrahima lacked the most basic protections that every child deserves: safety, stability, and consistent care. Ibrahima witnessed political violence affecting his family, and that violence ultimately claimed the lives of both his father and brother due to their political affiliation. Left with no remaining family members able to care for him, Ibrahima suddenly found himself completely alone and without any meaningful support system in Guinea. At just eighteen years old, Ibrahima made the difficult decision to travel to the United States by himself in search of safety and opportunity. After arriving, he entered New York City's shelter system. Like many of our clients, he arrived with tremendous uncertainty about what the future might hold.

Today, however, his life looks very different. Ibrahima is enrolled in high school in Brooklyn. He is learning English, working, and hopes to attend college and study finance. He participates in school activities and is actively building a future for himself.

He has also found something he had been missing for much of his life: a trusted adult who cares about him. Through an English class, Ibrahima met Kristen, whose name has been changed, who eventually became his proposed guardian. Their relationship grew over time through trust, consistency, and support. Kristen attends important events in his life, offers guidance about school and work, encourages him to pursue his educational goals, and provides the emotional support every young person deserves. She has described Ibrahima as resilient, kind, humble, and deeply committed to his future.

To many people, guardianship may seem merely a legal designation, but for young people like Ibrahima, it represents something far more important: a stable adult relationship. Kristen provides the consistent support that every young person needs as they build a future for themselves.

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Empowering Young Voices

Ibrahima 's story demonstrates why this initiative is so important. SIJS is not simply an immigration benefit; it is a critical protection for young people who have experienced abuse, neglect, abandonment, and other forms of instability. With legal representation, youth like Ibrahima can access safety, permanency, and the opportunity to build stable futures in New York.

The need for these services continues to grow. This year alone, CLC's SIJS team and additional staff attorneys have represented over 200 SIJS-eligible youth in family court, 100% of which received signed guardianship and SIJS orders that will permit them to continue seeking status in immigration court. Still, there are thousands of children seeking representation who are unable to access advocates. These numbers demonstrate both the tremendous need for these services and the impact that dedicated funding can have.

With continued funding, CLC and our ICARE partners could expand capacity, serve more young people, and provide even more holistic support. Additional resources could allow us to grow our legal teams and increase access to social work and mental health services specifically tailored to SIJS youth. Many of our clients carry significant trauma and face barriers to accessing appropriate service – several of them are too fearful to reach out for mental health support due to their undocumented status. With extended funding, CLC's social work team could use their own expertise to positively help our clients. Continued investment would allow us to better meet those needs while ensuring that legal representation remains available throughout the entirety of the immigration process.

We therefore respectfully ask the committee to continue supporting the SIJS Initiative and the critical work performed by the ICARE coalition across New York City by maintaining the same amount of IOLA funding OR increasing the funding by 125% to allow CLC and other organizations to invest in more holistic approaches and to take on greater case loads.

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Empowering Young Voices

For our clients, legal representation is often the difference between continued uncertainty and the opportunity to build a safe, permanent future. Please support our efforts by continuing to fund this work with and IOLA grant equal to or greater than the sum awarded for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to protecting immigrant children and youth in New York City.

Written Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
New York City Council, Finance Committee

Miranda Massie, Director, Climate Museum
Testifying on behalf of the Climate Museum
June 10, 2026

Greetings, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Miranda Massie, and I am the Director of the Climate Museum. As you may know, we are the first museum in the U.S. dedicated to climate change and climate action. We use arts and cultural programs to educate visitors about the climate crisis and offer ways for visitors to take civic and collective action. Since 2018—over the course of 18 exhibitions, 360+ events, and 190,000+ in-person visitors—the Climate Museum has provided dynamic and rich arts programming, all of it free or payment-optional, that moves people from experiencing distress and isolation about the existential climate threat to feeling informed, connected, and empowered to act.

In late 2025, Chair Gennaro and the Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency, and Waterfronts passed a Resolution in support of the Climate Museum. We are deeply proud of this Resolution. It confirms our sense of the Museum as a public good of, by, and for New Yorkers as well as an emerging element of our city's national and global leadership on culture, climate, and their intersection.

The Museum is currently working to scale up to a permanent location. We have convened a dream team of advisors to help us identify and secure, in sequence, an interim location for exhibitions and programming and then a lasting home for climate and culture. We will continue to present a variety of programs and events with outstanding partners as we scale up; you will find examples below.

I write with an urgent request today: that you strengthen New York City's civic fabric on climate and its cultural leadership by expressing your support for the Climate Museum through the Speaker's Initiative.

As previously mentioned, in December 2025, the Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency and Waterfronts passed a Resolution supporting the mission and growth of the Climate Museum. During the hearing, New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds—organizational partners, former high school interns, scientists, educators, artists, and more—shared their stories about how being a part of or experiencing the Museum's work moved them. A digest of that testimony is attached. The Resolution continues to play a key role in elevating the Climate Museum, and we are very appreciative of this statement of support from the Committee and Chair Gennaro.

In FY26 we also received our first Speaker's Initiative Grant of $100,000—a critical inflection point for the Museum as we seek to achieve eligibility for receipt of capital funds. This grant allowed us to present programs that keep us in dialogue with our community as we work toward our next exhibition and future home—including an Earth Day Concert in Times Square with Broadway Green Alliance; a Climate Game Show Night with noted drag artist and environmental activist Pattie Gonia; a poetry and visual arts inflected book launch for a brand new book by climate leader and bestselling author Dr. Katharine Wilkinson; and a celebration of World Oceans Day with the New York Climate Exchange, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Met Orchestra Musicians, and Te Ao Mana that will foreground Pacific Island music and dance.

This year our key strategic objective is to secure a second Speaker's Initiative grant of $100,000 to advance the process of establishing eligibility to apply for capital funds from City Council, so that the Museum can continue to be a publicly accessible and accountable New York City institution as we progress toward our permanent home.

Through the Resolution and the support from the Speaker, the city council has not only lifted up arts and culture, but maintained and grown New York City's position as a global leader on climate and civic engagement with it. In 2025, the Climate Museum coauthored a peer-reviewed study with researchers from the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. The study found that, after seeing our exhibition, visitors left more aware of just how much others are concerned about climate change, more hopeful that it can be solved, and more confident and determined to speak out about it.[1] The Museum does the critical climate work of seeding a sense of agency and possibility in the public. This work lays the foundation for meaningful and sustained change, with our city in the lead.

As President Trump continues to maliciously attack fundamental public services, civil rights, clean energy, climate justice, and indeed democracy itself, we all feel a sense of collective urgency. Now is the time to come together around an issue we are all concerned about. Now is the time for New York City to defend our values and stand together for unwavering climate, cultural, and civic leadership.

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[1]Nicholas Badullovich, Amanda Nesci, Miranda Massie, John Kotcher, Edward Maibach; "Communicating about 'The End of Fossil Fuel' in a museum setting: a mixed-methods investigation of the climate museum," PLOS Climate, February 19 2025. https://journals.plos.org/climate/article?id=10.1371/journal.pclm.0000518

Today, I am asking for your support in helping the Climate Museum continue to do this vital work. We have submitted a request as part of the Speaker’s Initiative and ask for your support with Speaker Menin and her team. We deeply appreciate the past support we've received from the Council and hope to extend this vital partnership.

Thank you again for your support, for your time today, and for your service.



WITNESS TESTIMONIES

New York City Council Hearing on Resolution in Support of the Climate Museum

October 22, 2025

CIVIC AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS



CHRISTA FARMER
Professor, Hofstra University

“I visited the pop-up exhibition space of the Climate Museum on February 10, 2024, with seven students from my GEOL140 Paleoclimatology course at Hofstra University...We were all impressed with the welcoming space and the engaging exhibit. I was especially touched by the connections made between community, equity, and the climate system.”



BRAD LANDER
New York City Comptroller

“This is not just a museum — the NYC Climate Museum is a civic institution for culture and the sense of hope we need to meet the challenges posed by the climate crisis. By translating complex ideas into accessible stories and experiences, the Museum builds the public understanding and collective will necessary for bold, lasting climate action.”



RYAN MANN-HAMILTON
Professor, LaGuardia Community College

“The Climate Museum has served as a vital cultural and educational resource—empowering communities, especially youth and underrepresented groups, to confront the realities of climate change and to envision a just, sustainable future. The continued investment in the Climate Museum is an investment in New York’s resilience, innovation, and leadership in the global movement for climate justice.”



JOEL TOWERS
President, The New School

“The work of the Museum has reached the hearts and minds of so many. Not just my students, but thousands of all ages and backgrounds. Not just teaching about climate change, but changing the course of students' lives and fostering the next generation of civic leaders.”

CLIMATE SCIENCE EXPERTS



SONALI MCDERMID

Professor of Environmental Studies, New York University

“The Climate Museum is not just a place to learn about climate change. It’s a place to gather community and galvanize our community towards action and create the city and the world we want to live in.”



CYNTHIA ROSENZWEIG

Senior Research Scientist, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia Climate School; Vice Chair, Climate Museum Board of Trustees

“The Climate Museum provides the key elements necessary not only for New Yorkers, but for visitors from the U.S. and the world, to solve climate change, the significant planetary challenge of our time and for generations to come.”



CLIMATE POLICY EXPERTS



MARK CHAMBERS

Architect and Executive Director, Terreform ONE; Former Senior Director for Building Emissions and Community Resilience, White House Council on Environmental Quality

“The Climate Museum wields a precision and an empathy that policy alone cannot, helping communities to interpret, to challenge, and ultimately to co-author the future that we’re all building together.”



NATHANAEL GREENE

Director, Renewable Energy Policy, Climate & Energy, Natural Resources Defense Council

“When I visit, I’m reminded that solving the climate crisis is not only a technical project; it’s a human one. Policy can clear the way for wind turbines, solar fields, and transmission lines, but culture is what gives us the courage to build them… You cannot counter fear with data alone. You counter it with belonging, with a sense of purpose, with art, and with stories that make people proud to be part of the solution. That’s exactly what the Climate Museum does.”



DAN ZARRILLI

Chief Climate & Sustainability Office, Columbia University; Former Chief Climate Policy Advisor, NYC Mayor’s Office

“The Climate Museum has been a key player introducing culture alongside the policy, technology, and finance themes that dominate climate discourse. If we hope to make more progress here in New York City, we will need an even stronger focus on culture to activate the public, which of course supports clean energy and climate justice by very wide margins, but which has remained dramatically under mobilized.”

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADERS



EDDIE BAUTISTA

Executive Director, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

“The Museum’s exhibitions and other programs have played a helpful role in informing the general public about the connections between climate change and social (in)justice and the critical role of the environmental and climate justice movements in advancing climate progress.”



LONNIE J. PORTIS

Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, WE ACT for Environmental Justice

“From its conception, the Climate Museum has been a valued addition to the broader effort to raise awareness and understanding of the climate crisis and how to address it. With its unique cultural perspective, the museum has helped educate the general public—both young and old—about the critical dynamics linking systemic inequities and climate change.”



CREATIVES



DARIAN DAUCHAN
Actor, Writer, Musician; Lead Teaching Artist, The Climate Museum

“Every exhibit, every event, every session, when we’re together, creating together, planning together, in conversation with one another, experiencing poignant art together, we are reminded that we’re not alone, that the challenge can be met, and that with our collective efforts we have a chance.”



GUY GEIER
Senior Partner, FXCollaborative Architects

“This project is about creating public spaces that reflect who we are as New Yorkers—open, inclusive, and forward-looking.”



SARI GOODFRIEND
Photographer

“The Museum helps us confront a very existential question—where do we fit in and what can we do to ensure a safe future for our planet and humanity as a whole?”



EMILY RABOTEAU
Writer and Essayist

“It is an innovative and maverick space for urgent climate communications that inspire collective action as well as a safe pathway into the dark and overwhelming reality of the climate crisis... Speaking for myself, it helped give me the tools to confront that reality instead of avoiding it.”



GABRIELA SALAZAR
Artist

“Above and beyond any other institution, the Climate Museum has helped me to understand that through my devotion to art and its community, there is a way to make a difference.”

MUSEUM LEADERS



SEAN DECATUR
President, American Museum of Natural History

“The Climate Museum successfully weaves art, historical documents, and scientific data into a coherent and cohesive narrative that both informs and activates its audience...With its focus on the human side of the climate crisis through arts and cultural programming, the Climate Museum is an important and distinctive addition to our sector.”



JENNY NEWELL
Curator for Climate Change, Australian Museum

“The Climate Museum has been empowering ever-growing numbers and, crucially, diverse ranges of people to support climate and social justice. Ten years ago, it was hard to get visibility in museums for the ‘difficult’ topic of climate change. Now, integrating climate content with culture is increasingly normative. More museums—large and small—are stepping up and exploring ways of engaging the public with the climate crisis. The Climate Museum has played an important leadership role in this urgently-needed change.”



YOUTH LEADERS



MANAV BANSAL
Climate Museum Youth Program Alum

“It wasn’t until I encountered the Climate Museum that my outlook on life, as well as the impact I thought I could make, was altered. The Museum ignited a spark within me, fueling a desire to think differently and to explore how I might have a broader impact.”



DREW KNOTTS
Former Climate Museum Volunteer

“What I expected to be another college volunteer role became one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. The Climate Museum taught me how to turn my anxiety about the future into action, creativity, and hope.”



IDEA REID
Climate Museum Youth Program Alum

“The world was seemingly at its most hopeless, yet I don’t think I’ve ever felt as unafraid and bold as I did [when I was working with the Climate Museum]. The Museum gave me the tools to turn my passion and artistry into action.”



JASMINE WYNN
Climate Museum Youth Program Alum

“Since 2020, I have been involved with climate education and advocacy in various capacities—facilitating high school teach-ins, writing about climate solutions for Congressional audiences, and leading lobbying efforts in both Albany and New York City. However, none of this would have come to fruition without the help of the Climate Museum, which provided me with a pathway into climate leadership and understanding environmental justice.”

FUNDERS



RICKY BENAVIDEZ
Director, The Carmack Collective

“Even for organizations that have not relied on federal funding, the current federal administration’s actions and stated policies actively threaten the resilience and sustainability of climate organizations and other nonprofits. We are in a moment of perverse attacks on clean energy and climate justice. It is paramount for both private and public funders to step up and support the excellent work being done.”



ARMANDO BENGOCHEA
Senior Program Officer & Director, The Mellon Foundation

“We initiated our support because we believe that the vibrant interdisciplinary programs the Museum offers the public—explicitly uniting the arts and humanities with civic engagement on matters vital to us all—illuminate innovative pathways forward toward a safe, just, and vibrant future.”



CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS



NIC BADULLOVICH

Researcher, George Mason University and The University of Western Australia; Author of "Communicating about *The End of Fossil Fuel* in a museum setting: A mixed-methods investigation of the Climate Museum"

"In short, we found several important behaviours and mindsets that were positively affected by visiting the Museum: visitors had greater hope that climate change can be addressed, greater intentions to engage in climate change conversations, and we observed a marked shift in social norm perceptions."

"It uses empirical evidence to build its programming and to communicate the realities of climate change. And it does not sugarcoat hard truths – but our research study shows that not only do people feel more hopeful when they leave the Museum, but they feel more compelled to do something about it. That is remarkable."

"Its impact reaches far beyond New York – it serves as a model for the world. Our empirical research paper also demonstrates this, as people visiting the museum came from five continents across the world, comprising 40 different countries."



ED MAIBACH

Director (Emeritus), George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

"Through its programming, the Climate Museum is offering state-of-the-science and state-of-the-art climate education to NYC residents and visitors—which is an important service that reflects well on America's leading city."

PARTNERS



VICKI CERULLO

Director of Urban Engagement, The New York Climate Exchange

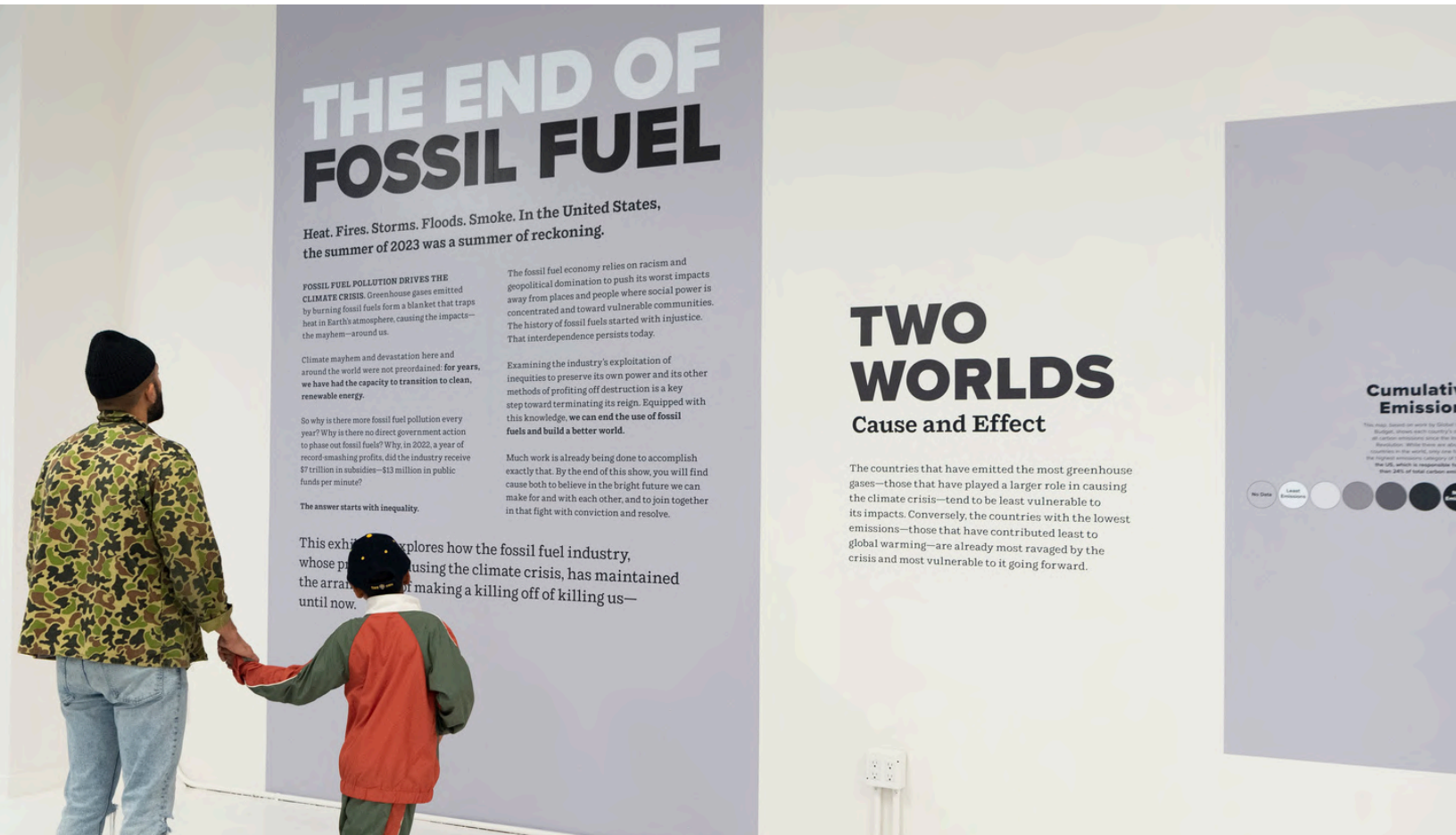
“We at the Exchange know that climate solutions can only be unlocked at speed and scale if they're multidisciplinary. The arts are key to that equation. Art sparks conversation, evokes emotion, and most importantly, research shows that it leads to action. That is exactly what the Climate Museum does.”



SARAH KRAUTHEIM

Chief of Staff, The Trust for Governors Island

“This Climate Museum’s exhibition felt fundamentally different from other climate-focused programs I had experienced. Rather than overwhelming visitors with dire predictions, it met people where they are—tapping into individual feelings and experiences around the climate crisis while providing hopeful pathways for action. Working with Miranda and her team left me inspired and motivated, not paralyzed by fear.”



THE CLIMATE MUSEUM

THANK YOU!



COALITION FOR
Community School
Excellence

The Coalition for Community School Excellence Testimony: Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing

Background:

New York City has one of the largest portfolios of community schools in the nation. We stand as a national leader in the strategy's implementation, with NYCPS' Office of Community Schools supporting 419 schools from grades K-12 across New York City.

The community school strategy addresses some of the most pressing challenges facing students today; chronic absenteeism, learning loss, mental and physical health needs, and food insecurity. Through school-based supports, targeted interventions, and strong relationships with students and families, community schools remove barriers to learning and improve student engagement.

Community schools advance the current Chancellor's key priorities of strengthening academic rigor, creating culturally responsive and community-connected classrooms, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and promoting family empowerment and collaborative leadership. Community schools have historically partnered with culturally and spiritually rich communities that have concentrated areas of material impoverishment. These communities have been disproportionately affected by systemic inequities that distort their depth of talent and value. As such, we believe **every school should be a community school.** The strategic benefits are universal because there is an increased value on people and processes that can raise expectations, leading to improved outcomes.

Research data reinforces the strategy's effectiveness in the short and long term. Studies have found a correlation between the effective implementation and execution of the community school strategy and stronger student connectedness, higher attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, improved academic outcomes and graduation rates. In New York City, community schools have outperformed comparison schools over the past decade, including larger gains in graduation rates, ELA and math proficiency with smaller increases in chronic absenteeism.

Community schools deliver these high-impact outcomes at a fraction of the cost of downstream interventions. Addressing the root causes of student challenges before they escalate reduces the reliance on more expensive crisis-response systems. National studies show returns of $10-14 for every dollar invested, while local data shows that a $100,000 investment in a Community School Director can leverage more than $600,000 in services and grants.

Budget Recommendation:

We are grateful to the City Council, City Hall and NYCPS leadership for recognizing the value of the community school strategy, and for more uniformly embracing non-profit providers as true partners in advancing the Chancellor's priorities. Maintaining level funding for community school contracts in FY27 and the outyears is an important step that provides stability and builds trust between community-based organizations and NYC City Government.

At the same time, continual improvement of the strategy's implementation and its long-term sustainability remain at risk. Community schools face significant challenges; unstable federal and state funding streams, inefficient contracting and procurement systems, delayed payments, and understaffing within the Office of Community Schools (OCS). The Executive Budget's reduction in OTPS funding for OCS threatens to further limit the office's ability to participate in professional learning and capacity-building to support schools and providers. Together, these challenges strain implementation of the strategy with fidelity and hinder New York City's ability to sustain and expand it effectively.

In partnership with the Coalition for Community School Excellence (CCSE), we urge the Council and the Administration to strengthen the infrastructure needed to support community schools by prioritizing the following actions:

- **Restore OTPS funding for the Office of Community Schools (OCS)** so they can access the professional learning and technical assistance needed to implement best practices and effectively support schools.
- **Invest $1M to expand the Office of Community Schools (OCS) headcount from 20 to 28 full-time positions,** working toward a 15:1 program manager-to-provider ratio. This investment would help stabilize partnerships, address persistent contract and payment delays, and provide more targeted support to providers. The addition of a dedicated data analyst would augment the system to improve data collection, support resource mapping, and ensure fidelity to the community school model while better measuring impact.
- **Fund a city-wide impact study on the Community School strategy.** The two most recent evaluations, released in 2020 and 2022, rely on data only through the 2018–2019 school year. They do not capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A new, comprehensive study would provide critical insights into the effectiveness of the city's community schools portfolio and identify implementation challenges that must be addressed to support future expansion.
- **Commit to strategic expansion** by adding 100 new elementary community schools by 2028, while maintaining fidelity to the strategy.

At this critical moment for New York City's students and families, the City must reaffirm its commitment to community schools. By strengthening infrastructure, stabilizing funding, and

expanding access, we can ensure that community schools continue to serve as anchors of stability and pathways of opportunity, innovation and equity for several generations.

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on Finance | June 10, 2026

Testimony submitted on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation

This testimony is submitted on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), a nonprofit community development finance institution that was formed in 1974 to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities that had been devastated by deterioration and abandonment. Thank you to Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, and to the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide testi for NYCHA mony today.

On behalf of CPC, we congratulate the Mamdani administration for their recent release of their first housing plan, *Block by Block: The Housing Plan for a New Era*, and the FY 2027 Executive budget, which balances the City's books and remains grounded in building and preserving the affordable housing New Yorkers need. We are very pleased to see this budget's $22 billion commitment to housing over five years, a vital investment towards achieving the goal of building 200,000 new affordable homes and preserving another 200,000 existing homes over the next decade. These funds are a landmark investment that will fuel the HPD pipeline, fully utilize expanded federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and sustain critical NYCHA preservation programs. The inclusion of $5.6 billion over the next five years for NYCHA specifically will support both PACT-RAD conversions and comprehensive modifications for conventional public housing developments, a catalytic investment in NYCHA which has been underfunded and overlooked for too long. We are grateful for this administration's visionary leadership to advance both preservation and new construction together to meet the scale of the City's housing needs.

Scaling Up Preservation Programs

We strongly support the scaling up of HPD's preservation programs, including the more than $2 billion in capital funds committed across FY27 and FY28 to clear backlogs and accelerate new preservation work. We are particularly encouraged by the dedicated funding for physically distressed City-Supervised Mitchell-Lama buildings, which is expected to preserve upwards of 2,800 units. The Mitchell-Lama program was designed to create affordable rental and

homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers, and it remains one of the city's most crucial sources of regulated affordability. Approximately 100,000 Mitchell-Lama units remain across roughly 179 developments in New York City, yet over 28% of the original stock, some 38,000 units, has exited the program over the past two decades. Without targeted capital intervention, more buildings will reach a point where program exit becomes the only financially viable path for their owners. Therefore, we welcome the portfolio-wide strategy outlined in *Brick by Brick*, to explore preservation tools tailored to the distinct needs of Mitchell-Lama properties.

We are also encouraged by new preservation tools aimed at securing affordability, stability, and quality. The TOOLS initiative is an important step toward strengthening the financial health of affordable housing. Of particular significance is the new acquisition pathway for at-risk buildings and portfolios, which recognizes that escalating operating costs have strained rent-stabilized portfolios and increased the risk of financial and physical distress. By facilitating sales of at-risk buildings to responsible landlords and pairing those transfers with capital investments and discretionary tax abatements, HPD can intervene before distress becomes irreversible. As this program gets underway, a dedicated budget allocation for acquisitions and capital investment will be essential to meeting likely demand. Anchored by a $60 million NYCRS investment, CPC's management of the Community Stabilization Partners portfolio, made up of approximately 35,000 majority rent stabilized units formerly held by Signature Bank, demonstrates how mission-focused capital can stabilize distressed housing at scale. We look forward to leveraging that experience to support the City in preserving large-scale distressed multifamily portfolios across the five boroughs.

Lowering Operating Costs

CPC conducts a yearly survey of our New York City borrowers to gather property income and expense data from the previous year. The data reflected in this year’s survey was gathered in early 2025 and reflects actual building expenses during calendar year 2024 from a representative sample of 324 loans (~55% of portfolio) encompassing 14,552 rent-stabilized units. In 2024, CPC's borrowers reported a 5% increase over 2023 per unit expenses for a total of $10,016, with General and Administrative, Utilities, and Property Insurance showing large increases. Notably, investments in Repairs and Maintenance increased only 3.4%, the third consecutive year of essentially flat growth in this category. Since 2020, total investment in Repairs and Maintenance has grown only

1%. This small increase does not reflect decreased maintenance needs, as aging buildings typically require more attention, not less. Rather, it reflects owners' budgeting decisions. Owners of buildings where expenses outpace revenue will make the logical decision to prioritize paying non-negotiable expenses like property taxes, utilities, and insurance first. Routine repairs and building-wide system maintenance becomes discretionary and often deferred.

As expenses continue to increase while rent increases for stabilized buildings remain low or flat, more buildings are struggling to cover vital expenses and maintain housing quality. These concerns only get worse for buildings with lower rents, as is often seen in 100% stabilized buildings in the outer boroughs. *Block by Block's* spotlight on the Bronx as the borough where housing quality and stability challenges are most acute closely mirrors what CPC observes across our own portfolio. Where the 2024 average rent-stabilized rent is approximately $500 lower than the citywide average, financial stress has already arrived and is worsening at an accelerated pace. We support focused attention and resources directed toward preserving and creating affordability within the borough.

Given these rising expense pressures, we are grateful for the City's focus on lowering operating costs for affordable and rent stabilized buildings through interventions in insurance, water rates, and property taxes.

Insurance: The City's $100 million investment in a new, lower-cost insurance program for regulated housing could be a lifeline for the affordable housing industry. Of all rising operating costs, the exponential growth in multifamily property insurance premiums has emerged as one of the most destabilizing forces for affordable housing providers. Per-unit insurance premiums across CPC's portfolio have risen 75% since 2020, and we know there have been even steeper increases for supportive and deeply affordable housing providers[1]. The City's work to stand up a new, lower-cost insurance program has the potential to stem insurance price growth and significantly reduce operating costs for participating buildings.

Property taxes: CPC's data analysis has shown that a 100% property tax exemption could meaningfully slow financial decline and free up capital to support vital building improvements. Property taxes represent one of the single largest line items in the operating budgets of many rent-regulated buildings and one of the few expense drivers where direct government intervention can

[1] https://thenyhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Affordable-Housing-Insurance-Policy-Brief-3.16.24-Final.pdf

meaningfully influence building stability. As this Administration and Council continue to explore innovative ways to ease property tax burdens for rent-regulated buildings we stand ready to lend our data to inform policy making.

Water rates: At a time when rent-stabilized housing faces mounting financial pressure, the Multi-Family Water Assistance Program is a critical lifeline to offset rising costs that should be bolstered and expanded. Water rates increased 8.5% in 2024, the steepest single-year increase in a decade, and the University Neighborhood Housing Program estimates water payments will reach $2,000 per unit per year by 2030[2] without policy intervention. The Multi-family Water Assistance Program is consistently oversubscribed, turning away eligible households, and its $250 credit has not kept pace with costs since the program's inception over a decade ago. We applaud the expansion of the Multifamily Water Assistance Program to 75,000 units and additionally support UNHP's calls to increase the per-unit benefit and broaden the program's reach.

J-51: For affordable and rent-stabilized buildings, J-51 has long enabled owners to undertake capital work that would otherwise be financially infeasible, and we thank the Governor and State Legislature for recognizing the importance of this critical program by reauthorizing it in the FY27 budget. A renewed J-51 remains an essential preservation tool that is needed now more than ever. We urge the City Council to act swiftly to adopt and enact the J-51 Tax Incentive Program so affordable buildings can access this resource as soon as possible.

New Construction

In addition to preserving existing housing, building new housing must be a key part of the City's strategy for combatting the ongoing housing crisis, and we applaud the Mamdani administration for centering new construction in their housing plan and budget. Expanding HPD's capital budget for FY27 and FY28 by more than 35% over FY24 and FY25 will allow HPD to produce more affordable housing at a time when New Yorkers, especially low-income New Yorkers, need it most. This capital, combined with new development possibilities unlocked by the recently

[2] https://unhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Every-Nickel-Counts-Report-1.pdf#:~:text=If%20there%20are%20no%20changes%20in%20policy,sent%20to%20the%20City's%20general%20operating%20budget.

adopted City of Yes Zoning Text Amendment, a reformed State Environmental Quality Review Act, and the State's 485-x tax incentive program, has the potential to jumpstart new development citywide.

To meet the need for new deeply affordable homes while also maximizing the impact of HPD's capital, we urge the Administration and Council to promote new construction of mixed-income housing. Buildings with a mix of affordability levels may have a lower total number of affordable units than a 100% affordable building but they will require less subsidy per unit and can rely on the higher rent units to cross-subsidize lower rent units, all while leaving more city subsidy available for other projects. Rather than concentrating affordable units to a few deeply subsidized 100% affordable new buildings in only a few neighborhoods where low land costs can offset total development costs, the City should explore a mixed-income development agenda that when layered on top of the City's Fair Housing Growth Strategy can yield economically integrated buildings equitably distributed across New York City's neighborhoods and extend the reach and impact of City subsidy.

Council Legislation

Alongside the Mayor's budget and Housing agency agendas, the City Council has a critically important role to play in advancing effective legislation that sufficiently regulates the housing industry to ensure outcomes and prevent mismanagement while also not becoming overly burdensome. In that vein, CPC strongly supports the revamp of the Third-Party Transfer program through the SAFER Homes Act and applauds the administration for recognizing its critical importance. We also support the administration's commitment to further implementing and expanding the reach of CityFHEPS, which helps New Yorkers move into housing more quickly and stay stably housed for the long-term.

On behalf of the Community Preservation Corporation, we reiterate our strong support for the initiatives outlined in *Block by Block* and supported by the Mayor's Executive Budget, including the $22 billion commitment to housing and the $5 billion in new affordable housing capital funds over the next five years. Sustained action on the construction of new and preservation of existing housing is critical to making New York City more affordable for all

residents. Moving towards implementation, additional specificity in strategy will be crucial to achieving the ambition of this vision, including mobilizing the right incentive structures needed to drive development, equitably directing where that development should occur across the five boroughs, and guiding how preservation and new construction activity ensures equitable outcomes for all New Yorkers.

CPC applauds the Mamdani administration for setting a bold vision to scale housing production and preservation, and we stand ready to serve as a partner to the City in implementing this robust pro-housing agenda. Thank you again to the Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit this testimony today and please feel free to contact CPC's Policy and Public Affairs team directly with any questions.

Eric Bederman, VP Director of Public Affairs: ebederman@communityp.com

Emily Klein, AVP Deputy Director of Policy and Public Affairs: eklein@communityp.com

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About The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC)

The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) is a nonprofit affordable housing and community revitalization company that was formed in the early 1970s to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities which were devastated by disinvestment. Today, CPC uses more than fifty years of expertise in housing finance and public policy to expand access to quality housing, drive down the costs of affordable housing production, advance diversity and equity within the affordable housing development industry, and finance the construction of energy efficient housing. Since our founding, CPC has invested over $16 billion to finance the creation and preservation of more than 276,000 units of affordable and workforce housing through our lending and investing platforms. CPC serves as a permanent lending partner to the New York City Retirement Systems and the New York State Common Retirement Fund, and we are also the servicer of a portion of the rent stabilized multifamily loan portfolio formerly held by Signature Bank, which includes just under 35,000 units of housing across New York City, where we are working diligently to preserve the physical quality and financial stability of that critical portion of the housing stock.

For more information, visit www.communityp.com.

TESTIMONY

NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
CHAIR, ERIC DINOWITZ

Oversight Hearings on The Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

Presented on
Monday, June 8, 2026

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

40 Rector Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10006
(212) 823-2020
www.csa-nyc.org

Thank you, Chair Dinowitz and members of the City Council, for the opportunity to offer written testimony on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget. My name is Henry Rubio, and I am President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators. CSA represents more than 17,000 in-service and retired principals, assistant principals, educational administrators, supervisors, as well as directors and assistant directors of CBO-based early childhood centers across New York City.

The Executive Budget builds on several priorities raised during the Preliminary Budget process and includes meaningful investments in class size implementation, special education services, early childhood education, literacy and math supports, and citywide mental health and community safety initiatives.

At the same time, funding alone does not ensure successful implementation. School leaders are responsible for translating policy into practice, managing staffing, supervising instruction, maintaining safety, and supporting students and families every day. In each of the areas that follow, our goal is to ensure that investments made at City Hall translate into real improvements for students, educators, and families in every neighborhood.

Early Childhood Education

We strongly support the City's commitment to expanding access to early childhood education. Decades of research confirm what educators and families already know, that high quality early childhood programs improve school readiness, strengthen social and emotional development, increase long-term academic outcomes, and provide critical support to working families. Early childhood education sits at the center of any serious effort to support working families, and CSA supports the Administration's goal of expanding these programs.

The Executive Budget reflects further movement toward that goal. We appreciate the Administration's child care partnership with the State, including the State's $1.2 billion investment to help make child care more affordable for working families. We also appreciate the Executive Budget's $40 million investment in FY27 to increase provider rates, as well as funding for The Little Apple, the City's first municipal daycare. These investments are important acknowledgments that early childhood education is both education infrastructure and affordability infrastructure.

However, as school leaders well know, the long-term success of expansion depends on the stability of the workforce responsible for delivering these programs. Provider rate increases are an important step, but the City must ensure that public investments reach the educators, directors, assistant directors, and staff whose work makes early childhood education possible.

Today, New York City's early childhood sector is one of the largest in the nation, with nearly 37,000 educators working across more than 10,000 licensed childcare programs serving families in every borough. According to a comprehensive December 2025 workforce report released by the Day Care Council of New York and authored by Emmy Liss, who now serves as Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Childcare, the workforce supporting these programs is overwhelmingly female and reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. Approximately 95 percent of childcare workers are women, about 75 percent are non-white or multiracial, more than 40 percent identify as Hispanic, and more than half were born outside the United States.

The same Day Care Council workforce analysis found that the median annual wage for childcare workers in New York City is approximately $38,000, compared to a citywide median wage of roughly $65,000, meaning childcare workers earn less than 95 percent of occupations in the city. As a result, they are twice as likely as other employed New Yorkers to live in poverty, and a significant number rely on public assistance programs such as Medicaid or SNAP.

Our members have lived through previous expansions which succeeded in increasing access, and many families benefited. However, expansion also scaled long-standing inequities. Two early childhood systems now exist side by side, one operated directly by the Department of Education and one operated by community-based organizations, and they remain fundamentally unequal.

CSA represents Directors and Assistant Directors in CBO programs who perform substantially the same work, under the same regulatory requirements, as their counterparts in DOE buildings. Yet they are paid less. Their staff are paid less. Their programs operate with fewer resources. This inequity has persisted for years despite repeated commitments to parity.

These compensation disparities have real consequences for workforce stability. Many educators leave community-based programs for DOE positions that offer higher salaries and stronger benefits. Recruitment becomes more difficult, leadership turnover increases, and classrooms become harder to staff. Across the early childhood sector, too many teachers leave the field within their first five years, and 57 percent of programs report being short staffed statewide. Even without further expansion, the system requires approximately 5,000 new educators each year simply to replace turnover, and workforce projections suggest that a universal birth-to-five system could require tens of thousands of additional childcare workers.

Leadership stability is particularly affected by compensation inequities. Directors and Assistant Directors in CBOs carry responsibilities that closely mirror those of DOE administrators. They supervise staff, evaluate teacher performance, guide curriculum implementation, manage attendance and payroll systems, oversee budgets, ensure regulatory compliance, and often respond to contracting and grant requirements associated with nonprofit governance.

Yet despite performing comparable supervisory roles, they are compensated on a lower scale. Analyses included in the Day Care Council workforce report estimate that directors who remain in community-based programs can lose more than $2 million in earnings over the course of a 25-year career compared to similar leadership positions within the DOE system. No education system can sustain leadership stability when the professionals responsible for running programs face such a significant financial penalty for remaining where they are most needed.

In addition to compensation inequities, providers continue to face serious operational challenges related to delayed payments from the DOE. In recent years, community-based programs have experienced chronic payment delays that have made it difficult to meet payroll, pay rent, and maintain basic services. The City Council has already examined these failures through oversight hearings because centers have at times been forced to operate for months without reimbursement for services already delivered. These delays create financial instability, push programs into debt, and threaten closures even as demand for early childhood seats continues to grow.

Funding structures also contribute to instability. Many community-based providers operate under enrollment-driven funding models in which program budgets are tied directly to the number of students enrolled. Even small fluctuations in enrollment can create significant financial gaps for nonprofit providers operating on narrow margins. Unlike DOE schools, which operate within more stable institutional budgeting frameworks, community-based providers often absorb the financial risk created by shifting enrollment patterns.

CSA supports the Administration's vision for early childhood education and appreciates the new investments reflected in the Executive Budget. But we urge the City to address the full system, not just access. True success requires pay parity, workforce stability, operational reliability, timely payments, and respect for the professionals who lead these programs every day. If New York City is going to continue expanding early childhood education, it must fix the inequities that have defined it for too long.

Special Education Services and Due Process

CSA appreciates that the Executive Budget directly recognizes the long-standing challenges faced by special education students and their families. For decades, too many families have had to fight for services their children are legally entitled to receive. School leaders see the consequences when evaluations are delayed, providers are unavailable, placements are difficult to secure, or mandated services are not delivered with the consistency students need.

The Executive Budget states that NYC Public Schools has done important work in recent years to improve access to services and that the City is building on that work through additional investment. CSA supports that direction. The most effective way to reduce conflict, reduce

litigation, and support families is to provide students with the right services early, consistently, and close to home.

At the same time, the Executive Budget also identifies due process cases as a major cost driver and states that changes to program management are expected to reduce cases and generate annual savings. CSA understands the need for responsible fiscal management. But savings in special education must come from better service delivery, stronger administrative systems, clearer central support, and earlier resolution of family concerns, not from restricting access, delaying services, or shifting additional burdens onto individual schools.

Principals and assistant principals are often the people families turn to first when services are not in place. They work to coordinate IEP implementation, manage provider schedules, communicate with families, support teachers, and resolve conflicts before they escalate. But school leaders cannot solve systemwide capacity issues by themselves. They need adequate staffing, sufficient related service providers, timely evaluations, reliable transportation, clear placement options, and central systems that respond quickly when a student's services are at risk.

CSA urges the Administration and the Council to ensure that special education investments are measured not only by savings in due process spending, but by improved student outcomes, stronger family trust, and the ability of schools to deliver mandated services without forcing parents into adversarial processes. Reducing litigation should be the result of a better system for students, not a substitute for one.

School Safety

School safety remains one of the most urgent issues facing our schools. The Chancellor has rightly identified safety as a core pillar of his education strategy, and CSA strongly agrees. Children cannot learn when they are anxious or afraid. Families cannot fully trust the system if they do not feel confident sending their children into school buildings each morning. Educators cannot teach effectively when they are managing constant disruptions or responding to unresolved safety concerns.

In recent years, school leaders have seen a noticeable increase in anxiety among students and families. Parents consistently share heightened concern about social media-driven conflicts, mental health challenges, and incidents of violence both inside and outside school buildings. Students are carrying trauma into classrooms. School leaders are spending increasing amounts of time responding to behavioral crises, peer conflicts, and emotional distress.

New York City schools are currently supported by approximately 3,600 school safety agents, and the New York City Independent Budget Office reported in February 2025 that the number of school safety agents had declined by 28 percent, a loss of 1,413 positions, compared with July

2019 levels, reflecting a substantial reduction in the school safety workforce over the past several years.

Meanwhile, safety personnel continue to intercept dangerous items on a regular basis. Police reporting found that during the 2023-2024 school year NYPD school safety personnel confiscated approximately 3,700 dangerous instruments and 278 weapons in New York City public schools, representing thousands of situations in which trained personnel prevented potentially dangerous incidents from escalating.

School safety agents play a critical role in maintaining secure and welcoming school environments. They are often the first adults students see when they enter the building and the last when they leave. In many schools, safety agents are trusted figures who build relationships with families over years. They know the children by name. They recognize when something feels off. They de-escalate conflicts, support school staff during emergencies, and provide reassurance to parents. For many students, safety agents function as steady, familiar adults, often described by families as trusted uncles or aunts who help anchor the school community.

Despite their importance, the number of school safety agents has declined in recent years, leaving many buildings understaffed and school administrators overly burdened and concerned for the safety of their students and staff. For several years now, CSA has repeatedly raised concerns about this shortage and its impact on daily operations. While recruitment challenges are frequently cited, there has not yet been a comprehensive, systemwide strategy to address recruitment, retention, compensation, deployment, and working conditions.

The Executive Budget includes citywide investments in community safety, hate crime prevention, and access to mental health care. CSA supports these investments. They are important, and they reflect a broader understanding that safety includes prevention, intervention, and community stability. But citywide investments cannot substitute for the specific safety needs inside school buildings. Schools need enough trained safety agents, adequate mental health staffing, and leadership capacity to manage incidents in real time.

Recent incidents reported across New York City illustrate the kinds of situations school leaders and safety personnel are managing every day:

In September 2025, a 16-year-old student in Queens allegedly brought a loaded 9-millimeter handgun to school and posted threats on social media about shooting up the building.

In October of this school year, police recovered a loaded handgun from a student in Brooklyn, a school building that does not have permanent metal detectors.

In November, a 17-year-old student was slashed in the head and neck with a scalpel during a hallway fight inside a Bronx school and was transported to the hospital.

Right before the December holidays, a 12-year-old boy was charged with attempted murder after stabbing another 12-year-old in the chest at a Brooklyn school.

In January 2026, two separate students brought loaded firearms into two different New York City schools on the same day.

Even when violence occurs outside the building, the consequences immediately affect the school day: that same month, a Manhattan school building in Chelsea was placed on lockdown after gunfire erupted in a nearby park, forcing students and teachers to shelter in place.

In February, a school safety agent in Brooklyn was stabbed while attempting to break up a fight near a school during dismissal.

And earlier this month, an 11-year-old student stabbed another child inside a Bronx school, sending the victim to the hospital. Meanwhile, more than a dozen students were injured in a pepper spray incident at a Queens school.

These incidents represent only a fraction of the events school leaders manage each year. Even when situations are contained quickly, they leave lasting impacts on students, staff, and families. Each incident requires investigation, counseling, communication with families, and often weeks of follow-up to stabilize the school community. This is a growing strain on administrators who must quickly and appropriately address these incidents to support their students and families.

Safety also extends beyond physical security. Student well-being is deeply connected to mental health supports, restorative practices, and access to caring adults who can intervene early when problems arise. The New York City Department of Health reported in September 2025 that 35 percent of New York City public high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless in 2023, up from 27 percent in 2013, while 18 percent reported seriously considering suicide and 14 percent reported a suicide attempt in 2023. These statistics are drawn from the NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which is conducted every two years, making 2023 the most recent year of available citywide data.

At the same time, many schools lack adequate mental health staffing. A December 2025 report from New York City Comptroller Brad Lander found that 53 percent of New York City schools do not meet recommended guidance counselor ratios. Principals report that many conflicts stem from untreated anxiety, housing instability, social media pressures, and unresolved trauma. Without adequate counseling services, restorative programs, and school-based mental health professionals, schools are often left responding to crises rather than preventing them.

CSA continues to advocate for the restoration and expansion of restorative justice programs, school-based mental health supports, peer mediation, and guidance counseling services. These resources are not optional. When students have access to counseling, when conflicts are addressed through structured restorative practices, and when families are engaged as partners, schools become safer and more stable.

An AP in Every School

Leadership capacity is another critical factor. As anyone who has spent time in a school building knows, assistant principals are central to the daily operation of safe and effective schools. They work at the intersection of instruction, operations, and school culture. They supervise and support teachers, coordinate professional learning, manage compliance responsibilities, reinforce expectations across the building, and address the countless day-to-day issues that determine whether a school runs smoothly. In many buildings, assistant principals are among the most visible and consistently present members of the leadership team, maintaining steady relationships with students, staff, and families throughout the school day.

That presence is especially important when it comes to safety. Assistant principals are often the first administrators to respond to student crises, medical emergencies, behavioral incidents, and safety concerns. They coordinate with school safety agents, direct staff, communicate with families, support teachers, and stabilize school operations in real time. These moments require judgment, composure, and experience.

But safety is not only about crisis response. It is also about prevention. Assistant principals help build the school culture that allows adults to identify problems early, intervene before conflicts escalate, and maintain clear expectations in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and common spaces.

When schools do not have sufficient assistant principal coverage, these responsibilities do not disappear. They fall entirely on the principal or are distributed in ways that create gaps in supervision, communication, and follow-through. That is not sustainable, particularly in large schools where the number of students, staff, programs, and daily incidents requires a distributed leadership structure.

As class size implementation brings thousands of new teachers into the system, ensuring sufficient supervisory staffing becomes even more important. Schools need enough assistant principals to mentor new educators, support instruction, maintain consistent operations, and respond quickly and effectively to safety concerns. For these reasons, CSA continues to advocate for at least one assistant principal in every school and for the supervisory capacity necessary to keep schools safe, stable, and well led.

Professional Development

CSA supports school leaders not only through advocacy but through sustained professional development delivered by our Executive Leadership Institute. For more than two decades, ELI

has provided CSA members with training designed by school leaders for school leaders, grounded in the realities of New York City schools.

ELI offers many single-topic workshops each year on timely and practical subjects, including instructional leadership, restorative practices, mental health supports, science of reading implementation, chronic absenteeism, family engagement, and crisis management. In addition, ELI provides structured, year-long programs for new and experienced administrators who want to reinvest in their professional growth. These programs focus on instructional supervision, school culture, staff development, operational management, and equity-centered leadership.

The centerpiece of ELI's work is ALPAP, CSA's Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals, which serves as a principal preparation program. ALPAP is a year-long experience that pairs aspiring principals with veteran mentors who are currently leading schools. Participants engage in seminars, field-based learning, action research, and direct coaching. They build practical leadership skills while developing professional networks that continue long after the program ends. ALPAP has helped prepare hundreds of school leaders for principalship and remains one of the most effective leadership pipelines in the City.

The Executive Budget includes $17.3 million in FY27 to expand NYC Reads and Solves. CSA supports investments that strengthen literacy and math instruction. But the success of these instructional initiatives depends heavily on school leaders. Principals and assistant principals must understand the instructional models, support teachers, use data effectively, monitor implementation, and communicate with families. That requires targeted professional development aligned to the real work of school leadership.

For many years, professional development relied heavily on in-person workshops. While those remain valuable, the pandemic accelerated a shift toward virtual learning, and school leaders have embraced it. Virtual sessions allow administrators to participate from their buildings, reduce travel time, and balance professional learning with demanding schedules. Attendance has increased, and engagement has broadened across boroughs.

At the same time, school leaders are increasingly asking for asynchronous learning. Principals and assistant principals work long days and often cannot attend live sessions at fixed times. They are requesting high-quality online courses that can be completed at their own pace, while still earning required certifications and professional learning credits. This flexibility is essential for leaders who are managing staffing shortages, student needs, and operational challenges throughout the school day.

CSA is preparing to transform its offerings by converting much of our existing content into asynchronous formats while continuing to offer live workshops and mentoring. This will allow us to reach more school leaders, provide consistent learning across the system, and support

administrators in ways that fit the realities of their schedules. This transition requires significant investment in curriculum development, digital platforms, instructional design, and staffing.

A critical component of this expansion is artificial intelligence literacy. AI is already reshaping education. Yet many school leaders have not received structured training on how to responsibly integrate AI into instruction, operations, and school culture. CSA believes that systemwide transformation begins with principals.

We are developing professional learning specifically focused on AI, created by New York City administrators for New York City administrators, covering best practices for instructional use, staff support, student safety, data privacy, and ethical implementation. Increasing AI literacy among school leaders and administrators will produce dividends across the system. It will strengthen instructional leadership. It will support teachers as they adapt their practice. It will help schools operate more efficiently. It will ensure that students benefit from emerging technologies in thoughtful and equitable ways.

CSA is trusted with professional development because our programs are created by New York City school leaders who understand New York City schools. Our facilitators are practitioners. Our content reflects the instructional frameworks, compliance requirements, staffing realities, and community dynamics that principals face every day. This credibility matters. School leaders engage deeply with ELI because the learning is relevant, practical, and immediately applicable.

We are asking the Council for increased investment of $1.2 million in ELI, bringing the total to $2.2 million, because this moment represents a critical turning point.

Class Size Law Implementation

CSA has always supported smaller class sizes. Educators understand that when teachers have fewer students, they are better able to provide differentiated instruction, build relationships, identify learning gaps, and spend meaningful time with each child. Smaller classes create stronger classroom communities and improve academic outcomes. For these reasons, CSA supported the class size legislation at the state level.

From the beginning, however, we have been clear that reducing class size must be done responsibly. We warned early that successful implementation would require sufficient staffing, adequate funding, and available space. Without all three, schools would be placed in impossible positions and students would ultimately bear the consequences.

The Executive Budget makes significant new commitments toward class size compliance. We appreciate the additional $122 million investment to hire 1,000 more teachers. We also appreciate the addition of $1.5 billion to the School Construction Authority's Five-Year Capital

Plan, bringing the total identified in the Executive Budget summary to $7.6 billion. These investments reflect the reality that class size implementation cannot succeed without both staff and space.

Over the past two years, CSA has worked closely with the DOE and UFT to move implementation forward in a practical way. Principals were asked to analyze their buildings, assess staffing needs, evaluate space constraints, and report back on what their schools would require to meet the mandates. We appreciate that the City used this information to guide funding decisions and to direct additional resources to schools that demonstrated need.

We appreciate the Executive Budget's additional $122 million investment to hire more teachers, and we continue to urge the city to pair teacher hiring with sufficient supervisory staffing. CSA has consistently emphasized that hiring teachers alone will not be enough. If thousands of new educators enter the system, schools also need supervisors who can provide instructional coaching, professional development, and operational stability. APs play a central role in mentoring new teachers, maintaining consistency across classrooms, and responding to daily challenges in school buildings. We were pleased that the City recognized this reality, and we continue to advocate for further supervisory support as implementation continues toward the compliance thresholds.

Another one major challenge has become increasingly clear. Many schools simply do not have the physical capacity to add classrooms. New construction has not kept pace with enrollment growth, and there has not been sufficient progress in identifying where additions to existing buildings are feasible or where entirely new schools are required. Without a comprehensive facilities strategy tied directly to class size implementation, principals are left trying to solve structural problems at the building level with limited options. Space constraints remain one of the most significant barriers to full compliance. We must prioritize the facility retrofit requests that principals have already submitted to increase the number of available classrooms, and the City must begin to identify locations for new school buildings.

Lastly, CSA remains concerned about the financial structure supporting implementation. Fair Student Funding was designed around class sizes that will no longer exist. When schools reduce enrollment to meet new caps, they lose per-pupil funding even as they are required to staff additional classrooms. Without adjustments to Fair Student Funding, schools may be forced to cut programs or support services to cover basic instructional costs. The funding formula must eventually be updated to reflect the realities created by the law.

Additional Priorities

In addition to the areas already discussed, CSA urges the Council to continue supporting several programs and operational needs that are essential to school stability and student success.

CSA strongly supports expanded investment in Career and Technical Education. CTE programs provide students with industry-aligned instruction, hands-on experience, and pathways to meaningful careers. School leaders see firsthand how these programs engage students who may otherwise feel disconnected from traditional academic models. Yet access remains uneven across boroughs and communities. CSA urges increased funding to expand CTE and career pathway offerings so that every student has access to career-connected learning, including apprenticeships and internships, particularly in high schools serving high-need populations.

Equally important is early exposure to digital literacy and computer science in elementary and middle schools. Students must develop foundational skills in computational thinking and responsible technology use at an early age. CSA continues to advocate for dedicated funding for computer science instruction, professional development for educators, and equitable access to devices and curriculum resources so that students across all neighborhoods are prepared for high school, college, and an evolving workforce.

CSA also supports expanded investment in STEAM Centers that provide students with opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. These centers expose young people to robotics, design, and emerging fields while building creativity and problem-solving skills. School leaders urge that these opportunities be made available in every borough, not concentrated in a limited number of communities.

Community Schools remain another critical support structure. These schools provide wraparound services that address food insecurity, health care access, housing instability, and family engagement. When paired with strong instructional programming, Community Schools help stabilize neighborhoods and improve attendance, behavior, and academic outcomes. CSA encourages continued investment in community schools.

Access to functioning technology remains essential. Schools continue to rely on student devices for instruction, assessment, and communication with families. CSA urges the City to continue funding the purchase, maintenance, and repair of devices so that technology does not become an unfunded mandate placed on individual schools.

CSA also appreciates the Executive Budget's investment in expanding NYC Reads and Solves. Literacy and math investments are important, but they must be accompanied by sufficient staffing, coaching, professional learning, scheduling support, and high-quality materials. Principals and assistant principals will be responsible for making these initiatives work in classrooms, and they need the tools and time to do that work well.

Finally, CSA also urges the City to sustain funding for New Visions. New Visions provides critical support to schools through technology solutions specifically designed for the unique realities of public education. The New Visions Portal was created in partnership with educators

and school communities to reflect the day-to-day workflow of schools. By thoughtfully consolidating student, academic, attendance, program, and intervention data into one accessible system, the Portal empowers school leaders and staff to make informed decisions, identify student needs early, and coordinate timely supports that improve student outcomes.

The Portal is not simply a reporting dashboard. It is a planning, case-management, and student-support tool that allows school teams to monitor progress, document interventions, coordinate services, and act on real-time information before challenges become crises. Its widespread voluntary use across the system demonstrates the meaningful value administrators and school-based staff find in the platform.

Continued investment in New Visions funding is essential to ensuring that schools have access to tools that foster collaboration, efficiency, and student success. The Portal fills a critical gap by connecting schools, districts, and community-based service providers through a shared platform that supports coordinated care and communication**.** It also helps connect school teams with district offices, CUNY, DHS shelters, community-based organizations, and citywide initiatives through shared, permission-based access to timely and actionable information. Its flexibility allows schools to customize processes to meet local needs while maintaining consistency in data use and intervention strategies.

Sustaining this funding for the platform will help schools strengthen support systems, improve operational effectiveness, and ensure that every student has access to the resources they need to thrive. CSA urges the Council and Administration to maintain stable funding for the New Visions Portal so that school leaders and their teams can continue using coordinated, real-time data to support students and families effectively.

Conclusion

CSA appreciates the Administration's recognition that New York City's education system requires sustained investment in early childhood education, class size implementation, special education services, school safety, instructional supports, mental health, and leadership development.

The Executive Budget includes important new investments, including support for class size staffing and capital needs, special education services, childcare provider rates, NYC Reads and Solves, citywide mental health access, and early childhood expansion. These are meaningful steps. But the success of these investments will depend on implementation, staffing, space, central support, and the ability of school leaders to turn budget commitments into daily practice.

At the same time, school leaders see every day that funding decisions made at City Hall translate directly into classroom conditions, staffing stability, and student well-being. Expanding early childhood education requires resolving long-standing inequities in compensation and payment systems. Improving special education requires early access to mandated services and a system that supports families before disputes escalate. Implementing class size mandates requires

adequate staffing, space planning, and funding structures that reflect current realities. Ensuring school safety requires investments in people, mental health supports, and leadership capacity, not just infrastructure. Strengthening professional development requires preparing current and future leaders for the evolving demands of their roles, including responsible integration of emerging technologies.

CSA's members are responsible for turning policy into practice. They manage complex organizations, support educators, partner with families, and care for students under increasingly challenging conditions. They are committed to delivering on the City's goals, but they cannot do so without stable systems, equitable funding, and sustained support.

CSA looks forward to continuing to work with the Administration and the City Council throughout the budget process to ensure that these investments lead to meaningful improvements in school communities across all five boroughs. We thank you for your continued partnership and for your commitment to New York City's students, families, and educators.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

THE DOOR
Where Young People Thrive

To: NYC Council, Committee on Finance
From: Lora Adams, Legal Program Manager, Detained Minors Project at The Door's Legal Services Center**,** and **Angie Toribio,** Director of Government Relations and Strategy at The Door
Date: June 10, 2026
Re: FY 2027 Executive Budget and Supports for Immigrant Youth

The Door is comprehensive youth development organization that has served young people in New York City since 1972. We serve up to 11,000 youth annually across our four locations, including our lower Manhattan and South Bronx youth centers and two supportive housing sites on the Lower East Side. Broome Street Academy (BSA), a charter high school embedded at The Door, enrolls up to 330 students and prioritizes applicants who are experiencing housing instability or have been involved in the child welfare system. At The Door, young people between the ages of 12 and 24 can access a wide range of services including health care, education, mental health counseling and crisis intervention, legal assistance, high school equivalency and college preparation services, career development, housing support, arts, sports and recreational activities, and nutritious meals, all for free.

Established in 1992, The Door's **Legal Services Center (LSC)** ensures that young people are provided with high-quality civil legal representation in matters including access to higher education and vocational services, humanitarian immigration applications, public benefits, and the right to safe and supportive foster care placements. Our team is comprised of over 50 professionals, including attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support personnel. While the LSC's target population is all young people in NYC in need of civil legal services, most of our services support immigrant youth, many of whom have faced insurmountable challenges regarding their safety, legal status, and rights in the United States. Our attorneys represent young people in removal proceedings before immigration courts, as well as those seeking to regularize their status through the filing of affirmative humanitarian applications.

Over the past year alone, we handled more than 2,500 immigration legal matters for youth in need, including legal services for 614 unaccompanied immigrant children from ages 0 to 18.

Fear and Harm Facing Immigrant Youth

The impact of escalating immigration enforcement has been devastating for many young people in our community. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has continued to conduct raids across the country, arresting people at their homes, places of work, or even on their way into the courthouse to comply with the immigration legal process. We have observed significant drops in attendance for many programs other than direct legal services out of fear. These detentions also have a ripple effect as the adult sponsors, often family members, of our clients are also being arrested and detained, frightening other adults from sponsoring unaccompanied children. Young people no longer feel safe and have difficulty trusting us when it is impossible to guarantee what will happen next in their cases.

In response, our legal team has been forced to expand its federal litigation capacity, including preparing to file more habeas corpus petitions on behalf of young people unlawfully detained in the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) or ICE custody.

Growing Need Amid Federal Funding Uncertainty

To meet the growing demand for these services, we operate several free legal clinics, including a weekly drop-in clinic primarily serving recent arrivals who are unhoused or housing insecure. However, the need continues to outpace our resources. At the same time, the federal government has taken a multi-pronged approach to dismantling the rights of immigrants across the country, creating significant obstacles that impact our ability to help young people pursue humanitarian immigration relief, including by targeting critical funding sources that sustain this work.

For the past several years, The Door has served as a subgrantee of the Acacia Center for Justice's Unaccompanied Children's Representation grant through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Many of these young people arrived in the United States without a guardian, and we are seeing an increasing number who were taken from their parent or guardian and detained. We provide know-your-rights education, in-court assistance through our Friend of Court program, social work services, and full legal representation during their detainment and after their release should they stay in New York.

In March 2025, the federal government attempted to eliminate the Unaccompanied Children's Representation program nationwide, illegally canceling its funding overnight. We worked unfunded until a May 2025 preliminary injunction, but thus far we are only contracted in three-month increments until ORR proposes a new long-term contract.

In February 2026, ORR released a new solicitation for bids for the Unaccompanied Children's Representation program. The terms of this RFP raise serious concerns regarding the future of legal representation for unaccompanied children and threaten the integrity of services that help children establish safety, permanence, and due process protections after fleeing violence in their home countries.

The Door signed a commitment letter to continue to work with Acacia should it be awarded the contract, and Acacia submitted their first proposal in early April 2026; however, they also filed a protest of the solicitation on the same day, challenging various aspects of the procurement. Though ORR has twice retracted its proposal due to protests around billing, attorney ethics, and client privacy, the most recent proposal has only worsened the negative impact on our young people. The short-term contract awarded after the preliminary injunction expires July 2026, but ORR has yet to enter a proposed replacement in good faith. We are extremely concerned about the existence of immigration legal services for detained youth after this summer.

City Council Investments

As a founding member of the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE) coalition, The Door has received discretionary funding through the Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families initiative for more than a decade. We have also received support through the Welcome NYC initiative since its creation. These critical sources of support make it possible for us to provide comprehensive wraparound services to immigrant youth including direct legal representation, Know Your Rights trainings, legal clinics, and brief services to triage and prioritize urgent cases.

In FY26, City Council made a significant investment in immigrant youth legal services, enabling providers to expand capacity, reduce waitlists, and reach more young people than ever before. That investment has made a measurable difference during an extremely challenging time and we are deeply grateful. However, the need remains urgent.

We respectfully urge the City Council to fully fund ICARE at the coalition's requested amount of $18,559,420. Of that total, The Door would receive $2,766,000 to continue strengthening our capacity to provide effective, comprehensive, and zealous legal representation to immigrant youth.

Additionally, we call for your support of The Door's expanded requests of $350,000 through the Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJS) initiative, $50,000 through the Welcome NYC initiative, and its new request of $750,000 through the proposed Speaker Initiative for LGBTQ Immigrants.

Current funds allow us to support a weekly drop-in legal clinic for runaway and homeless youth with two dedicated staff. The young people who attend our clinic seek quality advice and representation in their immigration cases, and most are in removal proceedings. Each young person receives a one-on-one consult, where attorneys, paralegals, and social workers screen the young person for legal and social work needs and provide them with know-your-rights information, advice, and referrals. In the last several months, we have also developed a growing pro se services practice in response to the increasingly harsh state of immigration law and the dangers faced by young people forced to navigate removal proceedings without a lawyer. The needs at this clinic far outpace our capacity, and this expanded request would enable us to dedicate additional staff and educational resources to some of the most vulnerable teens and young adults in our city.

The young people who come through our doors are resilient, ambitious, and deserve every opportunity to thrive. With your continued partnership, we can ensure that immigrant youth in New York City continue to have access to the legal representation, services, and support systems they need to build safe and stable futures.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and ongoing commitment to immigrant youth,



Lora Adams, Legal Program Manager
Detained Minors Project
The Door Legal Services Center



Angie Toribio, Director
Government Relations and Strategy
The Door

TESTIMONY OF
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

City Hall,
New York, NY

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Joint Hearing of the Committees on Children and Youth, Mental Health and Substance Use, and Oversight and Investigation

PURPOSE: To Express Opposition to Intro 660

Presented by

Reggie Chatman
Director of Policy, The David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy

The Fortune Society
29-76 Northern Blvd.
LIC, NY 11101
212-691-7554

http://www.fortunesociety.com

Thank you, Deputy Speaker Williams and Chairs Stevens, Caban, and Krishnan, for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Reggie Chatman, and I am the Director of Policy at The Fortune Society's David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. In my role, I help lead Fortune's policy and advocacy efforts. I am also a formerly incarcerated youth who spent 25 years in prison starting at age 17, and who now also works as a credible messenger, coach, and mentor for justice impacted youth. Therefore, I have lived experience with respect to how important trust is between youth and the staff of the programs that serve them. It is our belief that Intro 660 may threaten that trust and thus, we have grave concerns about this proposed legislation.

The Fortune Society is a 58-year-old organization committed to providing alternatives to incarceration and supporting successful reentry. Our mission aims to strengthen the fabric of communities by instilling a belief in the power of individuals to change. Through programs shaped by the experiences of our participants, we help rebuild lives. We also seek to change minds through education and advocacy to foster a fair, humane, and rehabilitative justice system. In Fiscal Year 2025, Fortune served more than 18,000 New Yorkers – including over 2,000 people under the age of 25 – through our broad array of programs, including employment services, mental health and substance use treatment, and housing. Every day we see how comprehensive, community-based programming and interventions can change lives, break cycles of involvement in the justice system, and create safer communities for all of us. We have no wrong front door, meaning that whether someone is mandated to participate in our services or comes to us voluntarily, and regardless of which program is their initial form of engagement, they can avail themselves of everything we have to offer. Because of the care with which our staff build trust, it is common for our younger participants to reach back out to their case managers well after they have completed a specific program, to keep them updated on their progress or to inquire about re-enrolling in another Fortune program.

In 2026, we were proud to be selected as a partner organization for the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) Community Resources for Employment and Development (CRED) program. This program offers career development training through mock interviews, resume writing support, digital literacy lessons, and green building operations and maintenance training with our partner Solar One. With the gracious support of DYCD,

participants receive up to 24 weeks or 600 hours of paid training and internship experience, earning $20 per hour. Upon completion of the program, participants are placed in transitional work opportunities for 21 hours per week. After their internships, participants remain in Fortune's continuum of support and are assigned to an Employment Specialist who will continue to help them find permanent work opportunities. This program operates out of our Supervised Release Program location in the Bronx and is designed for and available to residents in communities most impacted by gun violence. The services have been well received, and we have not experienced any issues between our participants. In fact, during our many years of serving thousands of participants annually, including young people whom we have served in various ways since our founding, we have rarely experienced altercations between participants in our sites.

In CRED, we serve young people between the ages of 18-24. We are therefore concerned that Intro. 660 will impact the young people we serve in a way that erodes their trust in our frontline staff, and Fortune as a whole. Intro 660 would require all programs funded by DYCD, including the CRED program, to report on in-person verbal or physical altercations involving youth under the age of 24, provide details on the reasons for those altercations, examine related online activity, and report on whether an agency responded. The bill also suggests that community-based providers "monitor and identify" young people's online activities to prevent potential altercations. We know that youth-serving spaces are most effective when they are built on trust, relationship building, de-escalation, and support; thus, these requirements raise serious concerns for Fortune as a provider of youth programming. Young people need places where natural conflict can be addressed safely and constructively. Requiring reporting on any altercation and monitoring online activity will instead create an atmosphere that disrupts trust, making relationships between youth and staff feel less authentic and less conducive to the program's intended outcomes.

One of our former young participants shared that after a few weeks, "I started to open up because Fortune was my safe haven in a sense," which enabled him to fully embrace the program. The requirements outlined in Intro. 660 would complicate that sense of safety and vulnerability, thereby undermining the true power of the programs we offer. Mandating reporting on participating youth is simply antithetical to our program's purpose. Our goal is to support

their growth and prevent future criminal legal system involvement – not inadvertently increase their exposure to it because they no longer want to attend a program out of distrust.

The requirements laid out in this legislation would impact over 120,000 young people throughout our city. We are deeply concerned that Intro 660, if implemented, would create a new surveillance database of our youth that in effect could become a new iteration of the gang database. To protect the integrity of programs at Fortune and at our partner organizations across the city, we urge the Council to refocus its concerns about protecting young people towards investment, rather than surveillance, and to safeguard the critically important relationships built between our staff and the youth we serve.

Testimony Provided by
Jackie Rogers, President, The Garden by the Bay
For the Committee on Finance of the FY27 Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

Thank you to Chair Linda Lee and members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Jackie Rogers, and I am a member of The Garden by the Bay, located at 480 Beach 43rd Street, Edgemere, NY 11691 in the Borough of Queens. The Garden by the Bay, has a rich history of community advocacy, action and engagement; and has been a vital green space in our neighborhood for the last six years. We have become a beacon of hope for the marginalized and underserved community of Edgemere.

As a member of the Green Guerillas Council of Gardeners, a dynamic coalition uniting community gardeners across New York City, I want to highlight several crucial recommendations for advancing a sustainable and equitable food system in our city.

While we applaud the City's decision to baseline $15 million in funding for NYC Parks workers, we urge the Council to ensure that GreenThumb's seasonal staff are also baselined. GreenThumb is the primary support system for more than 550 community gardens across New York City. However, GreenThumb continues to operate with limited staffing and budget constraints, even as gardens are being asked to meet growing community needs.

GreenThumb's 17 seasonal staff positions must be included in the baseline, along with the restoration of $2.6 million in funding. Without this investment, gardens will continue to face delays and gaps in receiving materials, technical assistance, infrastructure support, and direct communication from the City.

Therefore, we call upon the city to invest in:

1. Baseline GreenThumb's 17 seasonal staff and $2.6 million in funding.
2. Increasing funding to the Parks Equity Initiative (PEI) and allocating $300,000 of PEI funds to create a pilot program empowering garden groups to access funds directly, through a simplified application and reporting process, fostering equity and sustainability.
3. Continuing to invest in A Greener NYC to empower local organizations in providing youth with green jobs, infrastructure, and advocacy opportunities to community gardeners.
4. Increase funding to the Get Stuff Clean initiative to enable the DOHMH Rat Academy to address rodent infestation and illegal dumping affecting community gardens, while also strengthening collaboration between DSNY and GreenThumb, and enhancing the relationship and outreach of the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene Rat Academy Training program with community gardeners for effective access to this citywide resource.

Community gardeners have been left to fend for themselves for decades. It is time for the city to invest in its communities and uplift the benefits community gardens contribute to neighborhood success. We urge the Committee on Finance to restore and baseline funding for GreenThumb, create direct funding opportunities for gardens, strengthen sanitation and rodent support, continue investing in youth green jobs, and ensure that community gardens receive the protection and resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

Jackie Rogers,
President, The Garden by the Bay
Where Hope, Inspiration and Tranquility Reside

Testimony
for
The New York City Council

6/10/26

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jolene Gunther-Doherty, and I am the Director of The Guild for Exceptional Children's 4410 Preschool Special Education program.

4410 preschool special education programs have existed for decades serving NYC's students with special needs. Our highly trained school staff includes special education teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists which work with students with complex educational needs. Placements for preschoolers with special needs requires the thoughtful development of individualized educational plans. Without qualified special education teachers, the promise of early intervention for NYC's most vulnerable students will fall short and further slow the development of our preschoolers with special needs. Salary parity needs to be addressed for 4410 programs to continue to provide services to students with special needs.

I urge the City Council to ensure 4410 programs are fully and equitably incorporated into plans and budgets for universal childcare.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

The High School
for Innovation in
Advertising & Media

Adaleza J. Michelena, Principal
Lakisha David-Mckenzie, Assistant Principal *David Mevs,Assistant Principal*

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Finance in Support of New Visions for Public Schools

Good afternoon.

My name is **Adaleza Michelena**, and I am the founding Principal of the High School for Innovation in Advertising and Media (IAM). IAM is a 9-14 Pathways to Technology (P-TECH) high school located in Canarsie, Brooklyn serving about 325 students.

I am writing to express my strong support for New Visions for Public Schools and to urge the City Council to continue funding and supporting the Affinity partnership structure that has been such an important part of the success of my school and so many others across New York City.

My relationship with New Visions goes back almost twenty years. New Visions was involved before IAM even opened its doors. Back in 2007, when our school was still an idea and a proposal, New Visions was there helping us think through what the school could become. They worked alongside our founding team during the planning process, supported us through the opening of the school, and have remained a trusted partner ever since.

When I think about the growth of IAM over the years, I cannot separate that story from the support we have received from New Visions.

They helped us build our Career and Technical Education program. They supported our advisory program and helped us strengthen the systems that allow every student to be known well by adults in the building. They have supported our college and career planning efforts, our school librarian, our guidance counselor, and our instructional programs in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Just as importantly, they have helped us become a stronger organization.

One of the areas where I have seen the greatest impact is through data and student support systems. I remember when many of us were using DataSorter, which was essentially one giant spreadsheet that helped schools organize information about students. At the time, it was groundbreaking. Over the years, New Visions continued to improve those systems, developing first the Data Portal and then the New Visions Portal. Today, those tools are an essential part of how we monitor student progress, identify students who need support, track graduation readiness, and make informed decisions as a school.

What started as support for New Visions schools has grown into infrastructure that benefits schools throughout New York City. That ability to evolve and respond to the needs of schools is one of the reasons New Visions remains so valuable.

Another strength of New Visions is the network itself.

The High School
for Innovation in
Advertising & Media

Adaleza J. Michelena, Principal
Lakisha David-Mckenzie, Assistant Principal *David Mevs,Assistant Principal*

As school leaders, we can sometimes become isolated within our own buildings and communities. Through New Visions, I have had opportunities to learn from principals and educators from Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx. We share ideas, solve problems together, and learn from one another's successes and challenges. Those relationships have made my school better and have helped us innovate in ways that would have been much harder to accomplish on our own.

The impact of the Affinity network extends well beyond any one school. Affinity schools collectively serve more than 71,000 students across New York City, many of whom face significant challenges, including poverty, housing instability, and language barriers. Despite serving higher-needs populations, Affinity schools continue to produce strong outcomes, including higher graduation rates and higher rates of college enrollment than comparable non-Affinity schools.

That is not an accident.

It is the result of years of partnership, expertise, professional learning, collaboration, and investment in schools.

What has always impressed me about New Visions is that they do not simply provide a service and move on. They have built capacity within my school. They have helped IAM solve problems. They listen. They adapt. They continuously improve their work based on what schools actually need.

Over the years, I have watched New Visions support schools through leadership transitions, changes in accountability systems, curriculum shifts, the pandemic, technological advances, and now major changes to graduation requirements. Through all of those changes, they have remained focused on one thing: helping schools better serve students.

After nearly twenty years of partnership, I can say with complete confidence that the High School for Innovation in Advertising and Media would not be the school it is today without New Visions. Their work is reflected in our systems, our programs, our staff development, and most importantly, in the opportunities available to our students every day.

I am deeply grateful for everything they have done for IAM and for schools across New York City. I respectfully ask the Council to continue supporting New Visions for Public Schools and the Affinity partnership structure so that schools like mine can continue to benefit from the expertise, collaboration, and resources they provide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Adaleza Michelena
Principal
High School for Innovation in Advertising and Media

The Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, Inc.

Testimony Before the New York City Council

Committee on Finance — FY2027 Executive Budget Hearing - June 10, 2026

Submitted by Raye Barbieri, Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

Thank you, Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Raye Barbieri, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Kingsbridge Heights Community Center (KHCC), a settlement house in the Northwest Bronx that has served our community for 52 years.

KHCC was founded in 1974 by three Bronx women who walked into City Hall and demanded better for their neighborhood. That founding spirit — rooted, bold, and unapologetic — guides everything we do today. We serve more than 6,500 families annually across early childhood education, youth development, mental health and trauma services, food justice, adult literacy, workforce development, and wraparound case management. Our $16.5 million budget is overwhelmingly government-funded, and the vast majority of the families we serve are low-income New Yorkers of color in the Northwest Bronx and Upper Manhattan.

We are a proud member of United Neighborhood Houses, and we stand fully behind the priorities UNH has set forth in its FY27 testimony. In this statement, we speak to the priorities that are most directly tied to KHCC's programs and the families who depend on us — and we urge the Council to invest accordingly.

Early Childhood Education: Protect the Investment in Our Youngest New Yorkers

KHCC operates a comprehensive early childhood continuum — including Early Head Start, 2-K, 3-K, and 4-K classrooms, and Family Childcare Networks (FCCNs) serving families in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan. In FY25, we served 500 children ages 0–5, and 95% of children completing our preschool programs met school readiness targets.

We applaud Mayor Mamdani's commitment to universal, high-quality early childhood education and his prioritization of free childcare for two-year-olds — including the announced expansion into Kingsbridge and Inwood this fall, and across the city next year. KHCC stands ready, willing, and able to expand and ensure the City reaches its target for free childcare for all.

However, the federal landscape is threatening to undermine what the City is building. New York City lost an $80 million federal Head Start grant in 2025, all of which was subcontracted to organizations including KHCC for high-quality head start programs across the five boroughs. While the City stepped in with transitional funding through FY28, the long-term future of impacted programs remains uncertain. The City must make a sustained, multi-year commitment to ensure all affected providers obtain new City contracts and that critical early childhood capacity is not lost unnecessarily — especially at a time of significant citywide expansion. We urge the Council to:

- Fully fund the DOE's FY27 early childhood budget to backfill the lost federal Head Start dollars and protect approximately 6,000 seats citywide, increase nonprofit PreK teacher salaries to match those of DOE employees, and increase the rates per child, ensuring no community loses capacity due to the federal funding transition.
- Baseline child care outreach funding at $5 million as proposed in the Executive Budget — with specific attention to multilingual, culturally responsive outreach that reaches the immigrant families we serve.
- Baseline Promise NYC at $25 million, ensuring that immigrant children excluded from ACS-funded care receive the same access to quality programming as their peers.

The federal attack on Head Start is real and escalating. A proposed rule would rescind workforce compensation standards that have helped attract and retain qualified early childhood educators. Our staff are some of the lowest-paid professionals in the city doing some of the most important work. The City must fill the gap the federal government is creating to fulfill the promise of affordability for families and workers alike.

Youth Development: From Afterschool to College and Beyond

KHCC served 1,078 tweens and teens across our youth programs in FY25. Ninety-three percent showed measurable growth in key social-emotional learning areas, as measured by the Hello Insight SEL assessment. Our College Directions program has achieved a 96% college acceptance rate — and with new support from the Robin Hood Foundation, we are expanding our Persistence Initiative, providing structured advising, financial guidance, and ongoing support to help our graduates not just get into college or other training programs, but stay enrolled despite setback and challenges.

Strong youth outcomes require stable, ample flexible City investment. We support UNH's call to restore funding to Student Success Centers, Learning to Work, and alternative summer programming models. KHCC operates two highly effective Student Success Centers serving multiple high schools on both the John F. Kennedy and Walton public school campuses — pairing college counseling expertise with peer leadership to guide students through the admissions and financial aid process. KHCC has operated year-round youth programming for five decades; we know what works: community-based relationships, trauma-informed practice, and trust built over time — not a one-size-fits-all school-year extension.

We are also actively planning for expanded youth and workforce development programming at the Kingsbridge Armory when it opens in 2030 — a generational opportunity for the Northwest Bronx that will require a strong City investment foundation to build from.

Mental Health Services: Restore and Baseline Council Initiatives

KHCC's Changing Futures Program (CFP) is one of the few certified rape crisis and child sexual abuse intervention programs in the Bronx — but our mental health work extends far beyond crisis response. We offer a full continuum of care, including bilingual, licensed, trauma-informed mental health services for both adults and children. We carry deep specialization in supporting survivors of domestic violence, interpersonal violence, sexual violence, and commercial exploitation, serving both children and adults navigating these experiences. In FY25, the CFP team served 900 individuals — 548 through counseling and 352 through prevention and education — and held 6,385 individual counseling sessions.

These are among the most vulnerable New Yorkers: survivors of sexual trauma and their families, parents at risk of child welfare involvement, and children navigating unimaginable harm.

KHCC provides this work in large part through City Council Mental Health initiatives — flexible, community-based funding that allows us to meet our community's specific needs. We strongly urge the Council to restore all 15 previously-funded DOHMH Mental Health Council Initiatives at a total investment of $47.27 million, with the 3% COLA increase recommended by UNH.

Specifically relevant to our work:

- Children Under Five Mental Health — which supports the families of the youngest children in our early childhood programs
- Trauma Recovery Centers — which align directly with our Changing Futures model
- Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations — which reaches the adults and families we serve through CFP, Parenting Journey, and KHCConnect
- Peer Specialist Supports — which KHCC and our BronxFirst coalition partners see as a critical complement to clinical services

Mental health is the top priority of BronxFirst, the 50-institution Bronx-wide coalition of which KHCC is a founding member. The Bronx has among the highest rates of unmet mental health need in the city. Council funding for community-based mental health programs is not a supplement — it is an essential foundation for a comprehensive continuum of care in communities like ours.

Food Justice: Expand the Community Food Connection

Our food justice work is more urgent than at any point in recent memory. In FY25, KHCC distributed 304,000 pounds of produce through our twice-weekly food pantry — and in our FY25 annual report, we announced a 35% expansion of the pantry, now distributing 380,000 pounds annually, in direct response to rising Bronx hunger. We also offer up to 25 community garden plots, offer programming including intergenerational gardening, chef battles, and family cooking classes, and are actively developing an urban farm to grow our own supply.

The new federal SNAP work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) are already driving more New Yorkers to our pantry. Per HRA testimony this spring, over 40,000 New Yorkers lost SNAP benefits in June due to the expanded ABAWD rules, and 15,000 refugees and asylees lost eligibility in April. These are our neighbors.

We urge the Council to:

- Increase the Community Food Connection investment to $100 million, building on the Mayor's $54 million commitment. Emergency food providers across the Bronx are past capacity.
- Invest in the Civic Impact Fund and NYC Service at $13 million, enabling community-based organizations to expand volunteer infrastructure that supports SNAP recipients meeting work requirements. KHCC has volunteer opportunities across our food, youth, and garden programs and is prepared to serve as a partner site.

- Support the HRA Community Service Partnership and provide financial resources to CBOs managing the added burden of tracking and supporting volunteers for SNAP compliance.

Adult Literacy: Restore and Increase City Council Discretionary Investment

KHCC's ESOL program served 268 adult learners in FY25, with roughly 80% advancing at least one English proficiency level. Our ESOL classes are an entry point into our full continuum — many participants go on to access workforce development, parenting programs, and wraparound case management through KHCConnect. Language access is not a standalone service; it is the door.

The 2024 DYCD Adult Literacy RFP introduced geographic restrictions that excluded many long-standing providers. City Council stepped in with $16.5 million in FY25 and FY26 discretionary funding that sustained more than 60 programs — a critical lifeline. Without renewed and increased Council investment, KHCC and providers like us will lose the ability to offer adult literacy classes after June 30.

We urge the Council to increase its adult literacy discretionary investment to $18 million, ensuring that programs excluded from the DYCD portfolio can continue to serve adult learners. We also urge DYCD to revisit the unnecessarily restrictive geographic criteria that shut out organizations with strong track records and established community trust.

Wraparound Services and Benefits Access: Fund the Connective Tissue

KHCC's KHCConnect unit screens every program participant for unaddressed needs — including benefits assistance, social care network screening, and navigation — and connects them to referrals, intensive case management, and educational opportunities. In FY25, 569 families received case management across 2,017 sessions. KHCConnect is what makes KHCC a settlement house and not just a collection of programs — it is the connective tissue that allows us to see the whole family.

KHCC is not a current recipient of the NYCBenefits program. We currently fund this critical benefits navigation and social care work through a patchwork of local discretionary dollars, some fee-for-service, and private donations — a fragile and inadequate foundation for work this essential. NYCBenefits was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget, and its absence would be felt immediately. The families we serve need one-to-one, linguistically appropriate support navigating SNAP, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, FHEPS, and more — and that support should not depend on whether an organization was lucky enough to receive a contract. We urge the Council not only to include NYCBenefits in the Adopted Budget, but to expand it: we recommend increasing the investment from $9.75 million to $15 million, ensuring that all communities have access to these services, that the program is baselined for FY28–FY32, and that new providers can be added so no neighborhood is left without coverage.

Nonprofit Contracting Reform: Pay Us Fairly and Pay Us On Time

KHCC operates on an 84% program efficiency rate, with only 13% going to management and general overhead. We have delivered clean audits, no material weaknesses, and increasing

net assets for multiple years running. We are exceptional stewards of public dollars. But our financial stability is routinely degraded by poor funding practices and a lack of political will by the City of New York. We — like every settlement house — are constantly asked to do more with less, and our frontline staff and the communities we serve bear the cost.

We strongly support:

- Intro 452 (Stevens), establishing wage requirements for City-contracted human services workers. Our staff are professionals. They deserve wages that reflect it.
- Legislation requiring interest on late payments — and a firm commitment to eliminate delays in contract registration. With delays of a year or more now common, nonprofits including KHCC are forced to draw on commercial lines of credit at high rates of interest just to keep programs running. These costs are real, they are significant, and they must be borne by the City — not absorbed by the organizations providing services to residents.
- All City agencies must honor federally-approved or City-negotiated Indirect Cost Rates —full stop. The practice of capping administrative costs at a 10% de minimis rate creates a significant structural deficit that is absorbed entirely by the nonprofit providing services to City residents. It is a hidden tax on mission-driven organizations that the City has chosen not to address. That must end.

Conclusion

Fifty-two years ago, KHCC was founded because the Bronx deserved better. Today, we serve more than 6,500 families a year — through early childhood, youth development, trauma-informed mental health care, food justice, adult education, and wraparound supports — because the Bronx still deserves better, and we are committed to providing it.

The federal government is retreating from its obligations to low-income communities. Head Start is under threat. SNAP is being cut. Medicaid work requirements are set to begin mid-FY27, and when they do, tens of thousands of New Yorkers — disproportionately in communities like the Bronx — will lose health coverage, further shredding an already fraying social safety net. Mental health funding is uncertain. In that environment, New York City's investment in community-based settlement houses is not just important — it is essential infrastructure.

We urge the Council to adopt the priorities outlined in this testimony, invest in the programs and funding streams that have proven results, and stand with the families of the Northwest Bronx and Upper Manhattan who have counted on KHCC for over half a century.

KHCC welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions and to discuss any of these priorities further. Thank you all very much.

Raye Barbieri,

Chief Executive Officer
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
3101 Kingsbridge Terrace, Bronx, NY 10463
Rbarbieri@khcc-nyc.org

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY CIVIL

Rebekah Cook-Mack
Employment Law Unit
49 Thomas Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10013
rcook-mack@legal-aid.org
212-298-5311

Alan Levine
President

Twyla Carter
Attorney-in-Chief
Chief Executive Officer

Adriene L. Holder
Chief Attorney
Civil Practice

Elizabeth Saylor
Citywide Director
Employment Law Unit

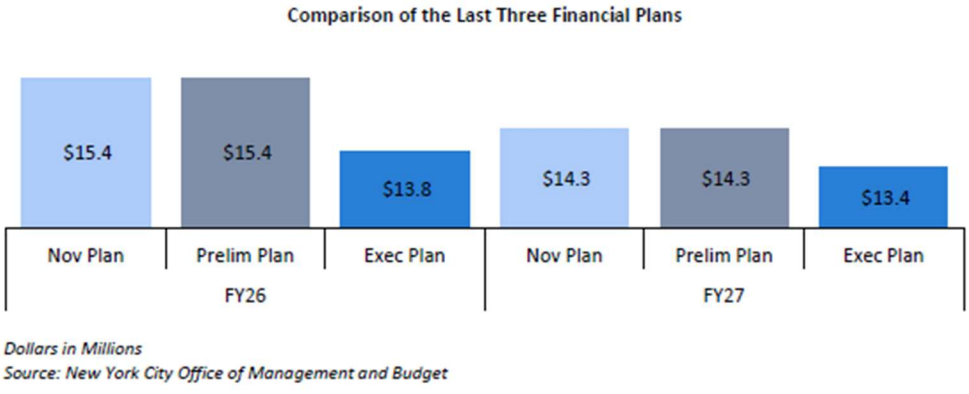
June 10, 2026

The Legal Aid Society's Testimony Calling For Increased Funding for the New York City Commission on Human Rights

Submitted by Rebekah Cook-Mack

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. I am a Staff Attorney in the Employment Law Unit of The Legal Aid Society.

The Mayor's Executive Budget proposal compounds, rather than addresses, the chronic underfunding that the New York City Commission on Human Rights (Commission) has been subjected to since the pandemic. Mayor Mamdani proposes cutting the Commission's budget by over 10%, reducing it to Giuliani-era levels at a time when investment is needed. This means that New Yorkers will wait longer for justice and our Human Rights Law will go under-enforced. Now is not the time for the worst budget in many years, as demonstrated in the below chart of funding over time, the FY27 budget proposal would fund the Commission at the lowest level in several budget cycles.



Source: https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2026/03/Commission-on-Civil-and-Human-Rights.pdf

We call on the Mayor to reverse course and invest in the Commission so that it is funded at $25 million in FY27. This is less than 0.02 percent of the City's $127 billion FY27 preliminary budget – it is a rounding error.

Funding the Commission at $25 million and allowing it to hire and fill lines will allow Commissioner Christine Clarke to build a robust Civil Rights Enforcement Agency for New Yorkers at a time when the Federal Government has become hostile to these rights. If funded, a robust Commission could serve as a lasting legacy for the Mamdani administration – but building that legacy cannot wait. Commissioner Clarke takes the reins at a time when the Commission is more important than ever. She cannot succeed if the City does not give her the resources necessary to do the job.

I. The Legal Aid Society

The Legal Aid Society is built on one simple but powerful belief: that no New Yorker should be denied the right to equal justice. We want to remain a beacon of hope for New Yorkers who feel neglected, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or how they identify. From our start 150 years ago, our growth mirrored the city we serve. Today, we are proud to be one of the largest and most influential social justice law firms in New York City and nationwide. Our staff deliver justice in every borough, working tirelessly to defend our clients and dismantle the hidden, systemic barriers that prevent them from thriving. As passionate advocates for individuals and families, LAS is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of our city.

Last year, LAS provided direct holistic legal services to 475,000 individuals and their families through our Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights Practices. Over 2 million New York City residents benefited from our direct representation, affirmative litigation, legislative and policy advocacy. Our work across these Practices provides us with unique insights into the challenges facing marginalized communities in NYC and an unparalleled ability to effect change on a greater scale. Our Civil Practice works with low-income New Yorkers experiencing a broad range of civil legal issues that, without assistance, can escalate into situations with cascading effects that threaten their stability and keep families locked in cycles of poverty. Our specialized units cover the full spectrum of civil legal needs, including housing and homelessness; homeowner

stabilization, family law and domestic violence; immigration; special education; health; community development; consumer issues; employment; government benefits and disability; taxes; and holistic services for vulnerable populations including the elderly, adults and children with disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

The Employment Law Unit represents low-wage workers in employment-related matters such as claims for violations of leave laws, unpaid wages, discrimination, trafficking, and unemployment insurance. Our clients are overwhelmingly people of color living paycheck to paycheck. The Unit conducts litigation, outreach, and advocacy designed to assist the most vulnerable workers in New York City, among them, low-wage workers who are sexually harassed; discriminated against based on race, national origin, immigration status, pregnancy, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, domestic violence, or criminal background; or denied reasonable accommodations needed due to pregnancy or disabilities.

The Employment Law Unit represents people like a former client, an undocumented hotel cleaner at a Bronx hotel. Our client alleged she was treated more harshly and had more difficult assignments because of her national origin and refusal to sleep with the General Manager. The Commission investigated and found probable cause and subsequently, the matter was resolved for over $150,000 in Commission mediation. The Employment Law Unit was able to represent this client because of our ability to file at the Commission, we could not file an EEOC charge for this client today.

The LGBTQ+ Unit of the Legal Aid Society seeks to address systemic issues impacting Legal Aid's LGBTQ+ clients through public education, advocacy, legislation, and impact litigation. It also provides trainings to LAS staff on the New York State and New York City Human Rights Law's protections for LGBTQ+ people.

LAS provides legal and related services to low-income individuals and families experiencing housing discrimination based on their source of income. This work entails advocacy and negotiation with brokers, owners, and landlords on behalf of clients and litigation of selected cases to end systemic practices that exclude voucher holders where landlords continue to discriminate after being informed of their legal obligations to accept housing vouchers. Through this litigation, LAS seeks comprehensive remedies, including injunctive relief requiring landlords to accept housing vouchers; policy changes to eliminate discriminatory screening and advertising practices; mandating fair

housing trainings for ownership, management, and leasing staff; monitoring and reporting requirements to ensure ongoing compliance; compensatory damages for affected persons; and, where appropriate, civil penalties and attorneys' fees. By pursuing strategic enforcement actions, LAS aims to deter future discrimination, expand access to neighborhoods of opportunity for voucher holders, and reinforce the enforceability of source of income protections. CCHR should be a critical partner in this work, helping to identify patterns of noncompliance, conduct testing and investigations, support outreach and education to voucher holders and housing providers, and coordinate advocacy to strengthen programmatic enforcement efforts.

The Legal Aid Society is also a member of the Fair Chance for Housing Coalition that works to eliminate housing discrimination against people with arrest or conviction histories. The coalition works to advance fair housing protections through policy advocacy, public education, stakeholder outreach, and coalition-building. This work helps ensure that people impacted by the criminal legal system have a fair opportunity to secure safe and stable housing.

Adequate funding for the responsible enforcement agency is critical to the success of these efforts. Agency-level funding ensures that the agency has the capacity to educate landlords, housing providers, tenants, advocates, and other stakeholders about their rights and responsibilities under the law, provide technical assistance and guidance, conduct outreach to affected communities, investigate complaints, and enforce compliance effectively. Without this, the protections established through fair housing policies cannot be fully realized in practice.

II. Even Underfunded, CCHR Makes a Difference for Victims of Discrimination

The New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), enforced by the Commission, prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. It protects against discriminatory lending practices, retaliation, discriminatory harassment, and bias-based profiling by law enforcement. It is one of the most comprehensive civil rights laws in the country and applies to a long list of protected

classes beyond those recognized by the federal and New York State governments.[1] We commend City Council for its expansive view of civil and human rights, amending the NYCHRL over 40 times since 2013 to add additional protections for New Yorkers.[2] However, we must express our alarm at the chronic underfunding of the Commission, which prevents New Yorkers from receiving justice when faced with discrimination and is reflected in the Mayor's preliminary FY27 budget.

The Commission testified that its work resulted in significant relief for complainants and savings for the city in 2026. The Commission reported that it secured over $1 million in restitution for victims of discrimination, approximately $350,000 in damages secured for victims of disability discrimination in housing and over $600,000 in damages for employment discrimination claims, including race, pregnancy, and sexual harassment cases. These are real results for real New Yorkers. In addition, the Commission returned more than $200,000 to the City's bottom line in civil penalties assessed to bad actors.

Our client Ms. C is an example of a person the Commission helped. Ms. C, an undocumented Latina New Yorker, was employed as a seamstress at a dry cleaner in Washington Heights. She was subjected to uninvited touching by her boss, her efforts to address the problem, asking him to stop, were laughed off. Finally she told him she would report him if he did not stop. One week later she was fired. Legal Aid was able to assist her by filing sexual harassment and retaliation case for her at the Commission. With their help, the matter was ultimately resolved for more than $100,000, changing Ms. C's life and making it clear to her former employer that the laws are not just words on paper, and ignoring them can be a costly mistake.

The Commission testified that it had secured long-term affordable tenancies for 31 households who faced discrimination based on their source of income. It estimated that by keeping these families out of shelter (where annual per-family costs average roughly $95,000), the Commission's work had saved the city approximately $3 million in averted shelter costs this year. The Commission also reported more than 70 "set-aside"

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[1] *See* N.Y.C. Comm'n on Human Rights, *The Law*, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/the-law.page (last visited June 8, 2026).

[2] *See* N.Y.C. Comm'n on Human Rights, *Amendments to the NYC Human Rights Law*, https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/amendments.page (last visited June 8, 2026).

apartments negotiated in settlements for exclusive rental by voucher holders in 2026. These settlements have allowed those with vouchers and subsidies a "first look" at amenity rich, rent regulated housing in high opportunity areas (known as "Set Asides"). These Set Aside Units proved a special lifeline to elderly and disabled tenants who have difficulty navigating the fast-paced online rental market.

Funding to do the work necessary to achieve settlements of this magnitude are especially important since the Commission noted in its testimony that housing discrimination has increased, with source-of-income complaints making up the single largest category.

III. A Small Investment Can Spur Transformation and Return Meaningful Benefits For All New Yorkers By Ensuring Our Anti-Discrimination Laws Are Vigorously Enforced

In his inaugural address, the Mayor acknowledged the transformative moment we are in and promised to govern expansively and audaciously. We ask the Mayor to realign the budget to reflect our shared principles by increasing funding to the Commission. At a time when federal partners are unavailable, a budget of $25 million in FY27 is crucial for the Commission to increase staff to meet growing demand.

With $25 million in FY27, the Commission could staff up its early intervention team to resolve all eligible cases promptly. The Commission could also expand its mediation program to help resolve complaints and speed resolution for complainants. For cases that do not resolve through early intervention or mediation, additional staff would ensure they are tried at OATH with Decisions and Orders issuing promptly thereafter.

Increasing funding to the Commission is necessary to holding the line and protecting the rights of the City's most vulnerable residents – largely Black and Brown low-income New Yorkers. A strong Commission acts as a bulwark for all of us. Cutting its budget, as the Mayor proposes, is a mistake.

IV. Importance of the Commission Expands as Federal Partners Retreat

The Commission should be a key partner in protecting the people of New York City and bringing bad actors to justice. Unfortunately, today, the Commission is in crisis. It no longer meets the needs of New Yorkers. **We write to alert you to this crisis and implore you to take immediate action to increase its funding and staffing**. Without adequate funding and staffing, thousands of New Yorkers – disproportionately low-income people of color – who have been discriminated against will go without justice. Unfortunately, the Mayor's preliminary budget catastrophically reduces the Commission's funding by almost 10% at a time when more is needed following years of disinvestment. In the absence of federal partners to protect the rights of the most vulnerable, the Commission stands between undocumented workers and bad actors empowered by a federal government that is hostile to protecting their rights.

The Commission is an indispensable partner for New York's most vulnerable residents seeking to enforce their rights. For low-income New Yorkers, the Commission is the only way to protect their rights. Accessing the courts, without the assistance of counsel, is not viable for many New Yorkers. This is because court procedures are complex; litigation can be expensive and involve multiple appearances requiring low-income New Yorkers to miss work they cannot afford to forgo; and language access can be a barrier. Often, private attorneys will not take the cases of low-income New Yorkers who cannot afford to pay an hourly rate or retainer.

Historically, employees facing discrimination could turn to the EEOC for help. Today, the federal workforce is experiencing an unprecedented retrenchment and filing with a federal agency now involves risks for the undocumented. For transgender, gender non-conforming, nonbinary and intersex (TGNCNBI) people, the EEOC is no longer a viable partner; the DOJ has withdrawn from cases involving TGNCNBI individuals in its effort to comply with Executive Order 14168 which, among other things, withdraws federal recognition of transgender people. As federal agencies withdraw from protecting TGNCNBI people and attempt to roll back longstanding civil rights protections, the Commission has become one of the few forums available to investigate discrimination, provide meaningful remedies, and educate the public about their rights under the New York City Human Rights Law. Without adequate staffing and resources, TGNCNBI New Yorkers will face longer delays in obtaining relief and greater barriers to enforcing some of the strongest anti-discrimination protections in the nation. This

moment calls for increased investment in the Commission so it can continue serving as a critical safeguard for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers.

Ensuring that our civil rights laws are enforced is important for all workers. By demanding that employers comply with our laws, we ensure that workplaces are free of discrimination and harassment. This benefits all workers. To meet this moment and ensure New York City's laws are enforced, the City must invest in the Commission.

V. New York City Human Rights Law, the Strongest in the Nation, Continues to Expand

The Commission is a unique body in the City, entrusted with the authority and charged with the duty to "thoroughly" investigate allegations of discrimination and, to the best of its ability, "eliminate and prevent" discrimination in New York. The Commission's budget has plummeted while its responsibilities have grown. In nearly every year in the past decade, the City Council has added to the protections of our Civil Rights Law in some way. Since 2013, the City Council has passed more than 40 amendments to these laws.[3] Most recently CCHR took responsibility for enforcing the Fair Chance for Housing Law. This law expands the City's commitment to ensuring that people with prior involvement in the criminal legal system are not unfairly denied housing opportunities.

The Fiscal Impact Statement estimated the fiscal impact of this law at $1.4 million for education and enforcement. Instead of increasing the Commission's budget by this amount, the Executive Budget cuts over $1.5 million. Ensuring that the Commission has the resources to implement and enforce this new law is essential to realizing its promise and preventing discrimination against New Yorkers with arrest or conviction histories.

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[3] *See Amendments to NYC Human Rights Law* https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/amendments.page#:~:text=A%20Local%20Law%20to%20amend,%2C%20housing%2C%20and%20public%20accommodations.

Many of the more recent additions to the law have no equivalent protections at the state or federal level. Some of these expanded rights prohibit discrimination in housing that is rampant in the City, significantly increasing the Commission's workload.[4]

Laws CCHR Enforces	CCHR	State	Federal
Fair Chance For Housing Law: Makes it illegal for most private NYC housing providers, in rentals and sales, to consider most older convictions and requires them to conduct an individualized assessment process for any applicants with convictions that may lawfully be considered.	✓	✗	✗
Fair Chance For Employment Law: Makes it illegal for most employers in New York City to ask about the criminal record of job applicants in ads, on applications, or in interviews—before making an offer.	✓	✗	✗
Law prohibiting Source of Income Discrimination: Prohibits discrimination based on the type of lawful income you receive. Applies to nearly all types of housing throughout New York.	✓	✓	✗
Disability Rights Laws: Requires landlords to pay for modifications for disabled tenants both inside units and in common areas	✓	✗	✗

The failure to fund the Commission means our Human Rights Laws are under enforced and New Yorkers seeking justice endure long waits.

VI. Conclusion

This is a moment of urgency. It is a moment where New York can stand with its most vulnerable residents to ensure that where the federal government has closed doors, the City's remain open. The Commission serves a vital role for New Yorkers facing discrimination. Redressing discrimination not only helps those directly impacted by securing damages and punishing bad actors, but also deters future misconduct, making our city a more equitable place for all.

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[4] *See* Ishan Thakore, *Plagued by staff shortage, NYC agency fails to make determinations in most discrimination cases*, Gothamist (July 6, 2023) (noting that source of income discrimination is the most common form of housing discrimination), https://gothamist.com/news/plagued-by-staff-shortage-nyc-agency-fails-to-make-determinations-in-most-discrimination-cases.

We thank the Council for its consideration of this testimony. For more information or to address concerns, please feel free to contact me at rcook-mack@legal-aid.org or (212) 298-5311.

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY
CIVIL

49 Thomas Street
New York, NY 10013
(212) 577-3300
www.legalaidnyc.org

TESTIMONY BEFORE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Executive Budget Hearing - Immigration

Submitted on June 12, 2026

My name is Deborah Lee, and I am the Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit (ILU) at The Legal Aid Society (LAS). Throughout our nearly 150-year history, LAS has been a tireless advocate for those least able to advocate for themselves. Over 2,300 staff members operate across all five New York City boroughs in our Civil, Criminal Defense, and Juvenile Rights Practices – guided by the fundamental principle that nobody should be denied justice because of poverty. Combining the expertise gained from representing clients across diverse areas of law with the broader public policy perspective of an advocacy group, we lift up marginalized individuals and enable them to advance themselves and their families. Part direct legal services provider, part social justice defenders, we have a unique ability to go beyond individual issues to affect change at a societal level.

Since the 1980s, LAS has maintained a citywide Immigration Law Unit (ILU) within the Civil Practice. ILU, now comprised of almost 100 staff, is a recognized leader in the delivery of free, comprehensive, and high-caliber immigration legal services to low-income immigrants in New York City and surrounding counties. Staff represent immigrants before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), before immigration judges in removal proceedings, on appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), and in federal court on habeas corpus petitions and petitions for review. Over the most recent year, ILU assisted in over 8,400 individual legal matters benefiting over 4,000 New Yorkers citywide. In addition to direct legal services, we conduct outreach presentations with community members and grass-roots organizations and provide critical immigration legal information to New Yorkers through our Know Your Rights hub[1] on our website, which has garnered over 240,000 views since January 2025, and our dedicated legal helpline telephone bank. We also provide regular trainings to immigrant-serving advocates from community-based organizations, state and local agencies, and judicial and legislative staff.

[1] https://legalaidnyc.org/news/critical-resources-immigrant-communities/.

Partnerships with other non-profit organizations and coordination of a successful *pro bono* program with nearly 70 participating law firms enable the ILU to maximize resources to meet the increasing demand for representation.

LAS' testimony here also incorporates our previously submitted testimony from the March 25, 2026 preliminary budget hearing, and is attached here for ease of reference.

Driven by the current federal administration's push to detain and deport noncitizens, New York City has seen an unprecedented surge in the demand, complexity, and urgency of immigration legal services, particularly for detained individuals, immigrant youth, and mixed-status families. **To meet the need to advocate on behalf of noncitizen New Yorkers, LAS respectfully requests the City Council to:**

(1) increase funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) to $13,299,000 per provider;

(2) enhance LAS funding for the Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families Initiative (UMFI) to $4,500,000 in FY27; and

(3) maintain flexible implementation of LAS' Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) funding so providers can respond to rapidly changing community needs.

LAS respectfully continues to request flexibility in our contracts given the rapidly shifting immigration landscape, as ongoing policy changes strain our capacity by requiring significant resources for existing cases, many of which last for years, while we work to meet rising demand for new representation.

Finally, we respectfully ask that all funding reflects our full staffing needs and costs, as our staff are our front-line responders in these tumultuous times and we must be able to provide for them every year.

A. Trump 2.0 Continues to Devastate Noncitizens and New York City

Since January 20, 2025, the current Trump administration has now issued over 715 policy actions that harm non-citizens in this country,[2] accelerating detention and deportation while eroding core procedural protections. More than a year into this administration, its priority remains clear: to maximize enforcement while dismantling due process. These efforts have only intensified in recent months, reshaping not just enforcement practices but the fairness of the system itself.

Federal litigation has become essential to challenge these shifts. In *Benitez v. Department of Homeland Security*,[3] LAS along with other partners filed a class action lawsuit in April 2026 on behalf of eight Latino New Yorkers and the Workers' Center of Central New York challenging the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) policy and practice of conducting suspicionless stops of New Yorkers based solely on their perceived race and ethnicity[4] and warrantless immigration arrests without probable cause. Litigation like this has become critical in challenging the expansion of detention authority and the erosion of procedural safeguards. But the fact that these basic protections must be fought for in court underscores a deeper problem: fairness in this system is no longer guaranteed. It is contingent and constantly under threat.

Other litigation has curtailed some of the devastating impact on noncitizen New Yorkers in Immigration Court proceedings. A recent stay in *African Communities Together v. Lyons*[5] has largely halted civil immigration arrests inside New York City Immigration Courts and restored prior guidance. But arrests persist throughout New York City, and the chilling effect remains. Many people are afraid to appear at any immigration-related appointments, increasing *in absentia* removal orders and undermining the system itself.

Even for those who do appear, due process is rapidly eroding. Meritorious claims are being dismissed without a meaningful opportunity to be heard, and courts are now conducting "mega master" calendars, high-volume proceedings that prioritize speed over fairness.[6] For unrepresented New Yorkers,

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[2] *See* https://immpolicytracking.org/policies/?after=2025-01-20; *see also* https://www.nycbar.org/reports/the-trump-administrations-early-2025-changes-to-immigration-law/?back=1#_ftn12.
[3] *See* https://legalaidnyc.org/court-case/benitez-v-dhs/.
[4] *See* Gwynne Hogan, Rosalind Adams, and Haidee Chu, *We Found 430 ICE Street Arrests In the New York Area. More Than 93% Targeted Latinos*, The City (May 27, 2026), https://projects.thecity.nyc/ice-street-arrests-investigation-racial-profiling/.
[5] *See* https://www.nyclu.org/court-cases/african-communities-together-and-the-door-v-todd-lyons-et-al.
[6] *See* Ximena Bustillo, *Immigration courts are using a new tactic to speed up deportations*, NPR (May 26, 2026), https://www.npr.org/2026/05/26/nx-s1-5830474/trump-immigration-courts-mega-masters.

due process is disappearing in real time.

Detention has also expanded. Facilities like Delaney Hall have drawn attention for troubling conditions,[7] but they are not exceptional. LAS and our NYIFUP partners have documented these same issues for years at facilities like Orange County Jail, including the lack of access to counsel, inadequate care, and limited transparency. In addition to the reality that noncitizens are often detained far from their families and counsel, the system that detains them effectively coerces them to abandon viable legal claims. The outcome is not incidental; it is embedded in the design of the current immigration detention system.

These enforcement tools have had a broader, intended impact. As enforcement escalates, communities are pushed further into the shadows. Workers are less able to report wage theft or unsafe conditions. Survivors of domestic violence and trafficking are less likely to seek help, despite legal protections. Tenants are afraid to report dangerous housing conditions because they fear retaliation, for fear that a landlord may call ICE against them. The result is not just harm to the individuals involved, it erodes public safety and accountability across this city.

LAS and our partner providers are working tirelessly to meet immense community need, but the reality is incredibly daunting. This is not just about resisting harmful policies. It is about building something better. We must work together to imagine an immigration system that reflects the lived realities of families seeking safety and stability—one grounded in fairness, not exclusion.

At the same time, legal service providers like LAS are operating at the limits of capacity. Immigration cases are complex, resource-intensive, and often take years to resolve, even as demand for representation continues to rise sharply. In a system with no guaranteed right to counsel, those who remain unrepresented are the most vulnerable; they are least able to assert their rights and most likely to be swept into detention and removal without meaningful recourse. Without counsel, many New Yorkers will never have a real opportunity to be heard.

In this moment, the question is not only how we respond, but how we ensure that people are not

[7] *See* Tracy Tully, *A New Governor Faces Her First Crisis Amid Tear Gas and Tough Decisions*, The New York Times (June 7, 2026), https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/07/nyregion/delaney-hall-mikie-sherrill.html.

forced to navigate this system alone. Legal representation is essential, but it must be paired with robust public education so that every New Yorker knows—or can help a loved one understand—how to check court dates, locate someone in detention, and assert their rights. The City must take leadership in this kind of widescale effort to ensure that all New Yorkers can access information and support.

This is also why the City's Executive Order 13[8] is an important and worthwhile endeavor. We must consider citywide what we can all do to protect noncitizen New Yorkers from being summarily turned over to our federal government and likely forever separated from their families here. We must continue to strengthen protections around information sharing across city agencies and ensure consistent, mandatory training and enforcement of sanctuary protections across all agencies.

LAS stands ready to continue partnering with the City to help achieve these goals. We urge the City Council to continue to take bold action, to provide flexibility in funding, and to invest in systems that ensure New Yorkers can understand their rights and navigate a broken and dangerous immigration system. Without sustained investment in legal services, community education, and the full enforcement of sanctuary protections, due process for noncitizen New Yorkers will continue to erode.

B. New York City Council Funding Requests – Immigration

We are grateful for the Council's support for legal services for low-income immigrant New Yorkers, who are among the City's most vulnerable populations. The Council's commitment to ensuring parity of justice and access to comprehensive legal services for our immigrant communities is central to our work and establishes New York City's approach as among the most progressive in the nation. Thanks to support from the New York City Council and the Human Resources Administration, LAS currently conducts the following immigration-related programs:

1) **The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)**, a collaboration between The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders, has represented over 4,000 detained immigrants facing deportation since 2014, helping to

[8] *See* https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2026/02/executive-order-13.

ensure New York families are not separated simply because they cannot afford an attorney. The nation's first universal legal representation program for detained immigrants, NYIFUP provides high quality, holistic representation to New Yorkers detained and facing deportation who cannot afford an attorney. Our NYIFUP team manages a full caseload of deportation defense cases, and provide services including representation at master calendar, bond, and individual merits hearings before the Immigration Court, appeals in front of the Board of Immigration Appeals and federal circuit courts, and comprehensive social work services. Many of our NYIFUP clients are long-term permanent residents or other non-citizens with strong family ties and long work histories in this country.

As of April 4, 2026, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security detained over 60, 311 non- citizens nationwide.[9] As has been the trend over the last few years, ICE has increasingly arrested New Yorkers in New York City and then detained them in facilities hundreds of miles away, including in Western Pennsylvania, at the Moshannon Valley Processing Center, Buffalo Service Processing Center in Upstate New York, Plymouth County Correctional Facility, in Burlington, Massachusetts, and detention facilities across the southern part of the United States. This practice of detaining NYC residents all over the country has made it more difficult for us to identify and provide representation to these NYC residents.

Since its inception and increasingly over the past several years, NYIFUP, this City Council, and other immigration advocates have held ICE accountable for egregious illegal detention trends of our neighbors, families, and friends. Most recently, we have called attention to needless and egregious suffering our clients endure at detention centers such as withheld medical care, racist behavior, violations of attorney client privileged mail and communications, and persistent access to counsel issues. The need for advocacy and legal representation on behalf of our fellow New Yorkers is more

[9] *See* Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, https://tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/detention.html.

critical than ever as ICE continues to collaborate with local Department of Corrections officers to forcibly incarcerate New Yorkers and abduct them from our communities.

NYIFUP providers are the City's and statewide experts in defending these New Yorkers who are at imminent risk of being removed from the United States, and likely forever separated from their families here. Our NYIFUP clients are now fighting against their removal not only in Immigration Court, but also against unlawful efforts to deport non-citizens to third countries. We must have more resources to meet the more complex reality of detained deportation defense. To that end, **LAS is requesting an increase in funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) to $13,299,000 per provider.**

2) **The Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families (UMFI) Initiative** has been providing legal assistance to Unaccompanied Children and Adults with Children fleeing endemic gang violence and domestic abuse since 2014, with the support of the New York City Council. This traumatized and vulnerable population is especially in need of highly competent legal representation to advance their claims for asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), and other forms of immigration relief.

Over the past decade, but with a dramatic increase since spring 2022, the City has also seen an extraordinary influx of Adults with Children (AWC) families. Such cases involve multiple complex immigration legal matters, including expert evaluations, multiple relief applications that need to be submitted by different members of the same family unit, labor-intensive trials to prepare for, and particularly thorny ethical issues when clients' interests sometimes diverge. The demand for legal screenings and full representation of these AWC family units are ever increasing and LAS' work is desperately needed, as it is one of the few organizations with significant expertise in handling complex asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile status, U and T nonimmigrant status, and deportation defense in Immigration Court removal proceedings.

Since January 2025, the federal government has cut funding for other agencies,

including sibling organizations in New York City, who focus on working with unaccompanied children, leaving devastated, unrepresented, and increasing demand for services on LAS to help meet this newly created gap in services. Even despite on-going litigation to push back against these sudden cuts, the demands on LAS' expertise in handling unaccompanied children's matters has never been more keenly felt.

The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting an enhancement of funding for the Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families Initiative (UMFI) to $4,500,000 in FY27.

3) The **Protecting New Yorkers Habeas Initiative** is a new project that LAS has developed to address the ever-increasing threats of noncitizen New Yorkers being detained by federal immigration officials and rapidly deported into harm's way to their home country or to third countries they may never have even visited before. To meet this urgent demand, The Legal Aid Society (LAS) proposes to expand its habeas capacity through enhanced training and developing new litigation resources. This project will prioritize serving non-citizens at high risk of being targeted for detention by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The project will publish an immigration-focused habeas resource toolkit for advocates city-wide and utilize advanced technology to integrate emerging legal arguments and create sharable litigation resources, to ease in the drafting of habeas petitions.

   To support this work, LAS respectfully requests $1,750,000 in FY27. As federal litigation needs may continue to rise for noncitizen New Yorkers, the need for additional funding by our City may be warranted and we welcome City Council's leadership in meeting the complex legal needs of our immigrant communities.

4) **The Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)** serves immigrants and new Americans who are seeking citizenship, permanent residence, or another immigration status or are seeking employment legal services after having been exploited by their employers. Legal services are provided through our Immigration Law Unit, Employment Law Unit,

with an infrastructure of subcontracting agencies with deep ties to marginalized communities. For IOI, what has been most successful and effective is the flexibility of its contract and its priority to full legal representation, especially for those in Immigration Court.

LAS is grateful for this award and looks forward to continued partnership with the City to continue to address the quickly changing immigration legal environment and the needs of noncitizen New Yorkers.

C. Conclusion

We thank the City Council for its generous support of immigration legal services, which allow us to serve some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah Lee
Attorney-in-Charge
Immigration Law Unit
The Legal Aid Society

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY CIVIL

49 Thomas Street
New York, NY 10013
(212) 577-3300
www.legalaidnyc.org

TESTIMONY BEFORE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

Presented on March 25, 2026

My name is Deborah Lee, and I am the Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit (ILU) at The Legal Aid Society (LAS). Throughout our nearly 150-year history, LAS has been a tireless advocate for those least able to advocate for themselves. Over 2,300 staff members operate across all five New York City boroughs in our Civil, Criminal Defense, and Juvenile Rights Practices – guided by the fundamental principle that nobody should be denied justice because of poverty. Combining the expertise gained from representing clients across diverse areas of law with the broader public policy perspective of an advocacy group, we lift up marginalized individuals and enable them to advance themselves and their families. Part direct legal services provider, part social justice defenders, we have a unique ability to go beyond individual issues to affect change at a societal level.

Since the 1980s, LAS has maintained a citywide Immigration Law Unit (ILU) within the Civil Practice. ILU, now comprised of almost 100 staff, is a recognized leader in the delivery of free, comprehensive, and high-caliber immigration legal services to low-income immigrants in New York City and surrounding counties. Staff represent immigrants before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), before immigration judges in removal proceedings, on appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), and in federal court on habeas corpus petitions and petitions for review. Over the most recent year, ILU assisted in over 8,400 individual legal matters benefiting over 4,000 New Yorkers citywide. In addition to direct legal services, we conduct outreach presentations with community members and grass-roots organizations and provide critical immigration legal information to New Yorkers through our Know Your Rights hub on our website,[1] which has garnered over 200,000 views since January 2025, and our dedicated legal helpline telephone bank. We also provide regular trainings to immigrant-serving advocates from community-based organizations, state and local agencies, and judicial and legislative staff. Partnerships with other non-profit organizations and coordination of a successful *pro bono* program with nearly 70 participating law firms enable the ILU to maximize resources to meet the increasing demand for

[1] https://legalaidnyc.org/news/critical-resources-immigrant-communities/.

representation.

The Legal Aid Society submits this testimony to highlight the unprecedented escalation of immigration enforcement, detention, and due process erosion under the current federal administration, and its devastating impacts on noncitizen New Yorkers and their families. These federal actions have dramatically increased the demand, complexity, and urgency of immigration legal services in New York City, particularly for detained individuals, immigrant youth, and mixed-status families. **To meet this moment, LAS respectfully requests the City Council to: (1) increase funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) to $13,299,000 per provider; (2) enhance LAS funding for the Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families Initiative (UMFI) to $4,500,000 in FY27; and (3) maintain flexible implementation of LAS' Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) funding so providers can respond to rapidly changing community needs.**

LAS' testimony here presents our challenges under the current Trump administration as well as our funding-related requests for our New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), Youth, and federal litigation, and Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)-related work.

Immigrants built our great City, and we are proud to honor our own histories, our loved ones, friends, and neighbors. LAS is committed to fighting for immigrants' rights on all these fronts and respectfully calls upon this Committee to take bold action in these turbulent times, and to lead this City in protecting the rights of noncitizen New Yorkers.

A. The Current Immigration Landscape

The immigration landscape today is more volatile and demanding than at any point in recent memory. Since January 2025, ICE detention has increasingly become the primary tool used to terrorize noncitizens, with over 3,000 New York City residents detained by ICE between January through mid-October of 2025, the majority of whom were later deported.[2] This federal administration has also used novel means, such as invoking the Alien Enemies Act to forcibly remove noncitizens to El Salvador for

[2] *See* Haidee Chu, *NYC Deportations Ramped Up While Immigration Arrests Slowed, Latest Data Shows*, The City (Dec. 5, 2025), https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/12/05/ice-deportations-arrests-immigration-data/.

potentially indefinite detention,[3] implementing the near elimination of being released on bond from ICE detention,[4] and using third-country removals,[5] and asylum cooperative agreements to prohibit asylum seekers from seeking humanitarian protection in the United States.[6]

Additionally, the over 600 immigration policy actions[7] and over 50 new precedent decisions[8] since January 2025 have fundamentally reshaped the practice of immigration law, removing temporary protections for noncitizens,[9] making it more difficult for them to obtain longer term lawful status,[10] eliminating pathways for work permits,[11] and expanding information-sharing systems that expose noncitizens to heightened enforcement risks.[12]

Inside the courts, instability is escalating. Immigration Judges are being reassigned at

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[3] *See* Ali Bianco et al., *Supreme Court Blocks Trump from Conducting More Deportations Under Alien Enemies Act*, POLITICO (Apr. 19, 2025), https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/18/trump-deportations-alien-enemies-act-00299474; *see also* Deborah Lee, *How the 2025 Invocation of Alien Enemies Act Erodes Immigrants' Rights*, 53 Fordham Urb. L.J. 1 (2025).

[4] *See* Camilo Montoya-Galvez, *ICE Says Many in Immigration Detention No Longer Qualify for Bond Hearings*, CBS News (July 15, 2025), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-immigration-detention-bond-hearings/; *see also* Paul Moses, 'Is Bond Now Being Granted?': Conflicting Orders Leave Detainees, Attorneys in Limbo, Documented N.Y. (Jan. 22, 2026), https://documentedny.com/2026/01/22/bond-hearings-immigration-detention-eoir-bautista-hurtado/.

[5] *See* Michael Kunzelman, *Trump administration's 'third country' deportation policy is unlawful, judge rules*, AP News (Feb. 25, 2026), https://apnews.com/article/south-sudan-deportation-supreme-court-judge-murphy-148cee2906dc7286b074116d3eec6fd4; *see also* Am. Immigr. Council, What Are Third-Country Removals? Understanding Their Use in U.S. Immigration Policy (Dec. 5, 2025), https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/what-are-third-country-removals-factsheet/.

[6] *See* Ctr. for Gender & Refugee Stud., *Asylum Cooperative Agreements: Denial of Due Process and Risks of Return to Danger* (Mar. 11, 2026), https://cgrs.uclawsf.edu/en/our-work/publications/asylum-cooperative-agreements-denial-due-process-and-risks-return-danger.

[7] *See* https://immpolicytracking.org/policies/?after=2025-01-20; *see also https://www.nycbar.org/reports/the-trump-administrations-early-2025-changes-to-immigration-law/?back=1*.

[8] *See* https://www.justice.gov/eoir/ag-bia-decisions#menu1.

[9] *See* Catholic Legal Immigr. Network, Inc. (CLINIC), *TPS: Quick Summary Chart of Currently Designated Countries* (Mar. 17, 2026), https://www.cliniclegal.org/resources/humanitarian-relief/temporary-protected-status-and-deferred-enforced-departure/tps-quick; *see also* U.S. Citizenship & Immigr. Servs., *DHS Ends the Abuse of the Humanitarian Parole Process and Terminates Family Reunification Parole Programs* (Dec. 12, 2025), https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/dhs-ends-the-abuse-of-the-humanitarian-parole-process-and-terminates-family-reunification-parole.

[10] *See* Billal Rahman, *From Travel Bans to Green Cards: How U.S. Immigration Could Change in 2026*, Newsweek (Dec. 21, 2025), https://www.newsweek.com/from-travel-bans-to-green-cards-how-us-immigration-could-change-in-2026-11236880.

[11] *See* https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/02/23/2026-03595/employment-authorization-reform-for-asylum-applicants; *see also* Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project, *5 Things to Know About A New Proposed Work Permit Rule* (Feb. 23, 2026), https://asaptogether.org/en/proposed-work-permit-rule/.

[12] *See* Adriel Orozco, *District Court Greenlights ICE-IRS Agreement, Blurring Lines Between Civil Immigration Enforcement and Criminal Investigations*, American Immigration Council (May 22, 2025), https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-irs-data-sharing-agreement-court/.

unprecedented rates, leading to inconsistent and hostile adjudication.[13] Hearings are cancelled with little notice, and our clients face the constant risk of ICE detention during routine immigration interactions, such as at court and ICE check-ins.[14] Under the current administration, these courts have become increasingly weaponized to advance enforcement goals. The Department of Justice's recruitment of "deportation judges,"[15] encouraging applicants to "become a deportation judge," reflects a system designed to accelerate removals rather than ensure neutral adjudication.

Layered on top of this instability is the near total collapse of meaningful appellate review within the Immigration Court system. The BIA's Interim Final Rule[16] has dramatically shortened filing deadlines and permits appeals to be summarily dismissed in as few as ten days, effectively eliminating the neutral, deliberative review process that once served as a backstop against erroneous or unjust Immigration Judge decisions. Even with on-going litigation that has partial stays in place,[17] it is clear that noncitizens can no longer rely on the immigration court system or the Board of Immigration Appeals for meaningful review.

This deterioration has forced a dramatic realignment of immigration practice into the federal courts. The rise in unlawful detentions requires routine filing of habeas corpus petitions in federal district courts to secure clients' release. Emergency litigation, constitutional challenges, and circuit court appeals—once exceptional—are now core components of representation. Comprehensive advocacy increasingly requires continuity across administrative hearings, district court litigation, and federal appellate practice.

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[13] *See* Anusha Mathur and Ximena Bustillo, *U.S. has a quarter fewer immigration judges than it did a year ago. Here's why*, NPR (Feb. 23, 2026), https://www.npr.org/2026/02/23/g-s1-110911/trump-immigration-judges-dismissals-numbers; *see also* E. Tammy Kim, *Inside Donald Trump's Attack on Immigration Courts*, The New Yorker (Oct. 23, 2025), https://www.newyorker.com/inside-donald-trumps-attack-on-immigration-court.

[14] *See* Sergio Martínez-Beltrán, *DOJ admits ICE courthouse arrests relied on erroneous information*, NPR (Mar. 26, 2026), https://www.npr.org/2026/03/26/nx-s1-5762691/doj-admits-ice-courthouse-arrests-relied-on-erroneous-information; *see also* Gwynne Hogan, *ICE Turns Required Check-Ins Into Arrest Dragnet in Lower Manhattan*, The City (Jun. 3, 2025), https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/06/03/ice-arrest-dragnet-manhattan/.

[15] *See* https://join.justice.gov/.

[16] *See* https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/02/06/2026-02326/appellate-procedures-for-the-board-of-immigration-appeals.

[17] *See* American Immigration Lawyers Association, *Federal Court Blocks Key Portions of IFR Changing BIA Appellate Procedures* (Mar. 8, 2026), https://www.aila.org/library/federal-court-blocks-key-portions-of-ifr-changing-bia-appellate-procedures.

Tragically, the narrative underlying this all is that asylum seekers, and noncitizens more broadly, are inherently dangerous or unlawful. This rhetoric dehumanizes individuals fleeing persecution and is used to justify harsh enforcement measures and erode due process, conditioning the public to accept policies that would once have been unthinkable.

With the Trump 2.0 administration's promise of mass deportations underway nationwide,[18] our noncitizen family members, neighbors, and loved ones are being told repeatedly that ICE will detain and quickly deport them. Noncitizens in New York City, whether recent arrivals or long term residents, no longer feel safe accompanying their children to school, seeking medical care, attending a religious service, or even going to their own Immigration Court hearing because they fear that ICE will summarily detain and deport them.[19]

LAS calls upon City Council to meet this historical moment by doing whatever it can to protect noncitizens in New York City, including most urgent to increase funding support organizations fighting on behalf of noncitizens and giving us the flexibility to respond to the ever-changing legal landscape.

B. New York City Council Funding Requests – Immigration

We are grateful for the Council's support for legal services for low-income immigrant New Yorkers, who are among the City's most vulnerable populations. The Council's commitment to ensuring parity of justice and access to comprehensive legal services for our immigrant communities is central to our work and establishes New York City's approach as among the most progressive in the nation. Thanks to support from the New York City Council and the Human Resources Administration, LAS currently conducts the following immigration-related programs:

1) **The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)**, a collaboration between The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders, has represented over 4,300 detained immigrants facing deportation since 2014, helping to

[18] *See* Allison McCann et. al, *High Immigration Arrest Figures Under Trump Come With Few Details, The New York Times (Feb. 1, 2025),* https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/02/01/us/politics/ice-arrests-trump-immigration.html.
[19] *See* Arya Sundaram, *Fearful NY migrants are skipping doctors' visits and food help, advocates say, Gothamist (Sep. 16, 2025), https://gothamist.com/news/fearful-ny-migrants-are-skipping-doctors-visits-and-food-help-advocates-say.*

ensure New York families are not separated simply because they cannot afford an attorney. The nation's first universal legal representation program for detained immigrants, NYIFUP provides high quality, holistic representation to New Yorkers detained and facing deportation who cannot afford an attorney. Our NYIFUP team manages a full caseload of deportation defense cases, and provide services including representation at master calendar, bond, and individual merits hearings before the Immigration Court, appeals in front of the Board of Immigration Appeals and federal circuit courts, and comprehensive social work services. Many of our NYIFUP clients are long-term permanent residents or other noncitizens with strong family ties and long work histories in this country.

As of February 7, 2026, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security detained over 68,289 noncitizens nationwide and is monitoring via Alternatives to Detention (ATD's) over 179, 991 families and individuals.[20] As has been the trend over the last few years, ICE has increasingly arrested New Yorkers in New York City and then detained them in facilities hundreds of miles away, including in Western Pennsylvania, at the Moshannon Valley Processing Center, Miami Correctional Facility in Indiana, La Salle Detention Facility in Jena, Louisiana, The Federal Correctional Institution in Berlin, New Hampshire, and El Paso Camp East Montana in El Paso, Texas, and other detention facilities across the United States. This practice of detaining NYC residents all over the country has made it more difficult for us to identify and provide representation to these NYC residents.

Since its inception and increasingly over the past several years, NYIFUP, this City Council, and other immigration advocates have held ICE accountable for egregious illegal detention trends of our neighbors, families, and friends. Most recently, we have called attention to needless and egregious suffering our clients endure at detention centers such as withheld medical care, racist behavior, abusive and transphobic treatment, violations of attorney client privileged mail and communications, and

[20] Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, https://trac.syr.edu/immigration/quickfacts/ and https://trac.syr.edu/immigration/detentionstats/pop_agen_table.html.

persistent access to counsel issues. The need for advocacy and legal representation on behalf of our fellow New Yorkers is more critical than ever as ICE continues to collaborate with local Department of Corrections officers to forcibly incarcerate New Yorkers and abduct them from our communities.

NYIFUP providers are the City's and statewide experts in defending these New Yorkers who are at imminent risk of being removed from the United States, and likely forever separated from their families here. We are best positioned to meet the challenge needed to help these vulnerable New Yorkers now.

To meet the need, LAS respectfully requests increased support from the City Council for NYIFUP, in the amount of $13,299,000 for each provider.

2) **The Unaccompanied Minor Children and Families (UMFI) Initiative** has been providing legal assistance to Unaccompanied Children and Adults with Children fleeing endemic gang violence and domestic abuse since 2014, with the support of the New York City Council. Over the past 4 years, an average number of 140,000 unaccompanied children (UCs) enter the United States yearly,[21] with some of these children finding themselves trapped into exploitative child labor situations, as the New York Times has repeatedly documented.[22] Others are released to supportive sponsors, including many in New York City. This traumatized and vulnerable population is especially in need of highly competent legal representation to advance their claims for asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), and other forms of immigration relief.

Over the past decade, but with a dramatic increase since spring 2022, the City has also seen an extraordinary influx of Adults with Children (AWC) families. Such cases

[21] U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Stats and Summaries (Nationwide Encounters), https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters.
[22] Hannah Dreier, "Labor Department Denounces Surge in Exploited Minor Children," New York Times (July 27, 2023), https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/27/us/migrant-child-labor.html; Hannah Dreier, "Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S.," New York Times (Feb. 25, 2023), https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/25/us/unaccompanied-migrant-child-workers-exploitation.html.

involve multiple complex immigration legal matters, including expert evaluations, multiple relief applications that need to be submitted by different members of the same family unit, labor-intensive trials to prepare for, and particularly thorny ethical issues when clients' interests sometimes diverge. The demand for legal screenings and full representation of these AWC family units are ever increasing and LAS' work is desperately needed, as it is one of the few organizations with significant expertise in handling complex asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile status, U and T nonimmigrant status, and deportation defense in Immigration Court removal proceedings.

The Legal Aid Society is respectfully requesting an enhancement to $4,500,000 for UMFI in Fiscal Year 2027. The requested budget increase will allow us to fully cover the cost of the staff dedicated to this project.

3) **The Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)** serves noncitizens who are seeking citizenship, permanent residence, or another immigration status or are seeking employment legal services after having been exploited by their employers. Legal services are provided through our Immigration Law Unit and Employment Law Unit, with the support of 13 current subcontracting agencies, including legal services providers and community-based organizations with deep ties to marginalized communities.

   We are deeply grateful for the recent award notification for the IOI RFx solicitation, and remain hopeful that there will be a fair and thoughtful consideration for the need for on-going flexibility in providing legal services during this volatile federal administration.

C. Our Work with New Yorkers Detained by ICE - New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP)

Against this backdrop of escalating enforcement and instability in the immigration courts, programs that ensure continuity of representation for detained New Yorkers have become not only lifesaving, but indispensable to preserving due process and family unity. However, providing immigration legal services to those who are detained by ICE is incredibly challenging for a variety of reasons, including that Immigration Court hearings are conducted at an extremely rapid pace, their cases often involve more

complex legal analyses than those who are not detained by ICE, and their incarceration in and of itself is traumatizing and devastating for their families. Three developments have made this work even more challenging:

- the detention of New Yorkers outside of the New York/New Jersey region which exacerbates communication and representation challenges;
- the increased detention of noncitizens under the current Trump administration; and
- the Department of Homeland Security's position, despite a federal district court's ruling otherwise, that most noncitizens in the Unites States are ineligible for bond, so that they can be released back to their families and communities here in the United States while their Immigration Court proceedings proceed.

For the most part, New Yorkers are no longer locally detained by ICE. ICE's New York City Field Office routinely arrests noncitizen New Yorkers in New York City, holding them for a temporary time at 26 Federal Plaza or other "holding" facilities throughout New York, and then often transfers them to facilities hundreds of miles away. While there are some more local facilities, including the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC) in Brooklyn, New York or Delaney Hall in Newark, New Jersey detained New Yorkers, many of the NYIFUP clients we serve are transferred to Western Pennsylvania, at the Moshannon Valley Processing Center, Miami Correctional Facility in Indiana, La Salle Detention Facility in Jena, Louisiana, The Federal Correctional Institution in Berlin, New Hampshire, and El Paso Camp East Montana in El Paso, Texas, and other detention facilities across the United States. This practice of detaining New Yorkers all over the country has made it more difficult for us to identify noncitizen New Yorkers and provide representation.

Challenges in Identifying and Screening Noncitizen New Yorkers for NYIFUP Immigration Legal Representation

When noncitizen New Yorkers were more routinely detained locally in the New York and New Jersey region, their Immigration Court proceedings were located locally as well, at the Varick Street Immigration Court in lower Manhattan. LAS and our other NYIFUP partners built professional working relationships with the Immigration Court and ICE prosecutors to allow NYIFUP staff to intake and screen unrepresented noncitizens during initial court hearings; this helped all stakeholders with creating more efficient and manageable dockets and helped NYIFUP identify noncitizen New Yorkers who needed

Immigration Court representation.

Unfortunately, with the detention of noncitizen New Yorkers outside of the New York and New Jersey region, NYIFUP partners do not have the existing relationships with Immigration Court and ICE prosecutors in other jurisdictions, and there is no streamlined system to allow LAS or its NYIFUP partners to intake and screen noncitizen New Yorkers in other venues. Further, despite much effort by NYIFUP providers, these government stakeholders elsewhere have shown limited interest in collaborating to allow us to identify and potentially represent noncitizens on their dockets. After considerable advocacy and coalition-building with legal service provider near the Moshannon Valley Processing Center, NYIFUP providers receive referrals of individuals who might be eligible for our services. These organizations have extremely limited staffing and capacity though and we have often received referrals too late in the Immigration Court process and noncitizen New Yorkers have often already been ordered removed by the time we are able to contact them in detention.

As LAS and our NYIFUP partners have faced resistance when trying to gain access to intake and screen noncitizen New Yorkers in other non-New York City based Immigration Courts, LAS has developed creative strategies to help identify noncitizen New Yorkers in detention. In addition to receiving referrals directly from affected New York families and loved ones, LAS tries to follow up with noncitizens whose names appear on the calendar but are transferred before they appear in Varick Immigration Court. Over this past year, NYIFUP partners also developed a dedicated referral form to track New Yorkers who get detained and transferred out of state before they get docketed in New York or New Jersey immigration court and, since August of 2025, we have received over 1,000 referrals.

Challenges in Advocating Against Unlawful Detentions of Noncitizen New Yorkers Detained In Remote Locations

LAS faces significant obstacles litigating habeas petitions to challenge the unlawful detention of those detained in remote facilities, including the reality of little to no available *pro bono* counsel options locally to litigate near these immigration detention facilities and ICE's practice of transferring individuals without notice while habeas petitions are being prepared. As most federal courts have concluded that a habeas petition may only be filed in the district where an individual is confined, it may be difficult or impossible to obtain habeas counsel who is barred in the relevant district court and, even if habeas counsel

is secured in a particular jurisdiction, there is no guarantee that such jurisdiction will be the proper venue for filing once the habeas is prepared.

LAS continues to explore and expand the ways in which we challenge ICE detention of noncitizen New Yorkers. LAS has continued to challenge the adequacy and availability of bond proceedings for noncitizen New Yorkers who are transferred outside of the New York region by filing civil complaints under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) principles. If a detained immigrant is challenging the adequacy of bond procedures in New York Immigration Court, then venue is proper in the Southern District of New York, given that most events will have transpired, and at least one government defendant is based, in that district. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e)(1) (permitting venue "in any judicial district in which (A) a defendant in the action resides [or] (b) a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred").

Increased Detention of Noncitizens Under the Current Trump Administration

The second recent development that has made working in NYIFUP more challenging is the increased enforcement under the current Trump administration. Trump 2.0 campaigned with the promise of mass deportations and, since the election, has increased ICE arrests and deportations of noncitizens in this country.

To further support the priority to detain as many noncitizens as possible, ICE has increased detention capacity with the opening of the Delaney Hall facility in Newark, New Jersey, with a bed space for 1,000 detainees.[23] ICE has also increased bed space for ICE detainees at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn and there are discussions about opening new facilities in upstate New York[24] and New Jersey[25]. This has led, and will lead to more ICE arrests of noncitizens in New York City region and, given NYIFUP's limited resources, will put incredible strain on our staff to meet the increased demand for immigration legal services for these noncitizen New Yorkers.

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[23] *See* Steve Janoski, *Inside New Jersey's troubled immigration detention center: 'It's designed to break people'*, The Jersey Vindicator (Sep. 25, 2025), https://jerseyvindicator.org/2025/09/25/inside-new-jerseys-troubled-immigration-detention-center-its-designed-to-break-people/.

[24] *See* Gwynne Hogan, *ICE Opening Huge Lockup 50 Miles North of New York City, The City (Jan. 14, 2026),* https://www.thecity.nyc/2026/01/14/chester-dhs-ics-detainee-lockup-jail/.

[25] *See* Sophie Nieto-Munoz, *ICE buys warehouse for migrant detention, Roxbury officials say*, New Jersey Monitor (Feb. 20, 2026), https://newjerseymonitor.com/2026/02/20/ice-warehouse-migrant-detention-roxbury/#:~:text=by%20Sophie%20Nieto%2DMunoz%2C%20New,for%20migrants%20in%20New%20Jersey.

Persistent Challenges Representing Noncitizen New Yorkers in ICE Custody

Separate from these current trends of detaining noncitizen New Yorkers outside of the New York/New Jersey region and the increased detention of noncitizens under the current Trump administration, LAS continues to face persistent challenges in representing our NYIFUP clients generally. As we know from prior and current experience, detention jeopardizes access to counsel. As an example of this, we are constantly dealing with access to counsel issues at Orange County Correctional Facility (OCCF). The space in the OCCF that is set aside for in-person visits, sometimes referred to as the "glass house," is a room divided by a glass wall with a phone for communication. There is usually at least one correctional officer within earshot and frequently there are also other detained people meeting with their advocates. This makes it extremely difficult to have confidential conversations about past trauma, fear of gangs, or to dive into the personal details that an attorney must know to properly advise their clients and prepare them for trial. Some of the people we represent understandably refuse to meet with us in person given the confidentiality concerns. Although NYIFUP providers have repeatedly requested consistent access to confidential meeting spaces with our clients at the facility, OCCF leadership and ICE have refused to allow for this.

Additionally, in-person visits at OCCF present language access issues when attorneys and clients do not speak a common language. The "glass house" telephones–the only mechanism by which an attorney and detained person may effectively communicate–make it nearly impossible for attorneys to communicate with their clients when they do not speak the same language. The only way to do so is to bring an interpreter in-person with the attorney; however, attorneys have often been restricted in bringing interpreters or other individuals with them on legal visits.

Our ability to adequately represent clients is significantly hampered by their detention. For years we have had issues communicating with clients behind bars, but these challenges have only been exacerbated by the recent increase in detention which has led to other serious disease outbreaks, such as the recent tuberculosis outbreak at OCCF which has resulted in quarantining an entire unit. Video conference services repeatedly fail, often with technical malfunctions where one party cannot hear the other, or the call fails to connect altogether. Efforts to correct these issues are sometimes resolved by individual officers, but often are not. Sometimes attorneys must wait days to be able to speak with their

clients, even with pending trials looming on the horizon. Further, NYIFUP attorneys have at times had to prepare clients for their trial testimony using video technology where the audio portion was non-functional. Attorneys resorted to using dry-erase boards, or pieces of paper, to communicate messages to their clients visually and to prepare them for their final hearings which would determine whether they would be deported or permitted to remain in this country with loved ones.

Calls have varied, ranging from issues with OCCF's video technology to a lack of staff available to facilitate the call. Officials at OCCF have consistently failed to respond to requests for assistance in restoring a reliable system of communication. ICE has at times allowed for 15-20 minute "legal phone calls," which are appropriate to convey a brief message or a rescheduled court date at most, and woefully insufficient for people preparing testimony for their multi-hour trials, where a judge will determine whether or not they can remain in this country and ultimately their freedom. Developing the necessary attorney-client communication and trust is impossible by 15-20 minute calls.

Video calls are also extremely difficult to schedule. On any given day, there are only 14 timeslots longer than 25 minutes available for an entire housing unit which can house more than 40 people, and three of those time slots are after 7:00PM. Once a time slot is filled, it is no longer available for anyone in the unit to use. When considering the number of NYIFUP advocates, private attorneys, and other representatives attempting to schedule a call to clients at OCCF, this is clearly insufficient to meet the needs of the demand of representation.

As a result of the limitations on access to counsel, we often must communicate through calls made with new video tablets provided by OCCF. Tablets are often left uncharged or are taken away in retaliation for a perceived infraction or for speaking out against conditions of confinement. Sometimes clients are not informed that communicating with counsel through tablets is an option. Relying on tablets often jeopardizes confidentiality as the people we represent are forced to communicate with us in open spaces where other people are nearby, once again rendering our conversations non-confidential and hindering the free flow of often sensitive information that is necessary for us to provide effective legal representation.

OCCF, and other ICE detention facilities in New York State, have limited detained people's access to representation, making it less likely that they will be prepared for their trials, and thus more

likely that they will be deported. Detention alone, particularly during the past few years, has become an access to counsel and due process issue by impeding detained people's ability to adequately prepare and gather evidence for their defense. NYIFUP is undermined by this.

D. Our Youth-Related Work

The same enforcement-first federal policies destabilizing adult New Yorkers have had especially devastating consequences for immigrant children and youth, whose legal eligibility is time-sensitive and whose futures are permanently shaped by delays and denials of due process.

Since 2003, LAS's Youth Project has assisted undocumented noncitizen youth in New York City and surrounding counties who are in foster care, adoption, or guardianship, to obtain Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), allowing them to obtain green cards and other immigration benefits. The project also defends unaccompanied youth in removal proceedings.

LAS's Youth Project remains a leader amongst our fellow undocumented youth legal service providers. LAS leads the New York SIJS advocates' group, a bimonthly forum for immigrant youth legal service providers statewide to troubleshoot Family Court issues, discuss USCIS challenges, and brainstorm solutions to other developing legal issues. Approximately 40-50 advocates regularly attend the SIJS meetings, including officials from ACS.

The Youth Project also manages the SIJS-NY listserv, which includes hundreds of statewide legal service providers who can better represent their immigrant youth by maintaining contact with other experienced service providers. Members of the Youth Project speak regularly at continuing legal education (CLE) events, and several have spoken at national conferences, including the American Immigration Lawyers Association's Immigrant Defense Conference, National Association of Counsel for Children's annual conference, and the American Bar Association's Unaccompanied Child Conference. Youth Project staff are frequently asked to consult on matters having national impact, including strategizing about, and conducting impact litigation, drafting amicus briefs, and commenting on proposed changes to regulations.[26]

[26] LAS also sits on the steering committee of the End SIJS Backlog Coalition (www.sijsbacklog.com), a group of directly-

Below, we highlight current trends and the most immediate challenges facing LAS' Youth Project and its work on behalf of immigrant youth.

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) Representation and Meeting the Immense Needs of New Yorkers

With New York City's existing immigrant population and those who have more recently arrived, there is a tremendous need immigration legal representation for immigrant youth eligible for SIJS and are approaching their 21st birthday when they will age-out of eligibility. Within LAS' Youth Project alone, we have taken on for representation of emergency SIJS cases every month, rushing to prepare clients, filings, and constantly pushing for Family Court hearing dates before our clients age-out. This is in addition to our work with existing clients and other new clients who are not in absolute last-minute crisis.

To additionally respond to this community need for SIJS assistance, in 2024, LAS launched a pilot project though the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE) coalition[27] that has helped streamline the SIJS application process in New York City Family Courts. Through this project, the Youth Project has assisted over two dozen youth with filing pro se guardianship applications in Queens Family Court, a necessary step towards obtaining SIJS. In December 2025, the pilot project was expanded to include Brooklyn Family Court and LAS is currently working to expand this pilot to Staten Island. Since December 2025, ICARE has filed close to 50 petitions through the pilot project. The project helps alleviate the burden on immigration legal providers at a time where the system is overwhelmed with applications for SIJS while ensuring that youth have counsel each step of the process.

In February 2025, the Youth Project integrated its work through the SIJS pilot project with ILU's weekly legal clinics, utilizing volunteer attorneys and law school students to help build capacity to help with preparing the family court petitions for SIJS cases.

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impacted youth and over 150 allied advocate organizations across the country, working to educate Congress, relevant administrative agencies and the public about the harmful impacts of visa caps on vulnerable immigrant children, and to advocate for an end to the SIJS backlog. In 2023, the Coalition released a new report detailing the drastic increase in youth caught in the SIJS backlog over the last two years and highlights the first-hand stories of SIJS youth. The Coalition also released several Practice Advisories throughout 2023 and engaged in national policy and advocacy aimed at reducing the backlog and the impact of the backlog on SIJS youth through legislative, regulatory and policy changes.

[27] *See* https://www.icarecoalition.org/.

The SIJS Backlog and Deferred Action

As previously reported, in March 2022, USCIS announced a new policy that when a SIJS application is approved, the applicant will now be considered for deferred action, making SIJS- approved youth eligible for work authorization as well as hopefully protecting them from removal.[28] In June 2025, however, the government rescinded the deferred action policy. This termination of the policy was stayed by a Federal District court judge in November 2025.[29] Although stayed, USCIS has not issued any further deferred action status to youth with approved SIJS petitions. In March 2026, the visa bulletin, (the federal government system that tracks when certain individuals may apply for their green card), jumped nearly two years from March 15, 2021, to January 1, 2023. With this jump, more than 90 of our youth clients with approved SIJS petitions became eligible to apply for their green cards.

Despite the significant jump on the visa bulletin, it is uncertain how much further the visa bulletin will advance at any given time. For April, for example, there is no movement on the visa with regard to what applications are being accepted.

LAS continues to monitor immigration law developments to assess how this impacts noncitizen youth, and LAS will continue to represent our clients in their quest for safety and permanency in this country. We will also continue to provide expert technical assistance to other practitioners in New York City, statewide, and nationally regarding best practices and arguments for all types of cases relating to immigrant youth.

E. Our Federal Work

As administrative adjudication has become increasingly unreliable and protective remedies have eroded, federal courts have emerged as the only remaining forum where many immigrants can obtain meaningful review and enforce basic constitutional protections.

Our Immigration Law Unit's federal litigation team continues to be a leader in impact litigation to

[28] https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/uscis-to-offer-deferred-action-for-special-immigrant-juveniles.
[29] *See* National Immigration Project et al., *Updated Guidance to Practitioners in Light of Recent Developments in A.C.R. v. Noem* (Feb. 18, 2026), https://nipnlg.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/2026_ACR-Updated-Guidance.pdf.

obtain protection for broad classes of noncitizens and achieve class action victories that protect thousands of noncitizens from arbitrary and cruel immigration policies. We also undertake litigation for individuals in federal district court and in the circuit courts of appeals to address systemic injustices in our immigration system. We craft innovative legal strategies, secure wins for our individual clients, and establish favorable precedents on emerging legal issues. We also amplify our impact by facilitating partnerships and working groups, and we provide training and technical support to pro bono partners and practitioners in New York and across the country. As federal immigration policies and case law continue to shift at unprecedented speed, ILU continually reassesses emerging needs and works to provide the highest-quality services to as many clients as possible while adhering to our professional and ethical obligations.

Challenging Unlawful Detention Through Habeas Litigation and Federal Appellate Litigation

Under today's federal policies, immigrants encounter severe obstacles in immigration court, where due process safeguards have eroded, adjudications have become increasingly punitive, and the administrative appeals system rarely corrects agency error. Simply put, for many clients, there is no real justice at the administrative level. This year, ILU has continued to respond to heightened and urgent community needs through robust federal litigation.

Since 2018, LAS has filed more than 115 habeas corpus petitions challenging unconstitutional detention and prolonged detention on behalf of noncitizen New Yorkers. Over one-quarter of these cases are since the beginning of Trump's second administration in January 2025. Our habeas litigation has secured key due process protections, including requiring the government to bear the burden of proof at bond hearings, requiring judges to consider a client's ability to pay and alternatives to detention, and limiting the government's ability to detain noncitizens for unreasonably prolonged periods without judicial review.

And again, since 2018, we have filed over 65 petitions for review primarily in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit challenges the misapplication of statutory standards, systemic errors in credibility analysis, flawed adjudications under the Convention Against Torture, and unlawful expansions of deportability. One third of those petitions for review were filed during Trump 2.0. We have dramatically scaled up our federal litigation work during this federal administration because the

federal courts are often the only venue where noncitizens can obtain a fair hearing, enforce constitutional protections, and challenge unlawful government action. As a result, LAS's federal litigation practice has become more indispensable than at any time in recent history. Our attorneys approach each matter with the understanding that litigation in federal district courts and the courts of appeals is often the sole remaining check on the immigration enforcement system.

Impact Litigation and Systemic Reform

In addition to individual federal cases, LAS leads and participates in some of the most consequential immigration-related impact litigation in the country. Our cases target unlawful federal policies, abusive enforcement practices, and systemic failures that undermine due process. Since January 20, 2025, The Legal Aid Society has expanded its immigration impact litigation docket to confront the rapidly escalating harms produced by the current federal administration's immigration policies. Through amicus filings, class actions, and direct litigation, LAS has challenged unlawful federal actions, defended state and local protections for immigrant communities, and fought to ensure due process, transparency, and access to justice. Key matters include:

- In *City Council of the City of New York v. Eric Adams*,[30] LAS filed an amicus brief supporting the Council's challenge to the Mayor's decision to allow ICE to reestablish an office on Rikers Island. The filing detailed the dangerous history of ICE activity at the jail, the risk of irreparable harm to immigrant communities under the current federal enforcement landscape, and the ways the proposal violated New York City's sanctuary laws. Courts ultimately issued orders blocking the ICE office from moving forward, underscoring the harms identified by amici.

- In *United States of America v. State of New York*,[31] LAS submitted an amicus brief urging dismissal of the Trump administration's lawsuit attacking New York's Protect Our Courts Act (POCA) and related Executive Orders. The brief demonstrated how POCA safeguards the constitutional rights of people using the courts, prevents ICE's courthouse arrest practices, and

[30] Council of the City of N.Y. v. Adams, 2025 N.Y. Slip Op. 25141 (Sup. Ct. N.Y. Cnty. June 12, 2025).
[31] *United States v. State of New York,* No. 1:25-cv-00205 (N.D.N.Y. filed Feb. 12, 2025).

lies squarely within the state's authority to protect public safety and judicial access. A federal judge later dismissed DOJ's lawsuit, validating much of the reasoning advanced by amici.

- In *Maria L. v. Noem*,[32] LAS joined a nationwide class action challenging DHS's revived and aggressively expanded civil-fines program, under which immigrants have been assessed ruinous penalties of up to $1.8 million each. The complaint explains that beginning in early 2025 ICE issued thousands of boilerplate fines without the legally required individualized findings and then adopted a June 2025 interim final rule designed to impose penalties "swiftly and at scale," stripping away basic procedural protections and violating the Administrative Procedure Act and constitutional guarantees.

- In *CLINIC v. Rubio*,[33] LAS and national partners filed suit challenging the State Department's sweeping January 2026 suspension of immigrant-visa processing for nationals of 75 countries. The action argues that the visa freeze constitutes an unlawful nationality-based ban grounded in an unprecedented and illegal expansion of the "public charge" definition. Plaintiffs contend that DOS exceeded its statutory authority, violated the APA, and enacted a discriminatory policy that separates families and denies lawful immigration opportunities to applicants—many of whom had already been approved.

- In *The Legal Aid Society v. USCIS*,[34] LAS filed a FOIA lawsuit to compel USCIS to resume publishing Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) non-precedent decisions—materials the agency abruptly stopped posting in March 2025 despite publicly representing that such decisions would continue to be published within one month of issuance. The complaint asserts that the agency's failure to publish these decisions, and its failure to timely respond to LAS's FOIA request seeking explanation, unlawfully undermines transparency and deprives applicants and practitioners of essential guidance needed to understand how immigration benefits are adjudicated.

[32] *Maria L. v. Noem*, No. 1:25-cv-13471 (D. Mass. filed Nov. 20, 2025).
[33] *Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. v. Rubio*, No. 1:26-cv-00858 (S.D.N.Y. filed Feb. 2, 2026).
[34] *The Legal Aid Society et al v. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services et al*, No. 1:26-cv-01140 (S.D.N.Y. filed Feb. 10, 2026).

- In *United States v. City of New York*,[35] LAS filed an amicus brief supporting the City's motion to dismiss a federal lawsuit attacking New York City's sanctuary laws. The filing emphasized that these laws are vital to protecting more than three million immigrant residents, allowing them to safely access essential services, participate in the criminal legal system, and engage with government without fear that local agencies will funnel them into federal immigration enforcement. The brief underscored that the City has constitutional authority to govern its own institutions and maintain policies that enhance public health and safety.

Working in Partnership

In addition to our work for individual federal litigation matters and impact litigation efforts, Las deeply values working in partnership with others. LAS co-facilitates the Second Circuit working group, which focuses on removal defense issues in the Second Circuit, and the New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania habeas working group, which explores creative litigation to fight immigration detention. Each of these working groups operates a lively listserv and, on a quarterly basis, convenes practitioners from dozens of organizations and law firms litigating federal immigration cases in federal district court and the courts of appeals. Through these working groups, we touch the immigration and federal court cases of thousands of noncitizens who are not LAS clients.

E. Our Immigration Opportunities Initiative-related Work

The primary aim of the City's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) funding has been to ensure that more noncitizens would have access to full legal representation, including in complex immigration matters and removal proceedings. Through our IOI work, LAS has helped thousands of noncitizen New Yorkers obtain and/or secure their immigration status, avoid deportation, and fight back against unfair labor practices and exploitation. In FY24, LAS and our subcontractors handled over 4,500 cases for individuals seeking assistance with an immigration, employment, or family law matter.

We are deeply grateful for the recent award notification related to the IOI RFx solicitation and appreciate the City Council's continued recognition of the critical role these services play. As the federal

[35] *United States v. City of New York*, 1:25-cv-04084, (E.D.N.Y).

immigration landscape continues to shift rapidly, we hope the City will continue to provide the flexibility necessary to allow LAS to respond nimbly and effectively to evolving community needs. This work strengthens the social fabric of our city and benefits all New Yorkers, and LAS is committed to continuing its leadership in this area.

F. Conclusion

We thank the City Council for its generous support of immigration legal services, which allow us to serve some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. However, the realities facing immigrant New Yorkers today are unprecedented in scope, speed, and severity. Detention, deportation, and enforcement-first policies are destabilizing families, undermining access to the courts, and eroding fundamental principles of justice. In this environment, the City's investment in immigration legal services is not merely supportive; it is essential.

We respectfully urge the City Council to meet this historic moment with the increased funding and flexibility outlined in this testimony. Together, we can ensure that New York City remains a place where due process prevails, families are protected, and no one is denied justice because of their immigration status or ability to pay.

Respectfully submitted,



Deborah Lee
Attorney-in-Charge
Immigration Law Unit
The Legal Aid Society

THE LIBERTY FUND

Testimony of:
David Long
Executive Director, The Liberty Fund

Before the:
New York City Council - Committee on Finance
2027 Executive Budget Hearings Public Testimony
June 10, 2026

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dave Long and I am the Executive Director of The Liberty Fund. This testimony outlines our programming and how funding from the NYC Council will enable continued justice reform while ensuring public safety. I have attached documents which provide even more details and specifics about our work.

OVERVIEW

The Liberty Fund is a non-profit organization committed to reducing pretrial detention and improving public safety. Building upon the success of our Charitable Bail Fund Program, we launched the ROR Case Management Program—a voluntary, person-centered initiative providing case management and court reminders to individuals released on their own recognizance (ROR) or out on bail with pending cases. The program is also available to individuals with prior court involvement. Our support spans the pretrial period, during proceedings, and post-disposition. All services are delivered by certified case managers trained in trauma-informed care and risk-need responsivity.

IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES PROVIDED

The Liberty Fund served 204 clients in FY25. The Liberty Fund continues to maintain an active New York City court presence as well as be involved in community based outreach fairs and network opportunities. Our tailored case management approach supports individuals in overcoming systemic barriers while reducing reliance on incarceration. Our impact as of December 31, 2025 includes the following:

- 2,056 individuals served through voluntary case management

- 11,850 wellness calls completed
- 6,003 CLIENT UPDATES SENT TO DEFENSE ATTORNEYS & REFERRAL PARTNERS.
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- 709 community-based referrals made

- 87% court appearance rate, enhancing public safety

- 7,800+ days of detention prevented, yielding over $5.7 million in annual cost savings

View our outcomes dashboard: libertyfund.nyc/outcomes

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

The Liberty Fund benefits the community because our groundbreaking approach ensures no net-widening and builds personal agency for individuals from NYC communities that have been historically impacted by racial/social injustices. The Liberty Fund also ensures that the recent criminal justice reforms remain consistent while filling a critical service gap, to ensure public safety.

Specifically, The Liberty Fund provides the following community benefits with our target population:

- Filling a Critical Service Gap - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed.

- Rising Detention Costs - Pretrial detention is a significant financial burden to the community. The NYC Comptroller's office has placed the recent cost of incarcerating an individual in New York City at a record $1,500 per day in 2025, not counting community losses from disruption of work, childcare, housing. Misdemeanor cases can often range up to three to five months to resolve.

RECENT KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Housing Court clients - Building upon a pilot project in the Fall of 2025 in which The Liberty Fund case managers spent two days each in Housing Court parts in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, The Liberty Fund established a formal partnership with Legal Services of New York City (LSNYC). Starting in February 2026, LSNYC will be referring up to 10 clients a month who can benefit from the person centered case management services that our ROR Case Management program can provide.

- Partnership Building - The Liberty Fund undertook a pilot program with the Bronx Community Solutions (BCS) project that yielded strong results. For one full week in November, Liberty Fund case managers were onsite, attending and supporting all workshops offered by BCS. This engagement was followed by a comprehensive outreach effort to workshop participants, as well as to clients who met with their BCS case managers during that week. As a result of this targeted outreach, more than 40 clients enrolled in and became active participants in the Liberty Fund ROR Case Management Program.

Both accomplishments demonstrate The Liberty Fund's commitment to remaining a key INSTITUTION SERVING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY, WHILE CONTINUING TO SHOW (NEXT PAGE)

flexibility, innovation, and creativity. Collaboration has been—and continues to be—a hallmark of how we successfully achieve our goals and fulfill our overall mission as an organization.

GOALS FOR 2027

1. Increase capacity so as to be able to serve at least 235 clients annually

2. Further explore and develop our Housing Court client pilot project

3. Build organizational resilience in response to expected volatility in government and nonprofit funding streams

ATTACHMENTS

Client Success Stories

Organization Overview

Organization Flyer

THE LIBERTY FUND

Client Success Stories - June 2026

Every day, The Liberty Fund helps people break cycles of incarceration and build stronger futures. But numbers don't tell the full human story. Meet some of our success stories.

B.W.

BW, a 43-year-old man, had been entangled in the criminal justice system since his first arrest at age sixteen. Much of his twenties and thirties were spent incarcerated, and without a high school diploma, he struggled to see a path forward. When he entered The Liberty Fund's ROR Case Management Program, BW felt overwhelmed and uncertain about his future. His case manager immediately began working with him to set concrete, achievable goals. Together, they completed an application for a dual adult education and workforce development program, with the case manager also coordinating directly with the program to support BW's intake process. At the same time, recognizing the instability of his temporary living situation with a relative, the case manager assisted BW in searching for permanent housing. BW also received weekly wellness calls that provided both accountability and encouragement. These check-ins not only helped track his progress in education and housing but also offered a consistent space to discuss his mental health and overall well-being. Six months later, BW had secured his own studio apartment and successfully completed the first phase of his education and workforce development program. Just as importantly, with a more stable foundation, he began to rebuild relationships with family members, gaining renewed emotional support to sustain his progress. Through The Liberty Fund's ROR Case Management Program, BW transformed a cycle of repeated arrests into an opportunity for stability, growth, and reconnection with his community.

J.E.

When JE was navigating a pending criminal case while seeking custody of his two children, he was overwhelmed and unsure where to turn. Through regular wellness calls and consistent support from The Liberty Fund, JE regained his footing. He reunited with his family, returned to work, learned healthy co-parenting skills, and avoided further justice involvement. JE shared that our guidance helped him "rebuild his life and confidence." Your support made that possible.

B.O.

NYU student BO reached out to us for mental health support during a difficult period. We connected her with a local clinic in New Jersey—close to home—and, through therapy and continued check-ins with our Social Worker, she developed strong coping strategies. With renewed confidence, BO began commuting to school, secured a part-time job, and strengthened her relationship with her father. Her progress is a testament to what compassionate, timely support can spark.

S.S.

When SS came to us seeking housing support, she was determined to build a stable future but didn't know where to begin. Our team helped her complete her Housing Connect application, and soon after, she began receiving multiple apartment options. SS is now in the process of choosing the best home for her family. She shared her excitement about finally finding stability—and is even exploring a second job so she can furnish her new place. Your generosity opens doors like this, quite literally.

J.R.

JR was referred to the Liberty Fund as she worked to complete her GED and rebuild her life. We connected her with a range of educational options, including remote and hybrid courses, and she ultimately enrolled in virtual GED classes through GED.com. She begins classes this month, energized and hopeful. Through regular wellness calls and support in navigating the educational system, JR found the confidence to take this crucial next step. She expressed deep gratitude for the guidance and encouragement that helped her get her life back on track.

THE LIBERTY FUND

Mission

The Liberty Fund reduces the pretrial jail population, prevents the poorest New Yorkers from having their lives upended and their freedom sacrificed, and provides support in order to avoid future interactions with the criminal justice system. We achieve our mission by providing pretrial services, including robust case management, to any qualifying Released on Recognizance (ROR) client throughout the pendency of their court case.

Target Population:

Vulnerable, low-income individuals:

- *Released on Recognizance (ROR).*
- *Voluntarily agree to participate.*
- *Past demographics include 87% men; 53% Black; 35% Latinx; 38% Ages 20-29; 42% Ages 30-39.*

Program Design and Services

INNOVATIVE MODEL

Our model has four innovative features for impact:

- ***Pretrial*** *- Interventions are initiated at the most critical touchpoint for success.*
- ***Voluntary*** *- Non-mandated services ensure no additional restrictions placed on clients to prevent further "net widening" as they stabilize their lives.*
- ***Person-Centered*** *- Services determined by client to better meet individual needs, promote personal agency and connect to best-fit services.*
- ***Court-Based*** *- Low-touch interventions leveraged during court appointments for effective time usage.*

DIRECT SERVICES PROVIDED

Each client participates in the following services:

- ***Case Management*** *- Intake, needs assessments, service action plans, and wellness calls.*
- ***Critical Court Needs*** *- Client court-reminders and emergency needs, such as MetroCards, food vouchers, hygiene kits.*
- ***Workforce Development and Homelessness Interventions*** *- Referrals to best-fit housing/job training programs.*
- ***Access to Social Service Team*** *- Services led by our Social Services Director (LCSW) and 2 certified Case Managers who double as licensed New York State bail bond agents.*

Questions? Don't hesitate to contact us.

David Long, Esq.
Executive Director
dlong@libertyfund.nyc
(646) 373 0327

Check out more at www.libertyfund.nyc

Community Benefits

Social Service Impacts - Since 2017, we have helped 1,700+ clients access community-based services, prevented 7,000+ days of detention, facilitated annual cost savings of $5.1 million, and achieved an 88% client court appearance rate.

Filling a Critical Service Gap - Few NYC programs like The Liberty Fund focus on the misdemeanor population, especially older and homeless individuals, resulting in higher recidivism rates if not addressed. Since 2017, Liberty Fund staff made 10,308 wellness calls with our program participants and 595 referrals to community-based services.

Criminal and Social Justice Reforms - Through its established partnerships with several key criminal and social justice organizations, the Liberty Fund has provided valuable support to our partners as we collectively implement needed criminal justice reforms in New York City.

Partnerships

Defense Agencies - including NYCDS, Legal Aid, Bronx Defender Services, Brooklyn Defender Services, Queens Defenders, and 18B attorneys. We communicate with attorneys as a best practice to help relay the most current information to all parties. Our resource manual includes a citywide network of social service organizations specifically adjusted to navigate a post-pandemic landscape.

Established Agreements - The Liberty Fund has entered into agreements with the following criminal/social justice agencies to provide our case management services for their clients as additional support or as a step down from their programming: Manhattan Justice Opportunities; Bronx Community Solutions; Fortune Society Parole Restoration Program; Osborne Association; Exalt Youth; Exodus Transitional Community; Unite Us; Center for Community Alternatives; NYC Criminal Justice Administration; Queens Community Justice Center.

Financial Need

Financial support now will underwrite our essential services for New York City's most vulnerable, while ensuring both continued reform and public safety.

The Liberty Fund is citywide. Our clients have lived in these zip codes:

BRONX: 10451; 10452; 10453; 10454; 10455; 10456; 10457; 10458; 10459; 10460; 10462; 10463; 10465; 10466; 10467; 10468; 10469; 10472; 10473; 10474; 10475

BROOKLYN: 11202; 11203; 11205; 11206; 11207; 11208; 11209; 11210; 11211; 11212; 11213; 11215; 11216; 11217; 11218; 11221; 11222; 11223; 11224; 11225; 11226; 11229; 11230; 11231; 11233; 11237

MANHATTAN: 10001; 10002; 10009; 10010; 10011; 10012; 10014; 10016; 10017; 10019; 10023; 10024; 10025; 10026; 10027; 10028; 10029; 10030; 10031; 10032; 10033; 10034; 10035; 10036; 10037; 10039; 10040

QUEENS: 11377; 11354; 11361; 11367; 11368; 11373; 11385; 11411; 11412; 11413; 11418;

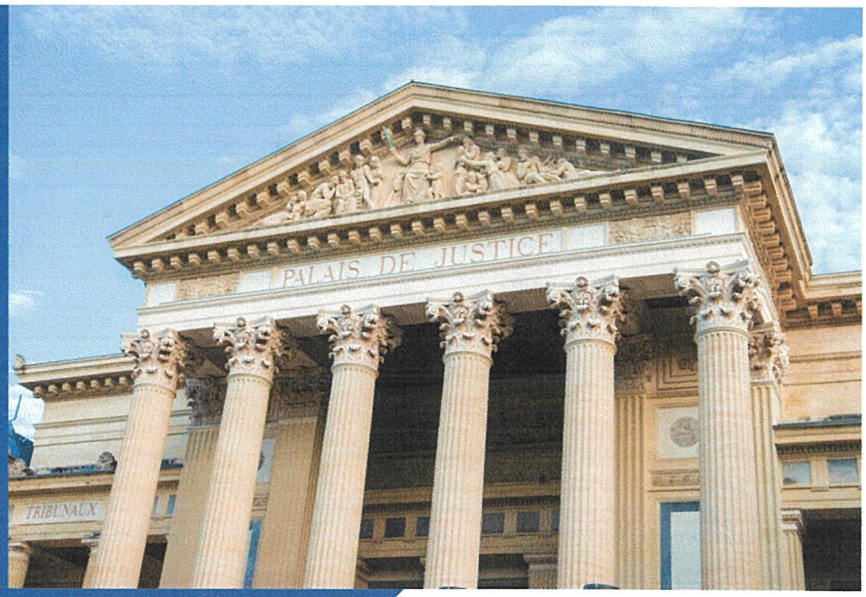
STATEN ISLAND: 10301; 10302; 10303; 10304; 10308; 10309;

Yolanda Seltzer
Director of Social Services
yseltzer@libertyfund.nyc
646-281-5882

David Long
Executive Director
dlong@libertyfund.nyc
646-373-0327

www.libertyfund.nyc

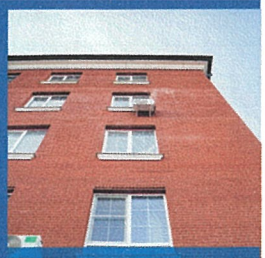
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New York, NY 10029

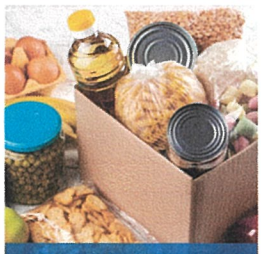


The Liberty Fund is a non-profit dedicated to individuals released on their own recognizances (ROR) or out on bail with a pending case.

THE LIBERTY FUND


Person-Centered


Housing Help


Food Resources



Employment Referrals

THE ROR CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

We strive to enhance clients' lives by providing resources that keep them out of the justice system so they can thrive in their community.

- **Voluntary participation** with no mandates or restrictions.
- **Person-centered** to focus on individual needs, preferences and values.
- **Referrals** to community-based organizations with supportive services.
- **Holistic services** such as mental health, benefits, housing , jobs, food, court reminders and

THE LIBERTY FUND

Testimony of:

David Long
Executive Director, The Liberty Fund

Before the:

New York City Council - Committee of Public Safety
Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

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case managers during that week. As a result of this targeted outreach, more than 40 clients enrolled in and became active participants in the Liberty Fund ROR Case Management Program.

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THE LIBERTY FUND

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THE MET

Norah Yahya
Chief Government Affairs Officer

T 212 650 2122
Norah.Yahya@metmuseum.org

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Executive Budget Testimony
The New York City Council
FY 2027

Thank you to Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Williams and the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Relations for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Norah Yahya, and I am the Chief Government Affairs Officer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Met is known for its iconic permanent collection spanning over 5,000 years of artifacts, objects and art from around the world, and its current, must-see exhibits, but the Museum also serves as a unique destination for training programs, educational opportunities for all ages and abilities as well as supporting world class research divisions in preservation, conservation, and archeology. Further, the Met's multi-disciplinary offerings are available both virtually and in-person, and in recent years, brought millions of attendees to over 30,000 events. The Met hosts nearly 180,000 school children annually, with over 2.5 million annual student visits across the Cultural Institutions Group organizations citywide.

The Met employs approximately 2,000 staff, more than 1,600 of whom are New York City residents, and roughly 80 percent of whom are union members. More broadly, the cultural sector supports over 100,000 jobs citywide, including 15,700 at Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) organizations with 5,800 union employees with living-wage jobs that participate in city health & retirement plans.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art appreciates the proposed executive budget. We would like to thank the Council for prioritizing culture and for its advocacy in securing a historic $75 million increase and a $45 million baseline increase for the arts and culture sector in Fiscal 2026.

We remain grateful to the Council for your collaboration, and we look forward to strengthening our partnership with the Council in this new time and exploring new areas of collaboration to better serve our communities and ensure that culture is affordable and accessible for ALL New Yorkers.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

We take pride in our role in this landscape and in the impact, we have on local and widespread communities. Last year, The Met welcomed 5.7 million visitors and for the second consecutive year, local visitorship exceeded pre-pandemic figures. The Museum strives to serve local and global audiences alike, as well as diversity of communities as reflected in the variety of exhibitions, events, and programming. Nearly half of the visitors last year were local and from New York state, most of whom made use of the museum's Pay As You Wish program for entry.

The Museum's reach extends deeply into communities across all five boroughs. The Met partners with more than 500 community-based organizations through its festivals and public programming and collaborates with approximately one-third of New York City senior centers through the Met's ArtBox program. Through initiatives such as Community Wednesdays, the Museum welcomes seniors, veterans, CUNY students, and other underserved groups for dedicated access to the galleries. The Met also hosts major cultural programming, including Lunar New Year, Museum Mile, MetFest, and Teens Take The Met!, drawing thousands of families, young people, and community partners each year. Accessibility remains a core priority, with thousands of visitors with disabilities served annually through dedicated programs. In 2025, these audiences included people with dementia and their caregivers, people with developmental and learning disabilities, people who are blind or partially sighted, the deaf community, older people with disabilities, and veterans with disabilities in hospital and residential settings.

The Met strives to be a place for all New Yorkers, regardless of income, and actively works to reduce barriers to access. This includes paid internship opportunities, with 25 annual positions reserved for NYCHA residents, and transportation support for community programming, particularly for participants from the outer boroughs.

We applaud the Mayor's $10M baseline to the DCLA budget in his Executive Budget proposal. We urge the Administration and the City Council to add the additional $20M at adoption to ensure that Culture stays whole. We ask the city to fully restore and baseline the **$30 million** that was added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector. Baselining this funding is critical to ending the 'budget dance' and supporting sustainable culture and culture jobs. Huge swings in annual funding levels impede staffing, planning, and programming, and are most damaging to small community-based organizations in our coalitions.

We appreciate the Council's recent efforts to address the need for reform around the capital projects process, we reiterate how improved processes and more expeditious reimbursements would help to ensure there is no additional

burden placed on organizations working in partnership with the city in the stewardship of public buildings and institutions.

In addition, there is need for the Council and Administration to support annual cost adjustments tied to inflation and rising operational expenses. Cultural institutions continue to face increasing costs, and a predictable funding framework is critical to sustaining operations, retaining talent, and ensuring fair wages for the cultural workforce.

The Met remains committed, alongside our partners in the Cultural Institutions Group, to serve all New Yorkers and strengthen the City's cultural and economic vitality. Continued and sustained investment from the city is essential to ensuring that culture remains accessible, affordable, and impactful for all.

Lastly, we thank the Council and the Committees on Finance and Cultural Affairs for the opportunity to offer testimony and their commitment to a thriving cultural sector in New York.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org

The Municipal Art Society of New York
MASNYC

111 Broadway, Suite #1603
New York, NY 10006
MAS.org

MAS Testimony on the Executive FY27 Budget for the Department of Parks & Recreation

June 10, 2026

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) is a longtime advocate of New York City's public realm, championing the equitable design and maintenance of open spaces citywide. As a member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition and the Forest for All NYC Coalition, **we continue to urge Mayor Mamdani to fulfill his campaign promise to allocate 1% of the City budget to the Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks).**

We commend the mayor's decision to baseline an additional $15 million for NYC Parks staffing and $2 million in temporary funding for tree planting capacity in the May Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27). These are significant improvements in funding from the January Preliminary Budget, but still a reduction from what was allocated in the FY26 Adopted Budget.

We also applaud the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) for the recent release of the city's first-ever Urban Forest Plan. The publication of this plan, which includes a goal of 30% city tree canopy coverage by 2040, represents a meaningful effort to preserve and expand our urban forest. However, the Executive Budget lacks dedicated funding to implement the plan.

NYC Parks is responsible for the care of over 30,000 acres of parkland across the five boroughs, and more than half of the city's tree canopy. Between rising temperatures, flood risks, and concerns over our air quality, investing in the urban forest is essential to maximizing New York City's livability for generations to come. Our tree canopies also have the capacity to disrupt climate inequities across our city, lowering emissions and mitigating flooding in our most vulnerable neighborhoods.

MAS stands with the Forest for All NYC Coalition to call for $150 million to fund the Urban Forest Plan in FY27 so that our city can reach its 30% tree canopy goal by 2040. This funding will be allocated toward sufficient staffing, tree maintenance, new tree planting, workforce development programs, and tree health research and monitoring. Without adequate investment in our parks, it becomes increasingly challenging to kickstart new initiatives like the Urban Forest Plan, as well as to maintain existing public open spaces. The plan's dual mission to both plant and preserve trees further underscores the need to fund our parks and public spaces holistically. With this new roadmap in hand, it's time that the City commit funding for the Urban Forest Plan and 1% for NYC Parks for a resilient and healthy future for New Yorkers across the five boroughs.

Sincerely,

Keri Butler
President, Municipal Art Society of New York

Testimony for NYC Council Committee on Finance Hearing on the FY27 Executive Budget
Tami Lin-Moges, Director, NY Cities Program, The Nature Conservancy
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Tami Lin-Moges, and I am the Director of The Nature Conservancy's New York Cities Program. The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization, and our diverse staff and more than 400 scientists conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We impact conservation in 76 countries and territories, directly and with partners. We have 90,000 members across New York, 35,000 of whom are in New York City. We advance strategies that create a healthy, resilient, and sustainable urban environment and are committed to improving NYC's air, land, and water to sustain and support the people and nature of this great city.

In New York City, we convene the 200+ member Forest for All NYC coalition and we are leading practitioners on the science and policy of the NYC urban forest. In 2021, we authored the State of the Urban Forest in NYC (SUFNYC) a comprehensive assessment of the local urban forest, and with Forest for All NYC, released the NYC Urban Forest Agenda, a collaborative roadmap that provides detailed recommendations to meaningfully protect, maintain, expand, research, and promote the NYC urban forest to benefit all New Yorkers justly and equitably. We also conducted an analysis, using 2017 data, of local tree canopy potential that shows the feasibility of expanding canopy cover in every neighborhood across the city. Later this year, we will be publishing updates on these analyses using the latest available 2021 canopy data, allowing us to further understand the dynamics of the NYC urban forest.

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of The Nature Conservancy and as a leading member of Forest for All NYC and the Play Fair Coalition regarding the FY27 Executive Budget. We urge the Mayor and City Council to dedicate new funding to support the implementation of the city's first ever *Urban Forest Plan* and baseline and restore NYC Parks staff. We are grateful to the Administration and Council for notable gains for NYC Parks in the Executive Budget – namely, $15 million to baseline NYC Parks staff previously funded by one-shots, as well as the addition of $2 million in one-shot funding for 6 additional staff (Gardeners, Associate Park Service Workers, and supervisors) for the in-house tree planting pilot team. These are notable steps in the right direction, especially in a tight fiscal environment. However, the proposed NYC Parks budget as a whole is still lower than it was for FY26, potentially resulting in another budget cut.

We urge the Mayor and City Council to invest more deeply in the NYC urban forest and finally start moving toward dedicating 1% of the City budget to parks, starting with $150 million in capital and expense funds for the NYC urban forest in FY27. These funds would further restore and baseline critical NYC Parks roles, expand forestry and natural areas staffing, and support implementation of the Urban Forest Plan across City agencies.

The urban forest includes not just the trees and their canopy, but also their physical infrastructure, such as tree beds and soil, the accompanying biodiversity, and a rich social infrastructure, such as the people who dedicate their careers and free time to it. The urban forest includes over 7 million trees, with their canopy covering 23.4% of the city as of 2021. It spans the whole of the city,

crossing jurisdictions and owners, and can be found on our streets, private backyards, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) campuses, City parks, schools, institutions, and other sites.

This year's budget cycle comes at a pivotal moment. In April, Deputy Mayor of Operations Julia Kerson, Chief Climate Officer Louise Yeung, NYC Parks Commissioner Shimamura, Councilmembers, and stakeholders stood together to announce the launch of the City's first-ever Urban Forest Plan, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023. This Plan directly builds on the work of the Forest for All NYC coalition and the *NYC Urban Forest Agenda*, and in many ways, is the culmination of decades of science, advocacy, collaboration, and community leadership. The Plan sets forth a comprehensive roadmap for achieving a 30% tree canopy goal citywide in an equitable way by 2040, detailing 43 actions helmed by the City and its partners to expand the workforce, improve tree maintenance, strengthen community stewardship, and build a more resilient urban forest across all five boroughs.

The release of this 10-year Plan is a defining moment for NYC and requires associated investment to ensure its success. The Urban Forest Plan could set New York apart as a national and global leader in nature-based climate solutions. It also has the potential to substantially improve the lived experience of New Yorkers – particularly those living in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods with historically low canopy and fewer public resources. But it cannot be implemented without restoring and expanding the very workforce that sustains the urban forest.

For years, the City's ability to manage its portion of the urban forest has been constrained by chronic and unstable underfunding, which has led to workforce reductions. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) is responsible for 53.5% of tree canopy in NYC and manages more than 14% percent of all NYC's land area. Despite its enormous ecological, social, and economic value, NYC Parks only receives 0.5% of the City budget, with even fewer resources allocated to the forestry activities of NYC Parks, and the agency has faced repeated staff cuts and hiring freezes. As NYC Comptroller Levine highlighted in his recent report on funding the urban forest, "chronic underfunding and staffing reductions have limited the City's ability to provide consistent care," even though we know that "long-term canopy growth depends on…consistent maintenance and the protection of existing trees across the five boroughs." The Comptroller further recommends that the City significantly increase baseline operating support for NYC Parks, especially by expanding the maintenance, pruning, inspection and care staff, as well as related workforce development programs.

There are severe inequities in the spatial distribution of the NYC urban forest, and thus meaningful disparities in terms of where benefits and services are provisioned and to whom. This is further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. As climate change increases the frequency and intensity of heat waves, heavy rainfall, and coastal storms, New Yorkers already burdened by environmental and socioeconomic challenges face heightened vulnerability, as outlined in the City's EJNYC report from 2024. The most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods in NYC are often home to lower-income residents and communities of color and have significantly less tree canopy, higher energy burdens, and greater exposure to air pollution (See SUFNYC Ch. 4). On average, more than 500 New Yorkers die prematurely each summer due to hot weather, with the death rate for Black New Yorkers two times higher than white New Yorkers. Extreme rainfall is becoming more frequent, overwhelming infrastructure and putting increasingly vulnerable households at risk of displacement. The cost of inaction is not theoretical – New Yorkers are experiencing climate change now, and its consequences fall disproportionately on the communities with the fewest resources to adapt.

As the Trust for Public Land and I highlighted in this recent op-ed in Politico, nature and green spaces help make the city more affordable and livable. Research published in 2018 by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service on the urban forest indicates that its benefits and services of carbon sequestration and mitigation, air pollution removal, avoided stormwater runoff, and reduced energy costs to be worth well over $260 million per year, and the cost to replace this resource if lost would be about $5.7 billion. Investments in trees and green space reduce household energy costs, mitigate heat exposure, and lower the financial burdens associated with climate risks. They reduce flooding in vulnerable areas, which helps avoid costly damage and provides direct economic savings. Parks also serve as free, accessible, proximate places to rest, play, gather, and seek relief on hot summer days – benefits that matter enormously in a high-cost city. Nature is not an add-on to affordability; it is an effective tool to reduce financial strain and improve quality of life.

The Nature Conservancy respectfully requests that the Council and the Administration work together to allocate $150 million in FY27 to start to rebuild NYC's urban forest workforce and launch the first phase of the Urban Forest Plan. This $150 million investment includes:

- Restoration, expansion, and baselining of NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) staff and programs to support ongoing operations and to grow the urban forest:
    - Expand NYC Park's capacity for tree risk management and inspections, including increasing and baselining the number of staff (climbers and pruners, foresters, and related management) and contract funding that are critical for caring for and managing the existing tree canopy across NYC. Planting new trees is critical, but recent research from The Nature Conservancy (report forthcoming) indicates that approximately 90% of the canopy growth from 2017-2021 was due to growth of existing trees – highlighting just how critical the protection and maintenance of the trees we already have is in reaching the 30% canopy goal.
    - In addition to baselining $15 million for 161 staff previously funded by Mayoral one-shots, baseline the remaining NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts that were not included in the Executive Budget (approximately $8 million for 115 positions including Parks Enforcement Patrol and Green Thumb staff) to limit turnover and sustain the operational efficiency that comes from retaining a stable workforce.
    - Provide $16 million in baselined annual funding to fully implement the Forest Management Framework for forested natural areas, including capital funding for large scale restoration and contract work, baselined expense funding for in-house staff to conduct maintenance and for materials and operating costs, and baselined expense funding to provide one trails crew per borough supporting the formalization and maintenance of NYC's nature trail network.
    - Increase the number of tree planting staff (via Capital funded Interfund Agreement) to increase the number of street trees planted from just under 18,000 in FY25 to at least 25,000 per year, with the aim of shortening the 9-year Neighborhood Tree Planting Program.
    - Increase funding for the trees and sidewalks program, to increase the City's capacity to respond to damage to sidewalks caused by tree roots.
- $1 million for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to support non-NYC Parks agencies tasked with heightened management and expansion of trees in their jurisdictions (such as NYC Housing Authority, Department of Education, the School Construction Authority, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, etc.) in

implementing initial actions of the NYC Urban Forest Plan. This includes funding for an updated citywide Lidar remote sensing data capture and analysis to monitor the canopy coverage of the urban forest and measure the growth or loss of tree canopy coverage and track progress towards the 30% goal, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed every 5 years.

In addition to these budget requests, there are several staffing-related needs that are essential in rebuilding and expanding the City's urban forest workforce, including salary increases for the advanced and technical civil service roles like Foresters and Climber & Pruners, to help attract and retain the best candidates to manage the nation's largest urban forest. We also call for expansion of City-led workforce training programs, including internal programs to train existing employees and create promotional opportunities like the NYC Parks Climber & Pruner program, as well as programs that bring in new workers to expand overall workforce capacity.

These investments are necessary to ensure that millions of New Yorkers across generations can benefit from the cooling, health, safety, and economic impacts of a thriving urban forest. They are investments in public health, in workforce stability, and in the long-term affordability and livability of our city.

I urge the Council and the Administration to seize this moment by fully funding the workforce, programs, and cross-agency coordination necessary to bring this plan to life. The Nature Conservancy stands ready to continue offering technical expertise, community partnership, and support for the City's efforts.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.

THE New York HISTORICAL

Testimony to the
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

FISCAL YEAR 2027 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARINGS
Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries & International Intergroup Relations:

Thank you for your continued service to education and the arts in New York City, and for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of The New York Historical. Founded in 1804, The New York Historical conveys the stories of the city and nation's diverse populations, expanding our understanding of who we are as Americans and how we came to be. Our work is made possible, in part, by generous funding from the Department of Cultural Affairs and the City Council, and we thank you for your vital partnership.

UNCOVERING HISTORY

Ever-rising to the challenge of bringing little or unknown histories to light, The Historical's mission is to collect, preserve, and interpret, for the broadest possible public, material relevant to US history and American democratic heritage. Current and upcoming exhibitions include:

Old Masters, New Amsterdam **(May 1, 2026 - August 30, 2026)**, a first-of-its-kind exhibition that uses the paintings of Rembrandt and his contemporaries to help envision life in the little Dutch settlement that would become New York. With works by Rembrandt van Rijn, Frans Hals, and Jan Steen, many of them never before shown in New York, the exhibition brings New Amsterdam to life, illustrating the people and policies that would eventually become the center of the American melting pot.

Democracy Matters **(June 18, 2026 - November 1, 2026)**, a tracing of the evolution of American democracy through the lens of American art. Drawing primarily from the permanent collections of The New York Historical, the exhibition explores how the concept of democracy has stretched, contracted, and shifted through key moments in the history of the nation; how competing understandings of it have come into conflict; and how those conflicts have reshaped its boundaries.

You Should Be Dancing: New York, 1976 and Beyond **(October 2, 2026 - April 4, 2027),** a transportation back to 1976 when New York City was the main stage for America's 200th birthday celebration. Despite the parades and festivals, New York was in crisis, facing near-bankruptcy, spiking crime, and a housing and drug crisis. Still, the city's youth reinvigorated American culture, introducing disco, punk and hip hop, which would forever change music history. This exhibition surrounds the visitor with music, fashion, instruments, photographs, and original documents to learn about the glitz and grit of this transformative year in New York City's history.

EXTENDING OUR REACH THROUGH EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Education is the cornerstone of our mission, and each year, The New York Historical delivers direct services that enhance history and humanities learning to over 300,000 individuals, from pre-K through post-graduate students. More than half of these individuals are New York City K-12 students and teachers to whom we provide quality education programming that builds critical thinking, literacy, and creative problem-solving skills, while encouraging knowledge of US

history, appreciation for cultural diversity, and responsible civic engagement. Leveraging our expansive American history collections and our object-based learning pedagogy, our **K-12 offerings** are designed to supplement content learned in classrooms, filling gaps in traditional history curricula by providing diverse, undertold American history narratives, enabling students to see themselves in our nation's shared past.

Through field trips, social studies enrichment workshops, workforce development opportunities for teens, teacher professional development opportunities, and digital curricula and classroom resources, The Historical enriches classroom learning and highlights the perspectives, experiences, and contributions of historic figures or populations who have traditionally been excluded along lines of race, gender, sexuality, or class. Our object- and inquiry-based pedagogy infuses art and artmaking into its education programs, drawing direct connections between history taught in schools and visual language students already know. This methodology has been proven to be more effective in reaching a wide range of students with varied learning styles, including ENL students, and trumps rote memorization in enabling students to participate more actively in their own education. Our staff conduct deep and thorough outreach to ensure our programs are promoted across all five boroughs, and that school administrators are aware of our programs' accessibility and affordability.

This commitment extends to our adult audiences, who engage with the Museum as scholars, researchers, or lifelong learners. For example, our **Citizenship Project** provides Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) seeking citizenship with free civics and American history workshops that prepare them for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization Test. Our **Master of Arts in Museum Studies** program, offered through City University of New York's School of Professional Studies (CUNY SPS), offers flexible class schedules and scholarships for individuals looking to enter the museum field to ensure all New Yorkers have access to pathways into New York's vibrant arts and culture workforce.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the year ahead, to ensure our programming reaches our youngest audiences, The Historical seeks to renovate its **DiMenna Children's History Museum** (DCHM), driving a pipeline of civics and history education opportunities that starts with children ages 2-8 and extends through adulthood. DCHM, established in 2011, translates our expansive collections and prestigious scholarly efforts into digestible early childhood programming capable of reaching the city's youngest learners. Soon, The Historical will renovate the space to include a new gallery entitled ***Building America***, featuring objects from our prized collection of American history treasures, including maps, flags, and more, alongside engaging digital interactives, games, and replica touch object, giving young learners endless opportunities to interact with history with their own hands. The new installation will explore ideas of Americanness, the nation's founding documents, and the three branches of government. Installation themes will be accompanied by life stories of historical figures who lived in New York City as children, allowing youth to make connections between themselves and the lives of past New Yorkers, including new arrivals to the country, free Black Americans, and young women.

The Historical remains grateful for the City's generous investment in our work, including Cultural Development Funds through the Department of Cultural Affairs, discretionary funding allocated by the City Council, and critical capital funds to support the physical infrastructure that supports our programming. Support from the City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs ensures that our programs have a sustainable future, and we thank you and your fellow City Council Members for your exceptional service.

For more information, please contact Donju Min, Director of Institutional Giving
donju.min@nyhistory.org
(212) 873-3400 x.300

The Noble Maritime Collection

Celebrating forty years ~ Established 1986

Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
The Noble Maritime Collection
Member of the Cultural Institutions Group

My name is Megan Beck, and I am the Executive Director of the Noble Maritime Collection, one of the newest members of the Cultural Institutions Group, located at Snug Harbor on Staten Island. I am here to urge the City Council to fully restore and baseline the remaining $20 million needed to reach the full $30 million investment in arts and culture that New York City's cultural institutions received last year. This is not a request for new funding—it is a request to maintain the same level of support provided in FY2026 and to give our institutions the stability needed to plan for the future.

New York City's cultural institutions are essential civic infrastructure as anchors for tourism, economic activity, education, and community wellbeing. At the Noble Maritime Collection, we preserve and share the stories of New York Harbor and the people whose lives and work shaped our city. Through exhibitions, school programs, family activities, public events, and pay-what-you-wish admission, we connect New Yorkers to their history and to one another.

These funds represent real jobs. The full $30 million investment supports between 325 and 350 positions across the cultural sector, professionals who live and work in neighborhoods throughout the city. Since 2019, New York's cultural sector has lost approximately 20,000 jobs. We cannot afford to lose even one more.

Beyond employment, this funding enables broader public access: additional days of service, free and low-cost programming, and partnerships with public schools and senior centers. These initiatives ensure that arts and culture remain a public good rather than a luxury, a principle central to our mission at the Noble Maritime Collection, by providing pay-what-you-wish admission year-round to the thousands of visitors, students, families, and seniors we serve each year.

We also support the Cultural Institutions Group's request for stable, predictable funding through baselining, with annual adjustments that reflect rising operating costs. Like many nonprofits, we face increasing expenses related to staffing, maintenance, and insurance. Sustainable funding allows organizations like ours to retain staff, plan responsibly, and continue serving the public effectively.

Finally, we encourage the City to continue improving the cultural capital process. Institutions like ours steward historic public assets that require ongoing investment. Greater transparency, more efficient project delivery, and long-term infrastructure planning would help cultural organizations better maintain these spaces for future generations.

We respectfully ask that you use your voice and your vote to fully restore and baseline $30 million for arts and culture in the FY2027 budget. The stability of our sector is critical to the vitality of our organizations, our communities, and our City.

Respectfully,

Megan Beck, Executive Director, The Noble Maritime Collection, meganbeck@noblemaritime.org

June 11, 2026

To: New York City Council – Committee on Finance
Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, Majority Leader Shaun Abreu, Council Members Christopher Marte, Virginia Maloney, Shirley Aldebol, Oswald Feliz, Justin Sanchez, James F. Gennaro, Phil Wong, Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Lincoln Restler, Crystal Hudson, Alexa Avilés, Darlene Mealy, Mercedes Narcisse, Frank Morano

Dear Deputy Speaker Dr. Williams, Chair Lee, Majority Leader Abreu, and members of the committee on Finance:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership, commitment to equity, and support of the arts & culture sector. I write this letter on behalf of **The People's Theatre**, a member of the **Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC), Cultural Equity Coalition (CEC), Alianza de Teatros Latinos (ATL)** and steering committee member of the **Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LxNY)**.

Rooted in Washington Heights and Inwood, **we create theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more and equitable world.** Through professional productions, high-quality free arts education programs, and advocacy, we serve over **2,500 artists and audiences annually**, rooted in the belief that **immigrants telling their own stories can change hearts, minds, and policy.**

Thanks in part to a **$25.7 million capital investment by the City**, we are on the cusp of opening **The People's Theatre: Centro Cultural Inmigrante**, a state-of-the- art, 20,000-sf center dedicated to the immigrant experience. When it opens in September 2026, Our new home will be NYC's first performing arts center dedicated to the immigrant experience and **the largest Latino theatre in New York State**.

We join our colleagues across the cultural sector in urging the Council to restore the **full $30 million in arts funding** and **establish it as a baseline investment** with **automatic cost-of-living adjustments** that keep pace with inflation.

In tandem with the baseline funding, we ask that the Council increase the **Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative** to **$8 million.** The CTC Initiative was the first City Council cultural initiative and helped pave the way for later initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative

and Cultural After School Adventures (CASA). Yet despite supporting 65 organizations across New York City, **the initiative has not received an increase since 2021,** and the funding for the subsequent cultural initiatives has outpaced this foundational initiative. **This funding is vital, especially for legacy Black and Indigenous theatres** that are excluded from other pockets of funding like the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. To add to it, many of these organizations who are core to NYC's cultural history have seen significant reductions in or have been zeroed out of DCLA Cultural Development Fund (CDF) grants in recent years. **This modest $2.3M increase will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30% and serve as a Cost-of-Living Increase after being stagnant for 5 years.** We also ask that the Council **restore flexibility** so organizations can use these funds to **sustain their operations, build capacity, and support workforce development**. This allows us to serve New Yorkers more richly, more abundantly.

Lastly, with an eye to future stability, we ask that the Council set a target of **$20 million in cultural funding** per City Council district: this would be a **notable, brave step towards equity while remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.**

With these changes, you would see **investments with immediate returns**. **Culture in NYC generates 13% of the city's economic activity!** The People's Theatre and our colleague arts organizations of color support local businesses, education, public safety, tourism, and neighborhood vitality. As our leaders, we know that you care about equity and our city's flourishing. We respectfully ask for you to translate that commitment into sustained investment in the organizations that advance it every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Aya Esther Hayashi, PhD
Development Director
aya@thepeoplestheatre.org

New York City Council - Committee on Finance

Deputy Speaker Dr. Williams, Chair Lee, Majority Leader Abreu, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Leticia Cortes Ortiz, and I am the Youth & Family Advocate for **The People's Theatre**, a member of the **Coalition of Theatres of Color, Cultural Equity Coalition,** and steering committee member of the **Latinx Arts Consortium of New York**. At The People's Theatre, **we create theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more just and equitable world.** Like several of our colleagues, we provide multilingual, intergenerational programming and services to our Uptown community, and **they trust us**. For us, theatre is the entry point into the work of social justice.

Thanks in part to a capital investment of **$25.7 million** by the City of New York, the New York City Council, and former Manhattan Borough President Levine, we will open **The People's Theatre: Centro Cultural Inmigrante** in September 2026. Our new home will be NYC's first performing arts center dedicated to the immigrant experience and **the largest (by square footage) Latino theatre in New York State**.

Today, we join our colleagues across the cultural sector in urging the Council to restore the **full $30 million in arts funding** and establish it as a baseline investment with automatic cost-of-living adjustments that keep pace with inflation.

In tandem with the baseline funding, we ask that the Council increase the **Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative** to **$8 million.** The CTC Initiative was the first City Council cultural initiative and helped pave the way for later initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative and CASA. Yet despite supporting 65 organizations across New York City, **the initiative has not received an increase since 2021**. This funding is necessary and vital, especially for notable and legacy cultural organizations of color that have seen significant reductions in or have been zeroed out of DCLA funding in recent years. Additionally, we ask that a target of **$20 million in cultural funding** per City Council district be set: this would be a notable, brave step towards equity while remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.

With these changes, you would see investments with immediate returns. Culture in NYC generates **13% of the city's economic activity!** The People's Theatre and our colleague arts organizations of color support local businesses, tourism, education, public safety, and neighborhood vitality. As our leaders, we know that you care about equity and our city's flourishing. We respectfully ask for you to translate that commitment into sustained investment in the organizations that advance it every day. Thank you for your time and consideration.

June 11, 2026

To: New York City Council – Committee on Finance
Deputy Speaker Dr. Nantasha Williams, Chair Linda Lee, Majority Leader Shaun Abreu, Council Members Christopher Marte, Virginia Maloney, Shirley Aldebol, Oswald Feliz, Justin Sanchez, James F. Gennaro, Phil Wong, Selvena N. Brooks-Powers, Lincoln Restler, Crystal Hudson, Alexa Avilés, Darlene Mealy, Mercedes Narcisse, Frank Morano

Dear Deputy Speaker Dr. Williams, Chair Lee, Majority Leader Abreu, and members of the committee on Finance:

Thank you for your steadfast leadership, commitment to equity, and support of the arts & culture sector. I write this letter as the Executive Artistic Director for **The People's Theatre**, City Council District 10's largest performing arts organization and a proud member of the **Coalition of Theatres of Color (CTC), Cultural Equity Coalition (CEC), Alianza de Teatros Latinos (ATL)**. I also serve on the steering committee of the **Latinx Arts Consortium of New York (LxNY)**.

For over 17 years, we have **created theatre with and for immigrant communities to build a more equitable world.** Through professional productions, high-quality free arts education programs for children and adults, and advocacy, we serve thousands of **artists and audiences annually**, rooted in the belief that **immigrants telling their own stories can change hearts, minds, and policy.**

Thanks in part to a **$25.7 million capital investment by the City**, we are weeks away from the opening of **The People's Theatre: Centro Cultural Inmigrante**, a state-of-the- art, 20,000-sf center dedicated to the immigrant experience. When it opens in September 2026, our new home will be **NYC's first performing arts center dedicated to immigrants** and **the largest Latino theatre in New York State**.

The opening of The People' Theatre's new home in September comes with huge growth for our organization. **We expect to serve over 25,000 New Yorkers a year**, which will almost **double our expenses** with an unprecedented impact on workforce development for our community. At The People's Theatre, we are actively developing **workforce training opportunities for youth** and **new jobs for local residents** in the areas of **hospitality, front of house, facilities, and technical theatre**. Building **a home built by and for local and immigrant communities** is core to our mission, and **we are proud that our space is over 66% MWBE, immigrant, and locally built.** We look forward to partnering with the City Council to expand the creation of strong, new jobs for New Yorkers.

Additionally, we join our colleagues across the cultural sector in urging the Council to restore the **full $30 million in arts funding** and **establish it as a baseline investment** with **automatic cost-of-living adjustments** that keep pace with inflation. In tandem with the baseline funding, we ask that the Council increase the **Coalition of Theatres of Color Initiative** to **$8 million.** The CTC Initiative was the first City Council cultural initiative and helped pave the way for later initiatives such as the Cultural Immigrant Initiative and Cultural After School Adventures (CASA). Yet despite supporting 65 organizations across New York City, **the initiative has not received an increase since 2021,** and the funding for the subsequent cultural initiatives has outpaced this foundational initiative. **This funding is vital, especially for legacy Black and Indigenous theatres** that are excluded from other pockets of funding like the Cultural Immigrant Initiative. To add to it, many of these organizations who are core to NYC's cultural history have seen significant reductions in or have been zeroed out of DCLA Cultural Development Fund (CDF) grants in recent years. **This modest $2.3M increase will boost CTC organizations' grants by nearly 30% and serve as a Cost-of-Living Increase after being stagnant for 5 years.** We also ask that the Council **restore flexibility** so organizations can use these funds to **sustain their operations, build capacity, and support workforce development**. This allows us to serve New Yorkers more richly, more abundantly.

Lastly, with an eye to future stability, we ask that the Council set a target of **$20 million in cultural funding** per City Council district: this would be a **notable, brave step towards equity while remaining under 1% of the City's total budget.**

The People's Theatre and our colleague arts organizations of color support local businesses, education, public safety, tourism, and neighborhood vitality. As our leaders, we know that you care about equity and our city's flourishing. We respectfully ask for you to translate that commitment into sustained investment for The People's Theatre and the cultural organizations that advance it every day.

¡Gracias y Pa'lante!



Mino Lora
Executive Artistic Director
mino@thepeoplestheatre.org

347 EAST 10TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10009| 646-292-7710 | info@wpaonline.org

TESTIMONY OF LUISA TAVERAS, INTERIM CEO OF THE WOMEN'S PRISON ASSOCIATION
FY27 EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING
JUNE 10, 2027

The Women's Prison Association (WPA) is one of 12 nonprofit members of the ATI/Reentry Coalition. The Coalition's ecosystem of community-based alternatives reduce incarceration in New York City and provide pathways to healing and opportunity for communities disproportionately harmed by mass incarceration. Coalition members bring decades of experience across all five boroughs, sharing best practices and delivering programs that fully engage and support diverse participants.

Founded in 1845, WPA is the nation's first organization dedicated to serving women before, during, and after incarceration. Our approach is personal. We address the root causes of systems involvement, know the data, and are focused on the needs and nuances of individuals. Recognizing that women's criminal behavior can be addressed more effectively outside incarceration.

WPA launched the nation's first home-based diversion program for women. There is overwhelming evidence that women are best supported at home with their families. As the incarceration rates of women increase, WPA's vision to replace incarceration with high-quality, robust community-based solutions is more urgent than ever.

We applaud the restoration of funding for Alternatives to Incarceration programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, including increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments represent an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

At the same time, additional investment is needed to bring these programs to scale. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the Coalition's services generated more than $60 million in savings for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable our 12 coalition organizations to serve more New Yorkers and further expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

WPA requests $1,095,20 or a $200,000 increase in discretionary funding to implement the next phase of its strategic plan: advancing a comprehensive, high-quality approach to supporting justice-impacted women at home within a coordinated network of care.

347 EAST 10TH STREET NEW YORK, NY 10009| 646-292-7710 | info@wpaonline.org

This funding will allow WPA to sustain and strengthen critical components of its service model that are not fully covered by contract reimbursement but are essential to clients' success, including flexible care management, trauma-informed clinical support, and deep coordination across courts, providers, and city agencies.

We anticipate using these discretionary funds to strengthen and expand WPA's Care Management Department by supporting both current and new staff positions. These investments will help build the infrastructure necessary to meet the growing needs of participants and ensure the continued delivery of high-quality, participant-centered services.

Specifically, the funds will support the hiring of an additional Case Manager for our Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) program, a Senior Case Manager to strengthen our community-based programming, and advancement opportunities for existing staff members as they take on increased leadership responsibilities. These strategic staffing investments will enhance our capacity to provide individualized support, improve supervision and program coordination, and position the department for sustainable growth.

By investing in these priorities, WPA can continue to advance a replicable, community-based and gender-responsive alternative to incarceration that is grounded in lived experience and centered on women's needs. As WPA enters a new chapter, this funding is essential to supporting our work to have an impact for women, families, and communities leading to true public safety and thriving.

Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria

The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria
23-15 Newtown Avenue
Astoria, NY 11102

Dr. Allison Persad, Principal
Michael Cohen, Assistant Principal
Alexandra Gialaboukis, Assistant Principal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing with urgency and deep conviction to express my **unequivocal support for the continuation of our longstanding partnership with Girls Inc.**, which has been an integral part of our school community since 2014.

For over a decade, Girls Inc. has not simply operated as an after-school provider within our building—they are **woven into the very fabric of our school community**. Their presence is felt every day through their unwavering commitment to empowering our students, supporting our families, and reinforcing the core academic and social-emotional priorities that define our mission, vision, and values as a 6–12 school in Queens.

Girls Inc. has consistently delivered **high-quality, research-based programming** that fosters leadership, confidence, and academic success—particularly for our young people who benefit most from sustained, culturally responsive support. Their staff build authentic relationships with students and families, demonstrating a level of trust, continuity, and care that cannot be replicated quickly or superficially by a new provider.

This partnership has resulted in:

- Strong student engagement and retention in after-school programming
- Meaningful family involvement and support structures
- Alignment with our school-day priorities, including social-emotional learning and college and career readiness
- A safe, empowering environment that uplifts student voice and leadership

It is for these reasons that I must express serious concern regarding the recent decision **not to renew Girls Inc. as our COMPASS provider**.

At no point was there a clearly communicated or collaborative vetting process involving school leadership regarding a replacement Community-Based Organization (CBO). There was no transparent ranking, comparative evaluation, or meaningful engagement with our school to assess **alignment with our unique needs, priorities, or student population**.

As the instructional leader of this school, I must state clearly:

We do not agree that this change will serve the best interests of our students, families, or community.

Replacing a deeply rooted, highly effective partner like Girls Inc. without a deliberate, inclusive process risks:

- Disrupting critical relationships built over many years
- Undermining trust with families and students
- Introducing programs that may not align with our school's culture or priorities
- Compromising the quality and impact of after-school services

Girls Inc. is not interchangeable with another provider. Their work is **essential—not supplemental—to our ecosystem of support**. They have demonstrated sustained, measurable impact and have earned the trust of our entire school community.

I respectfully urge the DYCD COMPASS Unit to **reconsider this decision and allow for the renewal of Girls Inc. at our site**, or at minimum, engage in a transparent and collaborative process that meaningfully includes school leadership in determining the best aligned provider for our students.

Our students deserve continuity, quality, and care. Our families deserve trusted partners. And our school deserves to have its voice recognized in decisions that directly affect our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Allison Persad
Principal

Young Women's Leadership School of Manhattan

140 W. 102nd Street, New York, NY 10025
Phone: (212) 678-7390
Fax: (212) 674-7391
Colleen McGeehan, Principal
Medina del Castillo and Alexa Allen, Assistant Principals

June 8, 2026

Dear City Council,

I am a school administrator at The Young Women's Leadership School of Manhattan, a school with an economic needs index of 87%. I have used versions of the New Visions Portal for 17 years, and I cannot imagine doing the work of supporting students without it. **On behalf of our school community, I beg you not to remove Portal funding from the budget.**

During a recent mandatory academic policy training, I was reminded that the DOE recommends Insight for tracking student progress. I honestly don't know how anyone relies on it. It lacks the most essential functions—especially the ability to record interventions and share them with staff. As a principal, I cannot afford to use a system that is incomplete and not user-unfriendly.

The Portal, by contrast, is a daily tool that gives us accurate, real-time information and allows us to plan and track individualized supports. We use it to identify graduation pathways, monitor Regents needs, program tutoring, track attendance, and share notes across teams. Our quarterly color-coded attendance reports to families come directly from the Portal and have helped us shift attendance patterns this year which has been a huge win.

The mock Regents tool is powerful and becoming integral to our end of year Regents prep. As a co-teacher in Algebra, I rely on its detailed, standard-level data to reteach concepts and group students effectively. I've trained half our Regents teachers how to do the same and planned to do more in school year 26-27

We use the system daily and recently prioritized training all our advisors on its use so they can use it in their academic conversations. We want and need more of this system and would be at a huge disadvantage without it.

Please maintain funding for this essential tool. I am happy to answer any questions. Please reach out via cmcgeehan@schools.nyc.gov or our school number 212-678-7390

Sincerely,



Colleen McGeehan

Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria

May 2026

TO: Respected Leadership of the Mamdani-Samuels Administration, Councilwoman Tiffany Cabán, Assemblymember Diana Moreno NYCPS and DYCD Colleagues

My name is Gayathri Iyer, School Counselor of over eight years at **The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) of Astoria (30Q286)**, a school imbued with the exact working family fuel that powered the Mayor's inspiring campaign promises, especially that of affordable exemplary childcare. I am writing with great concern at the news of the potential loss of our longstanding afterschool partner, **Girls Inc. of New York City**, with a specific and symbolic plea to reverse this decision and retain this invaluable resource to our staff, and students enrolled from all areas of Queens.

My relationship to this request relies on the memory of my own experience as a "latch key" afterschool kid with the once rare profile of a working second income mom in a far off town, in a far off time when a parent who wasn't home to fix an afterschool snack and activity was treated as a personal family failure. It is with healing and pride that as a counselor **I hear the sacred daily stories of young women almost all raised by working moms and teams of caregivers, girls normed to aspire to college and career ambitions where the grind for the whole family never dares to end before 5PM, which deserves due dignity and sustained systemic support.**

I came to work in schools, and TYWLS in particular first as afterschool educator at Museum of Moving Image partnered here, where arts and after-hours proved inextricable to working with the whole child and whole school community, and I still **serve as a citywide consultant to teaching artists and nonprofit on the social emotional best practices of these kinds programmatic collaborations**. Now, as a District 30 solo

parent working for the city's largest childcare provider (NYCPS) who can not live without aftercare to fulfill my union hours and local commute, **I have never been more convinced that the key to family welfare is a quality afterschool provider in high functioning symbiosis with regular school day culture.**

This cohesion for me as a parent and educator means the sweet spot of a great end of day transfer and safe pickup protocol, exposure to all the extracurriculars parents can't afford in boutique weekend classes, and an empathetic, trained, organized staff with structure and philosophy that has all the responsibility of school, with all the frills and fun that kids need in the fuzzy hours after seven demanding class periods. **After years in witness, Girls Inc is the exemplar** I sought for my own kid *(*I landed for PreK aftercare in Superkickers at 30Q069, also a program to be preserved and funded)*, where kids light up to see staffers when the enter the building, and look forward to elective-type **offerings that echo what we do in project-based learning with a rigorous middle school accelerated curriculum by day**. There have been over three Program Director transitions (shout out to Soukeyna Abbott, Jazmin Navarro, Siobhan Vega, Adina Gordon) in Girls Inc at TYWLS in my time, and in a consistency I've rarely seen at any nonprofit or educational institution, **the core ethos of care and competency has stayed at the highest level**, all from leaders with strong education and social work certifications and related networks.

Their staff goes above and beyond to align to things that are not transferable to another provider: our emergency building response team roles, workflow at our community events like Multicultural Day with their own booths, respect for our classroom facilities and material resources, strategic staffing, and even training in our intricate internal grading and student anecdotal systems so an incident from the day never lingers into a new issue into the early evening. As a counselor, knowing that students go home hours after I do with their behavior monitored and supported to de-escalation and distress tolerance is priceless, especially in the era when the **competing afterschool activity is an exploitative overstimulating doomscroll** at the (however well-appointed) deli. Girls Inc is full of optimal social-emotional, arts, academic, and vocational experiences from jewelry making to social media literacy to dedicated homework support for kids who don't always have the needed extra desk space or snack pantry at home to set those conditions. Their

every opportunity from ice skating, to Broadway showgoing, to sports, to body image workshops, to inclusive holiday celebrations, are exactly **suited to our students' requests for experiences they may not otherwise receive, bolstering our diverse girls empowerment mission**. Their programs are delivered by trauma-informed staff with classroom and administrative management skills that are failsafe and part of our students' reasons for daily attendance and academic growth. **Their practices are accessible to all levels of learners, creative, flexible, communicative, and visible** as reliable red shirt staff hired from communities our students belong to and identify with, even **hiring our own high school students as paid and growing interns** in a **beautiful sisterhood continuum**.

Additionally, one Girls Inc staffer who used to visit my office to liaise healthy conflict resolution or rapport with 6th graders in her afterschool group came back two years later after a formal teaching degree to become a now tenured member of our special education full time school staff in a time where teacher recruitment is challenging. **These are the non-line item benefits of DYCD and NYCPS partnerships as the manifest of childcare for all, and with intention.** In our incredible feminist faction of working families in Queens, **afterschool *IS* school**, and re-assigning Girls Inc is like taking a horn off our unicorn, or in the words of our students, cringe, sus, and lowkey messed up.

We respectfully urge that you do not crash out and take our Girls Inc homies from our home, because the best young women in the best district in the best city, at the most dysregulated afternoon hours of the tweenage day will pull up on you demanding these incredible stakeholders, mentors, and other-moms back in their lives. Our Girls Inc team every day at the cafeteria gathering chants a fitting call and response that quiets a room to direct attention to the task: **"Bring it back, bring it back, bring it back!"** On behalf of our students, we hope you understood the assignment.

Sincerely,



Gayathri Iyer

Public Testimony of Transportation Alternatives
City Council Finance Committee Hearing on the Executive Budget on Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Good Morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Executive City Budget. My name is Corey Hannigan, and I am the Policy & Government Relations Director for Safe Streets at Transportation Alternatives.

New Yorkers deserve a budget that reflects how they actually move through our city and one that meets the urgent safety, transit, and accessibility challenges we face today. The vast majority of New Yorkers walk, bike, or take transit, yet our city investments have not always matched that reality.

We applaud the Mamdani Administration's commitment to building streets that are safer, more accessible, and truly world-class. But that vision will only become reality if it is backed by sustained investment in DOT and the safety projects that New Yorkers have been demanding for years.

During the previous administration, our city often faced the same problem: DOT lacked the resources and staffing necessary to meet the goals laid out in key city blueprints like the Streets Plan. New Yorkers were promised safer streets, faster buses, better public spaces, but those promises were often constrained by insufficient investment.

With less support, there are fewer safety projects, street transformations, and intersection upgrades. We'll never know how many New Yorkers were killed or seriously injured because DOT didn't have the resources it needed.

Today is a new administration and a new era, and we're encouraged to see Mayor Mamdani's commitment to initially invest $34.9 million annually in safe and world-class streets, growing to a $65.1 million investment by 2030. We hope that these investments will be sufficient for DOT to meet and exceed the streets plan benchmarks, including the unmet targets from the previous administration, to transform our city into one where bus riders aren't trapped in traffic, people on bikes have safe and protected rides end to end, and New Yorkers will have more and better sidewalk space for walking.

As the city considers where to direct these investments, two immediate priorities stand out: hardened daylighting and expanding our Open Streets Program.

Hardened daylighting is an incredibly effective tool to prevent crashes and save lives. To meet the scale of need across New York City, we are calling for $15 million in Fiscal Year 2027 for hardened daylighting alone. Hardened daylighting is the practice of repurposing the parking spaces closest to an intersection to prevent parking and increase visibility — the exact infrastructure solution that could have prevented the crashes that killed nine-year-old Kamari Hughes and nine-year-old Dolma Naadhun. In 2025, just 0.8% of NYC's intersections received hardened daylighting.

Open Streets need funding to survive. The current $2 million annual allocation is simply not enough to sustain the program or keep pace with rising costs. The City must also establish a reliable reimbursement timeline for Open Street partners, many of whom are grassroots organizations and volunteers advancing public space improvements with little to no financial support. New Yorkers should not have to personally shoulder the costs of operating public infrastructure.

We recognize that achieving these goals requires identifying new revenue sources. Fortunately, we have an opportunity sitting at our doorstep: expanding metered parking. Today, only 2.5% of our parking spaces are metered — far below peer cities like San Francisco, LA, or Boston. Expanding metered parking on commercial corridors would better manage our curb space while generating substantial new revenue. Implementing demand-based metered parking on just 25% of eligible commercial corridors would raise over four billion dollars annually — more than enough to fund the streets plan or make buses fast and free.

For too long, DOT has been expected to deliver transformative projects with inadequate resources and support. We are happy to see that pattern begin to change with the current administration. The greatest city in the world deserves the greatest streets in the world, and that requires sustained, ambitious investment. By increasing dedicated funding to DOT and pairing it with smart revenue solutions, New York City can build a transportation system for the future, not one catching up with the past. Thank you so much for your time and the opportunity to testify today.

https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=1415407&GUID=87344321-8CE7-4CA6-8E08-6F8A0D6179B0&Options=info%7C&Search=

Slush:

Every year, cars and trucks kill and seriously injure New Yorkers, disrupt families, burden our healthcare system, and cost our city billions of dollars — traffic fatalities and injuries cost New Yorkers an estimated $3 billion annually. Investing in Vision Zero is not only the right thing to do, it is fiscally responsible.

June 10, 2026

Dear Chairperson Lee and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Taige Rambarran, and I am an Environmental Educator and Community Outreach Coordinator at Trees New York. Thank you, Chair Lee and Finance Committee members, for the opportunity to write to you today.

For 50 years, Trees New York has been committed to our mission to plant, preserve, and protect New York City's urban forest. Our mission remains as vital today as it did five decades ago. Through our education programs and grassroots community engagement, we have successfully expanded the city's tree canopy, a vital resource for all as New York continues to experience climate emergencies such as extreme heat and flooding. As a member of the Forest for All NYC coalition, we aim to continue advocating for a just and equitable NYC urban forest. While we are grateful to see $15M allocated for baselined positions in the Executive Budget and applaud the Mayor for publishing the city's first Urban Forest Plan, we kindly ask the Council and Administration to work together to deliver the Mayor Mamdani's campaign promise to double the NYC Parks budget.

This funding would ensure the continuation of programs that are essential to protecting and expanding our city's urban forest. Recently, I collaborated with Councilmember Sandy Nurse in District 37 to host a Citizen Pruner course. During the planning process, there were concerns about whether we would be able to fill all available spots without extensive outreach. However, the level of public interest was overwhelming as the course reached full capacity within just ten minutes of registration opening. Community engagement is at an all-time high, because as residents are confronted with relentless heatwaves and the burdens of excess stormwater from flash floods, New Yorkers understand more than ever that trees are critical infrastructure.

As Citizen Pruners, New Yorkers are licensed to prune street trees, but this work goes beyond simply trimming branches. Through my experience as an educator, I am reminded of how passionate New Yorkers are about their city and its environment, from their observations of the lack of green spaces in historically disadvantaged communities to their determination to share this knowledge with those around them.

What I have learned from my students is that a healthy urban forest is a cause that all New Yorkers care about, as they understand how vital the city's trees are for the city they love and call home. The urban forest cannot sustain itself; it needs stewards such as myself, the Citizen Pruners, and well-trained Parks staff to maintain its health and ensure that trees reach maturity so that we may all benefit. Thank you for taking the time to read and understand why the Urban Forest Plan requires full funding to protect, care for, and expand the tree canopy of NYC.

With appreciation,

Taige Rambarran
Environmental Educator and Community Outreach Coordinator, Trees New York

Trinity Church

6/5/26- Trinity Church Testimony – Committees on Finance and Mental Health & Substance Abuse - FY27 Executive Budget

To Chairs Lee and Caban and Members of the Committees on Finance and Mental Health & Substance Abuse:

My name is Natasha Lifton, Managing Director of External Affairs and Special Projects at Trinity Church in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for this Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget hearing.

Trinity Church is an Episcopal church in Lower Manhattan with a congregation of more than 2,600 parishioners from all five boroughs, representing a diverse range of racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Beyond our ministry, Trinity advances faith and social justice through direct services, grantmaking, and advocacy.

We are pleased to see the Mamdani administration dedicate $40.2 million toward the creation of a new Office of Community Safety, an important first step to improve how the city responds to New Yorkers experiencing mental health crises. We are also grateful for the administration's recognition of the need to enhance and expand the Behavioral Health Assistance Response Division (B-HEARD), which dispatches trained mental health professionals in response to 911 calls involving individuals experiencing emotional distress.

As faith leaders and fellow New Yorkers, we believe these investments represent meaningful progress toward a more compassionate and effective public safety system. This issue has particular resonance for the Trinity Church community. In October 2016, Trinity parishioner Deborah Danner was tragically killed by police officers in her apartment while experiencing a mental health crisis.

We were encouraged when the B-HEARD program was first piloted but believe the program has not yet reached its full potential. With the new administration's creation of the Office of Community Safety, New York City now has an opportunity to strengthen the program's implementation, improve coordination between agencies, and ensure more mental health crisis calls are directed toward trained care professionals, including peers, minimizing the role of law enforcement.

The inclusion of peer workers in the B-HEARD program, specifically individuals with lived experience navigating mental health challenges, is a critical best practice. Peer support workers can help build trust, de-escalate crises, and connect New Yorkers to long-term care and stability. We also call for the following improvements to the program:

- Operate the program 24/7 and expand it citywide, starting with communities with the highest rates of 911 calls related to emotional crises.

- Change catchment areas from police precincts to community health districts as a way to delineate geographic boundaries and enhance the ability to connect crisis response teams to the existing continuum of services for those in crisis.

- Ensure that all mental health crisis calls are handled by 988 dispatchers who have expertise in mental health care, based on direct calls or calls forwarded by 911 or 311, with teams to be dispatched by 988 operators. There should also be the ability for the public to request B-HEARD services directly, as well as training for 911 operators to support interoperability.

- Invest not only in robust, traditional mental health services, but also in “third spaces” such as crisis stabilization centers, support and connection centers, crisis respite centers, and clubhouses.

We encourage the administration and Council to continue investing in community-based mental health responses that prioritize care, dignity, and safety.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Ahmed Lashuel, Transportation and Environmental Justice Fellow
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings
10 June 2026

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee on Finance today. My name is Ahmed Lashuel, and I'm a summer fellow at Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit that works towards transportation and environmental justice in the New York City metro area, and I attend the City College of New York, in Councilmember Abreu's district. I'm also a daily user of our streets and sidewalks, so I want to bring attention to the state of our bike infrastructure outside of the city's wealthiest urban neighborhoods.

In December of 2021 the DOT committed to building 50 miles of protected bike lanes per year, and I understand that commitment extends into fiscal year 2027. In addition, the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice charges the DOT with the task of reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries in certain historically underserved neighborhoods. That includes Washington Heights, where I live. Our district, Community Board 12, is home to part of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway—and the Greenway system is incredible, and hopefully the city will continue to expand it—but as for our streets, where we live, work, and pray, there are just 2 miles of protected bike lanes, by my count. And of course, that's just Washington Heights. How many miles of protected bike lanes are there on the streets of East Flatbush, or Canarsie, or Brownsville, or Kingsbridge, or Grand Concourse? I'll tell you the answer: it's less than one mile, in all those neighborhoods combined.

A protected bike lane is one of the most effective tools at our disposal for preserving life and promoting healthier, more sustainable transportation, and the DOT's own polling tells us that a majority of New Yorkers want them on their streets. The richest city in the richest country in the world should have had no issue building 50 miles of bike lanes in a year. I watched the testimony given by Commissioner Flynn a couple weeks ago, and I do trust him to lead the DOT well. That being said, the executive budget sets aside $11.2 million for bike lanes in fiscal year 2027. We need to see a comprehensive plan on how that money will be spent, how many miles of bike lanes we can expect to see, and where those bike lanes will go.

Andrew Manoo, Transportation and Environmental Justice Summer Fellow
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Testimony: New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings - Finance
June 10th, 2026

Good morning. My name is Andrew Manoo. I am a Summer Fellow at Tri-State Transportation Campaign and an Electrical Engineering student at the City College of New York. Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable transportation, equitable planning policies and practices, and strong communities throughout the New York City metropolitan area. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a comment to the Committee on Finance on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget.

Following the recent DOT budget hearing, I want to highlight two priorities. Faster streetlight repairs, and fairer red light camera placement. DOT's $331 million investment in streetlights and sensors shows a strong commitment to safety. In FY25, repairs took an average of 5.3 days, up from 3 days in 2021. DOT blames coordination with Con Edison and aging infrastructure for these delays, but working streetlights are too important to let repair times keep getting worse. We urge DOT to set a clear repair time target as part of this investment.

That same concern for safety brings me to red light cameras. Expanding the red light camera program to 600 intersections is a great step forward, but these cameras only help the communities that receive them. DOT says it places cameras based on crash data and found no racial or economic differences in where they are located. Yet when asked whether communities were benefiting equally, the data was not readily available. I've felt the difference these cameras make on Atlantic Avenue, where I cross more safely now. We urge DOT to make the racial and economic analysis behind these placement decisions more accessible.

I appreciate the work DOT has done to improve safety across the city. But safer streets only work when their benefits are shared by everyone. Whether it is restoring streetlights quickly or ensuring transparency in red light camera placement, every New Yorker deserves to move through the city safely, regardless of where they live.

Thank you.

Grey D'Orazio, Summer Fellow
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing
June 10th, 2026

Good morning. My name is Grey D'Orazio, and I am a summer fellow with Tri-State Transportation Campaign. TSTC is a non-profit advocacy and policy organization dedicated to improved mobility, accessibility, affordability, and sustainable transportation systems in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a comment to the Committee of Finance on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget.

The maintenance of public roads impacts everyone who uses them, it is important that it remains accessible to all populations of people. The amount of resurfacing and pothole repair has been trending down in recent years, according to the Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Plan Department of Transportation Budget Overview, this decline does not represent a lack of potholes but can likely be attributed to the 704 vacant positions at the DOT (11.8% vacancy rate) and lack of staffing necessary to complete the required jobs [from the same report]. More of the funding needs to be put towards filling these vacant positions and ensuring that potholes are being filled in all communities. This would increase the efficiency of the DOT at dealing with the potholes, improving the safety on the road.

I live in the Rockaways and can attest to the large number of potholes scattered throughout the peninsula. After watching the Meeting of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure I went on a 60 block bike ride from 129th street to 69th street along Rockaway Beach Blvd the following is what I noticed:

- In the shared car/bike lane from 116th to 108th, near the curb and at intersections the road becomes rough and potentially unsafe to ride on for bikes. Some of these spots require pulling further into the middle of the lane and closer to the cars [this shared car/bike lane is along a two way with parking permitted on one side]
- In the last meeting potholes present at the entrance to the YMCA parking lot were mentioned, the bulk of the issue at the parking lot entrance was addressed but, there were smaller divots left and the potholes up and down the street were left untouched, to be specific there were two groupings of large potholes (73rd street)
- Multiple areas of potholes were present in crosswalks, this makes the path inaccessible/more difficult to traverse for disabled people, like those in wheelchairs, and the elderly with walkers or people with strollers.
- The size of the potholes got worse going past 104th st. Are these potholes being dealt with equitably across each neighborhood?

These were just some of the issues noticed on this bike ride. All of these issues impact the safety of populations using these roads, cyclists, pedestrians using the crosswalks, public transit riders, and those in cars deserve roads free of these obstructions. More of the funding should be dedicated to ensuring roads are free of these hazards and safe for all users. Thank you for your time and consideration.

TSTC@TSTC.ORG

231 W 29TH STREET, SUITE 608
NEW YORK, NY 10001

(212) 268-7474

Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Ali Goldfarb and I am the Trails Program Manager for Trust for Public Land in New York.

Trust for Public Land's mission is to connect people to nature, ensuring that everyone, regardless of zip code, has access to the outdoors. Across New York City, we work to expand access to parks, trails, and green space, particularly in neighborhoods that have historically lacked this critical infrastructure. We transform asphalt schoolyards into neighborhood parks, repurpose underutilized land, and conserve land, like in Staten Island when we protected Pouch Camp.

Today, I want to thank the City of New York for its continued commitment to advancing the QueensWay, particularly the first section of the project, the Metropolitan Hub. The planned ground breaking of the Met Hub represents a major milestone after years of planning, advocacy, and community engagement. We are grateful to the City, NYC Parks, NYCEDC, elected officials, and community partners for their leadership in moving this transformative project toward construction.

Once complete, the Met Hub will provide new opportunities for recreation, outdoor learning, active transportation, and community gathering while serving as the first tangible step toward the larger vision of the QueensWay, a 3.5-mile linear park and trail connecting neighborhoods in Queens. For many residents, especially in communities with limited access to parks and open space, this investment will create safer connections to nature, recreation, and local businesses.

At Trust for Public Land, we remain deeply committed to engaging communities along the corridor. Community input shaped the original QueensWay plan through hundreds of stakeholder meetings, and that commitment continues today through public tours, cleanups, school programs, volunteer events, and partnerships with local organizations. As the project moves forward, we will continue working to ensure residents are informed, involved, and have meaningful opportunities to help shape the future of the QueensWay.

While we celebrate the progress of the Met Hub, we also encourage the City to continue advancing future sections of the QueensWay. Completing additional phases will improve access to Forest Park, strengthen connections between neighborhoods, and bring the full benefits of the project to hundreds of thousands of Queens residents.

Thank you again for your leadership and investment in the QueensWay. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the City and the community to bring this vision to life.

MICHAEL:
Good morning Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for giving me the chance to speak today.

My name is Michael Sasy, and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills. I am here today to share why the QueensWay is important to me, my school, and my community.

My school is located right next to where the first section of the QueensWay, the Metro Hub, is being built, so this project is important to me and many other students. Right now, there are 3.5 miles of abandoned railway that are not being used. The QueensWay would turn that space into something that students, families, and community members can enjoy every day. It would create a place where people can walk, run, bike, and spend time outdoors.

As a track athlete, I know how important it is to have safe places to train and stay active. The QueensWay would give students like me a safe, car-free place to run outside of school practices. It could be used for training, recovery runs, walking, or just staying active on weekends and during school breaks. Not every student has access to athletic facilities outside of school, so having a free public space where anyone can exercise would make a big difference.

Running is also about more than fitness. It helps people manage stress and clear their minds. Having more green space near our school would give students a place to relax, enjoy nature, and take a break from the pressures of school. It could also bring the community together through events, fitness programs, and activities for people of all ages.

I appreciate the City's investment in building the first phase of the QueensWay, the Metro Hub. This project will create new opportunities for recreation, improve our neighborhood, and make better use of a space that has sat unused for many years.

I believe the QueensWay will make our community healthier, greener, and more connected. I respectfully ask the Council to continue supporting funding for this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HARMAN:
Good evening, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Harman Kaur, and I am a student at MELS. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Last week, I co-hosted a Town Hall at my school where panelists talked about the impact that the QueensWay could have on the community, showing my peers what the abandoned railway track could turn into… a great park! As a student and community member, I care about having safe and welcoming spaces where people can walk, exercise and socialize with one another. My classmates said they were excited about a place where they can hang out, meet people and play sports!

In my neighborhood, there are not enough green spaces where families or students can safely enjoy the outdoors. If we have access to parks and walking paths, it can support our physical health and our mental well-being! This can also strengthen community connections. I love to go for walks while listening to music or going for walks with my friends to admire flowers or to bond. These activities make me feel super calm and peaceful. And when you see other people doing the same thing, it proves you're not alone.

The Queensway could also provide possible opportunities for learning, volunteering, exercise, and to explore new hobbies. Funding is important because it will help turn this vision into a reality for future generations.

I politely ask our city leaders to support funding for the QueensWay project. Thank you for your time.

SHIRLEY:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Shirley Penafiel , and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

I am here to thank the City of New York for their support of the QueensWay, a project that will directly benefit my school and my community.

I think the QueensWay is important because as a student the amount of work I get can be stressful, and whenever I feel overwhelmed I go to a park. Seeing the birds and flowers and spending time with my friends and family there help decrease that streess because for a couple hours, I have a place to escape.

I am excited about the QueensWay because it's going to be a place where me and my friends, family and people I care about can spend time together and have fun. This park can help me stay active in the outdoors instead of being inside, on my
phone all day. It will also bring joy to our community by providing a place where families, friends and neighbors can come together..

I would like to thank New York City for its commitment to building the first section of the QueensWay, the Metropolitan Hub. I hope the City will continue investing in future sections so that even more people can benefit from a gathering place to have fun and relieve stress.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

SOL:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Sol, and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens. I am here to thank the City of New York for their support of the QueensWay, a project that will directly benefit my school and my community.

I think the QueensWay is important because of the health benefits, giving people a place to socialize, walk, and play sports. Also important are the environmental benefits for plants and wildlife, supporting biodiversity. I am excited about the QueensWay because students and other community members can socialize, connect, and share ideas.

I would like to thank New York City for its commitment to building the first section of the QueensWay, the Metropolitan Hub. I hope the City will continue investing in future sections so that even more people can benefit from safe, accessible green space.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

SAYID:

Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sayid Ali. I'm a 9th grader at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

As many of you know, high school can be very stressful. One of my favorite ways to deal with this stress is by going outside. Spending time outside has shown to have many mental health benefits such as reduced stress, preventing mental burnout and even improving sleep. However, in my neighborhood, everything is surrounded by cars, buildings and houses, making it difficult for people to access green spaces like Forest Park without having to cross major thoroughfares. My neighborhood is filled with highly trafficked roads and streets, making green spaces very loud and not really away from city life. To access these green spaces, you need to cross highways such as Queens Boulevard and Woodhaven, making it dangerous. Manhattan has the Highline and now the people of Queens have the Queensway. Queens residents will profit from the plethora of benefits the Queensway will provide. The Queensway will allow for a green space that is away from city chaos but still accessible for so many people. It will connect various neighborhoods together and be the closest green space for many Queens residents. Finally, people will be able to escape hectic streets and reap the rewards of nature. With that, I kindly ask that you fund the expansion of the Queensway as it will benefit so many. Thank you for your time.

Prakhar:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Prakhar Verma, and I am a student at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

I want to thank the City of New York for supporting the QueensWay project, which will benefit my school and my community.

This QueensWay will change the underutilized corridor of the abandoned rail line into a fun and fully accessible public space. The public space will advance environmental sustainability, strengthen community ties through meeting, and preserve biodiversity by revitalizing native plant species.

Through conversations with stakeholders, case studies in my classes, and research, I have learned the importance of civic participation and how quality planning, environmental shifts and community involvement can create positive impacts on the lives of future generations for years to come. Our ecosystems will thrive and that will spread awareness. We can also engage in activities such as gardening and taking long walks which is one of my personal favorite hobbies. The MELS campus is connected to the Queensway, providing advantages in our education such as creating outdoor classes and an easy way to go on fieldwork.

I am super excited for the Queensway as I will finally have a park that is near my house and have an efficient way to meet up with my best friend who lives farther away. At the same time it will also reduce the traffic that leads to a substantial amount of pollution, creating a safer environment and a breath of fresh air.

Thank you, New York City for its commitment to build the first section of the QueensWay, the Metropolitan Hub. I look forward to continued City investment sections of QueensWay to create more safe, accessible green space for all to use.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Rosenberg:
Hello Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Elyse Rosenberg, and I am a high school teacher at Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens.

I am here to express my gratitude to the City of New York for its investment in the QueensWay, a project that will have a lasting impact on both my school and the surrounding community.

Our school directly abuts the QueensWay, and a developed QueensWay will help us expand instructional possibilities for going on fieldwork, learning in nature, building outdoor classrooms and helping our students forge relationships and build community outside the traditional classroom environment.

My colleagues and I have been working with our students for years to help them provide design input and gather information about their priorities and imagined possibilities for the QueensWay. Through this work, I have seen firsthand how invested students are in the future of this space. A fully realized QueensWay would provide our school community with travel safety, spaces for teachers to work and be creative in outdoor classrooms, and provide learning opportunities for future generations of my students.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of the QueensWay.

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES ON FINANCE BUDGET AND OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027

ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADVOCATES AND ATTORNEYS, UAW LOCAL 2325

JUNE 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Lisa Ohta and I am the president of UAW Local 2325, the Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys. My local represents more than 3,700 legal service workers, at over 35 different employers, primarily in New York City. Many of my members are currently bargaining renewal contracts, including the Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, and Neighborhood Defender Service.

ALAA members testified before the City Council in March about untenable workloads, a crisis of attrition especially among experienced staff, and the chronic underfunding of our offices and our work. We are bargaining with management right now—bargaining for sustainable pay and manageable caseloads—bargaining for the conditions that allow us to do excellent work on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of clients we serve each year—and it is not going well.

These negotiations have laid bare what every member of our union has known for years: that public defense and legal services remain critically underfunded. Our members face a looming unaffordability crisis. If our salaries do not increase, we anticipate disastrous consequences not only for our members but also for our clients and for the criminal and civil court systems.

And we want you to hear it from us: we are ready to strike.

Year after year, this city and this Council has found the money to keep police officers and District Attorneys in their jobs and guarantee them a pension. Yet we have not seen the same increases in wages and benefits. We are the ones whose jobs fulfill a constitutional mandate. We are the ones standing between our clients and a Rikers cell, or family separation, or immigration detention. We are the ones fighting to keep communities together. Yet we are told by management that our salaries simply can't keep up with inflation. That we must either pay more for the healthcare coverage we've relied on, or accept worse coverage.

Budgets are moral documents. And you can support us and our clients, your own constituents, with your budget choices. You can support labor by funding the real

cost of our work, so we can settle fair contracts and that COLA increase goes directly to increasing wagesJustice demands equal pay for equal work. That we can devote decades to our work, to our clients, and earn far less than our counterparts in DAs offices or corporation counsel inherently injustice but within the power of the Mayor and City Council to fix.

And you should do this not just because our members and their families deserve an affordable city—we do. Not just because we love our jobs and want them to be sustainable—we do. But because funding us builds public safety. Equally funding our work ensures that working class New Yorkers get the absolute best legal representation. It protects them from law enforcement overreach. It forces the justice system to treat them fairly. It keeps families together. Our communities deserve nothing less. And we are ready to fight for it.

NYC Council Hearing on Mayor's Executive Budget
June 10, 2026
Written Testimony of Walter Mugdan, President, Udalls Cove Preservation Committee

My name is Walter Mugdan. I serve as president of the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee (UCPC, www.udallscove.org). UCPC was founded in 1969; its mission is the conservation, preservation and restoration of the last undeveloped natural areas in the Udalls Cove watershed in northeastern Queens. Udalls Cove is the eastern arm of Little Neck Bay, itself part of Long Island Sound. Much of the area has been protected as the Udalls Cove Park Preserve, a New York City *Forever Wild* area with trails winding through woods and along the shoreline. UCPC serves as the park stewardship organization for Udalls Cove Park, and also for the northeastern portions of Alley Pond Park.

We write in support of increased funding for New York City parks. A recent Trust for Public Land report shows that NYC's park system has been downgraded to 20th place, due largely to lack of funding and significant cuts to the agency's core staff over the last three years. We are pleased that Mayor Mamdani's budged baselined $15 million for NYC Parks in the FY27 Executive Budget, which means that 161 of the 276 temporary ("one shot") positions will be made permanent and guaranteed a job after June 30th. This is very important, but not yet sufficient.

We strongly encourage the Mayor and City Council to raise Parks funding to 1% of the City budget, as Mayor Mamdani committed to do during his campaign. We also urge that baselining a further $8 million, which would mean 115 critical parks staff who will lose their jobs on June 30th will be guaranteed permanent jobs. And we urge the Council to fund about $23 million for a new round of 276 "one-shot" positions for FY27. These positions will help the agency make progress in key areas that have been pain points for every council member, such as tree maintenance.

As a park stewardship organization, UCPC has taken on the responsibility for trail maintenance, including installation of wooden walkways (also called puncheons) over perpetually muddy sections of trail to minimize erosion and improve the experience for walkers; trimming back excess vegetation that grows into trails about three times during the growing season; and removing fallen trees or tree limbs that block the trails. But many City parks do not have comparable stewardship organizations with the capacity to perform these maintenance tasks, and even in park areas for which we are stewards we rely on the Parks Department to address issues beyond our capability (e.g., when a large tree falls). Adequate funding for NYC parks is vital!

Walter Mugdan
President, Udalls Cove Preservation Committee
udallscove@aol.com
www.udallscove.org

New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings
Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

New York City Council Committee on Finance
Honorable Linda Lee, Chair

Submitted by: Faith Behum

June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee, and members of the Committee on Finance for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum, and I am a Manager of Government and External Relations at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need – identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services and allocates nearly $200 million each year to support older adults, combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, strengthen Jewish life, and respond to crises here and across the globe.

UJA-Federation of New York submits the following recommendations for the New York City FY 2027 Enacted budget.

The Committee on Aging

Maintain Funding for the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative

The Council-funded Elie Wiesel Holocaust Survivors Initiative continues to be a critical lifeline for Holocaust survivors grappling with poverty, food insecurity, isolation, complex medical needs, and the lasting effects of trauma.

More than half of New York's remaining Holocaust survivors live in or near poverty. Many arrived in the United States later in life with limited savings and receive little to no Social Security income. Today, the youngest survivors are over 80 years old. While the survivor population declines each year, the cost of providing care continues to rise due to increasingly complex physical, cognitive, and mental health needs. Holocaust survivors experience disproportionately high rates of chronic illness, trauma-related mental health conditions, and long-term medical complications stemming from persecution, displacement, and malnutrition. In recent years, these challenges have been compounded by the lingering effects of the pandemic, rising antisemitism, global conflict, and the increasing cost of living.

Last year, the City Council allocated $4.2 million for the Holocaust Survivors Initiative. **UJA-Federation respectfully requests that the FY27 budget maintain funding at $4.2 million.**

This investment supports specialized case management, trauma-informed mental health services, crisis prevention and emergency assistance, legal and benefits counseling, socialization programming, caregiver support, and end-of-life services. Demand for these services remains high, and many providers continue to maintain significant waitlists.

As New York's survivor population ages, sustaining this funding is essential to ensuring survivors can live their remaining years with dignity, security, and the support they deserve. There is limited time left to honor our collective promise to those who survived the Holocaust: never abandon, never forget.

Strengthening Aging Services
New York City is rapidly aging, yet the City's investments have not kept pace with the needs of older adults and family caregivers. While the older adult population has grown to 1.4 million New Yorkers, NYC Aging's budget remains less than one-half of one percent of the City's total budget.

These funding gaps have real consequences. Older adults struggle to access nutritious meals, case management, caregiver supports, and other critical services that allow them to remain healthy, independent, and connected to their communities. Family caregivers face increasing demands with insufficient support, while aging services providers are stretched beyond capacity as they work to meet growing need. Without adequate community-based supports, older adults are more likely to experience housing instability, avoidable hospitalizations, social isolation, and unnecessary institutionalization.

Investments in aging services work. Community-based programs reduce avoidable hospitalizations, emergency service utilization, and other costly interventions while helping older adults remain healthy, safely housed, and engaged in their communities. These investments are not only fiscally responsible; they reflect whether New York City values the dignity and well-being of older New Yorkers as they age.

As a member of the Age Strong NYC coalition, UJA-Federation supports a comprehensive, multi-year strategy to strengthen aging services, expand affordable housing options for older adults, and ensure that all New Yorkers can age with dignity and security. The recommendations below represent critical investments needed to meet both current and future demand:

1. Invest **$2.3 billion to fully fund aging services** in New York City, including affordable housing, community services and supports, and nutrition.
2. Invest **$500 million in Older Adult Center (OAC) State of Good Repair capital improvements** to address decades of deferred maintenance and ensure centers remain safe, accessible, and able to meet growing demand. Additionally, **establish and expand an emergency repair fund of at least $10 million** to address urgent facility and infrastructure needs.
3. **Increase funding for case management services by $44 million** to expand staffing capacity, reduce waitlists, and provide older adults with timely access to benefits, healthcare navigation, housing assistance, and supportive services.
4. Invest **$90 million in nutrition programs**, including:
    a. **$60 million for congregate meals at Older Adult Centers** to address inflationary costs and sustain providers.
    b. **$30 million to provide fully funded weekend meals** for home-delivered meal recipients.

NORC in Every Neighborhood
NORCs help older adults age safely in place by providing social services, health and wellness programming, case assistance, and opportunities for community connection. As New York City's older adult population continues to grow—and more older adults live alone—expanding NORCs is a critical strategy to reduce isolation, improve health outcomes, and help residents remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

UJA-Federation supports efforts to expand NORC coverage to neighborhoods by **investing $10 million in the FY27 budget to ensure that there is a NORC in every neighborhood** that currently lack access to these services and supports continued investment in the NORC system.

Additionally, the City Council NORC initiative provides essential supplemental funding for programs, and independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. Since the Council began providing these funds in 2019, the standard hourly rate to hire nurses has increased from $85 to approximately $100 per hour. This rising cost must be reflected in future allocations to ensure programs can continue delivering essential care.

Council initiative funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council's enthusiasm for the NORC program, providers have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. **In FY27, the City must baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council's NORC Initiative of approximately $1 million and continue to fund the Council's NORC Initiative funding.**

UJA-Federation joins aging services providers and advocacy organizations across New York City in calling for sustained investments in nutrition, NORCs, case management, capital improvements, and community-based supports that enable older adults to age with dignity, independence, and security.

Committee on Contracts

Maintain the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers and Support Int. 0452

UJA appreciates the City Council and Administration's commitment to provide a 3% COLA for human services workers through FY27. Years of underfunding of the sector have resulted in the human services workforce being some of the lowest compensated workers in New York City's economy. The current COLA investment is a step in the right direction to ensuring City-contracted human services workers are paid fairly. Next year, the Mayor and Council will need to prioritize lifting salaries for human services workers with another COLA and ideally, a multi-year investment.

Despite this recent investment, nonprofit workers continue to earn 30% less than their government counterparts. Because of this, **UJA urges the Council to pass Int. 0452-2026 which will make progress towards achieving wage equity for nonprofit workers.** Government is not just the predominant funder of human services, but is also the main driver of human services salaries, and either directly sets salary rates on contracts or does so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract. Int. 0452 is a significant step towards ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts. By establishing a clear wage requirement system, this legislation promotes transparency in compensation, ensuring that every worker is paid solely based on their qualifications and experience. The legislation also states, "Before registering a human services contract, the comptroller shall affirm that the required wage and mandatory fringe is fully funded in the procurement." Explicitly stating that the required wage and fringe will be funded by the City is crucial. While nonprofits want to pay their employees competitive wages, they cannot do this without increased funding included in their contracts.

UJA urges the City Council and Administration to continue their commitment to supporting this workforce by funding the 3% cost of living adjustment for City-contracted human services workers through fiscal year 2027 and committing to funding a multi-year COLA in FY 2028. The City Council must also pass Int. 0452-2026 the "Wage Equity Legislation" to create lasting change with how human services employees are compensated through City funded contracts.

The Committee on Parks and Recreation

Investing in an Aquatics Initiative

Many of the nonprofits in UJA's network have pools in their facilities. Those with indoor pools offer private and group swim lessons as well as opportunities for children, youth and adults to engage in other aquatic

activities throughout the year. Those who have outdoor pools are usually located at camps and use these spaces to host swim lessons and aquatic activities for their camp participants. In a few instances, when they do not have access to their own indoor or outdoor pool, some nonprofits use New York City pools for swimming lessons and water activities for their campers.

The nonprofits in UJA's network are committed to providing swim lessons and water safety instruction to the communities they serve. In many instances, if these nonprofits did not offer this resource their communities would lose access to this life saving skill. UJA joined the New York City Lifeguard and Aquatics Taskforce in 2022 to partner with city agencies and local nonprofits to better understand why there is a lifeguard shortage and what can be done to address it. It soon became clear that to create a lifeguard pipeline, the Taskforce needed to broaden their focus by locating ways to increase access to swim and water safety training, as well as supporting nonprofits and municipal partners in building capacity. In many instances, access to swim lessons and water safety instruction is only available to those who can afford the classes and/or are fortunate enough to have access to a pool in their community.

The lack of broadly accessible swim instruction and sufficient lifeguards to staff beaches and pools has created an urgent public health crisis. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), more children in the United States, ages 1–4, die from drowning than any other cause of death. And for children ages 5–14, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury or death. This entirely avoidable public safety hazard has an outsize impact on communities of color. The CDC also reports that, on average, the drowning death rate among the Black community is 1.5 times that of the white population. As the lifeguard shortage continues to result in decreased access to swimming education programs, the racial disparities in drownings and water accidents are likely to continue to increase.

A challenge of this significance cannot be fully addressed by a single entity or solution. To achieve meaningful change, a multifaceted approach that meets people where they are and removes barriers to access is needed. As a first step, **UJA supports the New York City Lifeguard and Aquatics Taskforce's proposal to create a $5 million Aquatics Initiative to help nonprofits provide access to four categories of programming including**:

1. Land-based water safety education consisting of classroom-based set of lessons focused on water safety.
2. "Second Grade" Swim- A partnership between nonprofits and the NYC Public Schools that brings students (2nd grade or similar age) to schools with pools for multi-week swim safety classes.
3. Swim Lessons- Free City funded swim lessons provided to New York City youth & adults overseen by community-based organizations in all five boroughs.
4. Lifeguard Training and Certification: Free lifeguard training and nationally recognized certification programs provided across all five boroughs. Free lifeguard development programs provided across all five boroughs to create a robust pipeline of youth prepared to undertake lifeguard training and certification.

This Aquatics Initiative is both a lifesaving skills program and a workforce development program. In addition to stand alone programming, the four aquatics programs listed above can seamlessly push into existing youth programs managed by both the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and the New Yok City Department of Education. UJA urges the city to also consider beginning with pilot programs during this fiscal year at programs including but not limited to 3-K and Pre-K, Saturday Night Lights, Beacons and Cornerstones.

To truly improve water safety at City pools and beaches, swim and water safety instruction must be made available to every resident in the city. New York City does not have enough pools to accomplish this. Nonprofits must be partnered with and funded adequately, particularly in poorer, under-resourced areas to increase the number of people accessing these life-saving lessons. Nonprofits with pools have the infrastructure in place and connections to their local communities to support the city's efforts in improving water safety for its residents.

Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use

The City Council's Mental Health initiatives provide funding that goes directly to community-based organizations that oversee behavioral and mental health services throughout New York City in several languages. These funds provide vital resources for programs that would often not have any other City, State or Federal support. The FY27 NYC budget must continue to support these initiatives by providing a 3% increase to match the citywide human services COLA initiative, thus allowing providers to address the increasing costs to provide these services to their communities. Additional targeted investments are requested for Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Clubhouses and Peer Support Specialists. Federal funding reductions are expected to negatively impact mental and behavioral health services for vulnerable populations. This is why it is critical that the New York City Council continue to invest in the Mental Health Initiatives in FY 27. Below are the investments UJA is requesting be included in the FY27 budget for all the Mental Health Services Initiatives:

Autism Awareness **$3,359,704**
Children Under Five **$1,602,917**
Court-Involved Youth Mental Health **$6,850,000**
Developmental, Psychological, & Behavioral Health **$2,323,157**
Emergency Medical Services Mental Health and Wellness **$1,030,000**
LGBTQIA Youth All-Borough Mental Health **$1,236,000**
Mental Health Clubhouses **$3,790,000**
Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations **$3,809,990**
Mental Health Workforce Retention & Development **$309,000**
NYC 988 Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Hotline **$5,150,000**
Older Adults Mental Health **$3,450,005**
Opioid Prevention & Treatment **$3,167,250**
Peer Specialist Supports **$6,000,000**
Trauma Recovery Centers **$4,944,000**
Youth Peer Support **$257,500**

UJA's nonprofit partners receive funding through a few mental health initiatives including Autism Awareness, Older Adult Mental Health, Court Involved Youth Mental Health, Opioid Prevention and Treatment, Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health, Children Under Five, Trauma Recovery Centers and Peer Specialists Supports. Below are examples of the types of services and supports the nonprofits in UJA's network oversee using funding from the Mental Health Initiatives.

The Autism Awareness Initiative

The Autism Awareness Initiative (AAI) funding allows eight of UJA's nonprofit partners to provide wraparound services to autistic children and youth in after school, weekend, and summer programs. It also supports trainings for parents, guardians, and caregivers of children with autism. Most importantly, these supports and trainings are largely offered to individuals with autism and their families who are not eligible for services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). In many cases, this is one of the few supports these individuals, and their families can access in the community.

One of the nonprofits in UJA's network supported hundreds of families last year using Autism Awareness Initiative funding. They provided parent education workshops that educate families about addressing sensory needs, conflict resolution, self-care, skill-building for children with autism, creating structures and routines, and family teamwork. This program has empowered parents to become leaders in their children's schools and has allowed some parents to transition to parent coordinators or facilitators of the education workshops.

The wraparound after school and summer programs funded by the AAI focus on assisting participants to develop intellectually and socially. More importantly, they provide a familiar social outlet for participants. One

of the nonprofits in UJA's network uses AAI funding to oversee a daily after school program for children with autism and a pre-employment program for adults with autism. The afterschool program focuses on increasing the social, communication, and adaptive daily living skills of participants. This program also supports the parents of the children who attend by providing daily in-person updates on their children's progress and having longer conversations on a weekly or biweekly basis depending on the family's needs. They also refer parents to other services and help them access OPWDD services if they are eligible. The pre-employment program is a weekly group session for young adults between the ages of 23-35 who are on the Autism Spectrum. It focuses on building participants' strengths, helping them to raise their self-esteem and confidence, foster their employment and social skills, and expose them to new potential career paths.

Autism Awareness Initiative providers all stated that while it has become more expensive to provide trainings for parents, after school or employment programs for individuals with autism, the funding has not been increased to meet these rising costs. In fact, the AAI was cut in FY 24 and that remained through FY 26. UJA urges the City Council to fund the Autism Awareness Initiative at $3,359,704 a 3% increase from FY 26 that will help providers cover increasing programmatic costs.

The Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative
JCCA, a nonprofit in UJA's network, receives funding through the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Initiative. JCCA uses this funding for the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment program to target Jewish Orthodox and Bukharan youth between the ages of 14 and 19 in Queens who are at-risk for or engaging in opioid abuse. Youth in this community have experienced high rates of depression. The Orthodox and Bukharan community has seen a spike in marijuana use due to the legalization of marijuana, as youth self-medicate to relieve anxiety, which can become a gateway drug with teenagers. As a result, JCCA is providing youth with preventative measures to teach them about risks of using marijuana substances. The Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment program focuses on empowerment to support those who are suffering and prevention for those at risk of developing an opioid addiction.

Programs like the Kesher Opioid Prevention and Treatment continue to be needed throughout New York City and have even been asked to be implemented in Jewish Day Schools. UJA is requesting that the City Council fund this initiative at $3,167,250 which would increase funding by 3% from FY26.

The Children Under Five Initiative
The Children Under Five Initiative funds community-based outpatient mental health clinics that provide mental health treatment to children aged five years and younger. The Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association of Washington Heights and Inwood (Washington Heights Y), a nonprofit in UJA's network, uses this funding for a part-time mental health practitioner who works with children and staff in their pre-school program. The practitioner observes children in their classrooms and identifies those who need additional supports and services. They work directly with families to develop strategies to address developmental concerns and provides support when children are being evaluated for outside services. Pre-school staff also work with the mental health practitioner to develop classroom modifications that benefit all children in the program. Lastly, the mental health practitioner trains staff on social, emotional, and developmental issues and develops support plans for students when challenges arise. UJA requests that the City Council increase funding to $1,602,917 for the Children Under Five Initiative so Washington Heights Y and the other agencies who receive this funding can address the rising costs of these programs.

The Older Adults Mental Health Initiative (OAMHI)
The OAMHI supports organizations to provide individual and group counseling to older adults in non-clinical settings such as senior centers, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, and food pantries, while also supporting in-home services for homebound elderly. This initiative also provides financial support for in-home services such as psychiatric evaluations and counseling, services that are often not covered by insurance companies or reimbursed poorly. By offering these services in a non-clinical setting, providers can adapt

services to the needs of communities without stigma. Older adults have also benefited from case management services funded by the OAMHI, helping them to get connected to additional social supports like SNAP.

Loneliness and social isolation continue to impact older adults. One of the nonprofits in UJA's network provides counseling, case management, referrals to outside services, and support groups. Programs are designed to address older adults' unique needs to prevent medical emergencies, reduce social isolation, increase safety at home, and improve quality of life. Wraparound services allow this provider to address acute needs in the population they serve as well as the root causes of mental health issues. Providers recognize the continued and increased need for these services in their communities. Increasing funding by 3% for a total of $3,450,005 for this program in FY27 would allow our nonprofit partners to continue to connect older adults with the mental health services they require to live fulfilling lives in the community.

The Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative
The Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative funds critical services for youth. The program was funded at $3.425 million since FY23. UJA is requesting that funding be doubled to $6.850 million in FY27 to support existing providers and to add new providers to address the growing mental health needs of court-involved youth.

This is a citywide initiative that assesses risk for mental health concerns and connects court-involved youth with nonprofits. The initiative also provides family counseling and respite services to families of court-involved youth. These services are essential for preventing entry and re-entry into the juvenile justice system. At-risk youth often lack access to mental health services, family counseling, or other supports that will keep them from juvenile detention. This initiative addresses lack of access to these important interventions through best practices in support services and referrals. Currently 3,000 youth are served annually by 21 providers across New York City.

JCCA receives funding through the Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative. The JCCA's "Second Chances" program is for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 who have mental and/or behavioral health needs and do not have health insurance, are court-involved or have behavioral indicators for court involvement. The program provides free mental health/counseling services, educational support and substance abuse referrals, family support services, and advocacy. It also connects participants to long-term supports. Last year, 179 youth expressed interest in participating in Second Chances. JCCA was only funded to serve 45 youth.

Since FY20, JCCA has also overseen an eight-week program titled, "Make it Work" using funding from the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative. Make It Work, prepares youth to enter the workforce. Make It Work is extremely successful and often has 60 applicants for only 15 open slots per cycle. Three cycles of Make It Work are provided each year. Referrals are received from a variety of sources including probation, ACS, schools, hospitals, and other non-profit agencies. JCCA continues to exceed both their intake and outreach targets annually. Long waitlists exist for Make it Work and JCCA would like to expand the program additional participants per cohort if they received additional funding. An increased investment of $6,850,000 in the Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative in FY 27 would support agencies like JCCA to expand capacity and meet the growing demand for these important services.

The Developmental, Psychological and Behavioral Health Initiative
This initiative supports a range of programs and services that address the needs of individuals with substance use disorder, developmental disabilities, and/or serious mental illnesses and their families and caregivers. A nonprofit in UJA's network oversees two programs with the funding they receive through this initiative. One of the programs provides housing and services to ten people with serious mental illness who are transitioning from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization into a less restrictive setting. The second program is at a clinic where adults with mental illness and older adults receive mental health treatments in a group setting. The clinic provides services to approximately 900 individuals annually. An increased investment of $2,323,157 in this initiative in FY 27 will help providers cover the rising costs associated with coordinating these services.

Trauma Recovery Centers
Trauma recovery centers were created in FY 23 to provide trauma-informed healing support to survivors of violent crime from underserved communities. The Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island (JCCGCI), a nonprofit in UJA's network, was named as the Trauma Recovery Center for Brooklyn. UJA requests that funding for Trauma Recovery Centers be increased by 3% to $4.9 million to support CBO's like JCCGCI as they continue to grow this program.

The Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) at JCCGCI provides trauma-informed, client-centered care for individuals affected by various forms of violence and trauma, including physical assault, sexual assault, gun violence, domestic violence, and more. Their services focus on immediate stabilization and long-term recovery, particularly for underserved and marginalized groups like people of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and those facing homelessness or food insecurity. The center offers personalized services, including outreach, trauma therapy, case management, and flexible care to meet diverse needs. JCCGCI's TRC has shown measurable improvements in mental and physical health outcomes since 2023. UJA requests the Trauma Recovery Centers initiative be funded at $4.9 million in FY 27 to support JCCGCI and other CBOs as they continue to try to build this resource for the communities they serve.

Invest in School-Based Mental Health Clinics
UJA asks the City to invest $3.75 million in FY 27 to bolster up to 50 existing school-based mental health clinics (SMHCs). Each SMHC should receive approximately $75,000 in annual operating support to maintain and expand on-site mental health services for children. SMHCs provide on-site mental health services to children during the school day, including psychiatry, medication management, family peer support, youth advocacy, and counseling. SMHC staff work closely with school staff to identify children in need and coordinate services. SMHCs work to engage the whole family and can serve family members at their community location. SMHCs provide crisis mental health services, ensuring children receive a compassionate response when they are in need and reducing the use of suspensions, detentions & punitive measures. Currently, most funding comes from Medicaid, which does not adequately cover the range of services provided. **A $3.75 million investment would provide the additional resources these clinics need to fully cover the costs of overseeing these services.**

Baseline Funding for the Mental Health Continuum
For the past four years, the City has allocated $5 million of one year funding for an innovative model called the Mental Health Continuum, an integrated system of targeted and intensive supports for students with significant mental health needs. This model includes school partnerships with external partners, including NYC Well, professionals for crisis response, and training for school employees. Through a partnership between the Department of Education, New York City Health + Hospitals, and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, this model aims to meet the needs of students with significant mental health challenges in fifty schools with the highest rates of NYPD interventions, suspensions, and chronic absenteeism. **To fully implement and sustain the Mental Health Continuum, UJA requests the City baseline $5 million for the program.**

<u>The Committee on General Welfare</u>
DoVE Initiative
Currently, 180 organizations across NYC use DoVE funding to address domestic violence in their communities by providing legal services, crisis intervention, case management, outreach, education, and training. The DoVE initiative provides vital supports to individuals living in violent situations. Funds are directed to many of UJA's nonprofit partners who understand the unique needs of their communities. **UJA strongly urges the City Council to maintain its investment at $12 million for the DoVE Initiative in FY 27.**

NYCBenefits
UJA was disappointed that $9.75 million was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget for NYCBenefits. Since 2023, NYCBenefits has funded nonprofits (including four in UJA's network) across the City to support low-income residents when they apply for public benefits. Case workers guide individuals through the often-

confusing process of applying for public benefits and ensures applicants know all the benefits they are eligible for. The failure to fund this program will impact some of the most impoverished New York City residents as well as the nonprofit employees who support them. The City should not be disinvesting in NYCBenefits when the need for supports like these is increasing due to the federal government actively cutting access to public benefits and complicating the process to apply. **UJA requests $9.75 million be restored for NYCBenefits, allowing nonprofits to continue to support individuals to access food, housing and healthcare assistance.**

The Committee on Children and Youth

Strengthening afterschool programs

This administration's focus on creating a universal child care system accessible to all NYC families is admirable. Because child care needs do not stop at age five, an important component of any truly universal child care system is strong and affordable afterschool programs. While, the Executive Budget maintains commitment to the afterschool expansion plan initiated under the previous Mayoral administration, the recent release of the center and school-based COMPASS awards has raised concerns over how the system is being expanded and its eventual impact on the communities afterschool programs are present in.

The center-based COMPASS awards resulted in more than fifteen community-based centers losing entire afterschool contracts or facing significant seat reductions, despite demonstrating high-quality programming and continued community need. As a result, many longstanding providers that families have relied on for years may be forced to close their doors, disrupting trusted relationships and limiting access to safe and supportive spaces for children.

The school-based COMPASS awards created additional disruptions to continuity of care for children and families. Many community-based organizations (including two nonprofits in UJA's network) lost contracts at schools where they have successfully provided services for years and had the support of school leadership. While UJA supports a fair and competitive procurement process, in some cases these awards have created fragmented service models within individual schools — with different providers operating elementary and middle school COMPASS programs and serving as the lead Community School CBO partner. This discontinuity can create unnecessary administrative burdens for school staff and undermine consistency and coordination of services for students and families. In addition, several schools were not matched with any provider despite receiving applications, including applications supported by principals. This raises important questions about whether all previously promised program sites will ultimately be served.

The timing of the release of the COMPASS awards also has negatively impacted CBOs. Providers who applied for center and school-based COMPASS awards, were notified in April and May respectively if they were chosen to oversee programs. This has resulted in a truncated timeline for afterschool programs to either begin developing programming for the upcoming school year or notify staff that they will no longer be employed in their afterschool program if they did not receive an award. For those who lost awards, the staffing for their 2026 summer programs has been put into jeopardy with many staff considering leaving programs and looking for employment elsewhere due to not having a job at the end of August.

Beyond challenges resulting from the award process, UJA remains concerned that the current reimbursement structure is insufficient to sustain high-quality programming over the long term. The per-participant rates offered in the COMPASS RFP will allow providers to recover only about 60–70 percent of true program costs in the first year, with the gap widening over the six-year contract due to the absence of annual cost escalators. As a result, providers must either subsidize programs with other funding sources or offer staff wages that do not reflect their responsibilities and expertise, creating inequities in the quality and stability of programming available to families.

Given these concerns, UJA is calling on the City to:

- Restore and baseline funding for community-based organizations that lost center-based contracts or experienced significant seat reductions despite meeting eligibility requirements.

- Provide greater transparency regarding how school-based awards were determined.
- Ensure that all unmatched school sites are paired with providers as quickly as possible.
- Provide support and establish clear coordination protocols in schools undergoing a provider transition and where multiple providers are now working together.
- Ensure all new COMPASS contracts for their entirety include at least a 3% annual COLA or other cost escalator.

UJA welcomes the opportunity to partner with DYCD to ensure that efforts to expand New York City's afterschool system strengthen community-based organizations, preserve continuity for families, and expand access to high-quality programming.

Child Care Assistance Program

As the Mamdani Administration works towards creating a universal child care system, the 25,600 children on the waitlist for the child care assistance program (CCAP) must not be forgotten. The families who access CCAP vouchers live in high poverty neighborhoods and have little access to additional resources to fund their child care needs. No affordable child care means parents and guardians need to make difficult decisions on how to care for their children including reducing work hours, leaving a job, or making suboptimal child care arrangements.

The New York State Enacted budget included over $3 billion for the CCAP. A portion of that funding, $950 million, is for New York City to be split evenly and used for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027. The funding for New York City will allow ACS to maintain enrollment in the CCAP but it is not enough to supply vouchers to children on the waitlist. **The City Council, Mamdani Administration and ACS must work together to decide how much additional money the City will need to address the waitlist for the CCAP and ensure all children who are eligible have access to child care vouchers**.

Adult Literacy

More than 2.2 million adults in New York City have limited English proficiency or lack a high school diploma, yet public investment in adult literacy remains far below the level needed to meet demand. As a result, fewer than 3 percent of New Yorkers who could benefit from English language instruction, Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED preparation, digital literacy, and civics education programs are able to access services in a given year.

Adult literacy programs are a critical pathway to economic opportunity and self-sufficiency. These programs help New Yorkers gain the language, educational, and workforce skills necessary to secure employment, advance their careers, support their families, and fully participate in civic life. As New York City faces persistent workforce shortages across multiple sectors, investments in adult literacy strengthen both individual economic mobility and the City's long-term economic health.

At the same time, adult literacy providers face growing uncertainty. More than $24 million in New York City's adult literacy funding comes from the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and federal proposals have called for eliminating this funding entirely. Such cuts would significantly reduce access to educational opportunities for thousands of adult learners across the city and place additional pressure on already oversubscribed community-based programs.

New York City must respond by strengthening its own commitment to adult learners. UJA-Federation supports the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy's proposal to **create a new $20 million Education for Integration and Equity initiative** to expand access to English language instruction, adult basic education, digital literacy, high school equivalency preparation, and civics education. This investment would help address longstanding unmet need while protecting educational opportunities at a time of significant uncertainty in federal funding.

UJA-Federation also urges the City Council to **increase discretionary funding for adult literacy education from $14.5 million to $18 million** and to consolidate all Council-funded adult literacy programs under Adult Literacy Forward. This nationally recognized model has demonstrated the value of flexible, community-responsive funding and stronger accountability for publicly funded programs.

Adult literacy education helps New Yorkers build stable careers, support their families, and contribute to their communities. Investing in adult learners advances economic mobility, strengthens the workforce, and creates pathways out of poverty. UJA-Federation urges the Administration and the Council to make adult literacy a budget priority in FY27.

Committee on Education

Preschool Special Education

UJA appreciates the additional investments made in preschool special education in the FY 27 Executive budget. Specifically, starting in FY 27 $67.5 million and increasing to $81.6 million in FY 30 will be included to expand Special Education Pre-K programs and make them more accessible to all New York City children. For years, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) has struggled to provide an appropriate special education preschool seat to every child who required one. As of May 2025, 29% of preschoolers with disabilities were missing one or more of their legally mandated services like speech therapy or counseling. More than half of those children were receiving none of their mandated preschool special education services. Additionally, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) recently posted information online indicating a shortage of preschool special education classrooms in Spring 2026 that could leave hundreds of young children with disabilities with the most intensive needs without access to a preschool program.

It is clear any decrease in funding to preschool special education programs will result in further damage to a system that is already struggling to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a timely manner. While investments made in expanding special education pre-k programs in FY 27 are welcome, it is important to note what some preschool special education programs are experiencing now as they begin planning for the 2026-2027 school year. Recently, the Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) started a new practice where inclusion specialists must approve placements in special education preschool programs. This is part of New York City's efforts to reduce the rate at which preschoolers are recommended for self-contained special education classes. Since this practice began, special education preschool providers have noticed a decrease in referral to their programs. This will decrease the number of children entering preschool special education programs, directly impacting these programs' ability to stay open.

While federal law requires children be placed in the least restrictive environment, it is critical that this is an appropriate placement for them. There are some children who require specialized preschool special education programs and general education programs with services are not going to provide the programming they need to thrive. It is imperative the DOE carefully monitor the impact of inclusion specialist approvement on preschool special education providers and the children not being placed in these programs.

Pre-K and 3-K Programs

UJA is thankful for the baselining of $5 million for Early Childhood Education outreach in the FY 27 Executive Budget which will help to ensure families across New York City know about free 3-K and Pre-K programs.

UJA's non-profit partners oversee New York City funded 3-K and Pre-K programs and hosted private pay programs before publicly funded programs existed. Transitioning to and working in a City funded early childhood education system continues to be challenging. Before creating a City funded universal child care system, it is critical that the Mamdani Administration and City Council understand and address the issues facing nonprofit 3-K and Pre-K providers because these same issues will most likely impact any expansion of child

care. Improving the current City funded early childhood education system will lay a stronger foundation to build the universal child care system.

Continued delayed reimbursement from NYCPS threatens the sustainability of the 3-K and Pre-K programs in community-based organizations (CBOs). Since October 2022, NYCPS has slowly improved the timeliness of payments on Birth to Five contracts. While some providers have benefited from this, others still wait to be compensated. One of the biggest issues nonprofits in UJA's network faces is waiting for approval of students.

Students must be approved before a program can invoice and be paid. Students not being approved also delays providers' ability to enter data into the vendor portal about completed developmental screenings, which are required to be done 45 days after a child is enrolled. When providers contact their enrollment specialist and/or operational analyst about these issues they struggle to receive concrete suggestions on what can be done to rectify the problems delaying students to be registered.

No City contracted 3-K and Pre-K programs should have to wait months to be compensated for completed work. To address the payment issues facing the 3-K and Pre-K systems, the Mamdani Administration must pay early care and education service providers on time and complete payments owed immediately. NYCPS must fully staff their divisions responsible for invoicing and payment and continue to grant ECE providers the ability to batch multiple months of invoices.

Enrollment procedures create additional issues for families and providers. Currently, families enroll their children in 3-K and Pre-K programs located in CBOs through New York City Public Schools. NYCPS enrolling families in CBO 3-K and Pre-K programs creates an unnecessary step in the enrollment process that families would not have to deal with if they could enroll through the CBOs. It also results in CBOs obtaining their list of enrollees from NYCPS meaning they ultimately have control over who is or is not attending CBO programs. CBOs interact directly with families who are interested in attending their 3-K and Pre-K programs and should be given the option to directly enroll them in their programs. If enrollment continues to be managed through NYCPS, providers should not be penalized for under-enrollment, consistent with protections afforded to early childhood programs operating in public schools. Programs in CBOs should be held harmless for under-enrollment when NYCPS's district schools are not cited for under-enrollment in their 3-K and Pre-K classrooms.

New York City Public Schools is in the process of extending contracts that were awarded through the current Birth-to-Five RFP. The Birth-to-Five RFP was issued in 2020 and went into effect in the fall of 2021. It includes the City's contracts for Pre-K, 3-K, and Extended Day/Extended Year programs. Providers were recently notified these five-year-old contracts that will be extended two years. The Executive Budget included a $40 million baseline investment for enhancements to these contracts resulting in Community Based Organizations receiving a 2% increase in their contracts during the next two years to address rising costs. While grateful for this increase, 2% is not enough funding for early childhood educators to meet the rising costs of food (specifically kosher food in the UJA network of nonprofits), 3.5% salary increases for staff in DC Local 215, or the rising costs of fringe benefits. Because of this, **UJA urges the City to immediately implement cost escalators of at least 3% in current Birth to Five Contracts to reflect increased costs for insurance, utilities, and other necessities of maintaining early childhood education programs.**

Lack of comprehensive pay parity across the early childhood education workforce continues to plague the sector as well. The 2019 salary parity agreement resulted in all certified CBO teachers in pre-kindergarten programs receiving the same compensation as entry level NYCPS pre-kindergarten teachers. Not included in this agreement were longevity increases which resulted in teachers who worked in CBO Pre-K programs for multiple years making the same amount as a teacher who is a new hire. Directors and educational directors in CBO Pre-K programs were also not included in the 2019 salary parity agreement. As a result, many are compensated less than the teachers they supervise, resulting in directors and educational directors leaving CBOs

for higher paying jobs. Additionally, non-teaching staff in CBOs, including assistants, janitors, cooks, and other staff, are being compensated less than their counterparts in New York City Public Schools.

In 2024, labor contract agreements were made between Local 95 (HeadStart providers) and Local 205 (nonprofit child care centers that contract with NYCPS). Local 215 members and those who are not unionized were not included in these contract agreements. All of the 3-K and Pre-K programs in UJA's network of nonprofits are either members of Local 215 or not unionized. This means these providers are operating on different contract agreements than what was agreed upon for Local 95 and Local 205 and are offering their staff smaller salaries and less benefits due to continuing to work off an outdated salary agreement.

Preschool special education teachers are also among the lowest-paid teachers in New York City, making less than their counterparts in NYCPS. As a result, preschool special education teachers are leaving for higher-paying positions within NYCPS, CBOs have been forced to close their programs, and children are forced to wait at home until a special education seat opens. The lack of providers (speech therapists, occupational therapists, etc.) has forced children in integrated classrooms to wait for their services, causing further harm and developmental delays.

Before expanding the child care system, the City needs to immediately create true pay parity for the entire early childhood workforce. This would include Local 215 and non-unionized CBOs as well as ensure that staff at community-based preschool special education programs are included. The agreement would result in equivalent salaries and benefits for equal levels of education and experience between certified and uncertified early childhood educators inside and outside NYCPS programs. This should also account for the differences in school days, and longer hours worked by CBO educators as well as include longevity increases. A minimum wage floor of $25 an hour must also be included for non-teaching staff in CBOs. Lastly, when contract agreements are achieved, they must be promptly amended to include additional funds for CBOs to have the financial means to compensate their workforce according to those agreements.

New York City families need access to affordable, high quality child care. UJA's nonprofit partners are ready and willing to provide this service. But the City must address the previously stated issues to expand the early childhood education system in a responsible way.

Non-Public Schools

Jewish day schools have faced increased security threats since October 7, 2023. Schools have invested in additional methods (for example increasing security personnel) to provide a secure learning environment for their students. The increased costs of which have largely been placed on the parents of the students who attend the schools. This has been financially taxing on the families who send their children to Jewish day schools.

In recent years, the student enrollment threshold for the Nonpublic School Security Reimbursement Program was increased making more nonpublic schools eligible to be reimbursed for security services through New York City funds. The combination of more schools being eligible for this funding as well as the continue rise of antisemitic incidents across New York City has created the need for additional funding to be added to the Nonpublic School Security Reimbursement Program. **UJA is urging the Council and Administration to increase the investment in this program to ensure that all religious and independent schools have access to adequate security funding.**

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 2027 New York City budget. If you have any questions, please contact Faith Behum at behumf@ujafedny.org.

Uniformed Emergency Medical Service Officers Union
Local 3621, DC37, FDNY, NYS-PEC, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

In a system where minutes matter – we have a system that is completely out of balance and teetering on the brink of collapse. *Without change, EMS simply cannot keep up.*

New Yorkers must know that it is now more deadly in our city if you or your loved one suffers a heart attack, life threatening illness, serious accidents or fall. *Health and emergency care in our city is in serious jeopardy. The survival rate from a cardiac arrest is at an all-time low. (17%)*

This public safety crisis didn't happen overnight; it's been long time in the making, with years of neglect and bad decisions. This mayor didn't cause it, and neither did this Council. In fact, this Council has been an advocate for EMS over the years and we want to thank you for your effort and help, and we know that this Mayor is committed to equity, affordability and fairness. Pay equity is an affordability issue.

Emergency medical care for New Yorkers must be a priority. We ask you to help us do what's best for our city and prioritize this issue because it is literally a matter of life and death. We need to adequately compensate and resource our EMS First Responders, so that they can properly protect the people of our city during emergencies.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Vincent Variale

President

125 Barclay Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10007 * Email: Local3621uemso@gmail.com * Office # (212) 815-1220 * www.Local3621.com

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Chief Executive Officer

Union Settlement
237 East 104th Street
"Union Settlement Way"
New York, NY 10029

www.unionsettlement.org
info@unionsettlement.org

Testimony to the New York City Council
COMPASS Program Funding for Union Settlement

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
Submitted by Sean Wynter
Executive Director Youth Development and Opportunity
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Chairperson and members of the New York City Council.

My name is Sean Wynter- Executive Director of Youth Development and Opportunity Department at Union Settlement, and I am here today to urge the Council to support the reinstatement of COMPASS funding specifically for Middle School participants for Union Settlement, an organization that has proudly served East Harlem for more than 130 years. For generations, Union Settlement has been a trusted anchor institution, providing critical educational, recreational, and social services to children, youth, and families throughout the community.

We were deeply disappointed to learn that Union Settlement was not awarded funding to continue operating COMPASS Middle School programs despite being selected by school principals as their provider of choice. These principals have witnessed firsthand the quality, consistency, and impact of our programming and intentionally chose Union Settlement because of the strong relationships we have built with students, families, educators, and the broader East Harlem community.

For more than a decade, Union Settlement has successfully operated COMPASS programs in four East Harlem middle schools, serving over 1,000- 6th–8th grade young people and their families annually. Union Settlement and other East Harlem providers can now will only serves 441 kindergarden-5th grade participants. New York City Department of Health Community Health Profiles indicate that East Harlem experiences some of the highest rates of chronic health conditions and premature mortality in the city, driven by long-standing inequities in access to care, economic opportunity, and environmental conditions (NYC Department of Health, Community Health Profile, 2023). Union Settlement and other East Harlem providers are safe havens for the families in the community. The continuity of the program is critically important. Families depend on stability, familiarity and Union Settlement is well-established entity in East Harlem. Disrupting the security of support harms the students and their families. Trust has been developed throughout the years, and this will undermine and add risk to the community.

The loss of these services represents more than a funding decision—it represents the loss of trusted relationships, proven outcomes, and vital support for young people in one of New York City's most underserved communities Students and

families who have relied on Union Settlement's programming for years now face significant gaps in services and opportunities.

The impact is particularly troubling for residents of Washington Houses. Following years of disruption caused by extensive building repairs, residents were eager to benefit from the reopening of Union Settlement's newly renovated community center. This revitalized space was envisioned as a hub for school aged youth engagement and community-building activities. Yet despite this significant investment and the clear need for services, no COMPASS funding was awarded to support programming.

In addition to providing high-quality after-school programming, Union Settlement offers a comprehensive network of services that extend far beyond the walls of the schools we serve. Through our longstanding presence in East Harlem, we have built trusted relationships with students and families and are uniquely positioned to address the broader needs that impact youth success.

Families connected through our COMPASS programs have access to workforce development and job training opportunities, mental health counseling and wellness services, benefits enrollment assistance through New York Benefits programs, financial empowerment services, adult education, college and career readiness resources, and family support programs. These integrated services allow us to support not only the academic and social-emotional development of young people but also the overall stability and well-being of their families.

The loss of COMPASS funding impacts much more than after-school activities. It disrupts a critical entry point through which families become connected to essential services that help them secure employment, access healthcare and public benefits, address mental health needs, and achieve greater economic stability. Union Settlement's ability to provide these wraparound supports has been a cornerstone of our work in East Harlem.

Because of the deep trust, we have established with families, our school-based programs often serve as the first connection to a broader continuum of services. By removing Union Settlement from the East Harlem community, many families may lose access to a trusted partner that understands their needs and can connect them to resources that improve outcomes for the entire household.

East Harlem continues to face challenges related to poverty, educational inequities, community violence, and limited access to youth development opportunities. Organizations like Union Settlement play a critical role in addressing these challenges by providing consistent, high quality programming that keeps young people safe, engaged, and on pathways toward success.

We respectfully ask the New York City Council to review this funding decision and advocate for the restoration of COMPASS funding to Union Settlement. Doing so would honor the choices made by school leaders, preserve trusted community partnerships, and ensure that thousands of East Harlem youth continue to have access to the high-quality programming they deserve.

For over 130 years, Union Settlement has stood beside the residents of East Harlem. We remain committed to serving our community, and we ask for your partnership in

ensuring that these essential services continue for the young people and families who depend on them.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to New York City's youth.

For the Community
By the Community

www.unionsettlement.org

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony from Mary Vaccaro, vice president for education and executive director of the UFT Teacher Center

Good morning. My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I am the UFT's vice president for education and the executive director of the UFT Teacher Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about several initiatives that are making a meaningful impact on educators, students and school communities across New York City.

I'd like to begin with the UFT Teacher Center, which promotes teacher excellence and academic achievement for all students through high-quality professional development tailored to the unique needs of each school. The Teacher Center's work is grounded in the belief that when educators are supported, students thrive.

Last year alone, the Teacher Center provided more than 126,000 hours of professional learning to over 341,000 educators, principals and parents across the city. These learning opportunities range from instructional coaching and curriculum support to leadership development and collaborative planning. The impact is clear: Ninety-nine percent of participating educators reported that the professional learning they received significantly improved their practice.

We have expanded our reach by opening 11 new Teacher Center sites this school year. We now have well over 200 site coaches embedded directly in schools, working shoulder to shoulder with educators to strengthen instruction, address challenges in real time and support student success. These coaches help schools implement evidence-based practices and build sustainable systems that continue to benefit educators and students long after a workshop ends.

The Teacher Center has also played an essential role in supporting major citywide instructional initiatives, including the development and rollout of NYC Reads. By providing ongoing training, coaching and implementation support, the Teacher Center helps ensure that educators have the tools and confidence they need to deliver high-quality instruction in every classroom.

The UFT Teacher Center has also teamed with nonprofit partners to provide social-emotional supports for our school communities, including joining with the Goldie Hawn Foundation to introduce MindUP to over 300 schools, Think Equal to support social-emotional learning in pre-K to over 500 educators and CommonPoint to host wellness days. These partnerships have given us the ability to make connections and to expand our reach to educators, students and families. This is all while we continue to be a certified

provider of TCIS (Therapeutic Crisis Intervention). This year, a record number of educators took advantage of this training.

I also want to briefly highlight the PROSE initiative, which empowers district schools to develop innovative approaches that better serve their students and families. Interest in PROSE continues to grow as more educators seek opportunities to implement creative solutions and share successful practices with colleagues across the system.

Finally, I would like to discuss the importance of supporting educators' well-being. Sixteen years ago, the UFT recognized that educators in crisis had limited places to turn for support. In response, we created MAP, which has become the supplemental mental health program for DOE employees. Today, more than 50,000 educators use MAP's counseling services, support groups and wellness workshops. It is a trusted resource that provides critical support to the people who dedicate their lives to serving our students.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate the power of investing in education. By supporting professional growth, encouraging innovation and prioritizing well-being, we strengthen our schools and create better outcomes for all students.

Testimony from Karen Alford, vice president for elementary schools and executive director of United Community Schools

Good morning, my name is Karen Alford. I am the UFT vice president for elementary schools and the point person for the UFT's nonprofit United Community Schools. The City Council has supported the UFT's community schools initiative from the program's start in 2012. In 2025, support from the City Council helped UCS schools feed over 71,000 families and provide over 48,000 health and wellness exams, screenings and check-ins.

These supports translate to increased test scores, attendance and student engagement at our UCS schools. We found that:

- 46.3% of UCS students met ELA standards, compared to 36.2% of the comparison group, showcasing a 10.2 percentage point advantage for middle and elementary school students
- High school students at UCS schools accumulated roughly one more credit than similarly situated noncommunity-school students

Teachers too feel the impact of working in a UCS school, and we often hear our UCS teachers say they feel more supported, secure and engaged in their work.

We hope to continue to expand upon this work in the upcoming year with a particular focus on building a dedicated UCS mental health team to deliver mental health services to schools, to increase academic enrichment programming and attendance-improvement activities, and to provide staff and educators with targeted technical assistance and instructional support to ensure they are well-equipped to meet students' needs.

Additionally, the UFT is eager to partner with the mayor and the City Council to fulfill the promise of truly universal 3-K and to ensure the successful rollout of 2-K for families across New York City. To ensure the success of these critical initiatives the UFT asks that:

- Providers are paid in a timely manner without delays.
- Independent, nonnetwork-affiliated and home-based providers are included in the expansion of 3-K and the rollout of 2-K.
- Our youngest learners are provided with the appropriate special education services.

Finally, I want to touch on two of our union's programs that greatly affect students and families. The first is our BRAVE hotline, an immediate, compassionate resource for any child experiencing bullying. The hotline is staffed by licensed counselors and trained professionals who provide confidential support, guidance and crisis intervention to students and families in need. The hotline is available from 2–9:30 p.m. on weekdays by phone, chat or text. If we can save just one child from the anguish of bullying, protect one family from the heartbreak of a preventable tragedy and shield one school community from the ripple effects of these incidents, then we as a community will have done our jobs.

The second program is Dial-A-Teacher. The UFT's Dial-A-Teacher homework hotline (212-777-3380) answered tens of thousands of calls last school year from students and parents looking for homework help. It operates Mondays through Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m. and offers homework help in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. With your continued support, we can expand our outreach and keep serving students and families.

All of these programs change lives, and we are grateful for your continuous investment in and support of them.

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony of Michael Mulgrew, UFT president, submitted before the New York City Council Committee on Finance

My name is Michael Mulgrew, and I am the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's over 200,000 members, I would like to thank Finance Chair Linda Lee and all the members of the City Council's Committee on Finance for holding today's public hearing on the New York City executive budget for fiscal year 2027. I would also like to thank Speaker Julie Menin for her strong leadership these past few months.

RESPECT for Paraprofessionals

The UFT has been pushing for the paraprofessional RESPECT check legislation for over a year now. Many of you have signed onto Int. 0692-2026 as sponsors and championed this issue in hearings and at rallies. We are grateful for your support, but now we need to get this bill across the finish line. It is not enough to simply say we support paraprofessionals. We need to put action behind our words and ensure that each paraprofessional in this city receives $10,000.

Class Size

When the class size law was first implemented, we understood that reaching full compliance was a difficult but worthwhile undertaking. The UFT was ready to move full steam ahead, but the city dragged its feet. To prevent this from happening again, and to ensure the city is held accountable for timely compliance with the law, the UFT negotiated a differential payment for teachers whose classes are exempt from the class size limits due to either space or hiring limitations. This differential will be $8,500 in school year 2026-27 and $9,500 in school year 2027-28. We are eager to work with you all as we enter the final stages of implementation to ensure that every classroom comes into compliance by 2030.

Child Care

The UFT applauds Mayor Mamdani and Gov. Hochul's investment in universal child care. To make 3-K truly universal and rollout 2-K, we will need to grow and support our early childhood education workforce. To do this, the city must pay providers in a timely manner without delays, so they are not forced to provide services without income. The city must also include independent, non-network-affiliated and home-based providers in this child care expansion. The UFT currently represents 8,000 home-based child care providers, who make it possible to offer families care in their very own neighborhoods.

They also provide culturally responsive care and nontraditional hours of care, which is crucial for parents who work hours other than 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Finally, as we scale up our universal child care services, we must ensure that our youngest learners receive the appropriate special education services.

Additionally, New York City families deserve affordable, safe care for their children. However, child care has become increasingly expensive and difficult to find. In response to this, the UFT created NYC Childcare Navigator to connect our members to affordable child care. Based on the overwhelming positive feedback from our members, we decided to expand our reach, and we are proud to now offer this valuable free resource to all residents of the five boroughs. Recently, we added new features to the program to allow families to find out in less than five minutes whether they also qualify for federal WIC and SNAP food programs and housing vouchers. We ask that the City Council embrace the NYC Childcare Navigator as a frontline tool for families and providers to navigate eligibility and placement for existing and new child care capacity.

Fund UFT Programs

For years the UFT's programs have ensured that education funding goes directly into the classroom and improves educational outcomes for students and working conditions for teachers. This year we submitted discretionary-funding applications for six programs that we ask the City Council to support. We greatly appreciate the Council's past support for these programs and have seen a dramatic increase in demand for each of them in recent years. Because of that, we are requesting a proportionate adjustment in allocations to support these activities.

UFT Teacher Center

The UFT Teacher Center promotes teacher excellence and academic achievement for all students through professional learning tailored to each school's unique needs. Last school year, Teacher Centers delivered over 126,000 hours of transformative professional development to over 341,000 participants - educators, principals and parents. Additionally, ninety-nine percent of participating educators reported that the Teacher Center's professional learning sessions improved their practice.

Thanks to the support we received from the City Council and the City Council Speaker's Initiative in 2025-26, we were able to open 11 new Teacher Centers, for a total of 197 sites — a 60% increase from 2020-21. The funding also enabled our 203 site coaches, who are embedded in schools across the city, to provide support in three critical areas:

1) Ensuring that educators are prepared to support students in literacy development using the science of reading and the new curricula used in the NYC Reads.

2) Ensuring that educators are prepared to provide the social and emotional support their students need to address the trauma they have experienced in these unprecedented times, including students who are new arrivals to our city.

3) Ensuring that all students receive support equitably through providing professional learning that prepares educators to reach all students, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

Additionally, the UFT Teacher Center is committed to expanding our work with the Provider Professional Education Program and United Network for Early Childhood Education, which aim to grow the early childhood workforce for both teachers and home-based child care providers alike. This work is particularly important right now as we work to expand universal 3-K and create the 2-K program in New York City.

For 2026–27, we are requesting a grant of $6.5 million from the City Council Speaker's Initiative and $4.12 million from the City Council's discretionary funds to sustain and expand Teacher Center programming. This funding will allow us to retain and bring on additional central team staff who work with multiple schools, open new Teacher Centers in areas without any sites, and continue to offer Teacher Center supports to schools across the city.

United Community Schools (UCS)

United Community Schools is a teacher-inspired and educator-led nonprofit with proven results that serves close to 20,000 families. Within each school there is a community school director who leverages outside relationships to bring the necessary resources directly to students and families. Our community schools provide food for families and offer mental health, physical health, dental and vision services within school buildings. In 2025 support from the City Council helped UCS schools feed over 71,000 families and provide over 48,000 health and wellness exams, screenings and check-ins.

As a result of these robust supports, we've seen test scores go up, attendance improve and student engagement increase at our UCS schools. We found that 46.3% of UCS students met ELA standards compared to 36.2% of the comparison group, showcasing a 10.2 percentage point advantage for middle and elementary school students. We also saw that high school students at UCS schools accumulated roughly one more credit than similarly situated non-community school students. Teachers too feel the impact of working in a UCS school, and we often hear our UCS teachers say they feel more supported, secure and engaged in their work.

This year we ask that the City Council provide UCS with $5 million to sustain our 32 community schools and expand the services we offer to communities. This funding will be used to build a dedicated UCS mental health team that will work in close collaboration with school principals, administrators and health practitioners to deliver coordinated, high-quality mental health and wellness services. It will allow six community school

directors and three community school associates to oversee academic enrichment programs, attendance improvement activities, STEM/STEAM courses, family engagement workshops, community forums, vision and dental clinics and coat and toy drives at each of their school sites. Funding from the City Council will also enable us to provide UCS educators and staff with targeted technical assistance and instructional support to ensure they are well equipped to meet students' needs.

Positive Learning Collaborative (PLC) and Member Assistance Program (MAP)

The PLC program is one of our most effective tools for bringing equity to New York City public schools. This model weaves together social-emotional supports, restorative practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, mindfulness and healing-centered practices to support school communities and ensure every child has the social, emotional and academic skills needed to succeed in the classroom and life.

Recently, the PLC has collaborated with the MAP program to further expand the UFT's capacity to meet the needs of educators and school communities around social emotional support, mental health support and professional development opportunities. Thanks to Council's support, our free, multilingual MAP careline is now available twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. This line has received over 30,000 calls since 2022, with a recent increase in calls relating to bias and hate crimes, as well as immigration crackdowns and fear of deportation of our students. Since the fall, MAP has also served over 300 schools that have requested crisis counseling from our team of trained clinicians because their school community has been impacted by suicide, grief and immigration fear (especially around ICE) that affected the school community.

Since 2019, MAP has also offered the Let's Talk About It all-day program to thousands of middle school students from around the NYC area, with a focus on the Bronx in the 2023–24 school year and Queens in the 2024–25 and 2025–26 school years. Since 2018, MAP has also offered thousands of hours of professional learning opportunities and credits to educators and counselors.

To sustain and continue to expand all this programming, the UFT is requesting $1.9 million for the 2026–27 school year from the City Council.

Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE)

PROSE amplifies the voices of educators by enabling them to propose school-level innovations that bolster student excellence. These innovations may include how teachers are hired and evaluated and how students are programmed throughout the day. Many of the over 280 PROSE schools that currently exist have a strong emphasis on project-based learning. The program includes most of the consortium high schools in the city, which have a state waiver allowing them to replace state Regents exams with project-based assessments, as well as other schools that focus on this kind of innovative curricula and

assessments. PROSE also includes most of the Internationals Network of high schools, which are focused on serving students who are new arrivals to our city. We propose to use $300,000 in City Council funds to support schools in continuing these efforts, to expand the program to more school communities around the city, and to facilitate the sharing of best practices between schools around these innovations in the 2026–27 school year.

BRAVE Hotline

Bullying continues to pose a significant challenge in our schools, deeply affecting students' mental health, academic potential and overall well-being. That is why the UFT created BRAVE (Building Respect, Acceptance and Voice through Education), which raises awareness about bullying prevention, digital safety, conflict resolution and restorative practices through interactive workshops, school-based presentations and community outreach. We also have a BRAVE hotline that students, their families and educators can call, chat or text for help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As our schools face evolving challenges, such as the rise of cyberbullying and the increasing diversity of student needs, it is imperative that BRAVE continues to adapt and expand its critical services. We are requesting a grant of $300,000 from the City Council this fiscal year to fund program coordination, consultant-led workshops, outreach materials and community engagement efforts. This support will ensure that BRAVE can expand its reach, maintain high-quality programming, and continue serving schools and families with timely, relevant and impactful anti-bullying education.

Dial-A-Teacher

Dial-A-Teacher operates Mondays through Thursdays from 4 to 7 p.m., offering free homework help to students and parents in nine languages, including Spanish, Mandarin and Bengali. Last year, the program received over 35,000 calls. Dial-A-Teacher is respectfully requesting $325,000 in City Council funding for fiscal year 2027 to allow us to expand access to these supports by increasing the number of teachers available to answer calls, continuing with technological upgrades and providing staff development that will enhance our ability to serve students in the modern educational arena.

Support Citywide Initiatives

I would also like to advocate for citywide programs that are vital for our students and educators. We need to continue to baseline Teacher's Choice, and I also ask the Council to support arts in education and Commonpoint.

1. **Teacher's Choice** – Thank you for your continued support of the Teacher's Choice program. It is a key initiative to ensure teachers and other school staff are reimbursed for the school supplies and materials they purchase for their

classrooms and for many of their students in need. We ask that you continue to provide $20 million in baseline funding for Teacher's Choice in fiscal year 2027.

2. **Arts in Education** – The arts introduce our students to new ways of thinking and expressing themselves. That is why we ask that the City Council support Broadway Bridges, the Broadway League program that provides $10 tickets for 10th grade students to see Broadway shows, aiming for every student to attend a show before graduation. This program also celebrates educators by hosting special events for them to experience the theatre. We also ask the Council for increases in funding for arts education in city schools and cultural centers such as museums and music halls.

3. **Commonpoint** – Commonpoint is a social services organization that supports the diverse needs of New Yorkers of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The organization offers a variety of supports for youths and families, ranging from sports programs and summer camps to job training and college access assistance. We ask that you support Commonpoint's programs in the fiscal year 2027 budget.

Thank you for holding today's hearing and for working with us to support and fully fund public education in New York City. I look forward to our continued collaboration.

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony from the United Federation of Teachers before the City Council Committee on Finance

Testimony from Priscilla Castro, chair of the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter

My name is Priscilla Castro, and I am the chair of the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter. We have been loud and clear for the past year: We must make the paraprofessional RESPECT check — Int. 0692-2026 — a reality. This is an issue of affordability. Due to the harm that pattern bargaining has caused, our members struggle to live in the city that they serve. Paraprofessionals cannot afford to go without additional pay, and students cannot afford to be without their paraprofessionals for one day longer.

Without paraprofessionals, students do not receive the necessary special education services. Next year, the city is projected to spend $1.5 billion on Carter cases because public school students are not receiving the support they not only need but are legally entitled to. It's time to direct this money toward the people actually doing the work.

I want to thank all the City Council members before us who have shown their support for the paraprofessionals in this city and the RESPECT check legislation. We will not stop until the hardworking, caring and dedicated paraprofessionals of New York City receive the respect and recognition they deserve.

Testimony from John Kamps, member representative of the Paraprofessionals Chapter

My name is John Kamps, and I am a representative of the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter. I am here to express my strong support for the RESPECT check legislation and to urge you to continue advancing this important measure.

This legislation represents a critical step toward addressing longstanding inequities affecting paraprofessionals, who are among the most essential yet undercompensated members of our school communities. Every day, paraprofessionals provide indispensable support to students, particularly those with disabilities and complex needs, helping to ensure safe, inclusive and effective learning environments.

Paraprofessionals are always there when they are needed. In every crisis, and every time the Department of Education or our school system has relied on them, they have been there and served admirably. During the reopening of schools after COVID, paraprofessionals sat side-by-side with students because you cannot guide a student's pencil from six feet away. Many stepped up when teachers were unavailable, managing classrooms to keep schools running.

The passage of this bill would send a powerful message that those sacrifices were not in vain. It would show that the city recognizes the dedication, resilience and commitment paraprofessionals have demonstrated time and time again. The RESPECT check would also provide meaningful financial relief and help stabilize a workforce that schools depend on by improving recruitment and retention. It is both a practical solution and a long-overdue acknowledgment of the role paraprofessionals play.

We simply want to be seen as the essential members of the school community and educational system that we truly are. Paraprofessionals make the difference every single day. Thank you for your leadership and attention to this issue. I respectfully urge you to support the passage of the RESPECT check legislation.

Testimony from Michael Sill, secretary of the UFT

Good morning. My name is Michael Sill, and I am the secretary of the United Federation of Teachers, which represents over 200,000 members.

You heard the leaders of our paraprofessional chapter. It is time to pass Int. 0692-2026 and get this RESPECT check to all our paraprofessionals. We have paraprofessionals working two to three jobs and living in homeless shelters because the job they love does not allow them to keep the lights on and pay their rent. This injustice must stop. Enough is enough.

Thank you to Chair Linda Lee and the rest of the City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify and advocate for the UFT's impactful programs. When you invest in UFT programs, you can be sure that education dollars go directly into the classroom to improve educational outcomes for students and working conditions for teachers. This year we submitted funding applications for six programs that we ask the City Council to support. You have all been wonderful partners in the past, and we look forward to continuing to serve our city's students, educators and families together.

United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

Testimony from Mary Vaccaro, vice president for education and executive director of the UFT Teacher Center

Good morning. My name is Mary Vaccaro, and I am the UFT's vice president for education and the executive director of the UFT Teacher Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about several initiatives that are making a meaningful impact on educators, students and school communities across New York City.

I'd like to begin with the UFT Teacher Center, which promotes teacher excellence and academic achievement for all students through high-quality professional development tailored to the unique needs of each school. The Teacher Center's work is grounded in the belief that when educators are supported, students thrive.

Last year alone, the Teacher Center provided more than 126,000 hours of professional learning to over 341,000 educators, principals and parents across the city. These learning opportunities range from instructional coaching and curriculum support to leadership development and collaborative planning. The impact is clear: Ninety-nine percent of participating educators reported that the professional learning they received significantly improved their practice.

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The Teacher Center has also played an essential role in supporting major citywide instructional initiatives, including the development and rollout of NYC Reads. By providing ongoing training, coaching and implementation support, the Teacher Center helps ensure that educators have the tools and confidence they need to deliver high-quality instruction in every classroom.

The UFT Teacher Center has also teamed with nonprofit partners to provide social-emotional supports for our school communities, including joining with the Goldie Hawn Foundation to introduce MindUP to over 300 schools, Think Equal to support social-emotional learning in pre-K to over 500 educators and CommonPoint to host wellness days. These partnerships have given us the ability to make connections and to expand our reach to educators, students and families. This is all while we continue to be a certified

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UNITED NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES
45 Broadway, 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10006
212-967-0322 | www.unhny.org

Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Council Member Linda Lee, Chair

FY 2027 Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by Nora Moran, Director of Policy and Advocacy
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Thank you Chair Lee and members of the New York City Council Committee on Finance for the opportunity to testify. United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) is a policy and social change organization with a mission to promote and strengthen settlement houses' neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. Settlement houses provide multi-generational services designed to support individuals, families, and communities. Settlement house programs build bonds within and between communities and create opportunities for advocacy and social change. UNH was founded in 1919 by settlement house leaders who recognized the strength in their collective voices to drive important social reforms. With this goal, UNH was tasked to coordinate the efforts of settlement houses; document their shared learning and experiences; and increase the influence and impact of settlement houses for the greater good of New York communities. UNH has successfully advocated for fair and affordable housing, child labor laws, inclusive policies and services for immigrants, adult literacy education, public recreation space, quality child-care and after-school programs, job training, programs serving older adults, access to the arts and to healthy food, and more.

This testimony provides an update on numerous programs and budgetary needs that we highlighted in our Preliminary Budget testimonies, including for the committees on Aging, Children & Youth, Contracts, Education, General Welfare, Immigration, and Mental Health. Several of our priorities were addressed in the Executive Budget, but many needs remain, including essential programs that rely on Council funding year over year.

NYCBenefits

Since 2023, the NYCBenefits initiative has helped New Yorkers secure and maintain public benefits to meet their food, housing, healthcare, and other basic needs. This high-impact program is a partnership between the Department of Social Services (DSS), 35 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and three Technical Assistance (TA) providers. Settlement houses in UNH's network operate 40% of the NYC Benefits contracts (15 programs).

NYCBenefits' work is absolutely critical now in the face of an increasing affordability crisis in New York City and an attack on the social safety net at the federal level, but the program is in jeopardy: **NYCBenefits was not included in the FY27 Executive Budget.** If NYCBenefits loses

funding, tens of thousands of New Yorkers will lose targeted benefits assistance and over 400 nonprofit staff will be impacted. Furthermore, it is vital that funding be secured so as not to disrupt operations and service delivery within DSS.

The City must:

- **Include $9.75 million for NYCBenefits funding in the June FY27 Adopted Budget.**
- **Baseline $9.75 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28-FY32 to ensure program continuity.**
- **Include $5 million in funding for NYCBenefits for FY28-FY32 to allow for its expansion to serve additional youth and families.**

The impact of this work speaks volumes: In the first 9 months of FY26, NYCBenefits social service providers served 28,000 low-income New Yorkers, already on track to outpace the 34,000 New Yorkers assisted in FY25.

Thus far in FY26, clients that applied for or recertified for SNAP with NYCB CBOs have received over $20 million in annual benefits. In addition to feeding families, this money goes right back into NYC's economy.

CBO staff help clients citywide enroll in or renew essential benefits that range from SNAP, Medicaid, and Cash Assistance to FHEPS, One-Shot Deals, and Fair Fares. Staff serve clients from all 200+ NYC zip codes and collectively provide services in 54 languages. This local, linguistically appropriate, one-to-one support leads to more successfully completed applications, upholds client dignity, and makes benefits more accessible in diverse communities. This support means cash in the pockets of everyday New Yorkers—helping them to live in an increasingly unaffordable city and afford the everyday basics of food, rent, health insurance, childcare, and more.

Core aspects of this program include training, case consultation, and case resolution support provided by the Technical Assistance (TA) Providers. The TAs, who have decades of expertise in public benefits and housing programs, provide a full training series to the 35 CBOs. This series, covering the full array of public benefits and housing programs available to New Yorkers, is the most comprehensive of its kind offered to CBOs in NYC. TAs also provide consistent support to frontline CBO staff through the complete benefits application process and correspond with DSS on case resolution needs.

DSS's integrated role in the program is key to its success. Their leadership and case support across the full spectrum of HRA-administered benefits and services has led to thousands of positive outcomes. Additionally, together, DSS and TAs help CBO staff navigate the real-world impacts of federal policy changes. This includes expanded SNAP ABAWD rules as well as upcoming Medicaid work rules and more frequent recertifications. These changes will affect food security and healthcare for thousands of New Yorkers—so the NYCBenefits CBOs have been well-prepared and are poised to help clients maintain their urgently-needed benefits and prevent program drop-offs that will be costly for NYC.

A deeply integrated nonprofit partnership with DSS has never existed on this scale before, and its impact is unprecedented. This program operates on an annual budget of $9.75 million—but the value of the benefits clients receive at the federal and state levels alone is exponentially greater, leading to improved economic security across New York City. The program's efficacy is

so well proven that ACS is collaborating with DSS to expand NYCBenefits' reach to ACS-involved youth and families to promote long-term stability for an additional $5 million annually. Furthermore, DSS has already begun planning for a new procurement, including ways to strengthen and expand the program. That important progress will be lost if NYCBenefits does not have baselined funding.

If NYCBenefits is not included in the budget and baselined, a critical lifeline will be cut for tens of thousands of New Yorkers who are living in shelters, facing eviction, or do not have enough food, clothing, or other necessities. **We urge the City to include funding for NYCBenefits in the FY27 Adopted Budget and to baseline future funding for ongoing NYCBenefits work so that providers can continue working towards our shared vision of a just and equitable city.**

New SNAP Work Requirements and Community Service: HRA Community Service Partnership and Civic Impact Fund

The federal administration has implemented new barriers to accessing SNAP that requires Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) recipients to meet specific work requirements, which is expected to impact hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers; similar rule changes will be coming soon for Medicaid recipients. These work requirements can also be met through community service or volunteer hours. Settlement houses are eager to assist New Yorkers who are unable to access SNAP benefits that they could previously access, and many have volunteer opportunities available, thus offering a win-win solution that also benefits the community. In fact, last year 13,535 people volunteered with UNH member settlement houses. Still, it takes staff time and money to manage volunteers, and the City should provide financial support and technical assistance to organizations who are providing these volunteer opportunities.

Some of this work is already happening, and we encourage the City to expand on these efforts:

HRA Community Service Partnership

The NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) has created an opportunity for CBOs to partner with the agency to offer community service and volunteer engagement opportunities to support cash assistance and SNAP recipients' compliance with work requirements, including ABAWDs. CBOs can fill out a form on HRA's website, choosing between two pathways: the Community Service Provider (CSP) track for high-touch organizations that can support structured, compliance-driven service activities, or the Self-Enrolled Voluntary Service Provider (SEVSP) track for light-touch programs offering voluntary, small-scale opportunities.

Several of UNH's members filled out this interest form and have been working with HRA to begin the partnership. Most are taking part in the SEVSP track for small-scale opportunities. Under this program, they complete a memorandum of understanding with a larger work referral organization. The larger organization refers clients to volunteer opportunities in their local community including the CBO. The CBOs work on a clearance process and paperwork for the volunteer, receiving some technical assistance and support from the larger organization.

While the program is still under development, our settlement house members participating in the program suggest it is working well so far, and that there is good communication with the larger organization. Still, they are not receiving any financial support to help manage the volunteers,

which is essential to ensure volunteers are properly placed, trained, managed, and supported. At one settlement house, there is just one volunteer coordinator who manages volunteers at multiple sites across an agency that serves 50,000 individuals each year. Another settlement house reports having three volunteer coordinators on staff, and that they would feel comfortable taking on up to ten new volunteers before needing to hire another coordinator.

As HRA rolls out this program, we urge the City to invest in the programs signing up to do this work so it can meaningfully carry out the City's goals, and we can begin to create systems to address federal work requirements that show no signs of ending in the near future.

Civic Impact Fund

The Civic Impact Fund (CIF), under NYC Service, provides up to $10,000 for nonprofit and community-based organizations in TRIE-designated high-need neighborhoods to expand volunteer-driven services addressing food access, safety, and mental health. Organizations use this funding for staff time, supplies, volunteer stipends, and training needs. In 2024, CIF recipients engaged 2,792 volunteers, served 122,584 residents, and distributed 444,385 pounds of food. While these grants are often short-term and meant to support specific time-bound issues, it represents an important tool for the City to support and encourage community service. In addition, NYC Service offers wide-scale trainings and technical assistance for CBOs across the City who want to support and scale-up their volunteer work.

Investing in the CIF program and NYC Service presents an opportunity for SNAP recipients who are ABAWD to continue receiving SNAP benefits by meeting their work requirements through volunteering at organizations across the City. **In the FY27 Budget, the City should invest $13 million in NYC Service and its Civic Impact Fund, which funds nonprofits to expand their volunteer infrastructure, which in turn will help those newly subject to federal SNAP work or volunteer requirements.** This investment would expand the CIF program to include more community-based organizations and larger grant sizes, allowing CBOs and settlement houses to expand or fund their volunteer programs. For example, between 50 to 100 CBOs could receive grants, worth about $50,000 for small or mid-sized organizations, up to $250,000 for larger CBOs, and about $500,000 of the $13 million fund could be reserved for administrative support for NYC Service.

Community Food Connection (CFC)

As we testified during the Preliminary Budget hearings, **we continue to urge the City to increase its investment in the Community Food Connection (CFC) program to $100 million total,** building on the Mayor's $54 million investment announced earlier this year. This program, which supports emergency food providers across the City, is essential in the face of stunningly high rates of food insecurity. It is even more urgent given new data on the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who began losing their access to SNAP benefits this Spring due to the federal spending bill H.R.1 – including over 40,000 people who are newly subject to work requirements and lost their benefits in June, and 15,000 refugees and asylees who were enrolled in SNAP and lost their eligibility starting in April (per testimony from HRA Administrator Scott French in June). Without access to food benefits, more New Yorkers will be forced to turn to pantries, making this funding a true emergency need to ensure New Yorkers do not go hungry.

Addressing SNAP Skimming

SNAP skimming continues to plague New Yorkers, with numerous providers in our network indicating a significant increase in cases over the last few months. Fortunately, the Enacted State Budget included funding to transition to chip-enabled EBT card technology, which will effectively eliminate SNAP skimming fraud cases. The allocation is approximately $25 million statewide, some of which is covered by a federal administrative cost share.

Unfortunately, the State did not provide funds to create a skimming victims compensation fund to support New Yorkers who have had their benefits stolen. HRA Administrator Scott French testified this month that roll out of the chip cards will begin in January 2027. This leaves a significant gap in time when SNAP recipients will still be having their benefits stolen with no financial recourse.

We urge HRA to work with the State to implement the new chip cards swiftly, and in the meantime continue to train community members and CBOs on how to freeze their cards when they are not in use – an interim and insufficient solution that is especially challenging for older adults who are not comfortable with smartphone technology.

Early Childhood Education and 2-Care

Early childhood education is finally getting the attention it deserves, and UNH applauds the Mamdani Administration and the New York City Council for their commitment to creating a universal, high-quality early childhood education system. Mayor Mamdani has made significant strides in recent months by prioritizing and investing in early childhood education. We are particularly eager for the implementation of free child care options for two year olds, which is based on our 2-Care proposal that we developed alongside New Yorkers United for Child Care.

Child Care Outreach Funding

The FY26 Adopted Budget included one-time funding for early childhood education outreach to help families better understand and access available programs. This funding has helped families understand their options, navigate complex systems, and access care equitably, while also supporting stable and predictable enrollment for providers. It is especially important that outreach include robust multilingual services and culturally responsive strategies to reach immigrant families and families with limited English proficiency who may face additional barriers navigating enrollment and eligibility systems. Several of our members provide this type of outreach and enrollment support and have seen strong results. **We are pleased to see that the Executive Budget recognized the importance of these funds and baselined $5 million in child care outreach funds.**

Promise NYC

Despite there being many types of child care programming in New York City, immigrant children do not always qualify for extended day/year child care programming because of their status. Promise NYC was created to fill in this gap, and to ensure that children who were not eligible for child care programming via ACS's traditional assistance program could still receive care. **We are grateful that the Executive Budget for the first time baselined Promise NYC with $25 million in recurring funds.**

Alternative Summer Program Model for Middle School Youth

The City must work with local stakeholders to pilot summer program models other than Summer Rising. The Summer Rising model made sense when it was first created in Summer 2021, when students had been learning remotely for long periods of time during the COVID-19 pandemic and there were real concerns about learning loss and student readiness to return to school buildings long-term. However, we are now in a different time, and we have an opportunity to rethink and reshape summer programming to meet students' current needs.

In response to questions from settlement houses and their communities about the efficacy of this model, UNH conducted a study of Summer Rising, composed of a digital survey of 700 parents and CBO providers, and 7 focus groups of middle school participants. In November 2024, we released *One Size Does Not Fit All: Assessing the Efficacy of the Summer Rising Program in Meeting the Needs of New York City Families*. Some of our key findings were:

1. Many families are dependent on free summer programming provided by the city. 58% of surveyed parents said they did not have a back-up option if Summer Rising was not available, with the percentage rising to 64% for low-income families.
2. Middle schoolers expressed frustration with the DOE-led academics. 87% of focus group participants disagreed or felt neutral in regards to the statement "I feel engaged in the morning session" of Summer Rising."
3. Despite recognizing the value of summer academic enrichment, many parents participating in the survey expressed frustration over a lack of communication around the DOE-led academic program. Parents reported being unclear about what curriculum was being used, who their students' teachers were, and if their child's learning needs were being met. This was in contrast to reports of regular communication from the CBO staff.
4. There are widespread concerns whether students with IEPs and English Language Learners are receiving appropriate accommodations. Over half of CBO staff said that a shortage of paraprofessional support for students with IEPs was one of the most pressing challenges. Additionally, some focus group participants who identify as English Language Learners shared that they were excluded from the DOE-led academic portion and given arts & crafts projects instead.

The summer months offer young people a break from the traditional school schedule, and allow more time for outside play, postsecondary exploration, field trips, positive peer socialization, and hands-on learning activities. Higher-income families often have the option to pick from different summer options depending on their child's preference, but most low-income families are reliant on city-funded programs to ensure a safe summer placement.

There exist a number of respected summer programming models that be used as a basis for alternative models, including:

- COMPASS Summer: DYCD funds community-based and Cornerstone programs to operate non-Summer Rising programming during summer months. This model reflects school-year programming and includes field trips, physical activity, leadership development, and integrated academics.
- Freedom Schools: This research-based and culturally sensitive program focuses on academics, civic engagement, family engagement, and social emotional learning. The training and model have been developed by the Children's Defense Fund.
- In addition, settlement houses operate a number of alternative summer models, including:
    - Life Lines Arts Camp: This program run by the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park engages youth in consistent group and community-building activities that promote social, physical, and artistic development. Campers attend a 5-day/week, full-day program and participate in enriching activities, including dance, theater, music, visual arts, and sports. Two full days per week are spent off-site on day trips.
    - Learning Campus Model: Henry Street Settlement operates this program as an extension of their school-year afterschool program, bringing together young people from two local community centers to participate in a club model. All students participate in academic sessions, but are given voice and choice to select enrichment activities, resulting in higher retention rates.

Youth and families should have a voice in deciding what kind of programming is right for them. **The City must commit to funding alternative summer programming models to meet the diverse needs of NYC's youth and families.**

Student Success Centers

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

Student Success Centers (SSCs) aim to fill this college counseling gap by pairing the expertise of community-based organizations with youth leadership training. In an SSC, youth leaders are trained as Peer Leaders. Together with CBO staff, Peer Leaders provide workshops, college trips, and one-on-one individualized counseling to help students through the college admissions and financial aid processes. The Student Success Center model is available at 34 high schools citywide. Settlement Houses operate 27 of these programs.

It is vital that the City commit to supporting all students navigating postsecondary options and the college admissions systems by restoring this program. UNH urges the City to **restore $3.3 million for the Student Success Center program through sustainable funding sources, and baseline this funding for the outyears**.

Additionally, we urge the City to streamline the FY27 funding process to help providers understand earlier how much funding they should expect per site, and how to access this funding. Lack of clarity from NYCPS and lack of communication from school leadership has led to confusion and delays in payments to CBO partners. Increased transparency and accountability for the roles of all stakeholders will improve the planning and implementation of SSCs.

Learning to Work

The Learning to Work (LTW) model supports students in Transfer Schools and Young Adult Borough Centers (YABC) as they work towards their high school diploma and the development of a post-secondary plan. Community based organizations (CBOs) are embedded in the fabric of these schools through LTW contracts with the DOE. In the current school year, Learning to Work programs are available citywide in 46 Transfer Schools and 20 YABCs. Settlement houses operate 27 of these contracts. **We are grateful that the Mayor included $31 million in baselined funds for LTW in the Executive Budget.**

NYCPS released a Request for Proposals (RFP) in December 2025 (R1231) that laid out a higher total budget of $57.4 million. While the FY27 Executive Budget restored and baselined $31 million to ensure programming can continue after June 2026, **the City must fund the $14.4 million differential for FY28 to fully enact the future RFP, set to commence in July 2027.**

Beyond concerns about whether funding is secured for the open RFP, providers have also expressed concerns about how NYCPS has proposed to change the program model. For three years, CBO providers met with the NYCPS' Office of Student Pathways (OSP) to inform the redesign of the program, the results of these conversations and program evaluations were outlined in Eskolta School Research and Design's reports. Additionally, UNH worked with LTW providers ahead of the RFP to develop a set of recommendations that were shared with NYCPS. Surprisingly, the new RFP did not incorporate the major recommendations from either Eskolta's report or the providers' recommendations. Instead, the RFP drastically changes the model, which threatens its proven success in reaching the hardest-to-serve young adults, supporting them in navigating life's challenges, graduating, and developing meaningful postsecondary plans.

Concerns with the current RFP are:

- The increased caseload of 1 Advocate Counselor to 75 students (current ratio averages 1:50) is not feasible with this population of students.
- Advocate counselor responsibilities have changed from emotional/mental health supports to post-secondary and vocational learning. In the currently successful model, LTW programs support students at high risk of dropping out of high school by leveraging the strong relationships they build with CBO Advocate Counselors to provide resources and opportunities to guide them through graduation.
- The RFP emphasizes post-secondary planning and work-based learning experiences with no mention of the growing mental health needs of the target population. Current LTW providers have cited this as a growing need, sharing the importance of addressing students' basic needs as part of a strategy to increase their chances of graduating high school.

- Providing internships and other work-based learning opportunities is within the purview of the CBOs in this RFP, but the funding to pay student stipends will be funneled through a DOE centralized system that will place added burdens/steps into the equation. This will also impact LTW providers' ability to support undocumented students at transfer schools and YABCs.

Adult Literacy Services and Council Funding

UNH advocates for an adult literacy system that provides quality, comprehensive, and accessible educational services for New Yorkers to improve their literacy skills, learn English, obtain a High School Equivalency diploma, and enter training and post-secondary education.

In New York City, an estimated 2 million adults have limited English-language proficiency or lack a high school diploma. No-cost community-based adult literacy programs such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), adult basic education (ABE), and high school equivalency (HSE) preparation programs enable New Yorkers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to secure higher-paying jobs that can sustain their families, support their children's education, and advocate for themselves and their families. Adult literacy programs run by settlement houses and other community-based organizations reach over 9,000 people each year and often serve as entry points for adult learners who are subsequently connected to workforce training support and other wraparound services that strengthen their families' economic and social well-being.

In 2024, the Department of Youth and Community Development's Adult Literacy RFP introduced new requirements tying program eligibility to specific Neighborhood Tabulation Areas (NTAs), which significantly limited which organizations could apply for funding. As a result, many long-standing providers were excluded from securing multi-year contracts and lost the funding needed to sustain their adult literacy programs, despite a large student base and successful program outcomes.

To address the gaps created by the 2024 DYCD RFP, the City Council made a historic investment of $16.5 million in adult literacy funding in FY25 and FY26. This discretionary funding is sustaining more than 60 programs. For four UNH settlement house adult literacy program providers (CAMBA, Center for Family Life, Queens Community House and Sunnyside Community Services), City Council discretionary funding is the sole funding source sustaining these programs, and they have served or expect to serve more than 3,100 students collectively. Without renewed funding, organizations excluded from the current DYCD literacy portfolio will not be able to offer adult literacy classes after June 30th of this year.

It is necessary for adult learners to have stable programs and support, as continued City Council funding supports staffing and essential program infrastructure and thousands of adult learners depend on these programs for essential skills. Ideally, these programs would be supported by a robust, baselined program managed by DYCD that offered students and providers stability with year-over-year funding. However, until DYCD revisits its unnecessarily restrictive stance on geographic priority for programming, **it is crucial that the City Council increases its investment to $18 million to make sure that more adult learners can have access to quality classes**.

Immigration Legal Services

The City Council must **renew its investment in immigration legal services** so that immigrants navigating complex legal systems can access the support they need. Without free or low-cost legal assistance, many immigrants, especially low-income families, face significant barriers that can lead to family separation, economic hardship, and reluctance to engage with essential services. By sustaining these investments, the City Council helps ensure that community-based organizations can continue to show up for their communities and that all New Yorkers have a fair opportunity to live, work, and contribute to the communities they call home.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities: NORC in Every Neighborhood and Council Initiative Funding

NORC in Every Neighborhood

Earlier this year, UNH published *A NORC in Every Neighborhood: Expanding Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities to Meet the Needs of Older New Yorkers*, which analyzes the need to expand NORC programs across New York City as the City's older adult population continues to grow. Our brief examines the benefits of NORC programs and highlights neighborhoods with a high concentration of older adults without NORC programs. For example, the Queens Village, Bellerose, and Rosedale neighborhoods in Queens have a combined population of 58,238 residents aged 60 and older, about 28 percent of all residents, but currently have no NORC program. In every neighborhood of New York City, from Bushwick to Flushing, there are thousands of older adult residents who would benefit from a contracted NORC program in every neighborhood.

An expansion of NORCs will ensure older adults have their needs met in the comfort of their own neighborhoods and communities for as long as possible. The growth in the older adult population, especially in the share of those living alone, should compel the City to invest in and expand services that not only help reduce the risk of social isolation, but also enable older adults to remain safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

With an upcoming NORC procurement planned in the coming months by NYC Aging, and a brand new State investment in NORCs, the time is now to invest in this essential program for New York City's aging population. **UNH recommends that New York City include a new investment of $10 million in the FY27 budget to ensure that there is a NORC in every neighborhood.** Ideally this would be realized through a contracted procurement process from NYC Aging that prioritizes sitting a NORC program in each of the 31 neighborhoods that currently lacks one. This procurement could happen concurrently with a planned NORC Request for Proposals (RFP) for the entire system, which we believe is planned for later this year, or could be a standalone RFP for new programs only. Each program would cost approximately $322,000, more than the current contract average of $251,000, to account for higher staff salaries and program costs. A $10 million investment to ensure that there is a contracted NORC program in every neighborhood in New York City would benefit thousands of older adult residents and contribute to a more age-friendly, affordable and inclusive city.

NORC Council Initiative

The City Council NORC initiative provides essential supplemental funding for programs, and also independently funds several NORCs that do not have separate City contracts. For the last several years, this funding has included support for nursing services in NYC Aging-contracted NORCs. This funding fills a gap left by the reduction of pro-bono nursing services that are required by NORC contracts. The nursing funding is essential and providers rely on this support. Since the Council began providing these funds in 2019, the standard hourly rate to hire nurses has increased from $85 to approximately $100 per hour. This rising cost must be reflected in future allocations to ensure programs can continue delivering essential care.

Council initiative funding also goes to some State-contracted Neighborhood NORCs, and serves as a required matching fund grant for these contracts that providers rely on. Because of the Council's enthusiasm for the NORC program, we have been able to bring resources and attention to the needs of a large and rapidly growing older adult population. **In FY 2027, the City must baseline long-standing NORC nursing support that is part of the City Council's NORC Initiative of approximately $1 million, and continue to fund the Council's NORC Initiative funding.**

Congregate Meals for Older Adults

Rising inflation rates have affected senior meals programs, especially food costs for congregate meals. There has not been an increase to the congregate meals budget at older adult centers (OACs) in years, since at least the last RFP in 2021 which predated a period of abnormally high inflation. Food costs have reached record highs, placing an immense strain on an already chronically underfunded meal program. Rising food costs have made it increasingly difficult for providers to provide culturally-competent and nutritious meals.

UNH documented the dramatic increase in meal costs in our 2025 report, *Let's Eat: The Need to Invest in Congregate Meals for Older New Yorkers*, which highlighted Census data on the growing financial hardship of older New Yorkers and the impact of inflation on their mental and economic well-being. As one example noted in the report, inflation has gone up by 22% for food since older adult center contracts began in 2021, though some providers reported wholesale food price increases that have gone up as much as 76%. The costs faced by providers have significantly outpaced general inflation rates. Still, the City has not provided any new funding for food in that time period. Older adult centers are doing the best they can with extremely limited funds to ensure seniors receive the meals they need.

At the same time, federal cuts to SNAP and ABAWD regulations are driving more older New Yorkers to older adult centers to utilize their meal programming. This places an even greater strain on meal programs at Older Adult Centers across the City, most of which are already stretched thin and lack the resources to accommodate the growing number of participants. The time is now to plan for expanded units at OACs and ensure additional funding to support expected growth in food needs, including ensuring that culturally competent, nutritious meals remain consistently available.

The City must ensure inflation costs are included annually in future budgets for congregate meals at OACs. The City must **increase food budgets at older adult centers with a $60 million**

investment in FY27 to meet inflation demands for congregate meal services. This $60 million figure is consistent with an analysis of the on-the-ground needs from UNH and our advocacy partners, taking into account inflation rates and the true cost of food for OACs, which has risen much faster than inflation rates. **We also urge contract flexibility and additional funding to meet the expected growing demand for congregate meals in light of federal SNAP cuts and ABAWD requirements for SNAP.** Food insecurity remains high among older adults, and anything the City can do to address these needs should be embraced.

Home Delivered Meals

Nonprofit home delivered meals (HDM) providers deliver a daily nutritious meal to homebound older adults who are unable to prepare their own food, while also providing case management and regular in-person wellness checks for those at risk of social isolation. Eight UNH members currently provide home delivered meals in their communities, either as lead contractors or subcontractors. We deeply appreciate the Council's support over the last few years in securing funding for a higher reimbursement rate for the HDM program. Since 2021, the per-meal reimbursement rate has increased from $9.58 to $14.78 per meal. This is a significant and essential improvement.

Older adult hunger is at a crisis level. For many homebound older adults, the HDM program is the only food they are receiving for all of their nutritional needs, and they will stretch the meal to last all day. We need to look toward expanding this system and providing more meals to those who need them. We call for a **$30 million investment to operationalize Council Member Lee's Intro 280, which requires the City to pay for meals 7 days a week.** Currently, weekend and holiday home-delivered meals are provided through a public-private partnership with Citymeals on Wheels. Intro 280 shifts the responsibility from Citymeals on Wheels to regular NYC Aging home delivered meal contracts, allowing Citymeals to provide additional meals per day. Expanding home delivered meals is critical to addressing food insecurity among older adults and ensuring homebound seniors receive nutritious meals.

Capital Improvements for Older Adult Centers

Older adults deserve dignified spaces to provide them with healthy meals, fun activities, classes, fitness programs and social services. However, NYC Aging-funded programs often face major difficulties with aging buildings and equipment upkeep. Systemwide needs include infrastructure upgrades, HVAC repairs, accessibility upgrades, technology systems, kitchen equipment, bathroom repairs, and more. Providers frequently express problems with leaks and flooding after storms, and note that these are becoming more frequent as climate change accelerates the rate and intensity of weather-related disasters.

Capital funds play an important role in high-quality service provision by keeping buildings and equipment in a state of good repair. Unfortunately, aging services programs have a number of long-standing capital needs that continue to grow. These issues vary by provider and include building repairs, renovations, kitchen equipment, HVAC units, vehicle repairs and replacements, and more. Without sufficient capital funding streams available, these repair needs are exacerbated, and can result in interrupting service delivery when buildings or equipment become unsafe. For example, HVAC units may break down, meaning a cooling center may not

be able to open and keep older adults safe in a heat wave. Tumultuous weather may cause a roof to leak, leaving spaces inoperable until repairs can be made.

We were incredibly grateful that in the FY26 Budget, the Council allocated $5 million in expense funding to fund repairs to older adult center infrastructure across the city. Several UNH members receive this funding and report positive results with their ongoing repair work. One of our members just began upgrading their OAC office and computer room. **We urge the Council to expand the emergency infrastructure fund from $5 million to $10 million to keep centers accessible and ensure critical infrastructure needs are met.**

Council Mental Health Initiatives

In FY 2027, UNH recommends the City Council restore funding to all 15 of the previously-funded DOHMH Mental Health Council Initiatives with some targeted increases, for a total value of $47.2 million. Nineteen UNH members provide services through City Council Mental Health initiatives.

We greatly appreciate the Council's long-standing support for these programs that bring mental health services to vulnerable populations in their own communities. Year after year, these initiatives provide crucial funding to nonprofit providers to offer mental health services in non-clinical community settings, including community centers, senior centers, and early childhood programs. Despite the fact that the funding must be restored each year by the Council instead of being on more stable multi-year contracts, the funding is flexible and allows providers to best meet their hyper-local needs through creative solutions to distinct mental health challenges.

Further, while many mental health programs were baselined by the City as part of the 2015 ThriveNYC initiative, these Council initiatives continue to be important because several of the Thrive programs changed scopes of services and were structured in a way that prevented existing providers from applying. For example, many of UNH's settlement house members were excluded from applying to serve as host sites for NYC Aging's Geriatric Mental Health Program due to rigid selection methodology.

Funding levels for these initiatives have fluctuated over the last several years. In addition, resources have not kept pace with inflation or community need, putting providers under significant financial strain.

This year, to ensure these vital initiatives can keep up with rising costs and provide high quality services, we urge the Council to provide at least a 3% increase to match the citywide human services COLA initiative, thus allowing providers to address the increasing costs to provide these services to their communities. In addition, we recommend targeted increases for three initiatives: Court-Involved Youth Mental Health, Mental Health Clubhouses, and Peer Specialist Supports. **It is crucial that the Council at a minimum restore and invest all of this funding in the FY 2027 budget ($47.27 million total).**

Specific funding levels in FY25 that must be maintained in FY26 include:

Autism Awareness	$3,359,704
Children Under Five	$1,602,917
Court-Involved Youth Mental Health	$6,850,000
Developmental, Psychological, & Behavioral Health	$2,323,157
Emergency Medical Services Mental Health and Wellness	$1,030,000
LGBTQIA Youth All-Borough Mental Health	$1,236,000
Mental Health Clubhouses	$3,790,000
Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations	$3,809,990
Mental Health Workforce Retention & Development	$309,000
NYC 988 Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Hotline	$5,150,000
Older Adults Mental Health	$3,450,005
Opioid Prevention & Treatment	$3,167,250
Peer Specialist Supports	$6,000,000
Trauma Recovery Centers	$4,944,000
Youth Peer Support	$257,500

Prevention Services

We are deeply concerned with the proposed cuts to funding for Prevention Services in the Executive Budget, and to ask for immediate restoration of these cuts.

For decades, New York City has invested in supporting families with prevention services. This has resulted in an impressive service network, and New York City has been a national leader in supporting families and keeping families safely together. Prioritizing prevention services and supporting families has successfully reduced the number of children in NYC foster care from over 13,000 a decade ago to a historic low of 6,300 today. These programs provide critical support and guidance for New York City families, and create pathways to food, clothing, housing, education, and access to medical and mental health services. Families receive the necessary oversight and support for children to remain safely at home as prevention programs' staff work collectively with families to address challenges that brought them to the attention of the child welfare system. This has also been an important City and State partnership, as now for decades, New York State has contributed significant reimbursement back to counties (now at 62%) for investments made in prevention services.

Due to cuts included in the Executive Budget, these same prevention services are now at risk. Prevention services serve as a safety net for children and families and represent significant cost savings for the city. These proposed cuts to prevention represent a departure from the City's long-standing direction to invest in family support.

The Administration must immediately restore the proposed $2.7 million in cuts to prevention services. If these cuts are implemented, four agencies (Good Shepherd Services, Forestdale, CAMBA, and Coalition for Hispanic Family Services), 49 staff, and 360 families in Brooklyn and Queens will be directly affected. Furthermore, because every day is critical in a child's life, we urge that these restorations be made immediately and that the four impacted provider agencies be promptly informed that their contracts will be reinstated. This decision should not be delayed until June 30. Stability and predictability for families are paramount in prevention services and we must eliminate the uncertainty families are now feeling today as to how they will be supported after June 30. The staff deserve to know that their jobs are secure. As of this writing, the provider agencies have not received written notification from ACS regarding the prevention cuts or a timeline for closing programs. To prepare and manage the challenge of closing programs safely and deliberately, providers have already withdrawn offers to candidates currently in the hiring process and are moving toward staff layoffs. Moreover, agencies are struggling to halt program expansions, pause existing restoration projects, and manage long-term leasing contracts. Unfortunately, due to the significant fiscal impact across agency programs not slated for cuts, some providers are considering returning other human services contracts to the city. Should agencies be forced to make such decisions, the resulting ripple effect on children, families, and communities will be devastating, and the cost to the City cannot be overstated.

Additionally, the fiscal impact on the city exceeds the $2.7 million in proposed cuts to the city tax levy dollars. Prevention services funds are reimbursed by the State at a rate of 62% to all counties. This means the City's proposed cut of $2.7 million in city tax levy will result in $4.3 million in state funds being left unclaimed. Consequently, the total loss to prevention services will amount to $7 million. The city should maximize every dollar available to invest in keeping families together.

Families currently receiving these prevention services are being informed that their relationships with staff and providers will soon change. Any change carries the risk that families may discontinue the prevention program if their case is transferred to a different provider agency, notwithstanding the potential safety risks to children who are no longer enrolled in services.

Given the unique circumstances surrounding the approaching end of the budget process, the provider agencies' fiscal years, and the specific needs of the families served by prevention services programs, it is important to note that there is a precedent for reversing preliminary decisions regarding targeted cuts through last-minute executive or legislative restorations. This practice has been in place for over a decade. We strongly urge the City to continue investing in keeping families together by restoring the cuts to prevention services.

Nonprofit Contracting

As we've testified before, there are numerous problems plaguing the nonprofit contracting system, including late payments and chronically low pay for staff. There are a number of policy proposals designed to strengthen the nonprofit contracting system and alleviate some of these problems. We support various efforts to address these urgent issues, including the following proposals:

Intro 452 (Stevens) - Establishing wage requirements for city-contracted human services workers
UNH supports Intro 452 (sponsored by Council Member Stevens) to establish wage requirements for City-contracted human service workers, which would require City agencies to include sufficient funding to cover those wages in contracts, and track implementation of those wages by human service contractors.

While developing a system of human services worker titles and corresponding civil service titles will be arduous and will require careful analysis, we cannot continue to ignore the need. For years, the government at every level has asked nonprofit partners to "do more with less." This dynamic has pushed our sector to a real breaking point, and our workforce has suffered the consequences. It's time for us to look beyond stopgap measures and towards efforts that would have a long-lasting impact on the human service sector.

One potential problem to note is that the bill creates potential staffing complications for settlement houses and other community-based organizations that blend funds from city, state, federal, and private sources. Unless other funding sources agree to increase budgets for New York City contractors to match New York City's funding-levels, providers with blended-budgets will struggle with internal wage differentials for similar positions (i.e. a human service worker on a state contract with similar responsibilities to one on a city contract may be paid less than prevailing wage unless the state agrees to adjust contract budgets to match the city's prevailing wage schedule). The City should encourage New York State to engage in a similar process for human service contracts

UNH urges the Council to pass this legislation and ensure that sufficient funding is included to limit major disruptions to programs.

Intro 514-2024 - Interest to be paid on late contract payments to non-profit contractors
This bill, which was introduced in 2023 but not yet reintroduced in this session, would require interest to be paid on late payments under City contracts with nonprofit organizations. Due to late payments, many providers have been forced to take out loans and lines of credit, which incur interest, all because of the City's delayed payments. In other words, nonprofits are effectively floating the City money. Intro 982 sends a clear message to the Administration to address the backlog and cover any costs incurred in the future. Short of guaranteeing that the City would register contracts and make payments on time every time, this bill is the next best thing, because it ensures that the consequences of late payments are not borne by nonprofits when delays are often out of their control. UNH strongly supports this bill and appreciates the sponsors for their support.

Intro 482-2024: Public procurement database
UNH supports transparency initiatives, and therefore supports the formerly introduced Intro 482-2024, which would establish a searchable, online database containing information from all stages of the contracting process for every mayoral agency procurement that exceeds the small purchase limits. Should the public procurement database become law, UNH urges City agencies to leverage existing proposals and reporting from contractors to update and maintain the database, given that providers already report on the data called out in the bill. City agencies should not pass the reporting burden on to contractors by requiring additional paperwork above and beyond what is already required of them as current reporting is more than sufficient to comply with the law.

Ensure Agencies follow the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR)

Several City agencies require providers to default to a 10% *de minimis* indirect rate in their program budgets, saying that rates will be adjusted later rather than including their higher federally-approved or CPA-certified indirect rate. This has led to confusion and mistrust as agencies do not want to undercount their costs in their budgets, with no guarantee that those rates will be adjusted to their actual ICR. This provides yet another procedural delay in the payment process. Agencies should never require contracts to use the 10% *de minimis* rate if they have a higher accepted ICR.

Testimony of United Way of New York City
Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance
Public Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Dear Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Finance,

United Way of New York City (UWNYC) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget.

For over 85 years, UWNYC has coordinated resources and advocacy to ensure low-income New Yorkers can access essential services and support.

Through a network of more than 600 community-based partners, UWNYC directly funds and strengthens over 400 food pantries, soup kitchens, mobile meal providers, and SNAP enrollment specialists across the five boroughs each year.

UWNYC also plays a critical role in standing up programs that foster safe communities throughout the city we call home, including through partnerships with schools and mental health providers to serve our youth.

Our testimony here uplifts three of UWNYC's priorities for the FY27 budget: the Community Food Connection program, which anchors the city's emergency food network; Atlas, UWNYC's citywide violence-prevention initiative; and the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, a culturally responsive curriculum for New York City Public Schools. Each is a community-based investment that the budget should protect and bolster.

UWNYC urges the Council and the Administration to baseline $100 million for the Community Food Connection (CFC) program in the FY27 Adopted Budget. The Mayor's Executive Budget takes an important step forward, and we ask the Council and the Administration to build on it and close the remaining gap, so the network of 700+ emergency food providers can meet rising demand.

We also recommend sustained funding for Atlas in FY27, to remain consistent with existing Atlas contracts.

UWNYC also urges the Council to fund the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative at $6,507,000 in FY27, the third year of a citywide effort to build a culturally responsive curriculum for New York City Public Schools.

The Executive Budget Moves CFC in the Right Direction

UWNYC commends Mayor Mamdani for significantly increasing baseline CFC funding in the FY27 Preliminary and Executive Budgets. This is a meaningful shift away from the year-to-year emergency restorations that have defined CFC's recent history, and toward the consistent, predictable funding the network requires.

UWNYC doesn't take this increased investment lightly. For the past two budget cycles, CFC was on the chopping block. The Mayor's decision to baseline this funding signals that this Administration understands CFC as core infrastructure, not a discretionary line.

The remaining gap is the difference between meaningful and sufficient. UWNYC is asking the Mayoral administration and the NYC Council to work together to close it and bring CFC to a $100 million baseline.

CFC Is the Backbone of NYC's Emergency Food Network

CFC, administered by the Department of Social Services/HRA, is New York City's primary baseline funding stream for direct community food assistance. The program's FY25 Impact Report, released earlier this year, highlights:

- 703 providers supported across the five boroughs.
- 47.1 million pounds of food distributed.
- 37.2 million pantry visits recorded in FY25, a 5.4% increase over FY24.
- 19% of the citywide Supply Gap closed, and 24% closed in TRIE neighborhoods identified by the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity.

Most importantly, CFC provides predictable, multi-use grants that let local organizations plan ahead, staff adequately, and invest in the refrigeration, equipment, and capacity they need to operate.

Demand Is Rising, While Federal Support Collapses

Pantry visits across NYC remain elevated, and the families waiting in line are being squeezed by rent and food prices. UWNYC's ALICE metric shows that half of New York City's households, roughly 1.3 million families, lack the income to consistently meet their basic needs. More than 1 in 7 NYC residents are food insecure.

At the same time, the federal infrastructure that has historically bolstered this system is fragmenting:

- H.R. 1, signed into law on July 4, 2025, is the largest cut to federal food assistance in U.S. history. It is projected to remove more than 300,000 NYC households from SNAP through harsher work requirements, restricted utility allowances, and a Thrifty Food Plan freeze.
- The same law puts 1.5 million New Yorkers' Medicaid coverage at risk, a parallel hit that compounds household financial pressure and drives more families toward emergency food.
- Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) reimbursements were previously suspended. Of note, payments restarted April 30, 2026 following a prolonged disruption.
- USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) funding for New York is set to expire.

- Beginning in FY29, H.R. 1 shifts a share of SNAP benefit costs onto states based on payment error rates, creating sustained downstream pressure on the state and city budgets that fund emergency food.

While food insecurity is rising, federal support for these programs is falling. Providers across the UWNYC network are responding the only way they can: rationing food, limiting hours, deferring equipment repairs. Smaller pantries, often the ones closest to the highest-need neighborhoods, are the most exposed.

Why it is Crucial to Provide Baselined Funding for CFC at $100 Million

Baselining matters as much as the number. Year-to-year uncertainty is itself a cost, as pantries cannot hire, sign leases, or plan capital investments against funding that might or might not return. Baselined funding lets the network operate effectively.

Reaching a $100 million baseline does three things:

- Sustains direct service at the moment demand is highest. It keeps 700+ pantries and soup kitchens operational as H.R. 1's SNAP cuts land on top of an already-stretched network.
- Funds capacity. Multi-use grants let providers invest in the refrigeration, staffing, and infrastructure that determine whether food actually reaches families.
- Prioritizes equity. CFC dollars flow through community-based organizations rooted in the neighborhoods they serve. UWNYC's ALICE research shows that nearly half of New York households are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, working families above the federal poverty line but below the cost of living. These are the families most affected by SNAP cuts, and the families CFC reaches.

No New Yorker should have to choose between rent and dinner. Pantries and soup kitchens should never have to ration meals or turn families away. A $100 million baseline for CFC in FY27 emphasizes that food is a basic survival resource, and that resilient, community-led food systems are central to the functioning of a just and equitable city.

UWNYC stands with Food Bank for New York City, City Harvest, and the more than 400 frontline providers in our network in recommending this request.

Atlas: A Public Health Model of Safety

UWNYC's second funding recommendation is for the Atlas program, a citywide violence-prevention initiative that UWNYC coordinates with the Department of Youth and Community Development and the Office of Neighborhood Safety. Atlas's Functional Family Therapy (FFT) program is a short-term, evidence-based family counseling model for youth and young adults at elevated risk of violence, many of them referred by the courts, schools, or the juvenile justice system. Functional Family Therapy is recognized as a Model program by Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development and rated Effective by the federal CrimeSolutions clearinghouse, which finds that it reduces recidivism among justice-involved youth. The

Washington State Institute for Public Policy, a leading source for cost-benefit analysis of justice programs, finds that Functional Family Therapy returns more in public savings than it costs to deliver.

Trained therapists deliver Atlas FFT in offices, homes, schools, and other community settings, working with a young person and the people closest to them to interrupt the conflict and isolation that lead to violence.

UWNYC's own data show the model is working:

- 80% of Atlas participants had no pretrial arrest.
- 92% of Atlas participants had no pretrial violent felony arrest.
- 1,480 referrals and 854 families served to date.

The fiscal case is just as clear. Holding one person on Rikers Island costs roughly $550,000 per year. Serving one youth through an Atlas community program costs less than $30,000.

Prevention rooted in those relationships keeps young people out of the justice system and anchored in school, work, and family.

Building the Capacity to Deliver Safety

Atlas reaches New Yorkers only because community-based organizations deliver it. UWNYC provides capacity-building support to every Atlas partner: hands-on help with staffing, data, and the operational systems that let a community organization deliver an evidence-based model with fidelity.

UWNYC sees daily how thin the margins are for the organizations that carry this work: stretched staff, limited infrastructure, and long waitlists for the services families need. When the City invests in their capacity, it builds public safety that lasts, because the organizations that prevent violence stay standing.

Atlas and capacity building work together. Atlas reaches young people and families before harm hardens into a justice-system record. Capacity building keeps the organizations that deliver that work standing. Together they describe what durable public safety looks like at the neighborhood level.

Since 2020, Atlas has brought this evidence-based model to the neighborhoods that carry the heaviest burden of violence. UWNYC urges the Council and the Administration to sustain funding for Atlas in the FY27 Adopted Budget, so the initiative can continue reaching the young people and families who need it most.

The Latinidad Curriculum Initiative

UWNYC's third funding recommendation is the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, a citywide effort to build a culturally responsive PK-12 curriculum that reflects the histories, cultures, and contributions of Latine communities in New York City Public Schools. UWNYC urges the Council

to fund the initiative at $6,507,000 in FY27. UWNYC serves as project lead and convener, alongside the Edmund W. Gordon Institute for Advanced Study at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Hispanic Federation.

In a city where roughly 430,000 public-school students are Latino, this is a core investment in educational equity. The curriculum gives teachers classroom-ready resources across grade bands, aligned with content-area standards in English language arts, mathematics, STEM, social studies, and multilingual learning, so that students study and understand the Latine experience as part of how the city teaches history, civics, literature, and the arts.

FY27 is the third and final year of the initiative's development. Funding this year finalizes and pilots the PK-12 curriculum and builds the professional learning and teacher training that district-wide adoption requires.

This investment also supports the Community Through Learning Collaborative, which expands implementation and teacher training across the city's culturally responsive curricula, including Jewish, MENA, AAPI, and LGBTQ studies. The result is a stronger foundation for every student to see their community reflected in what they learn.

Thank you for your time and your continued partnership.

Respectfully submitted,

United Way of New York City

About Us

United Way of New York City has been serving low-income New Yorkers for over 85 years. As a backbone organization, we coordinate cross-sector efforts across food access, education, health equity, and economic mobility. Through a network of more than 600 community-based partners, we connect resources to where they're needed most and advocate for structural solutions to poverty. Our work centers equity, trust, and long-term impact, because every New Yorker deserves the opportunity to thrive.

UNLOCK NYC

New York City Council
Budget Hearings - Public Testimony

Testimony of Mar Maguire, Report Intake Specialist & Community Outreach Coordinator
Unlock NYC
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. My name is Mar Maguire and I am the report intake specialist and community outreach coordinator at Unlock NYC, a tech nonprofit led by women who have experienced source of income (SOI) discrimination. At Unlock NYC, our mission is to equip voucher holders with the paper trail, voice, and connections to create accountability when they face housing discrimination. We're creating a power shift where landlords and brokers fear the social and financial costs of illegally discriminating against voucher holders. The majority of tenants who use our tools are currently experiencing homelessness, either staying in a shelter (36%), living doubled up with family (24%), or on the street (4%). **SOI discrimination is a vicious barrier that keeps New Yorkers homeless.**

Since launching our reporting tool in 2021, **we have received over 3,500 complaints of SOI discrimination, and referred over 1000 of these reports to the NYC Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) for further action.** As the enforcement agency tasked with protecting New Yorkers from discrimination in housing and employment, CCHR has effective tools at its disposal to combat SOI discrimination and house homeless New Yorkers.

Unfortunately, **CCHR desperately needs more funding and staffing.** The Commission has had to do more and more work with dwindling resources. In nearly every year in the past decade, the City Council has added to the NYC Human Rights Law in some way. Most recently, the Council passed the Fair Chance Act to ban employers from using criminal records in hiring decisions. We all know the work, the community power and advocacy that goes into codifying human rights protections in NYC. While having the country's most expansive Human Rights Law is commendable, these valuable protections are toothless without proper resources to enforce them. So we must ask: **what good are laws if they can't be enforced?**

We call on the Mayor to reverse course and invest in the Commission so that it is funded at $25 million in FY27. This is less than 0.02 percent of the City's $127 billion FY2027 preliminary budget – it's pennies, a rounding error, a fraction of a fraction that will pay for itself.

The Human and Financial Cost of Understaffing CCHR

The capacity strain at the Commission has a direct impact on the lives of low-income New Yorkers. The current wait time for an intake appointment is up to six months, while cases take years to be brought to court. Formal complaints languish for months (or years) without resolution, and are sometimes “administratively closed” with no clear motive. This waiting process is particularly crushing for homeless New Yorkers who are in a race against the clock to find an apartment before their voucher expires. Furthermore, the lack of enforcement sends the wrong message to discriminators, who continue their illegal practices knowing that they are unlikely to face any consequences.

Progress has been made, thanks to the efforts of the New York City Council. The FY2024 Adopted Budget included $1.3 million for CCHR’s specialized SOI Unit, which carries out a mediation program called Pre-Complaint Interventions (PCIs).

The Impact of PCIs

Every week, I work with voucher holders who have been ghosted, denied, and given the runaround–hundreds and thousands of times. What I've seen actually work: CCHR's pre-complaint interventions. Their PCIs give voucher holders a direct shot at justice–not a court date months from now, but a phone call or email that changes everything within days, sometimes hours.

I’ll give you a real example: Walter was living in a shelter. He found an apartment on StreetEasy and called a broker. The broker's tone was condescending from the start. He told Walter he couldn't tour the unit because the building had violations and wouldn't pass inspection. Walter later told me: "Why am I getting punished for their building not being up to code?"

Then came the real reason: the broker said verbatim he'd lose money waiting for the inspection. Profit over people, plain and simple. I've seen it before–and it goes unchecked until CCHR steps in.

Thankfully, Walter had recorded the call. He reported to Unlock NYC. We sent his case to CCHR. Within days, CCHR initiated a pre-complaint intervention. They told the broker he had one chance to do things right before they filed a formal complaint. And just like that–the disrespect vanished. The broker changed his tune immediately. He apologized. He made excuses. But more importantly: he complied. That is what enforcement looks like.

Walter got a fair shot at viewing and applying for the apartment. A man who had been treated as less than human, as an inconvenience to profit, was suddenly treated as a renter with rights. In all his time searching for an apartment, it wasn’t until CCHR advocated for his rights as a voucher holder that Walter was able to view and apply for an apartment.

Voucher holders deserve the opportunity to become tenants and achieve tangible justice. Today, not someday. Because for families facing eviction or living in shelters, that speed is survival. Our city's human rights laws are only as powerful as they can be enforced. CCHR is where New Yorkers turn for that enforcement–a phone call that actually puts a roof over someone’s head.

Record It, Report It is what we preach. It's how we get people housed. I urge you to fund the City Commission on Human Rights. Because every day, another Walter is waiting for his fair shot. And only enforcement gets him there.

Investing in enforcement to combat SOI discrimination is a cost-saving measure.

In the last year alone CCHR has secured long term affordable housing for 31 households who reported source of income discrimination to the commission. If we take it that one year in a NYC shelter costs the city $95,000, keeping these 31 households housed saved the city $3 million, and that's just this year alone.

This year CCHR also secured 70 set aside units exclusively for voucher holders. Another 1,000 units are either currently occupied by voucher holders or are being held for them as part of commission initiated set aside settlements. The commission's enforcement actions have saved the city many millions, in this case $100 million, and won stable, long-term housing for low income new yorkers.[1]

In our current housing market, turning down applicants with housing vouchers is the norm. SOI discrimination is the most pervasive form of housing bias in New York City,[2] and landlords have adapted their techniques over the years to become increasingly hard to catch. Our organization has cataloged over 20 discrimination tactics, including changing the price of the apartment after a voucher holder applies, creating a separate "waitlist" for voucher holders, not responding to an applicant after they reveal their voucher, steering voucher holders to substandard housing units, implementing exclusionary income requirements, exploiting the gross/net effective rent loophole and many more.

While PCIs are incredibly effective in reversing illegal denials, they are not enough to create a robust enforcement landscape that deters the real estate industry from perpetrating SOI discrimination.

Our Ask: Protect the People, Fund the Commission

Funding CCHR at $25 million is the baseline needed to ensure New Yorkers are protected in practice, not just on paper.

Without proper SOI enforcement, vouchers cannot be an effective tool to alleviate our daunting homelessness crisis. SOI discrimination does not happen in a vacuum; research suggests that SOI discrimination may serve as a proxy for racial discrimination[3] and that it

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[1] See CCHR's Executive Budget Testimony from 5/27/26

[2] ibid

[3] Scott and Uprety, "In the District, Source of Income Discrimination Is Race Discrimination Too – Equal Rights Center;" Tighe, Hatch, and Mead, "Source of Income Discrimination and Fair Housing Policy."

disproportionately impacts women, the elderly, and the disabled.[4] The Commission is the agency responsible for protecting New Yorkers from these myriad forms of discrimination.

The Commission's proposed FY2026 budget of $15.4 million and FY2027 budget of $14.3 million, is infinitely small compared to the immense mission it has been tasked with. T**he Commission's entire budget would remain less than 0.02% of the City's total budget.**

We urge the Mayor and the City Council to **increase the NYC Commission on Human Rights' budget by 11 million dollars, to $25 million.** Our ask includes:

- Restore the proposed cuts to the Commission
- Add $10 million more to CCHR's budget to total $25 million
- Permit CCHR to hire at top of the salary range for all lines (investigators & attorneys)

As New Yorkers, we pride ourselves on our culture of acceptance–but without the Commission, it is an illusion and not a reality. We look forward to continuing to work with our allies in City Council to build a robust anti-discrimination landscape and house our homeless neighbors.

We thank the Council for its consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,
Mar Maguire
Report Intake Specialist and Community Outreach Coordinator, Unlock NYC |
mar@weunlock.nyc

[4] Bluthenthal, "The Disproportionate Burden of Eviction on Black Women."

The Upper Manhattan Early Childhood Connect (UMECC) is a cross-sector effort to promote school readiness. Initiated by Columbia University Medical Center and New York Presbyterian Hospital, UMECC is coordinated by Literacy in Community (LINC), a nonprofit that is the backbone partner for the City Council's only early literacy initiative, City's First Readers.

UMECC has focused its efforts on early intervention. Early intervention or EI refers to targeted services and supports provided to babies and young children (usually from birth to age three) who have or are at risk for developmental delays. The most common pathway to receiving early intervention services is a referral from a pediatric healthcare provider but the system for registering for those services is bureaucratic and often baffling to the families who need them. As a trained pediatrician, I have witnessed this become a barrier that deprives children of developmental support that would greatly benefit them.

UMECC's ambassadors are bilingual, trained individuals who have had personal experience with the early intervention system. They are credible and trusted messengers about the benefits of children receiving services, providing personalized, handholding guidance from initial contact through every step of the EI process and its successor support system, the Preschool Special Education Committee which serves children beginning at age three. UMECC's mission quickly expanded to include the Committee on Preschool Special Education because the same challenges that families face in seeking Early Intervention services are barriers to this resource as well. A further obstacle includes a perception that labeling a child as needing special support will be harmful.

UMECC ambassadors not only refute that mistaken but widely held belief, they coordinate a Family Advisory Council consisting of 30+ community members who currently or previously have dealt with either or both EI or CPSE services. This advisory group grounds our work and is enhanced by a second advisory group consisting of 15+ community based organizations or entities like Community School Districts in Northern Manhattan which serve families with programming for children from prenatal through five years.

Our programming at UMECC aligns perfectly with the city's new emphasis on 2K. We urge the City Council and the Mayor's Office to consider how this work can amplify the impact of their other early childhood education efforts. Learning to read begins at birth and what a child experiences before they even enter a classroom can determine their trajectory. We know that early intervention can help children to achieve reading proficiency, which by third grade becomes the single most important way knowledge is acquired. It makes so much sense to invest in programs like UMECC that will support children in reaching their full potential.

Upper Manhattan Early Childhood Connect (UMECC)
5030 Broadway, Suite 641 • New York, NY 10034
212-620-5462 • umecc.org • skothari@lincnyc.org

I know that the cost of providing such early support is a real factor, especially in lean years. But the cost of not providing such support is far greater - not only for the detrimental impact on individual children but the long term consequences for our economy and social structure.

This year for the first time UMECC has applied for Council funding. I hope you will consider the positive impact of investing in UMECC. Some of NYC's most vulnerable children are depending on you.

Sejal Kothari, MD, MPH
Program Director of Upper Manhattan Early Childhood Connect

skothari@lincnyc.org

Visit our programs! | www.lincnyc.org
5030 Broadway, Suite 641
New York, NY 10034
212-620-5462 ext. 125

Please fund $1.5M for spay/neuter and $2M for pet food pantries

As the co founder and president to Urban Cat League, Inc. a group working for 20 years to fill the gaps in the care of animals in NYC, I am appealing directly to **Budget Chair Linda Lee, Speaker Julie Menin, and Mayor Mamdani** to fund these critical services. Please fund $1.5M for spay/neuter and $2M for pet food pantries

Sincerely, Mike Phillips

- Right now, more than half of New Yorkers cannot afford a basic veterinary office visit. Animal rescuers are overwhelmed by the growing number of stray and abandoned animals who need help — with no financial or logistical support from the city.
- Families are surrendering the animals they love because they cannot access resources — adding even more pressure to NYC's already strained rescue community and shelter system.
- NYC spends just $2.98 per person on animal care — among the lowest of any major U.S. city.
- 75% of dogs entering ACC are unfixed.
- 193,000 spay/neuter surgeries are needed annually for community cats and owned pets who cannot afford them. The city funds only 3,500 surgeries.
- No New Yorker should have to choose between feeding themselves and feeding their pet.
- Affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter keep animals where they belong — at home with the people who love them.
- As cost barriers are removed, adoptions will increase and preventable euthanasia will decrease.
- Fewer cats will suffer outdoors

URBAN JUSTICE CENTER | Freedom Agenda

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Finance

June 10, 2026

Submitted by Darren Mack, Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

Chair Lee and Council members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm Darren Mack, Co-Director of Freedom Agenda. We are led by our members who have experienced incarceration themselves, or through a loved one. We're one of the organizations leading the Campaign to Close Rikers.

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create safety. The Executive Budget eliminates some waste in DOC's budget, and restores what would have been devastating cuts to mental health, diversion and reentry programs, **but we'll need to do more than maintain the status quo to get Rikers closed.** Specifically, we need at least:

- **$39.2M more to meet mental health needs in the community** through investments in Intensive Mobile Treatment, Assertive Community Treatment, an outpatient competency restoration pilot program, Crisis Respite Centers, and capital funding for new dual-diagnosis residential treatment beds.
- **$47.3M more for diversion and reentry programs** including funding alternative to incarceration and reentry programs to scale, expanding mental health programs for court-involved youth, and opening new units of low-barrier housing for people with court involvement and mental health diagnoses.
- **$3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction and increase their oversight capacity.**

The City Council has fought hard in the past few years for investments in evidence-based programs that strengthen communities and keep people out of Rikers. These programs are not just effective, they're also popular. A recent survey of crime survivors in New York City showed that 3 of 4 preferred alternatives to incarceration and mental health treatment instead of jail.

And yet, more than 1,000 people still sit on waiting lists for community-based mental health treatment. In the meantime, too many spiral into crisis, are met with police instead of healthcare workers, and end up at Rikers, where their health almost always deteriorates. ATI and reentry programs also remain underfunded, while Riker is set to operate at a cost of **$2.96B in FY27**.

New York City CAN afford to invest in these programs that work. The Executive Budget eliminates 586 vacancies for uniformed officers at the Department of Correction. That's a good start, but at least 715 of these vacancies remain. Eliminating them could free up $96 million – an amount that could pay for the budget needs we outlined, with money to spare.

The budget also includes funding for 580 more police officers, at a time when NYPD is arresting more and more people who need housing and mental health services. Hiring more police will not address the reasons why people are sleeping on the subway or stealing food, but it will consume funding that could be used to address their needs.

The FY2027 budget will show this Mayor's priorities, along with the City Council's. We need an Adopted Budget that shows the City is serious about taking a whole of government approach to meeting its moral and legal obligation to close Rikers. We are not there yet, and we cannot afford another year of arresting and jailing our neighbors who need housing and healthcare, and then being surprised when they cycle back through Rikers.

Included with this testimony is full budget analysis **that outlines the amendments needed to align the FY27 budget with closing Rikers Island.**

As we look toward closing Rikers, we also need to begin planning for the repurposing of the land to benefit impacted communities, and our entire community. **We urge the City Council to ensure the adopted budget includes $10 million to conduct a master plan for Renewable Rikers.**

We also strongly support the proposal put forward by the People's Plan to collect on the billions owed to the City by the largest lawbreaking corporations.

Thank you,

Darren Mack

Co-Director, Freedom Agenda

Dmack@urbanjustice.org

[attached – FY2027 Campaign to Close Rikers Executive Budget Analysis]

CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE * DEFEND * DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

FY2027 City Budget Analysis & Priorities

At a cost of nearly half a million dollars per person per year, Rikers Island is the most expensive and least effective tool our City has to create community safety. The FY2027 Executive Budget includes some key steps toward reining in jail operation costs, and reinvesting those savings in true public safety. And in order to Close Rikers as quickly as possible, we'll need to do more. To align the FY2027 budget with the City's legal and moral obligation to Close Rikers, it must include:

1. **An additional $39.2M to meet mental health needs outside of Rikers,** including:
    a. **At least $66.3M, baselined, for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams,** $22M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which should eliminate the current waitlist.[1]
    b. **At least $23.8M, baselined, for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT),** $4.5M more than the Executive Budget allocates.[2]
    c. **At least $6M, baselined, for Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT),** $2M more than the Executive Budget allocates, which provides both mental health and reentry services to people returning from jail and prison.[3]
    d. **$1.7M to establish an outpatient competency restoration pilot program** for 50-75 people who might otherwise be waiting at Rikers for transfer to a state hospital.
    e. **$3M in capital funds to support 60 new residential treatment beds** for people with serious mental illness and with co-occurring addictions.[4]
    f. **At least $8.8M, baselined, for crisis respite centers,** $6M more than the Executive Budget allocates, to open four new centers, in compliance with Local Law 118-2023.[5]
2. **An additional $47.2M for diversion and reentry services through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), including:**
    a. $10M in new funds for ATI programs and **$10M** in new funds for Reentry Services, as recommended by the ATI/Reentry Coalition, to scale up these evidence-based models.
    b. **$6.9M** to expand programs serving court-involved youth with mental health needs.
    c. **$20.3M**[6] to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.
    d. OCJ should also publish an analysis of the full need for transitional reentry housing, and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for Justice Impacted Supportive Housing (JISH), a permanent reentry housing model.[7]
3. **An additional $3.6M to restore cuts to the Board of Correction (BOC), and expand their oversight capacity.** The Executive Budget shows $605,000 in cuts to BOC's budget.[8] These cuts

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[1] Per DOHMH testimony on June 5, 2026, the waitlist is 600 people. Each new IMT team can serve 27 people.
[2] The combined waitlist for all ACT teams, including FACT and SPACT, was 654 people as of June 5, 2026 per DOHMH testimony. The City should also work with the state to eliminate the waitlist for all ACT teams.
[3] For FACT teams, the City adds approximately $675,000 per ACT team to supplement state funding by adding reentry specialists.
[4] State funding through OASAS would provide operational funds.
[5] The FY2026 budget for crisis respite centers was $5.3M, but only $2.8M in the FY2027 Preliminary Budget, as reported by DOHMH.
[6] Approximately $135,000 per unit, based on similar Safe Haven models.
[7] While JISH funding would come through DOHMH, OCJ coordinated the first (and only) data match, when the program was launched.
[8] $233,000 is associated with cutting two vacancies, and $374,437 is associated with cuts to OTPS

are unwise and unnecessary. The Board of Correction has testified that they need at least 60 staff roles (29 more than the Executive Budget includes)[9] to carry out their oversight responsibilities, as a first step to rightsizing their budget.[10] Expanding BOC's capacity could not only improve conditions in the jails, but also protect the city from future liability, like the $123 million dollars paid out in FY2025 for claims against DOC.

Meanwhile, DOC remains over-resourced. With new management in place, DOC can better deploy resources, not rush to fill vacancies. The FY2027 budget should build on smart vacancy reductions announced in the Executive Budget, and:

4. **Eliminate vacancies for DOC uniformed staff, to begin to rightsize the agency**
    a. The Executive Budget authorizes 6,474 positions for uniformed officers in FY2027 (down from 7,060 in FY2026), but as of January 1, 2026 DOC employed 5,759 officers and 1,301 positions were vacant.[11] Filling DOC's remaining 715 vacancies would cost an additional **$95.6M annually.**[12] These remaining vacancies should be eliminated, in order to reduce incarceration and cut wasteful spending.
5. **Reduce overtime spending** by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where 109 officers are still assigned.[13]
6. **Conduct and release a staffing analysis as soon as possible,** to determine how many staff DOC actually needs to operate the facilities it currently manages.

The Executive Budget also includes 580 more police officers, among a surge of low-level arrests that frequently impact New Yorkers who lack stable housing and need mental health services. These resources should instead be used for housing, healthcare, and other community-based interventions.

DOC Budget Breakdown

- The Executive Budget proposes spending at least **$2.96 billion**[14] **for jail operations in FY2027**. This represents a slight reduction from the FY2027 Preliminary budget, but still a 3.8% increase from last year's adopted budget.[15]
- The Executive Budget shows an authorized headcount of **6,474 uniformed DOC officers**. With approximately 6,600 people in custody, this amounts to a **staffing ratio that is still nearly 4 times higher than the national average**, and **2 times more officers** than will be required to operate the borough jails.[16]
- DOC is on track to spend **$369 million on overtime** for uniform staff in FY2026 - 229% of their adopted budget.[17]
- New York City spent at least **$485,801 annually to incarcerate one person** at Rikers in FY2025.
- Most of DOC's costs are driven by staffing. The FY2027 budget projects that 87% of DOC expenses will be staff salaries, overtime and benefits.

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[9] Based on testimony from the Board of Correction on March 7, 2025 that approximately 60 staff are needed to fulfill their mandate. BOC's proposed staffing in the F27 budget is 33 people, and total agency budget of $3.67M, per Departmental Estimates.
[10] Board of Corrections representatives previously advocated increasing their budget to a minimum percentage of DOC's.
[11] Per Independent Budget Office
[12] Based on $133,756 per officer, as calculated by the Vera Institute.
[13] City of New York Executive Budget Fiscal Year 2027, Supporting Schedules p. 1414
[14] Including expenses, associated fringe benefits, pensions, and debt service. Expense Revenue Contract Budget
[15] DOC's FY2026 Adopted Budget was $2.85 billion. A-Look-Inside-the-FY-2027-New-York-City-Department-of-Correction-Budget.pdf
[16] The Independent Rikers Commission estimates 3,240 officers will be needed in the borough jail system.
[17] Per Independent Budget Office

URBAN JUSTICE CENTER | Mental Health Project

New York City Council
Committee on Finance

Executive Budget Hearing – Fiscal Year 2027

Wednesday, June 10, 2026
Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY

Testimony of
Jennifer J. Parish
Director of Criminal Justice Advocacy
Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project
(646) 602-5644 • jparish@urbanjustice.org

The FY2027 budget should put New York City on a path toward ending its reliance on incarceration and reinforcing a social safety net that provides for the fundamental needs of all New Yorkers. With slight cuts in funding for corrections and police, the City can fund the mental health services, community supports, and housing needed to begin reducing the jail population. To address the humanitarian crisis at Rikers Island, jail oversight must also be adequately funded.

The Urban Justice Center Mental Health Project advocates for people with mental health concerns involved in the criminal legal system. We are deeply familiar with the difficulties people with mental health concerns who are involved in the criminal legal system have in accessing essential mental health services. We represent the *Brad H.* Class, all incarcerated individuals who are assessed as requiring mental health treatment while in NYC jails. Currently 60% of the jail population is enrolled in mental health services, and 23% – more than 1500 people – are diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

Community Mental Health Investments

The vast overrepresentation of people with mental health concerns, including serious mental illness, in the city jails demonstrates that our community mental health system is in tatters. Reinforcing and expanding that system is essential not only for the individuals who need that support but for achieving the goal of closing Rikers Island.

The FY2027 budget should include an additional $42.6 million to meet mental health needs *outside* of Rikers, including:

- At least $66.3 million, baselined, for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams, $22 million more than the Executive Budget allocates, to eliminate the current waitlist;
- At least $23.8 million, baselined, for Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), $4.5 million more than the Executive Budget allocates;
- At least $6 million, baselined, for Forensic ACT (FACT), $2 million more than the Executive Budget allocates, which provides both mental health and reentry services to people returning from jail and prison;
- $1.7 million to establish an outpatient competency restoration pilot program for 50 to 75 people who might otherwise be waiting at Rikers for transfer to a state hospital*;*
- $3 million in capital funds to support 60 new residential treatment beds for people with serious mental illness and co-occurring substance use;
- At least $8.8 million, baselined, for crisis respite centers, $6 million more than the Executive Budget allocates, to open four new centers, in compliance with Local Law 118-2023;
- $3.4 million to expand the Council's Court-Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative, for a total allocation of $6.8 million.

Alternatives to Incarceration, Reentry Services, and Housing

In addition, many people who are incarcerated on Rikers Island could remain in or be diverted to the community and avoid the abuse, neglect, and trauma that the city jails inflict on people detained there. With an additional $40.3 million for diversion and reentry services through the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, the City could prevent these harms. The needed services include the following:

- $10 million in new funds for ATI programs and $10 million in new funds for Reentry Services, as recommended by the ATI/Reentry Coalition, to scale up these evidence-based models;
- $20.3 million to establish at least 150 units of low-barrier housing for people with court-involvement and mental health diagnoses.

To determine the scope of the housing needs of this population, the Office of Criminal Justice should also publish an analysis of the full need for reentry housing and conduct a data match to generate an updated eligibility list for Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH), a permanent reentry housing model.

Jail Oversight

As long as the jails remain operational, the Board of Correction (BOC) must have adequate funding to provide the necessary oversight. The $605,000 cut to the BOC included in the

Executive Budget is unwise and unnecessary. To restore this cut and expand the Board's oversight capacity, an additional $3.6 million should be allocated. The Board has testified that they need at least 60 staff roles (29 more than the Executive Budget includes) to carry out their oversight responsibilities, as a first step toward rightsizing their budget.

Excessive Spending on Police and Corrections

The investments described above could easily be funded through modest reductions in the bloated Department of Correction (DOC) and Police Department budgets. The FY2027 budget should build on smart vacancy reductions announced in the Executive Budget and eliminate vacancies for DOC uniformed staff. The Executive Budget authorizes 6,474 positions for uniformed officers in FY2027 (down from 7,060 in FY2026), but as of January 1, 2026, DOC employed 5,759 officers, and 1,301 positions were vacant. Filling DOC's remaining 715 vacancies would cost an additional $95.6 million annually. These remaining vacancies should be eliminated to reduce incarceration and cut wasteful spending.

In addition, DOC could reduce overtime spending by consolidating operations and permanently closing jails on Rikers, starting with the vacant Anna M. Kross Center, where 109 officers are still assigned. To determine how many staff DOC actually needs to operate the facilities it currently manages, the City should conduct and release a staffing analysis as soon as possible.

The Executive Budget also includes 580 more police officers, among a surge of low-level arrests that frequently impact New Yorkers who lack stable housing and need mental health services. These resources should instead be used for housing, healthcare, and other community-based interventions.

Written Testimony
New York City Council
Committees on General Welfare and Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
June 4, 2026

Thank you, Chair Hudson and members of the Committees, for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Committee on General Welfare's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am a Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. I will be sharing budget priorities for support needed by nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing providers, as well as necessary investments to the CityFHEPS voucher program.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Procurement Reform & Prevailing Wage for Human Services Workers

The FY27 Budget must take decisive action to resolve payment issues for contracted nonprofits.

Nonprofits are contracted by the City to provide essential services on the government's behalf, but the City is not paying contracted nonprofits who deliver critical services to our city's residents most in need on time. In many instances, payments are made months after services have been provided. The NYC Comptroller's April 2025 report found over $1 billion in unpaid invoices for human service contracts, with at least $675 million for service dates in 2024 or earlier. Moreover, Nonprofit Finance Fund's 2025 survey showed 32% of NYC nonprofits received government funds more than 90 days late, compared to 10% of U.S. nonprofits overall.

The lack of normalcy when it comes to payments puts organizations like ours at risk. It makes it difficult to pay staff and vendors, and operate programs for the people we serve.

The FY27 Budget must take decisive action to create wage equity.

The sector is grateful for the multi-year COLA investment, and while that ends next year, we need to push for true wage equity, where nonprofit workers are not paid up to 30% less than their government counterparts. Government is not just the predominant funder of human services, but is also the main driver of human services salaries, either directly setting salary rates on contracts or doing so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract.

Our programs rely on case managers to connect the people we serve with services and resources to achieve their goals, maintenance workers to keep buildings clean and well-maintained, security staff to ensure the safety of our residents, and cooks to prepare healthy meals. Unfortunately, many human services organizations, including Urban Pathways, are struggling to fill essential positions; Urban Pathways currently has a 14% staff vacancy rate. Ultimately, this reality has the most negative impact on the people we serve, as staff vacancies strain service capacity and limit our ability to deliver consistent, high-quality care. Intro 0452 is a significant step toward ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts; by establishing a clear wage requirement system, it promotes transparency in compensation and ensures that every worker is paid based on their qualifications and experience.

To create a fair and transparent contracting system, the Council must:

- pass Int. 0452 **to align nonprofit and government human services job titles**, and through that, **raise salaries** for nonprofit human services workers;
- **drastically reform its procurement and payment process**, with additional staff, updated technology, increased efficiency and transparency, and a streamlined process that eliminates burden and barriers;
- pass Int. 514 for City agencies to **pay interest on late payments** to contracted nonprofits;
- **pay the true cost of the services** being provided through the term of its contracts.

<u>CityFHEPS: Increase Funding</u>

We urge the City Council to increase funding for the CityFHEPS voucher program.

As the federal government moves to significantly cut funding to housing, homelessness, and social safety net programs, it is imperative that our City government increase funding and expand access to programs like the CityFHEPS voucher that help New Yorkers escape and avoid

homelessness through rental assistance. New York City, the wealthiest city in the world, must protect its most vulnerable neighbors and prevent our homelessness crisis from worsening by allocating the necessary resources to expand the reach of the CityFHEPS voucher program in the FY27 budget.

Research shows rental vouchers significantly reduce homelessness and housing instability. Federal Housing Choice Vouchers reduce the poverty rate for recipients by 43% and provide long-term benefits to households that previously experienced homelessness. Despite evidence of the positive effects of rental assistance, there are not nearly enough vouchers to meet the need, and many HCVs will disappear soon due to federal funding cuts. Only one in four eligible households currently receive Housing Choice Vouchers, leaving households with little options to help them afford rent or escape homelessness. With increased funding, CityFHEPS has the potential to play a pivotal role in filling this gap, serving households at risk of losing their HCV, and ending New York City's homelessness crisis.

Investing in CityFHEPS is not just a moral imperative, it is the only fiscally responsible path forward. Shelter costs approximately 35% more than the CityFHEPS voucher and moving families into permanent housing with CityFHEPS could save the City as much as $635 million in shelter costs over 5 years. This analysis reflects only the direct cost comparison between shelter and CityFHEPS and does not account for the broader negative externalities of homelessness, such as the heavy reliance on costly emergency services, which if prevented would result in even greater savings.

CityFHEPS: Administrative Barriers

We urge the City Council to reduce barriers in the administration of CityFHEPS to expedite placement in permanent housing.

The CityFHEPS voucher program fails to realize its full potential as a pivotal tool to combat homelessness due to a bureaucratic process that lacks clarity and efficiency, requiring eligible individuals and voucher holders to be their own advocate in receiving and utilizing vouchers. **Concrete timelines and guidelines, increased accountability and responsiveness, and streamlined processes** are essential in addressing the persistent barriers within the administration of the CityFHEPS voucher.

As it stands, there is no set standard for how long it should take to complete an application from start to finish. The City Council must expedite CityFHEPS applications by committing to a 15-day maximum turnaround from finding an apartment to approval to ensure that voucher holders can retain permanent housing prospects. Many voucher holders lose apartments due to the lengthy process that must be completed before an apartment can be approved and checks cut.

Most landlords are unwilling to hold an apartment beyond this time frame, which mirrors the private sector application timeline. Losing an apartment to bureaucratic processes is unfair to the apartment seeker, who applies for many apartments before finding one that will accept them. The process of leasing an apartment with a CityFHEPS voucher is opaque and creates a sense of hopelessness for the people we serve. To remedy this, the administration must require the creation of an accessible voucher holder checklist that clearly communicates all the necessary paperwork to the recipient. This should be universally accessible and available in all languages via AccessHRA. This will decrease the chances of incomplete or incorrect applications and increase voucher-holder confidence.

Furthermore, the city should eliminate or significantly extend the expiration date for CityFHEPS Shopping Letters. Households in shelter are at significant risk of losing viable housing opportunities while waiting for their expired shopping letter to renew, given delays in the recertification process. Eliminating or significantly extending the shopping letter expiration date for households in shelter will reduce the burden to staff in regenerating these letters. In addition, it will increase efficiency of tenants looking for housing.

Affordable & Supportive Housing Expansion

We are pleased to see that the Mayor has proposed approximately $4 billion in additional housing capital funding over five years through HPD, contributing to more than $22 billion in total housing investment across the capital plan. This positions housing production as one of the administration's signature priorities. As a supportive housing provider, we rely heavily on HPD capital financing to assemble projects servicing formerly homeless New Yorkers. Unfortunately, the proposed budget falls short of announcing a significant new city investment dedicated specifically to supportive housing operations or expansion. For Urban Pathways, the budget creates potential opportunities to expand housing development and strengthen placement pathways, while also raising questions about whether supportive housing providers will receive the operating and service investments necessary to meet demand.

We applaud and extend our appreciation of the NYC Progressive Caucus for their FY27 Budget Proposal, ***Rentals within Reach***. This campaign centers smart investments to ensure over 20,000 New Yorkers have access to quality publicly funded housing, including supportive housing. One of their two priorities is a $78 million investment to preserve and renovate supportive housing units, including (1) $13 million flexible expense pot to renovate or repair up to 1,000 units; and, (2) $44 million in Capital and $21.3 million in Expense funding to preserve at least 325 units in FY27.

Urban Pathways strongly encourages support of the Rentals within Reach campaign. Preserving existing supportive housing is just as important as building new supportive housing.

Combat Source of Income Discrimination

Source of Income (SOI) Discrimination is rampant city-wide and is the biggest challenge the people served by Urban Pathways face when searching for an apartment. SOI discrimination leads to extended stays in our safe havens, stabilization beds, and drop-in centers. Although discrimination against voucher holders is illegal, inadequate enforcement makes it difficult to prove instances of discrimination by property owners. The City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), the only agency tasked with holding discriminators accountable, has historically been underfunded and understaffed.

To combat SOI discrimination, the City must:

- properly resource CCHR to end discriminatory housing practices and ensure that voucher holders are able to utilize their vouchers in a timely manner;
- develop and implement outreach initiatives to educate voucher holders about their rights and help owners, managers, and agents understand the available resources to help support tenants and clients;
- require an annual public reporting on SOI complaints and the average time it takes to resolve a complaint; and
- pass Introductions 1210-1215 to strengthen penalties against landlords and brokers who refuse to rent to tenants using rental subsidies.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:

Kandra Clark, Director of Policy & Advocacy
kclark@urbanpathways.org, 646-263-9732

Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Written Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings
Executive Budget Hearing
June 2, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Urban Pathways has worked hard to build strong partnerships with the people we serve. Across 10 of our supportive housing sites, we have established tenant association boards. Each month, boards meet to discuss internal challenges and successes. They work with our Community Organizer to bring projects to fruition and create changes in their building and individual apartments. Through this work, many boards have created good neighbor policies, which emphasize respect for surrounding community, shared responsibility for space, and active participation in neighborhood life. Tenants plan and host activities throughout the year, which include cookouts, movie nights, attendance at sporting events, and much more.

In addition, we host consumer advocacy groups twice per month where tenants learn how government and policy work, discuss current issues, engage in advocacy campaigns, and prepare for speaking with elected officials. Through this group, tenants are provided with information about upcoming rallies, public hearings, and advocacy opportunities, including conferences and panels.

As one of lived experienced advocates, Will Woods, has shared, “Having a stable home gave me the opportunity to be the advocate I am today.” His words reflect the very mission behind Urban Pathways supportive housing programs and services: that when people have housing, they have the chance not just to survive - but to lead, to contribute, and to thrive. Throughout all our

groups, we regularly hear of tenants' challenges exiting supportive housing due to the lack of available affordable housing within their income range. Several tenants have discussed at length their inability to qualify for housing lotteries as their income range is below the acceptable guidelines. This lack of affordable housing and opportunities to move from supportive housing settings often discourage tenants. To better support tenants' needs Urban Pathways joined the ***Homes for NYC Campaign*** launched in 2026.

Homes for NYC Campaign:
New York City stands at a breaking point in its housing crisis. More than 100,000 individuals sleep in shelters every night, while hundreds of thousands more are on the brink of homelessness, burdened by rents that are more than half of their income. This is the direct result of policy choices that have failed to meet the needs of those at the lowest end of the income spectrum. **If the City is to reverse the tide of mass homelessness, it must adopt a fundamentally different approach: one that builds from the bottom up.**

At the heart of this crisis is a severe shortage of housing that is truly affordable to extremely low-income households. While New York City has invested heavily in "affordable housing" over the past decade, the majority of these units have been out of reach for those who need them most. Eligibility requirements often exclude households with the lowest incomes, resulting in people experiencing homelessness or extreme rent burden unable to access the very housing intended for them. As a result, the City's shelter system, originally designed as a temporary safety net, has become a long-term housing solution for tens of thousands.

To address this systemic failure, **New York City must commit to a targeted housing mandate centered on those at greatest risk, creating 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing each year for the next five years.** These units must be reserved for individuals who are currently homeless or living in extreme poverty. This level of investment is not only necessary, but long overdue. By focusing resources where the need is greatest, the City can deliver immediate relief to those most at risk and begin to reduce the overwhelming demand on the shelter system. Building new housing alone will not be sufficient. The City must also **invest in preserving its existing affordable housing stock.** Many units that are currently affordable are at risk of deterioration, conversion, or loss due to expiring subsidies. Preservation is not only a cost-saving strategy, it is essential to ensure long-term housing stability for low-income residents.

Additionally, the City must take action to **repair and utilize vacant housing units.** At a time when homelessness is at record levels, it is unacceptable for habitable units to sit empty due to bureaucratic delays, disrepair, or lack of coordination. Bringing these units back online quickly can provide immediate housing opportunities for those in need.

Housing that is initially affordable often becomes inaccessible over time due to rising rents or expiring affordability requirements. The City must **implement safeguards to guarantee that investments made today continue to serve low-income households for decades to come.** This includes stronger regulatory frameworks, sustained funding commitments, and accountability measures to prevent the erosion of affordability.

When deeply affordable units are created, they relieve pressure across the entire housing market. **By stabilizing the lowest-income households, the City can reduce competition for scarce low-cost units, ease rent burdens for similar income groups and create a more equitable housing system overall.** Reducing homelessness leads to significant savings in public resources, including shelter operations, emergency services, and healthcare costs.

Solving mass homelessness is not only a moral necessity but benefits New York City as a whole. The City thrives when everyone has the safety, dignity, and stability of a home. By committing to large-scale investment in deeply affordable housing, preserving existing units, utilizing vacant spaces, and ensuring long-term stability, the City can begin to reverse decades of policy failure. A decisive shift toward building from the bottom up, placing the needs of the most vulnerable at the center of housing policy, offers a clear and achievable path forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:
Kandra Clark, Director of Policy
kclark@urbanpathways.org, 646-263-9732

Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Testimony
New York City Council
Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use
Executive Budget Hearing
June 5, 2026

Good morning, Chair Cabán and members of the Committee. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am the Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing about the need for substantial investments in the behavioral health continuum of care, with an emphasis on the B-HEARD program and employing peers (people with lived mental health experience).

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Invest in a Non-Police Mental Health Crisis Response System

More than 20 New Yorkers experiencing a mental health crisis have been killed in police encounters since 2015, underscoring ongoing concerns about relying on law enforcement as the primary response to behavioral health emergencies. People experiencing mental health crises are best served by a non-police response that avoids the risk of serious harm or death, arrests, and people being transported with handcuffs, which is traumatic and can lead to exacerbating the crisis. When medical personnel, trained mental health workers, and people with lived mental health experience respond to a person in crisis, care options involve de-escalation, being treated on-site, receiving a referral for community-based care, being transported to a social service location, or being transported to a hospital for additional care. By investing in a non-police mental health crisis response system, we can enhance public safety and refer people to long-term

support as opposed to crisis escalation often resulting in serious harm, arrests, and the use of handcuffs.

While we appreciate the City's attempts to shift crisis response to a more person-centered approach, there is much more that needs to be done. Currently, the B-HEARD program is the main alternative to police when a mental health crisis call is placed to 911 in NYC. Current teams consist of EMTs and licensed social workers, which are limited in capacity and not available 24/7 or city-wide. **B-HEARD can be a true non-police response to mental health crises, adopting best practices and prioritizing the experience of the individual in crisis if it enacts the following changes:**

- **Mandate that peers be added to B-HEARD teams** and made a part of all aspects of planning, training, implementation, and oversight. Peers bring indispensable firsthand knowledge, insights, and trust in the community that cannot be replicated.
- **Expand the number of B-HEARD teams to match the call volume.** There are currently 18 B-HEARD teams and 38 social workers to staff them. The ratio of teams to call volume is mismatched: the City's own data shows that the need for teams to respond to calls always surpasses the number of teams available. The number of teams therefore must be increased to ensure all eligible calls are responded to with B-HEARD.
- **Expand the number of B-HEARD teams to ensure citywide and 24/7 coverage.**
- **Establish 988 as the number to be dialed for mental health and substance use crises** in lieu of 911, while ensuring interoperability among 988, 911, and 311.
- **Renew and expand the speaker budget initiative for the peer behavioral workforce (Chart #30 in the FY26 budget) to $6M in FY27.** Funding eligibility criteria must be refined to spotlight peer support specialists, emphasizing positions that aid in community-based behavioral health crisis response systems.
- **The Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use jointly with the Committee on Workforce Development must hold an oversight hearing this spring on behavioral health workforce development.** A comprehensive workforce strategy, coupled with adequate funding, will help the City build a behavioral health workforce pipeline and support retention through professional development and career pathways.

<u>Invest in Substance Use Disorder Treatment</u>

New York City must strengthen its investment in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment programs and services at a moment when the federal funding landscape has become increasingly unstable. Recent federal actions and proposed reductions affecting the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - including attempted grant cancellations and broader restructuring and reduction proposals - have created uncertainty for providers and the people who rely on treatment, recovery support, outreach, and overdose prevention services every day. When federal support becomes unpredictable, cities cannot afford to retreat. New

York has a responsibility to ensure continuity of care and preserve the local infrastructure that keeps people connected to treatment before crises escalate into emergency room visits, shelter entry, incarceration, or preventable overdose deaths. Stable City investment can help sustain outpatient treatment, medication-assisted treatment, peer services, mobile engagement teams, and recovery-oriented programs that meet people where they are.

Investment in SUD services is also a fiscal and public health imperative. Substance use disorder is deeply interconnected with homelessness, behavioral health needs, emergency services utilization, and long-term housing instability. For many New Yorkers, especially those experiencing housing insecurity or living with co-occurring mental health conditions, access to treatment is often the difference between stabilization and repeated contact with costly crisis systems. City funding should prioritize low-barrier treatment access, culturally responsive care, integrated behavioral health and housing models, and sustained recovery supports that extend beyond short-term intervention. At a time when federal behavioral health priorities remain in flux and providers face continued uncertainty, New York City has an opportunity to lead - to protect existing programs, prevent service disruptions, and affirm that access to treatment and recovery is an essential component of a healthy and equitable city.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Urban Pathways. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:
Kandra Clark, Director of Policy
kclark@urbanpathways.org, [redacted]

Gary P. Jenkins, Chief Executive Officer

Oral Testimony
New York City Council
Executive Budget Hearings
June 10, 2026

Thank you, all Chairs and members of Committees, for the opportunity to provide oral testimony for the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearings. My name is Kandra Clark, and I am a Director of Policy & Advocacy at Urban Pathways. I will be sharing budget priorities for support needed by nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing providers.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,700 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Procurement Reform & Prevailing Wage for Human Services Workers
The FY27 Budget must take decisive action to resolve payment issues for contracted nonprofits, as well as create pay equity.

Nonprofit workers are not paid up to 30% less than their government counterparts. Government is the predominant funder of human services, and the main driver of human services salaries, either directly setting salary rates on contracts or doing so indirectly by establishing costs for a unit of service along with required staffing on a contract. Unfortunately, the government pays nonprofit workers so little that we have a 14% vacancy rate and high turnover rate. Intro 0452 is a significant step toward ensuring that human services workers receive equitable pay comparable to their City counterparts; by establishing a clear wage requirement system, it promotes transparency in compensation and ensures that every worker is paid based on their qualifications and experience. Please pass Intro 0452.

CityFHEPS: Increase Funding & Address Administrative Barriers

We urge the City Council to reduce barriers in the administration of CityFHEPS to expedite placement in permanent housing.

The CityFHEPS voucher program fails to realize its full potential as a pivotal tool to combat homelessness due to a bureaucratic process that lacks clarity and efficiency, requiring eligible individuals and voucher holders to be their own advocate in receiving and utilizing vouchers. **Concrete timelines and guidelines, increased accountability and responsiveness, and streamlined processes** are essential in addressing the persistent barriers within the administration of the CityFHEPS voucher.

Affordable & Supportive Housing Expansion

We are pleased to see that the Mayor has proposed approximately $4 billion in additional housing capital funding over five years through HPD, contributing to more than $22 billion in total housing investment across the capital plan. This positions housing production as one of the administration's signature priorities. As a supportive housing provider, we rely heavily on HPD capital financing to assemble projects servicing formerly homeless New Yorkers. Unfortunately, the proposed budget falls short of announcing a significant new city investment dedicated specifically to supportive housing operations or expansion. For Urban Pathways, the budget creates potential opportunities to expand housing development and strengthen placement pathways, while also raising questions about whether supportive housing providers will receive the operating and service investments necessary to meet demand.

We applaud and extend our appreciation of the NYC Progressive Caucus for their FY27 Budget Proposal, ***Rentals within Reach***. This campaign centers smart investments to ensure over 20,000 New Yorkers have access to quality publicly funded housing, including supportive housing. One of their two priorities is a $78 million investment to preserve and renovate supportive housing units, including (1) $13 million flexible expense pot to renovate or repair up to 1,000 units; and, (2) $44 million in Capital and $21.3 million in Expense funding to preserve at least 325 units in FY27.

Urban Pathways strongly encourages support of the Rentals within Reach campaign. Preserving existing supportive housing is just as important as building new supportive housing.

Combat Source of Income Discrimination

Source of Income (SOI) Discrimination is rampant city-wide and is the biggest challenge the people served by Urban Pathways face when searching for an apartment. SOI discrimination leads to extended stays in our safe havens, stabilization beds, and drop-in centers. Although discrimination against voucher holders is illegal, inadequate enforcement makes it difficult to prove instances of discrimination by property owners. The City Commission on

Human Rights (CCHR), the only agency tasked with holding discriminators accountable, has historically been underfunded and understaffed. To combat SOI discrimination, the City must:

- properly resource CCHR to end discriminatory housing practices and ensure that voucher holders are able to utilize their vouchers in a timely manner; and
- pass Introductions 1210-1215 to strengthen penalties against landlords and brokers who refuse to rent to tenants using rental subsidies.

Homes for NYC

Throughout all resident advisory boards/consumer advocacy groups, we regularly hear of tenants' challenges exiting supportive housing due to the lack of available affordable housing within their income range. Several tenants have discussed at length their inability to qualify for housing lotteries as their income range is below the acceptable guidelines. This lack of affordable housing and opportunities to move from supportive housing settings often discourage tenants. To better support tenants' needs Urban Pathways joined the Homes for NYC Campaign launched in 2026. **New York City must commit to a targeted housing mandate centered on those at greatest risk, creating 12,000 units of deeply affordable housing each year for the next five years.** These units must be reserved for individuals who are currently homeless or living in extreme poverty. This level of investment is not only necessary, but long overdue. By focusing resources where the need is greatest, the City can deliver immediate relief to those most at risk and begin to reduce the overwhelming demand on the shelter system.

Invest in a Non-Police Mental Health Crisis Response System & Substance Use Disorder Treatment

The City Council must expand the number of B-HEARD teams to ensure citywide and 24/7 coverage, as well as establish 988 as the number to be dialed for mental health and substance use crises in lieu of 911, while ensuring interoperability among 988, 911, and 311.

Investment in SUD services is also a fiscal and public health imperative. Substance use disorder is deeply interconnected with homelessness, behavioral health needs, emergency services utilization, and long-term housing instability. For many New Yorkers, especially those experiencing housing insecurity or living with co-occurring mental health conditions, access to treatment is often the difference between stabilization and repeated contact with costly crisis systems. City funding should prioritize low-barrier treatment access, culturally responsive care, integrated behavioral health and housing models, and sustained recovery supports that extend beyond short-term intervention.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:
Kandra Clark, Director of Policy & Advocacy
kclark@urbanpathways.org, 646-263-9732

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New York, New York 10017
P 646.588.0030
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Testimony of Urban Resource Institute Before the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing

June 10, 2026

URI is the largest provider of domestic violence shelter services in the country and a leading provider of transitional housing for families experiencing homelessness. Each night, URI preliovides safe, temporary housing to nearly 4,000 individuals across 28 locations in New York City. Through trauma-informed, client-centered programs, we work to disrupt cycles of violence and homelessness for survivors, youth, and communities.

Thank you, Chair Hudson and Chair Lee and the New York City Council for your continued partnership and leadership, particularly your advocacy to restore funding for People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) at Magnolia Gardens and immigrant legal services.

URI's testimony focuses on six urgent and pressing budget priorities necessary to stabilize the human services sector and strengthen New York City's safety net for survivors of domestic violence and families experiencing homelessness:

- Nonprofit-owned transitional housing model
- Procurement reform and improving payment delays
- Investment in human services workforce
- Increased DoVE funding
- Expanded funding for immigrant survivors
- Maintaining People and Animals Living Safely program for homeless families

Housing must be viewed as a continuum; each type of housing is critical in their continuum as we serve the needs of the people who need it.

Emergency shelter is designed for people who need access to immediate safety from the street or the threat of violence. During short-term stays, URI can provide urgent stabilization and support to these families as they continue on their journey.

Tier II shelter fills the need after the immediate crisis has abated. Families in Tier II shelter may not yet be ready for supportive or affordable housing, either because they are unemployed or are still too early in their healing journey. Tier II shelter provides individuals and families who need more support with a longer runway to achieve stability before entering supportive or affordable permanent housing.

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Supportive housing is designed for families and individuals who still need access to case management and supportive services to maintain their housing stability. While it is a final stop for many, some move onto permanent, affordable housing.

Each stop along this continuum is critically necessary. While our collective goal is placement in permanent affordable and/or supportive housing, we must meet families where they are in their journey with housing that is designed to meet their distinct needs.

1. Nonprofit-Owned (NPO) Transitional Housing Model

Prior to the Nonprofit-Owned Transitional Housing Model, nonprofits relied on short-term leases with private landlords to fulfill contracts with the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to lease space from private, for-profit building owners, which forced nonprofits to bear the cost of profit margins, commercial financing, and the uncertainty of nine-year contracts. Moving to the Nonprofit-Owned Transitional Housing model with 30-year contracts with the City of New York, where the provider owns the asset, has helped to stabilize costs, create enduring community assets, and replace aging shelter infrastructure. The NPO model delivers high-quality, purpose-built facilities designed to support healing and stability. Importantly, these developments are structured to transition over time from transitional housing to permanent housing, ensuring long-term flexibility within the system. The NPO model is both cost-effective and better aligned with the needs of the individuals and families we serve.

Leveraging the NPO model enabled URI to build 91 units of transitional housing alongside approximately 183 units of permanent and deeply affordable housing, including 111 units of supportive housing for survivors of domestic violence currently under consideration by New York City Housing Preservation and Development.

However, we are increasingly concerned that the pipeline for new NPO projects has slowed significantly. No new projects have been approved in nearly a year, effectively halting the development of new transitional housing. This slowdown threatens the City's ability to maintain a balanced and functional continuum of care, which depends on adequate investment at every stage, from emergency transitional housing to permanent, affordable, and supportive housing.

Additionally, sustaining and expanding the NPO pipeline is essential to the City's broader housing strategy. This model plays a key role in reducing the City's reliance on costly hotel shelters by accelerating the transition into purpose-built facilities that are more dignified, more effective for families, and more fiscally responsible.

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NPO housing can be more readily converted into permanent affordable and supportive housing. We respectfully urge the Council to partner with providers and stakeholders to identify strategies to reinvigorate and sustain the NPO pipeline. Continued investment in the NPO model is a matter of system efficiency, ensuring every stage of the continuum of housing is maintained and that New Yorkers in crisis have access to safe, stable, and appropriately designed housing.

2. Procurement and Payment Delays

Procurement delays and late payments remain among the most urgent issues facing providers. According to a recent NBC article and City & State, the Administration is considering delaying the 50% advance payment to social service providers in FY27, reversing what providers were assured. This abrupt shift is incredibly challenging to providers' operations. URI alone is owed $33M in reimbursements on contracts for work already completed. URI relies on advance payments to manage cash flow constraints. Delaying or reducing advance payments would further destabilize essential providers and effectively force the sector, already operating to absorb the City's own fiscal pressures.

With current vacancy rates of 13.2% at HRA and 20% at DHS, headcount reductions at the agencies responsible for administering contracts at DSS, ACS, MONS, MOCJ, and others have left the remaining staff unable to manage the significant load of contracts. URI is advocating for a significant investment in restoring staff lines in these agencies to ensure contracts can be registered in a timely fashion and paid within 90 days. Headcount reductions at HRA and DHS would further lead to continued contracting delays, worsen processing times, and be detrimental to providers who depend on timely contract payments.

3. Human Services Workforce Investment

The human services workforce, overwhelmingly comprised of women of color, is the backbone of the City's social safety net. Despite this, nonprofit workers earn significantly less than government counterparts performing comparable work.

Community-based organizations like URI invest significant time and resources in recruiting and training frontline staff, yet struggle to retain them. Without pay parity, providers face chronic vacancies, high turnover, and workforce burnout. Due to persistent pay disparities and lower overall compensation, many workers leave for municipal positions that offer higher wages and stronger benefits, making it increasingly difficult for providers to maintain a stable and experienced workforce. We appreciate the Council's dogged leadership and are incredibly heartened that Intro 0452 has 27 co-sponsors. We look forward to working together to continue to elevate this critical equity issue and see Int. 0452 become law.

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Housing is the single largest cost New Yorkers face. To address this significant burden, in November 2025, the City of New York expanded the Municipal Employee Housing Preference from 5% to 10%. Human service workers receive lower compensation for comparable work and lack access to key benefits available to municipal employees, such as the housing preference. URI would like to partner with the Council to explore opportunities to expand the preference to include the human services workforce, ensuring the City directly addresses the affordability crisis plaguing the human services workforce.

4. Increase DoVE Funding

Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative funding has remained stagnant since Fiscal Year 2024. While rates of violent crime have generally decreased, the rates of domestic violence and intimate partner violence, particularly in the Bronx and Brooklyn, remain stubbornly high, particularly among Black and Latina women. Four NYPD precincts have reported that Chronic Domestic Violence Offenders have doubled from 2023 to 2024. The high rates of domestic violence homicides and felony assaults necessitate that total funding for the Domestic Violence and Empowerment Initiative (DoVE) be increased.

At URI, DoVE funding supports our Justice Initiatives programs, such as URI's Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP), which is a community and youth violence prevention program; the Abusive Partner Intervention Program (APIP), which engages people who have caused harm in solutions to end violence; the Economic Empowerment Program (EEP), which provides survivors of financial abuse with advocacy to discharge debt, along with job readiness, internship, and job placement support; and People and Animals Living Safely (PALS), through which URI's shelters are pet-inclusive for families experiencing violence and homelessness. We also urge increased overall DoVE funding and Member Designated Item funding to support prevention and intervention programs.

5. Expand Funding for Immigrant Survivors

URI was honored to be one of four providers funded in FY26 through the Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence and Gender-Based Harm Initiative to deliver our Legal Education and Advocacy Program (LEAP). We appreciate the Council's advocacy to baseline this funding in the FY27 NYC budget. This investment is critical during a time of heightened uncertainty for immigrant communities.

LEAP fills a critical gap by providing direct representation, legal advice, and pro se assistance to survivors of domestic violence residing in URI shelters. The need is substantial: nearly 60% of individuals served at the New York City Family Justice Centers are foreign-born, and these survivors face compounding barriers, including housing instability, unemployment, and limited formal education, while the number of organizations providing immigration legal services has declined significantly. Undocumented survivors are especially vulnerable to coercion, as abusive partners often weaponize immigration status, threatening deportation or withdrawing sponsorship to maintain control.

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LEAP addresses these challenges by providing trauma-informed, culturally responsive legal support that empowers survivors to pursue safety and stability. URI's team assists immigrant survivors in securing relief through VAWA self-petitions, U visas, and other pathways to lawful status, while also guiding them through complex, overlapping legal systems, including Family, Criminal, Housing, and Immigration Courts. Through on-site clinics in shelters across four of the five boroughs, LEAP ensures accessible, confidential services and supports survivors navigating both formal representation and pro se processes. In FY25 alone, LEAP handled 157 immigration cases, including 26 VAWA self-petitions and 17 U visa applications. Sustained and expanded funding is essential to maintain and expand this lifeline and ensure that immigrant survivors can exercise their rights, secure legal protections, and rebuild their lives free from violence.

We urge the Council to renew this lifesaving funding in the Immigration Legal Services for Survivors of Violence and Gender-Based Harm Initiative.

6. Pet-Inclusive Shelter - People and Animals Living Safely (PALS)

Pet-inclusive shelter is lifesaving. URI's research shows 50% of survivors would not seek shelter if they could not bring their pets with them, and 91% report harm or threats to their pets. URI pioneered pet-inclusive shelter in New York City more than 10 years ago in partnership with the New York City Department of Social Services through a pilot in a small DV shelter in Brooklyn. Since then, URI has expanded pet-inclusive shelter access to 10 domestic violence shelters, keeping over 1,000 families together with their pets.

Following the successful pilot at Uplift Family Residence in the Bronx, and with funding commitments from DSS, URI planned to expand PALS to Magnolia Gardens, which would have been the first-time families with pets could be referred from PATH to shelter. In partnership with Asian Americans for Equality, URI developed Magnolia Gardens as New York City's first award-winning, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and pet-inclusive temporary housing development for unhoused families in Flushing, Queens. We appreciate the Council's support of animal welfare issues and request its continued support as URI advocates for the restoration of $250,000 to support PALS at Magnolia Gardens. This investment will allow more families to access safety without leaving members of their family behind.

Conclusion

As the Council finalizes the Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget, URI urges the Council to take action across these six priority areas:

1. Reinvigorating and sustaining the NPO transitional housing model
2. Procurement reform, maintaining 50% advances and on-time payments
3. Investment in the human services workforce through pay equity and housing preferences

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4. Increased DoVE funding
5. Expanding funding for immigrant survivors
6. Restore $250,000 in committed funding by the City for pet-inclusive transitional housing at Magnolia Gardens

These targeted investments will interrupt cycles of violence through prevention and intervention, while strengthening the infrastructure that survivors and families experiencing homelessness rely on every day. URI looks forward to continuing our partnership with the New York City Council to advance these shared goals. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the testimony further, please contact Senior Director of Government Affairs, Samantha Cardenas at scardenas@urinyc.org. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

BRONX CONNECT | MANHATTAN CONNECT | PHILLY CONNECT

URBAN YOUTH
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL, INC
432 East 149th Street, 2nd Floor
Bronx, NY 10455
T: 718.402.6872
F: 718.402.6879

Good afternoon, Chairperson Lee and members of the Finance Committee.

My name is Anthony Springer and I am the Senior Advocacy Associate for Urban Youth Alliance, which is a Bronx-based juvenile justice organization serving court-involved and at risk youth. Our program has served thousands of youth and young adults facing charges in the Bronx since 1999. From its inception, our program has addressed the epidemic of juvenile incarceration among youth in New York City. Over the past few years we have expanded services locations to Manhattan and Staten Island.

As part of New York City's Crisis Management System and ATI Coalition, we serve the Bronx by providing Cure Violence Services, gun violence school-based prevention, community therapeutic services, and employment services. For over 20 years we have also worked in supporting people coming out of jails and prisons, by connecting them to services and employment.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on the need to resource preventative services for our communities.

We applaud the commitment to the restoration of funding for Alternatives to Incarceration programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, including increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments represent an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

These investments are sorely needed as we have seen statistically what actually works. That is providing supportive services to under-resourced communities.

While the restoration will go help, additional investment is needed to bring these programs to scale. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the Coalition's services generated

more than $60 million in savings for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable our 12 coalition organizations to serve more New Yorkers and further expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

Thank you for your time.

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URBANYOUTH
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL, INC.
432 East 149th Street, 2nd Floor
Bronx, NY 10455
T: 718.402.6872
F: 718.402.6879

New York City Council

Hearing to Discuss:
Executive Budget

Wednesday, June 10, 2026
9:00 AM

Testimony Presented By
Reverend Wendy Calderón Payne

Good afternoon, Chairperson Lee and members of the Finance Committee.

My name is Reverend Wendy Calderón Payne, and I am the Executive Director of Urban Youth Alliance, a Bronx-based juvenile justice organization serving court-involved youth. Since 1999, our program has served more than 3,000 youth and young adults facing charges in Manhattan and the Bronx. From its inception, our program has addressed the epidemic of juvenile incarceration among youth in New York City. In recent years, we have expanded our service locations to Manhattan, Staten Island, and Philadelphia.

As part of New York City's Crisis Management System and ATI Coalition, we serve the Bronx by providing Cure Violence Services, gun violence school-based prevention, community therapeutic services, and employment services. For over 20 years we have also worked in supporting people coming out of jails and prisons, by connecting them to services and employment.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on the need to resource preventative services for our communities.

We applaud the restoration of funding for Alternatives to Incarceration programs and reentry services in the Executive Budget, with increases of $3.03 million and $5.9 million, respectively. These investments demonstrate an important commitment to community-based public safety strategies that reduce reliance on incarceration and support New Yorkers in building stable, productive lives.

At the same time, additional investment is needed to scale these programs. A recent fiscal impact analysis conducted by the Data Collaborative for Justice found that the Coalition's services generated more than $60 million in savings for New York City by reducing reliance on incarceration at Rikers Island—demonstrating that investments in community-based alternatives produce both fiscal and public safety benefits.

We urge the City Council to build on the Administration's commitment by providing an additional $2.4 million in discretionary funding through the Alternatives to Incarceration and Reentry Programs initiative. This investment would enable our 12 coalition organizations to serve more New Yorkers and further expand access to effective community-based alternatives that promote safety, stability, and opportunity.

Thank you for your time.

New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation
June 10, 2026
Executive Budget Hearing

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the board and staff of Van Cortlandt Park Alliance in support of an increase in the budget for NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. I am testifying on behalf of VCPA's board and staff and as members of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition. We thank the City Council Committee on Finance and Chair Lee for holding this important hearing.

Since the 1970s, the City has allocated just 0.5% of its budget to park maintenance and operations —significantly less as a percentage of overall budgets and less per capita when compared to cities like San Francisco, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Los Angeles. This continued disinvestment in our parks can be clearly seen in every park that does not have a powerhouse nonprofit like the Central Park Conservancy.

We were extremely disappointed to see Mayor Mamdani's preliminary budget for NYC Parks, at $33.7 million less than last year's adopted budget. I wish I could say we were surprised.

While it's great that the hiring freeze will finally be eliminated, it comes with the loss of 100 Park Enforcement Patrol lines. The City spent months training these PEP officers who have only just recently begun to patrol our parks, helping to keep New Yorkers safe. And come July 1st, every one of them will be out of a job. What a waste. This continued cycle of throwing away time and resources on training new staff every year needs to stop. **The Mayor and the City Council need to work together to baseline these 100 PEP lines.**

In addition, 600 lines were lost in the Adams administration, through cuts and a hiring freeze. While NYC Parks is asked to do more and more each year, **NYC Parks has lost 700 positions in less than 5 years.**

The budget also fails to address the nearly 300 parks workers set to lose their jobs at the end of the fiscal year, because they were not baselined. We had hoped that Mayor Mamdani would put an end to the annual budget dance which, frankly, is exhausting. **These vital 300 positions need to be baselined.**

Year after year, NYC Parks staff does more with less. The staff is already stretched too thin. They are tired and frustrated, and so are we.

The current proposed budget maintains the status quo of historic underfunding, leaving communities without the safe, accessible green spaces they deserve.

The time is now. Mayor Mamdani and the City Council need to work together to dedicate 1% of the city budget to Parks. There is no substitute for public dollars for our parks. In reality, NYC Parks needs and deserves well more than 1%, but let's at least start there.

Parks are essential! They should be funded and cared for accordingly.

Christina Taylor
Deputy Director
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

Vision Urbana, Inc.

Educate. Empower. Transform.

June 10th, 2026

City Hall
New York, NY 10007

RE: FY27 Budget Recommendation "Feeding Our Communities Initiative"

Honorable Councilmember Lee:

There is a newly created taxpayer funded initiative called, "Feeding Our Communities Initiative" released this fiscal year 2026 during the Transparency Resolution in July that put $5M into the CFC program and $8M into 10 nonprofit providers across the City. Can this initiative fund for FY27 be used to fund 33 *"high capacity"* pantries across 33 TRIE neighborhoods?

As Executive Director of Vision Urbana, Inc., celebrating 30 years of community based programming on the Lower East Side of Manhattan (Council Districts 1 and 2), I have had the pleasure of working directly with 15 NYCHA Tenant Associations across the Lower East Side of Manhattan providing food pantry and fresh produce totaling an average of 15,000 lbs. of food to more than 1,000 households (over 2,500 individuals) weekly. We are an Emergency Food Relief Organization (EFRO) designated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) in 2017 which never stopped providing pantry services to residents during the pandemic. Our work fighting food insecurity during the pandemic resulted in securing a lease to renovate a medical clinic within a NYCHA development by City Hall - the Alfred E Smith development, a full diagnostic and treatment center being renovated this year that will open in 2027. Vision Urbana successfully raised more than $3.3M to renovate through NYS and Federal funding. This center located in NYCHA, will provide not only medical services but nutrition services. **I would consider Vision Urbana, alongside 32 other NYC pantries like Vision Urbana to be considered *"High Capacity"* pantries critical for food security investment in the FY27 budget.**

The average food pantry feeds between 300-500 households a week. Understanding that pantries are a volunteer-based program model (typically older and retired members of the community lacking formal data reporting training) with Personnel costs underfunded - if at all funded there is need in the council budget to underwrite an investment in trained personnel. This lack of investment in trained personnel results in disincentivizing pantries to exist at all, let alone operate at levels deserving of food handling to minority communities which would require basic digital data entry skills for reporting pantry outputs (required by FeedNYC and to become an EFRO). In order to sustain pantries citywide moving forward, I would posit that an investment of food pantries require at least one full time staff equivalent (FTE) investment at no less than $25/hr or $45,500 annually per pantry. However, there are more than 470 designated EFRO pantries (and assuming all are registered in

PASSPort to manage council funding) would require an annual city council budget of $22M annually (more than any existing council budget addressing pantry costs).

Understanding the budget constraints, I would propose a concept for the council's consideration to establish a new initiative at city council to underwrite one full time equivalent (FTE) staff person for 33 *"High Capacity"* pantries within each of the 33 TRIE neighborhoods which would cost the council $2.3M to underwrite at $70k salary FTE per *"High Capacity"* pantry. The investment would ensure *"High Capacity"* pantries could continue to attract and sustain higher caliber talent to 1. Sustain the TRIE *"High Capacity"* pantry in their community, 2. Ability to source additional food outside foodbanks, and 3. Collaborate with the other 33 TRIE neighborhood *"High Capacity"* pantry staff to ensure best practices and leverage a collective coalition to become a NYS funded pipeline to sustain this initial city investment to 33 TRIE communities. I would define *"High Capacity"* pantries as pantries who can 1. Demonstrate multiprong approaches to pantry distribution (home delivery, client choice, community hub and on site pick up) 2. Report data of clients served into the FEEDNYC database 3. Demonstrate capacity to pick up pallets of food and 4. Connect pantry recipients to additional wrap around services. A pantry who can achieve 3 out of 4 of these capacities would be deserving of additional city funding.

This perspective becomes an on the ground accounting and recommendation for how to utilize the newly formed "Feeding Our Communities Initiative" which this fiscal year provided $13M to addressing food insecurity that would sustain 33 of what I would call *"High Capacity"* pantries throughout the already defined 33 Taskforce Racial Inclusion & Equity (TRIE) neighborhoods citywide.

It is important also to note that the operating costs of pantry food for pantries currently are low because foodbanks subsidize 75-100% of the total cost of food per pantry making discretionary dollars useful for salaries and stipends, but ONLY for those pantries who can register and keep up with reporting in PASSPort. This is why personnel costs are critical investments but for *"High Capacity"* pantries because normal pantries are burdened weekly bearing the responsibility of managing and distributing millions of dollars' worth of food each year with less than $10,000 a year. There are large foodbanks subsidizing a significant food for local pantries while who receive multi-million dollar operating budgets to do so from both NYS and NYC discretionary, as well as contract dollars from the Feds to purchase food and transport them to EFRO pantries across the city. The foodbanks are not going to task themselves in figuring out a solution to invest in *"High Capacity"* pantries (I've tried to have conversations with them) but will continue to invest whatever capacity dollars they have to host food summits, collect surveys from the EFRO pantries and transport pantries to advocate for their multimillion dollar contracts in Albany and City Hall.

Vision Urbana has been able to exceed average expectations of pantries citywide because we are able to underwrite several staffing costs, stipends for volunteers, cost of our 14 ft box truck with liftgate (insurance, gas, parking and driver) and are able to populate our proprietary database with pantry recipients from which we connect to additional wrap around services at 50% of our total operating budget year after year.

There is a newly created taxpayer funded initiative called, “Feeding Our Communities Initiative” released this fiscal year 2026 during the Transparency Resolution in July that put $5M into the CFC program and $8M into 10 nonprofit providers across the City. Can this initiative fund the 33 TRIE *“High Capacity”* pantry model? If this cannot happen, would there at least be a consideration to use the “Feeding Our Communities Initiative” to build the infrastructure and capacities of the more than 450+ EFRO registered pantries in NYC, instead of a select number of nonprofit providers? Again, the problem goes back to capacity for these EFRO’s many of whom cannot staff trained personnel. Hence, an investment in personnel is critical, at minimum, to the 33 *“High Capacity”* pantries within the 33 TRIE neighborhoods.

I welcome the opportunity to workout further the complete policy for establishing a new pipeline of funding for 33 *“High Capacity”* pantries across the 33 TRIE neighborhoods.

From the community & for the community,



Eric Diaz
VU Executive Director

Volunteers of America GREATER NEW YORK

NYC COUNCIL FY27 EXECUTIVE BUDGET TESTIMONY 6/10/26
HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS, AND EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction and Thanks

My name is Catherine Trapani, Assistant Vice President of Public Policy for Volunteers of America Greater New York (VOA-GNY), one of the largest housing and homeless services providers in NYC. I would like to thank Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Hudson, Chair Sanchez, Chair Dinowitz, and Members of the Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

About Us

VOA-GNY is an anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in Greater New York through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, impacting more than 12,000 adults and children annually through 70+ programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester. Our programs include DHS and HRA DV emergency shelters and transitional housing, and we are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing. VOA-GNY has a robust portfolio of permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties totaling over 2,100 beds—with over 1,600 more units actively in the pipeline.

Housing is just the start of what we do. VOA-GNY also operates the Bronx Early Learning Center (BELC), a vibrant 22-classroom preschool special education program for students ages 2.9 to 5 years old, as well as the Bronx Economic Empowerment Center where our SSVF Veteran's program, YouthBuild, and Career Access Program provide services.

VOA-GNY is a member of the Human Services Council (HSC), Homeless Services United (HSU), The Supportive Housing Network of New York, the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC), the Homes Can't Wait Coalition, and the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF).

We are heartened by the Mayor's focus on streamlining development and access to affordable housing through the recommendations laid out in the SPEED Report and look forward to continued partnership with the administration as it moves forward with implementation to

shorten development and predevelopment stages and approval processes for affordable housing. In the same spirit of the SPEED report, we have the following recommendations to continue progress towards ending homelessness by strengthening shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness and expanding supply and access to affordable and supportive housing throughout New York City:

Housing and Homelessness Recommendations:

1. Expand Development of Affordable and Supportive Housing

    a. **Pass Int. 905-2026 (Nurse) Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA)** COPA will unlock more parcels of land for non-profit affordable housing development citywide. VOA-GNY is one of the City's largest affordable housing nonprofit developers, with over 1,600 units currently in the pipeline and more on the way. Through COPA, the City can reduce speculative real estate influence and displacement of predominantly low-income communities of color while enabling non-profit developers like VOA-GNY to create even more affordable housing for low and extremely income households to remain within their community.

2. Improve Access to Existing Affordable and Supportive Housing

    a. **Implement the CityFHEPS Expansion with an additional $500 million in the FY27 Budget.** As this administration agrees, CityFHEPS is the most effective means of helping people experiencing homelessness to access housing and to keep those most at risk of becoming homeless in their homes. We urge the Mayor to drop the CityFHEPS lawsuit and fully implement Local Laws 99 to 102 of 2023 to help tens of thousands of New Yorkers who don't qualify to exit shelter or prevent loss of their housing. According to our estimates, a $500 million investment to fund the expansion in FY27 would help 15,000 households experiencing homelessness including in HRA DV shelters and DYCD runaway and homeless youth programs to attain permanent housing, as well as helping 15,000 more households at risk of eviction to remain in their homes.

    In addition to fully implementing the laws, VOA-GNY urges the administration to extend CityFHEPS eligibility to NYCHA EHV households as part of CityFHEPS larger expansion. These impacted EHV households including survivors of domestic violence and runaway and homeless youth who may not have a DHS shelter history required by current CityFHEPS rules, and this inclusion would allow them to remain in their homes, preventing further instability to EHV recipients and maintaining the income stream for thousands of landlords renting to them.

    Current CityFHEPS income and work requirements make the path to eligibility

too narrow. Voucher holders in shelter are forgoing raises and promotions to keep their vouchers limiting their economic mobility while people parenting infants and those with non-federally recognized disabilities or other significant barriers to employment are languishing in shelter with no pathway to housing. Had the CityFHEPS laws been enacted, people could earn more money and still be able to qualify for a voucher, rather than walking this financial tightrope. Within our own shelter program, one of our clients, Mr. X, was in shelter for three years before finally getting a job working for the city. However, upon completing his CityFHEPS paperwork, Mr X. learned his income was too high to qualify for the voucher. Rather than risk losing his voucher, he chose to forgo his full-time job, choosing to reduce his hours part-time, to be able to remain beneath the 200% Federal Poverty Level limit.

Mr. X's story is unfortunately not uncommon. One of our programs had a temporary employee, Ms. Y, working as a Case Manager for us. Ms. Y was an exemplary employee, so much so that VOA-GNY went through the proper paperwork with the temp agency to offer her a full-time position within our organization. She accepted our offer, however within the first two weeks of starting, she was approved for an apartment through CityFHEPS and chose to resign. Instead of staying with a full-time job with healthcare and retirement benefits, Ms. Y chose to return to temping to avoid losing her CityFHEPS voucher and exit shelter.

We urge the administration to drop the lawsuit and swiftly enact the CityFHEPS legislation so that New Yorkers no longer need to choose between housing and being able to earn a decent living.

b. **Expand HPD headcount to reduce delays administering rental assistance vouchers.** HPD is tasked with administering several voucher systems, including Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), the Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) switchover to Home TBRA, the roll out of the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) and potentially other locally administered programs. As such, HPD's headcount must keep pace with these additional responsibilities. Due to HPD delays administering HCVs, it has taken two years to fully lease one of VOA-GNY's new affordable housing buildings. When the city is in a housing crisis with a 1.4% vacancy rate and over 90,000 people currently experiencing homelessness, paperwork processing delays must not impede access to vacant affordable housing.

c. **Fully Fund the NYC Council Progressive Caucus' Rentals within Reach campaign.** We applaud the Progressive Caucus and Speaker Menin for their leadership and commitment to widening access to affordable and supportive

housing through the Rentals Within Reach campaign. VOA-GNY urges the administration to fund this campaign in the FY27 budget, including $65.3M to permanently preserve 325 units of Supportive Housing and $13M for a flexible expense funding to address smaller repairs within HRA and DOHMH supportive housing units.

d. **Implement the SPEED Report's proposed Making Accelerated Transitions to Coordinated Housing (MATCH) pilot program** which will empower homeless services providers to work directly with landlords and marketing agents to match people in shelter to homeless set-aside units. Providers are best suited to knowing who can best utilize this precious limited resource, and by enabling providers, the City can minimize bureaucracy which slows down access to permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and reduce time affordable housing units sit vacant.

e. Pass Int 346-2026 (Nurse) to identify ways to streamline the 2010e supportive housing application. By identifying which parts of the application are mandated by state or federal law or contractual agreements, the city can reduce and eliminate non-essential pieces which take time to collect and can be barriers particularly for people who experienced unsheltered homelessness, lacking a regular address, missing personal identification/documents, and who may not be able to offer a comprehensive recount of their personal situation.

f. Change the Supportive Housing Interview process to a housing acceptance meeting. Currently, three households in shelter are interviewed per available supportive housing unit, with the intention of only one being selected by the supportive housing provider. This process results in at least two out of three households being turned down after the interview, in some cases with households being passed over multiple times without any clear reason leaving them without a pathway to housing. The Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS) indicates what types of supportive housing are appropriate for each applicant to thrive within the community. Instead of forcing applicants to be interviewed for housing which some are continually passed over for, all that should be necessary is a housing acceptance meeting, akin to how prospective tenants view an available apartment, ask questions of the landlord, and flag potential concerns they may have with the unit.

We would like to thank the Council and the Administration for your support of VOA-GNY's Street to Home program, which offers unsheltered individuals a lease for permanent supportive housing, often within the first two weeks of meeting them. Thanks to your leadership and support, we're in the process of working with the Administration to scale up the program and will have more to

share in the coming months. The Street to Home model relies on this "acceptance interview" concept. Presumptively eligibility applicants are shown an available unit and if they decide they want it, it's theirs. The lessons we have learned from this successful program should be applied to other types of supportive housing. Placing the choice in the applicants' hands has led to faster leasing and decreased vacancies.

g. **Roll back DSS/HRA cost-containment strategies which will slow down or negatively impact access to shelter and effectiveness of CityFHEPS rental assistance. This churning causes prolonged stays in shelter and ultimately costs the City more.**

    i. **Pass Int. 232-2026 (Hudson) to reduce DHS' required housing history for families with children applying for shelter from two year down to one.** It can be extremely challenging for families to recount contact information for every single place they stayed for two years, when bouncing from one person's home to another. Reducing the number of times a family is placed in conditional status will remove extremely disruptive bi-weekly reapplications for shelter which make it difficult to maintain/seek employment, help children regularly attend school, and manage other appointments/check-ups.

    While DHS policy allows parents to not bring their children for reapplications, families can still experience extremely dire consequences. A mother in conditional status within VOA-GNY's shelter left her child in our shelter staff's care while she went to the PATH Center to reapply. However, she still did not return by the evening, and without any word from her, our staff called PATH to confirm whether she was still there. DHS staff would not confirm or deny her presence, ultimately leaving our shelter staff, as mandatory reporters, with no choice but to call Child Protective Services. When the mother finally returned from PATH close to midnight, CPS had unfortunately already taken her children away. While she was ultimately able to regain custody of them, no family should need to go through that to prove they are indeed homeless and need shelter. In addition to that extremely traumatic incident, many families are stuck in conditional status at times for several months in shelter before being found eligible, all the while unable to qualify for housing resources like CityFHEPS, the most effective tool DHS has for attaining permanent housing.

    ii. **Rent reasonableness tests will further lengthen the CityFHEPS application process, and depending on the methodology could result in**

viable housing opportunities being lost. Trying to conduct rent comparisons is not an exact science, as units vary in large and small ways within a community. It is also unclear whether the methodology only factors in recently leased units or also ongoing rent payments from long-term tenants or rent-stabilized units which would not reflect current market prices and could artificially lower the reasonable rent calculation. Beyond tests for new applications, the administration intends to test rents at annual renewal for the 65,000 households receiving CityFHEPS. Commissioner Dalton's testimony that there would not be new staff hired to conduct these tests is a cause for concern that this additional responsibility will further strain workloads of current HRA staff focused on processing CityFHEPS applications and renewals.

iii. **Move HCR legal regulated rent verifications to post lease signing to avoid further delaying the process.** We are not aware of overcharges being a significant problem to warrant this widescale adoption, however if the administration switches verifications to post lease signing and works with tenants to lower their rents and pursue treble damages, this measure could further the Mayor's efforts to hold bad landlords accountable while maintaining streamlined processes for accessing permanent housing.

iv. **Reductions in broker fees will negatively impact CityFHEPS utilization for shelter residents.** Shelter residents face an uphill battle finding permanent housing when using a voucher, competing with cash-in-hand renters for an exceedingly small percentage of low to moderately priced apartments. Brokers are used on occasion to help shelter residents having tougher times locating viable housing. Acknowledging that one month's rent is the standard fee for cash renters who utilize brokers, the paperwork and inspection process for voucher holders is comparatively more work. Without a strong enough incentive, brokers may lose interest in working with voucher holders, given the easier alternative.

3. <u>Contract Reforms and Investments in the Nonprofit Homeless Services Sector</u>

   a. **Fully Implement Local Law 156-2025, providing 50% advances for non-profit human services contracts.** VOA-GNY is alarmed by recent reports that the Mayor is considering delaying implementation of New York City's new nonprofit contract law, which ensures timely payments to nonprofits providing critical services to New Yorkers in need. This law was passed by the Council to address a longstanding crisis of delayed payments to nonprofits that forced providers to front the City's cost of shelter, domestic violence, services, and other essential

services.

Nonprofits are not the City's bank. Any delay, of any amount, would have a serious and immediate impact on our programs, our workforce, and New Yorkers who depend on our services. Nonprofits support the City in battling the affordability crisis by implementing its boldest policy initiatives, from social services to affordable housing development. **Delaying payments would not resolve the cash flow challenge; it would simply shift the burden from the City to the nonprofit sector and our workforce. We urge the Mayor to fully implement the law as enacted, and work with nonprofit providers to address the City's fiscal challenges without undermining the essential services that keep our communities housed, safe, and healthy.**

b. **Resolve the DHS and HRA Contract Reimbursement Backlog, Paying Back Nonprofit Providers for Services Rendered Years Ago. As of March 31st, 2026 VOA-GNY is owed approximately $23.8 million for contracted services rendered as far back as FY21.** Even if we were fully paid back tomorrow, these reimbursement delays do not come without costs, as our organization has had to take private loans to float expenses incurred by the City's chronic delays. **In FY25 VOA-GNY paid $1.08 million in non-reimbursable interest, and for FY26 we budgeted $1.14 million. This money could have done a lot of good for New Yorkers, had the City paid us on time.**

Commissioner Dalton's testified that average invoice processing is 31 days, which more than three times exceeds the 9-day timeline in DHS' fiscal manual. But as Chair Lee and the Council well understand, invoicing is only the last step in the City's reimbursement process that unfortunately for nonprofits, could span years.

We urge the Council and administration to take a critical eye on further improving DSS' timeline for processing contract amendments and budget actions. Providers cannot invoice while budget modifications are active, as well as registration delays and outright refusals to review new needs on an emergency basis, leaving providers to front costs while begging for reimbursements later.

While the City has a limited pot of money in a returnable grant fund to provide interest free loans to nonprofits, **VOA-GNY is being prohibited from accessing more bridge loans to cover current costs until DHS pays back monies owed to the fund for prior loans**. Such situations demonstrate the limitations of the loan fund and signal the need for action to address the payment backlog.

We successfully applied for and received 16 bridge loans totaling $4.6 million,

but $4 million of reimbursements are held up by DSS, either because of pending contract amendments or us awaiting HRA's go ahead to submit POCRs. HRA asked us to sequence our invoices according to their timeline, regardless of the urgency of this situation. Thus, our organization is in a similar position to last year, owed significant monies and lacking a transparent timeline for the agency to process our contract amendments and budget actions to enable VOA-GNY to invoice for services provided from prior years only now, we have no access to emergency loans to soften the impact of these delays.

c. Improve the City's shelter portfolio to make it more humane and welcoming to people experiencing homelessness

i. Conduct a Shelter Conditions Capital Needs Assessment to address physical concerns to reduce aversion to shelter. This administration inherited an aging shelter portfolio patched together over decades. We urge the City to build upon its efforts to address long-standing conditions issues like at the 30th Street Intake Center, to do a full assessment of the needs of the entire shelter portfolio to ascertain the degree to which each site needs repairs. Shelters have been stuck in perpetual loops resubmitting the same new needs request year after year to fix conditions like leaky roofs or outdated issue-prone elevators without resolution, ultimately leading to more costly damage as maintenance issues compound. Under resourcing capital needs of shelter contracts sets both the clients and staff up for failure, and this administration could finally right a longstanding reason people choose to not enter shelter.

ii. Update the DHS Model Budget to be indexed to inflation and increase funding for building maintenance. The DHS Model Budget exercise in 2018, while increasing budget lines for the lowest paid shelter contracts, did not include increases for inflationary costs. Each year, we see fixed costs increase, including healthcare, water, and utilities, yet our program budgets remain flat. As a stop-gap measure, DHS allows providers on a case-by-case basis to modify our budgets to use accruals from Personnel Services (PS) budget lines due to vacancies to cover these increased costs. Without addressing inflation, our PS lines will continue to be cannibalized to cover OTPS costs, reducing wages and the number of staff within shelter programs.

We urge DHS to increase funding for building maintenance within DHS shelter budgets. Our maintenance staff work hard to keep our shelters clean and in good condition, but they are stretched thin. By increasing

maintenance staff lines, DHS shelters can bolster headcount to help maintain dignified spaces for clients and help prevent minor issues from growing into costlier repairs.

iii. **Establish a dedicated renovation and preservation fund to conduct major repairs and implement trauma-informed redesigns of City-owned shelters.** The City's aging shelter portfolio utilizes repurposed spaces like Parks Department buildings which were not originally designed for their current use and have likely seen limited renovations over decades of use. The administration by establishing a fund to renovate these City-owned buildings, can modernize its temporary housing stock while reenvisioning physical layouts that incorporate trauma-informed designs to help soothe the inherently traumatizing experience of homelessness for people in shelter.

iv. **Empower nonprofit operators in the capital repairs process to inform DHS' plans and help smooth the impact for staff and clients.** Nonprofit providers are the closest to the work and operations of their buildings and should be included when DHS develops plans to renovate their facilities. Our insights can help make good strategic decisions and prioritize which items need to be remedied most urgently. By engaging in the planning process, providers will also be able to create transition plans with advanced notice for program staff and the ability to help better support impacted clients.

d. **Fund the 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers.** Thank you to the Speaker Menin and the Council for your support of the sector with a multi-year COLA. We are enthused to see that the executive budget includes the final year of the COLA slated to go into effect July 1st, 2027. Next year, the Mayor and the Council will need to prioritize lifting salaries for human services workers with another COLA and ideally, a multi-year investment.

e. **Pass Int. 452-2026 (Stevens), the Human Services Wage Equity Legislation to establish wage parity between City and nonprofit human services workers.** While COLAs can help workers to keep up with the cost of inflation, they are not a long-term solution to address chronic underpayment of government contracted human services workers. Our nonprofit workforce is paid a fraction of what City workers earn doing equivalent work. This legislation would seek to close the gap, finally addressing a longstanding deficiency and helping tens of thousands of nonprofit human services workers to earn equal pay for equal work.

Education Recommendations:

VOA-GNY, an anti-poverty organization focused on ending homelessness in the Greater New York area, recognizes that focusing on providing services for three pillars, housing, health, and wealth, can help lift people out of poverty and break the cycle long term. A good education is fundamental to helping people gain higher paying jobs and generate wealth.

1. **Volunteers of America- Greater New York is extremely grateful to the Council for your heroic work saving our signature initiative Operation Backpack® in last year's budget!** Thanks to the Council's robust support, Operation Backpack® was able to provide **almost 24,000 backpacks** filled with high-quality grade-appropriate school supplies, **to every student in shelter who needed one!** This targeted operation, in partnership with DHS, identifies the need on the shelter level, ensuring that each child is equipped with fun brand-new backpacks and supplies prior to the first day of school, to start the year off right!

   Through your continued support of $250,000 for VOA-GNY's Operation Backpack® citywide initiative, we can continue to fully meet the needs of students in shelter for the coming school year!

2. VOA-GNY is thankful for the Mayor's inclusion of education investments in the FY27 Executive Budget, including extending and baselining funding for critical initiatives including preschool special education services, summer programming, Learning to Work programs, and early childhood education outreach programs.

   We appreciate Speaker Menin, Chair Dinowitz and the entire City Council for your inclusion of the following programs in your Preliminary Budget Response. We urge you to continue carrying these priorities with you to the negotiating table, calling on the Mayor to restore funding for these critical education programs currently helping thousands of NYC students and their families:

   a. **$8 million for Sensory Exploration, Education, & Discovery (SEED) Programs** for students with intensive sensory needs

   b. **$6 million for Restorative Justice** to help students stay in school and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended

   c. **$5 million for Mental Health Continuum** to provide mental healthcare to students at fifty schools

   d. **$4 million for Immigrant family communications and outreach** to help families receive information about their child's schooling in their language and mode they can understand

   e. **$3.75 million for Student Success Centers** to allow youth leaders to build a

culture of college-planning and help their peers with the college admissions process.

Closing

VOA-GNY is grateful to Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Hudson, Chair Sanchez, Chair Dinowitz, and Members of the City Council for your steadfast commitment to nonprofit human services providers and the New Yorkers we serve, and we continue to stand ready to partner with both the Council and the Administration in supporting the needs of all New Yorkers.

Testimony respectfully submitted by Catherine Trapani.

If you have any questions, please contact me at Ctrapani@voa-gny.org .

TESTIMONY OF VOLUNTEERS OF LEGAL SERVICE
Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
June 9, 2026

Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) supports New Yorkers with comprehensive, free legal advice, representation, and education. For over 40 years, VOLS has partnered with community-based organizations and the private bar to provide free civil legal services to New Yorkers who otherwise cannot afford or access representation. Our five core projects serve small business owners, individuals accessing benefits, immigrant young people, incarcerated mothers, and older adults in every borough.

For more than 30 years, VOLS' Incarcerated Mothers Law Project (IMLP) has helped individuals incarcerated in New York's women's prisons and jails, including the Rose M. Singer Center (RMSC) on Rikers Island, with their family law needs. Through this work, VOLS IMLP regularly meets parents who are trying to maintain relationships with their children while navigating incarceration, family court, and re-entry.

What we see is a crisis that goes unnoticed: the steady erosion of family relationships when parents become involved in the criminal legal system. Structural support for parents before incarceration, during detention, and after release is extremely limited to non-existent. Family court and foster care timelines continue to run while parents are being held in custody, communication with caregivers and children becomes difficult, and guidance about parental rights is scarce. As a result, many parents lose contact with their children or, worse, lose their parental rights all together without ever receiving meaningful legal information or assistance.

At RMSC, the VOLS IMLP team meets many mothers and parents who come to our legal clinics hoping to understand how to protect their parental rights. But, far too often, the question they ask us is not how to keep their rights; tragically, it's whether there is any way to get them back after they have already been terminated. Generally, the answer is no. We have found that many of these outcomes could have been prevented with earlier access to legal support.

VOLS IMLP legal clinics at women's prisons assist incarcerated parents with family law matters. While these clinics and the great work of institutional legal services providers and social services organizations such as Hour Children and Osborne Association provide critical support, they are only a small intervention in a much larger systemic problem.

To address this gap, New York City should take three key steps: (1) fund programs that provide family law assistance specifically for incarcerated parents; (2) invest more in community-based organizations such as Hour Children and the Osborne Association so they can develop family law advisory services; and (3) ensure that parents receive clear information about their parental rights and family court obligations at sentencing or at the *earliest* stages of custody.

To ensure that VOLS IMLP can meet the demand for the aforementioned programs, that incarcerated parents may continue to receive family law assistance and adequate legal representation, and that we may expand our offerings to all vulnerable New Yorkers in need, VOLS respectfully requests **$100,000 in Speaker's Initiative funding.**

When parents become involved in the criminal legal system, they should not lose the chance to remain part of their children's lives. With earlier support and targeted investment, New York City can take meaningful steps to preserve these vital family connections.

Testimony in Support of FY27 Funding for Spay/Neuter, Veterinary Care, and Pet Food Pantries

Dear Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, and Members of the New York City Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We are submitting testimony on behalf of Voters For Animal Rights in support of two critical investments in the FY27 budget:

- **$1.5 million for affordable spay/neuter and veterinary care**
- **$2 million for pet food pantries across New York City**

New York City is a national leader in so many areas, but we are falling behind when it comes to investing in animal care. Despite being the wealthiest city in the country, New York spends approximately **$2.98 per capita on animal care — one of the lowest amounts of any major U.S. city.** By comparison, cities like Miami spend $13.70 per capita and Dallas spends $14.78 per capita. We can and must do better.

Right now, thousands of New Yorkers are struggling to afford food and basic veterinary care for their pets. Families are being forced to surrender animals they love — not because they want to, but because they cannot access the resources they need to keep them.

At the same time, animal rescuers and TNR volunteers across the five boroughs are overwhelmed. They are responding every day to stray and abandoned animals, but without enough affordable spay/neuter appointments, veterinary services, or city support to meet the need.

Investing in prevention is not only the compassionate choice — it is the fiscally responsible choice.

It costs New York City more than $1,000 to shelter an animal after they enter the system. By comparison, approximately $250 can provide basic veterinary care, vaccines, and spay/neuter services that help keep animals with their families and prevent unplanned litters before they happen. Upstream investments save money, reduce shelter intake, and improve outcomes for animals and people.

We are requesting **$1.5 million for spay/neuter and wellness care through nonprofit veterinary providers.**

This funding would help provide essential veterinary services for more than **10,000 cats and dogs annually**, supporting pet owners, rescue organizations, and trap-neuter-return volunteers. It would reduce overcrowding at Animal Care Centers of NYC, prevent unnecessary suffering, and allow more families to keep the animals they love.

We are also requesting **$2 million for pet food distribution through nonprofit community-based organizations.**

With 36% of New York City adults and 42% of families with children reporting food hardship in the past year, too many households are being forced to make impossible decisions between feeding themselves and feeding their pets.

Pet food pantries provide immediate relief. They keep animals out of shelters, keep families together, and create an important connection point where New Yorkers can access additional support and veterinary resources.

New York City's animal welfare system cannot rely only on responding after animals are already in crisis. We need to invest in solutions that prevent suffering before it happens. A city that supports animals also supports the people who love and care for them.

We urge the Council to include **$1.5 million for spay/neuter and veterinary care and $2 million for pet food pantries in the FY27 budget.**

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to building a more humane New York City.

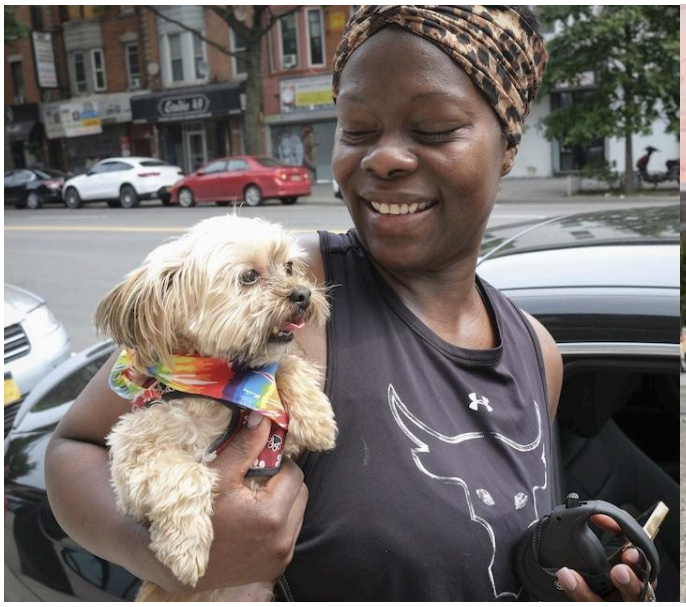
Allie Taylor
Board of Directors, Voters For Animal Rights
1276 Putnam Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11221
vfar.org

Animal Welfare and Pet Affordability

Policy Transition Team Memo For Mayor-Elect Zohran Mamdani

Prepared By Flatbush Cats and Voters For Animal Rights
Updated 12/12/2025

Top Priority: Making Pet Care Affordable to Keep NYC Pets With Their Families




New York City is facing a preventable animal welfare and public health crisis. Rising veterinary costs, housing instability, and gaps in community support are stretching animal shelters way beyond their limits. Families are surrendering pets due to solvable medical or financial challenges, and overcrowded shelters are straining staff, budgets, and outcomes.

- Every New Yorker loves their pet and believes they are family. But right now, **over 4.7 million NYC residents** live in households that cannot afford a basic vet visit.[1]
- **Affordability and housing** barriers are the top reasons why people end up surrendering their pets to chronically overcrowded city shelters, which operate far beyond capacity. Animal Care Centers of NYC ("ACC") annual intake reached more than 15,000 pets in 2024, while adoption and placement rates have not kept pace. Lengths of stay for shelter pets has increased.
- **1 in 3** animal surrenders in NYC are due to a lack of affordable housing that allows pets.
- Concern around the rising cost of pet ownership - and particularly the cost of vet care - is also the #1 barrier to adoption.[2] The average length of stay for pets at ACC has *tripled* since 2020[3], and **70% of pets now entering the shelter are not spayed or neutered.**

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (link) and American Housing Survey (link)
[2] 2024 Hill's State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report (link)
[3] ABC 7 NY: Animal Care Centers of New York City closed to dog surrenders due to critical capacity (link)

- NYC will spend over **$30 million per year** to run overcrowded animal shelters, but this doesn't address why pets are being surrendered in the first place. **Less than 1% of NYC funding** for animal welfare is focused on services that keep pets with their families.

This crisis is caused by a lack of investment: NYC spends **just $2.89 per capita** on animal care, which pales in comparison to other cities like Miami ($13.70) and Dallas ($14.78).

Upstream Solution: Make basic veterinary care affordable for New Yorkers

- To solve these issues, we must get to the root cause. By our estimates, New York City has approximately **790,000 unfixed pets** in need of free or low cost spay/neuter services right now.[4]
- In FY2026, the City Council created **a new budget initiative to make spay/neuter services more affordable for pet owners and rescuers**. But this covers less than 2% of the need - we must expand this initial $500k funding to appropriate levels to reduce pet surrenders and shelter overcrowding.
- According to the ASPCA, **NYC needs 189,000+ affordable spay/neuter surgeries per year** to get ahead of this problem. Currently, the city is only funding 3,500 spay/neuter surgeries annually.
- Beyond funding veterinary services, the city should support community engagement and outreach efforts to connect New Yorkers with information and key resources, including pet food and other basic supplies.

Policy + Legislative Actions

Immediately

- Appoint a new Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare, as is standard practice for a mayoral transition. Currently this office operates with only one staff member, which is insufficient given the scale of the city's animal welfare challenges. We recommend expanding it into a multi-person team with operational, policy, and data capacity, enabling the city to coordinate prevention strategies, improve access to care, and address the systemic drivers of shelter overcrowding. The new Director should be laser focused on making pet ownership more affordable and accessible for all New Yorkers, which will in turn alleviate the strain on overcrowded animal shelters. We have candidate recommendations.
- Appoint DOHMH leadership or a Deputy Commissioner that understands their duties with regard to animal welfare enforcement. DOHMH is not currently enforcing current regulations governing dog sales, licensing / vaccination compliance, and spay/neuter mandates. This must change.
- Require DOHMH to submit quarterly performance metrics and public reporting - including inspection activities, response times to complaints, and targeted enforcement against illegal breeding and unlicensed animal sales (backyard breeding).

[4] 88% of pets with underserved families are not spayed or neutered. The Humane Society of the US (link).

First year

- Introduction of new legislation requiring **low-cost veterinary clinics in every borough**, mirroring 2018 Local Law 123 which requires that full-service animal shelters are operated in all five boroughs. These can be run by local nonprofits with the funding streams below, with 50-70% of ongoing operating costs covered by service fees. This bill has strong support from current and incoming city council members.
- Introduce a new bill requiring **two pet food pantry pilots** to be run in The Bronx and Brooklyn (the two areas where the need is highest). A bill was introduced on this matter and earned a supermajority, but did not advance. We recommend redrafting the bill with a few updates (see Appendix) and reintroducing it. This bill has strong support from current and incoming city council members, including Speaker-Elect Menin.
- Ensure that pets are permitted in all new construction of affordable housing.
- Reintroduce legislation that would remove no-pet clauses from existing rental housing.

First term

- Work with the City Council to prioritize creating a new **Department of Animal Welfare** through legislation**.** More than 100 years ago, the primary concern and function of "animal control" was to keep stray and rabid animals off city streets. Over many years, the importance of animal protection issues in NYC has evolved to include a wide range of companion animal issues, as well as urban wildlife, and commercial use of animals. DOHMH has become the primary agency responsible for administering laws and regulations related to animals, pets and the environment. However, some of NYC's laws are wildly outdated and in need of overhaul. NYC's most pressing challenges for animals should be met by a well-funded agency dedicated to animal welfare, deeply knowledgeable about and capable of enforcing local laws and empowered to advocate for NYC's animals, increased funding and expanded priorities. Currently, DOHMH has abdicated all responsibility here and does not enforce existing laws, nor advocate for funding priorities.
- A new Department of Animal Welfare would unify management fragmented functions currently spread across DOHMH, NYPD, ACC, OEM, Parks Department and nonprofit organizations into a single, prevention-focused agency coordinating veterinary access, pet retention, field services, wildlife management, and shelter operations. By prioritizing preventative support, the city can keep pets with their families, reduce sheltering costs, and establish a more humane and cost-effective system.
- Next step: convene an interagency and nonprofit working group to formalize operating structure, priority focus areas, staffing and budget for the Department of Animal Welfare.

FY 2027 Budget Needs

Flatbush Cats

- Capital funding to build a second community veterinary clinic in Central Brooklyn, to open in 2028, serving 20,000+ pets and families per year (**$5M** - total capital expenditures estimated at $10 - $12M, with private support to cover the remainder).
- Launch a research-based **community engagement pilot** to identify effective approaches for keeping pets with their family / reducing intake (**$1.8M**). As the recipient of funds from this initiative, Flatbush Cats will deliver a report outlining recommendations and projected costs **for citywide implementation**, including a network of veterinary clinics and other support services across all boroughs.

Open RFP

- Funding for two pet food pantry pilots in The Bronx and Brooklyn (**$6M** - tied to new bill)
- Increase / baseline funding for the current spay/neuter initiative to **$2.5M** in the executive budget (not Speaker funding), to provide 15,000+ affordable spay/neuter surgeries + vaccines per year (all boroughs). Funding should increase in subsequent years as citywide clinic capacity becomes available.

Total for FY 2027: **$15.3 million**

Note: Funding all of these initiatives, in addition to continual baseline support for ACC, still totals less than 0.04% - *less than half of one tenth percent* - of the city budget.

Impact

In addition to **making NYC a more affordable and humane city,** these initiatives pay for themselves. Upstream investments average over **$750 in cost savings per animal**. It costs the city $1,000+ to shelter an animal vs $250 to cover a pet's basic veterinary care needs, help keep them at home and prevent unplanned litters.

Benefits

- **Affordability**
    - More New Yorkers can afford to keep their pets[5]
    - Increased shelter adoptions as cost barriers and housing barriers are removed
- **Quality of Life**
    - Pets are a critical lifeline for many New Yorkers, especially seniors
    - More families can enjoy the love and companionship pets provide
    - Provision of accessible core vital veterinary services for pet owners
    - Fewer pets suffering outside

[5] 45% of surrenders could have been prevented with access to low cost/free veterinary care or support with medical costs. 2024 Hill's State of Shelter Pet Adoption Report.

    - Decrease in preventable euthanasia in shelters
    - Reduced burnout and compassion fatigue for animal shelter staff, rescuers, and volunteers
- **Cost Savings**
    - City will spend 75% less per animal vs current downstream approach
    - Reduced intake and shorter lengths of stay for sheltered pets
    - Total funding required will *decrease* on a per animal basis over time

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Who We Are

Voters For Animal Rights

Voters For Animal Rights (VFAR) is a 501(c)(4) organization focused on passing humane legislation that improves the lives of animals and the New Yorkers who care for them. We have a long record of success passing numerous city and state measures protecting shelter animals, companion animals, wildlife, exotic animals, and farmed animals:

- Local Law 138-2017 prohibiting the use of wild animals in circuses
- Local Law 202-2019 prohibiting the sale of foie gras from force-fed ducks and geese
- Local Law 201-2019 prohibiting the trafficking of wild birds
- Local Law 54-2023 prohibiting the sale of guinea pigs in pet stores
- Local Law 132-2024 prohibiting the sale of animals from a residence, aka “backyard breeders”
- State Law prohibiting the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits in pet stores
- State Law prohibiting wildlife killing contests

We also led the successful effort to secure $500,000 in city funding for a spay-neuter TNR pilot program with Flatbush Cats. VFAR also works closely with ASPCA, NYS Animal Protection Federation, Humane World, Animal Legal Defense Fund, World Animal Protection, and NYC ACC. We have deep ties to NYC’s rescuer community in every borough, and our experience informs a practical, solutions-oriented approach to partnering with grassroots rescuers and pet parents.

Other Legislative Priorities for VFAR

- Supporting Intro 1325: Prohibits the sale of birds in pet shops

Flatbush Cats

Flatbush Cats is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on ending overcrowded animal shelters in NYC and beyond. We believe **every pet deserves to see a vet** and get the care they need. We have both the desire and the organizational capacity to provide these critical services and help move NYC animal welfare forward.

Through private funding, we recently built a new nonprofit veterinary clinic (Flatbush Vet) to help more New Yorkers get the care they need for both cats and dogs.

In our first two years after opening, Flatbush Vet has provided **10,000+ affordable spay/neuter surgeries** and 12,500+ wellness appointments for pet owners and rescuers. Over 900 individual rescuers and groups across NYC currently access low cost veterinary care at this facility.

Flatbush Cats works closely with other leading animal welfare partners including ACC, the ASPCA, and Bronx Community Cats. We receive multi-year funding support from The New York City Council (FY 24-26 Discretionary), The New York Community Trust, and PetSmart Charities among others.

Press:

- New investigative series about NYC's hidden cat crisis, and how to solve it: Underfoot
- Interview with Brian Lehrer about how to address NYC's overcrowded animal shelters
- The New York Times: How to Clear 500,000 Feral Cats From New York's Streets

VFAR and Flatbush Cats are trusted, experienced partners on the city's most complex and politically sensitive animal issues — from bodega cats to horse carriages. Having long worked at the intersection of policy and community, we look forward to advising Mayor-Elect Mamdani as he advances an affordability agenda that keeps New Yorkers and their pets together.

Allie Taylor
President, Voters For Animal Rights
allie@vfar.org

Will Zweigart
Executive Director, Flatbush Cats
will@flatbushcats.org

Appendix

Updated pet food pantry bill language:

"Within 9 months of the effective date of this local law, the City must establish pet food pantries in at least two locations, one in the Bronx and one in Brooklyn, for a minimum of 24 months.

Nonprofit organizations, existing food pantries, or animal welfare organizations may operate the program. Each location shall maintain accessible operating hours and adequate inventory to support at least X households per month.

Within 30 months of the effective date, lead service providers shall deliver a report evaluating the number of households served, volume of food distributed, geographic accessibility, impact on pet retention and shelter surrender rates, cost per household served, community partnerships established, and recommendations for program continuation, expansion to additional boroughs, or integration into permanent city services."

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CHARITY NAVIGATOR Four Star Charity

June 10, 2026

Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice to the New York City Council Committee on Finance on June 10, 2026 regarding Fiscal Year '27 Executive Budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation

Dear Chair Lee and Finance Committee,

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a community-based organization that has been building healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and/or low-income residents participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health policies and practices for over 35 years.

WE ACT is a member of the Forest for All NYC coalition, comprised of over 200-plus organizations seeking to equitably protect, maintain, expand and promote the New York City urban forest. Our members in Northern Manhattan find themselves at the intersection of vulnerabilities to extreme heat, flooding, and air pollution, in part because low income communities of color have 21% less park space compared to more affluent neighborhoods. The NYC urban forest cools the air, offers shady respite from heat, sequesters carbon, increases energy efficiency, and contributes to New Yorkers' health and wellbeing, and yet it does not serve New Yorkers equitably. We applaud the Mayor for releasing NYC's first ever Urban Forest Plan, required by Local Law 148 of 2023, in April and we are proud to have supported the creation of this Plan. It charts a path for NYC to equitably expand tree canopy cover to 30% citywide by 2040. To ensure the plan is successful, the City will need to plant additional trees, expand the workforce that protects and maintains trees, as well as invest in workforce development programs, tree nurseries, tree health research and monitoring, wood salvage, and more. It is with this mission in mind that we urge this Council to allocate $150 million to ensure the Parks Department and the Urban Forest Plan are set up for success:

- Restoration, expansion, and baselining of NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) staff and programs to support ongoing operations and to grow the urban forest:
- Expand NYC Park's capacity for tree risk management and inspections, including increasing and baselining the number of staff (climbers and pruners, foresters, and related management) and contract funding that are critical for caring for and managing the existing tree canopy across NYC.

- Baseline NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts (approximately 276 positions including Parks Enforcement Patrol, Urban Forest Rangers, Forestry staff, etc.) to limit turnover and sustain the operational efficiency that come from retaining a stable workforce.
- Provide $16M in baselined annual funding to fully implement the Forest Management Framework for forested natural areas, including $2.4M in annual capital funding for large scale restoration and contract work, $11.2M in baselined expense funding for in-house staff to conduct maintenance and for materials and operating costs, and $2.4M in baselined expense funding to provide one trails crew per borough supporting the formalization and maintenance of NYC's nature trail network.
- Increase the number of tree planting staff (via Capital funded Interfund Agreement) to increase the number of street trees planted from just under 18,000 in FY25 to at least 25,000 per year, with the aim of shortening the 9-year Neighborhood Tree Planting Program.
- Increase funding for the trees and sidewalks program, to increase the City's capacity to respond to damage to sidewalks caused by tree roots.
- $1M for the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to support non-NYC Parks agencies tasked with heightened management and expansion of trees in their jurisdictions (such as NYC Housing Authority, Department of Education, the School Construction Authority, Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, etc.) in implementing initial actions of the forthcoming NYC Urban Forest Plan. This includes funding for an updated citywide Lidar remote sensing data capture and analysis to monitor the canopy coverage of the urban forest and measure the growth or loss of tree canopy coverage and track progress towards the 30% goal, as required by Local Law 148 of 2023 to be completed every 5 years.

In addition to these budget requests, there are several staffing-related needs that are essential in rebuilding and expanding the City's urban forest workforce, including:

- Salary increases for the advanced and technical civil service roles like Foresters and Climber & Pruners, to help attract and retain the best candidates to manage the nation's largest urban forest.
- Expansion of City-led workforce training programs, including internal programs to train existing employees and create promotional opportunities like the NYC Parks Climber & Pruner program, as well as programs that bring in new

workers to expand overall workforce capacity.

- We are grateful to see $15M for baselined positions in the Executive Budget – this is a step in the right direction. However, there are still 115 positions in NYC Parks positions currently funded by one-year contracts that were not included in the Executive Budget such as Parks Enforcement Patrol and GreenThumb Staff. These roles are vital to maintaining high quality, safe parks and fostering community stewardship of parks and community gardens. Without stable funding for these teams, Parks will not be able to optimize their operations because they are forced into a cycle of losing and replacing talent. The whole City benefits when all Parks employees have job security.

These budget requests represent a critical investment in environmental justice by directly addressing the structural inequities that have long denied low-income communities and communities of color equitable access to the benefits of New York City's urban forest. By restoring and stabilizing the workforce, expanding tree planting and maintenance, and ensuring rigorous data tracking and interagency coordination, the City can move beyond piecemeal solutions toward a sustained, systemic approach to climate resilience. Fully funding these initiatives will not only advance the goals of Local Law 148, but also deliver tangible health, economic, and climate benefits—cooler neighborhoods, cleaner air, safer public spaces, and reduced energy burdens—to the communities that have historically borne the greatest environmental harms.

Sincerely,

Caleb Smith
New York City Policy Manager
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
caleb.smith@weact.org | 646-983-7288

NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

6/11/2026

Good afternoon, Chair, members of the Committee, and fellow New Yorkers.

Our request today is about protecting 450 deeply affordable homes and the hundreds of Bronx families who depend on them for stability, safety, and the ability to remain in their community.

My name is Jessica Clemente, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of WE STAY/Nos Quedamos, a community-based development corporation founded by residents and rooted in the belief that communities should have the power to shape their own future. WE STAY/Nos Quedamos serves as a community anchor institution providing resident engagement, community planning, housing stewardship, social services, and neighborhood development initiatives. Preserving these buildings preserves the broader ecosystem of support that helps families remain rooted in place.

I respectfully request your support for our Reso A applications for 760 Melrose Avenue, 871 Elton Avenue, 406 East 161st Street, and 500 East 165th Street in the Bronx. Approval of these applications will fund critical capital improvements that will preserve **450 deeply affordable homes** and protect hundreds of Bronx families who live in these buildings.

This is fundamentally a preservation request. It is about ensuring that 450 existing homes—already built, already occupied, and already serving low-income New Yorkers—remain safe, stable, and affordable for decades to come. These homes represent not only housing units, but decades of public investment and community-led planning that must be protected.

At a time when New York City continues to face a severe housing affordability crisis, preservation remains the most cost-effective and immediate tool available to the City. These 450 homes provide stability for families, safety for seniors, opportunity for children, and the ability for longtime residents to age in place in the neighborhoods they helped build.

More than thirty years ago, Melrose became a national model for community-led planning and development. At a time of severe disinvestment in the South Bronx, residents and public partners came together to create the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan, which gave rise to WE STAY/Nos Quedamos. That effort transformed vacant land into affordable housing, community facilities, parks, and economic opportunity, and remains one of the most successful examples of resident-driven redevelopment in the country.

The developments included in this request are part of that legacy. They reflect decades of public investment, resident leadership, and partnership with the City of New York. This request is about protecting that investment and ensuring these homes remain viable for future generations.

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P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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Today, however, nonprofit housing providers across New York City are operating under escalating financial pressure. Rising insurance premiums, utilities, regulatory requirements, and aging building systems continue to outpace operating revenues—especially in deeply affordable housing.

Like many mission-driven providers, WE STAY/Nos Quedamos advances organizational funds to address operating deficits, emergency repairs, and critical building needs to keep buildings safe and compliant. While necessary, these advances are increasingly unsustainable and are placing long-term strain on the organization.

The reality is these resources are not sufficient to address the full scope of capital needs across our portfolio. We are facing urgent and unavoidable needs, including elevator modernization, roof replacements, building system upgrades, and critical safety and accessibility repairs. These are not enhancements—they are basic requirements for habitability and dignity.

Across New York City, affordable housing providers are increasingly facing financial distress as operating costs rise faster than revenues. Housing experts and advocates have warned of a growing preservation crisis in which aging buildings and constrained operating margins are pushing properties toward mortgage distress, default, and in some cases, foreclosure.

These outcomes are already occurring across the City. When affordable housing enters financial distress or foreclosure, the consequences are severe: residents face instability, buildings deteriorate further, and the public sector ultimately bears far higher costs to intervene after conditions have worsened. Most importantly, decades of public investment in affordability are placed at risk.

For communities like Melrose, the stakes are especially high. These developments were created through a deliberate partnership between residents, community organizations, and the City of New York to reverse decades of abandonment and disinvestment. Allowing them to fall into distress would undermine decades of community planning and public investment that transformed Melrose into a nationally recognized model of community-led redevelopment.

The question before this Council is not whether these capital needs are real—they clearly are. The question is whether we invest now to preserve affordable housing or pay significantly more later through emergency intervention, deterioration, and displacement.

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Fiscal Impact and Return on Investment

The total Reso A funding of $18,593,015 will preserve **450 deeply affordable homes** across four developments: Parkview I (110 units), Parkview II (88 units), Bronx Third (128 units), and Palacio del Sol (124 units).

This equates to an average cost of approximately **$41,300 per apartment preserved**. By comparison, the cost of producing new affordable housing units in New York City can exceed several hundred thousand dollars per unit. Preservation is therefore not only more efficient—it is the most fiscally responsible strategy available to maintain existing affordability at scale.

Importantly, this investment also prevents far more costly outcomes. Without timely capital intervention, buildings face accelerating deterioration, increased operating deficits, and heightened risk of financial distress. In severe cases, deferred investment contributes to mortgage default, emergency stabilization costs, and foreclosure proceedings—all of which are significantly more expensive for the public sector and far more disruptive for residents.

At approximately $41,300 per apartment, this is a preventative investment that preserves affordability, stabilizes housing conditions, and protects long-term public assets at a moment when both construction costs and displacement pressures continue to rise across New York City.

Preservation protects people. It allows families, seniors, and longtime residents to remain in the communities they helped build. It stabilizes neighborhoods, prevents displacement, and ensures that affordable housing remains a permanent community asset rather than a temporary intervention.

To underscore this, more than 200 residents have signed letters in support of this request and will be submitted to the public record. Their message is clear: they want safe homes, functioning elevators, reliable building systems, and the dignity of living in well-maintained housing. They are not asking for luxury—they are asking for basic stability. These residents are your constituents: seniors aging in place, families raising children, essential workers, and longtime community members who have remained committed to the South Bronx through decades of both hardship and renewal.

We are asking the Council not simply to fund a capital project, but to take action to prevent a foreseeable housing crisis. Every dollar invested through Reso A preserves 450 deeply affordable homes, protects prior public investment, strengthens nonprofit housing stewardship, and reduces the risk of financial distress and foreclosure across New York City's affordable housing stock.

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P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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The story of Melrose is one of resilience and partnership between residents and government. Thirty years ago, the City of New York invested in a community-led vision that transformed one of the most distressed neighborhoods in the country into a national model of equitable redevelopment. Today, we have an opportunity—and an obligation—to protect that legacy.

We respectfully urge the Council to fully fund these Reso A applications for 760 Melrose Avenue, 871 Elton Avenue, 406 East 161st Street, and 500 East 165th Street.

The cost of preservation is far less than the cost of inaction. The time to invest is now.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued commitment to preserving affordable housing and strengthening communities across New York City.

Respectfully,

Jessica Clemente
Chief Executive Officer

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P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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To Chairperson Linda Lee and members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Melanie Reyes, and I am the Housing Organizer at WE STAY/Nos Quedamos, a 33-year-old South Bronx-based community development corporation.

Every day, I work directly with residents across our buildings. I listen to their concerns, help them navigate challenges, connect them to resources, and advocate for their needs. Through those conversations, one message comes through consistently: people deserve safe, well-maintained, affordable homes where they can remain and raise their families with dignity.

That is why I am here today to ask for your support in approving our Reso A applications. As a Housing Organizer, I see firsthand how building conditions directly affect residents' quality of life. When critical repairs are delayed, residents feel the effects every day. These are not cosmetic issues or luxury improvements. They are basic investments.

The reality is that mission-driven nonprofit community development housing owners like WE STAY/Nos Quedamos are facing increasing financial pressures. Rising operating costs and aging building systems make it difficult to address critical capital needs without public support.

This funding is about preserving affordable housing for current residents and future generations. It is about protecting community assets that were built through decades of partnership between residents, community organizations, and the City. And it is about ensuring that the families who helped transform Melrose into a thriving neighborhood can continue to benefit from that success.

Our residents of **760 Melrose Avenue, 871 Elton Avenue, 406 East 161st Street, and 500 East 165th Street in the Bronx,** understand the urgency of this need. Over 200 residents from our buildings have signed letters supporting these requests because they know what is at stake and want to become more civically engaged. They are asking for investments that will improve safety, maintain affordability, and protect the quality of life in their homes. These residents are your constituents. I respectfully urge the Committee to approve our Reso A applications in full. This investment will help preserve affordable housing, prevent displacement, protect prior public investments, and strengthen the stability of our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council to ensure that South Bronx families can continue to live in safe, affordable, and well-maintained homes.

Respectfully,
Melanie Reyes

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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WE STAY / Nos Quedamos
Resident Sign-On Submission
6/11/2026

To: Honorable Chair and Members of the New York City Council Finance Committee

Re: Resident Testimony in Strong Support of Reso A Applications

760 Melrose Avenue, 871 Elton Avenue, 406 East 161st Street, and 500 East 165th Street (Bronx)

Dear Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

We are residents of 760 Melrose Avenue, 871 Elton Avenue, 406 East 161st Street, and 500 East 165th Street in the Bronx. These are our homes—where we raise our children, care for our elders, and build our daily lives.

We are writing in strong support of the Reso A capital funding applications submitted by WE STAY/Nos Quedamos because we are the people who live with the conditions every day. We are the ones who rely on ownership to provide functioning elevators, safe hallways, heat and hot water, and buildings that are properly maintained.

Together, these four buildings represent approximately **450 deeply affordable homes** that house hundreds of Bronx families like ours. We understand that the requested investment of **$18,593,015 equals about $41,300 per apartment preserved**, and we want to say clearly: from our perspective, that is not a cost—it is protection. It is protection for our homes, our families, and our ability to stay in the neighborhoods we have lived in for years, and in many cases, decades.

We are asking for this funding because our buildings need it. We are the ones who have to deal with aging building systems, broken or unreliable elevators, and repairs that have been delayed for years. Some of us have family members who struggle to climb stairs when elevators are out. Some of us live with conditions that make us worry about safety, especially for children and seniors.

When repairs are delayed, things get worse. Small problems become big ones. Buildings become harder to maintain. And eventually, what should have been fixed becomes a crisis that costs more and disrupts more lives.

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We do not want to see our homes reach that point.

We also know what happens in New York City when affordable housing is not properly invested in. Buildings fall into financial distress. Conditions worsen. And too often, residents like us are the ones who suffer the consequences—through instability, uncertainty, and the fear of displacement from the only homes we can afford.

That is why we are asking you to act now. Not later, when things are worse and more expensive to fix—but now, while preservation is still possible and effective.

We support WE STAY/Nos Quedamos because they have stood with residents for decades and worked to keep these buildings safe and affordable. This request reflects what we have been asking for: basic, necessary investment to keep our homes livable.

Preserving these 450 homes means keeping families together, protecting seniors who want to age in place, and making sure children can stay in the neighborhoods they know as home.

We respectfully urge the Finance Committee to fully support and approve these Reso A applications. This is not just funding buildings—it is funding stability, dignity, and the right of 450 homes' worth of families to stay in their community.

Thank you for listening to our voices and for considering what this means for us daily.

Sincerely,

The Residents of
760 Melrose Avenue Bronx, New York
871 Elton Avenue Bronx, New York
406 East 161st Street Bronx, New York
500 East 165th Street Bronx, New York

On behalf of **WE STAY / Nos Quedamos Residents**

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P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
www.nosquedamos.org

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Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

We, the residents of Bronx Third, located at 500 East 165th Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,331,250 in City capital funding to address critical, long-overdue building upgrades and renovations.

Bronx Third is a vital affordable housing asset within Melrose Commons and a cornerstone of the South Bronx's community-led revitalization. In 2024, the building transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, ensuring permanent community control and long-term stewardship. For residents, this represents a commitment to stability, dignity, and the preservation of affordable housing for generations to come.

However, we are currently facing the impacts of significant deferred maintenance across structural components, the building envelope, and essential building systems. These conditions directly affect our health, safety, and quality of life, and without immediate investment, they will continue to worsen—leading to higher costs, increased system failures, and instability for the families who live here.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive capital stabilization plan that addresses urgent needs across five key priorities:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Critical Systems & Life Safety
- Common Areas & Energy Efficiency
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned improvements include:

- Roof replacement and façade repairs (Local Law 11 compliance)
- Window replacement and exterior door upgrades
- Concrete, asphalt, and gate repairs to improve safety and access
- Elevator modernization and HVAC system upgrades
- Boiler repair, fire panel modernization, and intercom replacement
- Security camera and smoke detector upgrades, and sewer maintenance

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- Common area improvements, including hallway flooring, lighting (Local Law 88 compliance), and painting
- Apartment-level repairs, including kitchen upgrades, flooring, doors, and interior painting

These investments are not cosmetic—they are essential to prevent system failures, reduce emergency repairs, improve energy efficiency, and ensure safe and stable living conditions. The work will also help transition the building from reactive repairs to planned, sustainable maintenance, lowering long-term operating costs and extending the building's useful life.

Bronx Third serves a diverse, working-class community, including low-income families and formerly homeless households. Many residents are deeply rent-burdened and cannot absorb the impacts of deteriorating building conditions or rising costs. Preserving this housing is essential to maintaining stability and preventing displacement in our neighborhood.

At this time, City Council capital funding is critical to move this project forward. This investment aligns directly with City priorities to preserve deeply affordable housing, strengthen community-led ownership, and maintain neighborhood resilience.

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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Bronx Third and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Darren richardson

Date: 5/20/26

Signature: D Richardson

Apartment Number: 8C

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

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- Common area improvements, including hallway flooring, lighting (Local Law 88 compliance), and painting
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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Marisol Carabello Date: 5/20/26

Signature: [signature] Apartment Number: 4B

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Cyre' Hope Crandle

Date: 5.20.2026

Signature:

Apartment Number:
2M

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Chanoa Payton

Date: 5-20-26

Signature: Chanoa Payton

Apartment Number: 3Q

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Todd Savoy

Date: 05/20/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 2J

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: ALVARO ESTEVEZ
Signature:

Date: MAY 20, 2026
Apartment Number: 6C

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Elijah Manning

Signature: Elijah D

Date: 5/20/26

Apartment Number: 4G

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Carmen Iris Perez

Date: 5/20/26

Signature: Carmen Iris Perez

Apartment Number: 6B

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Ion moodie

Date: 5-20-2026

Signature: Ion moodie

Apartment Number:

1E

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Rafael Rosa Mota

Date:

Signature: Rafael Rosa Mota

Apartment Number: 26

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WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

We, the residents of Bronx Third, located at 500 East 165th Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,331,250 in City capital funding to address critical, long-overdue building upgrades and renovations.

Bronx Third is a vital affordable housing asset within Melrose Commons and a cornerstone of the South Bronx's community-led revitalization. In 2024, the building transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, ensuring permanent community control and long-term stewardship. For residents, this represents a commitment to stability, dignity, and the preservation of affordable housing for generations to come.

However, we are currently facing the impacts of significant deferred maintenance across structural components, the building envelope, and essential building systems. These conditions directly affect our health, safety, and quality of life, and without immediate investment, they will continue to worsen—leading to higher costs, increased system failures, and instability for the families who live here.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive capital stabilization plan that addresses urgent needs across five key priorities:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Critical Systems & Life Safety
- Common Areas & Energy Efficiency
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned improvements include:

- Roof replacement and façade repairs (Local Law 11 compliance)
- Window replacement and exterior door upgrades
- Concrete, asphalt, and gate repairs to improve safety and access
- Elevator modernization and HVAC system upgrades
- Boiler repair, fire panel modernization, and intercom replacement
- Security camera and smoke detector upgrades, and sewer maintenance

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- Common area improvements, including hallway flooring, lighting (Local Law 88 compliance), and painting
- Apartment-level repairs, including kitchen upgrades, flooring, doors, and interior painting

These investments are not cosmetic—they are essential to prevent system failures, reduce emergency repairs, improve energy efficiency, and ensure safe and stable living conditions. The work will also help transition the building from reactive repairs to planned, sustainable maintenance, lowering long-term operating costs and extending the building's useful life.

Bronx Third serves a diverse, working-class community, including low-income families and formerly homeless households. Many residents are deeply rent-burdened and cannot absorb the impacts of deteriorating building conditions or rising costs. Preserving this housing is essential to maintaining stability and preventing displacement in our neighborhood.

At this time, City Council capital funding is critical to move this project forward. This investment aligns directly with City priorities to preserve deeply affordable housing, strengthen community-led ownership, and maintain neighborhood resilience.

As residents, we strongly support this proposal because it protects our homes, strengthens our community, and honors decades of organizing and planning that made Melrose Commons what it is today.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Bronx Third and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Danelle wheeler

Date: 5/20/2026

Signature: DW

Apartment Number: 6D

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Bronx Third (500 East 165th Street)

Name: Edwardo Jimenez

Date: 5/20/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 16

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Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

We, the residents of Palacio del Sol, located at 760 Melrose Avenue in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $5,081,140 in City capital funding to address critical, long-overdue building upgrades and renovations.

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- Trash compactor replacement and sewer system maintenance
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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Emma Olivencia

Date: 5/16/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 5C

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WE STAY!

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Wanda Gallard Date: 5/19/26

Signature: W. Gallard. Apartment Number: 7P

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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Palacio del Sol and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Victoria Morel

Date: 5/19/26

Signature: Victoria

Apartment Number: 2J.

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Taina Carpas

Date: 5/19/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 6F

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Iglis Acuna

Signature:

Date: 5/19/26

Apartment Number: 4 Q

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Brian Melendez

Date: 5/15/26

Signature: B.R.M

Apartment Number: 8A

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Rex Mottana
Date: 5/19/26
Signature: R.M.
Apartment Number: 4L

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Luz Torres

Date: 5-19-2026

Signature: Luz Torres

Apartment Number: 3 E

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Bianca Lalin

Date: 5/19/26

Signature: Bianca Lalin

Apartment Number: 6N

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The Residents of Palacio del Sol ~~(760 Melrose Avenue)~~

Name:

Date: 5-19-26

Signature:

Apartment Number:
3M.

We Plan. We Build. We Flourish.

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Guillermo Garcia

Signature: Guillermo Garcia

Date: 05/19/26

Apartment Number: 35

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Loyda De Jesus

Date: 5/19/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 5F

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Nyree McGirt

Signature: Nyree McGirt

Date: 5-14-26

Apartment Number: 3L

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name:

Date: 5/28/2026

Signature: Luis Ellman

Apartment Number: 3C

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Karen LaRose Date: 5/28/26

Signature: Apartment Number: 6B

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: N. Gabriel

Date: 6/28/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 7M

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Darryl mccoy 5D

Date: 5/28/26

Signature: Daryl mccoy

Apartment Number: 5D

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Pedrina Ayala Date: 5/28

Signature: Apartment Number: 21

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Norma Vela

Date: 5/28/26

Signature: Norma Vela

Apartment Number: 5-A

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: [illegible] Date: 5/28/26

Signature: [illegible] Apartment Number: 4F

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Carol Kelly

Date: 5/28/26

Signature: Carol Kelly

Apartment Number: 5C

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Kadeshia Brown

Date: 05/28/2026

Signature:

Apartment Number: 6B

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Valerie Butler

Date: 5-28-26

Signature: Valerie Butler

Apartment Number: 6K

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Shakeema Tucker

Date: 5-28-26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 3H

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The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Xavier Hayes

Date: 5/28/26

Signature: Xavier Hayes

Apartment Number: 7K

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As residents, we strongly support this proposal because it protects our homes, strengthens our community, and honors decades of community-driven planning and investment that have shaped Melrose Commons.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Palacio del Sol and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Karisma Marshall

Date: 05/28/2024

Signature:

Apartment Number: 7E

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

We, the residents of Palacio del Sol, located at 760 Melrose Avenue in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $5,081,140 in City capital funding to address critical, long-overdue building upgrades and renovations.

Palacio del Sol is a cornerstone of Melrose Commons and a powerful example of community-led revitalization in the South Bronx. In 2024, the building transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, securing permanent community control and long-term stewardship. For residents, this means stability, accountability, and a commitment to preserving deeply affordable housing for the long term.

Despite this progress, our building is experiencing the effects of significant deferred maintenance across structural elements, the building envelope, and core mechanical systems. These issues directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life, and without timely intervention, they will continue to worsen—leading to increased system failures, higher costs, and instability for families who call this building home.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive capital stabilization plan focused on five critical priorities:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Critical Systems & Life Safety
- Common Areas & Energy Efficiency
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned improvements include:

- Full roof replacement and façade restoration
- Window and exterior door replacement
- Concrete and asphalt repairs to improve safety and accessibility
- Elevator modernization and boiler replacement
- HVAC and ventilation system upgrades
- Fire panel modernization, smoke detector upgrades, and security camera systems

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- Trash compactor replacement and sewer system maintenance
- Common area improvements, including new flooring, Local Law 88 lighting upgrades, and painting
- Apartment-level repairs, including kitchen upgrades, flooring replacement, door repairs, and interior painting

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Ashley Frank

Date: 5/28/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 3i

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: L Matthews

Date: 05-28-2026

Signature: L Matthews

Apartment Number: 8J

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Clara Salamayor

Date: 5-28-2026

Signature: Clara Salamayor

Apartment Number: 3e

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Wilhelmina Cosy

Date: 5-28-26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 6D

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Sunny Rosa

Date: 05-2x-26

Signature:

Apartment Number:

917-421-0255

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WE STAY!

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Luz Torres

Date: 5-28-2026

Signature:

Apartment Number: 3 E

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WE STAY!

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue)

Name: Lasheena Mcfadden Date: 5/28/26

Signature: Apartment Number: 8G

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P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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Palacio del Sol Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (760 Melrose Ave) / Firma de Apoyo de los Residentes de Palacio del Sol – Financiamiento de Capital Reso A (760 Melrose Ave)

We, the residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY), are signing in support of NYC Reso A Capital Funding requested by Nos Quedamos (We Stay) to complete critical building repairs and infrastructure upgrades.

This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $5,081,140

Project Includes:

- Roof and façade repairs
- Elevator, boiler, HVAC upgrades
- Fire safety and security systems
- Window and door replacement
- Hallway and common area improvements
- Apartment-level repairs

Nosotros, los residentes de Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, Nueva York), firmamos en apoyo a la resolución municipal de Nueva York sobre el financiamiento de capital solicitado por Nos Quedamos (We Stay) para llevar a cabo reparaciones esenciales en el edificio y mejoras en la infraestructura.

Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $5,081,140

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reparaciones del techo y la fachada
- Modernización de elevadores, caldera y sistema de climatización
- Sistemas de seguridad y protección contra incendios

- Reemplazo de ventanas y puertas

- Mejoras del pasillo y área común
- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos

About Nos Quedamos (We Stay) / Acerca de Nos Quedamos (We Stay)

Since 1993, Nos Quedamos has led community-driven planning in the South Bronx through the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan, advancing resident-led development, preserving affordable housing, and strengthening community control over neighborhood planning and investment.

Desde 1993, Nos Quedamos ha liderado la planificación impulsada por la comunidad en el sur del Bronx a través del Plan de Renovación Urbana de Melrose, promoviendo el desarrollo dirigido por los residentes, preservando la vivienda asequible y fortaleciendo el control comunitario sobre la planificación e inversión en el vecindario.

Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Cynthia Cruz

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

4J

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

347-961-4126

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

cynthiacruz0110@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? / ¿Apoya usted esta solicitud de financiamiento? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

I support this funding request because we desperately need these things done.

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

This form was created inside of We Stay - Nos Quedamos.

Google Forms

Palacio del Sol Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (760 Melrose Ave) / Firma de Apoyo de los Residentes de Palacio del Sol – Financiamiento de Capital Reso A (760 Melrose Ave)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Joseph Giler

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

3M

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

6463980067

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

jgiler@nosquedamos.org

Do you support this funding request? / ¿Apoya usted esta solicitud de financiamiento? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Palacio del Sol Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (760 Melrose Ave) / Firma de Apoyo de los Residentes de Palacio del Sol – Financiamiento de Capital Reso A (760 Melrose Ave)

We, the residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY), are signing in support of NYC Reso A Capital Funding requested by Nos Quedamos (We Stay) to complete critical building repairs and infrastructure upgrades.

This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $5,081,140

Project Includes:

- Roof and façade repairs
- Elevator, boiler, HVAC upgrades
- Fire safety and security systems
- Window and door replacement
- Hallway and common area improvements
- Apartment-level repairs

Nosotros, los residentes de Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, Nueva York), firmamos en apoyo a la resolución municipal de Nueva York sobre el financiamiento de capital solicitado por Nos Quedamos (We Stay) para llevar a cabo reparaciones esenciales en el edificio y mejoras en la infraestructura.

Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $5,081,140

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reparaciones del techo y la fachada
- Modernización de elevadores, caldera y sistema de climatización
- Sistemas de seguridad y protección contra incendios
- Reemplazo de ventanas y puertas
- Mejoras del pasillo y área común

- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos

About Nos Quedamos (We Stay) / Acerca de Nos Quedamos (We Stay)
Since 1993, Nos Quedamos has led community-driven planning in the South Bronx through the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan, advancing resident-led development, preserving affordable housing, and strengthening community control over neighborhood planning and investment.

Desde 1993, Nos Quedamos ha liderado la planificación impulsada por la comunidad en el sur del Bronx a través del Plan de Renovación Urbana de Melrose, promoviendo el desarrollo dirigido por los residentes, preservando la vivienda asequible y fortaleciendo el control comunitario sobre la planificación e inversión en el vecindario.

Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Jessica Diaz

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

5b

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

646-474-6785

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

ladybeige323@yahoo.com

Do you support this funding request? / ¿Apoya usted esta solicitud de financiamiento? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

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Palacio del Sol Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (760 Melrose Ave) / Firma de Apoyo de los Residentes de Palacio del Sol – Financiamiento de Capital Reso A (760 Melrose Ave)

We, the residents of Palacio del Sol (760 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY), are signing in support of NYC Reso A Capital Funding requested by Nos Quedamos (We Stay) to complete critical building repairs and infrastructure upgrades.

This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $5,081,140

Project Includes:

- Roof and façade repairs
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- Hallway and common area improvements
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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Kadeshia Brown

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

6B

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

3472827705

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

kabrown10550@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? / ¿Apoya usted esta solicitud de financiamiento? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

We, the residents of Parkview I, located at 871 Elton Avenue in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ) on February 19, 2026, requesting $4,795,025 in capital funding to address critical, long-overdue building renovations.

Parkview I is more than just a building—it is a cornerstone of the Melrose community and a symbol of the neighborhood's hard-fought revitalization since the 1990s. In 2024, the property transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, securing permanent community control and long-term stewardship. As residents, we recognize the importance of this moment and the responsibility to preserve what has been built.

However, we are also living with the reality of significant deferred maintenance across key building systems. These conditions are not cosmetic—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these issues will worsen, leading to higher long-term costs and instability for the families who call this building home.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive stabilization strategy focused on five critical areas:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Critical Systems & Life Safety
- Common Areas & Energy Efficiency
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

- Roof replacement, façade repairs, window replacement, and exterior door upgrades
- Elevator modernization and HVAC system replacement
- Boiler and water heater replacement, fire panel modernization, and intercom upgrades
- Trash compactor replacement, sewer cleaning, and updated smoke detectors and security camera systems

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- Common area improvements, including new flooring, upgraded lighting (Local Law 88 compliance), and painting
- In-unit repairs, including interior painting, kitchen appliances, cabinetry, and flooring

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Parkview I serves a diverse, low-income community, including families, seniors, and residents transitioning out of homelessness. Many households are rent-burdened and cannot absorb the consequences of deteriorating housing conditions or rising costs. Preserving this building is essential to maintaining housing stability, economic mobility, and neighborhood resilience in the South Bronx.

At this time, City Council capital funding is the primary and only identified source to complete these critical repairs. Without this investment, necessary upgrades will be delayed, putting residents and the long-term viability of the building at risk.

As residents, we strongly support this proposal because it protects our homes, strengthens our community, and honors decades of community-driven planning and investment that have shaped Melrose Commons.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Parkview I and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: DORAH MATIAS
Signature: Dorah Matias

Date: 05/16/2024
Apartment Number: 6E

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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Parkview I and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Silmary Reyes

Signature: Silmary Reyes

Date: 5-27-2026

Apartment Number: 3H

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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Parkview I and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Lydia Ofori
Signature: Lydia Ofori

Date: 5/27/26
Apartment Number: 6H

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Mary Brooks

Signature: Mary Brooks

Date: 5/27/27

Apartment Number: 6H

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Brenda Gomez

Signature: Brenda Gomez

Date: 5/27/2026

Apartment Number: 3D

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Edelmira Alvedo

Date: 5.27.2026

Signature: E. Alvedo

Apartment Number: 4S

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Tausheena Hoke

Date: 5/27/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 7J

We Plan. We Build. We Flourish.

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WE STAY!

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Planned capital improvements include:

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- Common area improvements, including new flooring, upgraded lighting (Local Law 88 compliance), and painting
- In-unit repairs, including interior painting, kitchen appliances, cabinetry, and flooring

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name:

Signature:

Date: 05/27/24

Apartment Number: 2H

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Ernesto, Velazquez

Date: 5-27-2026

Signature: E. V

Apartment Number: 4D

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Josephine Turkson

Signature:

Date: 5/27/26

Apartment Number: 5F

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Olufunke Aleagbo

Signature: Olufunke Aleagbo

Date: 05/27/26

Apartment Number: 2R

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Reginald Tingle
Signature: Reginald Tingle
Date: 5/27/26
Apartment Number: 4R

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Terrence Garrett

Date: 5/27-26

Signature: Terrence Garrett

Apartment Number: 4P

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Gwendolyn Davis
Signature: Gwendolyn Davis
Date: 5/27/2026
Apartment Number: 8-F

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: YVETTE McCOY

Date: 5-27-26

Signature: Yvette McCoy

Apartment Number: 3K

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: OMAR B

Date: 5-27-2025

Signature:

Apartment Number:

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Parkview I serves a diverse, low-income community, including families, seniors, and residents transitioning out of homelessness. Many households are rent-burdened and cannot absorb the consequences of deteriorating housing conditions or rising costs. Preserving this building is essential to maintaining housing stability, economic mobility, and neighborhood resilience in the South Bronx.

At this time, City Council capital funding is the primary and only identified source to complete these critical repairs. Without this investment, necessary upgrades will be delayed, putting residents and the long-term viability of the building at risk.

As residents, we strongly support this proposal because it protects our homes, strengthens our community, and honors decades of community-driven planning and investment that have shaped Melrose Commons.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Parkview I and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Roshonda Dunbar
Signature: R. Dunbar

Date: 5/27/2026
Apartment Number: 4A

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
www.nosquedamos.org

NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

We, the residents of Parkview I, located at 871 Elton Avenue in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ) on February 19, 2026, requesting $4,795,025 in capital funding to address critical, long-overdue building renovations.

Parkview I is more than just a building—it is a cornerstone of the Melrose community and a symbol of the neighborhood's hard-fought revitalization since the 1990s. In 2024, the property transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, securing permanent community control and long-term stewardship. As residents, we recognize the importance of this moment and the responsibility to preserve what has been built.

However, we are also living with the reality of significant deferred maintenance across key building systems. These conditions are not cosmetic—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these issues will worsen, leading to higher long-term costs and instability for the families who call this building home.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive stabilization strategy focused on five critical areas:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Critical Systems & Life Safety
- Common Areas & Energy Efficiency
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

- Roof replacement, façade repairs, window replacement, and exterior door upgrades
- Elevator modernization and HVAC system replacement
- Boiler and water heater replacement, fire panel modernization, and intercom upgrades
- Trash compactor replacement, sewer cleaning, and updated smoke detectors and security camera systems

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- Common area improvements, including new flooring, upgraded lighting (Local Law 88 compliance), and painting
- In-unit repairs, including interior painting, kitchen appliances, cabinetry, and flooring

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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Parkview I and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Dora Comelo

Date: 5/27/26

Signature: Dora Comelo

Apartment Number: 4B

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Joy Ward

Signature:

Date: 5-29-26

Apartment Number: 2A

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www.nosquedamos.org

NOS QUEDAMOS
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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Garfield & Nedra Bowers Date: 05-27-2026

Signature: [signature] Apartment Number: 1d

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Luz Rivera

Date: 5/22/26

Signature: [signature]

Apartment Number: 2M

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Karolyn Garcia
Date: 5/27/26

Signature: Karolyn Garcia
Apartment Number: 2J

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P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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NOS QUEDAMOS
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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: VICTOR M FERNANDEZ

Signature: Victor M Fernandez

Date: 5/27/26

Apartment Number: 3L

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and invest in the long-term stability and future of Parkview I and the families who call it home.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to preserving affordable housing in the Bronx.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue)

Name: Cleshede Williams

Date: May 22. 26

Signature: C. Williams

Apartment Number: 3F

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
www.nosquedamos.org

Parkview I Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (871 Elton Avenue)

We, the residents of Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue, Bronx, NY), are signing in support of NYC Reso A Capital Funding requested by Nos Quedamos (We Stay) to complete critical building repairs and infrastructure upgrades.

This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $4,795,025

Project Includes:

- Roof replacement and building envelope repairs
- Window and exterior door replacement
- Elevator modernization and mechanical upgrades
- Boiler, HVAC, fire safety, and intercom systems
- Security camera and life-safety improvements
- Hallway flooring, lighting upgrades (LL88), and painting
- Apartment-level repairs (kitchens, flooring, fixtures)
- Site safety improvements (concrete, asphalt, access areas)

Nosotros, los residentes de Parkview I (871 Elton Avenue, Bronx, NY), firmamos en apoyo a la Resolución Municipal de Nueva York sobre el financiamiento de capital solicitado por Nos Quedamos (We Stay) para llevar a cabo reparaciones esenciales en el edificio y mejoras en la infraestructura.

Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,795,025

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reemplazo del techo y reparaciones de la envolvente del edificio
- Reemplazo de ventanas y puertas exteriores
- Modernización del elevador y mejoras mecánicas
- Sistemas de caldera, HVAC, seguridad contra incendios e intercomunicadores
- Mejoras en cámaras de seguridad y sistemas de protección de vida

- Mejoras en pisos de pasillos, iluminación (LL88) y pintura
- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos (cocinas, pisos y accesorios)
- Mejoras de seguridad en el sitio (concreto, asfalto y áreas de acceso)

About Nos Quedamos (We Stay) / Acerca de Nos Quedamos (We Stay)
Since 1993, Nos Quedamos has led community-driven planning in the South Bronx through the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan, advancing resident-led development, preserving affordable housing, and strengthening community control over neighborhood planning and investment.

Desde 1993, Nos Quedamos ha liderado la planificación impulsada por la comunidad en el sur del Bronx a través del Plan de Renovación Urbana de Melrose, promoviendo el desarrollo dirigido por los residentes, preservando la vivienda asequible y fortaleciendo el control comunitario sobre la planificación e inversión en el vecindario.

Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Yaritza Valle

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

6k

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

7186784717

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

yaritzavalle1985@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

This form was created inside of We Stay - Nos Quedamos.

Google Forms

Parkview I Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (871 Elton Avenue)

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This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $4,795,025

Project Includes:

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- Elevator modernization and mechanical upgrades
- Boiler, HVAC, fire safety, and intercom systems
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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Latifah Petty

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

9A

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

5166439169

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

latifahpetty90@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- ( ) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- (•) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

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Google Forms

Parkview I Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (871 Elton Avenue)

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This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $4,795,025

Project Includes:

- Roof replacement and building envelope repairs
- Window and exterior door replacement
- Elevator modernization and mechanical upgrades
- Boiler, HVAC, fire safety, and intercom systems
- Security camera and life-safety improvements
- Hallway flooring, lighting upgrades (LL88), and painting
- Apartment-level repairs (kitchens, flooring, fixtures)
- Site safety improvements (concrete, asphalt, access areas)

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Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,795,025

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reemplazo del techo y reparaciones de la envolvente del edificio
- Reemplazo de ventanas y puertas exteriores
- Modernización del elevador y mejoras mecánicas
- Sistemas de caldera, HVAC, seguridad contra incendios e intercomunicadores
- Mejoras en cámaras de seguridad y sistemas de protección de vida
- Mejoras en pisos de pasillos, iluminación (LL88) y pintura

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Luis Madera

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

5C

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

9175170742

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

hitech69lou@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- ( ) Yes / Sí
- (•) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Suzette Saucedo

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

3P

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

3473666469

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

Suzettes0888@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

We want our kids to continue living in our buildings feeling safe and in a healthy environment.

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Steven Torres

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

2-S

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

6469827532

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

st2low@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

We stand together

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Gina Saucedo

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

We love our building and want better living quality

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Ashley Saucedo

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

We deserve a better life for everyone

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Luis Madera

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

kamille saucedo

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

I want to feel safe in my community

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Angelica Marie

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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- Site safety improvements (concrete, asphalt, access areas)

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Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,795,025

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reemplazo del techo y reparaciones de la envolvente del edificio
- Reemplazo de ventanas y puertas exteriores
- Modernización del elevador y mejoras mecánicas
- Sistemas de caldera, HVAC, seguridad contra incendios e intercomunicadores
- Mejoras en cámaras de seguridad y sistemas de protección de vida
- Mejoras en pisos de pasillos, iluminación (LL88) y pintura

- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos (cocinas, pisos y accesorios)
- Mejoras de seguridad en el sitio (concreto, asfalto y áreas de acceso)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Damari Gayden

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

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Google Forms

Parkview I Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (871 Elton Avenue)

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Funding Amount Requested: $4,795,025

Project Includes:

- Roof replacement and building envelope repairs
- Window and exterior door replacement
- Elevator modernization and mechanical upgrades
- Boiler, HVAC, fire safety, and intercom systems
- Security camera and life-safety improvements
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Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,795,025

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- Reemplazo del techo y reparaciones de la envolvente del edificio
- Reemplazo de ventanas y puertas exteriores
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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Shanetta Gayden

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Funding Amount Requested: $4,795,025

Project Includes:

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Carmen Quiles

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Yvette Mccal

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

N/a

Do you support this funding request? *

- ( ) Yes / Sí
- (•) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Resident stated, "I'm not going to no meeting again until you gain control of this building" and was not interested in collaborating

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Sandra Gayden brown

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Vivian Richardson

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Yaritza Valle

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

We, the residents of Parkview II, located at 406 East 161st Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,385,600 in City capital funding to address urgent and long-overdue building renovations.

Parkview II is a critical affordable housing asset in Melrose Commons and a cornerstone of the South Bronx's revitalization since the 1990s. In 2024, the building transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, ensuring permanent community control and long-term stewardship. As residents, we understand the importance of preserving this legacy.

However, post-acquisition assessments have identified significant deferred maintenance across core structural and mechanical systems. These are not minor issues—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these conditions will continue to deteriorate, increasing costs, destabilizing building operations, and placing unnecessary strain on residents.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive, proactive investment strategy to stabilize the building, preserve affordability, and improve living conditions. The scope is organized around five key priorities:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Building Systems
- Common Areas
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

- Roof repair and full replacement, including insulation and weatherproofing
- Façade repairs and compliance upgrades
- Local Law 88 lighting upgrades and Local Law 97 energy efficiency measures (including boiler insulation and air sealing)
- Elevator repairs and modernization
- Boiler and hot water heater replacement, PTAC upgrades

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
www.nosquedamos.org

NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

- Fire panel and intercom system replacement
- Window replacement and security camera installation
- Compactor replacement and sewer-related upgrades
- Common area improvements, including flooring, painting, and lobby enhancements
- Apartment upgrades, including kitchen flooring, cabinets, and appliances

These investments are essential to prevent system failures, reduce emergency repairs, improve energy efficiency, and ensure long-term building stability. This work will also lower operating costs over time and shift the building from reactive repairs to a more sustainable, planned maintenance model.

Parkview II serves a diverse, working-class community, including low-income families and residents transitioning out of homelessness. Many households are deeply rent-burdened and cannot absorb the impacts of deteriorating building conditions or rising costs. Preserving this housing is critical not only for current residents but for the long-term stability of the neighborhood.

At this time, no other funding sources have been secured, and this project is dependent on City Council support to move forward. This investment aligns directly with City priorities to preserve deeply affordable housing, prevent displacement, and support community-led stewardship.

As residents, we strongly support Nos Quedamos' commitment to proactive preservation and long-term affordability. This is not just an investment in a building—it is an investment in our homes, our safety, and the future of our community.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and ensure that Parkview II remains a stable, safe, and affordable home for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Lisa Montanez

Date: 5/16/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4E

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
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WE STAY!

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name:

Signature: 6E

Date: 05/16/26

Apartment Number: 6E

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
P: 718-585-2323 | F: 718-585-8628
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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

We, the residents of Parkview II, located at 406 East 161st Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,385,600 in City capital funding to address urgent and long-overdue building renovations.

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However, post-acquisition assessments have identified significant deferred maintenance across core structural and mechanical systems. These are not minor issues—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these conditions will continue to deteriorate, increasing costs, destabilizing building operations, and placing unnecessary strain on residents.

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- Building Systems
- Common Areas
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

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- Fire panel and intercom system replacement
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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and ensure that Parkview II remains a stable, safe, and affordable home for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Joel MATOS

Signature: Joel E. Matos

Date: 05-16-24

Apartment Number: 9G

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Awa Diallo Date: 5/16/26

Signature: awa Apartment Number: 4K

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Ziekariba Diallo

Date: 5/16/26

Signature: Ziek

Apartment Number: 4K

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Karidiatou KABA

Date: 5/16/26

Signature: Kaba

Apartment Number: 4K

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Mary DIAZ

Date: 5/16/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 7B

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name:

Date: 5/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4G

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Judith Rodriguez

Date: 5/22/2026

Signature:

Apartment Number: 3J

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Mary Boahen

Date: 5-21-2020

Signature: MARY BOAHENG

Apartment Number: 7J

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: NERYS ALVAREZ Date: 4-22-25

Signature: [signature] Apartment Number: 6F

1347-614-3487

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We, the residents of Parkview II, located at 406 East 161st Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,385,600 in City capital funding to address urgent and long-overdue building renovations.

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- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

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- Elevator repairs and modernization
- Boiler and hot water heater replacement, PTAC upgrades

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- Fire panel and intercom system replacement
- Window replacement and security camera installation
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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and ensure that Parkview II remains a stable, safe, and affordable home for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Bintou Dionkassy

Date: 5/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 8L

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: OMAR DOMINGUEZ

Date: 5/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4L

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: SIRANTOU-SIMPARA

Date: 5/22/26

Signature: S. Sirantou

Apartment Number: 8L

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Jadiel Iora

Date: 05/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4A

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Alfredo Concepcion

Signature: Alfredo Concepcion

Date: 22/5/2026

Apartment Number: 2D

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: DIABI DOUCOURÉ

Date: 05-22-26

Signature:



Apartment Number:

3L

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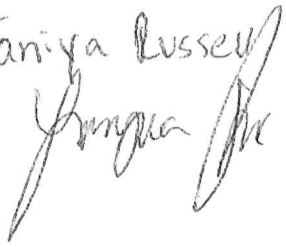
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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Taniya Russell

Signature: 

Date: 5/22/2026

Apartment Number: 4E

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Abdou Gueye

Date: 05/22/2026

Signature: 

Apartment Number: 3C

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Sincerely,
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Name: Mostapha Gueye

Date: 05/22/2026

Signature: Mostapha gueye

Apartment Number: 3C

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
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NOS QUEDAMOS
WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

We, the residents of Parkview II, located at 406 East 161st Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,385,600 in City capital funding to address urgent and long-overdue building renovations.

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However, post-acquisition assessments have identified significant deferred maintenance across core structural and mechanical systems. These are not minor issues—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these conditions will continue to deteriorate, increasing costs, destabilizing building operations, and placing unnecessary strain on residents.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive, proactive investment strategy to stabilize the building, preserve affordability, and improve living conditions. The scope is organized around five key priorities:

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Planned capital improvements include:

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- Fire panel and intercom system replacement
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We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and ensure that Parkview II remains a stable, safe, and affordable home for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: WENDELL RILEY
Signature: Wendell Riley
Date: MAY 22
Apartment Number: 6G

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: David Ayala

Signature: David Ayala

Date: 5/22/26

Apartment Number: # 2H

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: JORGE ENCARNACION

Date: 05/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 5-H

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Carlos Sepulveda

Signature:

Date: 5/22/26

Apartment Number: 6L

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Moussa Ahmet

Date: 05/22/2026

Signature: MOUSSA

Apartment Number: 6D

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: MASSOGBE

Date: 5/22/26

Signature: KOF

Apartment Number: 5C

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Justin Guzman

Date: 05/22/2026

Signature: Justin Guzman

Apartment Number: 3A

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Fortunato Jakito

Date: 29-5-26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4G

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Bintou Kaba

Date: 05/22/26

Signature: Bintou Kaba

Apartment Number:

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WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

We, the residents of Parkview II, located at 406 East 161st Street in the Bronx, write in strong and unified support of the NYC Capital Funding Reso A application submitted by We Stay / Nos Quedamos (NQ), requesting $4,385,600 in City capital funding to address urgent and long-overdue building renovations.

Parkview II is a critical affordable housing asset in Melrose Commons and a cornerstone of the South Bronx's revitalization since the 1990s. In 2024, the building transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, ensuring permanent community control and long-term stewardship. As residents, we understand the importance of preserving this legacy.

However, post-acquisition assessments have identified significant deferred maintenance across core structural and mechanical systems. These are not minor issues—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these conditions will continue to deteriorate, increasing costs, destabilizing building operations, and placing unnecessary strain on residents.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive, proactive investment strategy to stabilize the building, preserve affordability, and improve living conditions. The scope is organized around five key priorities:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Building Systems
- Common Areas
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

- Roof repair and full replacement, including insulation and weatherproofing
- Façade repairs and compliance upgrades
- Local Law 88 lighting upgrades and Local Law 97 energy efficiency measures (including boiler insulation and air sealing)
- Elevator repairs and modernization
- Boiler and hot water heater replacement, PTAC upgrades

754 Melrose Avenue, Bronx, NY 10451
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www.nosquedamos.org

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- Fire panel and intercom system replacement
- Window replacement and security camera installation
- Compactor replacement and sewer-related upgrades
- Common area improvements, including flooring, painting, and lobby enhancements
- Apartment upgrades, including kitchen flooring, cabinets, and appliances

These investments are essential to prevent system failures, reduce emergency repairs, improve energy efficiency, and ensure long-term building stability. This work will also lower operating costs over time and shift the building from reactive repairs to a more sustainable, planned maintenance model.

Parkview II serves a diverse, working-class community, including low-income families and residents transitioning out of homelessness. Many households are deeply rent-burdened and cannot absorb the impacts of deteriorating building conditions or rising costs. Preserving this housing is critical not only for current residents but for the long-term stability of the neighborhood.

At this time, no other funding sources have been secured, and this project is dependent on City Council support to move forward. This investment aligns directly with City priorities to preserve deeply affordable housing, prevent displacement, and support community-led stewardship.

As residents, we strongly support Nos Quedamos' commitment to proactive preservation and long-term affordability. This is not just an investment in a building—it is an investment in our homes, our safety, and the future of our community.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and ensure that Parkview II remains a stable, safe, and affordable home for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: ALIZATA TRAORE

Date: 05/22/2026

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4 J

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Nina Scott

Signature: Nina Scott

Date: 4/~~25~~22/2026

Apartment Number: 8-F

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Parkview II Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (406 E 161st St)

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Funding Amount Requested: $4,385,600

Project Includes:

- Roof, façade, and window replacement
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- Common area repairs and lighting (LL88)
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Nosotros, los residentes de Parkview II (406 East 161st Street, Bronx, NY), firmamos en apoyo a la Resolución Municipal de Nueva York sobre el financiamiento de capital solicitado por Nos Quedamos (We Stay) para llevar a cabo reparaciones esenciales en el edificio y mejoras en la infraestructura.

Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,385,600

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reemplazo del techo, fachada y ventanas
- Modernización del elevador
- Modernización de sistema de climatización, caldera y fuego
- Reparación de área común e iluminación (LL88)
- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos
- Sistemas de seguridad y

  mejoras de seguridad en el emplazamiento

About Nos Quedamos (We Stay) / Acerca de Nos Quedamos (We Stay)

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Desde 1993, Nos Quedamos ha liderado la planificación impulsada por la comunidad en el sur del Bronx a través del Plan de Renovación Urbana de Melrose, promoviendo el desarrollo dirigido por los residentes, preservando la vivienda asequible y fortaleciendo el control comunitario sobre la planificación e inversión en el vecindario.

Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Arianna Rose

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Wendell Griffin

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Jules Ky

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Lisa Montanez

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Community room into a Gym

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Lillian Ayala

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

N/A

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

KWADJO AFUVIA

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
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Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Justin Guzman

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

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- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Karidiatou Kaba

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

N/A

Do you support this funding request? *

- ( ) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- (•) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [ ] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

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Parkview II Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (406 E 161st St)

We, the residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street, Bronx, NY), are signing in support of NYC Reso A Capital Funding requested by Nos Quedamos (We Stay) to complete critical building repairs and infrastructure upgrades.

This investment is essential to preserve affordable housing, improve safety, and ensure long-term stability at our building.

Funding Amount Requested: $4,385,600

Project Includes:

- Roof, façade, and window replacement
- Elevator modernization
- HVAC, boiler, and fire system upgrades
- Common area repairs and lighting (LL88)
- Apartment-level renovations
- Security systems and site safety improvements

Nosotros, los residentes de Parkview II (406 East 161st Street, Bronx, NY), firmamos en apoyo a la Resolución Municipal de Nueva York sobre el financiamiento de capital solicitado por Nos Quedamos (We Stay) para llevar a cabo reparaciones esenciales en el edificio y mejoras en la infraestructura.

Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,385,600

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reemplazo del techo, fachada y ventanas
- Modernización del elevador
- Modernización de sistema de climatización, caldera y fuego
- Reparación de área común e iluminación (LL88)
- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos
- Sistemas de seguridad y

  mejoras de seguridad en el emplazamiento

About Nos Quedamos (We Stay) / Acerca de Nos Quedamos (We Stay)

Since 1993, Nos Quedamos has led community-driven planning in the South Bronx through the Melrose Urban Renewal Plan, advancing resident-led development, preserving affordable housing, and strengthening community control over neighborhood planning and investment.

Desde 1993, Nos Quedamos ha liderado la planificación impulsada por la comunidad en el sur del Bronx a través del Plan de Renovación Urbana de Melrose, promoviendo el desarrollo dirigido por los residentes, preservando la vivienda asequible y fortaleciendo el control comunitario sobre la planificación e inversión en el vecindario.

Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Jorge Encarnacion

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Eulalia camacho

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

[redacted]

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

[redacted]

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

[redacted]

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WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

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Parkview II is a critical affordable housing asset in Melrose Commons and a cornerstone of the South Bronx's revitalization since the 1990s. In 2024, the building transitioned to full nonprofit ownership under Nos Quedamos, ensuring permanent community control and long-term stewardship. As residents, we understand the importance of preserving this legacy.

However, post-acquisition assessments have identified significant deferred maintenance across core structural and mechanical systems. These are not minor issues—they directly impact our health, safety, and quality of life. Without immediate investment, these conditions will continue to deteriorate, increasing costs, destabilizing building operations, and placing unnecessary strain on residents.

The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive, proactive investment strategy to stabilize the building, preserve affordability, and improve living conditions. The scope is organized around five key priorities:

- Site & Safety
- Building Envelope
- Building Systems
- Common Areas
- Apartment-Level Improvements

Planned capital improvements include:

- Roof repair and full replacement, including insulation and weatherproofing
- Façade repairs and compliance upgrades
- Local Law 88 lighting upgrades and Local Law 97 energy efficiency measures (including boiler insulation and air sealing)
- Elevator repairs and modernization
- Boiler and hot water heater replacement, PTAC upgrades

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- Fire panel and intercom system replacement
- Window replacement and security camera installation
- Compactor replacement and sewer-related upgrades
- Common area improvements, including flooring, painting, and lobby enhancements
- Apartment upgrades, including kitchen flooring, cabinets, and appliances

These investments are essential to prevent system failures, reduce emergency repairs, improve energy efficiency, and ensure long-term building stability. This work will also lower operating costs over time and shift the building from reactive repairs to a more sustainable, planned maintenance model.

Parkview II serves a diverse, working-class community, including low-income families and residents transitioning out of homelessness. Many households are deeply rent-burdened and cannot absorb the impacts of deteriorating building conditions or rising costs. Preserving this housing is critical not only for current residents but for the long-term stability of the neighborhood.

At this time, no other funding sources have been secured, and this project is dependent on City Council support to move forward. This investment aligns directly with City priorities to preserve deeply affordable housing, prevent displacement, and support community-led stewardship.

As residents, we strongly support Nos Quedamos' commitment to proactive preservation and long-term affordability. This is not just an investment in a building—it is an investment in our homes, our safety, and the future of our community.

We respectfully urge you to approve this Reso A capital funding request and ensure that Parkview II remains a stable, safe, and affordable home for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Eduardo Hernandez EJ

Date: 5/22/2026

Signature:

Apartment Number:

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: BONIFACE BOLOG

Date: 5/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number: 4L

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Pamela Hernandez

Date:

Signature:

Apartment Number: 6B

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NOS QUEDAMOS
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The Reso A proposal outlines a comprehensive, proactive investment strategy to stabilize the building, preserve affordability, and improve living conditions. The scope is organized around five key priorities:

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Reina Carrasco

Date: 5/22/26

Signature:

Apartment Number:
2C

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Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

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Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to communities like ours.

Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Aston MBaye

Date: 05-22-26

Signature: ~~Aston~~

Apartment Number: 8K

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Sincerely,
The Residents of Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

Name: Ashley Rodriguez

Date: 5-27-26

Signature: Ashley Rodriguez

Apartment Number: 7G

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WE STAY!

Resident Sign-On Letter in Support of Reso A Capital Funding – Parkview II (406 East 161st Street)

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Parkview II Resident Support Sign-On – Reso A Capital Funding (406 E 161st St)

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El Proyecto Incluye:

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Carlos Gomez Super

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

2L

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

646-679-9931

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

Gmzc1@aol.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Esta inversión es fundamental para mantener viviendas asequibles, mejorar la seguridad y garantizar la estabilidad a largo plazo de nuestro edificio.

Cantidad de Financiamiento Solicitada: $4,385,600

El Proyecto Incluye:

- Reemplazo del techo, fachada y ventanas
- Modernización del elevador
- Modernización de sistema de climatización, caldera y fuego
- Reparación de área común e iluminación (LL88)
- Reparaciones dentro de los apartamentos
- Sistemas de seguridad y

  mejoras de seguridad en el emplazamiento

About Nos Quedamos (We Stay) / Acerca de Nos Quedamos (We Stay)

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Monique E. Young

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

5B

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

3472181833

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

Memitchell71@yahoo.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

- [x] I support this capital funding request. / Yo apoyo esta solicitud de financiamiento de capital.

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Project Includes:

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- Elevator modernization
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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Karina Cardona

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

5G

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

646-255-2533

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

Kcardona81@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Jose Ortiz

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

7-B

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

646-772-2190

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

Ortiz1965j@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- [x] Yes / Sí
- [ ] No / No
- [ ] I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

advocating for capital improvement at our residential building.

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Jerry Mitchell

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

5B

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

3478100273

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

JayJMitch016@yahoo.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Charise Murchison

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

5F

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

347-863-6087

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

cmurchison84@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

There are substantial repairs that need to be made to the building in order to improve the quality of life of the residence. Your financial contribution will help to uplift the residence of this building and effectively uplift the community.

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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Full Name / Nombre Completo *

Xiomarie pagan

Apartment Number / Número de Apartamento *

2L

Phone Number / Número de Teléfono *

3476594520

Email Address / Dirección de Correo Electrónico *

Xiomariepagan@gmail.com

Do you support this funding request? *

- (●) Yes / Sí
- ( ) No / No
- ( ) I need more information / Necesito más información

Comments (Optional) / Comentarios (Opcional)

Digital Signature Confirmation / Confirmación de Firma Digital

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NYC Council – Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

I am writing to urge the City Council to honor the commitment made during the One LIC negotiations by including funding for a lighting study in the Long Island City IBZ in the executive budget. Inadequate street lighting has created serious safety concerns — and an equally serious perception of unsafety — that make it increasingly difficult for businesses and their employees to operate in the neighborhood.

Weickert Industries, Inc. is located at 26-35 47th Ave, Queens, NY 11101 and has been in there for *30* of years.

Weickert Industries is a family-owned HVAC, sheet metal fabrication, and mechanical systems contractor serving the New York City metropolitan area. The company specializes in:

HVAC system design and installation
Custom sheet metal fabrication
Air-side mechanical systems
Testing and balancing services
Fire life safety and damper services
Building efficiency and ventilation solutions for commercial and institutional properties

The company is now in its fifth and sixth generations of family leadership, with a long-standing reputation in the sheet metal and HVAC industry.

Hours of Operation:

Monday–Friday: 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Saturday–Sunday: Closed
Additional appointments may be available by request.

Clientele:
Weickert primarily serves:

Commercial buildings
Institutional facilities
Industrial properties
Healthcare facilities
Educational institutions

Weickert
INDUSTRIES, INC.

Property owners and facility managers throughout New York City's five boroughs

Number of Employees: 22

The company is a small-to-mid-sized HVAC and sheet metal contractor with more than a dozen employees.

Publicly listed projects and clients include organizations such as New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and the New York City Department of Education.

Weickert Industries, Inc. has proudly operated in Long Island City, Queens for over a century as a family-owned HVAC and sheet metal contractor serving New York City's commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings. Our work involves the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of mechanical systems that are essential to building performance, including heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and air distribution systems.

As a long-standing industrial employer in the area, we operate a facility that supports fabrication and field operations requiring skilled technicians, equipment handling, and coordination with job sites across the five boroughs. Our employees and vendors regularly move between our shop and project locations, making reliable building infrastructure and safe working conditions critical to our operations.

One of the most persistent challenges we face in Long Island City is aging and inconsistent infrastructure that affects industrial businesses like ours. This includes outdated building systems in surrounding properties, limited modernization of mechanical infrastructure in older industrial buildings, and broader gaps in support for energy efficiency upgrades across the district. These issues directly impact operational efficiency, building performance, and long-term sustainability for businesses operating in the area.

26-35 47th Ave, Long Island City, New York 11101, phone: 718.706.0707 fax: 718.706.0977
www.weickert.com

Weickert
INDUSTRIES, INC.

For companies in the HVAC and construction trades, improving mechanical infrastructure across the district is not only a matter of efficiency but also safety and resilience. Better ventilation standards, upgraded building systems, and improved support for energy-efficient retrofits would help ensure that industrial businesses can continue to operate safely and competitively in New York City.

Weickert Industries has invested heavily in maintaining high standards in our own operations, but broader support from the City is necessary to modernize infrastructure across industrial areas like Long Island City. Without coordinated investment, many older facilities will continue to operate with inefficient or outdated systems that increase costs and limit performance.

We respectfully urge the City Council to support initiatives that fund HVAC modernization, mechanical infrastructure upgrades, and energy efficiency improvements for industrial business zones. These investments will strengthen local manufacturing and construction businesses, improve building safety and performance, and help ensure that companies like Weickert Industries, Inc. can continue contributing to New York City's economy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Weickert
Chief Operating Officer
Weickert Industries, Inc.

26-35 47th Ave, Long Island City, New York 11101, phone: 718.706.0707 fax: 718.706.0977
www.weickert.com

Executive Budget Hearing for FY2027

June 13, 2026

To Committee Chair Linda Lee and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Nina Young and I am a member of the Western Queens Community Land Trust and have worked with the Abolish the Lien Sale Coalition.

The City Council discretionary funding provided through the citywide Community Land Trust (CLT)Initiative is vital to our work. Launched in FY2020, the initiative delivers comprehensive community organizing, education, training and technical assistance to support the formation and expansion of CLTs, as vehicles to create and preserve permanently affordable housing and promote neighborhood-led development. This vital initiative has helped catalyze the growth of CLTs in low-income, immigrant, and Black and Brown communities across the five boroughs. At least a dozen CLTs now steward land and housing or have active projects in development.

We urge the City Council to fund the CLT Initiative at $3 million for 23 organizations in the FY27 expense budget—up from $1.5 million for 15 groups in FY26. This urgently needed funding will provide essential support to 19 active CLTs and four citywide organizations providing capacity-building training and tailored legal and technical assistance to CLTs. This is an increase from 13 CLTs and two citywide technical assistance providers in FY26. Enhanced funding should prioritize larger awards for advanced CLTs with multiple affordable housing and community development projects.

We additionally urge the City Council to support the creation of a $50 million CLT Fund in the FY27 capital budget. Mayor Mamdani committed in his campaign platform to the creation of such a Fund, which is essential to enable CLTs to seize opportunities to bring land and housing into permanently affordable community control. We have been presented with so many projects that we wish we could have pursued, that would have stabilized housing for hundreds, if we had been able to move forward with a purchase.

Finally, we urge the City Council to address chronic, harmful delays in registering discretionary funding contracts. These persistent delays, over multiple years, are creating cash flow challenges for small organizations, slowing our progress, and undermining the Council's support for CLTs. Currently, our hiring abilities are highly constrained, and we find ourselves challenged to maintain the salary of the one full-time employee we do have.

CLTs are urgently needed to address our city's worsening affordability crisis. I currently have a student who is about to enter the shelter system, adding to the 100,000 people already in it. One in three New Yorkers are severely rent-burdened, paying more than 50% of their incomes on rent. Between 2017 and 2021, NYC lost almost 100,000 units that had rented for less than $1,500 per month.

By bringing land and housing into community ownership, CLTs serve as powerful bulwarks against real estate speculation and displacement. Enhanced funding for CLTs in the city's expense and capital budgets will enable groups to build on strong progress and meet the growing demand for CLTs. Since 1994, the Cooper Square CLT on Manhattan's Lower East Side has preserved more than 320 deeply affordable apartments and two dozen affordable storefronts in 21 buildings – and is now bringing two additional rent-stabilized buildings into CLT stewardship.

New policies – including recently enacted land bank legislation and the reintroduced Community Opportunity to Purchase Act – stand to channel many more properties to community ownership in the coming years. It is imperative

that CLTs be equipped to seize these opportunities. Enhanced CLT funding in the City's expense and capital budgets will strengthen these essential grassroots institutions as they take land and housing out of the speculative market and into permanent community control.

Lastly, my work with the Abolish the Lien Sale Coalition allowed me to meet people who did not even know about the potential loss of their homes. I ask that you suspend the 2027 Lien Sale, fund outreach at $3 million for FY 2027, and establish the new system as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nina S. Young

Testimony to the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
Libraries & International Intergroup Relations
Christopher Durosinmi, Director, Government & Community Affairs
Wildlife Conservation Society
June 10, 2026

Thank you, Chairwoman Dr. Williams and members of the Committee. My name is Christopher Durosinmi, Director of Government and Community Affairs for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and a member of the Cultural Institutions Group. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

The Cultural Institutions Group is a coalition of 39 organizations that care for many of New York City's most significant publicly owned cultural assets across the five boroughs. Together, we help sustain New York's identity as a global cultural capital. Our institutions are welcoming spaces where New Yorkers and visitors gather in our buildings, classrooms, parks, and performance venues. At our core, we are committed to expanding access and opportunity for all. I would like to thank the Council for prioritizing culture and for its advocacy in securing a historic $75 million increase, and more specifically the $45 million baseline increase for the arts and culture sector in Fiscal 2026.

We are thankful to the Mayor for baselining $10 million in his FY27 Executive Budget. However, additional support is needed to maintain current funding levels for the CIG and CDF. We are asking the Council to restore and baseline the $20 million added in the FY26 Budget into FY27. This investment would provide stable, predictable support for New York City's cultural sector. We also urge the City to implement annual funding adjustments to keep pace with rising costs, sustain jobs, and ensure fair wages across the sector. Additionally, we urge improvements to the capital project process. These should include greater transparency, better long-term infrastructure planning, and streamlined procedures to reduce delays. These changes would help organizations more effectively maintain and invest in their facilities. Finally, we request continued support for programmatic initiatives like SCI Network NYC, Urban Advantage, CASA, the Immigrant Initiative, and others that expand cultural resources and opportunities for a broad and diverse range of constituents.

Cultural institutions are powerful economic engines, generating $110 billion dollars in economic activity and supporting local vendors with approximately $500 million dollars in annual spending. At WCS, we operate the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium, Central Park Zoo, Prospect Park Zoo, and Queens Zoo.

Saving wildlife is central to our mission, and ensuring public access to that work through our parks is fundamental to how we engage and educate New Yorkers. In Fiscal Year 2025, 69 percent of New York City residents, more than half a million visitors, attended the Bronx Zoo through free or discounted admission programs.

Through our Community Access Program (CAP), WCS provides complimentary admission to seniors, young people, individuals with disabilities, individuals experiencing homelessness, and community-based organizations. In partnership with city agencies, including the New York City Department of Homeless Services, the New York City Administration for Children's Services, and the New York Police Department and the New York City Housing Authority, we distributed more than 32,000 free tickets in

2025. In addition to CAP, WCS offers multiple pathways to free or reduced-price access for New York City residents, including Free Wednesdays at the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, where visitors can reserve tickets for up to four guests. The organization also provides free weekday admission year-round for NYC school groups, reaching over 253,000 students and chaperones, and offers complimentary Limited Admission to NYC undergraduate students with proof of eligibility. WCS honors active U.S. military members and veterans with free admission, along with discounted access for their families. Through partnerships like the Urban Advantage Program, WCS has delivered free admission and STEM learning experiences to students and teachers since 2004. Additional initiatives, including free memberships through IDNYC and community partnerships like Community Mayors Inc., ensure access for vulnerable populations and children with special needs across the city. These programs ensure that our parks remain accessible spaces for recreation, learning, and connection.

Workforce development is another critical pillar of our work. Across our parks, WCS provides meaningful pathways for young people to gain skills, experience, and employment. With the support of the City Council, WCS has expanded its STEM Career Lattice, a tiered workforce development model that provides youth ages 14 to 24 with paid opportunities and clear career pathways. Each year, participating youth collectively earn approximately $5.5 million dollars while gaining valuable professional experience. The program currently serves more than 1,900 young people, with strong participation from those underrepresented in STEM fields. Seventy-seven percent of participants identify as youth of color, collectively representing 49 languages.

Building on the success of the Career Lattice program, public support and City Council investments in youth help leverage additional resources to expand opportunities beyond our parks. Through the Eco-Vivencias program, young people gain direct, hands-on exposure to conservation in places like Puerto Rico, while creating a pathway to bring that knowledge and experience back to our parks in New York City. Experiences like the Puerto Rican crested toad restoration project provide students with a real-world understanding of how conservation is practiced both in in the wild and at our zoos and aquarium and help inspire the next generation of conservation leaders.

WCS also led the creation of SCI Network NYC, a collaboration of 8 science-based cultural institutions. With City Council support, in 2025, this network provided 1,141 interns across more than 60 types of internships in fields such as animal care, horticulture, science research, education, and conservation advocacy, earning more than $2.4 million in stipends. These results underscore the tangible value of public investment. Our efforts go beyond student engagement; they establish lasting pathways into growing and in demand career fields. Participants often move forward into seasonal positions, permanent roles, and leadership opportunities within our institutions and across New York City's economy.

As the City Council considers its priorities for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, we respectfully urge continued investment in cultural institutions by restoring and baseline the $30 million that was added in the FY26 Budget to support DCLA and the entire arts and culture sector, implementing annual funding adjustments to keep pace with rising costs and improvements to the capital process. We also request continued support for programmatic initiatives like Sci Network, Urban Advantage, CASA, the Immigrant Initiative, and others that expand cultural resources and opportunities for a broad and diverse range of constituents. Sustained investment ensures WCS can continue delivering for New Yorkers, expanding access, supporting jobs, and strengthening communities across the city.

Thank you.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

Testimony of Win (Formerly Women in Need, Inc.) for the New York City Council Committee on Finance Executive Budget Hearing
June 10th, 2026

Thank you, Chair Lee, and the esteemed members of the Committee on Finance for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. My name is Jade Vasquez, and I am the Director of Policy and Research at Win, the largest provider of shelter and supportive housing to families with children in New York City and the nation. We operate 16 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win "home," including 3,600 children.

Today, as our city faces its worst affordability crisis, approximately 100,000 New Yorkers, including 31,000 children, are experiencing homelessness.[1] As the federal government significantly cuts social welfare programs, like SNAP and Medicaid, and threatens to cut funding for housing assistance and homeless services, it is imperative that our City government expand *not* diminish local programs and initiatives that serve struggling New Yorkers experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness. New York City can lead the nation in passing a progressive budget that centers the needs of working people and marginalized communities, and we urge the City to:

1. **Fully implement the 2023 CityFHEPS Reform Package and allocate funding that would extend the rental assistance program to low-income households in the community, expand to households earning 50% of the City's Area Median Income, and remove burdensome work requirements.**

   We are thankful to City Council for passing Local Laws 99, 100, 101 and 102 of 2023, which, if implemented, could have saved the City over $1 billion in shelter costs and cut the family homeless population living in shelter by half, a recent Win analysis found.[2]

   Notwithstanding the Mayor's commitment when he was a candidate, the CityFHEPS expansion was not included in his Executive Budget, which allocated an additional $1.64 billion in FY27 to cover the costs of the existing CityFHEPS program, not the expansion. Today CityFHEPS vouchers house nearly 70,000 households.[3]

   Therefore, we urge the Council to continue fighting for CityFHEPS reforms and allocate sufficient funding to finally begin implementing the laws passed nearly three years ago, so that homeless and housing insecure New Yorkers have the resources they need to become financially stable and to provide a better future for themselves and their families. We also urge Council to pass other reforms to improve administrative delays, such as updating the application technology, decreasing processing times, and streamlining inspections, so that voucher recipients can exit costly shelters sooner.

2. **Allocate $78 million to renovate and preserve 1,325 units of supportive housing.**

   Win supports the Supportive Housing Network of New York (SHNNY) and the Progressive Caucus' "Rentals within Reach" campaign that calls for $78.3 million to renovate 1,000 supportive housing units and permanently preserve an additional 325 units. This funding includes a $13 million flexible expense pot to allow repairs to HRA and DOHMH units, allowing providers to re-rent.

3. **Fully fund and implement Local Law 35 requiring mental health professionals in family shelters.**

   The City must invest $40 million to fully implement Local Law 35 as intended, which mandates clinical mental health professionals in every shelter for families with children, so that families experiencing homelessness can quickly access lifesaving mental healthcare in-person or virtually. Prioritizing this investment in the upcoming fiscal year would create long-term benefits for both the families and the City, as mental health treatments lead to improved health and employment outcomes for recipients.

4. **Increase funding for immigration legal services and rental assistance programs that help long-term stayers in shelter and recent arrivals access legal pathways to work and obtain housing.**

   A significant portion of households in shelters are led by immigrants, including mixed status families, recent arrivals legally seeking asylum, and undocumented families, who tend to be some of the longest stayers in shelters due to low wages and ineligibility for federal assistance. As the Trump Administration continues its attacks on immigrants, removing legal pathways and kicking many immigrant families off federal benefits, it is critical that local governments step in and support these families' legal and housing needs.

   While we are pleased to see the Mayor's Executive Budget include an additional $32.9 million for immigration legal services, it falls short in meeting the legal needs of our immigrant neighbors facing daily and unlawful threats from federal immigration enforcement. Council should allocate an additional $85 million for immigration legal services in FY27 to better enable nonprofit immigration legal service providers and support staff to meet the ever-growing demand of legal aid for New York's immigrant community and maintain a strong City workforce of legal service providers.

   Furthermore, to alleviate shelter capacity, the Department of Social Services established the Special Housing Assistance Resource (SHARE) program, which utilizes up to $68 million in funding from New York State's Rental Supplement Program to provide rental assistance to the longest-term stayers in the shelter system, the vast majority of whom are

undocumented immigrants. Since this program began last year, 36 Win households (or 135 individuals) have exited shelter with a SHARE voucher. On average, these families had spent 4 years in shelter. Thus, the City should invest more funding into this program, so immigrant households ineligible for most housing subsidies finally have a pathway out of shelter and into permanent housing.

5. **Expand Workforce Development Programming in Shelter.**

   While workforce development programs in shelters receive some public funding, it is not nearly enough to provide the educational, financial literacy, and employment upskilling services and workshops that Win's Income Building Program (IBP) offers. Currently, DHS's employment specialist positions have little mentorship or support beyond Program Directors, and consequently little capacity to develop relationships with potential employers.

   The City should allocate more funding toward shelter workforce development programs and adopt a similar model to Win's IBP, including creating a "Job Developer" position responsible for supporting clients prepare for job or school applications and developing robust partnerships with local employers to identify job opportunities, and funding "Youth Income-Building Specialist" (YIBS) positions responsible for serving young people ages 14–21. At Win, YIBS assists clients with school attendance, GED completion, applying for the Summer Youth Employment Program and other internship opportunities, and college readiness.

6. **Continue to fund a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for City-contracted human services workers in FY2027 to uphold the City's multi-year COLA deal commitment.**

   Win is a proud member of the JustPay campaign committed to raising the wages of hardworking human services workers. We thank the Council for signaling your commitment to a 3% raise through FY27, and we hope you see this as a minimum standard for what is needed for human services workers in future years. In addition to COLA increases, we urge Council to pass Intro 452 which would advance wage equity among human services workers in the nonprofit sector.

In addition to these budget priorities, Win's Action Plan to End Family Homelessness urges the City to: increase funding for source of income discrimination enforcement so that voucher holders can utilize vouchers without risk of refusal; fully fund the Right to Counsel program to prevent low-income households from entering shelter; invest in aftercare services for all families leaving shelter; expand the number of shelter-based community coordinators to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness; and expand direct cash transfer programs serving high risk populations, including families with children experiencing housing instability or homelessness.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

The Trump Administration and Congress have created considerable uncertainty for the nonprofit providers serving low-income New Yorkers who are concerned over the reliability of funds from the federal government. We know federal cuts to social safety net programs will have dire results for the communities we serve, including the closure of programs that serve people experiencing homelessness. Given the imminent loss of these federal programs, it is crucial that New York City, the wealthiest city in the world, allocate the necessary resources to providers and low-income households to help struggling New Yorkers obtain financial stability, and achieve our collective mission of ending homelessness.

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[1] "Facts About Homelessness," *Coalition for the Homeless*, last updated April 2026, https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/.

[2] "The Cost of Inaction: How Fully Implementing CityFHEPS Expansion Reforms Could Have Saved New York City Over $ 1 Billion," *Win*, June 2026, https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/The-Cost-of-Inaction-Policy-Report-1.pdf.

[3] "Rental Voucher Expansion Absent From Mayor's Budget Plan, As City Hall Proposes Program Reforms," *City Limits*, May 18, 2026, https://citylimits.org/rental-voucher-expansion-absent-from-mayors-budget-plan-as-city-hall-proposes-program-reforms/

One State Street Plaza, 18th Floor, New York, New York 10004 T: 212.695.4758 F:212.736.1649
www.winnyc.org

TESTIMONY

Guillermina Astrid Mero Suarez
Member
Worker's Justice Project
Proyecto Justicia Laboral

Presented to:
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings - Committee on Finance
Hon. Linda Lee, Chair
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Executive Budget Hearings
Committee on Finance

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Good Morning, Chair Linda Lee and members of the New York City Council's Finance Committee.

My name is Astrid. I am originally from Ecuador and have lived in New York for about twenty-five years. I am a small business owner, a worker, a wife, and a mother. Like many immigrants, I have worked hard to build a life for my family and contribute to this city.

I am a proud member of Workers Justice Project. Their support has allowed me to continue growing professionally and take steps toward new opportunities. I hope to launch a second business, a construction company, and obtaining my OSHA and SST certifications with the organization was my first step. These trainings gave me essential skills in workplace safety and prepared me to pursue a new path in construction.

For immigrants like me, who do not inherit wealth or business connections, programs like these are crucial. They help us develop professionally, gain confidence, and create opportunities through hard work. These trainings are not just a certificate, they are a first step toward a better future and a meaningful purpose.

New York City has a responsibility to invest in and protect the immigrant workers who keep our economy running. Council-funded programs such as the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative, the Construction Site Safety Initiative, and the Support for Immigrant Workers and Women program provide critical training and resources that allow workers to succeed and support their families.

We urge the City Council to continue funding these initiatives so immigrant workers can thrive and help build a stronger, more prosperous city for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

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Buenos días, Presidenta Linda Lee y miembros del Comité de Finanzas del Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Nueva York.

Mi nombre es Astrid. Soy originaria de Ecuador y he vivido en Nueva York durante aproximadamente veinticinco años. Soy dueña de un pequeño negocio, trabajadora, esposa y madre. Como muchos inmigrantes, he trabajado duro para construir una vida para mi familia y contribuir a esta ciudad.

También soy una orgullosa integrante de Workers Justice Project. Su apoyo me ha permitido crecer profesionalmente y dar pasos hacia nuevas oportunidades. Espero lanzar un segundo negocio, una empresa de construcción, y obtener las certificaciones de salud y seguridad con la organización fue mi primer paso. Estas capacitaciones me dieron habilidades esenciales en seguridad laboral y me prepararon para seguir un nuevo camino en la construcción.

Para inmigrantes como yo, que no heredamos riqueza ni conexiones empresariales, programas como estos son fundamentales. Nos ayudan a desarrollarnos profesionalmente, ganar confianza y crear oportunidades mediante nuestro propio esfuerzo. Estas capacitaciones no son solo un certificado, son un primer paso hacia un mejor futuro y un propósito significativo.

La Ciudad de Nueva York tiene la responsabilidad de invertir en y proteger a los trabajadores inmigrantes que mantienen nuestra economía en funcionamiento. Los programas financiados por el Concejo, como la Iniciativa de Fuerza Laboral para Jornaleros, la Iniciativa de Seguridad en Sitios de Construcción y el Programa de Apoyo para Trabajadores Inmigrantes y Mujeres, brindan capacitación y recursos cruciales que permiten a los trabajadores avanzar y mantener a sus familias.

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Instamos al Concejo Municipal a seguir financiando estas iniciativas para que los trabajadores inmigrantes puedan prosperar y contribuir a una ciudad más fuerte y próspera para todos los neoyorquinos.

Gracias por la oportunidad de presentar mi testimonio.

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TESTIMONY

Lucia Montes de Oca Garcia
Member
Worker's Justice Project
Proyecto Justicia Laboral

Presented to:
New York City Council Executive Budget Hearings - Committee on Finance
Hon. Linda Lee, Chair
Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Executive Budget Hearings
Committee on Finance

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Good Morning, Chair Linda Lee and members of the New York City Council's Finance Committee.

My name is Lucia. I am originally from Mexico, and I have lived in the United States for the past twenty-two years. I am a proud member of Workers Justice Project, an organization that supports and advocates for immigrant workers like me. Through my active participation in its programs and activities, I have been able to grow both personally and professionally.

Not long ago, I was offered a job opportunity in the construction industry. Unfortunately, I was unable to accept the position because I did not have the OSHA and SST certifications required to work on construction sites in New York City. Thanks to Workers Justice Project, I was able to enroll in and complete both the Cleaning Technician and OSHA/SST training programs. Through these programs, I strengthened my professional cleaning skills and received critical site safety training. Upon completion of one of the trainings, I earned a certificate from Workers Justice Project and Cornell University. For me, this program was more than just a learning experience—it was a pathway to greater economic opportunity and a chance to build a better future for myself and my family.

New York City has a responsibility to invest in, protect, and support the immigrant workers who help keep our economy running. Council-funded programs and services, including the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative, the Construction Site Safety Initiative, the Support for Low-Wage Workers Program, and the Support for Immigrant Workers and Women Program, play a vital role in helping immigrants access training, resources, and opportunities. These investments enable workers to contribute to the city's growth, advance economically, and help create shared prosperity for all New Yorkers.

We urge the New York City Council to continue funding and strengthening these essential initiatives. Immigrant workers need access to the resources, training, and protections that allow them to work safely, support their families, and continue building the city we all call home.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.
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Buenos días, Presidenta Linda Lee y miembros del Comité de Finanzas del Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Nueva York.

Mi nombre es Lucía. Soy originaria de México y he vivido en los Estados Unidos durante los últimos veintidós años. Soy un miembro de Workers Justice Project, una organización que apoya y defiende a trabajadores inmigrantes como yo. A través de mi participación activa en sus programas y actividades, he podido crecer tanto personal como profesionalmente.

Hace poco tiempo, me ofrecieron una oportunidad de trabajo en la industria de la construcción. Lamentablemente, no pude aceptar el puesto porque no contaba con las certificaciones OSHA y SST requeridas para trabajar en obras de construcción en la Ciudad de Nueva York. Gracias a Workers Justice Project, pude inscribirme y completar los programas de capacitación de Técnico de Limpieza y OSHA/SST. A través de estos programas, fortalecí mis habilidades profesionales de limpieza y recibí capacitación fundamental en seguridad en el lugar de trabajo. Al completar una de estas capacitaciones, obtuve un certificado otorgado por Workers Justice Project y la Universidad de Cornell. Para mí, este programa fue mucho más que una experiencia de aprendizaje; fue una puerta hacia mayores oportunidades económicas y una oportunidad para construir un mejor futuro para mí y mi familia.

La Ciudad de Nueva York tiene la responsabilidad de invertir en, proteger y apoyar a los trabajadores inmigrantes que ayudan a mantener nuestra economía en funcionamiento. Los programas y servicios financiados por el Concejo Municipal, incluyendo la Iniciativa de Fuerza Laboral para Jornaleros, la Iniciativa de Seguridad en Sitios de Construcción, el Programa de Apoyo para Trabajadores de Bajos Salarios y el Programa de Apoyo para Trabajadores Inmigrantes y Mujeres, desempeñan un papel
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fundamental al ayudar a los inmigrantes a acceder a capacitación, recursos y oportunidades. Estas inversiones permiten que los trabajadores contribuyan al crecimiento de la ciudad, avancen económicamente y ayuden a crear una prosperidad compartida para todos los neoyorquinos.

Pedimos al Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Nueva York que por favor continúe financiando y fortaleciendo estas iniciativas esenciales. Los trabajadores inmigrantes necesitan acceso a los recursos, la capacitación y las protecciones que les permitan trabajar de manera segura, mantener a sus familias y seguir construyendo la ciudad que todos llamamos hogar.

Gracias por la oportunidad de presentar este testimonio.

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The New York City Council's Finance Committee
Executive Budget Hearing
Honorable Chair Linda Lee
June 10th, 2026

Good morning esteemed Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Janice Chong and I am a youth leader at the YA-YA Network, and I am an intern with the Dignity in Schools Campaign of New York. I was a student in the New York City public school system from K-12 and I graduated high school last year. I am an incoming sophomore at Georgetown University, but I'm still here to fight for the next generation of public school student's wellbeing.

This year's executive budget proposal threatens to cut important funding towards restorative justice, the mental health continuum, immigrant family communications, and other essential equity-based services.

These cuts will directly impact students. As a former public high school student who didn't have access to restorative justice services in her school, and who only became deeply ingrained in restorative justice practices because of external programs like the YA-YA Network and DSC-NY, I know first hand how dangerous it is to not have any restorative justice programs in schools.

Unfortunately, a student at my high school experienced a mental health crisis that involved a knife threat. Instead of seeking a restorative justice or mental health counselor to deescalate the situation, my school's administration decided to go on a shut down and use police force. The presence of police and the overall shutdown scared my classmates, and it especially scared the young person who was going through a crisis, who ended up fleeing the school. To this day I believe that if a team of counselors that were trained in trauma-informed deescalation techniques made contact with the student before the police attempted to, the students wouldn't have felt the need to flee.

This is not the only instance in public schools where restorative justice or mental health access could have helped young people in public schools. This is why it's important to fully fund restorative justice, mental health, and immigration protections in schools. By freezing the hiring of school police, eliminating vacancies, and reinvesting approximately $90 million in savings into restorative justice, mental health supports, and immigrant protections, the city will be positively impacting every student and young New Yorker.

If empowering the youth is your goal, then funding restorative justice, the mental health continuum, and immigrant protections will be your priority.

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

New York City Council
Committee on Finance, Honorable Linda Lee, Chair
Committee on Aging, Honorable Susan Zhuang, Chair
Committee on Children and Youth, Honorable Althea Stevens, Chair
Committee on Education, Honorable Eric Dinowitz, Chair
Committee on Parks and Recreation, Honorable Ty Hankerson, Chair

Testimony of YMCA of Greater New York
Submitted by Michael Rivadeneyra, Vice President of Government Relations

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget Hearing
June 10, 2026

The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to empowering youth, improving health, and strengthening community. With 24 YMCA branches and more than 100 community sites across New York City, the YMCA is among the largest providers of human services spanning from infancy to older adults and an important anchor, convener, and catalyst for transformational change in underserved communities.

The YMCA is also a proud member of the Age Strong NY, Campaign for Children (C4C), New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL), Coalition for Community School Excellence (CCSE), the Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF), Human Services Council (HSC), and Interorganizational Taskforce on Lifeguards & Aquatics, as well a supporter of New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). As members of these coalitions, we endorse and support their policy recommendations and budget agendas for Fiscal Year 2027.

We thank Speaker Menin, Chair Lee, Chair Zhuang, Chair Stevens, Chair Dinowitz, Chair Hankerson, and the entire City Council for their continued partnership and advocacy in securing critical investments in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. We are pleased that the Executive Budget includes investments in services for older adults, after-school, New York City Public Schools, community schools, early childcare, and in City Parks, however the city must go above just meeting baseline investments into these critical services and systems.

<u>Committee on Aging</u>

The YMCA currently operates two DFTA older adult centers – Flatbush YMCA and Glebe Senior Center. Unfortunately, the Glebe Senior Center was instructed by DFTA and NYCHA to relocate out of the NYCHA operated Glebe Senior Housing development due to a number of capital improvement needs, such as mold remediation, HVAC and plumbing. As is the case for all

providers operating older adult and other social service programs in a NYCHA facility, NYCHA is the sole party that can authorize and execute capital repairs on NYCHA property. The Administration is investing in repairing uninhabitable units within the NYCHA portfolio, however, is it not making a similar investment in their community center portfolio, such as senior centers and early childcare centers. The YMCA supports Age Strongs recommendation to make significant capital investments to repair and renovate NYCHA's community centers, so that residents can readily access critical services.

DFTA's older adult contracts are due for a new Request for Proposal (RFP), since the current contracts are being extended. We recommend that DFTA start engaging providers to design a Concept Paper and RFP that includes a new program model and budget model that reflects inflation, cost escalators, and living wages for the workforce.

Committee on Children and Youth – Afterschool

The YMCA Afterschool program, which includes seven Beacon, eight SONYC, twenty-six COMPASS, ten Community School, and two Cornerstone sites, empowers nearly 15,000 children and teens each day. The YMCA plays a vital role in helping young people build on the academic knowledge they gain during school hours while also fostering social-emotional growth, strengthening peer relationships and boosting confidence. These critical skills empower youth to thrive both within our program sites and beyond. For countless New York City families, afterschool programs like ours are not just an enrichment opportunity, they are an essential part of their support system. High-quality after-school programs combat learning loss, promote social emotional development, prepare youth for the workforce, and provide reliable care that working families depend on.

For decades, DYCD and its provider partners have demonstrated the power of flexible, community-centered programming through initiatives like Beacon, Cornerstone, Community Schools, and COMPASS. These programs have consistently adapted to meet the evolving needs of local communities. Yet, Beacon and Cornerstone remain constrained by outdated and chronically underfunded contracts. We call on the Administration to release new Concept Papers and RFPs for Beacon and Cornerstone. Providers need to be engaged in the design of new programs and budget models for Beacon and Cornerstone.

While we were encouraged to see that Mayor Zohran Mamdani's Executive Budget maintains a commitment to the afterschool expansion plan initiated under the previous administration, the recent release of COMPASS awards has raised concerns about how that expansion is being implemented. The release of center-based COMPASS awards in April resulted in existing service areas losing afterschool services due to numerous community-based centers not being awarded new contracts, despite demonstrating high-quality programming and continued community need. As a result, many longstanding providers that families have relied on for years may be forced to close their doors, disrupting trusted relationships and limiting access to safe and supportive spaces for children.

The release of school-based COMPASS awards in May created additional disruptions to continuity of care for children and families. n some cases these awards have created fragmented service models within individual schools — with different providers operating elementary and middle school COMPASS programs and serving as the lead Community School CBO partner. In addition, several schools were not matched with any provider despite receiving applications, including applications supported by principals. This raises important questions about whether all previously promised program sites will ultimately be served. While we support a fair and competitive procurement process, this process was rushed resulting in confusion and lack of transparency.

Beyond challenges resulting from the award process, we remain concerned that the current reimbursement structure is insufficient to sustain high-quality programming over the long term. The per-participant rates offered in the COMPASS RFP will allow providers to recover only about 60–70 percent of true program costs in the first year, with the gap widening over the six-year contract due to the absence of annual cost escalators. As a result, providers must either subsidize programs with other funding sources or offer staff wages that do not reflect their responsibilities and expertise, creating inequities in the quality and stability of programming available to families. Given these concerns, we are calling on the City to:

- Restore and baseline funding for community-based organizations that lost center-based contracts or experienced significant seat reductions despite meeting eligibility requirements
- Provide greater transparency regarding how school-based awards were determined
- Ensure that all unmatched school sites are paired with providers as quickly as possible
- Provide support and establish clear coordination protocols in schools undergoing a provider transition and where multiple providers are now working together
- Ensure all new COMPASS contracts include at least a 3% annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) or other cost escalators

We welcome the opportunity to partner with City Hall and DYCD to ensure that efforts to expand New York City's afterschool system strengthen community-based organizations, preserve continuity for families, and expand access to high-quality programming.

Committee on Children and Youth – Adult Literacy

The YMCA's New Americans Initiative is committed to actively raising the quality of life for all immigrants and refugees in New York City through vital trauma-informed support, services, learning opportunities, and more. We offer instructional, vocational, recreational, and wrap around services to all and programming is adapted to meet the individualized needs of our participants. Our comprehensive case management services support entire families to ensure that they have the tools and resources necessary to be successful, contributing members of NYC's communities. As we aim to remove any barriers hindering progress, we support individuals and

families with access to food, health and mental health resources, childcare, education, immigration services, and other resources.

Through a case management approach, our New Americans Initiative provides comprehensive, trauma-informed services including education, training and employment, civic engagement, community bridge building and other learning opportunities for participants and their families. Our strength-based intake process identifies specific needs—which may include food, housing, medical and mental well-being, access to public benefits, post-secondary education, citizenship preparation, English Language learning, job readiness, training and certification, employment or simply access to a single meal. More than 2.2 million adults in New York City have limited English proficiency or lack a high school diploma. Yet, despite this urgent need, city and State funding for adult education remains so inadequate that fewer than 3% of New Yorkers can access Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (HSE), or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes each year. The vast majority of those in need—low-income and working-class immigrants, women, and people of color—are being denied a fundamental opportunity to advance their education and improve their lives.

At the federal level, the Trump administration dismantled the Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy, raising concerns about possible cuts or restructuring to the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title II). This federal program currently provides approximately $24.6 million annually for ABE, GED, and ESOL in NYC. According to the Literacy Assistance Center, losing this funding would eliminate over 20,000 seats for students in dire need of these services. The YMCA has WIOA IET programs at our Flushing and Chinatown Branches, where a loss in funding would result in a loss of 200 seats. Adult literacy is not just an education issue, it is a matter of racial, social, and economic justice. Literacy empowers individuals to understand and advocate for their rights, access vital resources and opportunities, engage in civic life, and uplift their communities. Investing in adult literacy is an investment in equity, economic mobility, and the future of New York City. Now is the time to take bold action and ensure that every adult can learn, grow, and thrive.

In line with NYCCAL, we support the call on the City Council to **increase Council Discretionary funding for adult literacy education from $14.5 million to $18 million *and* to consolidate all Council Discretionary funding under Adult Literacy Forward.**

<u>Education – Early Childcare</u>

The YMCA currently operates nearly 700 3k and Prek slots across the City. We are glad to see that Mayor Mamdani's and Governor Hochul's commitments to expanding and fixing the 3k system as well as creating the 2k system. As the Administration moves forward with the expansion of 3k and aging doing the early childcare system, we want to highlight that in order to successfully execute and sustain the Administration must prioritize and invest in the early childcare workforce.

We are glad to see that the newly created 2k seats are full day, full year services. However, in order to maintain continuity of care for those children and families, the city must invest in extended day and afterschool services for the entire early childcare system – 2k to Prek.

Last, in line with C4C we call on the Administration to increase funding for the **Child Care Assistance Program** in order to address the current waitlist and ensure all children who are eligible have access to childcare vouchers.

Education – NYCPS

We join Coalition for Equitable Education Funding (CEEF) in applauding the Administration for baselining funding for several important education programs, including preschool special education services, summer programming, Learning to Work, and early childhood education outreach.

However, the Executive Budget leaves out funding for other critical programs that are currently benefiting thousands of NYC students and their families and are funded with dollars set to expire this June.

- **Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED)**, which supports students with intensive sensory needs. ($8.5M)
- **Restorative justice**, which helps students stay in school, repair relationships, and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended. ($6M)
- **Mental Health Continuum,** which provides expedited mental healthcare to students at 50 high-needs schools. ($5M)
- **Immigrant family communications and outreach**, which helps families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access. ($4M)
- **Student Success Centers**, which allow trained youth leaders to build a culture of college-going and help their peers with the college admissions process. ($3.3M)

We join with the CEEF in calling for the city to baseline funding for these programs in the final Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

Education – Community Schools

As mentioned above, the YMCA operates ten Community Schools, the majority which are funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers contract. Community schools advance the current Chancellor's key priorities of strengthening academic rigor, creating culturally responsive and community-connected classrooms, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and promoting family empowerment and collaborative leadership. Community schools have historically partnered with culturally and spiritually rich communities that have concentrated areas of material impoverishment. These communities have been disproportionately affected by systemic inequities that distort their depth of talent and value.

As such we believe **every school should be a community school.** The strategic benefits are universal because there is an increased value on people and processes that can raise expectations leading to improved outcomes. Research data reinforces the strategy's effectiveness in the short and long term. Studies have found a correlation between the effective implementation and execution of the community school strategy and stronger student connectedness, higher attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, improved academic outcomes and graduation rates. In New York City, community schools have outperformed comparison schools over the past decade, including larger gains in graduation rates, ELA and math proficiency with smaller increases in chronic absenteeism.

Budget Recommendations for Community Schools:

- **The city must protect Community School funding from potential federal and state threats,** including risks to key funding streams such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
- **Expand Office of Community Schools headcount from 20 to 28 full-time positions,** working toward a 15:1 program manager-to-provider ratio. This investment would help stabilize partnerships, address persistent contract and payment delays, and provide more targeted support to providers. The addition of a dedicated data analyst would further strengthen the system by improving data collection, supporting resource mapping, and ensuring fidelity to the Community School model while better measuring impact.
- **Engage community-based organizations as true partners in reimagining contracting and procurement processes for when contracts expire in Fiscal 2028.** Providers must have a seat at the table alongside OCS to help design a system that addresses longstanding challenges, including lengthy contract registration timelines, delayed payments, and administrative barriers. These inefficiencies place unnecessary financial strain on nonprofits and divert focus away from service delivery.
- Over the course of the Administration's first term, New York City should **expand the number of Community Schools** while maintaining fidelity to the model, beginning **with an additional 100 elementary schools by 2028.**

<u>Parks and Recreation</u>

One of the ways the Y reaches the community is through our aquatic programs, placing children and adults on the path to develop lifesaving skills in the water. Utilizing 22 aquatic centers across all five boroughs, the Y provides pool access to tens of thousands of New Yorkers every year. We do this through programs like Second Grade Swim, swim instruction, summer day camp, adult lap swim, and a variety of other programs. Furthermore, through our newly created Aquatics Center for Excellence (ACE) we have been providing free lifeguard training and certification programs since 2022. In 2024 through our branch-based program the YMCA certified 219

lifeguards out of 308 participants and 4 lifeguards out of 7 participants in our first ever school-based program.

In 2023, the YMCA, along with other organizations, convened the Interorganizational Taskforce on Lifeguards & Aquatics, comprised of nonprofit providers and City agencies focused first on tackling the City's acute lifeguard shortage and then on the broader issue of water safety in our city. Over the last year, through the work of the taskforce, we have created new collaborations that have supported recruitment efforts, shared resources, and developed joint advocacy efforts to elevate these critical issues with our city and state elected officials, but there is still much to get done.

As New Yorkers, we take pride in our city's diversity, energy, and resilience. Yet, when it comes to swimming access and education, we fall short. Despite being a waterfront city with 520 miles of shoreline, far too many New Yorkers never learn how to swim. With over 8 million residents—nearly half of New York State's population—and a warming global climate, our public pools are woefully insufficient to meet the growing need for swim instruction and recreation.

The consequences of this gap are dire. A lack of accessible swim education and a shortage of lifeguards have created an urgent public health crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1–4 in the United States and the second leading cause of unintentional injury or death for children ages 5–14. This preventable tragedy disproportionately impacts communities of color. The CDC reports that the drowning death rate for Black Americans is 1.5 times higher than that of white Americans. Without immediate action, the ongoing lifeguard shortage will only deepen these disparities, limiting access to swimming education and increasing water-related accidents.

We must take concrete steps to ensure that every New Yorker can learn, enjoy, and stay safe in the water. Beyond maintaining current resources, we must **invest in equitable and inclusive access to our city's waterfronts and aquatic facilities.** This includes increasing funding for swim instruction, improving pool operations, and expanding free swim lessons across Parks Department pools, New York City Public Schools, and nonprofit-run facilities. Currently, only a small fraction of the city's budget is allocated to swim instruction—an alarming reflection of its lack of prioritization. Investing in these programs will significantly reduce swim-related injuries and fatalities.

Addressing the **lifeguard shortage** is another critical step. This longstanding issue was exacerbated by the pandemic, but solutions are within reach. The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation should be permitted to **accept nationally recognized lifeguard certifications, such as those from the Red Cross and YMCA.** This would allow us to train and hire more lifeguards, closing staffing gaps and ensuring safer pools and beaches. Additionally, we urge the City to partner with nonprofit organizations to **establish a lifeguard development program within NYC high schools.** By engaging youth in swim training and lifeguard certification, we can create a sustainable workforce pipeline while fostering responsibility, leadership, and water safety awareness among the next generation.

Finally, in the long term, we must **prioritize expanding aquatic infrastructure.** This means building more pools—particularly in underserved neighborhoods—and recognizing aquatic facilities as essential public investments, alongside parks and green spaces, in our capital planning process. New York City's waterfront should be a source of recreation, safety, and opportunity—not a public health hazard. Investing in swim education, lifeguard training, and aquatic infrastructure is not just a matter of recreation—it's a matter of equity, safety, and public health.

A challenge of this significance cannot be fully addressed by a single entity or solution. To achieve meaningful change, a multifaceted approach that meets people where they are and removes barriers to access is needed. As a first step, we propose the creation of a $5 million fund for nonprofits to support expanded aquatics safety programs within four critical categories:

- **Land-Based Water Safety Education**
  - A classroom-based set of lessons focused on water safety.

- **"Second Grade" Swim**
  - A partnership between nonprofits and NYC Schools that brings students (2nd grade or similar age) to pools for multi-week swim safety classes in the water.

- **Free Swim Lessons**
  - Free swim lessons provided to New York City youth & adults provided by community-based organizations in all five boroughs.

- **Lifeguard Training and Certification**
  - Free lifeguard training and nationally recognized certification programs provided across all five boroughs.
  - Free lifeguard development programs across all five boroughs to create a robust pipeline of youth prepared to undertake lifeguard training and certification.

This aquatics initiative is both a lifesaving skills program and a workforce development program.

By implementing these solutions, we can make significant strides towards creating a city where every resident, regardless of background or circumstance, can dive into the joy and safety of swimming. Let's ensure that swimming truly becomes an accessible and inclusive activity for all New Yorkers.

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Rivadeneyra, Vice President of Government Relations, mrivadeneyra@ymcanyc.org.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHORUS OF NEW YORK CITY
IN THE KEY OF love

Young People's Chorus of New York City®
Francisco J. Núñez, Founder/Artistic Director
37 West 65th Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10023
T: 212.289.7779 | **F:** 212.289.6918 | **www.ypc.org**

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Executive Budget Hearing Testimony
Submitted by:
Francisco J. Núñez, Founder & Artistic Director
Young People's Chorus of New York City
June 10, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Francisco J. Núñez, Founder and Artistic Director of Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC).

For nearly four decades, YPC has used the power of music to bring together young people from diverse backgrounds while providing high-quality arts education, mentorship, and performance opportunities. Each year, we serve more than 2,000 children and teens across New York City through our Performance Choruses, School Choruses, and Community Choruses programs.

Before addressing our funding requests, I would like to express our appreciation for the City Council's longstanding support of arts and culture. We are grateful that the Fiscal 2027 Executive Budget includes additional funding for the cultural sector, and we respectfully urge the Council to continue working toward fully restoring and baselining arts and culture funding. Stable and predictable public investment is essential for nonprofit organizations like YPC that provide year-round educational programming, workforce opportunities for teaching artists, and free or low-cost access to the arts for thousands of New York City families.

At a time when organizations face rising operating costs and increasing demand for services, sustained support for the arts is an investment in young people, communities, and New York City's future. Arts organizations are critical partners in education, youth development, mental wellness, and community building, and they deserve the stability necessary to plan for long-term impact.

We respectfully request the Council's support for the following FY27 priorities:

- **$150,000 Speaker Request** *(Performance & Community Choruses, including cultural exchange with China and Spain)*
- **$30,000 Cultural Immigrant Initiative** *(Programming in large immigrant neighborhoods)*
- **$30,000 Manhattan Delegation Funding** *(School Choruses – Manhattan)*
- **$20,000 Queens & Brooklyn Delegation Funding** *(School Choruses – Queens & Brooklyn)*
- **$30,000 Bronx Delegation Funding** *(Community Chorus at Kips Bay in the Bronx)*
- **$100,000 CASA Renewal** *(Councilmembers Ariola, Mealy, Sanchez & Schulman)*

These funds will support YPC's citywide programming, including free School Choruses in New York City public schools, community-based choruses serving youth and families, and performance opportunities that foster artistic excellence, leadership development, and cross-cultural understanding.

Through music, YPC helps young people build confidence, strengthen social-emotional skills, develop academic discipline, and experience the joy of belonging to a diverse and supportive community. Public investment ensures that these opportunities remain accessible to children and families regardless of financial circumstances.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. We look forward to continuing our work with the Council to ensure that all young people have access to transformative arts experiences.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Draft: testimony for New Visions portal

Dear City Council,

Please do not remove the New Visions Portal from the DOE budget. It is an invaluable tool for principals and school staff, especially for helping to support our most struggling students and to ensure that they graduate. The DOE thinks that the system, Insight, is similar, but Insight give misinformation and is vastly inferior. **As a principal for the past 10 years of a school with an economic needs index of 93% (The Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn,)** I have found that **the New Visions Portal gives much more accurate information about students and allows us to develop and track individualized supports that actually help students.**

For example, just before I wrote this, I was looking up one of my seniors and the DOE insight tool is not helpful in supporting her. It lists her as "off track" and will not register that she has a 504 plan and thus is on track for a local diploma. It also has confusing information, such as listing "unearned credits" which I have to infer are credits that she failed the first time and made up in summer school. Even though she made them up, they're still listed as "unearned." And it has no way for me or my staff to add any interventions planned for her or any notes. As a busy principal, I don't have time to use a system with bad information.

Meanwhile the information on the New Visions portal enables me to accurately support this student. It shows this same student clearly listed as being "safety net eligible" meaning she has a 504 plan and can graduate with her current Regents scores. I can see what interventions we have planned for her, as well as a comprehensive lists of years of her reading levels and other relevant, past and future information (including whether she's had an IPR and whether she's applied to CUNY and submitted her FAFSA and TAP). It's clear, formatted in a way that's easy to read, and all on the same page.
And for all students, if they really are off track, the New Visions portal lays out clearly and easily what we can do to get them back on track (in terms of Regents or credits)

There are so many other aspects of the New Visions portal that we use all the time to help us help students.

The NV portal also enables us to support individual students with attendance. It has an easy to read 1-page printout of each student's attendance with much relevant information, including comparison to past years, a list of monthly averages, and the day by day layout. We print this out 1x per week for at-risk students and conference with them! We also print it out quarterly for the entire school.

The NV portal also enables us to support students to overcome Regents as a barrier to graduation, individually through its mock regents tool. The Mock Regents tool allows us to

have high-level overview of mock Regents results, as well as detailed student-level results, in an easy to use manner, which we used to plan reteaching of key concepts AND to put students into groups based on their understanding.

Thank you,
Catherine Mitchell, Principal
Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn

FY27 Citywide Initiative: Journalism for All

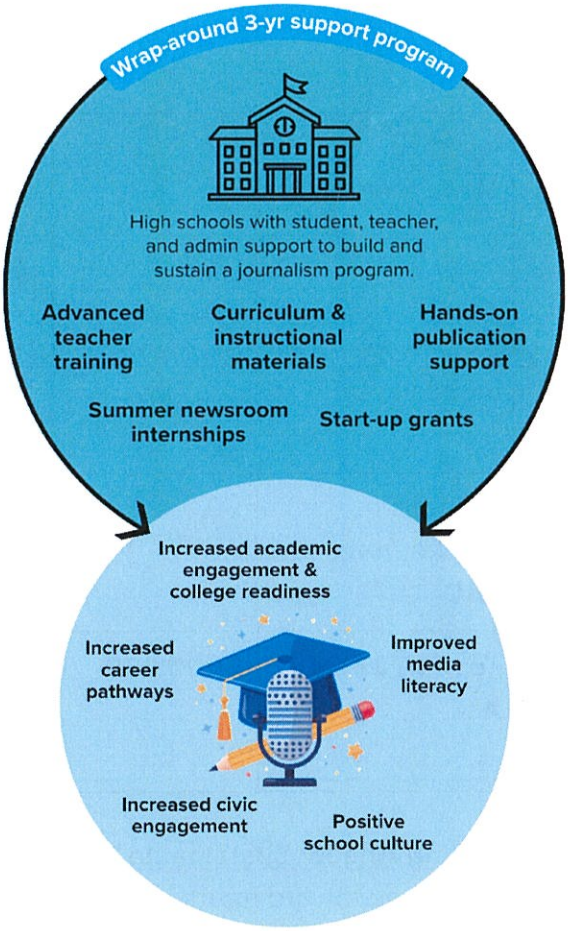
Updated: May 5, 2026

The Challenge & Civic Imperative

Despite being in the media capital of the world, **fewer than 20 percent of NYC public high schools offer journalism education**.[1] This scarcity persists amid mistrust in news sources, intense mis- and dis-information campaigns, and extremely low rates of news literacy[2]. Safeguarding critical thinking skills and creating equitable career pathways are immediate imperatives to prepare our students for their future and protect the civic health of our city.

The Solution: Journalism for All

Following 18 months of development with City Council Members, CUNY Newmark, journalism educators, and students, the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition (YJC) launched the Journalism for All pilot in 2025. Supported by over $1M in philanthropic support, the program currently supports 30 high-need schools piloting a replicable model for schools across the city.



Our schools receive:

- Comprehensive curricula & instructional materials.
- Advanced professional development & teacher coaching.
- Start-up funding and expert, tailored technical support to launch and sustain student publications.
- Paid summer internships for students at local newsrooms.

By increasing access to early, high-quality journalism experiences, Journalism for All will expand students' career opportunities, grow their representation in newsrooms and media coverage, and strengthen our democracy.

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[1] NYC Department of Education, "LL 27/2025 Student Journalism Programming Report 2024-2025," Sep. 2025.
[2] News Literacy Project, "News Literacy in America: A survey of teen information attitudes, habits and skills," Oct. 2024.

FY27 Ask

We are building a targeted public-private partnership to sustain and expand. The budget is designed to maximize every public dollar and deliver direct, high-quality school support.

Program Area	FY27 Ask	Details
Direct School Grants	$150,000	Seed funding and capacity building (e.g., essential equipment and software) sent directly to the 30 pilot schools. *This $150k public investment will be matched by private philanthropy.*
Hands-on School Support	$150,000	Administered centrally by YJC, these funds will be distributed to vetted, expert media contractors matched with schools through a competitive RFP process to provide hands-on journalistic support.
Initiative Management	$200,000	This funds the centralized personnel to manage the career pathways pipeline, ensure quality assurance, and conduct program evaluation. *This is the formal discretionary request made by Bell Voices, Inc.*
SYEP Newsroom Internships	$0	This represents a $150,000 component that is already committed through a new SYEP (DYCD) sector-focus pathway.
Curriculum + teacher training R&D	$0	Developed and implemented in partnership with the CUNY Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, entirely funded by private philanthropy.
Total FY27 City Ask	**$500,000**	*Leveraging $1M+ in private investment to sustain a 30-school cohort piloting a turnkey model for schools across the city.*

Looking Ahead: Sustainable Expansion

As we look toward future growth, our goal is to 1) integrate the program model into the DOE ecosystem and 2) continue our foundational academic partnership with CUNY Newmark through future city funding. By making this commitment in FY27, the City Council will bring us closer to closing the opportunity gap and help bring media literacy and career readiness to high schools in every District.

Contact: CJ Sánchez, Director, NYC Youth Journalism Coalition, cj@youthjournalismnyc.org
Website: www.YouthJournalismNYC.org

Sophie Mode, Program Associate, NYC Youth Journalism Coalition, NYCPS Graduate

My name is Sophie Mode. I am a New York City public school graduate (class of 2021), and I currently work with the NYC Youth Journalism Coalition to expand access to journalism education for every student in our schools.

As people who care about education and young people, it can often be hard to know where to start when it comes to addressing the plethora of concerns facing the largest school system in the nation. And there is no one solution, but we are here to speak about one that checks a lot of boxes: access to journalism education.

The students speaking after me will testify to the profound impact journalism has had on them, their peers, and their school communities at large.

You'll hear from them the urgency for journalism education in this moment.

How it fosters a culture of belonging and inclusion when divisiveness is so high.

How it builds media literacy when disinformation continues to rise.

How it gives their school leadership, the DOE, and you all, the opportunity to hear about the issues that students and teachers care about.

How it generates career pathways that are sorely needed, particularly in building a news industry that is actually representative of our city and country.

And that is all on top of the reading, writing, research, leadership, critical thinking, creativity, technical, and communication skills it develops, making it a strong answer to an upcoming challenge schools will face: the new Portrait of a Graduate framework. Journalism education is the answer to the questions of our time. Journalism is a necessity for a true democracy, and it must begin in our classrooms.

We urge you to create a Journalism for All Citywide Initiative in the FY27 Budget. Journalism for All is not a short term solution or quick fix. It is a tested, wraparound model for total support, designed to scale across the city while still ensuring support meets schools where they are instead of forcing them into a one size fits all model.

Currently, very few schools offer journalism education, as proven by Local Law 27 passed by the Council last year. And, access is starkly divided along the same equity gaps that plague our school system.

We have already seen the impact of Journalism for All in our pilot cohort, in schools like Hala's, Summer's, Jayleen's, Leair's, and Camilla's.

I am now so excited to introduce our student leaders, who can tell you firsthand about the impacts of access, and of a lack thereof. Thank you for your time.

Jayleen Mendez, sophomore, Lyons Community School

Good afternoon. My name is Jayleen and I am a 15 year old student at Lyons Community School.

I am here today to ask you to support funding for Journalism for All so more students across New York City can have opportunities like I have had.

Being part of journalism has helped me grow in so many ways. I have learned how to research, interview people, write articles, and communicate effectively. But more importantly it has helped me find my voice.

One of my first assignments was interviewing another student at my school and I was so nervous beforehand that I kept practicing my questions over and over. When the interview started they shared personal challenges they had faced and I realized how much it means when someone takes the time to listen. When I saw their story published I felt proud because I had helped tell a story that mattered.

Through journalism I have learned that every person has a story worth hearing. Journalism has allowed me to help keep my school community informed, celebrate student achievements, and give students a platform to be heard. I hope you will support funding for Journalism for All so more students can find their voice just like I did. Thank you for your time.

Summer Jara, sophomore, Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy Charter School

Good Afternoon, my name is Summer Jara, and I am a 15-year-old sophomore attending Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy, an all-girls charter high school located in the Bed-Stuy area. I am very fortunate to be given the access to raise awareness about journalism and its dire need in educational systems to you all.

I sit here today because my school stands strongly alongside a journalism program that has been embedded into our school curriculum. This program is not only mentioned within the walls of my journalism class but is also talked about amongst students and teachers in every other subject my school offers. That journalism program is Journalism For All.

Brooklyn Emerging Leaders Academy, also known as BELA, has only recently implemented the Journalism For All program, and the impact of this program has shown significant beneficial change.

With the help of Journalism For All, our school has officially created our own newsroom called The Hive. Our journalism class is a place where students can voice their opinions proudly and expand their freedom about any issue they desire, as it follows the policies Journalism For All has helped us produce.

Being able to say my school provides journalism shouldn't be a flaunt but an imperative. Through journalism, I have gained many experiences and opportunities that I thought were unattainable before my knowledge of journalism and program, Journalism For All. Experiences include attending an internship that provided lessons on how to work and set guidelines with the growing use of AI in journalism, and having the opportunity to participate in The School of The New York Times Summer program.

Journalism is a fundamental form of education, news, community connections, and civic liberation, all while serving as a source of entertainment for teenagers like myself.

It is essential to note that although BELA has been given this opportunity to receive funding to support journalism at our school, there are still a large number of schools that lack the accessibility to journalism, and in those schools are students who one day hope to pursue a career in journalism.

Thank you for your time.

Leair Davenport, junior, A School Without Walls

Hey y'all, my name is Leair Davenport, I'm 17, and representing A School Without Walls located near Wall St.

My school has a program through Journalism For All and I feel like journalism is important for me because I not only have a passion for photography, but also a lot of political opinions and opinions in general, so journalism gives me a medium to both publish photography through documentation, as well as get my voice out there.

Some students can struggle with finding a place to chime in, whether about their local community, or about bigger communities that go beyond a neighborhood. A lot of students also struggle with finding a place to start, gather thoughts and information, as well as having some sort of way to be involved whether involved in issues or simply spreading the news of maybe something good. Youth Journalism is what gives these people their voices. During a time of extreme discrimination, climate damage, and silencing, it's important that the people who have to pick up the systems left by the older generations– the kids– can at least have a say in what they want in the future.

Journalism For All and Youth Journalism as a whole has let me use my skills and voice for something meaningful for me, and funding Journalism For All can help allocate resources not only for the program but for the kids who can't have a voice without it. Further the medium for youth to speak up, because younger people are literally and figuratively the future.

Camilla Spillmann, Junior, West End Secondary School

My name is Camilla Spillmann. I'm 17 and I go to West End Secondary School. I'm a part of my school's journalism elective and club which are made possible by Journalism for All.

My school previously had a school paper before journalism for all, but over the course of a few years it crumbled due to a lack of funding and sizably large amount of energy that has to be put in for a paper to be maintained. This year, through Journalism for All, we've been able to revitalize it. In our elective, we've learned about what makes a good story and how to pitch one. We've talked about and practiced interviewing and how to formulate strong questions. We've talked about how best to structure an article and written many of our own. We've experimented with photography: thinking about what could make a good photo, what could fit a certain topic, what would catch readers' attention.

For our first print edition our advisor was able to get it to English teachers in every grade to share the paper with their students. We wrote about exam stress, AI in the classroom, the new state phone policy, local politics, and more. One student interviewed a vendor that sells coffee and pastries in a cart right next to our school – a figure everyone knew of but before that paper, hadn't really thought much about.

I think I speak for everyone here with me when I say that we are here before you because of a crucial belief that student papers are important. They allow students to develop writing, research, and critical thinking skills that are vital not just for college, or future careers, but life. However, they also provide something just as important, a rare opportunity for those my age: a formal outlet for students to talk about the world around them. Issues in their community, interests they care about, problems they may see in the world, or even good parts of their community – such as the impact a local street vendor – that people may otherwise gloss over. That's something I continue to have access to, something I hope more students at my school are able to do, and something I hope more students from schools across the five boroughs have access to themselves. For this reason, council members, I urge you to fund Journalism for All. Thank you.

Hala Musa, Senior, High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology

Hello my name is Hala Musa. I am a senior at the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology. My school has a journalism program through Journalism for All, and it has had a profound impact on me and my school community.

Through journalism, I have learned how to research, interview, fact-check, and tell stories that matter. More importantly, journalism has taught me how to listen to people, understand different perspectives, and use my voice to inform and advocate for my community. As a student leader who is deeply involved in issues of equity and student engagement, journalism has given me another way to create change. It has helped me develop critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills that I will carry with me throughout college and my future career.

The stories my classmates and I write highlight the experiences, achievements, and concerns of students in our school. Journalism helps ensure that student voices are heard and that important issues are brought into the conversation. It creates a stronger, more connected school community where students feel informed and represented. Access to journalism education has empowered students like me to become more engaged in our community and more confident communicators. It gives us the tools to ask questions, seek the truth, and share stories that might otherwise go untold.

I encourage you to fund the Journalism for All citywide initiative so that more students at my school and across New York City can have access to these valuable opportunities. Investing in student journalism is an investment in the next generation of informed leaders, storytellers,and community advocates. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gianna McIntosh, sophomore, Millennium Brooklyn High School

My name is Gianna McIntosh, and I'm a sophomore at Millennium Brooklyn High School. Journalism is important to me because it has become a way for me to build a legacy, to understand my community, ask better questions, and tell stories that matter.

My school doesn't offer a journalism class, but we do have a club. It only meets for an hour, and every week I leave wishing we had more time. I want journalism education to be part of everyday learning so these skills can stay with me and shape the way I see the world. By funding Journalism for All, you can show this commitment to students like me and to the future of our city's schools.

In our club, we write teacher features, club spotlights, reviews of school plays, student perspectives on political events, and opinion pieces about issues that matter to our generation. But it's difficult to fully invest in journalism when we don't have the time or resources to grow these skills. We need space, guidance, and support to make journalism education real.

Learning how to report, write, research, and ask questions has given me confidence and purpose. It has taught me that my perspective matters and that storytelling can create connection, understanding, and change.

That is why it is so important for the City Council to fund journalism education. Even if students don't become journalists, these skills still matter. They teach us to think critically, communicate clearly, and better understand the world around us. Every student deserves the opportunity to learn how to navigate media and information, not just the students who already know how to speak up.

Supporting journalism education means investing in young people's ability to participate, question, and contribute to their communities. In a time when misinformation spreads easily and young voices are often dismissed, journalism education is not optional. It is essential.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Derry Oliver, Rising Junior, Syracuse University, NYCPS Graduate

Good morning, my name is Derry Oliver. Three years ago, I sat in these same seats as a recent graduate of Cobble Hill High School, advocating for funding for the Youth Journalism Coalition. Now I'm back as a rising junior at Syracuse University, majoring in Policy Studies and Law, Society & Policy, with a minor in African American Studies — to do the same. The Youth Journalism Coalition has given high school students access to opportunities that are hard to find, and I am proof of that.

Growing up low-income, I wasn't lacking drive. I was lacking access. Journalism programs, leadership opportunities, and internships often came with a price tag that my family could not afford. Most of these opportunities also required a network that was nonexistent for me.

YJC opened doors I could not open on my own. As a student leader within the organization, I developed leadership skills I now apply as President of College Democrats at Syracuse University. Through the Youth Journalism Coalition, I had the opportunity to write for Teen Vogue about my advocacy work within the organization and to publish an article about my experience with mental health in the education system as a Black girl — which is part of what led me to write for the Daily Orange today. And just recently, I hosted the MLK Young Changemakers event at the Apollo Theater, through connections I built during my time in the Youth Journalism Coalition.

youthrepresent
JUSTICE FROM COURTROOM TO COMMUNITY

New York City Council
Committee on Finance
FY2027 Budget Testimony
Julia L. Davis, Esq. Executive Director of Youth Represent
June 10, 2026

Youth Represent is dedicated to improving the lives and futures of young people impacted by the criminal legal system. When the legal system creates barriers to success for youth, we use the law to help them leave the stigma of a criminal record behind. We provide criminal and civil reentry legal representation and mental health support to young people aged 16-26, assisting them with everything from rap sheet review to school suspensions to employment discrimination and other legal needs they identify. This is our 20th year serving 10,000 young people across New York City.

Thank you to Chair Chair Lee, members of the Finance Committee, and staff for the opportunity to provide written testimony about the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.

New York City Must Invest in Resources and Opportunities for Young People - Not Criminalization

Across New York City's five boroughs, an estimated 32,215 young people under 25–primarily Black and Brown youth–were drawn into the justice system through arrests, convictions, and incarceration in 2025.[1] This is a cycle that will not stop if the City continues to pour money into criminalizing, surveilling, and incarcerating young people before they've had the chance to thrive. Instead, the City must continually invest in community-oriented, youth-specific resources and opportunities to keep New York families safe and healthy. These programmatic and investment priorities are outlined in the 2025 Landscape of Youth Services for Young People with Juvenile and/or Criminal Legal System Involvement ("Landscape Report") which we are proud to have co-created with the NYC Youth Justice Coalition.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the passage of New York's landmark Raise the Age (RTA) law, which ended the shameful chapter in our history of prosecuting 16- and 17-year olds as adults regardless of offense. Prior to the passage of this legislation, 16- and 17-year-olds were held in dangerous conditions on Rikers Island and other adult jails across the state. Moreover, these youth were systematically locked-out of age-appropriate services in family court

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[1] NYS Arrests by County. https://mypublicdashboard.ny.gov/t/OJRP_PUBLIC/views/NYSArrestsbyCounty/CurrentData?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y. Accessed 18 Mar. 2026.
NYPD Arrest Data (Year to Date) | NYC Open Data. https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Arrest-Data-Year-to-Date-/uip8-fykc/about_data. Accessed 18 Mar. 2026.

programs designed to meet the needs of adolescents and avoid the barriers of an adult criminal record.

Despite making up half of the state's youth justice system population, New York City's young people have been excluded from accessing the Raise the Age funding since the law was enacted because the City exceeds the tax cap prescribed by state law. When RTA was enacted in 2017, the state budget both excluded New York City from Raise the Age funding *and* ended cost-sharing for the Close to Home program, placing the full financial, programmatic, and administrative burden of both youth justice programs on New York City alone.

Despite the lack of state funds, New York City made substantial investments in youth justice programming to support Raise the Age implementation as well as older youth and emerging adults, with emphasis on programs that utilized credible messenger mentoring, like ARCHES and AIM, and on alternatives to incarceration and detention.[2] During the Adams administration, many of these programs saw reduced funding or were cut entirely. Among these were programs that provided critical violence prevention and reentry services to youth.

Despite significant gaps in funding and services, youth arrests continue to decrease. Yet Crossroads and Horizons, the youth detention facilities that absorbed the custody of 16 and 17 year olds in the City, are dangerously overcrowded. Between July and September 2025, there were 329 youth detained in NYC's Secure Detention Centers,[3] despite the maximum bed capacity fluctuating between 212 and 259.[4] For over two years, ACS has been operating under a waiver from the Office of Children and Family Services which allows the agency to circumvent the state law that mandates private bedrooms for youth in secure detention. Under this waiver, young people have been sleeping on cots in hallways and classrooms at Horizon and Crossroads. Temporarily adding beds and continually renewing this waiver is a band-aid that does not adequately or sustainably address overcrowding. The time to consider and act on alternatives is now.

The total admissions to Secure Detention and Specialized Secure Detention increased by 24% from October 2024 to September 2025.[5] In 2025, 60% of youth in secure detention were Black, and 31% were Hispanic, as published by NYC's Administration of Children Services Detention Demographic Report from FY 2026 Q1.[6] Black and Brown young people are disproportionately impacted by this overcrowding because they are disproportionately represented in NYC's Secure Detention population.

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[2] Making Raise the Age Work for New York City Youth. Community Justice Collaborative, Oct. 2018. https://mcusercontent.com/9c2de0514632a20b91f239a8c/files/2df86e9d-b229-4fe5-8707-788cf7f59835/raise_the_age.pdf.
[3] "Flash Report - Monthly Indicators." NYC Administration for Children's Services, January 2025. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2025/01.pdf.
[4] Juvenile Detention Facilities - SD/SSD Census | Bureau of Detention Services | Office of Children and Family Services. https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/youth/detention/census.php. Accessed 18 Mar. 2026.
[5] *Quarterly Detention Demographics Report*. Fiscal Year 2026 4th Quarter. New York City Administration for Children's Services, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2026/detention-demographic-q1.pdf.
[6] ibid.

ACS does not provide adequate data to accurately represent the kinds and severity of charges faced by young people held in Secure Detention in NYC. More granular data on arrest charges by borough would better guide allocation of resources to specific programs in the places they are most needed. This lack of data obstructs any effort to understand the problem of overcrowding in these facilities and to develop a comprehensive decarceration plan to identify young people in each borough who could be released with supervision or moved to Alternative to Detention (ATD) / Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs while their case is open.

This is not an easy problem to solve. Many youth in Secure Detention and Specialized Secure Detention face serious charges in adult court as Adolescent Offenders and Juvenile Offenders. Substantially reducing the number of youth in detention will require a comprehensive plan and substantial investment of resources to provide robust ATD and ATI services to youth in every borough and to reduce youth arrests for serious offenses. In addition to the need for adequate services, the City has never fully reckoned with the impact of COVID on youth - the adolescents and emerging adults with the deepest system involvement today were in elementary, middle and high school during the height of the pandemic, and experienced learning loss, peer disconnection, and service disruption not to mention the trauma of family illness and death.

The City Must Implement a Comprehensive Decarceration Plan

Too often, young people only gain access to the services and supports they need *after* they have already been arrested or are in crisis. Instead of building systems that proactively meet young people where they are, we wait until they have contact with the legal system before mobilizing resources. At that point, service organizations are asked to do the incredibly difficult work of wrapping a young person in supports while also confronting the deeper challenges that may have led to system involvement in the first place—poverty, trauma, unmet educational needs, housing instability, and lack of economic opportunity.

Across New York City, the organizations entrusted with serving young people are asked to meet increasingly complex needs while operating with exceptionally limited resources. City contracts for youth services remain significantly underfunded compared to adult service contracts—contracts that are themselves insufficient—creating persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff and maintaining the continuity of care that young people need to thrive. These constraints are particularly acute as we better understand the profound impacts of mental health challenges and trauma among youth; hiring and retaining clinical professionals capable of responding to these needs requires meaningful and sustained investment.

If young people are truly our future, then we must invest in them now—by strengthening community-based services, ensuring youth providers are adequately resourced, expanding access to economic opportunity, and building a coordinated system that meets young people where they are. The Landscape Report provides a roadmap for a fully-funded, sustainable continuum of services that includes prevention, alternatives to incarceration and detention, and reentry.

Incarcerating Youth *DOES NOT* Work:

To address the overcrowding crisis and successfully redirect and depopulate Secure Detention, **the City must expand investments in youth-specific ATDs and ATIs, especially for felony charges**. We know that incarceration has disastrous effects on youth outcomes: residential placements and incarceration create obstacles to psychosocial development, making it harder for youth to learn to control impulsive and aggressive behavior, function autonomously, take responsibility for their behavior, and consider other points of view. Research indicates that confining young people increases the probability of recidivism as an adult by between 20-30%. Studies support the diversion of young people away from settings that confine them as soon as possible; for even a short period of custody has lifelong detrimental physical and mental health effects.

In response to the wealth of research that underscores the detriments of incarcerating youth, we challenge the New York City Council to adopt the goal of reaching a policy of "zero youth detention," as described in the Landscape Report. This is a widely supported goal across jurisdictions and among young people, families, service providers and advocates. "By scaling a continuum of community-based responses, New York City can provide strength-based, effective solutions that help youth remain safely in their homes and communities."[7]

Programs and Services Tailored to Young People *DO* Work:

Program models like credible messenger mentoring, family-focused multidimensional and cognitive behavioral therapy, Restorative Justice interventions targeting youth, and wraparound programs with assigned care coordinators use evidence-backed strategies to keep young people out of carceral settings and improve public safety.

Locally-designed programs can work even better than the program models listed above. "Homegrown" programs, as the Sentencing Project refers to them, that can offer a range of supports that can achieve real success with the young people in their communities when they incorporate these factors into their work:

- a trusted mentor, advocate, therapist or care coordinator who provides ongoing support and encouragement;
- rigorous and well-designed cognitive behavioral therapies;
- close cooperation with, and support for, young people's families; and

[7] Landscape of Youth Services for Young People with Juvenile and/or Criminal Legal Systems Involvement. New York City Youth Justice Coalition, 2025, https://www.lac.org/assets/images/Landscape-of-Youth-Services-for-Young-People-with-Juvenile-and-or-Criminal-Legal-Systems-Involvement.pdf.

- constructive education, employment, and recreational or community service activities.[8]

Data indicates that more non-profits targeting community needs, like those that use the strategies listed above, the more crime rates go down in that community.[9] There are excellent youth providers in communities all over New York City that already incorporate these strategies and models into their programs, but the State's investment in them is a fraction of what it spends on surveilling, policing, and incarcerating young people. The work that actually reduces youth incarceration is already happening on the ground and in our communities and needs to be adequately funded.

Snapshot of NYC Youth Justice Programs:

Drive Change supports justice-involved young people by providing culinary and hospitality training, social support, and pathways to advance their economic mobility and overall well-being. Through their fellowship program designed for 18-25 year olds, Drive Change offers a three-month paid learning and skill-building program where fellows gain skills to support life, workplace, and emotional well-being on their path to becoming agents of change. The fellowship has a 74% graduation rate and works with 60 justice-involved young people per year.

Why it works: Drive Change's workforce programming is in the culinary arts because they believe that hospitality can serve as a tool for social justice; quality employment is critical to disrupting the cycle of incarceration, poverty, and intergenerational trauma.

exalt youth works with justice-involved youth aged 15–19 at various intercept points. The program focuses on reconnections to education, career readiness and key life skills, followed by a nine-week paid internship. With structured classes, one-on-one support, paid work experience, and a strong alumni network, exalt gives young people the tools they need to stay on track and believe in their potential. Two years post-graduation from the program, 95% of exalt's young people have not been rearrested and 98% are re-engaged with education and scheduled to graduate high school or with an equivalency diploma by 20-years old.

Why it works: exalt youth provides structured support to learn key life skills while reconnecting youth to the community, giving them the tools and motivation for achievement while avoiding arrest and incarceration.

Arches Transformative Mentoring program works with 16- to 24-year-olds on probation who are disconnected from school, work, and programs and at high risk of rearrest, involving group activities and sessions based on cognitive behavioral

[8] Mendel, Richard. "Effective Alternatives to Youth Incarceration." The Sentencing Project, 28 June 2023, https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/effective-alternatives-to-youth-incarceration/.
[9] "Ideas in Action: More Non-Profits, Fewer Crimes." Vital City, 28 Mar. 2023, https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/more-non-profits-fewer-crimes/.

interventions run by credible messenger mentors, and individual mentoring to set positive goals. Arches participants were found to be less than half as likely as a matched comparison group to be convicted of a new felony 12 months and 24 months after beginning probation.

Why it works: Arches participants work with trusted mentors to develop conflict resolution skills and change thinking patterns; build new, healthy relationships with adults and peers; and identify goals.

CASES gives young people a chance to succeed as independent members of the community by providing mental health, mentorship, workforce readiness, and education services for young people who are involved or at risk of involvement with the criminal legal system. Its alternative-to-incarceration program ROAR follows an evidence-based model for young adults aged 16-27 with a case in Criminal or Supreme Courts, where they receive personalized services including gun violence prevention. 90% of participants avoid rearrest while in the program. CHOICES, an alternative-to-detention program for 12–17-year-olds with a pending Family Court matter, allows participants to avoid placement in youth detention facilities while receiving family therapy, court and school liaison services, and connections to resources that combat the socioeconomic drivers of crime.

Why it works: CASES ATI and ATD services for youth invest in their potential, building the skills necessary to realize opportunities for success in their communities while avoiding the retraumatization of incarceration.

Investing in a robust continuum of services must be complemented by extensive reforms to NYC and NYS youth justice systems to reduce the city and state's overreliance on incarceration and detention programs.

Discretionary Funding Requests: Youth Represent - Critical Services for Youth

With support from the New York City Council through the Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative and the Discharge Planning Initiative, Youth Represent provides reentry legal services for young people in their own communities. We are deliberate in serving Black, Latiné, Indigenous, and other youth of color who otherwise would not have access to legal services, while still prioritizing those with criminal legal system involvement. We have also expanded our age range from 24 and under to youth 26 and under. This is in response to growing research that shows our brains continue to develop into the mid-twenties,and addresses the very practical reality that our partner organizations often welcome participants over the age of 24.

We focus on young people living within New York City's five boroughs and are committed to providing inclusive and gender-affirming services to all youth. In 2025, 88% of our clients are people of color, including 49% Black, 26% Latinx, 6% multiracial, and 7% Asian. Our clients have an average age of 23, with nearly 20% being non-U.S. citizens and another 20% living in

subsidized housing. Alarmingly, only 10% are employed full-time, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive support. These statistics highlight the significant barriers our youth face in achieving stability and self-sufficiency, emphasizing the critical role Youth Represent plays in empowering marginalized young people to overcome systemic challenges and build brighter futures.

Youth Represent is seeking City Council funding, through the **Innovative Criminal Justice Programs Initiative, Court involved Youth Mental Health Initiative, Speaker Request Initiative** and the **Discharge Planning Initiative.** This funding will allow us to provide critical legal services and mental health services for youth. This year we have requested a total of $375,000–which would allow us to disrupt cycles of legal system involvement and expand access to justice. We aim to strengthen and grow our network of clients, community members and partners, ensuring that low-income youth of color have access to high-quality, culturally competent legal services, youth development, and mental health services in neighborhoods with the highest needs level. We hope that you will renew funding for Youth Represent and that you will do so in the context of a just budget–investing in the full range of services and supports that young people and families rely on.

I**nnovative Criminal Justice Initiative** - Youth Represent is seeking a restoration of $75,000 to **provide legal support to young people impacted by the criminal legal system.** We are uniquely dedicated to serving emerging adults (ages 26 and under) during pivotal moments when support can change the trajectory of a young person's life. Since 2006, we've served approximately 10,000 young people with over 20,000 services, partnering with them to overcome legal barriers and reclaim pathways to stable and sustainable futures.

Court Involved Youth Mental Health Initiative - Youth Represent is seeking $200,000 to support the **expansion of our social work practice, increasing access to mental health services for youth impacted by the criminal legal system.** Our model integrates our legal team with community-based organizations for job placement, case management, and support. While effective, our legal staff has increasingly been facing challenges when clients are also dealing with mental health issues. Confidentiality barriers can limit collaboration and without access to mental health professionals, referrals often go to overburdened services. Building the mental health practice within our organization ensures more continuity in care, improves young people's court dispositions, and helps in their growth and development.

Discharge Planning / Alternatives to Incarceration and Recovery Programs - Youth Represent is seeking a restoration of $100,000 to continue to **provide legal and reentry support for young people transitioning from incarceration.** This includes: RAP sheet clean-up clinics and individualized legal support including record sealing, certificates of relief, and parole/probation early termination and on-the-spot Know Your Rights (KYR) training; reentry legal navigation and wraparound services, including expanding referrals to reentry services (housing, mental health, workforce development) and offering short-term mental health support; and strengthening court and community-based reentry pipelines by deepening access to our expertise for workforce development and ATI programs.

We thank the Council for considering this testimony and for committing to bettering the futures of young people in New York City. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Julia L. Davis, Executive Director: jdavis@youthrepresent.org | (646) 503-5395.