

TESTIMONY

Before the Council of the City of New York

Committee on Children and Youth

Evaluating the Crisis Management System under DYCD

Presented by

Assistant Commissioner Jessica Raithel

June 17, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens, and members of the Children and Youth Committee. I am Jessica Raithel, Assistant Commissioner for Planning, Program Integration and Evaluation at the Department of Youth and Community Development. I am joined today by Denice Williams, Deputy Commissioner for Planning, Program Integration and Evaluation; Dr. Clifford Larochel, Executive Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety; and Dr. Karina Christiansen, Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Crisis Management System.

The Crisis Management System (CMS) has a long-standing history in New York City and has continuously evolved over time to best meet the needs of our communities. The Cure Violence model was originally brought to New York in 2010 and funded through State and Federal funding, thanks to the advocacy and expertise of many of the community-based organizations who are still running programs today. Back then all of the organizations decided to adopt the Ceasefire model from Chicago, which later transformed into Cure Violence, and evolved into the Crisis Management System that supports many neighborhoods across the City.

Cure Violence was originally designed as an intervention program to engage those individuals who are driving violence in their communities. Cure Violence is a specific *public health intervention* that views gun violence like a contagious disease where a very small number of individuals drive the outbreaks. To address the problem, trusted “credible messengers” seek out these individuals and persuade them to change their behavior. To maintain the credibility of key staff who are influential because they have similar backgrounds to those who drive the violence, including histories of criminal behavior and incarceration, the programs operate independently from law enforcement. Cure Violence uses three major strategies:

1. Interrupt and de-escalate incidents of gun violence to stop cycles of retaliation.

2. Connect the people who are driving violence to services that help steer them away from violence.
3. Change community norms by engaging residents in collaborative efforts to promote public safety.

Although challenges are abundant in assessing the impact of a program that is intertwined with so many community and individual factors, over the years, evidence points to a positive impact on community safety and public perception for high-fidelity programs.

To further enhance this impact, NYC has gone a step further to embed the Cure Violence model in individual specifically designed support services that also act as prevention. This led to the development of the Crisis Management System, which includes a spectrum of wraparound services to complement and expand support to individuals and communities. These include community healing and wellness programs, youth enrichment services including mediation in schools, professional mental health services, and mobile trauma units.

This vision was further realized when DYCD stepped in to provide support and assume responsibility of the CMS programs. The move allows for more intentional integration into DYCD's network of services which can address a broader spectrum of needs, including workforce programs, community-based case management, and community centers.

Since assuming responsibility for ONS in 2023, DYCD has conducted a comprehensive assessment of CMS programs and outlined priorities to ensure a successful onboarding. These included documenting fidelity to the Cure Violence model, strengthening connections to other DYCD-funded programs, increasing capacity building for community-based organizations implementing CMS programs, structuring and launching a data reporting system for all CMS programs, improving contracting and payment structures, and establishing a commitment to continuous quality improvement both internally and externally.

Studies on the state of evaluation for Cure Violence programs have emphasized the importance of implementing the model with fidelity to be able to replicate findings and point to essential program components. To this end, DYCD has integrated CMS programs into our agency-wide evaluation and monitoring system which tracks essential contractual and model requirements. CMS programs now receive standardized site visits from initiative managers to document adherence to requirements and provide coaching and resources where necessary. Thus far in FY25, 102 evaluations have been conducted by ONS staff and 98% of those evaluations received a rating of meets standard or above.

Another key component of the model is to monitor violence and incidents through community intelligence, live and historic data. To this end, DYCD has integrated NYPD data



streams into its system of record to support real-time data-driven communication between ONS initiative managers and CMS providers. As opportunities to explore expansion have arisen, DYCD has actively analyzed shooting data to inform catchment areas and potential changes to the model. DYCD also regularly convenes with NYPD to understand data trends and public safety needs to inform provider efforts, while still maintaining independence from law enforcement. The data DYCD receives is shared with CMS providers to ensure that interventions are targeted, timely, and community-informed, and this process is operationalized through localized planning meetings, provider strategy sessions, and coordinated response efforts.

DYCD has also committed to expanding access to other DYCD-funded programs to CMS participants and has been intentionally hosting networking and information sharing convenings with CMS providers and other providers in the DYCD network. Additionally, DYCD is building specific pathways to collaboration and referrals through initiatives like our CRED workforce program and the Summer Safety Plan in community centers. DYCD has also reimagined the specific CMS wraparound services by aligning scopes to program goals and needed staffing, such as through the consolidation of YES programs, and has rolled out new professional mental health support based on the needs on the ground.

DYCD has a robust technical assistance and professional development network of support for the community-based organizations it funds and has prioritized CV providers and other providers within the CMS network. To introduce these resources, particularly in the area of financial management – a recognized need among this cadre of organizations – DYCD staff and TA providers have conducted intentional outreach to CMS providers based on their identified needs, adding an onsite introductory meeting to the normal hand off to the consulting group.

One particular engagement with a financial management firm and a CV provider focused on entering and reconciling 2024 transactions in QuickBooks to ensure the accounting system accurately reflects all activity for the year. The consulting group also compiled the necessary backup documentation for expenses to allow the CBO to invoice under their DYCD contract from July 2024 through March 2025.

A highlight of our commitment to the professional development of frontline staff was through our Family Development Credential (FDC) Program. During Spring 2024, 15 Credible Messengers completed the FDC Program and are eligible to earn college credit.

DYCD also provides specific support and training for CMS providers to onboard into DYCD Connect, DYCD's data system of record. Thus far in FY25, nine data system trainings were held specifically for CMS providers. Finally, model specific support is provided by the nationally recognized Cure Violence Global.

This brings us to the development and launch of DYCD's data reporting system in DYCD Connect, our agency-wide data system. As we onboarded the programs into our agency, we assessed not only their scopes, but also their data collection needs. The result was the need to further clarify metrics through contractual scopes and to develop a system that protected participant confidentiality and safety while still ensuring that we can assess the program's activities and measure its reach in the community. The metrics we collect are aligned with the CV model and include measurement of the three main components of the model:

1. Violence interruption through de-escalations, long-term mediations, and shooting responses. During the first three quarters of FY25, Cure Violence programs have conducted 5,217 mediations, 6,458 de-escalations, and 189 shooting responses.
2. Participant connections to services through caseload and contact tracking and referrals. During the first three quarters of FY25, CV programs averaged a case load of 1,363 participants over the course of a month and had total of 43,271 in-person contacts with participants and 31,418 virtual contacts with 4,987 referrals to services including job training, education, and counseling.
3. Community engagement through community events and broader community member interaction. DYCD currently collects metrics aligned to these and is working to provide further quality assurance to ensure they fully represent the work on the ground.

DYCD also tracks demographics of participants and staffing levels at programs. Moving into FY26, CMS wraparounds will also report data using DYCD Connect, each with its own customized buildout based on the goals and structure of the program. DYCD is also committed to continuing to improve data collection and clarity of the metrics it collected. To this end, the agency has launched a data workgroup that is a collaboration with CMS providers, DOHMH, and DYCD to collectively recommend standard language for key metrics and ensure understanding among the entire network.

DYCD remains committed to continuous quality improvement across all aspects of the programming and has also partnered with National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and John Jay Research and Evaluation (JJREC) evaluation teams to conduct a long-term study of the program's implementation on the ground. This evaluation launched in FY25 and has three aims:

1. Review Current Services, Data Utilization, and Quality
2. Conduct a Process Assessment of the CV Model
3. Assess the ONS Transition to DYCD

This is being implemented through a review of program data, site visits to CMS provider sites, and interviews or focus groups with CMS providers. This study will be the foundation



for further long-term outcome and impact assessment, as well as a tool for DYCD to further improve programming in future program models and RFPs. As I've mentioned, the foundation of any solid outcome assessment is an implementation assessment and DYCD is committed to doing the work to ensure that foundation is solid.

DYCD also has built-in feedback loops with providers on an ongoing basis through full network provider meetings, a Steering Committee of key provider leadership, and close contact between initiative managers at DYCD and providers on the ground. This allows for ongoing adjustments and the ability of DYCD to be responsive to emerging needs and concerns.

As mentioned earlier in my testimony, since assuming responsibility for ONS in 2023, DYCD transferred all contracts from MOCJ, effective July 1, 2024, and took over both the contracting and payment processes with the CMS providers. In FY25, CMS providers transitioned from subcontractors to direct contracts with DYCD, allowing for greater transparency, support and accountability. DYCD provides the CMS network access to one-on-one budgeting and invoicing support, which will continue to be available next year. All CMS contracts are registered and active heading into FY26 and per the Administration's recent commitments on additional advances, providers will receive an advance of 50% of their registered FY26 budget. Additionally, providers have been trained and we continue to actively engage them to ensure budgets and invoices are submitted and approved in a timely manner.

In terms of Intro 992, we support the intent of the bill but have concerns such as disclosing why a contract was not renewed. We look forward to negotiations with the Council post hearing.

We appreciate the Council's strong support of DYCD and the CMS provider network. Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify today. We are pleased to answer your questions.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH
JUNE 17, 2025**

Good afternoon,

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

Today, the Council is holding an oversight hearing about the Crisis Management System under DYCD, so I would like to take a moment to discuss youth crime, an increasingly popular topic of coverage in the media. Fearmongering about youth crime has existed for decades, with perhaps the most well-known example—the idea of the teenage “superpredator”—contributing to a travesty of justice in our city with the wrongful conviction and incarceration of five teenage boys for assault and rape in Central Park, one of whom is now a member of this body.

Today, headlines about rising youth crime blame Raise the Age, the 2018 law that raised the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 years old. Arrests of people under the age of 18 have increased since 2022, and Mayor Adams, the NYPD, and publications like The New York Times are quick to point to Raise the Age, positing that gangs are enticing young teenagers to commit crimes because the penalties are not as harsh. However, the data paints a more complex and nuanced picture. Research has found that arrest trends among people under age 18 generally mirror the scale and direction of trends among adults age 18 and older.¹ Further, after the implementation of Raise the Age, juvenile arrests for major crimes decreased—a 4.4 percent decrease between 2017, the last full year unaffected by Raise the Age, and 2023.² Though fluctuating, juvenile arrests for major crimes have not surpassed 2017 numbers.

This is not to say that any young person committing a violent crime or wielding a gun is not cause for deep concern, but we must also be truthful about what the data shows, and not cherry-pick statistics to try to repeal a law passed to protect young people. Increases in youth arrests are generally proportional to increases in arrests across other age groups: in 2024, youth arrests for robbery accounted for the same proportion as those involving 18-24 year-olds (22 percent). However, the two proportions had also been similar in prior years (e.g., 2011 to 2019).³ The bottom line is that, if recent changes in crime were due to the implementation of Raise the Age, age-specific patterns would be observable in the data. Blaming Raise the Age ignores other, newer motivators of youth crime, like viral trends such as the TikTok “Kia

¹ <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2025/01/31/databit202501/>

² <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/the-truth-about-youth-crime-rates-in-nyc>

³ <https://johnjayrec.nyc/2025/01/31/databit202501/>



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Challenge,” which shows kids how to steal cars and may have something to do with the 78.7 percent rise in juvenile arrests for auto theft in 2023 compared to 2017.⁴

The Crisis Management System (CMS) recognizes that youth crime is something that can be disrupted and prevented through non-carceral, non-punitive means. I’d like to quote DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard: “By the time a young person picks up a gun, the system has failed them.” CMS, which deploys teams of credible messengers who mediate conflicts on the street and connect high-risk individuals to services that can reduce the long-term risk of violence,⁵ is an inter-agency collaboration between DYCD, the Department of Probation, NYC Public Schools, and Health + Hospitals. In 2023, Mayor Adams announced that the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) would shift to DYCD from MOCJ in order to integrate community violence intervention programming into the existing programs it runs.⁶ From 2010 to 2019, there was an average 40 percent reduction in shootings across all CMS program areas, compared to a 31 percent decline in shootings in the 17 highest-violence precincts.⁷

Though CMS could be a groundbreaking response to violence in theory, in practice, there are numerous shortcomings. In a report published by Comptroller Brad Lander’s office in March, an analysis found that CMS reduced shootings by 21 percent, or an average of 7.4 shootings, in precincts with Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs, contributing to a 9.8 percent citywide reduction from 2012 to 2024.⁸ However, these programs are limited by data gaps and inconsistent leadership, as well as long and growing payment delays to program providers. Vendor payment data from DYCD’s ONS revealed approximately 1,400 payment requests from 112 contracts totaling \$192 million between fiscal years 2016 and 2025. This is consistent with contracts across a range of city agencies and programs, delays that have driven providers to take out personal lines of credit or to even close their organizations entirely. The Comptroller’s report makes the following recommendations to improve CMS:⁹

- Improve the city’s management and coordination of CMS, by creating strengthened oversight with a dedicated team to improve the city’s management and coordination of CMS, standardizing data collection and reporting, and providing technical assistance and capacity-building for CVI organizations.

⁴ <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/the-truth-about-youth-crime-rates-in-nyc>

⁵ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/peacenyc/interventions/crisis-management.page>

⁶

<https://mediate.com/news/mayor-adams-to-fund-crisis-management-system-at-record-level-of-86-million-next-fiscal-year/>

⁷ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/peacenyc/interventions/crisis-management.page>

⁸

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/press-releases/nycs-crisis-management-system-interventions-reduced-gun-violence-by-21-comptroller-landers-report-finds/>

⁹ *Id.*



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- Launch a CVI dashboard, with real-time access to shooting data, crime trends, public health data, socioeconomic data, and available community resources.
 - Deploy a data-driven community engagement strategy through monthly “NeighborhoodStat” meetings, creating a structured forum for collaboration between violence interrupters, community organizations, NYPD precinct commanders, and local residents.
 - Creating a structured forum for collaboration between violence interrupters, community organizations, NYPD precinct commanders, and local residents through regular studies of CVI programs, and establishing a rapid-response improvement mechanism with insights from the real-time data dashboard, monthly coordination meetings, and a reimagined NeighborhoodStat.
 - Close payment delays by adopting a formal 90-day reimbursement timeframe policy for city contractors, including CVI providers, to prevent delays in critical funding.

In addition, there are three pieces of legislation being heard today which I have signed on to as a co-sponsor. The first is Intro 1259, sponsored by Councilmember Lee, which would require that all direct service staff employed at youth detention facilities who are not professionally certified or licensed in mental health, behavioral analysis, medicine, or a similar field, complete foundational training in behavioral support strategies, such as de-escalation and crisis prevention. This will better equip staff members in youth detention facilities to resolve conflict and de-escalate emotional crises without resorting to force.

Intro 992, sponsored by Councilmember Narcisse, would require the Mayor’s Office for Neighborhood Safety and the Prevention of Gun Violence to publish and maintain on its website information about the service provider organizations contracted with the office to serve each neighborhood under CMS, and to make publicly available on its website the criteria used to determine the geographic area a service provider is contracted to serve, including an explanation of how such service provider is specifically equipped to serve such area. This will better inform the communities served by CMS about programs and services available to them.

Lastly, Intro 1077, sponsored by Councilmember Joseph, would require the Administration for Children’s Services to provide luggage to youth entering the foster care system, transitioning between foster homes, or exiting the foster care system. Too often, youth in foster care have to carry their belongings in trash bags or other makeshift forms of luggage. This is not only impractical, but undignified. Trash bags are for trash, not for the young people under the care of the city.

Thank you.



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TESTIMONY

Oversight – Evaluating Crisis Management System Under DYCD;

Hearing on Proposed Ints. 0992-2024, 1077-2024, 1245-2025, 1246-2025, and 1259-2025

New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth
Althea V. Stevens, Chair

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Introduction

The Legal Aid Society (“LAS”) welcomes this opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth regarding the crisis management system under DYCD as well the following proposed legislation: Intros. 0992-2024, 1077-2024, 1245-2025, 1246-2025, and 1259-2025. In general, we support these proposals with a few recommended amendments, as well as issues to consider. We thank Althea Stevens, Chair of the Committee on Children and Youth, for offering the opportunity to highlight some of these critical issues.

The Legal Aid Society

The Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Courts in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children’s rights and welfare, typically representing more than 25,000 children each year. The Legal Aid Society represents the majority of children and youth placed in foster care through New York City’s Family Courts. The Legal Aid Society’s Criminal Defense Practice (“CDP”) represents individuals in New York City’s criminal courts. CDP aids in juvenile justice advocacy through its Adolescent Intervention and Diversion Unit (AID), which provides representation for adolescents, age 13-18, who are prosecuted in the adult criminal courts. The Legal Aid Society has dedicated teams of lawyers, social workers, paralegals and investigators devoted to serving the unique needs of children and youth removed from their homes and placed in the custody of the Administration of Children’s Services (ACS), whether due to family regulation system intervention or as a result of juvenile delinquency or adult criminal involvement. Our perspective comes from daily contact with children and their families, and from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and City and State agencies.

In addition to its individual representation, The Legal Aid Society also seeks to create broader, more powerful systemic change through its law reform representation. These efforts have benefited some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have had a state-wide and national impact. Our experiences engaging in courtroom and other advocacy on behalf of our clients as well as through coalition building with other stakeholders informs our testimony.

New York City Council Must Pass Legislation to Improve Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care

As the American Academy of Pediatrics has recognized, the separation that occurs when a child is removed from their family and enters foster care “can cause irreparable harm [], disrupting a child’s brain architecture and affecting his or her short- and long-term health.”¹ Indeed, nearly 80% of children in foster care battle mental health issues, compared to just 18-22% of children in

¹ Colleen Kraft, MD, AAP Statement Opposing Separation of Children and Parents at the Border (May 8, 2018), available at <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF14/20180719/108572/HHRG-115-IF14-20180719-SD004.pdf>.

the general population.² Therefore, it is imperative that child welfare agencies do everything in their power to lessen the trauma experienced when a child must enter, move through, and leave foster care.

I. Youth Deserve the Dignity of Transporting their Items with Luggage (Int. 1077)

Current law should already be interpreted to require the provision of luggage to children in foster care. Child welfare agencies as well as contracted provider agencies are federally mandated to facilitate “activities *or items*” that support normalcy for children in foster care by applying the “reasonable and prudent parent standard” (emphasis added).³ In compliance with federal law, New York State adopted that standard, providing that “[i]t is the intent of the legislature to promote a safe and nurturing environment for children in foster care that, *among other things*, allows them to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities with their peers” (emphasis added).⁴ In keeping with these requirements, the provision of luggage would certainly qualify as a special payment eligible for State reimbursement as directed by 18 NYCRR § 427.3.

Yet, countless foster youth report being forced to transport their belongings in trash bags. **Trash bags.** Such a practice is so morally reprehensible, especially given that it is blatantly symbolic of the “thrown away” feeling so many youth experience when going into and moving throughout foster care.

For example, former foster youth, Regina Rivera, reported that many of her belongings were packed in trash bags and, in the process, got misplaced, including some of her sentimental items. Regina was fortunate to finally land with a supportive foster parent who bought her a luggage set – an act that should be viewed as the bare minimum, but is, in fact, an all too rare an experience for children in foster care. Of getting her suitcase, Regina says, “It made me feel like an adult. . . Made me feel seen, like not just another bag, baggage basically, another toss away. You’re you, you’re human.”

Another former foster youth, Bryton Gomez, wishes that his agency had given him a big duffle bag and suitcases. Instead, he was forced to pack his belongings in trash bags when moving from placement to placement, as well as when he moved out on his own into an apartment. Of the experience, Bryton says, “It was a big transition, and I wish they treated me a little more with respect and gave me duffle bags instead of garbage bags.”

In recognition of the pervasive nature of this problem the NYS Legislature has passed S3781/A5434, which, if signed by the Governor, would explicitly require all local social services districts to provide youth throughout the foster care continuum with luggage. However as this bill has not yet been signed into law, Int. 1077 would ensure compliance at the City level. In addition, Int. 1077 reporting provisions would be useful for overseeing compliance. While LAS supports Int. 1077 in principle, we also recommend an amendment to make clear that ACS must report when

² *Mental Health and Foster Care*, Nat’l Conference of State Leg. (Nov. 1, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.ncsl.org/human-services/mental-health-and-foster-care>.

³ The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, P.L. 113-183 at § 111, September 29, 2014, 128 Stat 1919; *see also*, 41 U.S.C.A. §§ 675(10)(A), (11)(A).

⁴ Soc. Serv. Law § 383-a(1).

children and youth are provided disposable bags in addition to luggage, so as to ensure that the true count of youth being required to use disposable bags in any capacity is not obscured.

II. *Youth Affected by the Family Regulation System Would Benefit from Detailed Metrics and Sustainable Programming (Int. 1245 & 1246)*

Perhaps the most critical challenge facing older youth in foster care is the transition to adulthood. Young adults who have experienced foster care face myriad economic difficulties, at significantly higher rates than the rest of the population. Unlike some of their peers, young people leaving foster care often have no parental support or safety net as they navigate getting a job, finding housing, pursuing higher education, and managing their health. Not surprisingly, outcomes for these youth have been heartbreakingly poor.

Nationally, after leaving the foster care system, studies report that approximately one third of former foster youth experienced homelessness or other housing instability.⁵ Such instability is in large part because of their inability to pay rent, poor credit scores, or the absence of a supportive co-signer for lease agreements.⁶ Similarly, a 2015 study in New York City reported that over 20% of foster youth who exited care in their late teens ended up in a homeless shelter within a few years and more than half experienced incarceration at least once.⁷ In 2023, of the 400+ youth who aged out of NYC foster care at 21, 31% were unable to find housing and, as a result, had to remain in care, while only about one-third secured housing through vouchers or public housing and another third moved in with family.⁸ Even those who do find apartments often report feeling unsafe in substandard units.⁹

Furthermore, in 2011, the Center for Urban Future published one of the first comprehensive reports detailing the dismal employment outcomes for youth aging out of foster care in New York City, citing the shortcomings of ACS and foster care agencies in addressing the lack of preparedness among a population that has already experienced great educational and foster home instability throughout their young lives.¹⁰ At the time, it was estimated that no more than half of

⁵ Curry, S., & Abrams, L. (2015). Housing and social support for youth aging out of foster care: State of the research literature and directions for future inquiry. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 32(2), 143-153.

doi:10.1007/s10560-014-0346-4; Gypen, L., Vanderfaeillie, J., De Maeyer, S., Belenger, L., & Van Holen, F. (2017). Outcomes of children who grew up in foster care: Systematic-review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 76, 74-83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.02.035>.

⁶Stott, T. (2013). Transitioning youth: Policies and outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(2), 218-227. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.10.019>

⁷Cheyenne Deopersaud, It's Time to Put Real Support into Supportive Housing for Foster Youth, *Next 100* (June 7, 2024), <https://thenext100.org/its-time-to-put-real-support-into-supportive-housing-for-foster-youth/> (citing Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, *Report of the New York City Youth Homelessness Taskforce*, available at https://youthtoday.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/09/Report-of-NYC-Youth-Homelessness-Taskforce_January-20191.pdf).

⁸Karen Yi, Young People Are Stuck Longer in Foster Care Because They Can't Find Housing, Report Says, *Gothamist* (June 10, 2024), <https://gothamist.com/news/young-people-are-stuck-longer-in-foster-care-because-they-cant-find-housing-report-says>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰See, *Fostering Careers*, Center for an Urban Future (2011), available at https://nycfuture.org/pdf/Fostering_Careers.pdf.

the young people who left foster care in the years prior to the study had jobs at any given time.¹¹ Contributing factors identified as impeding former foster youths' preparedness for the workforce included: inadequate funding for programs designed to remediate educational delays and equip youth with the skills necessary to work, a lack of coordination between systems, inadequate data analysis, workforce development systems designed to reward the cherry-picking of youth with higher numeracy and literacy levels, and foster youth being forced to compete on a level playing field that should be tilted in their favor.¹²

Unfortunately, the outcomes for youth aging out of foster care have not greatly improved since 2011. In 2024, ACS conducted a survey of foster youth and 58% of youth were interested in working, but a whopping 76% of youth did not have a job or paid internship.¹³ This is in stark contrast to the general population of youth: that same year, the average unemployment rate of young persons age 16 to 24 was 13.2%.¹⁴ The survey by ACS further underscored the glaring racial disparity among youth aging out of foster care: 74% of those surveyed identified as other than white,¹⁵ although non-white persons only represent 48.6% of the general population of New York City.¹⁶

Int. 1245 would amend the City's administrative code to improve data collection about youth in foster care, with a critical focus on those discharged to Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (APPLA) — youth who age out of care without reunification, adoption, or guardianship. While disaggregating data by age, race, and gender is standard practice, the new value this bill offers is its emphasis on older youth who leave foster care to live independently. Collecting these indicators and publicly reporting them each year will shine a light on gaps in services and outcomes that have persisted in the shadows. To date, ACS's reporting has not fully captured these unmet needs.

In short, Int. 1245 will bring needed visibility to the transition from foster care to adulthood. By mandating data on outcomes like housing, education, and adult connections, disaggregated by age, there will be greater transparency regarding how our older youth are faring and offer the opportunity to target services to address their needs. For instance, if the data show that a large percentage of youth aging out are not securing stable housing or employment, that data will aid in efforts to increase access to housing vouchers. The bill's requirement to report supportive housing placements by Council district is also important because it will help identify whether housing resources for foster youth are equitably distributed or if some communities lack sufficient options for young people. With better data, the City can measure progress year to year and push for

¹¹ *See, Id.*, at 3.

¹² *See*, at 33-35.

¹³ NYC Administration for Children's Services, *Youth Experience Survey 2024*, at 5, available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2024/YES2024.pdf>.

¹⁴ Office of the New York State Comptroller, *New York City's Uneven Recovery: Youth Labor Force Update* at 2, available at <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/pdf/report-5-2026.pdf>.

¹⁵ NYC Administration for Children's Services, *Youth Experience Survey 2024*, at 12, available at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/2024/YES2024.pdf>.

¹⁶ United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts: New York City, New York, available at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newyorkcitynewyork/PST045224> (to be consistent with ACS's demographic tracking, this percentage does not include Hispanic/Latino ethnicity reporting).

improvements. Furthermore, this level of detail will enable smarter, targeted policymaking to improve outcomes for foster youth.

We lend our support to this proposed legislation and we applaud CM Adams and the City Council for recognizing that collecting and analyzing this information is a necessary foundation for reform.

Int. 1246 would also squarely address the poor outcomes for foster youth by requiring ACS to provide youth with a comprehensive program that would support them in foster care through adolescence and into young adulthood. If enacted, ACS would be required to provide long-term coaching, academic support, career development guidance, mental health resources, and housing assistance to youth in care and those aging out. In essence, Int. 1246 would permanently embed the largely successful Fair Futures model in our foster care system. This model pairs each young person with a dedicated coach and a team that ideally stays with them from middle school or high school *all the way through age 26*. The coach is designed to serve as a consistent mentor and advisor, helping the youth set goals and navigate the transition to adulthood, including through the provision of academic support, career development, connection to mental health resources, and providing housing assistance. The coach can also serve as a crucial adult connection for a young person.

This array of supports is precisely what our clients need as they move toward independence. Int. 1246 will require that *every* foster youth from early adolescence through their mid-20s be provided access to a mentor and a strong support network. No young person should have to navigate finding an apartment, enrolling in college, or managing health care alone at age 21 simply because they were in foster care. Fair Futures helps to provide a needed safety net.

The Fair Futures model is not just a theory—it is already up and running in New York City, funded through previous Council initiatives. The program has been implemented across all 26 foster care agencies and currently serves nearly 4,000 young people ages 11 to 26.¹⁷ According to Fair Futures reporting, in 2024, 87% of those who received Fair Futures coaching were coached for 90 days or more.¹⁸

As lawyers for many of these youth, we have seen the difference that having a coach and support team can often make. By codifying this program citywide, Int. 1246 guarantees that these benefits are available to all eligible foster youth who need them, now and in the years to come. It also protects the program from the vicissitudes of the budget process, by establishing one that treats foster youth *not just as children to be housed temporarily, but as young people with potential who deserve guidance into adulthood*. This will greatly improve long-term outcomes, increasing the chances that former foster youth will succeed in higher education, maintain stable employment and housing, and break the cycle of instability that has plagued too many youth who have left care.

¹⁷ The Center for Fair Futures, <https://www.fairfuturesny.org> (last visited June 12, 2025).

¹⁸ The Center for Fair Futures, *Overview & Impact Report* (Fall 2024), available at <https://resources.fairfuturesny.org/2024impactreport>.

While we applaud CM Adams for introducing such legislation and urge its passage, we also urge New York City Council to ensure that such a program is properly funded so that Fair Futures may increase wages for its coaches, thereby reducing turnover and promoting retention.

Importantly, it must be made clear that Fair Futures, and any such similar program, may supplement but must not serve as a substitute for ACS and foster care agency obligations. For example, LAS staff have reported that understaffed foster care agencies frequently rely on Fair Futures coaches to assist youth with completion of housing applications, despite ACS's own policy that each agency must employ housing specialists to assist youth with such tasks.¹⁹ Given that agency housing specialists receive more comprehensive training on housing assistance, relying on Fair Futures coaches can result in housing application errors and failure to apply for appropriate public benefits.

Additionally, we urge City Council to expand this legislation to include youth in "direct placements" – that is placement with kinship caregivers outside of the foster care system. Far too often, kinship caregivers are denied foster parent certification based on decades old and/or irrelevant criminal or ACS history, but children are nonetheless placed with those kin without the services and supports afforded by foster care because that is what is in their best interests. Such families struggle to obtain the financial means and the resources to provide the higher level of care that the children in their care require. Therefore, it is imperative that these youth also have the opportunity to benefit from programs like Fair Futures to help improve their outcomes, as well.

Furthermore, the Fair Futures program has already recognized the need for these very services to be made available to youth ensnared in the juvenile legal system. Indeed, the needs of these youth are typically the same, if not greater, than the needs of youth in the foster care system. Therefore, we also urge City Council to expand this legislation to include inclusion of not only all youth involved in the juvenile legal system, but those being prosecuted as adults in the criminal legal system.

Accordingly, we offer our collaboration to CM Adams in order to work together on strengthening the bill to give youth impacted by the family regulation system a greater chance at success.

City Council Must Pass Legislation to Ensure that Any Crisis Management System and Juvenile Delinquency Training Adequately Meet the Needs of Youth

III. *Int. 0992*

Our Community Justice Unit works very closely with Crisis Management Sites/Cure Violence sites and we are excited to work together with the bill sponsor, CM Narcisse, on legislation that provides community members clarity on provider catchment areas while also

¹⁹ Administration for Children's Services, Procedure # 2011 (August 31, 2011), available at https://jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/ACS%20Housing%20Procedures%20for%20APPLA%20Youth.pdf.

collecting data in a way that ensures providers can continue to support community needs. We need more time to work with our CMS partners and CM Narcisse to ensure that Intro. 992 meets this goal, but we are confident that we can work together to achieve it.

The Crisis Management System (“CMS”) sites and our collaborative work with them has been a key solution in driving down gun violence in our City.²⁰ Each site represents a safe space in the neighborhood where community members can meet; receive training on a variety of topics including mediation, conflict resolution, and legal trainings. These community spaces encourage civic engagement by preparing community members to speak at local government meetings, as well as providing an opportunity for members to avail themselves of wrap-around services. Such services may include: after school programming; tutoring and literacy classes; job readiness programs including resume building, job fairs, interviewing workshops, and OSHA training; financial empowerment; mental health resources; and legal representation. The Community Justice Unit offers a number of essential legal services to New Yorkers across our City.

In the past year, our Community Justice Unit has continued to work in partnership with CMS sites across the City. We’ve taken on more than 1,940 cases as part of our work with Cure Violence partners, including: helping individuals obtain their rap sheets and seal their criminal records; offering legal advice and assisting New Yorkers with housing, employment, and family law issues; and running a 24/7 hotline for legal emergencies. We encourage this Council to continue to support this life-saving and community empowering Cure Violence model with full fiscal support in the FY 26 budget for both our Community Justice Unit and our partners, the CMS/Cure Violence Sites across our City. We look forward to continuing working together to accomplish this goal.

IV. *Int. 1259*

Children held in youth jails are some of the most vulnerable children in our city. A state audit²¹ released earlier this year found that the city’s two juvenile detention centers are plagued with chronic absenteeism, a massive spike in contraband, inadequate oversight of school attendance, and a failure to properly report thousands of serious incidents of violence and abuse. These facilities cannot even provide proper sleeping facilities to children in their care. ACS has been using a “temporary” exception to a standing regulation about where children sleep since October of 2023, allowing them to place children on the floors of classrooms for almost 2 years.²² Even before they experience the trauma caused by being jailed, many of these same children live

²⁰ See, Melissa Nuñez, et. Al, Cure Violence Programs in NYC, available at <https://council.nyc.gov/data/cure/>.

²¹ See, *Oversight of Horizons and Crossroads Juvenile Centers*, by State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli (April 10, 2025), available at <https://www.osc.ny.gov/state-agencies/audits/2025/04/10/oversight-horizon-and-crossroads-juvenile-centers>

²² See, Nia Clark, *Some children in city juvenile detention centers sleeping in classrooms*, Spectrum News NY 1, (Nov. 7, 2023), available at <https://ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/public-safety/2023/11/08/some-children-in-city-juvenile-detention-centers-sleeping-in-classrooms>

lives riddled by the growing pains of adolescence compounded by surviving in communities filled with hardship, poverty, police oversurveillance, and a lack of educational and community investments.

We at the Legal Aid Society sincerely thank this Council, especially sponsor CM Lee, for putting forth Int. 1259, and for recognizing the importance of providing trauma-informed, culturally competent responses and support for our jailed children. Currently, when struggling with the pressures of growing and maturing in jail, our vulnerable youth are too often met with anger and aggression instead of care. While we encourage this Council to find ways to decarcerate the City's youth jails and end the reliance on caging rather than nurturing our City's children; we so appreciate the protection and support that Int. 1259 will provide to the children currently detained. We believe, if this legislation is strengthened by language creating structure for implementation and oversight, Int. 1259 can be extremely impactful for our jailed children. We offer our collaboration to CM Lee in order to work together on strengthening the bill to protect our children, their futures, and our communities at large.

Conclusion

The Legal Aid Society urges the City Council to incorporate our recommendations and pass Int. 1077, Int. 1245, Int. 1246, and Int. 1259. We look forward to working with our CMS partners and CM Narcisse on Int. 992. And we appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony, welcome any questions, and look forward to working collaboratively with the City Council to continue to address these important issues.

At the Table

Testimony of Michael Zink
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For the New York City Council
Committee on Children and Youth
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

Submitted June 20th, 2025

At the Table thanks Chair Stevens and members of the Committee on Children and Youth for the opportunity to submit written testimony related to Int. No. 1246 - a bill codifying into law the Fair Futures program, an initiative of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to support youth aging out of the foster care system.

Founded in Fall 2020, At the Table is a non-profit that connects 150 students with lived experience of foster care to long-term 1:1 college tutoring, advising, resource navigation support, and emergency funding. We also provide training and consultation to foster care agency staff throughout New York City, including as the higher education technical assistance partner for the Center for Fair Futures.

Any student who has been in New York City's foster care system can join At the Table if they are in college or planning to attend within the next year - we do not exclude anyone based on grades, academic standing, or how old they were when they left foster care. While studies from Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago estimate that just 8-12% of college-enrolled students with lived experience of foster care go on to earn 2 or 4-year college degrees, 47% of the students who enrolled with At the Table between Fall 2020 and Spring 2022 have already completed their degrees, and we expect that over 60% ultimately will. These results are a testament to the immense importance of connecting young people who have been in foster care to the community of support that *all of us* need and deserve.

We strongly encourage the City Council to codify into law the City's obligation to provide long-term housing, academic, mental health, coaching, and career development support to young people in foster care. We are particularly grateful that the proposed bill extends

these services until age 26. On behalf of At the Table, I offer the following suggested amendments:

1. Community oversight of the Fair Futures program should not be conducted by ACS, but rather, through a separate institution such as the NYC Public Advocate's office.

As currently written, Int. No. 1246 tasks ACS with consulting “with current and former youth in foster care, through a forum directly concerned with the welfare of youth,” both in establishing the envisioned program and quarterly moving forward. Youth voice and community oversight are critical to the success of any initiative that seeks to support the long-term goals of people who have experienced foster care, and we believe it is vital that this forum be convened in a space where young people feel as free as possible to express themselves.

ACS and the more than twenty foster care agencies with which it contracts to provide foster care services have immense power over the lives of young people in New York City's foster system. Even today, many young people in foster care in NYC face the possibility of their agency placing them in a lockdown facility, prescribing medication against their will, discharging them from foster care without a place to live, reassigning them from a trusted staff person, or shuffling them between homes and schools. This power dynamic creates meaningful barriers to honest feedback.

At the Table's students have reported to us, and we have observed, a wide range of both positive and negative experiences with NYC's foster care agencies, which themselves vary considerably in size, values, staff capacity, and service array. When youth experiences are negative, they consistently report to us that they feel profoundly *unheard* by their agency about the experience. Jahna Butler, writing for the Imprint News's Youth Voices Rising series in December 2024, said that “the worst part” of her experience in NYC foster care was the “feeling of helplessness” she had when trying to advocate for herself: “I felt like my voice didn't matter, that no one would listen or care. And in many ways, I was right. The system that was supposed to protect me seemed indifferent to the suffering I endured.”¹

Young people who have crucial information about where programs are going wrong, but who do not trust ACS or their agency to receive that information, often opt-out of (or are not selected in the first place for) youth advisory boards and other advocacy opportunities conducted inside the auspices of the system. We recommend that City Council specify in the proposed bill that the youth forum be organized by an institution separate from and not reliant upon ACS, and able to intentionally recruit from a diversity of perspectives. The

¹ <https://imprintnews.org/youth-voice/the-foster-care-systems-suppression-of-my-oppression/255674>

New York City Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) has been an important accountability partner for ACS in the past, and we believe it could be so in the future.

2. Alternative resources must be provided for young people who do not wish to receive support from a foster care agency.

Int. No. 1246 stipulates that “ACS shall partner with foster care agencies to establish a program for youth in foster care and youth who have exited the foster care system.” We would ask the City Council to include, at minimum, youth advocates and community-based organizations as potential partners for ACS in developing the program, in addition to foster care agencies.

Because of the mixed experiences that young people have had within New York City’s foster care system, not all feel comfortable receiving mental health, housing, education, or other services from their former (or in some cases current) agency. Young people who have had negative experiences of foster care often have the greatest need for services, and are at risk of falling through the cracks of a system designed to only offer services via NYC’s system of contract foster care agencies. For other students, having an alternative to working with their former foster care agency would support their sense of autonomy, mark their progress into adulthood, and allow them to explore new identities not present in their foster care case file.

We must create programming opportunities for these students that respect their wishes by allowing them to seek support from trusted providers operating outside the auspices of foster care.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this written testimony. For any questions, please reach out to me at: mike@atthetable.org

TESTIMONY OF:

Jacqueline Gosdigian, Supervising Policy Counsel

BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

Presented before the New York City Council

Committee on Children and Youth

Oversight Hearing- Evaluating the Crisis Management System Under DYCD

June 17, 2025

My name is Jacqueline Gosdigian and I am a senior supervising policy attorney at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). BDS is a public defense office whose mission is to provide outstanding representation and advocacy free of cost to people facing loss of freedom, family separation and other serious legal harms by the government. We are grateful to the Committee Children and Youth, and Chair Althea Stevens, for inviting us to testify about the crisis management system.

For nearly 30 years, BDS has worked, in and out of court, to protect and uphold the rights of individuals and to change laws and systems that perpetuate injustice and inequality. BDS represents approximately 23,000 people each year who are accused of a crime, facing the removal of their children, or challenging deportation. Our Adolescent Representation Team works to eliminate contact and involvement within the criminal legal system for court-involved young people. Our specialized attorneys, social workers, and youth advocates provide legal representation, advocacy, and social services in youth proceedings in Brooklyn's criminal court, Supreme Court and family court, collaborating across BDS' practices to provide comprehensive support to the youth we represent in court as well as support and guidance to their families as they help their children navigate these complex and frightening legal systems.

Black and Brown Youth Are Disproportionately Impacted by New York's Juvenile Legal and Family Policing Systems

BDS commends this Council for recognizing the importance of community investment and crisis management as part of the solution to prevent and reduce violence. The Crisis Management System (CMS) serves to prevent violence through the use of trusted, credible messengers. We

have witnessed the power of credible messengers—who are trusted, community leaders—to build rapport, meet young people where they are, and de-escalate conflict. When it works best, the young people who interface with CMS credible messengers or violence interrupters do not need our services, because they are able to avoid contact with the NYPD and the legal system.

Too often, in low-income communities of color, young people and their families seeking assistance or navigating conflict find that NYPD or ACS are the only resources. Involvement by these state surveillance agencies is harmful and traumatizing. Young people do not get the support they need and Black and Latine young people face disproportionately harsh outcomes. In New York, Black children make up 40% of the children in the foster system yet make up only 15% of the children in the state.¹ Black children also fare far worse in the foster system and have much longer stays in placements.² The trauma and instability of family separation caused by the family policing system puts youth at a greater risk for criminal legal system involvement. In the criminal legal system, the same racially disparate outcomes continue. Black and brown youth are more likely than their white peers to be charged with a crime, face pretrial detention, be tried as adults, and face harsher sentences.

The City Must Invest in More Violence Interrupter Programs, Community Resources, and Post-Arrest Programming, Not Surveillance

For too long, New York City has relied on policing, surveillance, and separation for public safety. Instead of strengthening communities or addressing root causes of conflict or violence, this system has created a revolving door of arrest and incarceration, further destabilizing communities. Investments in education, housing, and employment are critical components to a holistic public safety plan. In order to meaningfully address violence, the city must continue to invest in evidence-informed strategies and programming to reduce violence.

In 2012, the city launched a Cure Violence initiative, but prevention and intervention efforts that could be effectively implemented to curtail gang violence are underutilized and underfunded. While certain programs that are used may reinforce marginalization through partnerships with the NYPD, others have proven to be successful in strengthening community-based safety and security. At its most effective, the strategy leverages the experiences of young men of color, many of whom are former gang members, to act as “credible messengers” of an anti-violence message and “violence interrupters” to prevent and reduce gun and gang violence. Community-based organizations working under the Cure Violence model employ “violence interrupters” and outreach workers from the community who have themselves experienced violence and also have

¹<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/reports/maps/counties/New%20York%20State.pdf>, page 7.

²<https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07816.pdf>, page 4.

strong relationships with young adults, community leaders, and service providers.³ Violence interrupters work to stop conflicts before they happen, and outreach workers redirect the highest-risk youth away from the criminal system. Crisis Management Service providers are critical partners in the city's effort to increase public safety and we urge the Council to invest in expanding these programs. Currently, the catchment areas for CMS are narrow. We recognize that one of the strengths of these programs is that providers are known, trusted members of the community, however many of the young people we serve live outside of these zones and therefore do not benefit from the services. Bringing additional leaders and neighborhoods into the CMS system would help prevent violence and system involvement. Criminal legal system involvement results in lifelong, collateral consequences and we urge the city to invest in services and programming that contribute to safety without channeling young people into courts and jails.

NYPD's Surveillance of Youth is Harmful and Counterproductive

New York City's reliance on policing to address quality of life issues has extended into a technological dragnet. The current system surveils entire communities and neighborhoods with no impact on reducing violence and creating safety. The NYPD's "criminal group database," or gang database, is an extension of this failed approach, one that has not worked and will not work better simply because it has been digitized. True safety does not come from criminalizing young people or stockpiling data on their lives—it comes from investing in their well-being. We must radically shift our priorities away from surveillance-driven policing and towards sustainable solutions that strengthen community ties, provide real opportunities, and give young people resources, hope, and dignity.

The NYPD has already spent over \$3 billion in funding for surveillance technology in just over a decade, yet this investment has failed to prevent violence or promote safety. Instead of criminalizing young people through flawed databases, the city should redirect more resources towards Cure Violence and credible messenger initiatives, which have successfully reduced violence without criminalization. The city must also expand access to after-school programs, job training, mental health support, and conflict mediation to provide real alternatives to gang involvement. Additionally, post-arrest diversion programs must be prioritized so that young people are not funneled into the criminal legal system but instead receive effective alternatives to incarceration that provide support, not surveillance.

Programs such as the Youth Justice Network, Exalt, and Community Justice Innovation are effective and trusted programs that are becoming less accessible due to divestment in community-based programs. Esperanza, a long trusted alternative to incarceration programs for young people, closed its doors due to funding cuts. Impacted communities need the support of programs that work within the community not supervising it. Community members in crisis need

³<https://bds.org/latest/bds-testifies-before-the-nyc-council-on-nypds-gang-takedown-efforts>

to have their voices lifted up, and those who have found success need to be able to return to their communities if they want to, by providing jobs with living wages and support for smaller community organizations.

It is time for this city to acknowledge the roots of community violence and how poverty and lack of access to employment, education and adequate health care exacerbate these issues, and stop rebranding and putting forth failed policies. To create public safety and help youth build strong futures without the lifelong impact of criminalization, we respectfully offer the following suggestions:

1. Eliminate NYPD's Gang Database

Brooklyn Defender Services strongly urges the City Council to pass Int. 798 to permanently abolish the NYPD's Gang Database. Since its creation, this database has been a tool of mass surveillance and racialized policing that disproportionately targets Black and Latine youth, criminalizes association rather than conduct, and operates without transparency, accountability, or due process. It has failed to enhance public safety and instead facilitates unconstitutional policing practices that harm the very communities the NYPD claims to protect.

The harms of the gang database are not theoretical—they are borne by real young people whose lives are shaped by relentless police surveillance and harassment. The transition from widespread stop-and-frisk to expansive data policing has not reduced racial disparities; it has only made them more insidious. Our clients experience persistent police scrutiny, unjustified stops, and coercive interrogations simply because they live in over-policed communities. The gang database also causes Black and Latine immigrants to be more susceptible to immigration detention and deportation based on little more than where they live and who they are friends with; this risk of separation from their families and communities is particularly acute after the recent designation of certain gangs as terrorist organizations.⁴ Moreover, young people who are seeking asylum after fleeing violence from gangs in their home countries are often themselves erroneously labeled as gang members.⁵ Through the gang database, the NYPD has taken the worst elements of racial profiling and rebranded them as intelligence gathering. This is not a move toward justice but a deepening of surveillance-based policing that treats Black and Latine youth as suspects before they even have a chance to grow up.

2. Stop Surveilling Communications Between Incarcerated New Yorkers and their Families

BDS strongly urges the council to pass Int. 963, the End Correctional Community Surveillance

⁴ [Terrorist Designations of International Cartels - United States Department of State, https://www.state.gov/terrorist-designations-of-international-cartels/.](https://www.state.gov/terrorist-designations-of-international-cartels/)

⁵ See Jonathan Blitzer, "How Gang Victims Are Labeled As Gang Suspects," The New Yorker, January 23, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-gang-victims-are-labelled-as-gang-suspects>.

Act. Under the guise of a simple phone system, the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) and its jail telecom vendor, Securus, constructed a vast, high-tech spying network that primarily targets Black and brown New Yorkers. Without court oversight or a warrant, DOC records every call and collects biometric, financial, and other personal information from all participants, including the roughly 20,000 people admitted to NYC jails each year, as well as their family and friends.

Securus conducts network analyses on this data and packages it to sell to other law enforcement agencies, meaning that the personal data of impacted New Yorkers can circulate forever. Under Securus' surveillance apparatus, being denied or unable to afford bail means that a detained New Yorker, and their entire community, has fewer rights, less privacy, and diminished dignity.

In particular, this surveillance on both incarcerated youth, and youth in the community calling incarcerated family members, has resulted in increased contact with law enforcement and has added these young people to criminal group databases ("Gang database") and other databases within NYPD's Domain Awareness System.

3. Expand Exits from the Criminal Legal System with Pre and Post-Arrest Supports for Young People

While the Crisis Management System and the Cure Violence Model are a critical part of ending violence in this city, the city must also focus on what happens if someone actually gets arrested. We cannot assume that because the city is increasing the number of credible messengers and enhancing CMS, that this reaches every member of the community. The fact is, that even with CMS, arrests are still happening, and what happens to these New Yorkers, often young people, has been overlooked to an extent. There has been a lot of discussion in New York City about different approaches to preventing violence, but there continues to be a lack of programming and alternatives to incarceration for young people who are arrested and face criminal charges.

BDS is fortunate to have great relationships with several ATI programs that provide many of our adolescent clients with holistic services. For our clients facing charges of alleged gun possession, however, harsh mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines make resolving a young person's criminal case with an ATI largely dependent on the consent of the district attorney's office. There is really no clear criteria used to determine eligibility for ATI programming and the process for acceptance is almost unilaterally controlled by the DA. Once a young person is fortunate enough to be found eligible, that person usually faces prison time and a permanent felony record if they are unsuccessful in the program. More funding is needed for new, evidence-informed programming and alternatives to incarceration for New Yorkers that have been arrested. But, these alternatives will not be successful without buy-in from District Attorneys.

Successful preventive programs and alternatives to detention and incarceration should provide resources that level the playing field and give young people a fighting chance. Whether it is the

internet to access educational opportunities or therapy, or safe places to participate in free and accessible prosocial activities, young people should be able to live and thrive as adolescents whose brain development is on-going and should have access to programming which acknowledges this. One of the greatest differences between well resources and marginalized communities is the ability to make mistakes without life long consequences. For low-income youth, and youth of color, making a mistake may mean being monitored by ACS, its agencies or the police. Too often, mistakes made in school lead to police involvement rather than allowing the school to handle these issues.

4. Continue to speak out in support of New York’s successful Raise the Age Law

Raise the Age is responsible for a consistent decrease in youth crime since its implementation in 2018. In New York City alone, since 2013, there has been a 48% decrease in adolescent arrests for serious offenses. Evidence from implementation across the State clearly shows how the law has improved community safety and youth well-being. Additionally, in New York City, a lower percentage of cases were removed from Supreme Court to family court in 2022 than in 2019-2021.⁶

The current law has built in methods to address different types of cases and circumstances. Though cases are presumptively removable to family court, in certain serious circumstances, supreme court may choose to maintain jurisdiction over a young person whether through an initial hearing or an extraordinary circumstances motion. It is important to understand that family court is not a get out of jail free card. The juvenile legal system was created to rehabilitate youth who have committed illegal acts and ensure community safety. While sentences are shorter, services are more robust and created specifically with the needs and brain development of an adolescent in mind. There is simply no correlation between rehabilitation and lengthy prison stays. In fact, incarceration and placement in juvenile detention facilities is more likely to lead to more legal system involvement and more serious crime in the future.⁷

The family court model, and the work that New York has done to treat young people as the adolescents they are is incredibly important work. Holding young people accountable while recognizing that children are not smaller adults is crucial for more positive outcomes and greater public safety. Looking at behavior that actually needs to be addressed by the court system rather

⁶NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services, https://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/crimnet/ojsa/juv_off/index.htm; https://www.google.com/url?q=https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.criminaljustice.ny.gov%252Fcrimnet%252Fojasa%252Fjuv_off%252F2022%252Ffiles%252FAODispsNYC.xlsx%26wdOrigin%3DBROWSELINK&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1702571003275022&usg=AOvVaw2NOrSUN40dQhXdX_ChX_79

⁷Richard Mendel, Why youth incarceration fails: And updated review of the evidence, The Sentencing Project, (2022), Available at <https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2023/03/Why-Youth-Incarceration-Fails.pdf>.

than community system is crucial. Keeping families together while providing individualized help that families are asking for, is the only way to truly keep communities safe.

Additionally we must truly invest in programming to support these reforms. For example, the Youth Parts in supreme court are severely lacking the resources needed to effectively divert youth from incarceration. Judges are willing to resolve cases with Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI), but the programming is limited in each borough, and there are significant gaps, as probation has disinvested in important diversion programming. And while ATI and ATD programming is cut and reduced, ACS plans to invest \$340 million in secure detention. Adding new beds does not address many of the conditions-related challenges that exist in secure detention – much of which are rooted in staff recruitment, training, ratios, and retention. In fact, it is unclear how ACS plans to effectively staff additional beds when the agency has been unable to safely and effectively staff their existing facilities.

Furthermore, despite making up half of the state’s youth legal system population, New York City is currently excluded from accessing Raise the Age funding because the city exceeds the tax cap prescribed by state law. However, it is possible to access this funding by submitting a waiver of hardship, indicating that our city and our programs need the resources that are available through the Raise the Age law. New York City accounts for half of the state’s youth legal system population and should be able to access more funding. It is critical to invest in programs and organizations that are serving our communities through youth development, violence-prevention services, and other alternatives to incarceration to prevent the necessity of further investment in the carceral system. We therefore urge the council to pressure the Mayor and the administration to submit a letter with the waiver of hardship to allow New York City to be considered for the funding.

5. Call on your colleagues in the NYS Legislature to Expand Access to Programming for Emerging Adults

We must also look at how emerging adults are being treated within the criminal legal system. We now know that while an 18 year old may be a legal adult, their brain is not fully developed until their mid twenties.⁸ Even if a young person at age 16 or 17 has access to programming and services in family court as a result of New York’s Raise the Age law, once they turn 19 they are subjected to harsh mandatory minimum sentencing if they become involved in the criminal legal system. And the science shows us that emerging adults, like younger adolescents, are remarkably

⁸National Institute of Mental Health, *The Teen Brain: 7 Things to Know*; <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know#:~:text=The%20brain%20finishes%20developing%20and,prioritizing%2C%20and%20making%20good%20decisions.>

malleable and still developing impulse control and the ability to anticipate consequences of choices. Brain development during this period means that individuals have significant capacity to make positive changes, but are also especially vulnerable to trauma.

The criminal legal system needs to work in tandem with the juvenile system and streamline services for system-involved adolescents and emerging adults alike. Young people in the communities we serve are particularly vulnerable to police interaction, especially when they are still continuing to grow and mature into their mid twenties and grappling with peer pressure and decision-making skills. Nationally and in New York, young people aged 18 to 25 make up only 10% of the population, but over 20% of all arrests. Nearly three quarters of those arrests in New York are of youth of color. A recent Sentencing Project report found that across the country, Black youth are five times more likely to be incarcerated than their white peers.⁹

Because this disproportionality is so stark among emerging adults, reforms focused on this group are especially urgent. We ask the council to support and pass a resolution urging the enactment of the Youth Justice and Opportunities Act (YJ&O) (Myrie 4330/Walker A5293). The Youth Justice & Opportunities Act would expand opportunities for programs and other alternatives to incarceration and immediate record sealing for young people up to age 25. By passing YJ&O, New York has the chance to lead the nation by protecting the futures of young people up to age 25, enhancing community well-being, and providing emerging adults the opportunity to move forward in their lives without the barrier of a criminal conviction. The Act would also reduce State and local spending on youth incarceration—money that should be invested in communities to alleviate poverty and homelessness, ensure quality education, and fund other needed resources. In turn, this bill would help stabilize communities, promote community health, and increase public safety for all.

Conclusion

Thank you to this Committee for holding this important hearing today and your commitment to violence prevention through community investment. We urge the city to invest in real prevention by investing in young people and their families, schools, and communities and to expand access to programming for court involved youth.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to contact Jackie Gosdigian, Senior Supervising Policy Counsel, at jgosdigian@bds.org.

⁹Joshua Rovner, Racial Disparities in Youth Incarceration Persist, February 2021. Available online at: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/racial-disparities-in-youth-incarceration-persist/>



Center for
Family Life
in Sunset Park

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair

May 19, 2025

Thank you to Chair Stevens and the City Council for your support for children and youth across New York City. My name is Jhodessa Reimer and I am a Division Director for school-based programs at Center for Family Life in Sunset Park and I would especially like to thank you for recognizing the *true* cost of afterschool and for including increased rates for COMPASS programming in the City Council Budget Response.

I am here to urge the city to take immediate action and increase the cost-per-youth rates for FY26. Providers cannot wait until FY27 to receive adequate funding. While we are eagerly anticipating the release of the concept paper for the new COMPASS elementary contract beginning in FY27, this does not address the current funding crisis. For FY26, providers are still being funded at less than half the true cost of running safe, enriching, and high-quality programs.

With the announcement of a new COMPASS elementary contract for FY27, I am also calling on the city to issue a new COMPASS SONYC contract. Our city's middle school students deserve a model tailored to their unique stage of development, not one based on the needs of elementary school aged children, as the current SONYC model stands. DYCD should bring providers who have been successfully serving middle school students for decades, and there are many of us, to the table to give our input in the redesign of the SONYC model.

Additionally, it is imperative that DYCD create a new funding opportunity to replace COMPASS Explore, which was ended in June 2024 and has yet to be replaced. High school students are as deserving of access to enriching opportunities as any other student in our city. Today, you will from two high school students from Sunset Park High School will speak to the transformative experience they had as participants in Center for Family Life's COMPASS Explore program – we are asking the city not to forget about high school students next year and beyond.

I also want to highlight a Sunset Park school community in urgent need. Of the 5,000 new elementary afterschool seats that will be added for school year 2025-2026, we respectfully request that PS 516, a Title I school be allocated just 200 seats. This school has been tirelessly advocating for a DYCD-funded afterschool program since 2013. With the



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termination of the AmeriCorps program and the uncertain future of the 21st Century Learning Communities program, PS 516 is at risk of losing its only public funding sources for afterschool and leaving close to 200 families without the support they are counting on.

Finally, we are grateful that DYCD has announced 50% advances, and we urge DYCD to ensure these advances include Summer Rising. These contracts begin at the start of the fiscal year, right as providers are stretching to expand our programs to meet the demands for enrollment and funds are needed immediately, so we can put our focus fully on best serving children.

Thank you again for your continued leadership and for championing the children of New York City.



**Center for
Family Life
in Sunset Park**

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair
May 19, 2025

Thank you to Chair Stevens and the City Council for your support for children and youth across New York City. We are so grateful City Council's Budget Response called for fully funding afterschool programs. My name is Jirazel Munoz, I am a Licensed Social Worker and COMPASS director at Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn at PS 971. I began at CFL when I was in high school as a Counselor-in-Training, eleven years ago. Prior to my promotion to Program Director last fall, I had served as a Youth Worker, Group Leader, Activity Specialist, Outreach Coordinator, and Program Coordinator at five of our eleven school sites. As my professional trajectory at CFL demonstrates, I am wholly committed to the children and families of the Sunset Park community and, as such, I am calling for the city to fully fund year-round afterschool in Fiscal Year 26, not Fiscal Year 27 when the new COMPASS contract goes into effect.

By funding COMPASS programs at the rates DYCD has laid out through FY26, programs are at risk of closing. Having spent the last decade working at five different schools across the Sunset Park neighborhood, I can assure you that families depend on these free programs for economic stability. In Sunset Park, not only does COMPASS support our hard-working, immigrant families for afterschool five days per week over the course of the entire school year, but families have access to an additional two and a half weeks of childcare ten hours per day for the 13 school closure days and holidays that COMPASS programs operate. In fact, principals often use free afterschool and vacation programming as a selling point to prospective families on their kindergarten tours.

With federal funding, from Americorps to 21st Century Learning Communities, being suddenly terminated or under threat of termination, providers across the city, like CFL, who have used those funding sources to plug the gaps that the inadequate COMPASS funding leaves, will not be able to staff their programs or meet the contractual mandates. The COMPASS program model requires that all children receive a prescribed number of hours per week in structured activity categories such as STEM, literacy and physical fitness. However, without Americorps to supplement the insufficient COMPASS rates, CFL, and many providers like us, will be prohibited from hiring qualified education specialists (a



**Center for
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role *required* by COMPASS) or the caliber of activity specialists who can provide rigorous, high-quality instruction and teach the activities that COMPASS requires and evaluates us on. In fact, the current rate just barely allows us to meet the required 1:10 staff to participant ratio with high school and college aged staff paid less than \$20 per hour.

This is not the moment for New York City to underinvest in its children. I am calling on DYCD to fund the true cost of running year-round COMPASS programs now, not a year or two from now, and to follow through on issuing a concept paper and RFP for a new contract. Thank you.



**Center for
Family Life
in Sunset Park**

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair
March 20, 2025

Thank you to Chair Stevens and the City Council for your support for children and youth across New York City. My name is Joselyn Salazar, and I am currently a senior at Sunset Park High School. In my 9th and 10th grade years, I was a participant of the COMPASS Explore program with Center for Family Life at my school. I am calling on the city to invest in afterschool and to create a funding opportunity to replace the former COMPASS Explore contract, that DYCD ended in June 2024, with no replacement.

COMPASS Explore allowed Center for Family Life to provide leadership development opportunities each year for 75 students. This program helped us build real skills for the future while supporting our social and emotional well-being throughout high school. COMPASS Explore was open to all students, regardless of their documentation status or academic standing, and welcomed students from other schools, serving the wider Sunset Park community.

During my time in COMPASS Explore, I discovered a love of dance and the performing arts that was truly nurtured by CFL staff. I grew as a performer and as a leader and have built up my confidence alongside friends and peers who support each other at every step. Over the course of the last few years, I have performed in several shows for thousands of audience members, and incorporated my own ideas into those shows with the encouragement of the staff and peers I met in this program.

This year, our show was about “belonging”; we decided to highlight the importance of finding environments and communities where you feel accepted, supported, and like you can really be yourself. I am happy to share that I truly feel like I “belong” in afterschool, and I feel passionate about protecting the right for other students to find that same sense of belonging in places that care about them as much as CFL cares about us.

By ending this funding with no replacement, it has become incredibly challenging for organizations like CFL to continue to offer quality programs to ALL students. I urge the city to fully invest in afterschool, so future generations can experience the same transformative impact that COMPASS Explore has had on me and other students at Sunset Park High School.

Thank you.



Center for
Family Life
in Sunset Park

Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth
Hon. Althea Stevens, Chair
March 20, 2025

I thank Chair Stevens and the City Council for your support towards children and youth across New York City. My name is Jaeyoung Ha, and I am currently a senior at Sunset Park High School, where I joined the Center for Family Life afterschool program for the first time this year. I am calling on the city to invest in afterschool for high school students: a population that deserves quality programs at this crucial point in their lives.

During my freshman to junior year of high school, I was shy and hesitant to even step foot in the cafeteria after the school day ended. When my senior year came, I realized that time was limited for me, and I wanted to make my last year count. After meeting one of the CFL staff during a school day in my advisory, I decided to join Theatre Troupe, and I never looked back!

As an actor, filmmaker, animator, writer, and full-time student (who was also applying to college), I have plenty of hobbies that I *could* do independently in my free time. As a senior in high school, the temptation to go enjoy my lovely time at home is always there. But being in an afterschool environment pushes me to pursue those same interests, while forming connections with my peers and getting the support of staff who are knowledgeable and dedicated to helping students like me achieve our goals.

Past 3pm is the time when students really identify who they are and what they want to do in the future. Without the dedicated time and support I was given to explore these interests, I may not have the confidence to pursue them as a career. I am proud to share that in the Fall I plan to attend Brooklyn College for Filmmaking and Theater, and I am appreciative of the CFL staff who have invested in me during this journey.

I urge the city to not forget about high school students when making decisions about afterschool funding. High school isn't the end, it's the beginning. Students like me not only deserve quality programs, we need them (even if we don't realize it until senior year)!

Thank you.



Testimony of Julia L. Davis
Director of Youth Justice & Child Welfare, Children's Defense Fund-New York &
YouthNPower: Transforming Care Collective

June 20, 2025

For New York City Council's Committee on Children & Youth

Dear Chair Stevens and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony concerning new legislation that impacts young people who experience New York City's foster system.

Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is the only national, multi-issue advocacy organization working at the intersection of child well-being and racial justice by wielding the moral authority of programmatic proximity and community organizing to inform public policy. CDF serves and advocates for the largest, most diverse generation in America: the 74 million children and youth under the age of 18 and 30 million young adults under the age of 25, with particular attention to those living in poverty and communities of color. We partner with policymakers, aligned organizations, and funders to serve children, youth, and young adults. As the New York State office of the Children's Defense Fund, we focus our statewide movement-building and policy work on economic mobility, health equity, child welfare and youth justice. For more information about CDF-NY visit: www.cdfny.org.

YouthNPower: Transforming Care is an intergenerational collective of young people with lived experience in the child welfare system, university researchers, policy advocates, legal experts, and community organizers. Our team brings together a range of expertise—rooted in both lived experience and long-standing professional practice—to work collaboratively toward structural change in how we support youth and families in New York. For more information about YouthNPower: Transforming Care visit: www.youthnpower.org.

On behalf of Children's Defense Fund-New York and YouthNPower, I offer the following suggestions regarding the legislation:

Int. No. 1246 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing a program to support youth aging out of the foster care system

Our research documents the extreme precarity that young adults aging-out of foster care in New York City experience, we know:¹

- 69% report that they are financially unstable, 70% have no savings;
- 60% report at least one negative, dangerous or coercive housing experience since leaving foster care;
- 51% report that they could not afford food in the last month;
- 33% report that they could not afford utility bills in the last month; and
- 32% reported that they had been stopped and questioned by police in the last year.

They manage this intense instability with resources that they gather around themselves, but almost a third (30%) report a clinically significant degree of emotional stress, and two-thirds (66%) report that “the difficulties [of their lives] were piling up so high that [they] could not overcome them.”²

We commend the Committee’s attention to young people with foster care experience in New York City, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate on building the community supports they need and want.

Based on our work, we know that many young people who want resources like mental health services, one-on-one coaching, help with employment, education and housing after foster care would rather not return to a foster care agency to get those services – especially young adults. Across New York City, young adults aged 18-26 already work with existing community based organizations to obtain these kinds of resources and many are much more comfortable working with those groups rather than returning to their foster care agencies. This is especially true for young adults who are parenting and have considerable concern about returning to the child welfare system for resources because of their fear of having their own children removed.

With these considerations in mind, we offer the following areas for amendment to Int. No. 1246:

- The bill language should be amended to permit other community-based organizations – *not just foster care agencies* – to provide the range of services codified in the legislation. This would create the opportunity for young people to obtain these services and resources through trusted organizations already providing programs like workforce

¹ YouthNPower: Transforming Care Collective (2024). [We Demand Action, Not Just Words: Findings From a Survey of Former Foster Youth in New York City](#).

² Ibid.

development and training, education support, housing, or parenting support that are outside of the child welfare system. This is particularly essential for young adults 18-26 and those who are no longer in foster care custody. (See § 21-926(b).)

- Youth should choose to participate – *not be automatically enrolled* -- in the voluntary services set forth in the bill. Young people from middle school (age 11) through their mid-twenties (26), the ages covered in the legislation, should be informed about these services but should not be assumed to have consented to participating simply because they were removed from their family and placed in foster care. Young people in foster care often feel coerced, controlled or like they do not have real choices over their lives while they are in custody. It is important to support and validate young people's decision-making by inviting them to participate instead of making it the default. (See § 21-926(c).)
- Youth leadership and lived expertise oversight for this program should be moved outside of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA). Rather than merely require ACS to consult with young people quarterly as part of the program, the legislation should create a more robust body for youth engagement and input. For young people who have survived family separation, removal and foster care to play a meaningful role in examining the program, the organizing body needs independence from the agency administering the program. This is even more essential for those who are currently in foster care custody and are subject to ACS legal control. Shifting the youth advisory body to be housed within the OPA would also provide avenues for deeper inquiry around the experiences and impacts of the program, opportunities to recommend ways to adjust and refine it, and pathways for accountability to young people the program seeks to serve. (See § 21-926(d).)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these suggestions. Improving the range of supports for all young people who have contact with the child welfare system in the City is a top priority for CDF-NY and YouthNPower. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this legislation with you in more detail, please contact me at jdavis@childrensdefense.org.



Testimony for New York City Council

Committee on Children and Youth

June 17, 2025

Submitted by: Michelle Avila, Director of Public Policy

On behalf of Children's Aid, I would like to thank Chair Stevens and members of the Children and Youth Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.

With a mission to help children living in poverty to succeed and thrive, Children's Aid provides comprehensive supports to children, youth, and their families in some of the most under-resourced neighborhoods in New York City. Since our founding in 1853, Children's Aid has been anchored in the knowledge that poverty cannot be overcome with a single service delivered at a single point in time. We are a solutions-driven, multi-service agency employing a holistic strategy that serves children and their families at every stage of development, from cradle through college and career; and in every key setting — home, school, and community.

Today our nearly 2,000 full and part-time staff members empower 50,000 children, youth, and their families through our citywide child welfare and family services and our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

As an organization dedicated to eradicating poverty in our neighborhoods, we are committed to advocating for, protecting, and increasing funding for the most under-resourced youth and families in New York City. Children's Aid is a proud member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, the New York City Coalition for Community Schools Excellence, the Human Services Council, the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA), and Fair Futures. Through these networks and alliances, we fully support their policy agendas.



As a NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) contracted foster care provider, Children's Aid supports families through a continuum of services. We provide preventive, family, therapeutic and medical foster care, and adoption services. In 2024, we served 921 youth in family-based foster homes and completed 52 adoptions and 32 kinship adoptions. We also served 2,784 families in our preventive services programs across Manhattan, Central Brooklyn, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

We deeply appreciate the Committee on Children and Youth's attention to the many challenges—both systemic and individual—that youth in foster care face. Through our direct service and advocacy, we are committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, has access to the nurturing care, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive.

We thank the entire Council for your partnership and shared commitment to improving outcomes for youth in care. Below, we respectfully offer our comments on the proposed legislation under consideration.

- **Int. No. 1077 – Provision of Luggage for Foster Youth**

We strongly support the intent of Int. No. 1077, which would require that all youth in foster care are provided with appropriate luggage for transporting their belongings during transitions between placements. This simple but essential measure affirms the dignity of young people during what are often some of the most difficult and disorienting moments in their lives.

At Children's Aid, we already prioritize this practice. In partnership with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), we either receive duffel bags directly from ACS or procure them to ensure every child and young person in our care receives a durable and respectful means of carrying their personal items. This is one of many concrete supports we consider fundamental to quality care.

However, across New York City and New York State, the distribution of luggage or duffel bags remains inconsistent across Local Social Service Districts and foster care



agencies, despite the state's adoption of the 'My Bag' initiative.¹ As a result of sustained advocacy by stakeholders across the child welfare system—including current and former foster youth—the State Legislature has passed a bill this session requiring the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to provide luggage to youth at the state's expense. The bill now awaits Governor Hochul's consideration. This legislation would mandate that local social service districts, including New York City, distribute luggage and that OCFS submit annual progress reports.² The estimated cost to fulfill this initiative statewide is approximately \$200,000 annually to serve the roughly 13,000 children currently in care.²

We were proud to advocate for this bill at the state level and strongly recommend that dedicated funding be provided to support its implementation. **We urge the New York City Council to join statewide advocacy efforts to guarantee full state funding for this essential initiative.** It is critical the cost of providing luggage is not passed on to foster care agencies, which already operate with limited resources and bear substantial responsibility in supporting youth and families. When funding is not adequately provided young people bear the weight of limited resources.

- **Int. No. 1245 – Expanded Data Collection and Reporting in Foster Care**

Children's Aid supports efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in the child welfare system, including expanded data collection and public reporting. We support the proposal to disaggregate data by age and Council District, which can provide important insights to guide informed policy and resource decisions.

However, we are deeply concerned about the burden additional reporting requirements may place on foster care agencies and their already overstretched staff. The child welfare workforce is experiencing unprecedented strain, driven by high caseloads, persistent vacancies, and wages that do not reflect the complexity and emotional weight of the work. Any new mandates must be carefully evaluated for their operational impact and must be accompanied by adequate support and resources.

¹ <https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/new-york-legislation-luggage-for-foster-youth/259235>

² <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S3781>



ACS and provider agencies already collect and submit a significant volume of data to the City Council. This includes detailed information on foster care placements, prevention services, education outcomes, juvenile justice involvement, and more. We respectfully urge the Council to continue collaborating directly with ACS to utilize existing data systems, rather than introducing new administrative requirements for providers that could unintentionally shift focus away from direct services for children and families. Youth with a foster care background interact with multiple systems beyond ACS that significantly influence life outcomes, including housing stability. **We strongly recommend cross-agency collaboration and formal data-sharing agreements to support comprehensive data analysis and a fuller understanding of outcomes that extend beyond ACS's direct purview.**

- **Int. No. 1246 – A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York in relation to establishing a program to support youth aging out of the foster care system.**

Children's Aid strongly supports the intent of Int. No. 1246, which would require the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to establish a comprehensive program aimed at improving outcomes for youth currently in, and those who have aged out of, the foster care system. The proposed program would offer long-term coaching, academic support, career development guidance, mental health resources, and housing assistance—all essential services to ensure youth with a foster care background can thrive.

At Children's Aid, we are proud to house the Fostering Youth Success Alliance (FYSA), a statewide coalition dedicated to advancing outcomes for youth in and transitioning out of foster care. FYSA champions responsive policies and programs that promote socioeconomic mobility, physical and mental wellness, housing stability, and educational achievement. Its flagship effort, the Foster Youth College Success Initiative (FYCSI), has, for over a decade, helped close the gap in college access and success for youth with a foster care background across New York State.

At the city level, in partnership with Graham Windham and Forestdale, Children's Aid receives funding through the Young Women's Initiative to implement Wrap-Around



Supports for Transitional-Aged Foster Youth. This initiative pairs young people with trusted adults and credible messengers who provide individualized, holistic coaching and emergency assistance, including housing, food, and workforce support. While each agency may take a unique approach, our shared mission is to serve the nearly 1,000 youth who transition out of foster care each year, equipping them with the tools and relationships they need to reach their full potential. These services are open to all young people with foster care experience in NYC, regardless of the agency from which they exited care. Notably, this program predates and is distinct from Fair Futures.

Children's Aid is also a founding member of Fair Futures, a coalition of over 100 human services organizations united in their commitment to youth in and aging out of foster care. From the beginning, we stood alongside youth advocates, child welfare agencies, nonprofits, and philanthropic partners to ensure the City adopted and scaled the Fair Futures model—a framework that offers one-on-one coaching and support for young people from 6th grade through age 26. Fair Futures addresses a wide spectrum of needs: academic achievement, social-emotional development, career readiness, housing stability, and life skills. The model is now implemented across all 26 foster care agencies in New York City and currently supports nearly 4,000 young people aged 11–26³. Developed over 18 months through collaboration with experts in child welfare, education, workforce, and youth development, Fair Futures is grounded in evidence-based and best-practice programs that have proven effective at scale over the past decade.

Thanks in part to sustained youth-led advocacy and the support of the City Council and Administration, Fair Futures has received increasing public investment: \$10 million in FY20, \$12 million in FY21, \$20 million in FY22, and \$30.7 million in FY23. In FY23, the Administration fully baselined Fair Futures funding and expanded eligibility to youth up to age 26—a significant milestone for this citywide initiative.

We commend the City for baselining Fair Futures and are encouraged by the Administration's proposed \$15 million investment in FY2026 to support its expansion,

³ <https://www.fairfuturesny.org/about/case-study>



along with related initiatives such as College Choice, Career Choice/Workforce Ready, Girls JustUs, and Assertive Community Engagement & Success.

In response to Int. No. 1246, **we strongly urge the City to build upon and expand successful existing models such as Wrap-Around Supports for Transition Age Youth and Fair Futures.** These programs provide critical, proven, and youth-informed frameworks for supporting youth with foster care experience transition into adulthood. We echo COFCCA's call to enhance community-based aftercare programs and to allocate additional funding for agencies to hire specialized staff—including coaches, mentors, and career development professionals—to provide expert guidance and consistent support.

Closing

We thank the Committee on Children and Youth for the opportunity to submit testimony. Children's Aid looks forward to continuing our partnership with the New York City Council, ACS, and stakeholders citywide to strengthen and expand the supports available to youth with foster care experience. If you have any questions about the testimony herein, please reach out to Michelle Avila at mavila@childrensaidnyc.org.

Testimony of Caitlyn Passaretti
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Submitted to The New York City Council Children and Youth Committee
June 17th, 2025

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Stevens and the Children and Youth Committee for hosting this hearing on legislation impacting foster youth and those aging out of care.

CCC strongly supports local law Int 1077-2024 to amend the administrative code to provide luggage for youth in foster care. For too long, youth have not been provided with resources to carry their belongings, forcing them to use garbage bags or other alternatives when they relocate. This is dehumanizing, traumatizing, and does not treat children and youth with the dignity they deserve. We support this legislation and urge the Council to devote funding to the organizations providing luggage.

CCC also supports the following bills:

- **Int 1246-2025:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing a program to support youth aging out of the foster care system

Youth who age out of the foster care system experience numerous challenges, including difficulties securing employment with living wages, sustainable housing, and resources to address their basic needs. While some resources for this population exist, they are often inadequate or difficult for youth to find and access. Establishing a program that would be solely focused on supporting this population could provide critical, consistent supports to young people aging out of care. Int 1246-2025 would require the program to include long term coaching, academic support, career development guidance, mental health resources, and housing assistance. These resources should be accompanied by funding to support greater access for youth.

- **Int 1259-2025** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring basic training in behavioral support strategies for certain staff at juvenile detention facilities

Adults working with youth in detention facilities must have basic training in behavioral support strategies to ensure that youth are being supported with age-appropriate responses and care. Such trainings include de-escalation and crisis prevention techniques, guidance on incorporating trauma-informed and culturally competent practices when addressing challenging behaviors, as well as basic principles for encouraging positive behaviors and learning.

Additionally, we support the following bills that increase oversight and data collection to improve the efficacy of the CMS system as well as information on youth in foster care.

- **T2025-3598:** Oversight - Evaluating the Crisis Management System Under DYCD.
- **Int 0992-2024:** A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to requiring the office for neighborhood safety and the prevention of gun violence to provide notice and report on the crisis management system.
- **Int 1245-2025:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to additional information collected and reported about foster care youth

We believe these bills will allow for more transparency and increase effectiveness of supporting communities in the prevention of gun violence and ensure resources are devoted to support foster youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies

Written Testimony Submitted By:

Dr. Sophine Charles

Associate Executive Director, Downstate

New York City Council Oversight Hearing

Committee on Children and Youth

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) serves as the primary representative for nearly all not-for-profit organizations that provide foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York State. COFCCA comprises over 100-member organizations, ranging in size from small community-based programs to the nation's largest multi-service agencies, all united by the mission of serving children and families. More than 50 of our member agencies collaborate with various city agencies to support children and their families, including contracts with the NYC Administration for Children's Services to deliver child welfare services across the five boroughs of New York City.

We would like to express our gratitude to this Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony. We greatly appreciate the Council's leadership and ongoing support for nonprofit human services organizations. Furthermore, we commend the Council's efforts to actively pursue the legislative and fiscal resources necessary to address the safety needs of children and youth in New York City.

Four of the proposed bills in this Council Hearing will have significant implications for program operations, staffing levels, and staff training and development. Staffing is the lifeblood of all foster care programs and directly affects the quality of services and the duration of children's stays in care. Without the ability to recruit and compensate staff at competitive market rates using government funds, agencies will face challenges in adapting to proposed changes in data collection and additional training requirements. Furthermore, most new mandates will impact the financial resources of the ed agencies.

In this testimony, we will outline the following points:

- COFCCA's position and perspectives regarding the Council's efforts to amend the administrative code of the City of New York through local laws, specifically concerning bills **Int. No. 1077, Int. No. 1245, Int. No. 1246, and Int. No. 1259.**
- A series of questions and concerns related to the proposed bills: **Int. No. 1077, Int. No. 1245, Int. No. 1246, and Int. No. 1259.**
- Several recommendations to enhance the capacity of nonprofit child welfare providers to comply with the amended provisions in the administrative code.

Proposed Bills

Int. No. 1077: A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York Regarding the Provision of Luggage for Youth in Foster Care.

COFCCA supports City Council Bill Int. No. 1077, which mandates that all youth in foster care have access to luggage for transporting personal items during transitions between placements. All stakeholders—including government funders, nonprofits, and child welfare professionals—are obligated to “do no harm” regarding the concrete and emotional needs of young people in foster care. Providing appropriate gear for transporting belongings is a humane act and is essential for foster youth to maintain a sense of dignity and self-worth. Everyone involved must act to support the dignified movement of children as they navigate the foster care system.

Existing Luggage Provisions

In 2021, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) implemented the “My Bag” initiative, which has provided thousands of bags to youth in foster care across the state.¹

¹ <https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/new-york-legislation-luggage-for-foster-youth/259235>

Foster care agencies in New York City have been working in the spirit of this initiative and have taken steps to provide luggage, suitcases, and duffle bags to all youth in their care. Furthermore, New York State legislators have passed a bill mandating that OCFS provide luggage to youth in foster care at state expense; this bill now awaits the consideration of Governor Hochul. This bill also requires social service districts to distribute luggage to youth (New York City would be included in this, should the state bill be signed into law) and for OCFS to submit annual reports on the progress of luggage distribution.² The required fiscal implications for state and local governments assessment, included in the bill, estimates an annual cost of approximately \$200,000 to purchase luggage for the approximately 13,000 children currently in foster care.³

Implementation

Adequate government funding must be provided to ensure that the bill is able to be implemented as envisioned. We encourage careful assessment of the required budgetary resources needed to implement the important vision behind the bill, and to ensure that this does not become an unfunded cost for the nonprofit child welfare agencies.

Recommendations

- COFCCA encourages the Council to ensure that child welfare contracts are adequately funded to support agencies' capacity to maintain a continuous supply of luggage.
- COFCCA strongly urges the Council to refrain from imposing an additional burdensome administrative reporting process, as it would be excessively time-consuming for an already overwhelmed and understaffed workforce.

Int. No. 1245: A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York Regarding the Collection of Additional Information and Reporting on Foster Care.

COFCCA supports Int. No. 1245, a bill that mandates the collection, reporting, and submission of data on youth in foster care, ensuring that the data is disaggregated by age. We also endorse the provision in the bill that requires the collection of information regarding the Council District for each supportive housing placement of foster youth. Gathering this data will serve as a crucial measure to inform all stakeholders about the supportive housing needs of youth in foster care, identify gaps in services, and provide a compelling rationale for allocating additional financial resources to support this population.

Existing Data Collection

It is important to note that ACS and Providers currently collect a substantial amount of data and comply with the City Council's data reporting requirements. The specific list of data that is collected and shared with the Council includes information about foster care, prevention services, and juvenile justice programs. This data encompasses the number of abuse and neglect cases, the number of children in foster care, education placements and outcomes, as well as juvenile justice admissions and detentions.⁴

² https://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A05434&term=&Summary=Y&Committee%26nbspVotes=Y&Memo=Y

³ Ibid

⁴ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/about/data-analysis.page>

Agency Concerns

Providers are concerned that the majority of data collection requirements will fall on the shoulders of contracted providers. Each time the Council implements new data reporting requirements, it creates a significant burden and constitutes another unfunded mandate for child welfare agencies and their staff. It is unlikely that the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) will have supportive housing information categorized by Council Districts; therefore, the responsibility for collecting this data may be shifted to foster care providers. In an already strained workforce environment, providers are grappling with understaffing and will find it challenging to comply with additional data collection mandates.

Question

1. What resources will be available to collect supportive housing data by Council Districts?

Recommendation

- COFCCA strongly urges the Council to refrain from imposing an additional burdensome administrative reporting process, as it would be excessively time-consuming for an already overwhelmed and understaffed workforce.

Int. No. 1246: A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York Regarding Establishing a Program to Support Youth Aging Out of the Foster Care System

COFCCA supports the advancement of **Int. No. 1246** and any legislation that establishes programs aimed at improving outcomes for youth in foster care and those preparing to leave foster placements. Youth programming that includes long-term coaching, educational support, career development, mentoring, access to mental health services, and housing assistance are essential for enhancing the prospects of young people involved in foster care. We commend the Mayor and the City Council for fully funding the Fair Futures program, which is currently implemented to serve youth in foster care and those transitioning out of care. Fair Futures enables approximately 4,000 youths in foster care, aged 11 to 26, to access coaching, academic support, career development, and independent living preparation.⁵ Additionally, ACS has implemented Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILPs) that are available to youth for 12 to 18 months.⁶

Enhancing Outcomes for Youth

This bill would require the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to establish a program aimed at improving outcomes for youth currently in foster care, as well as those who have exited the system. The program must include long-term coaching, academic support, career development guidance, mental health resources, and housing assistance. ACS has made progress through partnering with providers in implementing programs that support youth in all the areas outlined in the bill. As a recent opinion piece notes, the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and foster care providers have taken the lead in implementing innovative support systems that help youth in foster care thrive. As a result, a greater number of youths exiting foster care are now engaged in and graduating from college than ever before.⁷

⁵ <https://www.fairfuturesny.org/about/overview>

⁶ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/youth/silp.page>

⁷ <https://link.edgepiot.com/s/592ceb2c/yrs7ZPSQMUgOe06zQdsRg?u=https://www.amny.com/opinion/new-yorks-child-welfare-system-capable-hands-jess-dannhauser/>

Existing Support Programs

COFCCA members wholeheartedly support the establishment and implementation of programs that provide essential assistance to youth in foster care. We commend ACS for launching Fair Futures across its 26 foster care agencies and, more recently, for extending it to youth in juvenile justice programs. To further support these young individuals, ACS has introduced opportunities for them to enroll in short-term transitional housing. The Supervised Independent Living Programs (SILPs) serve as valuable housing resources that prepare youth for independent living outside of foster care. Fair Futures and SILPs are significant resources available to children in foster care.

Recommendations

- COFCCA requests clarification: Will Int. No. 1246 include funding for new programs or an expansion of existing supportive youth programs?
- COFCCA encourages the enhancement of existing community-based programs to serve as aftercare support for youth in foster care.
- COFCCA strongly urges the Council to allocate additional fiscal resources for agencies to hire specially trained staff, including coaches, mentors, and career development specialists, to provide professional guidance and support to youth.
- COFCCA encourages continued discussion as rollout of the SILPs progress, to assess the full need for youth to access this support.

Int. No. 1259: A Local Law to Amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York Regarding Basic training in behavioral support strategies is required for specific staff members at juvenile detention facilities

COFCCA supports City Council Bill **Int. No. 1259**, which mandates that staff at juvenile detention facilities receive training in de-escalation strategies. Staff members who interact with youth in these facilities must be thoroughly trained and fully equipped to ensure the safety and well-being of young people who may exhibit crisis behaviors that could pose a risk to themselves or others. The New York State Office of Children and Families mandates that designated staff working in congregate care and detention facilities complete a minimum of 15 hours of training, which includes de-escalation training.⁸ Additionally, staff are required to participate in a series of booster trainings every two years.

Juvenile Justice/Close to Home

Currently, voluntary agencies mandate and provide training for all staff working in Close to Home facilities. Staff frequently manage challenging and disruptive behaviors exhibited by the young people in their care.

⁸ https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/ocfs_2021/ADM/21-OCFS-ADM-05-Att-A-Behavior-Management.pdf

Additional Training Requirements

De-escalation training is an essential component in creating a safe and nurturing environment for young people in Close to Home programs. Providers emphasize the necessity of additional staff training that focuses on positive youth development strategies, such as fostering youth interests, promoting youth engagement, and facilitating a wider range of programming and activities for young people. They also aim to incorporate various learning and exposure opportunities that showcase the talents and interests of youth by offering diverse afterschool programs for younger individuals and vocational training for older youth. To achieve these goals, Close to Home providers seek to strengthen and enhance their relationships with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), the Department of Education (DOE), and NYC Public Schools, collaborating creatively to better serve our young people.

Provider Concerns

Workforce challenges continue to strain the Close to Home system as staff turnover remains high. Personnel vacancies often negatively impact staff attendance and participation in training. Providers are constantly striving to maintain care coverage while safeguarding staff development opportunities—an increasingly difficult task. Providers aim to streamline the hiring process, ensure vacancies are filled promptly, and alleviate the heavy workloads of current staff to prevent burnout and reduce the likelihood of mistakes on the job.

Questions

- Currently, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and other agencies require direct care staff to participate in mandatory annual training on de-escalation and crisis prevention techniques, as well as guidance on incorporating trauma-informed and culturally competent practices. What additional expectations exist beyond what is already provided?
- We wish to clarify which titles the de-escalation training requirement would apply to, as “direct care” may have a broad application; will the training requirement apply to staff whose job functions involve de-escalation?
- Frequently, mandated training slots fill up quickly. What external training platforms will be available and funded to ensure cross-system compliance?

Recommendations

- COFCCA urges the Council to examine the current inventory of training opportunities available to direct care staff in juvenile justice settings and identify funding resources to support ongoing staff development.
- COFCCA strongly urges the Council to create community-based training platforms to enhance the availability of training slots when the training capacity of OCFS and ACS is exceeded.
- COFCCA encourages the Council to ensure that government contracts allocate funding for in-service training capacity and staff development resources at the provider level.

In conclusion, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the proposed bills aimed at addressing the needs of youth in foster care. COFCCA welcomes the chance to engage with the Council in a discussion about our testimony. We are available to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding additional strategies to improve outcomes for those affected by foster care.

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NYC Council Committee on Children and Youth

Public Testimony

June 17, 2025

To The New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth:

Good morning. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today. On behalf of the Free to Be Youth Project of the Urban Justice Center, I would like to thank the New York City Council's Committee on Children & Youth for convening this important hearing. My name is Amy Leipziger and I am the Project Director of the Free to Be Youth Project.

Free to Be Youth Project

The Free to Be Youth Project (FYP) is a direct legal service provider dedicated to serving homeless and at-risk lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth. The Project is housed at the Urban Justice Center, a non-profit law collective serving New York City's most disenfranchised poverty populations. Since 1994, we have been providing legal services to LGBTQ+ youth and young adults who are low-income, living on the streets, and homeless shelters, in the juvenile justice system, or foster care. We regularly travel to the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) drop-in centers, including the Ali Forney Center, and Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project to offer direct legal services and know-your-rights workshops. We also conduct legal clinics at the LGBT Center, HMI, and the Pride Center of Staten Island. We have helped hundreds of LGBTQ+ youth with legal problems like applying for legal immigration status, fighting wrongful denials of disability benefits, changing their names, fighting terminations of their public assistance benefits, and overcoming barriers to obtaining safe and stable housing.

Leaving Foster Care

For the nearly 1,000 young people who age out of foster care each year in New York City, the support they receive is frequently inadequate to help them transition out of high school and into housing, jobs, and systems of support¹. In fact, city data from 2023 shows that 31% of those eligible to transition out of foster care remained simply because they couldn't find affordable

¹ https://www.them.us/story/the-ali-forney-center-soft-landing-place-for-nyc-homeless-lgbtq-youth?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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housing². A report released by the New York City mayor's office in 2019 found that between 2005 and 2019, fewer than 25% of New York City public school students who spent at least one week in foster care graduated after four years of high school³. Another study found that between 31% and 46% of the young people aging out of foster care had been homeless at least once by the time they turned 26. By comparison, for the general population, that number is just 4%⁴. We at FYP know from our experience, as well as from the data, that young people experiencing homelessness have higher rates of mental health disorders than their peers and a high risk of physical or sexual victimization. They face a tougher time gaining employment, have more physical health challenges, and are more likely to exit school early⁵.

In front of the committee are four bills that would lessen the hardship that young people aging out of the foster care system confront. Int 1077-2024, *Provision of luggage to foster care youth*, would replace the disposable trash bags usually provided by the city for children leaving foster care to carry their belongings, with luggage. Int 1245-2025, *Additional information collected and reported about foster care youth*, would help draw a sharper picture of supportive housing in the foster system, including critical data on the experiences of LGBTQ+ foster youth. Int 1246-2025, *Establishing a program to support youth aging out of the foster care system*, would set up vital systems of support for youth aging out of foster care: academic support to close the gap of education between those aging out of foster care and their peers, critically needed mental health resources, and housing assistance, among others. Int 1259-2025, *Requiring basic training in behavioral support strategies for certain staff at juvenile detention facilities*, would require training to make juvenile detention facilities – facilities that 50% of foster children will have encountered by age 17⁶ – staffed by employees who have learned de-escalation and how to prevent crises, are trauma-informed, and are culturally competent.

² https://gothamist.com/news/young-people-are-stuck-longer-in-foster-care-because-they-cant-find-housing-report-says?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ https://www.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/Education_Outcomes_May19_2022.pdf

⁴ <https://www.hraadvisors.com/new-report-charts-vision-to-end-new-york-citys-foster-care-to-homelessness-pipeline/>

⁵ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/better-data-on-homelessness-needed-as-young-adults-with-foster-care-experience-transition-to-adulthood>

⁶ <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Midwest-Study-Youth-Preparing-to-Leave-Care-Brief.pdf>



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FYP's mission means that we meet many immigrant and LGBTQ+ youth, those that are even more vulnerable to the problems that arise when they age out of foster care. LGBTQ+ youth, for example, already have a 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness⁷, have markedly worse mental health outcomes than their heterosexual and cisgender peers, and are more likely to be unemployed or to live in poverty⁸. Immigrant youth face increased risk of job and housing insecurity for several reasons: lack of documents, low or unstable incomes, discrimination by landlords, and language barriers, to name only a few⁹.

While we are fortunate to reach many young people to whom we provide our services, there are thousands more in this city that don't have access to essential resources. Our capacity is limited, as are the capacities of our partner organizations, and more support is needed. Without increased and adequate support services, immigrant and LGBTQ+ youth aging out of the foster system will encounter more hardship and struggle against higher odds.

We at FYP urge you to pass these four bills. We thank the members of this Committee and the community of youth advocates who have been working hard to address the needs of this community. The Free to Be Youth Project stands ready to assist the NYC Council Committee on Children and Youth in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

/s/ AL

Amy Leipziger, Esq.
Free to Be Youth Project

⁷ <https://nn4youth.org/learn/lgbtq-homeless-youth/>

⁸ <https://www.hrc.org/resources/understanding-poverty-in-the-lgbtq-community>

⁹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9211750/>

Testimony of Good Shepherd Services
Before the New York City Council Committee on Children and Youth

Submitted by
David Caba, Senior Vice President
Good Shepherd Services

June 17, 2025

Thank you, Chair Stevens and the Members of the Children and Youth Committee for the opportunity to testify on the oversight of the Crisis Management System (CMS) under the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

My name is David Caba. I am the Senior Vice President overseeing the Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence program at Good Shepherd Services, which is part of the New York City Crisis Management System that operates within the confines of the 46, 47 and 52nd Precincts in Council Members Pierina Sanchez and Kevin Reilly's districts.

Good Shepherd operates 94 programs that support over 33,000 children and families across the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. Guided by our values, Good Shepherd Services partners and grows with communities so that all NYC children, youth, and families succeed and thrive. We provide quality, effective services that deepen connections between family members, within schools, and among neighbors. We work closely with community leaders to advocate, both locally and nationally, on behalf of our participants to make New York City a better place to live and work.

I began my journey with Good Shepherd Services over ten years ago as the Program Manager for GSS's first Community Violence Intervention (CVI) program known as, the Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (BRAG). What started off as a pilot program of only four staff, has grown to be a multi-site program of over 70 staff. Since then, I have been dedicated to growing leaders within the CMS community which includes being a trainer for New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Training Academy, elevating the need for the City to value the lived experiences of the individuals doing this work on the ground and also, sharing best practices among the CMS network.

On March 10, 2025, Comptroller Brad Lander released a report entitled, [the Cure for Crisis: NYC's Crisis Management System](#). In the report, the Comptroller recommends ways in which the City can strengthen the Crisis Management System which include:

- Improve the City's management & coordination of CMS, including strengthened oversight
- Launch a real-time Community Violence Intervention (CVI) dashboard
- Deploy a Data-Driven Community Engagement Strategy through Monthly "NeighborhoodStat" Meetings
- Take a data-driven approach to expanding capacity and efficiency of CVI
- Close payment delays

Based on the Lander report recommendations, my testimony will focus on the collective priorities of the New York City's Crisis Management System.

Improve the City's management & coordination of CMS, including strengthened oversight

- Oversight of the CMS system is not all within one agency. For example, Works Plus, the workforce development component of CMS, is overseen by the New York City Department of Probation (DOP). As the Council is aware, DOP threaten to cut the program and our collective advocacy with Chairs Nurse and Stevens, DOP agreed to fund it for one more year. This volatility threatens the effectiveness of CMS.

Launch a real-time Community Violence Intervention (CVI) dashboard

- While all CMS providers are currently reporting to DYCD via DYCD Connect, our agencies have experienced oversight from three different agencies in the last 10 years including DOHMH, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) and now DYCD. With each shift, there have been changes in what providers are expected to report which makes it difficult for us to create a data set that shares the effectiveness of the CMS over time.
- Data collection varies for the interventions across the Crisis Management System which include hospital responder, therapeutic, school violence intervention and workforce development. There are also other strategic approaches that CMS leverages to reach youth across our neighborhoods. A database that captures the eco system surrounding the individual and its benefits is needed.
- Additionally, while we can share data for the Community Violence Intervention work, that alone does not provide the full picture of the holistic work that CMS is doing in communities across NYC.

We are asking the City and the Council to invest funding to:

- Conduct an evaluation of the NYC Crisis Management System as evidence-based approach that supports creating a uniform way for CMS sites to captures effectiveness across the various components of CMS.
- Ensure the current database can interact with existing community based organizations data collection methods to allow for batch uploads of monthly reporting metrics. **Many CMS programs have data that spans for over a decade and with each shift, we have been asked to capture less or different metrics which make it difficult to capture the fullness of the CMS work.**
- Increase DYCD's capacity to provide technical assistance to CMS sites.
- Hire data analyst within CMS sites to support the internal capacity of CMS sites to capture and analyze data.

Close payment delays

- Regarding late payments, we received full payment for Fiscal Year 2024 from BlocPower Public Benefit Corporation on June 9th, 2025. Fiscal Year 2025 invoices have either been disbursed or approved for payment by DYCD. I want to note the volume of unpaid invoices for long periods of time from City agencies is creating cash flow issues for all sized agencies.

In addition to the recommendations proposed by the Comptroller, the collective has the following recommendations:

- Activate a joint taskforce that includes the Mayor, Council and the CMS providers to revisit what is needed to strengthen CMS including to explore expansion and funding levels that support the various components of CMS and to ensure the release of a fully funded RFP that includes a scoring system that ranks providers who are doing the work currently. The taskforce can also explore the creation of a NYC based training academy to support the CMS workforce since training is currently being conducted by Cure Violence Global in Chicago. Lastly, the taskforce can examine the viability of a 24/7 week operation for the CVI sites which are currently only operating 8 hours/5 days a week.
- The current contracts are set to expire on June 30th, 2026. We are asking that the City ensure that we have baseline funding to support CMS that accounts for real cost of living both for staff and agencies (as all costs including rent have increased since many of these contracts were first issued).
- Revisit the salary ranges for staff, ensure we are compensating for lived experience and hazard pay given the risk staff are taking and compensation that considers the true cost of living in New York City.
- Increase funding for the various components of the CMS i.e. therapeutics is \$50,000 which is not enough to hire a social worker or clinical staff.
- Revisit the work scope and funding for the Youth Enrichment Services (Y.E.S.) which reduced the number of schools serviced and changed the staff responsibilities which is not align to the previous model.
- Restore \$1.5 million in funding to the Community Justice Unit which is operated by the Legal Aid Society which is detrimentally impacting their ability to continue providing legal services to CMS. CMS needs robust legal supports that includes designated people focused on the cases of youth we refer.
- Provide funding for funeral assistance and survival support services.
- Ensure that City agencies are mobilized as part of the Shooting Responses to provide the community with resources.
- Increase funding to have more than one Mobile Trauma Unit per borough and to establish uniformity and robust therapeutic services and programming for the Peace Mobiles.

I want to thank the Council for hosting this hearing and for your partnership in advancing and elevating CMS in NYC.

Testimony Before the New York City Council Youth Services Committee for the June 17th, 2025 Hearing

Submitted by Andre T. Mitchell-Mann Founder, Man Up! Inc.; Co-Architect, NYC Crisis Management System; Co-Chair, Mayor's Gun Violence Prevention Task Force; Gun Violence Prevention Czar, City of New York

Good afternoon, Honorable Chairperson and esteemed members of the Youth Services Committee:

My name is Andre T. Mitchell-Mann. I am the proud founder of Man Up! Inc., a nationally recognized, 20-year-strong community-based organization. I am also the co-architect of New York City's Crisis Management System (CMS), and currently serve as co-chair of the Mayor's Gun Violence Prevention Task Force as well as the city's first—and hopefully not the last—Gun Violence Prevention Czar.

I've been dedicated to this work for over 30 years—well before formal titles existed—because I believe deeply in our people, our neighborhoods, and our power to heal.

Fifteen years ago, New York City made history by launching the Crisis Management System: a community-led, experience-informed public safety model built on trust, empathy, and grassroots leadership. Since then, we've created something truly transformational—over 30 community-based organizations collaborating across all five boroughs to reduce gun violence, provide wraparound services, rebuild community trust, and offer life-changing employment opportunities for individuals too often overlooked by traditional workforce systems.

Let me be clear: this model works.

Independent evaluations conducted by John Jay College and the NYC Comptroller show that shootings in CMS zones have dropped by up to 40%—most notably in Brownsville, East New York, the South Bronx, and Far Rockaway. These are not abstractions. These are lives saved. Futures redirected. Communities on the path to recovery.

Our work has touched tens of thousands of lives—and in the process, spared the city hundreds of millions in taxpayer costs by reducing emergency room visits, arrests, court appearances, and incarceration.

But I am not here to simply recount past success. I am here to speak about the future—about *where we go next*.

We are entering a new chapter: **CMS 2.0**—a bold, unified strategy that builds upon our successes and scales our system into a full-fledged public safety infrastructure.

CMS 2.0 calls for a centralized structure, providing consistent standards and support across all five boroughs. Every credible messenger—no matter their zip code—must receive elite training,

wear a uniform that reflects professionalism and purpose, and operate under rigorous guidelines for conduct, safety, and excellence.

This is now a *workforce*, not a patchwork of programs. These are public safety professionals, and they deserve to be fully insured and supported—with health benefits, paid leave, and job protections. If we seek consistent outcomes, we must invest in consistent structures.

CMS 2.0 also requires the establishment of a **state-of-the-art Credible Messenger Training Academy**—a centralized institution that certifies interventionists, professionalizes our field, and shapes the next generation of system-changers. This academy must be the *Ivy League* of community violence intervention—blending classroom instruction, field experience, and national best practices.

Moreover, CMS 2.0 deepens investment in the supportive, wraparound services that make true healing possible—including mental health care, education, housing, employment, youth engagement, and critically, *victim support*. This is necessary because behind every headline is a family in mourning, a neighborhood reeling, and a young person whose life is forever altered. As a city we must expand our support for survivors, families of victims, and those reentering our communities after incarceration or trauma.

This next level of CMS addresses the root causes identified by the Mayor's Gun Violence Prevention Task Force. Therefore, with proper investment, CMS 2.0 can also implement the seven strategies outlined in the GVPTF's Blueprint for Community Safety. Each of these seven core strategies are designed to address root causes of gun violence through a public health and community development lens, thereby creating a comprehensive, community-based response to the structural conditions that give rise to violence.

1. **Early Intervention** – Expanding access to mentorship, youth programs, and services that prevent violence before it starts.
2. **Housing** – Ensuring stable, affordable housing as a foundation for safety and well-being.
3. **Navigation and Benefits** – Helping individuals and families access public benefits and navigate city systems more effectively.
4. **Community Vitality** – Investing in neighborhood infrastructure like parks, community centers, and public spaces to foster pride and connection.
5. **Employment and Entrepreneurship** – Creating pathways to jobs, job training, and small business support, especially for those at risk.
6. **Trauma-Informed Care** – Providing mental health services and healing-centered approaches for individuals and communities impacted by violence.
7. **Community and Police Relations** – Strengthening trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the communities they serve

And lastly, CMS must evolve beyond the limitations of a single 8-hour shift. We propose a minimum of two shifts—or ideally, a **24/7, 365-day-a-year operation**—Remember, violence doesn't follow a schedule, and neither should safety.

We are not asking for charity. We are calling for investment.

Investment in a model that works. Investment in a city that leads by example. Investment in our youth, our peacekeepers, and the future of urban public safety.

Let me close with this:

New York City has never been afraid to lead. From CMS 1.0 to CMS 2.0, we have a moment to institutionalize this work, elevate this workforce, and transform public safety as we know it.

We're not simply trying to reduce violence—we're building a new profession, a new ecosystem, and a national gold standard for community-based safety solutions.

I speak to you not only as a practitioner, but as a voice for those we've saved—and those we've yet to reach. Let's recommit. Let's reinvest. Let's lead together.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Testimony for the Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth
May 19, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Stevens. Thank you for listening to the community about some practical reasons why we need more money for after-school programs that serve children like me. My name is Cassi, I'm 8 years old, and I come from PS 971 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I come from the third grade, and I'm representing the Center for Family Life. I've spent 3 school years and 3 summers with CFL at PS 971.

One reason why after-school needs more money is because my parents work hard. My dad works in a glass processing warehouse, my mom works in an auto body shop, and my brothers... well, they're just busy being teenagers, playing loud video games. I don't want to get involved with that! If after-school didn't exist, then my family wouldn't have enough money to pay bills and buy food because my dad gets paid per hour and my mom gets paid per day. If they had to take care of me after school, then we would lose a lot of our money.

Have you ever wondered what kids like me do in after-school? CFL turns a boring weekday afternoon into a fun experience that teaches us kids how to take care of ourselves when we grow up. Our teachers help us learn to cook, try out new languages, dance, and make art. They also teach us how to clean up after we finish our projects. That way, we have the knowledge for later in life.

Please take these reasons into consideration and give after-school more money so that kids in New York City can learn how to behave in adulthood and have a fun childhood along the way.

Testimony for Int. 1245 – *Disaggregated Data on Foster Youth Placements*:

Good afternoon. My name is Cheyanne Deopersaud, and I'm a policy advocate at a think tank called Next100, with lived experience in the foster care system since I was 15 years old.

I want to start by saying how deeply grateful I am that this Council is prioritizing the collection of more data on where youth aging out of foster care are placed. I am 100% in favor of this step forward. As someone who was placed into supportive housing myself, and who has spent the past two years researching the conditions of those placements, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to not just count placements—but to understand the environments behind them.

Tracking this data means we're finally paying attention. It means the experiences of youth like me are no longer invisible. And it opens the door to real accountability and real change.

In my upcoming report titled *Where They Live*, I mapped more than 175 supportive housing sites across New York City that serve former foster youth. I compared those locations to indicators like violent crime, building violations, racial segregation, and poverty. The patterns that emerged were heartbreaking, but not surprising.

Youth are overwhelmingly placed in neighborhoods with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage—areas with aging buildings, unsafe streets, and few opportunities to heal or grow. According to the Opportunity Atlas and NYPD data, over one-third of the buildings I analyzed are in neighborhoods where poverty exceeds 30%, with some as high as 52%. These buildings have an average of 63 violations each—some over 200. And in the surrounding precincts, youth face exposure to high levels of violence: median annual rates of 19 rapes, 178 robberies, and nearly 300 felony assaults.

These are not just numbers. These are the neighborhoods where young people are placed, often with no family support and little say in the matter. And right now, we track how many youth are placed—but not whether they're safe, whether their housing is livable, or whether their placement supports their future.

That's why, in addition to supporting this bill, I recommend the following to strengthen it:

First, collect neighborhood-level indicators alongside placement data—things like crime rates, building violations, and poverty levels. Context matters. Without it, we risk overlooking deeper patterns that are hurting young people.

Second, require ACS to publish an annual public report that gives a full picture—not just where youth are placed, but how those placements are working. That report should include:

- The census tract physical locations of all supportive housing buildings serving former foster youth
- For each building, maintenance complaint data: number, nature, and resolution times
- Inspection results and trends by housing provider
- Youth satisfaction surveys at intake, midpoint, and exit, by provider
- Outcomes like education, employment, income, and housing stability after placement

This report should be shared publicly and with youth leadership boards—and include year-over-year comparisons to track progress or persistent disparities.

This level of transparency isn't just helpful—it's essential. It's how we begin to ensure that young people aging out of care aren't just placed, but supported. Not hidden away in disinvested neighborhoods, but placed where they have a real chance to heal, grow, and thrive.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and for your commitment to improving housing outcomes for youth in foster care.

Testimony for Int. 1246 – *Establishing a Program for Youth Aging Out (Codifying Fair Futures)*

Testimony:

Hi, my name is Cheyanne Deopersaud, and I went into foster care without parents. My mom passed away when I was two years old. I didn't grow up with the kind of guidance that most kids have. But Fair Futures gave me something that felt close.

Fair Futures gave me a coach who helped me through things I imagine my mother would have—things like how to get around the city when I first turned 14 and had no idea how to use the train. How to eat something other than ramen noodles. What to wear to a job interview, what to say during one, how to show up like I belonged. They helped me stay on track with school, with deadlines, with life. They were there when I was figuring out relationships, how to protect my peace, how to show up for myself even when no one else would.

And that's what Fair Futures is. It's not just a program—it's the kind of steady support that every young person in foster care deserves, especially after we turn 18 and suddenly get labeled "adults," even though nothing magically gets easier. Extending this to 26 is what makes sense. Life doesn't stop being hard just because we hit a number.

I was lucky. I got connected to Fair Futures and even got to advocate for it. I met council members and elected officials who saw me, and that changed everything. It made me realize I wasn't invisible—and that maybe one day, I want to become an elected official myself, to fight for youth who feel the way I did.

Fair Futures helped me believe in my future. That's why I believe so deeply in this bill.

Luggage testimony:

Good afternoon,

My name is Cheyanne Deopersaud, and I'm a policy advocate at a think tank called Next100. I entered foster care at 15 years old after experiencing cycles of domestic violence and neglect.

When I think back to the day I was removed from my father's home, I realize how much of it I've blurred out. I think that's how my brain protected me. But one thing I remember clearly is what I left with: a trash bag. That wasn't what the government gave me—but it was what my father used to throw my things in as he pushed me out and made me the system's responsibility.

At the time, I didn't understand the weight of that. But looking back, I do now. My father packed my life into a garbage bag—not a suitcase, not a box, not anything with care. A trash bag. That was the message: that my things were worthless, and so was I. That I was trash.

No child should ever have to carry that message with them—literally or emotionally.

That's why I'm here today in strong support of this bill. Requiring the Administration for Children's Services to provide luggage to youth as they enter care, move between placements, or age out is not about convenience—it's about dignity.

It's a simple, tangible way to say: *you matter*. Your belongings matter. Your story matters.

I also support the bill's requirement to track how many young people are receiving this support, and who they are. Because dignity shouldn't depend on luck or the kindness of one caseworker—it should be a guarantee.

This bill may not undo the harm of that trash bag, but it can keep another child from ever experiencing that same kind of pain. Thank you for considering it—and for seeing the worth in us when others didn't.

City Council Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth – May 19, 2025

Rally at City Hall

My name is Erixz Calderon-Escobar and I am a senior at Sunset Park High School. Soon after coming to this country at the beginning of my sophomore year, I heard about the afterschool clubs run by Center for Family Life at my school and decided to join.

Joining these clubs had a major impact on me. By going to afterschool clubs, I developed my vocabulary in English. It was through afterschool clubs that I made friends. In clubs, I learned about leadership, about community, and I discovered my passion for the performing arts. By my junior year, I threw myself into every club available to me! I did every performing art my afterschool had to offer and had a lead role in the spring show.

The summer after my junior year, through SYEP, I was able to work in a summer camp with CFL, the same organization that ran the afterschool at my high school. I found so much inspiration with the kids- afterschool and camp is not *JUST* an afterschool program, it's so much more - it's a second home. Kids love going to CFL, kids are inspired and discover what they want to be. I am proud to say that after that summer, I was hired by CFL and now work part-time as a Group Leader with 2nd graders. I see that these kids *want* to stay for afterschool, it is so important to them, it means so much to have a place to go that's fun, where they learn new things, have community, and make new friends. They are complicated sometimes but they are so adorable. It makes me feel better to know that the kids are having fun.

It's through these experiences, discovering my love for performing arts through afterschool clubs at my high school and discovering how much I enjoy working with children, that I learned what I want to pursue as my career. Next year, I plan to pursue a dance education degree when I attend Hunter College, where I have been accepted.

All kids deserve the opportunities I had through COMPASS Explore and that I see my kids getting in COMPASS elementary school. The city should bring back COMPASS Explore for high school students and pay organizations across New York City, like CFL, the *real* cost of running a great COMPASS program. These kids are our future teachers, police officers, they are the citizens that will contribute to our society and the time invest in them is now!

May 19, 2025

Testimony for Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

Hello, I am Jackson Ulloa, a student at PS 516 and a participant in Center for Life's after school program. I am asking you to please save CFL after school at PS 516 because it means so much to me and a lot of other students who attend CFL. We do so many fun activities together as a unit, and sometimes we even have whole program activities like our Spring Show.

Having CFL gives my mom and many other moms and dads an opportunity to work while making sure we are safe and being taken care of by staff.

This is my 3rd year attending after school with CFL and I have learned many things here. Not only have I learned how to play different sports like soccer and baseball, but I have also learned how to work together with my unit and be accepting of different people. My favorite thing about CFL is making a lot of new friends and creating bonds with staff members. I also like being able to play my favorite sports without having to pay money to join a team.

CFL means a lot to me, so please consider helping us save CFL at PS 516.

Omar Jackson
Committee to the Children & Youth testimony

Thank You, to the committee for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Crisis Management System. And a huge thank you to Chair, Althea Stevens for meeting with leaders of the Crisis Management System to discuss what's working and what's not working and more importantly what support is needed in order to succeed.

My name is Omar Jackson and I am one of the fearless leaders of CMS. I have well over 10 years of experience in the field of crisis intervention and prevention. I've now become an expert in interrupting traumatic cycles before they reach the point of crisis. I am currently the Chief Advocacy Officer at Getting Out Staying Out (GOSO) and the director of GOSO's, CMS organization Stand Against Violence East Harlem (SAVE). SAVE is on the ground doing the intervention and prevention work at all levels, while GOSO provides in house wrap around services. At GOSO our focus areas are the 3 E's, Education, Employment and Emotional wellbeing. We aim to provide participants with the tools they need to succeed in life after convincing them to change their lifestyles and ways of thinking.

My colleagues that testified before me Doctors Erica Ford & David Caba spoke so eloquently about the amazing life saving and changing work that we're doing on the ground, in the juvenile detention centers, in the hospitals and in the schools. I wanted to speak on the challenges we face not having baseline funding. Not only aren't we not getting paid enough to do this heroic work, but there's times when some organizations aren't able to pay their staff at all. This creates serious challenges that impacts the sustainability of the program, the staff and eventually the outcomes of the community. CMS has consistently made measurable impacts in the communities we serve through crisis response, mentorship and violence intervention & prevention. We should not be challenged with sustainability. In order for us to continue this life saving work effectively we have to find a consistent and dependable funding stream, that gets us our funding on time. If we could ensure sustainability through baseline funding CMS would be able to continue to make measurable impacts in the communities we serve without the fear of not being compensated. During testimony I heard Chair Stevens mentions this topic is something she has a problem with and the city has to do better with.

Lastly I will speak really briefly about one topic that we've been discussing for years within the Crisis Management System. That topic is health benefits. The majority of CMS sites are grass roots non for profit organizations that aren't able to offer benefits. As we are on the frontline risking our lives to save lives just as NYPD, FDNY etc. we have to find a stream of benefits to offer to CMS.

Thank you for your time
Omar Jackson
Chief Advocacy Officer/Director

May 15, 2025

Testimony for Executive Budget Hearing on Children and Youth

Good afternoon New York City Council,

My name is Yeslie Maldonado, and I am a proud community member of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, a parent of a student in the P.S. 516 afterschool program run by the Center for Family Life (CFL), and also a former participant of the CFL Afterschool Program during my own childhood.

I am writing to express my strong and heartfelt support for P.S. 516 and the Center for Family Life in their effort to secure 200 of the 5,000 expanded COMPASS grant seats proposed in the Mayor's budget, and to urge consideration for any additional emergency funding that could help sustain this critical program.

Like many other parents in our community, I rely on this program to be able to work and provide for my family. I work in the nonprofit sector, helping adults across New York City find meaningful careers. Without this afterschool program, not only would my own family be directly impacted, but so would the many jobseekers who depend on my support as they navigate their employment journeys.

This program is not just childcare. It's a safe, nurturing space where children grow through creativity, teamwork, and a sense of belonging. As a daughter of immigrant parents and someone raised in a low-income household, programs like CFL were my only outlet to express myself creatively through dance, singing, and community. They gave me a voice, and today, I am proud that my children can share that same experience, surrounded by a team that truly cares about every child's well-being.

As federal budget cuts continue to disproportionately impact low-income communities of color, I urge the city to invest in our youth by protecting and funding their afterschool programs.

Please prioritize our community in the allocation of COMPASS seats and explore every avenue of funding available to keep this program running. Our children deserve it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yeslie Maldonado

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Clifford Lasorchel, ED of the Office of

Address: Neighborhood Safety

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Denise Williams, DC for Planning, Program Integration

Address: and Evaluator

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Rathel, AC for Planning, Program Integration and

Address: Evaluator

I represent: DYCD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 06/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Williams

Address: 2 Lafayette Street New York, NY 10007

I represent: Office of Neighborhood Safety

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Galloway - Ali Forney Center

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Caba

Address: Good Shepherd Services

I represent: Floor 16

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

12

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lemuria Alawode-El

Address: DYCP

I represent: Gun Violence Prevention Task force

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MS. Takeasha Newton

Address: _____

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: 49 Thomas Street

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tara Brown Arnell

Address: BRONX CONNECT

I represent: BRONX CONNECT / RTG

Address: 432 E. 149th ST

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 12025-3598 Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jackie Gosdigian

Address: 177 Livingston St Brooklyn 11201

I represent: Brooklyn Defenders

Address: 177 Livingston St 7th Fl Brooklyn

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6-17-25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Sophie Charles

Address: _____

I represent: COFCCA

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Karina Christiansen, Deputy ED of the

Address: Office of Neighborhood Safety

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6-17-25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dion Nelson

Address: [REDACTED] ST NY 10301

I represent: T2L

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/10/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Miller

Address: 55 Regis Drive 10302

I represent: CMS - Transpire

Address: Staten Island

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elaine Quinn

Address: 114 Wright St, ST NY 10304

I represent: CMS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 8/6/17/2015

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mike Pagan

Address: _____

I represent: THE LIFE / EMS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andre T. Mitchell-Mann

Address: _____

I represent: Man Up Inc. / Mayor's Gun Violence Review

Address: Task Force

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1077 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/2015

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sofie Fashang

Address: _____

I represent: NEXT100

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1245 1246 Res. No. 1077

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 06/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cheyenne Deppersand

Address: 126 West 126 Street, 10027

I represent: Next100/The Century Founda-

Address: tion

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERICA FORD

Address: 111-12 Supreme Blvd

I represent: Life Camp / NYC CMS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Self

Address: _____