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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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February 15, 2023
Start: 1:29 p.m.
Recess: 5:53 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Shaun Abreu
- Alexa Avilès
- Carmen N. De La Rosa
- Eric Dinowitz
- Oswald Feliz
- James F. Gennaro
- Jennifer Gutiérrez
- Shahana K. Hanif
- Kamilah Hanks
- Shekar Krishnan
- Linda Lee
- Farah N. Louis
- Julie Menin
- Mercedes Narcisse
- Lincoln Restler
- Pierina Ana Sanchez
- Lynn C. Schulman
- Althea V. Stevens
- Sandra Ung

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

- Gale A. Brewer
- Keith Powers
- Chi Ossè

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Gregory Brender
Day Care Council of New York

Irene Lew
Senior Research Analyst at United Neighborhood
Houses

Elysia Murphy
Deputy Executive Director at Citizens Committee
for Children of New York

Joyce Mcclammy
1332 Fulton Avenue Day Care in the Bronx

Elizabeth Bird
Director of Public Policy at Educational Alliance

Dr. Sanayi Beckles-Canton
Early Child Care Provider

Maria Drogyack (SP?)
Citizens Committee for Children of New York

Kara Ahmed
Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education
for New York City Public Schools

Dan Weisberg
Executive Director, New York City Department of
Education

Sarita Subramanian
Assistant Director for Education at the New York
City Independent Budget Office

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Rosemarie Sinclair
Executive Vice President of CSA, the Council of
School Supervisors and Administrators

Mary Cheng
Director of Childhood Development Services at
Chinese American Planning Council

Patricia Lett
President of Brooklyn Sunday School Union

Betty Baez Melo
Attorney and Director of the Early Childhood
Education Project at Advocates for Children of
New York

Lupe Hernandez
New York City Parent

Jeremy Caplan
Sunset Park

Chris Banks
Chair of Board of Directors of the Boulevard
Nursery Day Care

Dana Abrassart
Parent writing as a Constituent of District 40

Celeste Brad-Sherlane
New York City Parent

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
3 the Committee on Education. Today's date is February
4 15, 2023, located in Council Chambers recorded by
5 Steven Sadowsky.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to
7 the New York City Council Hearing of the Committee on
8 Education. At this time, can everyone please silence
9 your cell phones. If you wish to testify today,
10 please go up to the Sergeants desk to fill out a
11 testimony slip. Thank you for your cooperation.
12 Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good afternoon and welcome
14 to the hearing. [GAVEL] Good afternoon and welcome
15 to today's Education Oversight Hearing on 3-K Funding
16 Cuts and Delayed Reimbursements to Early Childhood
17 Providers. I'm Rita Joseph, Chair of the Committee.
18 Thank you to everyone present here today and those of
19 you who are testifying remotely.

20 At today's hearing, we will also hear testimony
21 on the following legislation: Introduction Number
22 843 sponsored by Council Member Julie Menin, which is
23 a Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the
24 City of New York in relations to reporting on payment
25 to early childhood care and education providers. And

1
2 Resolution 164 sponsored by Council Member Linda Lee,
3 which calls upon the New York City Department of
4 Education to establish Diwali as an official holiday
5 for public school students. Four and a half months
6 ago, the Committee held a hearing on early childhood
7 programs in the city. At the hearing, we received
8 ample testimony that DOE has not fulfilled its
9 contracts obligations to reimburse early childhood
10 education providers. That is Pre-k and 3-K centers
11 offering publicly funded child care have not been
12 paid for the full amount for the FY22 contracts, a
13 payment cycle that ended June 30, 2022.

14 As a result, the number of early childhood
15 providers such as Sheltering Arms, which provide care
16 to 400 kids in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens have
17 permanently shut down. Last fall, DOE entered into
18 an agreement with City Council to resolve delayed
19 reimbursement yet the issue persists.

20 At a January 2023 hearing, the Mayor's Office of
21 Contract Services testified that they are working on
22 the backlog of unpaid contracts. Including those
23 that belong to early childhood education providers.
24 According to recent press reports including a
25 February ABC piece, DOE blames the delays on

1
2 providers for not properly uploading their invoices
3 into the city's system.

4 Meanwhile, a January 2023 Center for Urban Future
5 report revealed infants across the largely
6 decentralized contracting and reporting system. This
7 includes duplicate requirements with and across
8 agencies, various to reimbursements excessive audits
9 and burdensome discretionary funding requirements.
10 Moreover, the administrations Novembers plan program
11 to Eliminate the Gap or PEG reduced the 3-K budget in
12 FY24 by \$568 million.

13 With the explanation that the city is
14 reallocating federal stimulus to reflect the
15 rightsizing of the universal 3-K expansion. Budget
16 based on the FY23 level; this means canceling and
17 plan to increase of program from 55,000 to 61,000
18 seats in 2023. Ultimately, all of this is hurting
19 our children, their families, and hardworking early
20 childhood providers. This is particularly concerning
21 for the city's low-income residents and communities
22 of color who desperately need more extended day and
23 year seats. We need to stay on top of this and
24 ensure that this does not happen again.

1
2 At this hearing, the Committee is interested in
3 securing a timeline for when these contracts will be
4 fully paid including 2023 contracts, and how this
5 process will be improved going forward. The
6 Committee is also interested in learning how the city
7 plans to serve families and early childhood education
8 providers who have negatively impacted due to delays
9 in the city's complicated contracting processes,
10 including what role the newly created Mayor's Office
11 of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will play
12 in addressing these issues.

13 I would like to thank the Committee staff as well
14 as my own staff for all of the hard work they put
15 into today's hearing. I'd like to acknowledge my
16 colleagues. I'd like acknowledge Council Member
17 Louis, Council Member Sanchez, Council Member
18 Schulman, Council Member Menin, Council Member Feliz,
19 Council Member Brewer, Council Member De La Rosa and
20 Council Member Hanks, Council Member Stevens, Council
21 Member Shekar, Council Member Narcisse and Council
22 Member Lee.

23 Before we swear in the Administration, we will
24 hear from the sponsors of Introduction 843 and the
25

1
2 Resolution 164 to deliver some remarks on their
3 legislation. Council Member Menin.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much. I
5 first of all want to thank Chair Joseph for holding
6 today's important hearing on delayed reimbursements
7 to early childhood education providers. In the fall
8 of last year, this Committee heard from the
9 Administration on this same topic and we were
10 informed that just 62 percent of providers were being
11 paid in a timely manner. That is frankly
12 unacceptable. That is why my bill Intro. 843 would
13 require the Department of Education to report each
14 month on payments to early childhood care and
15 education providers. This legislation would
16 highlight the number of invoices in total. The
17 number of invoices paid in full or partially paid,
18 the average amount of time it takes to process and
19 the number of invoices outstanding in value and in
20 percentage. I thank the 15 co-sponsors especially
21 the Chair in joining me on this legislation requiring
22 accountability from DOE. Transparency will lead to
23 more timely payments. My office has heard from early
24 childhood care providers that have been left unpaid
25 by DOE and are in danger of closing. We are in a

1
2 child care crisis and since 2015, over 1,400 child
3 care centers have closed in New York City. We've
4 seen first-hand the city exacerbate this crisis when
5 sheltering arms children and family services, a
6 provider serving over 400 children across three
7 boroughs was forced to close in October 2022 after
8 not being reimbursed by the DOE. This is a critical
9 moment for early child care and I hope to hear that
10 payment to providers has improved in 2023.

11 I thank the Chair for allowing me to speak and I
12 want to thank the bill drafter Sahar Moazami and
13 Beth Golub for working on the bill and for my team,
14 my Chief of Staff Jonathan Szott and my Legislative
15 and Budget Director Brandon Jordan. Thank you.

16

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member
18 Menin. Council Member Lee.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, thank you so much Chair
20 Joseph and colleagues for hearing this Resolution at
21 today's hearing. I just wanted to say on behalf of
22 the AAPI community, the 1.1 million Asian Americans
23 who call New York City home, it is my honor and
24 privilege to introduce Resolution 164 calling on the
25 state to have our schools recognize Diwali as an

1
2 official holiday. And as someone who is part of the
3 efforts to help recognize Lunar New Year as a holiday
4 as well, this is something that's very personal and
5 also recognizing, we have one fifth of our public-
6 school students who have served Diwali and are forced
7 to make the choice of either celebrating or sending
8 their kids to school or keeping them at home. And
9 so, this is an important piece of legislation and I
10 think that it celebrates the diversity of our city,
11 as well as recognizing the importance of different
12 cultures and understanding how important it is to
13 educate our students about the different cultures and
14 holidays that are celebrated throughout our city.

15 So, I'm very proud to sponsor this and also, on
16 our state side, we have colleagues that are you know
17 putting forth a similar bill, Assembly woman Jenifer
18 Rajkumar as well as Senator Joseph Addabbo and
19 Senator John Liu are also proposing similar bills at
20 the state level, so I'm happy to help and you know
21 push this effort on the City Council side so I
22 definitely hope that my colleagues will join me in
23 this Resolution and I also want to thank our Mayor
24 because has also said multiple times that he is

1
2 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you so much Chair Joseph
3 and all the members of the Education and all the
4 Committees who have come here today. We really
5 appreciate the Council's strong support for early
6 childhood education and so many of you showing up for
7 this hearing as well as previous event like the press
8 conference around this.

9 I'm from Day Care Council of New York, we are the
10 membership organization of early childhood centers in
11 New York City. Our members provide both a center
12 based and family child care in over 200 sites in all
13 five boroughs. Most of our members operate with
14 contracts with the New York City Department of
15 Education, while others use other funding sources,
16 such as federal Head Start contracts and fee for
17 services. DCCNY member organizations employ over
18 4,000 New Yorkers, the majority of whom are Black and
19 Brown women and we're an active member of the
20 Campaign for Children and our testimony reflects the
21 priorities and goals of that campaign.

22 We'll start with the cuts to the expansion of
23 Universal 3-K. This is not - the Universal 3-K is a
24 promise to move forward towards universal child care
25 in New York City and moving away from it is moving

1 backward an important thing for New York's
2 communities and for families.

3 We recommend instead of the cuts that the city
4 released an RFP for the expansion for 3-K for all,
5 allowing contracts for expanded programs to start in
6 July and services in September and that this would
7 include extended day, extended year programs which
8 the state has increased funding for.

9 Convert more existing through 3-K school day,
10 school year seats to extended day, extended year
11 seats and ensure 3-K expansion efforts prioritize
12 creating new capacity for extended year round seats.
13 Invest in robust resources in linguistically and
14 culturally appropriate multi-media marketing
15 campaigns to encourage enrollment in early childhood
16 education and reform enrollment procedures so that
17 community based organizations have the options of
18 directly enrolling children into their 3-K programs.

19 There is more of these details in the written
20 testimony about the late payments, the DOE programs.
21 This remains at crisis levels. We talked about this
22 back in the hearing in October and that did lead to
23 some changes but it did not lead to systemic reforms
24 necessary to make this a sustainable system. We need
25

1
2 to have ongoing systemic changes that ensure that
3 early childhood providers are paid on time. The late
4 payments have led to organizations missing payroll,
5 meaning low paid workers, essential low paid workers
6 are missing their paychecks, which means they're
7 missing their rent. Their missing their expenses.
8 They themselves are struggling. It's led to many
9 providers to take out personal lines of credit and
10 it's caused a lack of – its caused many people to
11 leave the workforce because they don't want to work
12 as much as they love working in early childhood
13 education in places that can't pay them on time.

14 We have some data around this that we have in our
15 written testimony but it's suffice to say that there
16 were some actions taken and we appreciate the rapid
17 response teams that were developed in response to the
18 concerns about FY22 payments. However, those changes
19 need to be completed. There are still FY22 payments
20 that are owed and we need to make the changes for
21 FY23 and going on. We're eight months into Fiscal
22 Year 2023 and many providers are still unable to
23 invoice. They either don't have approved budgets or
24 are lacking some other piece of information to ensure
25 that their programs are able to invoice and they are

1
2 not getting paid. They are getting by on bubble gum
3 and wrapping and it's a true struggle for the
4 workforce and for the families they serve.

5 So, we have a series of recommendations to
6 improve the systems to ensure late payments don't
7 continue. First, is to immediately complete all back
8 payments bringing all center based providers to at
9 least 75 percent of the full contract value for FY22,
10 which was guaranteed in the request for proposals
11 back in 2019. Increase the FY23 advance payments to
12 75 percent of contract value. This way the city is
13 only putting out the amount it has guaranteed in the
14 request for proposals and you're ensuring that the
15 greatest amount of funding actually goes immediately
16 to providers, that they can build up the reserves in
17 order to pay their own staff and pay their landlords
18 and other vendors on time.

19 Extending the providers ability to batch and
20 submit multiple months of invoices and maintain – we
21 just learned actually just two days ago, this is now
22 being allowed for FY2023. We hope that this could be
23 done in the future. It is necessary that there are
24 times that invoices are backed up. Organizations

1
2 need to be able to submit them all at the same time,
3 so that they can get any backup payments paid.

4 And then to separate the system of enrollment and
5 data collection from the system responsible for
6 invoicing and payments. Most of the other human
7 services have moved onto the passport system run by
8 the Mayor of Office of Contract Services. This
9 appears to be working more effectively at sharing on
10 time payments than the city's pre kit system as a
11 payment system. So, we propose separating those
12 systems and moving the payment onto the passport
13 system.

14 Finally, one of the most important changes we
15 need to make in early childhood education is to
16 fulfill the promise of salary parity for the early
17 childhood workforce. The early childhood workforce
18 are paid lower than their counter parts in public
19 schools and this is a product of discrimination.
20 That'll get us the workforce that is almost more than
21 90 percent women and in New York City, particularly
22 mostly women of color.

23 We need to move to parity, not just to ensure
24 that the programs have high quality staff but to
25 fulfill our commitment as a city to a city that is

1 committed to racial justice and to women's justice.

2 Thank you so much for taking on this issue. We

3 really appreciate the Council's support and your work

4 with us and the Department of Education to address

5 this crisis and we look forward to continuing to work

6 with you to ensure that the providers are paid on

7 time. That all children in New York City have access

8 to high quality early childhood education that meets

9 their family's needs and that the workforce who

10 supports this essential service is fairly paid for

11 their incredible work. Thank you so much.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Gregory.

13 We will now move onto our next panelists. To all of

14 our panelists, please state your name for the record

15 before you begin.

16 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: Good afternoon, my

17 name is Dr. Sanayi Beckles-Canton. I am an early

18 child care provider. I just want to read what I

19 have, one second.

20 Good afternoon City Council. I would like to

21 first thank you for this opportunity to share. As a

22 child care provider in New York City, myself and

23 several educators have been a victim of this slow

24 response to pay early child care providers. We are a

1
2 new program that over the course of three years have
3 invested our life savings in creating a program in
4 our community to support families and children but
5 unfortunately, due to the systematic bureaucracy that
6 we have experienced with the Department of Education
7 and the Department of Health, our school has yet to
8 open fully.

9 Unfortunately, our contract was approved in July
10 of 2021 but we have still not received one payment
11 and as a result, we have had to take out loans to pay
12 staff. We've had to lay staff off and unfortunately,
13 while the Department of Education has stated that
14 they are working swiftly to support programs like
15 myself, due to the lack of response and
16 communication. The unclear systems that we have to
17 send documentation to, there is not any follow-up.
18 Very often we are told that the persons who once was
19 in those positions are no longer working and we are
20 not giving any other follow-up. Very often we are
21 told that persons who once was in those positions are
22 no longer working and we are not given any other
23 follow-up. My question and concern is that as a
24 small Pre-K program, it is important that we get
25 clarity, understanding and that there's a

1
2 cohesiveness among the different city agencies that
3 support us

4 So, my hope is that I will support this
5 legislation to actually bring accountability and
6 transparency in a much more quick and swift way to
7 support organizations like me so that we don't have
8 to close our doors. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Dr. Sanayi. Next
10 panelist.

11 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: Yes, good afternoon. My name is
12 Joyce Mcclammy. I'm from 1332 Fulton Avenue Day Care
13 in the Bronx. I am also the Vice President of Local
14 205. I stand in for all of our members of Day Care
15 Workers. I thank the City Council for hosting this
16 meeting. It seems DOE refuses to honor their word
17 when it comes to community-based centers. Centers
18 are still going through tremendous hardships when it
19 comes to funding.

20 You have directors paying their staff out of
21 their own pockets and it shouldn't be. Centers
22 should not have to keep taking out bridge loans to
23 pay their expenses, as far as staff payroll, rent for
24 their centers and other expenses. When Chair Joseph
25 and Chancellor Banks had the press conference in the

1
2 later part of 2022, we were assured that everything
3 would be worked out but it still has not happened.
4 We are still going through were invoices are not
5 being paid on time. Granted DOE has a system that
6 they use but it was never brought to the community-
7 based centers that they should have a training so our
8 bookkeepers would know exactly how to fill out these
9 invoices.

10 They fill them out the best they can. They
11 submit them and then when they refuse them, then it
12 takes six, seven months for them to get it right.
13 This has to stop, centers are really suffering as
14 it's been brought out before, centers are closing.
15 Centers are having tremendous hardships and we
16 shouldn't have to go through that. Because I work in
17 a center and I care for our members. I care for our
18 children. These are our small children. Day care is
19 their foundation and we should give to stand for our
20 children and we are in communities where women of
21 color, single parents, and we provide that service.
22 A service that's needed much and DOE has to come and
23 step up to the plate. They agreed to the 75 percent
24 but a lot of centers are still not getting their
25

1
2 funding and we have to come to an agreement and DOE
3 has to honor their word. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Joyce.
5 Next panelist.

6 ELYSIA MURPHY: Good afternoon, can you hear me?
7 Nope, thank you.

8 My name is Elysia Murphy. I am the Deputy
9 Executive Director at Citizens Committee for Children
10 of New York and thank you so much for the opportunity
11 to testify today. As you may know, CCC has a long
12 history of advocating to protect and expand early
13 care in education services in New York City. We've
14 been so proud to live and work in a city that has
15 been a leader in the expansion of universal Pre-K and
16 3-K over the last many years. We've also been
17 incredibly proud to have the opportunity to advocate
18 alongside our partners on the Campaign for Children
19 and the many providers, some of which are here today
20 who have moved mountains in order to provide services
21 in the face of incredible obstacles over the past
22 several years.

23 We wanted to talk a little bit today about some
24 of the pieces of our testimony that elevates the
25 concerns that we've heard from contracted programs

1
2 about their experience over the past three years,
3 some of which you've already heard about and I have
4 no doubt that you'll hear more from panelists later
5 today.

6 For one, the start of the pandemic was an
7 entirely new system coming online due to the
8 transition of ACS contracts to the Department of
9 Education and the implementation of new contracts as
10 a result for both the family child care system and
11 the contracted system for birth to five programs.

12 Programs experienced at the start of the
13 pandemic, a shuttering of their doors in the initial
14 days and followed by hybrid and then in person
15 services. They were also serving communities that
16 were hardest hit by the health and economic impacts
17 of the pandemic on households, and the young children
18 that these providers were serving were not eligible
19 for vaccines until the summer of 2022.

20 Some of this context you can see in the data
21 presentation that we have included in the back of our
22 testimony today and I just want to take a moment to
23 acknowledge Maria Drogyack(SP?) who is my colleague
24 from CCC who put together this data presentation and
25 if there are any questions today or in the future,

1
2 please don't hesitate to ask them. This data
3 provides a really vivid illustration that the
4 expansion that has taken place has not been
5 responsive to the needs of children and families in
6 this city. It does not currently have the capacity
7 to serve infants and toddlers to meet the needs for
8 the families with young children. And it is largely
9 made up of school day and school year services as
10 opposed to extended day and year-round services.

11 From our discussions with providers, we know that
12 these factors have impacted enrollment and retention
13 of families at a time when services were critically
14 needed. And we also continue to hear the stress from
15 providers about the payments owed for fiscal year
16 2022 and we fear that the payment delays for fiscal
17 year 2023 are adding to an already unacceptable level
18 of fiscal strain and instability.

19 On top of that, the proposed cuts 3-K for All is
20 moving in the wrong direction and fails to take
21 action on the investments and operational reforms
22 that are critically needed to stabilize and
23 strengthen the system.

24 I'd like to echo the recommendations that have
25 been made so far by our Campaign for Children

1
2 partners, namely Gregory spoke to many of them and
3 just to elevate a few, which might be a little bit
4 reiterating some of what he shared and there's more
5 information in our testimony about these
6 recommendations but we hope that there will be
7 prioritization to immediately paying all center-based
8 providers for fiscal year 2022 and increasing the
9 fiscal year 2023 advanced payments to 75 percent of
10 the full contract value. This is needed to address
11 emerging and serious payment delays for the current
12 fiscal year.

13 We also hope to see a commitment to fund current
14 3-K program levels and restoring the timeline for the
15 3-K expansion and to convert existing 3-K school day
16 and school year seats to extended day year around
17 seats and ensure expansion efforts prioritize
18 creating new capacity for extended day year round
19 seats across all age cohorts. We hope to see funding
20 for a new labor contract that advances salary parity
21 between center and school based service teachers and
22 staff, and to ensure that homebased family child care
23 providers benefit from the increased market rate.

24 Again, I would like to express our profound
25 appreciation for Chair Joseph and her fellow

1
2 Committee members for hosting this hearing today.
3 CCC and our Campaign for Children partners look
4 forward to working with the City Council to advance
5 these goals and put children and families front and
6 center as the budget process proceeds. Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Elysia.
8 Next panelist.

9 ELIZABETH BIRD: Hi, Elizabeth Bird, I'm with
10 Educational Alliance. Thank you Chair Joseph and
11 Members of the Education Committee for this
12 opportunity to testify today. I'm Elizabeth Bird. I
13 am the Director of Public Policy at Educational
14 Alliance. We're a settlement house with community
15 centers located throughout the Lower East Side and
16 East Village. Educational Alliance was one of the
17 first Head Start pilot programs in the nation in
18 1965, and subsequently opened one of the first Early
19 Head Start programs in 1995.

20 Today, we offer center and home-based education
21 for 250 children ranging from birth to age five
22 through Head Start and as well as DOE universal Pre-K
23 and 3-K. As a longstanding provider of high-quality
24 early childhood education programs, we truly value
25 this opportunity to offer feedback on DOE's delayed

1 contract payments as well as proposed funding cuts
2 for early childhood education.

3
4 In FY22, we operated our early childhood programs
5 with out a registered contract for over six months.
6 In that time, we could not invoice the city for
7 program costs, which totaled \$754,000. To cover
8 these costs, we are forced to draw down funds raised
9 through private philanthropy and other means,
10 siphoning off resources desperately needed for other
11 programing. This is a fundamentally flawed approach
12 to contracting. When the city delays its payments to
13 providers, it essentially borrows interest free from
14 our bottom line, while we have to leverage funds to
15 cover the costs associated with programming.
16 Meanwhile, the city is never held accountable for
17 these additional costs and elected officials do not
18 have to account for this covert way of operating.
19 Our FY23 contract is still unregistered six months
20 after the school year began.

21 In my written testimony I have included some
22 concerns about the proposed cuts to the early
23 childhood sector that were included in the Mayor's
24 Preliminary Budget. I would just like in brief to
25 add here that I urge the Council to question the

1 Administration about these proposed cuts and their
2 potential impacts on New York City's children and
3 families. As it is, our DOE contracts do not fully
4 cover the costs associated with high quality
5 programming. In particular the need to increase
6 rates for wages. To offer longevity bonuses and
7 other incentives to encourage staff retention. Thank
8 you for the opportunity to testify today.

9
10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next panelist.

11 IRENE LEW: Thank you Council Member Joseph and
12 members of the Council Education Committee for the
13 opportunity to testify today and for convening this
14 really important hearing.

15 My name is Irene Lew. I am the Senior Research
16 Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses. We represent
17 46 neighborhood settlement houses including
18 Educational Alliance and 40 in New York City, and
19 along with partners at CCC and Daycare Council, UNH
20 is also a founding member of the Campaign for
21 Children.

22 Our New York City members operate 70 DOE
23 contracted center-based child care programs,
24 including Pre-K and 3-K programs. Nine of our
25 members run DOE contracted family child care networks

1
2 and ten operate Head Start or early Head Start
3 programs that are directly contracted with the
4 federal office of Head Start.

5 Collectively, our settlement house members serve
6 roughly 12,000 children under age five citywide. So,
7 I also want to you know reiterate, echo a lot of what
8 has already been said and in terms of late payments
9 and also some of the fixes that partners at CCC and
10 Daycare Council already recommended but I also want
11 to shed some more light on some of the provider
12 stories and the impact of delayed payments on
13 providers in our network.

14 We appreciate the change that DOE has made to
15 address delayed payments and including the Rapid
16 Response Team but we have heard from providers that
17 they are continuing to experience significant
18 difficulties in getting FY22 and FY23 invoices paid,
19 as well as significant delays in having their FY2023
20 budgets approved. Four of our members operating
21 several center based early learn programs and a Pre-K
22 program reported the city still owed them nearly \$1.3
23 million for FY22 contracts as of January 13th and
24 even more alarming, nearly eight months since the
25 start of the fiscal, current fiscal year, a number of

1
2 our members still haven't received any reimbursement
3 through FY23 aside for advances.

4 At the same time, the DOE notified providers
5 earlier this week that they would begin recouping
6 FY23 advances starting this month, although providers
7 are still owed almost eight months of payments for
8 the FY23 contracts.

9 And one of our members has also shared they have
10 worked with as many as 20 different DOE staff members
11 to resolve an issue. Other members have shared that
12 communication and messaging from the DOE is often
13 disjointed and inconsistent when it comes to
14 certifying attendance reports and approving
15 enrollment, which are further adding to payment
16 delays. Rather than devoting their time to
17 delivering high quality early childhood programming
18 to children and families in their communities,
19 providers have reported there spending as much as 12
20 hours a day to ensure that budgets are approved and
21 to verify children in the system.

22 One of our members actually shared recently that
23 this work is – their exact words were extremely time
24 consuming, exhausting, we're paid to serve the
25 community but that energy is getting eat up by this

1
2 dysfunction. And a lot of providers in our network
3 have been experiencing severe cash flow and hardship
4 due to late payments and one settlement house member
5 informed us as of January 30th, they were still owed
6 more than \$200,000 for FY23 and are currently
7 deferring the purchase of classroom supplies and
8 other nonessential items, so that they can make
9 payroll. And they noted they are working with the
10 severe budget deficit the beginning of the year but
11 then must scramble to spend the \$200 remainder budget
12 usually by the end of the fiscal year after the DOE
13 has finally improved their invoices.

14 And to kind of reiterate the recommendations
15 already been made in terms of fixes, we have heard
16 from providers that batch invoicing and multi-month
17 submission has really been helpful and as of Gregory
18 pointed out, the DOE recently informed providers they
19 would give them this option, extend this option for
20 FY23 but we really hope that this option will be
21 extended beyond FY23 and into FY23 and beyond because
22 it has been helpful in addressing the backlog.

23 And I also want to touch on briefly on what has
24 also mentioned but salary parity which really does
25 impact enrollment in 3-K and early childhood programs

1
2 and just the staffing shortages and the staffing
3 crisis in our system. Due to competition with the
4 DOE and higher vacancies that our providers are
5 experiencing that are making it difficult for
6 providers to serve more families. Because center-
7 based programs when they have staff shortages, they
8 can't run at full capacity due to the mandatory
9 children/adult ratios. One of our members reported
10 that has received requests for child care support
11 from asylum seeking families, but cannot serve them
12 because they don't have enough staff. They have a
13 waiting list of about 65 children and a bunch of
14 empty classrooms where they don't have the staff.
15 And another member has told us that they have a
16 program that is half staffed and half enrolled and
17 they are having difficulty recruiting staff when
18 their certified teachers earn \$10,000 less than what
19 the DOE pays for certified teachers at a school based
20 site.

21 So, we really hope that the administration really
22 help stabilize early childhood education workforce in
23 the city and a new labor contract that ensures that
24 stuff left out of the 2019 pay parity agreement,
25 including early childhood directors, support staff at

1
2 community based organizations and special education
3 teachers are included as part of pay increases that
4 longevity is factored in salary increases and that
5 there's a minimum wage floor of at \$25 for support
6 staff.

7 And the last point I want to make is just
8 regarding the unfilled seats and under enrollment.
9 The rapid expansion as Elysia mentioned before, it
10 created excess seats for in the system in certain
11 communities but under enrollment or unfilled 3K seats
12 don't reflect reduced demand for families for this
13 program, instead of reflect a mismatch between the
14 type of care that is offered school day, school year
15 care, instead of the full day year around care that
16 families need. And providers in our network have
17 reported struggling to meet the demand for extended
18 day seats for three- and four-year-olds. And that
19 they don't have the flexibility to open up more seats
20 and change our receipt types. And we have heard from
21 providers that the DOE is starting to address this in
22 more detail and you know really serve our providers
23 to address demands. We believe that more needs to be
24 done. DOE also controls the enrollment process and
25 so, parents don't have the ability to connect

1
2 directly with providers to enroll their children when
3 seats do become available. So, we also urge the city
4 to reform enrollment procedures so that community-
5 based providers have the option of directly enrolling
6 children whose families apply for 3-K, Pre-K or child
7 care. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm going to
9 start with questioning for the panel with Council
10 Member Brewer.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much for
12 all of your decades of service in each and every
13 organization. So, my question is basically what we
14 just heard because the Mayor keeps stating, oh, we
15 have not enough children to fit in the seats. I hear
16 that all the time. It's obviously not true, so I
17 wanted to know a little bit more. If you could
18 expand on the mismatch. We all know that if you're
19 going to go back to work, if you are working, you
20 need full day. We also know that you need to be paid
21 parity and we also know that you need toddler and
22 small, small baby service and they may not be what is
23 being offered and that's why people aren't going to
24 3-K. So, I just wanted to hear a little bit more
25 about that number one.

1
2 Number two, why are you told that you can't use
3 passport? Gregory mentioned that. Those are my two
4 questions.

5 GREGORY BRENDER: So, I'll start with the first
6 one unless someone else wants to go. So, with
7 regards to the mismatch, yes, I think that one of the
8 solutions is converting some of the 3-K and Pre-K
9 seats that are school day, school year, so six hours
10 and 20 minutes into extended day, extended year,
11 which are all year round to include summer months and
12 based on the work day instead of the school day.

13 The other part to the enrollment question is also
14 about outreach. You probably all remember in 2014
15 when Pre-K was first expanding, you couldn't walk a
16 block without being accosted about joining Pre-K or
17 seeing a sign for Pre-K. We need to have a campaign
18 to make people aware of what's available to them and
19 people to access the slots that are there.

20 And so, you know relaunching a campaign that is
21 culturally and linguistically suited to the
22 neighborhoods, diverse neighborhoods throughout New
23 York City. It has outreach through community
24 organizations, houses of worship. I think will also
25 help ensure that EC hire enrollment throughout the

1
2 system both in school day, school year but also in
3 extended day, extended year.

4 I think we do have some opportunities to see
5 increased expansion in extended day, extended year
6 because of what's happening at the state where last
7 year in the state budget the legislature and governor
8 increased eligibility and Governor Hochul has
9 proposed increasing eligibility again to 85 percent
10 of area median income. So, we could have more
11 families who will qualify for extended day, extended
12 year programs which our means tested.

13 And then the second question of the passport. I
14 don't know uhm, I don't know why it hasn't been,
15 maybe someone else does know.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We'll wait to ask the
17 next panel.

18 GREGORY BRENDER: Okay.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council Member
21 Narcisse.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon. I want
23 to say thank you for your service. This is a vital
24 service that you all are providing in the City of New
25 York. And as a mom of four, I know I needed this

1
2 service all the time when I was raising my own
3 children and as a business person, listening to all
4 you're saying, this is outrageous because I have a
5 couple questions to ask you. How many of you can
6 access loans to the bank waiting for payment? Can
7 you access?

8 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: I can definitely
9 answer that. As a new MWBE I was not able to access
10 a loan to the bank. It was through support of my
11 former Borough President Gale Brewer's support
12 helping me do upper Manhattan empowerment zone. But
13 a person like me who have invested my life savings in
14 this, I am at the end. I've taken my retirement just
15 to pay staff but no, I don't have access because I
16 don't have enough equity and I don't have the support
17 as a new small business in New York City.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, how long it will
19 take - I mean, how long it usually takes DOE to pay
20 you? To get your paycheck after you submit your
21 invoices?

22 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: I've submitted my
23 documents and I get no response. I've had to go to
24 elected officials to assist me. So, they often state
25 to the person in the position no longer works there.

1
2 They refer you to someone else. So, it's been months
3 and it has been very gruesome and traumatic for
4 myself and my team.

5 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: And I can attest to that. We
6 just got our June invoice approved January 10th. Our
7 July invoice is pending, so we're still waiting on
8 that. So, when I went to a Town Hall meeting last
9 month with the Chancellor and his staff, I asked the
10 question how long does it take for an invoice to be
11 approved? I was told two weeks but sometimes it
12 takes months and when you reach out to the person
13 that's handling; they never email you back. You
14 reach out to their supervisor, they don't email you
15 back, so you have no correspondence. So, it takes
16 months and months and months to get an invoice
17 approved.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, honestly, you
19 cannot stay in business because you don't get paid
20 right?

21 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: Exactly.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Is there times that you
23 cannot pay your staff?

24 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: Yes, I have been
25 faced with that three times and I had to reach out to

1 church members and people to assist me and do a Go
2 Fund me page. It is very heartbreaking and traumatic
3 and like many child care providers, you want to leave
4 the profession.

5
6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I can relate, that's
7 why I'm asking this question. I've been there. So,
8 how many of you hire staff locally from the
9 environment where you are functioning your small
10 businesses?

11 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: My entire staff all
12 live in the community, was raised in the community
13 and we all came together to serve our community.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, it's difficult.
15 So, I understand and I think that's the reason Chair,
16 Chair Joseph that's the reason we're here to support
17 small businesses, I mean, especially the services
18 that you are providing in our community, which is
19 vital. So, thank you for being here. I appreciate
20 your time. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I have a question for you
22 Joyce. Has the response team reached out to you and
23 offered their support in your invoicing?

24 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: No. Whenever we reach out to
25 them, we don't get a response right away. It takes

1
2 months before they respond back. So, that's a big
3 issue.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, communication lack of.
5 Thank you so much. Next person, Council Member
6 Schulman.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you and thank you
8 for coming here today to testify on this important
9 issue. So, a question I have and this is maybe for
10 the admin but so, in your testimony Mr. Murphy, you
11 said that there are 33,000 seats unfilled in school
12 year 2022. Do we have a breakdown? Is there a
13 breakdown of where that is or, and are there waiting
14 lists? I know you mentioned waiting, are there
15 waiting lists now or are there not?

16 ELYSIA MURPHY: Is it alright if I ask my
17 colleague to speak to that question?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Sure, absolutely.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And please state your name
20 for the record.

21 MARIA DROGYACK: Sure, hi everyone. It's a
22 pleasure to be hear it's Maria Drogyack on the CCC
23 team doing the analysis of the admin data coming from
24 the DOE and the ACS. So, we nothing called the
25 breakdown in the testimony but we know prepandemic,

1
2 we had centers. So, prepandemic, there were like
3 around 20,000 seats, around 13,000 centers around
4 5,000 in schools and around 4,000 in family
5 providers.

6 As the city added new capacity, contracts, family
7 and center-based contracts, city also like mainly
8 added capacity in a school day, school year seats.
9 So, prepandemic, out of the entire contracted system,
10 75 percent for school day, school year seats across
11 all age groups. So, we are adding new seats with the
12 school day, school year only and we are getting
13 increased capacity but increased number of unused
14 seats. So, there were 33,000 in school year 21-22.
15 We can bring the data and share it with you by
16 community district.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: That would be great and
18 you're telling us that you believe those seats can be
19 filled?

20 MARIA DROGYACK: We are certain that those seats
21 can be filled. We are speaking to providers. We are
22 speaking to parents. We know that parents are - I
23 know our hours are not six-hour spending limits and I
24 know I as a parent struggle with after school care.

1
2 And sometimes even if I'm there to pay for the care,
3 there are no seats available.

4 So, there's like a whole ecosystem in the
5 afterschool care that is adding to the complexity.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you because I
7 felt it was important to hear from you before we talk
8 to the administration. So, I appreciate the
9 information, thank you.

10 MARIA DROGYACK: You're welcome.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.
12 Council Member Menin.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair.
14 First of all, I can't tell you how heartbreaking and
15 distressing it is to hear this testimony. Just
16 months ago, the Council passed and the Mayor signed
17 five bills, which are my bills to create universal
18 child care. So, we would be the first city in the
19 country to implement universal child care. We did
20 this of course for so many different reasons. We
21 know that 1,400 childcare facilities have closed in
22 recent years. We're never going to be able to
23 implement universal child care if we can't fix this
24 payment problem.

1
2 So, it's just heartbreaking to hear this
3 testimony. I really have two questions. One would
4 be for either the Day Care Council, United
5 Neighborhood Houses or anyone who is really dealing
6 with a lot of the providers. I'm just curious how
7 many providers you have heard from who have said that
8 they are at risk of closure because of this
9 nonpayment issue? If you could really quantify that
10 if possible.

11 GREGORY BRENDER: I don't really have a number on
12 it. We've definitely heard from a bunch and you know
13 one of the challenges in the early childhood field
14 and probably several fields in the human services, is
15 everyone really tries to do what's best. So, you
16 know if it were a company building a bridge, they'd
17 probably just stop building a bridge at this point.
18 And early childhood providers, sometimes struggle
19 beyond what they should be doing to keep open. So,
20 we do know of course and not all of you know of
21 Sheltering Arms which had closed and just some of the
22 data I have from a survey we did a while back was, we
23 had surveyed providers and 41.5 percent of them had
24 either missed payroll or delayed vendor payments due
25 to their late payments from DOE.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: My second question is
3 about the – we're getting a lot of complaints where
4 people are saying they're not sure who to talk to at
5 DOE about the reimbursements. So, I'm curious for
6 any of the panelists if you could answer. What type
7 of guidance have you received about who are you
8 supposed to at DOE on a nonpayment or late payment
9 issue?

10 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: Uhm, the issue is the
11 person you work with as your budget analyst, is the
12 person that you're normally supposed to connect with.
13 But when that person leaves that position, you have
14 to email their supervisor and that person is the only
15 one in that position. So, you're kind of just
16 emailing around hoping that somebody will answer you
17 and often times it takes weeks or months.

18 And so, it is not clear who you go to. I don't
19 even know what the structure is to get back payments
20 because it changes so frequently and there's no human
21 being you can speak to for guidance. You just have
22 to keep emailing and hope that somebody will respond
23 to you.

24

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, DOE is not proactively
3 sending any communication about who needs to be
4 contacted?

5 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: No.

6 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: Can I say at my site, we do have
7 a contact person but when you email her, she doesn't
8 respond. You email her boss, he doesn't respond.
9 So, you're constantly emailing and not getting any
10 answers.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, that's clearly
12 unacceptable, so thank you for that testimony.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd like to call
14 on Council Member Feliz.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you. Good afternoon
16 everyone. First, let me start by thanking our Chair
17 Rita Joseph. Thank you so much for doing a great job
18 leading on the many different issues related to
19 education. I also want to thank my colleagues who
20 have bills before this Committee today and I also
21 want to thank all of you. Thank you for serving our
22 youngest students. We're very grateful and very
23 thankful for the work that you do. And let me also
24 say that all of you deserve better. All of you and
25 also your team and especially our students. They

1
2 deserve better and what's happening is outrageous and
3 also it's unbelievable.

4 So, a few questions. Generally, let's say out of
5 the last ten payments, how many of them have been
6 delayed?

7 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: All.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, I'll be interested
9 in hearing from every one on the panel. All, okay
10 and by how long are payments generally delayed by?
11 How much time? More or less roughly, are you talking
12 about two month? Four months?

13 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: Sometimes it's three, four, five
14 months before we get payment.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: I would be interested in
16 hearing from every one on the panel on that question.
17 So, generally how long are payments delayed by and
18 all of us serve different communities and I just want
19 to make sure we get -

20 ELIZABETH BIRD: It would be hard to say exactly
21 on average but I mean, I can say that we just finally
22 received all payments for FY22 in January of this
23 past year.

24 Dr. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: I'm still waiting.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, and the final
3 question is, what's the most amount of time that
4 you've had a payment delayed by? What's the longest
5 you've had to wait to get paid for the work that
6 you've done, you and your team? Roughly if you don't
7 have the hard number.

8 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: I think roughly with us, it's
9 been like four, four months.

10 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: Same or longer.

11 ELIZABETH BIRD: I would say same, five to six
12 months.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, perfect. Thank you,
14 thank you so much.

15 IRENE LEW: And also, yeah, I just want to echo
16 that. You know it can take weeks to months but I
17 think it also depends on the system and what it was
18 before in terms of not being able to batch invoicing
19 and not be able to move to the next month and you
20 know having contracts registered and budgets
21 approved. That also holds up the payment process as
22 well, so I want to reiterate that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.
25 Council Member Sanchez.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so
3 much Chair. I also receive frantic calls from
4 providers in my district and so, I want to thank you
5 all for representing here today an issue that is
6 continuing to face so many of our families in the
7 city of New York.

8 One issue that I heard about from Fordham Bedford
9 Community Services up in my area is about the stipend
10 rate change that came down from the State of New York
11 last year. As one example of a technical correction
12 that is needed with accelerator and within the
13 systems that you all use to do your reporting. So,
14 the first question is to anyone who can answer. Have
15 these reimbursement rate changes; the higher hourly
16 rate requirements, have you had issues with that as
17 well? And then secondly, if we can just do down and
18 say if you are Counsel, how many providers you know
19 that are in the red and if you are a provider, are
20 you in the red? Thank you.

21 GREGORY BRENDER: So, with regard to the first
22 question, you were talking about the states increase
23 in the market rate?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah.
25

1
2 GREGORY BRENDER: I'm not as closely in touch
3 with the folks in the home-based community but I
4 think that I have heard from folks particularly our
5 colleague and advocacy, the EC on the move that there
6 have been - a lot of providers are not yet receiving
7 the increase in the market rate.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Any one
9 folks who are in the red. Who are in debt because of
10 the lack of payments.

11 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: I am definitely in
12 debt. I may end up having to close a brand-new
13 renovated school in my community if something doesn't
14 change. That's why I'm here today.

15 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: We are also in the red as well
16 with our landlord because we cannot make the
17 payments. As the saying goes, you have to borrow
18 from Peter to pay Paul, that's what we've been doing.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council Member
21 Stevens.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello, good afternoon
23 everyone. Thank you guys for being here. As we
24 know, it's always a struggle and all the work that
25 you do, to then have to still come and advocate and

1
2 then not being paid as always. It's just always
3 really difficult. So, I just, I had a quick
4 question. I just wanted to know, did any of the
5 providers on the panel, did you guys get an email
6 from DOE about batch payments yesterday? Batch
7 payments in general for FY23? If so, could you talk
8 a little bit about it please.

9 ELIZABETH BIRD: I can only say that I know that
10 we did receive some notification.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, there was some
12 notification to you guys?

13 ELIZABETH BIRD: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: And I know that the big
15 topic is also around the payment but could you talk
16 about some of the other issues you guys are - uhm,
17 the providers are facing with the contracting process
18 and things like that? Because I know, the payment is
19 obviously the most pressing issue but there is
20 another host of issues that I'm sure that you guys
21 often face and can't talk about because you're not
22 being paid and so, it also gets over shadowed. So, I
23 wanted to make sure we create a space so you can talk
24 about some of the other issues that folks are facing
25 and challenges.

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2 DR. SANAYI BECKLES-CANTON: One of the things I
3 would really like to say about being a provider, with
4 a city as large as New York City and you have several
5 systems or several city organizations overseeing
6 early childhood education. I think the biggest thing
7 I faced was the permitting process with DOH and DOE
8 not being in communication. And as a result of
9 speaking up about very I guess retaliatory practices
10 when you speak up about the issues you may face with
11 workers coming to your site over DOE, it seems as
12 though you are further stalled or disenfranchised
13 because you speak up. And there's no where you can
14 go. So, this accountability system is great that the
15 Mayor wants to open something within his office to
16 support early childhood education but there was no
17 speak of DOH. If something is not done about the
18 permitting process and the management of how they
19 manage providers like myself, you can't sustain
20 business because if they don't do their job or they
21 don't follow through and DOE and DOH do not talk to
22 each other. And so, because of that, we often times
23 suffer and experience a lot of issues that can be
24 prevented if there was better communication and
25

1
2 better systematic to support small providers like
3 myself.

4 JOYCE MCCLAMMY: I agree with that also. DOE and
5 DOH needs to have conversations so your own one
6 accord. And another issue is, we cannot enroll kids
7 all times of the year. 3-K and Pre-K but DOE can
8 continuously bring kids in, all time of the year. We
9 only have a set time that we can enroll kids. Once
10 that portal is closed, it's closed. So, that's an
11 issue as well.

12 ELIZABETH BIRD: Yeah, I would just echo that
13 because we are penalized if we're under enrolled but
14 we don't have any control over the process of
15 enrollment. If a family comes to us and says we, you
16 know, do you have any space and we can say yeah, we
17 do but we don't have direct control over that
18 process.

19 ELYSIA MURPHY: Just to piggyback off of that,
20 some of the things and I think that Gregory might
21 have mentioned this in his testimony, with the
22 centralized enrollment, there's little to no funding
23 for programs to do their own outreach and marketing
24 and I think it presents a huge challenge to fill
25 seats. And also, we hear a lot about the

1
2 inflexibility in the contracts to be able to serve
3 age groups that meet the needs of the families who
4 are coming seeking care.

5 GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, just to I guess following
6 on that, I think moving away from centralized
7 enrollment to hybrid would be incredibly beneficial
8 because you have a lot of trust of community-based
9 organizations and the neighborhoods they serve. You
10 have a lot of families who find it easier to engage
11 with a community-based organization and even with the
12 most well-meaning large government agency. The other
13 thing I would add on the topic of the DOH and DOE
14 coordination is the comprehensive background checks
15 performed by Department of Health. Those are also
16 significantly delayed and they're actually much more
17 delayed than the background checks conducted by the
18 PEP system at DOE. So, we kind of hope that the CBC
19 system can be reformed to move more quickly because
20 there's a lot of times where you have staff who are
21 not fully cleared. They've gone through a level of
22 clearance where they have to be supervised 100
23 percent of the time that they're in a room with
24 children and it creates a staffing issue throughout

1
2 both our early childhood programs and our youth
3 serving programs.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to recognize
5 Council Member Dinowitz, Council Member Ung, Powers,
6 Avilès, Ossè, and Hanif. Council Member Shekar.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you Chair Joseph.
8 The work you all do is indispensable and essential in
9 this city and so, we're very grateful to hear from
10 you all about the urgent fix or the needs of the
11 system. I just have two short questions. One is,
12 it's my understanding that in the past, you all were
13 able to get a bridge loan that would help to cover
14 rent, utilities and as I understand it, it will be
15 received within ten days. It would cover payroll
16 too. But this year, that's no longer an option
17 anymore, is that correct?

18 GREGORY BRENDER: it's because bridge loans are
19 only available for unregistered contracts. So, once
20 it's registered, which we do want registered
21 contracts, it's just not a sustainable system but
22 yeah, that option did not become - it became not an
23 option I guess when contacts were registered. I
24 actually don't know if there's a legal reason for
25

1
2 that, so that may be something that could be looked
3 into.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: That's my question too.
5 It may be the case for unregistered contracts but you
6 know why couldn't there be some you know,
7 combinations made for the registered ones given the
8 magnitude of the crisis we're facing now. My other
9 just quick question is it seems like increasing the
10 contract advance; so once you have a registered
11 contract, increase in the contract advance would be a
12 very effective way to help with this situation,
13 correct?

14 GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, absolutely and some other
15 agencies, obviously the agencies are doing that or
16 looking into it, so I think that would be something
17 really great and we're urging them to advance at 75
18 percent. Currently it's 35 percent.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: 35 percent?

20 GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, so for FY23, the advance
21 would be expanded for pretty much every one since
22 we're more than 35 percent.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Exactly, I was going to
24 say we're probably approaching closer to 75 percent
25

1
2 than we are 35 percent. Alright, thank you very
3 much.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Alright, thank you so much
5 for your testimony.

6 PANEL: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you to everybody on the
8 panel. We will now hear from our next panel. We
9 will hear from the Administration Kara Ahmed and Dan
10 Weisberg.

11 Kara Ahmed and Dan Weisberg, I will now call on
12 each of you individually for a response. Please
13 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the
14 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
15 before these Committees and to respond honestly to
16 Council Member questions? Kara Ahmed?

17 KARA AHMED: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dan Weisberg?

19 DAN WEISBERG: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. You may
21 begin your testimony.

22 KARA AHMED: Good afternoon. We actually have
23 some slides as well; I don't know if they are going
24 to be able to come up. If not, no worries. Yes, one
25 moment.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Just hold for one minute for
3 the slides.

4 KARA AHMED: Great, thank you so much. Good
5 afternoon, Chair Joseph and the members of the
6 Education Committee that are here today. Thank you
7 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dr. Kara
8 Ahmed and I am the Deputy Chancellor for Early
9 Childhood Education for New York City Public Schools.
10 I am pleased to be joined here today by First Deputy
11 Chancellor, Dan Weisberg.

12 As a former early childhood educator and
13 principal, this work continues to be personal to me.
14 And it is personal to our Chancellor, who rightly
15 proclaims that bold futures begin with bright starts.
16 We are both proud of what have accomplished in a
17 short amount of time and we're confident in the
18 progress that we will continue to make. We are
19 committed to offering a range of high-quality, birth-
20 to-five programs in every neighborhood, based on the
21 needs and preferences of our families.

22 We are grateful to have the capacity to serve
23 over 140,000 children, which includes more than
24 10,000 infants and toddlers and we are providing 3-K
25 and Pre-K in every district in the city in a variety

1
2 of settings, including both district elementary
3 schools, standalone Pre-K Centers, family child care
4 programs, Charter Schools and community-based
5 organizations. I want to publicly thank all of our
6 early childhood educators and our program and school
7 leaders, who have devoted themselves to serving our
8 children and their families. We could not do this
9 work without them.

10 New York City Public Schools has a budget of \$2.2
11 billion for our early childhood education portfolio,
12 which represents the largest early childhood
13 education program in the nation and it includes all
14 programming serving children from birth to five years
15 old. Approximately \$456 million, or 21 percent of our
16 budget, comprises one-time federal stimulus funds.
17 Approximately 25 percent of our overall budget
18 includes state funding, primarily for our programming
19 for our four-year-olds, and 6 percent of our budget
20 is funding from the child care Block Development
21 Grant that supports our 3-K and Pre-K extended year
22 and extended day seats, as well as our infant and
23 toddler seats across our portfolio.

24 High-quality early childhood education that meets
25 the needs of our young children is an essential part

1
2 of our school system and it's a priority of this
3 administration. We want to continue to build on
4 what's working while addressing any gaps that
5 adversely impact our children and their families.
6 When I came before the Education Committee in
7 October, I outlined the work my team has done in
8 hearing from our programs and our schools on the
9 ground level, as we worked towards developing a
10 comprehensive vision for a high-quality birth to five
11 program built on an inclusive, mixed-delivery model
12 that optimizes seats to provide high-quality programs
13 aligned with family needs and preferences.
14 Guarantees sustainable, equitable, and responsible
15 financial support for programming. Develops and
16 fairly compensates the workforce, and ensures a safe,
17 high-quality early learning across New York City for
18 every child in every zip code.

19 As we plan for the long-term success of early
20 childhood education, we know there have been and
21 continue to be challenges in this work. We are proud
22 that Chancellor Banks announced last year that our
23 commitment to help stabilize the CBO sector was a
24 priority. Our CBO leaders are invaluable partners in
25 this work. A workforce comprised primarily of women,

1
2 and in particular women of color. So many of our CBO
3 partners are cornerstones of their communities, and
4 it is important to work in partnership to ensure
5 we're serving their neighborhoods as best as we
6 possibly can. A great example of this is the ongoing
7 work our team has been doing to support our partners
8 with the Shirley Chisholm Daycare center in Central
9 Brooklyn.

10 In collaboration and genuine partnership with the
11 leadership of this program, as well as elected
12 officials in the community, our team has provided
13 targeted supports and coaching on an ongoing basis
14 that has helped to facilitate a successful program
15 delivering high-quality early childhood education for
16 children and supportive services for families. Our
17 office continues to work in collaboration with this
18 program, ensuring critical structures are in place,
19 such as adequate and proper staffing, sound fiscal
20 operations, developmentally appropriate teaching and
21 learning systems, and health and safety practices.
22 This is the type of work that we are committed to
23 practicing across the sector to support our programs
24 and our schools and ensure the focus remains on our
25 students receiving high-quality services.

1
2 More broadly, in early November, our Chancellor
3 announced a number of steps to support the CBO
4 sector. I'd like to point your attention to slide
5 one if you don't mind turning. Thank you. And at
6 that time, we knew that we were faced with a very
7 large issue. Over 4,000 invoices that had not yet
8 been submitted for the previous Fiscal Year,
9 predating our own administration. We knew that there
10 was a sector that had been severely destabilized
11 prior to the pandemic that we needed to make sure
12 that we were addressing and supporting and helping to
13 really stabilize and bring back sustainability and
14 stability.

15 And so, our Chancellor announced at that time a
16 number of steps to help support the CBO sector,
17 including a rapid response team to ensure every
18 provider with unsubmitted invoices got the one-to-one
19 help that they needed. A commitment to pay invoices
20 in a timely manner and a new stabilization fund to
21 pay providers 75 percent of their FY22 contract
22 regardless of their expenses and regardless of their
23 enrollment.

24 We are very pleased we were able to meet all of
25 these commitments in just 12 weeks. The rapid

1
2 response unit has made thousands of calls, sent e-
3 mails, held meetings with providers, virtually and in
4 person, walking them through the processes to get
5 their invoices submitted, resolved and paid. We've
6 changed our invoicing processing to speed payment to
7 get the stabilization fund up and running. If you
8 could go to the next slide, that would be great.

9 Since the Chancellor's announcement of our added
10 support to stabilize the sector just twelve weeks
11 ago, I am proud to report that we have been able to
12 assist our CBO partners in submitting over 3800 back
13 invoices from the previous fiscal year, resulting in
14 over \$122 million in payments in just that short
15 amount of time, and totaling more than \$1 billion
16 over the course of fiscal year 22. We've also
17 delivered on the city's commitment to stand up
18 stabilization fund grants and have already identified
19 dozens of eligible vendors who have received, in
20 total, millions of dollars in stabilization payments.
21 If you could go to the next slide that would be
22 great.

23 Numbers that will continue growing in the coming
24 weeks. And so, as back invoices are submitted and
25 all invoices are submitted for FY22, if payments do

1
2 not equal 75 percent of the contract for a provider
3 for fiscal year '22, they then become eligible for
4 the stabilization grant, which many providers have
5 already received tens to millions of dollars.

6 In order to sustain this crucial work, we must
7 ensure its financial sustainability. The system that
8 we inherited unfortunately has been plagued by some
9 deep flaws in the system that still hinder our
10 progress. This includes a grave problem in our
11 system of oversaturation, too many similar seats in
12 one geographical area, while not meeting the demand
13 in other communities. That leads to thousands of
14 empty seats in some communities and long waitlists in
15 others. Not only is this not the best use of our
16 resources, but the imbalance creates unhealthy
17 competition between and among our early childhood
18 programs and schools, and ultimately resulting in
19 under-enrollment across the system. That has
20 destabilized the sector, especially our community-
21 based organizations that our city has relied on for
22 years and again, are led mainly by women and women of
23 color. In addition, we are dealing with are dealing
24 with inequitable pay rates per child across settings,
25 inadequate processes within DOE for supporting our

1
2 CBO partners, and a 3K expansion that was funded
3 through stimulus dollars that now faces a fiscal
4 cliff.

5 I want to be clear, we are not reducing current
6 funding to 3-K. We currently have a lot of seats and
7 enough seats for every 3-year-old who needs one. But
8 we are pushing this work forward by building a birth
9 to five program that will include 3-K and Pre-K and
10 it will be based on the needs and preferences of
11 families and their communities, though we acknowledge
12 the big challenge of determining how we will fund it
13 considering the impending fiscal cliff. But we will
14 solve this problem, in collaboration with you,
15 because our children's successful and their
16 educational journey absolutely depends on it.

17 We arrived at this place with city, state, and
18 federal help, and we will continue to need city,
19 state, federal help to build on it. But we have to
20 change our landscape by creating a sustainable and
21 responsible financial plan that can fund our long-
22 term commitments to children and guarantee stability
23 for their families. Our administration also believes
24 that every child from every zip code must have access
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1
2 to high-quality early childhood experience, and that
3 includes our children with disabilities.

4 Last December, we announced that our early
5 childhood education system would include a strategic
6 and intentional focus on serving young children
7 living with disabilities and their families, and we
8 thank Chair Joseph for standing with us at that time.
9 New York City Public Schools is addressing these
10 historic inequities by not only expanding the number
11 of seats available, but also ensuring that existing
12 seats can remain in place, giving our families and
13 providers stability. We are ensuring pay parity to
14 those providers and access to the same length of the
15 school day that a child would receive in any of our
16 early childhood classrooms. And many of these newly
17 expanded special education preschool seats exist in
18 under-resourced communities. Families of students
19 with disabilities need reliable childcare, and we are
20 committed to making that a reality in New York City.
21 We thank Chair Joseph and the Council for the immense
22 leadership on this issue.

23 I will now turn to the proposed legislation from
24 Council Member Menin. We have not yet had an
25 opportunity to fully examine the proposed legislation

1
2 but we do look forward to working with the Council,
3 so thank you. While there has been incredible
4 progress made, let me be very clear, this is
5 certainly just the beginning. High-quality early
6 childhood education that meets the needs of our young
7 children is an essential part of our school system
8 and a priority of this Administration and our mission
9 isn't close to being accomplished. We have a lot of
10 work ahead of us, and we aim to continue on this path
11 in service to children and to their families across
12 New York City. I thank you all for your time and I
13 look forward to answering any questions that the
14 committee may have.

15 DAN WEISBERG: Chair Joseph, if I could beg your
16 indulgence, we just have a couple more slides, is it
17 okay if I just take you to that very briefly?

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead please.

19 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you. So, if you would, flip
20 to the next slide, we just want to give you a little
21 bit more data before we answer questions. So, what
22 about FY23? Deputy Chancellor Ahmed went through the
23 story for FY22. For FY23, we anticipate paying out
24 about \$1.2 billion to early childhood providers. We
25 did issue advances at the beginning of the year

1
2 totaling about \$468 million. That's about 35
3 percent. Many agencies pay about 25 percent. We're
4 pleased that we're able to do a little better than
5 that. We have received about 2,700 invoices thus
6 far. We paid 2,200 of those, totaling about \$162
7 million. The average wait time for paying an invoice
8 for FY23 is about 17 ½ business days. I'm going to
9 drop out of character for a second. Until a year
10 plus ago, I myself was ahead of a nonprofit and I
11 know very much what it's like to toss and turn
12 worrying about whether you can make payroll waiting
13 for government to pay your bills. If I was dealing
14 with an agency as a nonprofit head that was paying
15 invoices in 17 ½ business days, I am telling you
16 Council Members, I would have jumped for joy.

17 That's not to say that everything is perfect. It
18 is not. You absolutely can find providers who are
19 waiting longer. We have to do better but what this
20 represents is real improvement. So, on that point
21 about us not being perfect, we do have 25 invoices
22 for FY23 pending that have been pending over 30 days
23 and that's a problem. That's not good. We're
24 working to resolve those right now as we speak. We
25 want that number to be zero but that represents less

1 than one percent of the invoices we received and
2 again, what that represents is improvement. And then
3 just on the next slide. This is the continuing
4 challenge. So, what does this grab? This is the
5 rate month by month at which we are receiving
6 invoices in FY23. We pay out the advances at the
7 beginning of the year, which is great, about 35
8 percent. As a result of that, we don't get many
9 invoices in, in August and September. That's a
10 problem. We have to help the providers. It's not
11 the providers fault, this is our fault. We have to
12 figure out a system where we are getting those
13 invoices early in the year because you can see what
14 happens. As that advance dissipates, the number of
15 invoices in January has spiked up, which is good
16 because we're getting them paid more quickly but
17 wouldn't it be better for those providers if they
18 didn't have to hustle and rush and stress and they
19 were getting in their invoices, which we are really
20 trying to encourage them to do by the 5th of every
21 month, and then they're getting paid by the end of
22 the month. That's the cadence we want, so you don't
23 have to submit multiple invoices. You don't have to

1
2 go back and forth. You get into a cadence. We don't
3 yet have the infrastructure to support that.

4 And finally, from my first tour of duty at the
5 New York City Public Schools, there was a story that
6 went around probably apocryphal about a middle school
7 gym with a gym floor that had been replaced several
8 times. Three, four, five times over the course of
9 five years and nobody had thought to look at the roof
10 which was leaking which was causing that floor to
11 buckle and need to be replaced. The issue, yes, we
12 have issues on payment. No question about it, we've
13 got to do better. We have to be easier and more
14 customer friendly. I think we're getting better but
15 we still have a ways to go. But the fundamental
16 problem, the fundamental problem if you are a
17 provider, is that you have taken a lease for four
18 classrooms because the DOE years past gave you a
19 contract for 3-K classrooms and you can only fill two
20 of them.

21 And so, you were only getting paid; because our
22 revenue comes in by students, you are getting paid by
23 student. That makes it very hard to pay the rent.
24 We have to do something about the fact that we have
25 so many approaching 40,000 empty seats in 3-K and

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2 Pre-K. We want to work with all of you on outreach.
3 I'm sure we can do better on outreach but we're also
4 going to have to continue the process as Dr. Ahmed
5 talking about, making sure that we are responding to
6 the community need. If they need infant toddler
7 seats, let's make sure those providers can provide
8 infant toddler seats. If they need 3-K, Pre-K, let's
9 make sure they have the right number so the providers
10 are never in a situation where they've been
11 contracted for seats we may have opened up a provider
12 right down the street or one of our schools right
13 down the street and there's just not enough kids
14 within a four-block ratio there. And so, they can't
15 fill the seats and that creates the financial strain.
16 That's the leaky roof. The leaky roof is the
17 misallocation of seats. We have to deal with the
18 buckling floor but please, help us to fix that leaky
19 roof. Thank you Chair very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Deputy Chancellor.
21 Alright, so let's talk about funding. What was the
22 budgeted total amount for child care, 3-K, UPK
23 services in FY22?

24 KARA AHMED: I'm sorry Chair Joseph, my mic was
25 off. For 3-K and Pre-K?

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2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 3-K, UPK services in FY22,
3 what was the total amount budgeted?

4 KARA AHMED: Sorry, we have FY23 numbers with us,
5 so.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: No FY22?

7 DAN WEISBERG: It was approximately \$2.2 billion
8 overall. Chair, sorry, we'll get you the exact -

9 KARA AHMED: We can get the exact number though
10 for you for FY22.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. What's some
12 supported UPK and 3-K in school settings? How much
13 of that amount supported UPK and 3-K in school
14 settings?

15 DAN WEISBERG: I don't think we have that number
16 Chair, apologize, we'll get that for you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Just need the nitty gritty
18 for this. Uhm, so what amount supported contracted
19 for family day cares and center-based care for
20 infants, toddlers, 3-K and UPK?

21 KARA AHMED: For FY22, we'd have to get back to
22 you on those details.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. So, okay, no problem.
24 So, how much child care and development block grant
25 funding did New York City receive for New York State,

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2 from New York State in FY22 and FY23 and how much of
3 it has been spent so far?

4 KARA AHMED: For the CCDBG funding, we've had
5 about \$125 million in an allocation. There are
6 claiming periods, so that money is filtered from the
7 federal government to the state to ECS, not directly
8 to DOE and then we're reimbursed through ACS. So,
9 there's a claiming period that's happening going into
10 March. And so, those numbers will get calculated and
11 totaled.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you'll send that over as
13 well.

14 KARA AHMED: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. As of the end of
16 September 2022, early childhood providers were owed
17 \$460 million by DOE for work performed during FY22.
18 But according to an audit from See Change Capital
19 Partners, how much is currently owed to early child
20 providers for work performed during the FY22?

21 KARA AHMED: I can answer this, sure. So, as we
22 shared, you know we've paid already over \$122 million
23 in the back invoices for FY22. We do suspect that
24 there may be more invoices that need to be submitted
25 and we have a rapid response team that's still in

1
2 effect. We still have our analysts who are still in
3 place and still working directly with providers, so
4 if they do have an invoice from FY22, please we ask
5 that you still submit it and we will pay it. We
6 cannot tell you what that total will be, only because
7 invoices will vary. Not every invoice result in a
8 payment. For some providers, it is going to be based
9 on their enrollment and their expenses and so we
10 would not know that until we actually see the
11 invoice.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you know how many
13 outstanding invoices remain for the FY22 contracts?

14 KARA AHMED: We have approximates but we couldn't
15 tell you. We know that there are about 84 vendors,
16 which is a very small amount considering the universe
17 that still have some unsubmitted invoices. So, we're
18 still working with those 84 vendors. We will
19 continue to work with those 80. That work doesn't
20 stop. You know, while we're working on two fiscal
21 years concurrently, that work will continue.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So far, how many of the
23 providers have been fully paid and how many have
24 partially been paid?

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2 KARA AHMED: So, there have been, for FY22, we
3 had approximate, almost 797 I think active vendors
4 and about 89 percent of those, 713 have closed out
5 FY22.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Earlier, you
7 heard about the rapid response team. Have the
8 response team conducted all of the promised support
9 sessions, weekly meetings, site visit for all
10 providers? If not, how many providers have not yet
11 received the support?

12 KARA AHMED: The rapid response team has been in
13 contact since early November with every single vendor
14 that had an unsubmitted invoice, whether they had 12
15 unsubmitted invoices or one unsubmitted invoice.
16 Actively calling on a daily and weekly basis,
17 offering to set up in person or virtual meetings,
18 walking folks through the process over the phone.
19 Any support that was needed, we are there to offer
20 and that work continues. That doesn't end.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct but earlier in
22 Joyce's testimony, she said she has never heard from
23 the Rapid Response Team.

24 KARA AHMED: That's unfortunate. I, myself have
25 been in contact with Ms. McClammy often and so has

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2 our team. We've been in direct contact and I know
3 that the rapid response team has been in contact with
4 her directly to support with her FY22 invoices to be
5 submitted. And I know that I've also been in
6 personal contact with Ms. Mcclammy.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what about the emails?
8 She also said that she emails and it takes forever
9 for someone to respond.

10 KARA AHMED: You know I certainly can speak to
11 Ms. Mcclammy directly and look into that. I just
12 know that we've had constant and consistent
13 communication with her. We're happy to partner with
14 her. Any support that she needs to get in her
15 remaining invoices. I think for FY22, we may be all
16 set and for FY23 any support that we can offer we
17 will continue to do so.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, Ms. Mcclammy you hear
19 that? On the record, they will support you. Has DOE
20 been able to fully meet the goal of processing
21 invoices within the 30 days? That was the goal.

22 DAN WEISBERG: Yes Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, Ms. Mcclammy. What is
24 the average length of time between a provider
25

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2 submitting an invoice and receiving funds from that
3 invoice into their account?

4 DAN WEISBERG: 17 ½ days, business days Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 17, okay, alright, despite
6 deployment of a rapid response team and other changes
7 of nonpayment, according to last month at the New
8 York State healing centers, we're still having
9 difficulty submitted on invoices, unregistered
10 contracts, have missed payroll or vendor payments due
11 to delays and we heard that across the panel today
12 with the delays in payment. Do you have a timeline
13 as to when is the outstanding payments for FY22 will
14 be completed and FY23?

15 KARA AHMED: For FY22 as invoices come in, we
16 continue to pay them. And so, as we've shared you
17 know the majority, close to 3,800 or over 3,800, I
18 think even as of today, have already been received
19 and paid.

20 So, as they come in, we will continue that review
21 and process them and the same for FY23.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: FY23, some of the providers
23 are saying eight months into the school year, some of
24 them have not been paid. How do we remedy that, so
25 you stabilize. See, we use the key words stabilizing

1
2 the sector and that's one way to stabilize the sector
3 is making sure that vendors and providers have money
4 in their hands to continue these services.

5 KARA AHMED: Absolutely, I couldn't agree more.
6 If there's any provider that feels they have not been
7 paid for eight months, I need them to reach out to me
8 directly. So, that and I've shared that with you
9 Chair Joseph, please send me any provider that feels
10 they haven't been reached out to in eight months,
11 that haven't been paid, we will absolutely look into.
12 But I think as First Deputy Chancellor has shared,
13 the payment process has only improved over time and
14 we've been able to turn around payments in less than
15 two weeks, sometimes in the same day and/or the same
16 week.

17 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, I would say Chair, yes,
18 please let us know about anybody who's waited more
19 than 30 days to get an invoice paid. Seriously,
20 anybody, we don't care what the situation is. Text
21 me anytime day or night or Dr. Ahmed. If somebody
22 hasn't been paid for FY23 Fiscal Year as yet, I'm
23 going to say that that either means there's an issue
24 in them being able to submit invoices. Which is not
25 their fault. We have to figure out how to help them

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2 to do that and they should have gotten an advance of
3 about 35 percent of their contract. If they didn't
4 get that, again, there's a problem we want to hear
5 about it right away so that we can address that.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Earlier you stated about you
7 have about 466 invoices to be paid. What is the
8 timeline and when can the vendors expect the
9 payments?

10 KARA AHMED: This is for FY23?

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

12 KARA AHMED: For FY23 we're looking at a little
13 over 400 that have been received less than 30 days
14 ago. So, some of them are just even from today.
15 Some are from this week; some are from last week.
16 So, those will be reviewed and processed and
17 sometimes there's a back-and-forth exchange with the
18 provider if the invoices needs to be corrected or
19 updated or things added to it. But those will be
20 processed and it will be less than 30 days.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can we get a commitment on
22 the record for a fast turnaround time?

23 KARA AHMED: Absolutely.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We heard earlier about this
25 contracting, this cumbersome contracting system to

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2 expedite payments. Walk me through the timeline in
3 reforming it. What does it look like for providers?
4 Because the system as we already know – you inherited
5 it but now, guess what? It's yours so you have to
6 fix it. So, what is the timeline on getting that
7 fixed, so were not here again having the same
8 conversation again.

9 KARA AHMED: I can talk about contracting sure.
10 There is a process and I don't think we would
11 disagree. It can often be a very cumbersome process
12 for any small business owner to navigate right. It's
13 complicated and it's full of steps. And it's also
14 not just full of steps and one of the panelists I
15 think said this is that it's not just full of steps
16 for the DOE right, because there's other city
17 agencies in which this process goes through. So, I
18 know that to your point, yes, we did inherit this
19 system and I know that we work very closely with our
20 other teams and divisions within the DOE to support
21 the contracting process because it does go through
22 many different layers and to really, really improve
23 and strengthen upon the pieces that we can absolutely
24 control. Which is staying in close contact with our
25

1
2 providers every step of the way of this contracting
3 process.

4 Sometimes we might not even have a better answer
5 on their status if it's left the DOE but the fact
6 that we can stay in close communication to keep
7 giving them any update that we can, I find is a
8 reassurance for folks and actually supportive and
9 helpful in moving the process forward. Within our
10 own internal controls, any of the pieces that need to
11 happen are the things that we're trying to move as
12 quickly and as efficiently on as possible. There are
13 pieces that have to come from the provider. A
14 submitted budget, things that have to be approved
15 before they can even move or shift from one office to
16 the next, so the best way that we can break that down
17 are through trainings and overviews for anyone who
18 has received a new award, which happened last spring
19 into the summer.

20 Again, that constant communication. Here's where
21 you are in the step. Here is the next step. You are
22 still within the DOE. It's now out of the DOE's
23 hands, it's gone to PEP, it's gone to the
24 Comptroller's Office. Whatever those pieces are,
25 those are the pieces that we're trying to make sure

1
2 that we are tightening up as much as we can on our
3 end, but also staying in close communication with
4 providers so that they're fully empowered through
5 that process.

6 DAN WEISBERG: And just some numbers Chair. The
7 good news is that we have about 1530 contracts for
8 FY23, the providers to avoid confusion. Some
9 providers have multiple contracts, so this doesn't
10 mean there's 1500 providers but 1530 contracts. All
11 but 34 have been registered, so we want those 34 to
12 be registered for sure. Again, this is cumbersome
13 process but it's improving.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, it is improving but
15 there's also understaffing. How does that – there's
16 a lot of word that there's not enough staffing in the
17 office to support this kind of work and that needs a
18 lot of hands-on deck. How do you plan on staffing
19 the office to make sure the needs of the providers
20 are being met?

21 KARA AHMED: So, I would like to answer that
22 question and also just to add to Dan's, the First
23 Deputy Chancellor's comments on the unregistered
24 piece. Some of those contracts to speak to
25 amendments. And so, I just want to be clear that

1
2 they're not full provider contracts. So, Council
3 Member Gutiérrez, I thank her for raising up what I
4 believe she was referring to as the family child care
5 market rate increases, which go through an amendment
6 process. That would be an example of an amendment
7 but not necessarily a contract. So, providers can
8 continue to be paid. They go through the same budget
9 process etc., as an amendment is occurring right, or
10 if additional seats were added to some one's contract
11 or there was a change in seats. Those are all the
12 amendment pieces.

13 But Chair Joseph to your question around
14 staffing, again, we're talking about multiple
15 divisions that are handling contracts within the DOE.
16 So, on the early childhood end, you know we've had
17 sufficient staffing at the central level and
18 specifically on the fiscal end, right. We've had a
19 group of folks that have been here for a number of
20 years that remain intact and dedicated and committed.
21 They are incredible human beings I will say. They
22 work tirelessly day and night and they too, knowing
23 the system that's been in place has led really in
24 lint, really incredible and valuable feedback of ways

25

1
2 that it can be improved because they've lived through
3 it and they've seen it from its inception.

4 And so, they've been incredibly supportive. We
5 also have a number of staff members in our division
6 of contract and purchasing that are working extremely
7 hard at processing contracts and improving those
8 systems. And I would agree and certainly First
9 Deputy Chancellor could jump in here, but that we are
10 sufficiently staffed. Always room to keep improving
11 the systems around it. I don't know if you would
12 want to add anything else.

13 DAN WEISBERG: Just that we're looking at, I
14 think Chair you mentioned in the past, you know part
15 of this is is it is too labor intensive. Most of the
16 labor in this case is in our procurement unit.
17 Central procurement. It's too labor intensive. We
18 need to get into 2023 here and improve our technology
19 systems. That is something we are actively looking
20 at to see how we can bring in technology systems,
21 it's going to make the whole thing less labor
22 intensive and speed it up for our vendors.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. I'm going to
24 pass the next set of questions to my colleague
25 Majority Leader Powers.

1
2 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Thank you. Nice to see
3 you. Thanks for the testimony. Thanks for being
4 here. Thank you our Chair for doing a hearing on the
5 topic. I know we are all very interested and
6 concerned with.

7 I want to just talk a little bit, just specific,
8 in East Side specific in Council Member as well, my
9 neighboring colleague on the upper east side. We've
10 been talking for a very long time on Pre-K and 3-K
11 programs to make sure we're filling in the gaps and
12 addressing the need. And I can tell you from a very
13 high rent area, having these programs are a magnet
14 for families, young families to want to stay in the
15 city and continue to be here in our neighborhood
16 community. There are noticeable gaps that I've seen
17 in the past when it comes to 3-K programs being
18 rolled out in our districts. I understand that under
19 the last Administration, it was not the starting
20 point where 3-K was and I understand.

21 So, I have a couple questions. One is, are there
22 any other plans or intentions at this point as your
23 changing and reconfiguring this program and obviously
24 talking about this program in this years budget, any
25 plans to address places where there might be gaps?

1
2 Two is, and I'm not advocating necessarily take
3 away from where there's a need in other communities
4 but certainly where there is an unfilled slots and
5 funding to be able to distribute those places. And
6 three is, I think the Council has received some of it
7 but can you share any data by district, the Council
8 District about like, so Council District 4 for
9 instance in my district about how many seats there
10 are and applications, the need, things like that.

11 And then I guess the last question is because
12 then I'll just let you guys go, is it feels to me
13 like in a lot of the unfilled areas and some of the
14 slots we're talking about are really, really good
15 slots. They're all day. They fill a real need for
16 parents here in the city and some of those seems to
17 be going unfilled and that shocks me.

18 So, it does ask me the question whether we are
19 doing enough to reach those parents and this is not
20 all, everyone, this Administrations issue. This is a
21 program that's been going through a lot over the last
22 few years but I do have a concern about how we are
23 reaching folks to make sure. And the reason I ask my
24 question is like, yeah, because I also get concerns
25 from the parents and I hear from them are seeing

1 programs out there but they're just too far away.

2 It's out – it's too far away from their house, so it
3 does not make sense for them to do the entire commute
4 on their way to work and works change obviously.

5 So, a lot of questions. Want to know about
6 District 4. Want to know about how we might shift
7 and you know, unused seats other places and wanting
8 yeah, get a better handle on what we're doing right
9 now to fill in gaps.

10 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you Mr. Leader, appreciate
11 that. Hopefully, we took good notes. Dr. Ahmed will
12 come in with some of data that which we do have. On
13 the issue of are we doing enough to make sure
14 families are aware? Let me start with the good news.
15 The good news is last year Pre-K, sorry 3-K
16 applications were up by about 20 percent. So, that's
17 good. Still many, many empty seats on the order of
18 16,000 empty seats in 3-K but it's good that outreach
19 is bearing fruit.

20 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: How many applications
21 total?

22 DAN WEISBERG: We'll pull that for you. Kara may
23 have that even while I'm speaking. And you know we
24 have opened up the application process even for 2023
25

1
2 and again, 3-K demand year over year is up by another
3 2,000 or so just in a short period of time that the
4 application portal has been open. So, that's the
5 good news.

6 The bad news, the challenging news is, yeah we
7 don't want any of these seats to be empty and so,
8 we've got to make sure we do everything we can to get
9 the information about free quality in some cases,
10 extended day, extended year seats are available to
11 you, to every family. So, we definitely want to work
12 with you about how to get that word out in a more
13 effective way and even broader way. The data I
14 believe we've shared some data. We'll make sure it's
15 the right data with Chair Joseph and happy to share
16 it with any member who wants - who's looking for data
17 in your particular district. And generally, Dr.
18 Ahmed and her team have begun this process. We're
19 not waiting. We are doing a needs assessment to try
20 to really get a fix on what the demand is in
21 particular micro-neighborhoods cuz you say. We don't
22 want to walk our three-year-olds you know 20 blocks.
23 That's not good, so it's really a very small area
24 that we're looking at. We're doing that but we're
25 not waiting for that.

1
2 So, Dr. Ahmed will give you the particulars but
3 we have already begun changing the configuration.
4 Because very often this isn't about taking seats away
5 from one area and give them to another. It's about
6 making sure the configuration in that area meets the
7 demand, right? So, if infant/toddlers opposed to you
8 know Pre-K for example in a particular area. But
9 Chair, if it's okay, Dr. Ahmed will give a little bit
10 of data.

11 KARA AHMED: And I'd also like to answer your
12 question about the number of applications in 2022.
13 It's almost 40,000 for a 3-K 39,730. That's up from
14 2021 in which it was 33,208.

15 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: What was the number 40?

16 KARA AHMED: I'm sorry?

17 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: The number of
18 applications contribute the number?

19 KARA AHMED: 39,230, yeah.

20 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: And how many seats are
21 there?

22 KARA AHMED: There are currently 55,000 seats,
23 yeah and about 16,000 of those are unfilled, yeah.
24 Uhm, you know we heard a lot and thank you First
25 Deputy Chancellor Weisberg. We heard a lot from the

1
2 panelists before us around this misallocation. I
3 think we've been saying this now for several months,
4 almost for a year around where we know that there's
5 an absolute need for change and not just about
6 shifting to where we saw areas of unmet need but also
7 insuring that we are eliciting and understanding what
8 the voices of the community. We have a variety of
9 settings as I shared previously in my testimony. We
10 are prioritizing a vision of early childhood that's
11 built on a mixed model delivery system.

12 So, that means that we want to make sure that we
13 want to make sure that we're understanding from
14 families where they want their children to be.
15 Whether that be a center-based program, a family
16 child care program, a district school, a stand-alone
17 Pre-K center or a Charter school. Their choice and
18 their decision becomes really, really important.

19 So that was one point that I wanted to make sure
20 that I got in there. But I also - I know I'm going
21 to share some data on some places where we've made
22 some changes already and I think that's really
23 important including on the upper east side. We're
24 going into this school alone; we're able to identify
25 unfilled Pre-K seats leaning into the voice of our

1
2 program leaders. From CBO's and from our school
3 principals and convert those to 3-K seats. And
4 that's just one of the several examples of what the
5 work has been since last spring.

6 So, that work has not stopped. We are engaged in
7 an external needs analysis in this moment and when
8 those results are in in the next few months, we're
9 absolutely committed in sharing those with Chair
10 Joseph and having a briefing with you to discuss
11 those further. Because those will help us really
12 make some determinations on a large scale to do
13 exactly what we - I think we're all agreeing to.
14 Which is, ensuring that we are addressing unmet need
15 and reducing oversaturation and shifting resources
16 where they're needed the most.

17 In Staten Island alone going into this year, we
18 were able to shift a number of unfilled Pre-k and 3-K
19 seats from one side of the island to the other side
20 of the island, just to ensure that the needs of
21 families are actually being met.

22 In our family child care providers, we had over
23 500 unused 3-K seats, unused. And so, we converted
24 those to infant toddler seats, extended day and
25 extended year, right? As we know for working

1
2 families, our student parents that are attending
3 school while parenting that that doesn't stop on June
4 30th and it doesn't stop at 220 on any given day,
5 right?

6 And so, to the point that I heard many make
7 already, absolutely. Looking for ways to make sure
8 that our extended day, extended year seats are
9 available and accessible for families. Right now,
10 that's one of our fill rates that's probably at the
11 highest of being unfilled, is our extended day and
12 extended year, which also says to us again, there's a
13 misallocation of where those seats are actually
14 located.

15 To the point of enrollment, I just want to make a
16 point. I know I heard a lot from the panelist around
17 the centralized enrollment. For infants and
18 toddlers, enrollment is not centralized or handled
19 directly through the Department of Education. That
20 happens at individual programs and so, that is
21 completely decentralized and that is also a place
22 where we're seeing that that there is a huge gap of
23 unfilled seats. And yet, we know for sure New
24 Yorkers can and need infant toddler care.

1
2 So, it is our obligation, it's our responsibility
3 and this is our priority of really looking at where
4 those seats are and where they actually need to be so
5 that we're serving the greatest amount of New Yorkers
6 as possible.

7 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Thank you. My time is
8 up. I just would love to have a follow-up meeting
9 with the team at the DOE at some point and colleagues
10 who represent the east side to talk about where the
11 gaps are and to where we can fill those in. So,
12 appreciate it, thanks.

13 KARA AHMED: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member
15 Powers. Council Member Brewer.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.
17 Picking up on earlier, I agree with you about the
18 decentralization of infant and toddler but the group
19 earlier, Gregory and everybody else was asking for
20 across the board decentralization. That's question
21 number one, why we can't do it?

22 Question number two, I was around forever and I
23 saw everybody had a T-shirt on saying Pre-K, K, etc.,
24 it was a de Blasio thing. You got to do that.
25 That's the only way. Nobody reads a newspaper in the

1 city anymore. Nobody watches television anymore.
2 They're on the streets, they need to see visually
3 this information. So, you have to do that kind of
4 outreach. I have not heard a peep and I know only
5 Manhattan perhaps, but I know what's going on in the
6 streets. You don't have any publicity about these
7 programs. You just don't.

9 So, two questions. What about passport? That's
10 number one. Two, can we decentralize? Number two
11 and then also can you do the Press. And I just also
12 want to mention the address Deputy Chancellor is,
13 1972 Broadway \$23 million. I want to get an answer
14 on that. I assume you have one, it's opening in
15 September. We'd like to know what's going on. And
16 then the Hochul money; what are you using the Hochul
17 money for?

18 KARA AHMED: So, thank you Council Member Brewer.
19 I'm going to take a few of these and Dan, please feel
20 free to jump in. Passport, let me start there.
21 Passport is something that I heard from providers
22 too. I've been listening to providers since the
23 onset of the beginning of my role here as Deputy
24 Chancellor and Passport has come up as a question.
25 We've looked into it. Our operations team among our

1
2 leadership group has looked into it and what we
3 understand is that generally it is not being used for
4 invoicing at this time or for our payment system
5 across the city. It seems that there might be a
6 pilot project that is in place but that it is not an
7 invoicing system. It is being used more widely and
8 now, more recently in the DOE for contracting and
9 procurement, but not necessarily for payment.

10 If that changes, that's certainly something we'll
11 explore as we are also exploring other systems too.
12 You know this is something that I've shared with
13 Chair Joseph and with others here on the -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know it will be easier;
15 I call it on the shelf, not a custom. Don't do
16 custom.

17 KARA AHMED: We agree and I think that's the
18 existing system.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I've been doing this for
20 40 years. Don't do customs but I think it makes
21 sense to use Passport because everybody else is using
22 passport and don't do something that DOE is going to
23 be unique and then it doesn't work. I'm for
24 Passport.
25

1
2 KARA AHMED: If Passport becomes available as
3 something that is a payment system, that is certainly
4 something that we can be looking at.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My understanding that it
6 is but alright, go ahead. That's number one, I'm
7 going to check on that. Go ahead.

8 KARA AHMED: Number two.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's just that, can we
10 not have decentralization at least a hybrid system?
11 The Mayor's finally learning how to spell hybrid now,
12 that's a good thing. Can we have a hybrid system for
13 the decentralization of enrollment?

14 KARA AHMED: So, the Office of Student Enrollment
15 has a system that's set up to really foster family
16 choice. And so, the application process for 3-K and
17 Pre-K, it is allowing families to make over 11
18 choices of where they would like their child to
19 enroll. Places that are mutually convenient to their
20 home and to their place of work and what is
21 supportive for them and the type of setting that they
22 would like their child to be enrolled in.

23 And so, that process has been filtered through
24 the application process of DOE so that we can support
25 families in making their choice.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm not disagreeing with
3 you except you heard 12, 10 people say it's not
4 working. So, if you want people to show up, I think
5 they go locally, which the hell with the system that
6 DOE's doing. You need to have something that is more
7 decentralized. Please, can you consider it? I know
8 you hate to change but consider it. It's not working
9 what you're doing. They are not signing up because I
10 do get frustrated. I go with Gregory Brender.

11 KARA AHMED: Okay, I'm going to pass it on to our
12 First Deputy Chancellor in a moment who leads the
13 work with Office of Student Enrollment but I will -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How long have I known you
15 Gregory?

16 KARA AHMED: But I will say this, that families
17 absolutely have the right to walk into a provider,
18 into a school and say this is somewhere that they
19 would like to enroll and the provider and the program
20 have an absolute opportunity in any of our family
21 welcome centers across the city to support with
22 enrollment there. The application process is one
23 place but 3-K, Pre-K infants and toddlers, like any
24 of our school system, it's rolling. So, right now,
25 at any moment and this happens already on a daily

1
2 basis, parents, families, they choose and they choose
3 and they walk into a program or a school and they
4 asked to be enrolled there and they have every
5 opportunity to do that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But that's not what was
7 said earlier, just so you know.

8 KARA AHMED: But that is, I just want to make
9 sure we are informing families of the proper process.
10 That is absolutely accurate. They can do that and
11 they should do that because they have the right to
12 choose where they want their child to attend.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: There's something
14 disconnected. Go ahead.

15 DAN WEISBERG: Uhm, so, there are many providers
16 that when a family walks in and says I want to enroll
17 my kid here, they have a tablet and they walk the
18 parent through the portal and have them you know list
19 that particular site as the place they want to go and
20 then they get set up there. What we certainly can
21 do, you know we want; a lot of parents of course
22 aren't just looking at one. They're moving into a
23 neighborhood. They don't know what's there. They
24 want to you know maybe sign up for five or six. We
25 want to facilitate that, so they don't have to go and

1
2 visit physically and put in a paper application but I
3 think Council Member, look we want to do anything we
4 can to improve enrollment. What we should look at
5 and we will look at is, is there something we can do
6 to facilitate the walk-ins to the CBO's to get them
7 into the system quickly?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm sure there's some
9 glitch.

10 DAN WEISBERG: So, we will absolutely look at
11 that.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright. Then the COCO
13 money, 1972 Broadway, those are the other two
14 questions.

15 KARA AHMED: I just want to clarify when we're
16 talking about the money from the Governor, is that
17 the money that's been given to the city?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes.

19 KARA AHMED: Okay, so those are funds that I know
20 that our city partners are looking at to determine
21 how they'll best be used and to support the child -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Extended day is of course
23 something that -

24 KARA AHMED: CCDBG funding, absolutely and really
25 determining how that will best be used in the entire

1
2 childcare system, which is more than just DOE
3 contracted care.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, it's such an easy
5 policy that you want. You want extended day
6 everywhere. You want infant and toddler to be full,
7 you want every seat to be full but it's not. So,
8 then then question is, what kind of publicity are you
9 doing because you're not doing enough. You know that
10 we all know that. And what else, you know all those
11 things that were suggested earlier need to be taken
12 into consideration.

13 DAN WEISBERG: Totally agree. Just to point out,
14 I want to set some reasonable expectations. We do
15 have a marketing budget. We would love and I'm
16 serious about this. We would love to partner -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: T-shirts.

18 DAN WEISEBERG: T-shirts, buses, not newspapers,
19 we're not going to put any ads in newspapers. We
20 agree with you, social media but just to set
21 expectations, as Dr. Ahmed said, we received 40,000
22 applications which is up.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but you got 16,000
24 vacancies.

1

DAN WEISBERG: But we've got 16,000 vacancies.

2

3 Back when you did see a lot of t-shirts and bus stops
4 and so forth, there were a lot of thousands and
5 thousands of empty seats then too.

3

4

5

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

6

7

DAN WEISBERG: Just to be clear about that. 1972

8

Broadway, I'm looking into that. As you said,

9

Council Member -

10

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Page 389, FCA right here.

11

DAN WEISBERG: Yes, thank you. You are many

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steps ahead of me. That is one of our projects. We

13

don't yet have an opening date but we would love to

14

sit down with you and get your input on that.

15

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'd be glad to give it to

16

you. Thank you.

17

DAN WEISBERG: Yes, thank you. Thank you so

18

much.

19

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member

20

Brewer and I do stress that enough, when 3-K first

21

came out, you were at street fares, you were tabling

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at every event, churches, homeless shelters,

23

hospitals, you were everywhere. And we don't see you

24

anymore, so we're asking for that same energy to come

25

back in recruiting parents because the need is there.

1
2 There are neighborhoods that have none. They have
3 neighborhoods with long waiting lists and I talked to
4 the providers and the parents. I'm always in the
5 street talking to them, so I know the need is out
6 there, so you just have to do your due diligence to
7 make sure the word is getting out.

8 DAN WEISBERG: Yes Chair, I'd love to work with
9 you on that and we will be investing in further
10 outreach, absolutely.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council Member
12 Dinowitz.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair. You
14 know I first want to recognize that there has been
15 work done. I think we had a hearing; Chair Joseph
16 had a hearing on this in October of last year and
17 there were issues with invoices, not being able to
18 submit invoices to the last one was submitted and you
19 know the bulk invoicing is something that a lot of my
20 directors have said has been very helpful and I also
21 you know, I personally want to thank you for the
22 announce and for the extra special education seats
23 for our children. It's so incredibly critically to
24 them and to their families who are you know very
25 often facing the most challenges in our city.

1
2 I have a few questions about not the invoicing
3 but the budgets. You know the schools have to – the
4 CBO's specifically have to submit budgets beforehand
5 and they have to be approved. If you have the
6 numbers, that's great. If you don't have them, I'd
7 love to have these numbers. So, on average how many
8 days does it take to approve a CBO's budget?

9 KARA AHMED: That varies. It can be turned
10 around honestly within a week but there is typically
11 exchanges back and forth. So, let me give you a few
12 scenarios.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, it's a time thing,
14 it's not a you thing. It's a time thing. So, if you
15 have the number because in my community, it's months
16 and this is the same way it was in October where you
17 know I have – you know the CBO's are submitting in
18 July, August and still they're not approved for this
19 school year. Right, we're talking about the school
20 year and their budget has not been approved.

21 I do want to talk about that process, about the
22 rejection process. Do you have the number of how
23 many times budgets are rejected before they are
24 approved?
25

1
2 KARA AHMED: We can get back to you on the exact
3 number of times. Again, it varies from budget to
4 budget.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, do you – that's
6 what the average would help us determine, right? I'm
7 sure some are approved right away but the average
8 would certainly tell us something. How long is a
9 budget allowed to – do you have an internal
10 measurement for how long a budget is allowed to sit
11 pending before it is either rejected or approved?

12 KARA AHMED: Budgets are reviewed fairly quickly
13 after they are received. And so, that is within a
14 week of receiving it. It should absolutely be
15 reviewed and then a conversation happens with the
16 provider, whether it's rejected, whether there's an
17 update that needs to be made, whether something is
18 not connected to their actual contract, which is
19 often times the case.

20 So, all of those things are taken into
21 consideration. It's just unfortunately one size
22 doesn't fit all, especially when it comes to budgets
23 but I can absolutely get back to you on any of the
24 average times of rejections, turn arounds, etc. How
25

1
2 many are still outstanding and if you have specific
3 cases from your district.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I sure do.

5 KARA AHMED: You should reach out directly and
6 feel free to reach out to myself, to Mark Treyger and
7 we can support with looking into what the particulars
8 are.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, I actually love
10 what you said about you know improving systems Dr.
11 Ahmed. You said improving systems because I think
12 that's the point. I mean, we come to these hearings
13 and you say, give us the name of the school and it's
14 great that you can respond to those individual needs.
15 The DOE in general has responded to my individual
16 needs but I'm interested in making better systems and
17 the system right now, I'm going to give you the
18 example and you'll tell me if this sounds accurate
19 because this is the way it is for my providers. They
20 submit a budget and then they have to go online every
21 day and just check to see whether it was rejected or
22 approved. They themselves have to check. And then
23 then, when they it is rejected or approved, they
24 themselves have to reach out to the DOE to find out
25

1
2 why it was rejected or approved. Does that sound
3 accurate?

4 KARA AHMED: That's not. So, a provider submits
5 a budget and if it is rejected, it is sent back and
6 there's - it's a technical release but it's sent back
7 with comments of exactly what the issues are. What
8 needs to be corrected and then there's an exchange in
9 a conversation between them and their analyst,
10 whatever that may be. Here's how I can help; here's
11 how I can support.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, there's a
13 disconnect because I have providers telling me that
14 they are not getting an email. They are not getting
15 a phone call. That they are having themselves to
16 check every single day. Now, it may not be a big
17 deal for some of the bigger providers at bigger
18 community centers but we have Pre-K programs that are
19 really just that. In addition to all the funding
20 issues, they're spending their time checking this
21 website every day. They are not getting the outreach
22 and when they find out that their budget was
23 rejected, they are reaching out to the DOE.

24 And so, if that system that you're saying is in
25 place, great. I am telling you that it is not

1
2 working and it is not being done. And the second
3 part of that is very often the reason for rejection
4 is because certain documents in the documents tab are
5 not submitted properly. But my providers are telling
6 me that they don't know necessarily what those
7 documents are beforehand and they are very often
8 resubmitting documents that have already been
9 submitted. And so, what is the possibility of you
10 providing a checklist for the documents? I know
11 there are some that you say on the list need to be
12 there but these others documents tab, there are
13 documents that are requested every year that you can
14 just provide a checklist for our providers that they
15 don't have to go back and forth. They don't have to
16 do this back and forth.

17 KARA AHMED: I couldn't agree more. The
18 checklist exists. Trainings exist. They're on -
19 there's webinars and again, I would argue that big or
20 small, customer service needs to be in place.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, and again
22 it's a time thing, it's not a you thing. I have
23 respect for you but it's you heard from the providers
24 in testimony today that you're not talking, or it
25 doesn't seem like you're talking to Department of

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2 Health because those are some of the documents that
3 you are requiring. I'm hearing that even
4 fingerprinting, that you're not talking to PEP even
5 though they're within your agency. That my schools
6 are having to reach out to them to find them
7 information that should just - that you should just
8 be asking for to begin with or you should have. And
9 there's a lot that is not being communicated within
10 your own agency. That's my time. I would love to
11 talk to you more about this but it is very important
12 that we highlight that your own agency is not talking
13 to itself and there's a lot of communication that you
14 are perhaps being told is happening with the CBO's
15 but is not happening and needs to be addressed so
16 that the budgets can be approved, so we can even get
17 to the invoicing process.

18 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you Council Member.

19 KARA AHMED: Thank you Council Member.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.

21 Council Member Menin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair.

23 So, there's been a lot of conversation that you've
24 heard from a lot of my colleagues about the
25 importance of outreach and I know you testified about

1
2 the importance of outreach but I am deeply concerned
3 because my understanding is that the Pre-K outreach
4 team was recently disbanded by DOE in the past couple
5 weeks. And that you transferred it to the Office of
6 Student Enrollment. Can you confirm if that's
7 correct?

8 DAN WEISBERG: Uhm, that's not correct Council
9 Member. I'm happy to report there is a 15 or so
10 member strong outreach team that has been in the
11 Office of Student Enrollment for quite a while.
12 Certainly from before I took my position. It's not
13 just for Pre-K but there's an outreach team that does
14 all the activities around meeting families and being
15 at welcome centers and doing outreach. Nothing
16 happened within the last week.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, for all the members
18 that were part of the original Pre-K outreach team,
19 all of them are still dedicated to outreach?

20 DAN WEISBERG: That I would have to go and look
21 and see who was there in the initial. To be clear, I
22 know I wasn't here but I know that there was specific
23 Pre-K for all outreach effort that happened with
24 marketing and the bus stops and everything during the
25 launch. I think there was a dedicated team that at

1
2 some point, I think years ago, I can check on it, was
3 once the launch happened, was folded into the Office
4 of Student -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, because I'm getting
6 reports like as of today that that team was
7 disbanded. So, I think what would be incredibly
8 helpful is if we could understand what kind of
9 outreach is happening. What do the odds look like?
10 What is the outreach? Where is the outreach going?
11 Because we've got all of these vacancies but yet
12 we're not filling them if we're not doing the proper
13 outreach. So, I'm very concerned about it and would
14 appreciate if there could be some kind of update on
15 that.

16 DAN WEISBERG: Happy to give you that update.
17 Again, I just want to emphasize, we can do better
18 outreach. Applications for 3-K are way up. This is
19 not just a situation where all these seats used to be
20 filled when there was better outreach. Seats were
21 built in an oversaturated way. There are too many
22 seats in certain places and not enough in others. We
23 can do all the outreach in the world if there were
24 too many seats opened up in a small radius then we're
25

1
2 not going to fill them unless we configure them to
3 meet demand.

4 So, we're with you on outreach but don't think
5 that we're going to go from a situation where we have
6 40,000 total applications for 56,000 seats and
7 outreach is going to make up that gap. In my
8 opinion, it is not.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, thank you so much.
10 So, \$4 million was done on marketing last time, can
11 you give us the budget on what's been done on
12 marketing so far on outreach?

13 KARA AHMED: Yeah, there's over \$3 million right
14 now dedicated for outreach and again, to First Deputy
15 Chancellor's point, we're not at a launch stage.
16 This is a program that's already been in existence
17 and the application rate is up. Families are
18 applying to 3-K and Pre-K. We saw over 2,200
19 applicants within the first week of the application
20 process opening up, just in this past month. Which
21 is a huge increase from last year at the same time.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, so you'll report
23 back to the Committee though on the outreach. I do
24 have one more question. Going back to the payment
25 issue on the providers. So, there was very

1
2 compelling testimony that providers are not hearing
3 back from DOE. A lot of colleagues discussed it.
4 One suggestion I would have is that if you were to
5 send an email to every single child care provider
6 that clearly states who their contact person is at
7 DOE, who that person's supervisor is and that is just
8 going to be incredibly helpful. So, I would like to
9 get your commitment that you will do that because I
10 think that would really go a long way to fix that
11 problem.

12 KARA AHMED: Thank you Council Member. We
13 absolutely could do that. We've done that
14 previously. We've sent things out that state both
15 the analyst and the supervisor. Even recently again
16 this week, supervisory names were provided and we can
17 continue to do that to support in any way that you
18 think would be helpful. So, absolutely.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, thank you.

20 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you but uhm, this just
22 jogged my memory of a question earlier. So, if you
23 do have folks that assigned to work with the
24 providers, why are providers stating that they have
25 no one? When they email, no one is answering their

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2 calls. No one's returning their emails and it's
3 taking so long. And as of last year, your Executive
4 Director resigned. Is that position full? I know
5 that you had about 100 staff that left that division.
6 How is staffing going on in that division?

7 KARA AHMED: Thank you Chair Joseph. To answer
8 your first question, I'm not sure what the disconnect
9 would be in terms of the communication. As I shared,
10 I was personally in contact with some of the
11 providers that actually testified here this afternoon
12 and I know that our team has been in contact with
13 them and their team directly. Their fiscal
14 specialists, folks that are dealing with any of their
15 enrollment or attendance.

16 And so, we will continue to do that outreach. We
17 will continue to have those open lines of
18 communication. That is key. That work continues.
19 That work continues to get strengthened and any
20 provider that feels that they cannot reach out to
21 someone in our office, please, I ask again. I've
22 said this publicly before, I'll say it again, reach
23 out to me directly and I will respond. So, we will
24 get to the bottom of why there would be a disconnect
25

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2 but certainly, I do know that our team is actively
3 working and has been.

4 Our team I think I shared with you earlier in
5 this hearing, that we feel that we have sufficient
6 staff that are here in our program. At our central
7 level in all areas of the work and specifically in
8 our area of finance. There has been very limited to
9 no transition in our finance team for the last
10 several years. And so, that finance team is fully
11 intact and still remains assigned to providers,
12 assigned to individual programs.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council Member
14 Schulman.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes, thank you very
16 much Chair and I want to thank the Chair for having
17 this very important hearing. So, a few things. One
18 is, the Chair mentioned that you should get back to
19 people and find out what you know, the one's that
20 were here, what was happening. I'm going to take
21 that a step further and ask that you get back to the
22 Chair or to the Committee Staff after you contact
23 those individuals so that we can know what was going
24 on if there was an error on their end. So, that we
25 can track it, because very often in these hearings,

1
2 people say we're going to touch base with them and
3 then we never hear anything. So, I'm going to ask
4 for that.

5 DAN WEISBERG: We're happy to do that Council
6 Member and happy to also provide information on the
7 interactions already happening, absolutely.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you. So,
9 Dr. Ahmed, you mentioned in your testimony that you
10 currently have enough seats for every three-year-old
11 who needs one. What's your definition of who needs
12 one?

13 KARA AHMED: That's a great question. So, we
14 would say that we do have enough seats for three-year
15 old's across the city. We would also say that we
16 don't think they're in the right place. And so, in
17 terms of needing one, in terms of numbers, what's on
18 paper, there are enough seats. In terms of really
19 meeting the needs of families, which is our goal, we
20 don't think it's sufficient. And that is the work
21 that we have ahead of us. Our administration
22 believes in ensuring that every child that does need
23 a seat has one. That means we've got to get them in
24 the right place so that families have access. And
25 access to the type of seat that they prefer.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, so we need to
3 work very closely on that because obviously the
4 advocates feel a different way. So, and we want to
5 make sure we get this right because students only get
6 one chance at a good education, so we want to make
7 sure that it counts.

8 The second thing I want to ask you is, has any
9 thought been given to extending, as people testified
10 to today, extending the day to year around seats?

11 KARA AHMED: Absolutely and I would just say one
12 more thing Council Member, that children don't get a
13 second shot at being two or three or four. So,
14 you're absolutely right. This is important and
15 urgent and so, we are acting in that fashion and so,
16 I appreciate your offer of support because we do want
17 to work with you on solving this huge problem.

18 Extended day, extended year, absolutely. Those
19 are income eligible seats. That's the funding that
20 one of the other Council Members asked about coming
21 from the Governor, the CCDGB funding. And there's
22 been an expansion to that eligibility, so we're
23 hoping to see that those seats increase in terms of a
24 fill rate where more families will actually be
25 eligible for them.

1
2 And so, in terms of some of the conversions that
3 we've already made in this past year, it's about
4 converting seats from school day, school year to
5 extended day and extended year to support families,
6 working families, student parents. So, that work
7 will continue. It's already happened, it's happening
8 and it will continue to happen.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you and then the
10 last line of questioning, you said in your testimony,
11 that every child from every zip code must have access
12 to a high quality, early childhood experience and
13 that includes children with disabilities. I don't
14 know that this is a question for you perse but the
15 transportation issue around kids with disabilities is
16 really terrible. There was some news media reports
17 about that in the past week. So, I just wanted to
18 ask about that because I have kids in my - where I
19 live and in my community who regularly have issues
20 with this.

21 KARA AHMED: Those are very important issues and
22 while I don't manage those directly, I certainly can
23 make sure that you're put in touch with folks that
24 can support and help. Any issues, whether it's a one
25

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2 off or a larger issue, just in general, please let us
3 know.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay, thank you very
5 much.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.
7 Council Member Stevens.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello. I have a lot of
9 questions, so I'm going to go through them, so you
10 all might want to take notes. And just stirring up
11 some things. I know before you had mentioned that
12 Passport was more for invoices and not payments.
13 That's not true. DYCD uses it, so I just want to
14 make sure we're clearing things up because you know I
15 know.

16 And then even with the outreach efforts, I just
17 wanted to; I'm not going to hammer too much on it but
18 just according to a chart article under half of the
19 240 3-K seats in Highbridge, which are high property
20 neighborhoods in the Bronx haven't been billed as of
21 September. And I just want to say, I know you guys
22 were like, oh, you know, you want to work with us but
23 if you want to work with us, no one's reached out to
24 my office. This is my district. It's a high
25 property area and so, it's not good enough for us to

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2 just say, for us to reach out to you. This is an
3 issue and a concern for all of us and my office is
4 always here and willing to work with you and so,
5 let's really just figure out how to fix it. Because
6 I feel like I've heard that in a hearing before in
7 the beginning of the year, still haven't received a
8 call. I wanted to point that out.

9 And also, I also want to note that DOE has never
10 been good at recruitment and so, I'm not really sure
11 why providers are not allowed to do the recruitment.
12 So, if you have \$3 million budget, that budget should
13 be divvied up amongst the providers, so they can
14 actually do the recruitment themselves because we're
15 in the community every day. So, I think that we
16 should be really reimagining what that looks like
17 point, blank, period.

18 We've had this issue with Summer Rising and now
19 with Pre-K. DOE, you guys don't do it well. So,
20 like let's work with the provider so they can do it.
21 So, let me get off that high horse and get to my 300
22 questions I got here.

23 Uhm, so, one of the things with talking with
24 providers, some of the issues around enrollment isn't
25 just around like recruitment and things like that.

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2 It's also the requirements around enrollment. So,
3 how are you working with the providers and families
4 to get some of the requirements to enroll in these
5 programs to be alleviated? Because we know that
6 there's a lot of like income requirements and all
7 these different things. How are we looking at these
8 other burdens that we can't even talk about because
9 they need money but these other burdens around like
10 the enrollment.

11 The other question I have is, what percentages of
12 3-K spots are extended day and extended year? With
13 the needs of the eligibility population in mind, why
14 is there not a large push to offer all programs as
15 extended day and extended year to better support
16 families? How is DOE working with DOH to help with
17 the clearing process as we know and heard from
18 providers that the DOE process is hindering folks
19 from hiring staff and this is happening not just with
20 your providers but even on the DYCD side. It is a
21 huge problem and people are not talking. So, how are
22 you working with DOH to get that done?

23 My next question, uhm, we understand that there
24 are strides that have been made related to invoicing,
25 but there is still, there is a glitch in the system

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2 that is not being reciprocated in contracts that
3 don't register and budgets are not accepted, then
4 invoices cannot be submitted. So, what is the
5 outstanding dollar amount owed to providers for FY23?

6 KARA AHMED: Thank you Council Member. I may go
7 a little bit out of order. I have your questions.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: As long as you have all
9 of them, we are fine.

10 KARA AHMED: So, let me start with uhm, as I'm
11 looking at my list here, DOH permits. And so, we do
12 actually have a very good partnership with Department
13 of Health. We have a liaison between our office and
14 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and
15 specially around child care issues, which aren't just
16 limited to permitting but certainly permitting is a
17 piece absolutely. And so, if there is a site that
18 has a permitting question or a concern and they're
19 unable to resolve it through -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, permit I don't think
21 is the issue, it's the clearing process. Like, we
22 know that people are not cleared for months and
23 sometimes years. I've worked in facilities where
24 people were not cleared for a year. So, that's not
25 the issue. Permitting it's an issue but the

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2 clearance of the employees are where we need to be
3 really focused at. And so, if you do have a
4 partnership with them, how is that being related with
5 the providers?

6 KARA AHMED: So, again, we don't manage the
7 clearance process but we certainly work with DOH.
8 So, anytime a provider reaches out to us directly
9 with a question that is much more related to DOH or
10 to the clearance process, we obviously work with them
11 directly to find out what the answer is, what the
12 status is, what we can do to support. So, anything
13 and everything within that realm. That is an ongoing
14 partnership, it's an ongoing communication but we
15 also want to be able to be the bridge between both
16 agencies if necessary to support providers in any way
17 that we can and we've seen that work, and we've seen
18 that really work well and work in collaboration.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I want to say it works
20 well because it doesn't and so, that's part of the
21 problem that we're not admitting, right? So, the
22 first step is admitting that it doesn't work because
23 it isn't working and it's not all DOE right? It's
24 DOH and the system. It does not work. And so, I
25 just want to be clear about that. It's a system that

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2 has been antiquated. It has not worked. People are
3 not being clear, so I'm not going to sit here and
4 just like, oh it works, because it's not. And it
5 hasn't worked for me and it hasn't worked for these
6 providers, so I just want to make sure we're using
7 the correct language here.

8 KARA AHMED: Working well, meaning that
9 communication with DOH to the system of clearances
10 for staffing, that is something that DOH leads and we
11 can certainly, we'll share that feedback with our DOH
12 partners, we will continue to. I do know that they
13 are working very hard on that system as well.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: It's not about people
15 not working hard. It's about the system not working.
16 I want to be clear because I know they're working
17 hard. We're not saying they're not working hard but
18 it ain't working.

19 KARA AHMED: And I will continue to share that
20 feedback with our DOH partners. Thank you Council
21 Member. Did you want to take one of the other
22 questions?

23 DAN WEISBERG: So, I think one of the – thank you
24 Council Member. One of the other questions was how
25 much had been paid for FY23. You know about \$630

1 million has been paid out already. That's between
2 Council Member advances and also payments for
3 invoices and you know, we won't know until all the
4 paperwork is in essentially but we do expect to pay
5 out approximately another \$600 million for FY23.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That's a large sum.

8 DAN WEISBERG: Yes, yes.

9 KARA AHMED: And for our EDY seats in 3-K, you
10 asked for specifically approximately ten percent of
11 our 3-K seats are EDY. Previous contracts that were
12 provided -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: You said ten percent?

14 KARA AHMED: Yup, previous contracts that were
15 provided to providers over the last several years
16 really were and you heard this from the other
17 panelists to, were primarily school day, school year
18 seats. And so, that is again, that's the work that
19 we continue to do, identifying where there's need of
20 where those SDY seats with in contractual and legal
21 provisions of what their contract terms are, wherever
22 we could change that, we are and we have. And we
23 will continue to do that work.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I just want to say, just
25 thinking about that, ten percent is really low,

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2 especially when we're thinking about working parents
3 right?

4 And so, my first question was around, how are we
5 looking at the requirements for families and that's
6 one of the things that does not work, right? If I'm
7 a working parent, I cannot pick my child up at three
8 o'clock. So, that's, like things have to make sense
9 for work. So even if I'm a parent and I need it,
10 that's going to affect enrollment because I'm not
11 going to enroll my child in this program because it
12 does not work. So, saying we have only ten percent
13 of extended day or extended year, that's a problem.
14 So, we should really be looking at how are we moving
15 in a place where extended day is the norm and we are
16 having at least 90 percent because that's what people
17 need, especially working families.

18 KARA AHMED: We agree. We absolutely agree and
19 that's why we've changed seats from school day,
20 school year to extended day. Again, extended day,
21 extended year funded through CCDBG is income eligible
22 right? So, families do need to be income eligible.
23 Some families are and some families aren't but where
24 we can make that need and where we know there is a
25 need, that's where we need prioritize it.

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2 As well as I just don't want to shortchange our
3 Head Start seats which also offer extended days and
4 year around programming. That's also an option for
5 families outside of extended day and extended year
6 seats.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, like I said, I
8 hear you but I think that's part of the issue around
9 enrollment. We can do recruitment all we want but if
10 there's an issue and it's not fitting the needs, then
11 I'm not going to enroll my child. So, we also, I
12 think it drives me crazy especially in the city, a
13 lot of times we get stuck in a way. Like, we've done
14 this for so long this way. We don't think about
15 we're reimagining and we need to better place where
16 we're reimagining this and it's working for the
17 people. Just this is my last question just around
18 like how are we also just looking at all of the other
19 things, the requirements around like, you know the
20 income eligibility and all these other things that
21 parents have to do in order to be in these programs?
22 Because if those things, I know some of it is federal
23 right? Some of those come from federal government in
24 the state and they're things we can't control but I'm
25 thinking about what are some of the things we can't

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2 control to start alleviating some of things, so it
3 can be more accessible to some families throughout
4 the city.

5 KARA AHMED: That's a great question and I mean,
6 couldn't agree more. You know, when there's pieces
7 in that process that could feel like barriers to
8 family, then it's counter to everything that all of
9 us are trying to do. And some of that, we have no
10 control over right? Some of those are federal
11 requirements and there's a process for that.

12 What I will say we do have control over though is
13 again and we've heard it now multiple times, is the
14 system in which families even apply to be eligible
15 right? Because that system in itself was once upon a
16 time very arduous, very cumbersome, very difficult,
17 that you know for a family to go through that
18 process, you know it felt like this is too much or it
19 just felt impossible. Why do it? And they end up in
20 a different system for care rather than taking
21 advantage of something that they are entitled to.

22 So, we've actually streamlined that system within
23 federal regulations, within state regulations of what
24 that can look like. Turn that turn around time while
25 the state requires us to be able to process those

1 applications within 30 days, we're down to 14 days or
2 less. Because that's 14 days; imagine a family
3 waiting for care, so that they can actually start
4 going to work or start going to school and if you had
5 to wait over 30 days just for that care to happen,
6 you know you would give up, right? Either giving up
7 on that employment or that school or giving up on
8 that child care and that child may end up in a
9 different place. And so, we've actually improved
10 that system dramatically in order to support
11 families. There's opportunity at all of our family
12 welcome centers that our First Deputy Chancellor
13 spoke about. Families can walk in and fill out that
14 application with someone literally sitting next to
15 them to go through that process because it's an
16 arduous process.

17
18 It requires a lot of different paperwork. Again,
19 it's a federal process, so it requires a lot of
20 pieces that need to be complete in order for the
21 process to even – the application to even be
22 submitted.

23 We have a call-in center where you can apply
24 straight through the program. So, you walk into any
25 of our CBO's. Any of the places where we have

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2 extended day or family child care providers, they too
3 are instrumental and incredible at supporting
4 families and going through that process. So, I say
5 that just to say that in terms of lifting those
6 barriers, it's also that infrastructure that wasn't
7 there, that we've actually built to make sure that
8 we've improved upon that process, so access is much
9 greater.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: No, and I appreciate
11 that and I know it seems - it becomes really hard
12 because the system was so slow and we need to be
13 looking at everything with urgency. And so, for me,
14 this is an urgent matter because families are
15 suffering. And so, yes, there might be some strides
16 and some things, but one, I tell people all the time,
17 I don't get rewarded for the job that I do. This is
18 a job and it's what we signed up for, so we're going
19 to continue to push and make sure that these things
20 are happening and making sure that we're uplifting
21 these issues and make sure that the families are
22 getting what they deserve.

23 And so, like I said, we look to continue to work
24 with you and I will be expecting someone to reach out
25 to my office about these seats that are not filled in

1
2 my district because I haven't got it yet. So, it's
3 really important. So, thank you.

4 DAN WEISBERG: Expect that call tomorrow morning
5 Council Member. So, thank you. Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: She'll put you on blast if
8 you don't call her. Well, thank you. When the
9 families walk into these welcome centers, once they
10 fill out the application, what's the wait time? Is
11 there a waitlist they have to be – how long does it
12 take for a child to be placed? Because we're talking
13 about maybe that person's waiting to go to work,
14 waiting to go to school. What's the timeline for
15 placement?

16 KARA AHMED: So, there's a few different routes
17 that a family can go when they come into a family
18 welcome center. Again, if they're looking for
19 extended day, extended year seats, which we have
20 plenty available and they walk into a family welcome
21 center and they're walked through that process.
22 There's paperwork that they have to complete. They
23 have to have things that belong to them personally to
24 submit. So, sometimes families come in and don't
25 have all of that information at once. And so, it's

1 going to rely on them being able to obtain it or to
2 be able to obtain proof of birth etc.. But once that
3 is submitted and all of those pieces are in place, as
4 I shared, we have turned this around to a 14 day or
5 less turn around time. Which is a stride. It is,
6 it's a huge accomplishment when you know again, we're
7 really held to a 30-day turnaround time. So, this is
8 much greater in a less amount of time.

9 That's if you're going a route of extended day,
10 extended year. If you're looking for a school day,
11 school year seat, there are certain things that are
12 required for all DOE children, all DOE students that
13 are enrolling in New York City public schools and
14 there's a list that's very well publicized and as
15 long as families bring those in and there is space
16 available of the school of their choice, the program
17 of their choice, the setting of their choice, they
18 can be enrolled in the same day.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that. Council
20 Member Feliz.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you so much Chair.
22 One issue that I continue to hear about in the Bronx
23 is the lack of access to 3-K and Pre-K programs.
24 Families and students receiving offers and having to
25

1
2 decline those offers because they're not able to
3 travel 30, 45 minutes every single morning. So, just
4 curious, how many families or students have received
5 offers and have declined the offer to a specific
6 program or provider?

7 KARA AHMED: I don't know if we have that
8 information with us but we can get back to you
9 Council Member Feliz but it's exactly our point, that
10 while there may be seats available, they may not feel
11 accessible to families and that's the work that we
12 have ahead of us of changing around to make sure that
13 it's not just about saying we have seats, which is
14 what's been the case but to really make sure that
15 those seats are in the places where families can
16 access them in a way that is much more convenient
17 than a 40 minute subway ride.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, we would really
19 appreciate if you could get us those numbers. Also,
20 how many Pre-K and 3-K seats do we have per borough?
21 Can you give us a breakdown, 3-K and Pre-K?

22 KARA AHMED: I don't know if we have it by
23 borough. I know we've given to Chair Joseph a
24 breakdown by District and we can certainly provide
25 one by borough as well if that's helpful, yeah.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: So, what district has the
3 most amount of seats and how many seats does that
4 district have? And what district has the least
5 amount of seats and how many seats does that district
6 have?

7 DAN WEISBERG: Sorry Council Member, just give us
8 just a second.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yup, if we could pause my
10 time, that would be great.

11 DAN WEISBERG: I feel like we have that. So,
12 doing a quick eyeball, it looks like and Dr. Ahmed
13 will correct me if I'm getting this wrong but it
14 looks like District 31, which is Staten Island, not
15 surprising has the most 3-K seats. I'm just looking
16 at 3-K right now, so there's about 3,200 seats in
17 Staten Island. About 2,800 are enrolled there and
18 I'm sorry Council Member, you also asked, what
19 district had the most seats and?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: And which one has the
21 least amount of seats and how many?

22 DAN WEISBERG: Has the least amount of seats.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: And what borough is it
24 located at?

25 DAN WEISBERG: Uhm.

1 KARA AHMED: Let's see I think maybe District 1?

2 DAN WEISBERG: District 16. District 16 has 537
3 3-K seats. This is 3-K, it's not Pre-K. 537 of
4 which and they've got 343 enrolled just to give you a
5 sense of the proportion. That's the least number of
6 districts. 16, which is Brooklyn.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Brooklyn, okay. What part
8 of Brooklyn? Is that east Brooklyn my guess?

9 DAN WEISBERG: That's central Brooklyn.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Central Brooklyn.

11 DAN WEISBERG: Central Brooklyn.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Okay, earlier you
13 mentioned there's approximately 1,600 vacancies.
14 Where are most of these vacancies located?

15 DAN WEISBERG: It's actually 16,000.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, 16,000.

17 DAN WEISBERG: 16,000, the uhm, again, we'll give
18 you all of this data Council Member but uhm, just
19 again, just doing a quick eyeball, you know let me
20 not try to do math while I'm sitting here but we will
21 give you the district by district, borough by borough
22 number of seats, enrollment and gaps. So, we'll get
23 all that to you.
24
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: And let me also say that
3 you know, it's extremely disappointing that you know
4 the poorest and neediest districts have the least
5 amount of seats, years later. That is extremely
6 disappointing and also unacceptable and I'm hoping
7 that changes. It's always the same thing with every
8 single issue, whether it's education, jobs, always
9 the same issue. I hope we could take real steps to
10 change that.

11 Final question, well, actually two more
12 questions. Uhm, going back to the wage and the
13 documents and payment, going back to that topic. It
14 seems like the process for submitting these documents
15 has created many of the issues that we're talking
16 about. Can you talk to us about that process step by
17 step? What exactly the providers need to do in order
18 to receive payment for their work.

19 KARA AHMED: Thank you Council Member. We've
20 actually done a lot of work to eliminate burdensome
21 requirements. We heard from a lot of providers that
22 the requirements that had been in place for the last
23 few years were quite burdensome. A number of
24 documents that needed to be submitted with each
25 invoice, uhm, we've actually eliminated and really

1
2 boiled it down to a profit and loss statement or a
3 general ledger, which has been widely distributed to
4 programs so that they have – and training as well, so
5 that again, they don't need to submit individualized
6 pieces of paperwork through each invoice. And so,
7 that has been extremely well received and extremely
8 helpful in the invoice submission process. Both for
9 submission and both for reviewing process.

10 DAN WEISBERG: Just, I don't want to chew up your
11 time Council Member but you know for all of these are
12 great questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: I was going to say you
14 already did.

15 DAN WEISBERG: Sorry.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: No, no just kidding.

17 DAN WEISBERG: But you know it points up a
18 greater need just to be clear as much as you know
19 Kara and her team and our CEO's team is trying to
20 make things easier and trying to do better customer
21 service, we have a system, which is a good thing of
22 800 plus providers being a backbone. Community-based
23 providers are the backbone of our system and there
24 really isn't infrastructure to help them with all
25 these things.

1
2 And so, one of the things we are going to do, we
3 haven't figured out what form it takes. We want to
4 work with you all. We have to provide back-office
5 support. In our view, which would happen is these
6 providers like the one you had today and these are
7 unbelievable, awesome people who are doing work with
8 our kids. They live in the communities. They employ
9 people in the communities they serve. They should
10 have an intermediary where they can just send an
11 email saying here's my paperwork. I don't want to
12 deal with the rest of it and have that organization
13 deal with us, make sure everybody gets paid on time.
14 All the budgets, everything is approved, including
15 even the DOH issues.

16 So, that's what we're looking into. In our view,
17 if we could go back in time, if we're going to have a
18 system that depends on these very often, very small
19 providers, we would create that infrastructure for
20 them so we don't have to do a big push to help them
21 to get us the paperwork that allows us to pay them.
22 That's just not, it's not a great system.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah, okay and final
24 question. What steps have been taken and also moving
25 forward, will be taken as well to make sure that

1
2 every zip code has access to seats? So, have been
3 taken in the last few years and also will be taken as
4 well moving forward to change the numbers that we are
5 seeing.

6 KARA AHMED: Absolutely. So, as I mentioned
7 previously, there has been an internal survey that's
8 been going out to our providers, to our school
9 leaders, to our family child care networks, all to
10 ask and lean into what they're seeing in their
11 communities and what the needs are. And based on
12 that, we've been able to make significant changes,
13 dating back to last spring and all the changes that
14 were made going into this fall to support both 3-K,
15 Pre-K but also our infant toddler programs and as
16 we've talked about, see changes from school day,
17 school year to extended day, extended year.

18 In addition to that, there is a formal needs
19 analysis that's happening through an external
20 organization where they're going to be collecting
21 lots of good data to help us understand how to best
22 move around some of these seats, shift resources, get
23 them where they are actually needed and understand
24 better what are the needs and preferences of families
25 and individual communities.

1
2 So, hopefully the combination of those two
3 things, the goal really is to make some very data
4 informed changes, instead of just having seats in
5 places and not really having the data that supports
6 it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Yeah and what's the
8 timeline for that?

9 KARA AHMED: That should be within the next few
10 months.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much is that going to
14 cost and who is handling that? Who will lead that?

15 KARA AHMED: So, that's the work that's happening
16 between my office, the Early Childhood Office and
17 other members of our division in the division of the
18 Department of Education. So, we're working together
19 on that because it's going to include a lot of folks
20 right? Because when we think about the seat
21 allocation, we're thinking about enrollment right?
22 And enrollment needs and so, really working with our
23 Office of Student Enrollment. We're thinking about
24 the fiscal aspect of it. So, not just within early
25 childhood finance but thinking about it from a

1
2 systems perspective of what those seats are going to
3 cost and what it will look like based on whatever the
4 needs analysis tells us, how those seats need to be
5 changed and what will be the cost of that and what
6 that will end up looking like.

7 And we're also working very closely with our
8 partners at City Hall to really collectively work on
9 this, think together and share progress and updates.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Uhm, when you send over the
11 breakdown, can you send it to us by seat type as
12 well? Borough seat types, send the breakdown for us.
13 Thank you. Council Member Restler.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much Chair
15 Joseph. Tremendously appreciate your leadership on
16 this issue and of this Committee. It is good to see
17 you again Deputy Chancellor Weisberg and Deputy
18 Chancellor Ahmed. Thank you both for making the time
19 to be here.

20 Just some simple questions, ideally yes, no. Is
21 the reported \$568 million cut to 3-K for next fiscal
22 year accurate?

23 DAN WEISBERG: I'll have to check the exact
24 number Council Member.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It's been widely
3 reported in the Times and other places.

4 DAN WEISBERG: And I would characterize that as
5 not a cut because we are -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate your
7 characterization but just yes, no, if it's possible.

8 DAN WEISBERG: I don't have the number right in
9 front of me.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: This has been the widely
11 reported number on the cut to 3-K for next year, so
12 assuming that it's accurate and that it's what we saw
13 in the budget documents, it's been released by the
14 Mayor. You're alleging that's a 6,000-seat
15 reduction, is that correct? That's what you've
16 reported in previous hearings.

17 DAN WEISBERG: Not from current levels no.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You're reducing funding
19 for 6,000 seats in the budget reduction that you're
20 planning for next year. That that is the scale of
21 the program you're reducing it back.

22 DAN WEISBERG: That I believe that is what it
23 would have funded, yes, additional 6,000 additional
24 seats, correct.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: 6,000 additional seats
3 are not being funded. Is the program, is the size of
4 the program being maintained year over year except
5 for those 6,000?

6 DAN WEISBERG: Okay, so a \$568 million reduction
7 for 6,000 seats. I'm not superb at math but that
8 would lead us to a \$94,700 per seat. That is how
9 much it cost. The CBC did a report just a couple
10 years ago and found \$14,000 per seat was the average
11 cost for a UPK seat in New York City.

12 So, all of a sudden, your cost per seat increased
13 seven-fold in a matter of less than, in three years'
14 time. What I think is clear, is that this isn't a
15 6,000-seat reduction. You are reducing the number of
16 seats in the 3-K system down to what you're serving
17 this year, which is 36,000, maybe 40,000 We're
18 seeing a dramatic reduction in the capacity of the 3-
19 K program despite the fact that we have 65,000-70,000
20 three year olds in New York City.

21 So, there is no path to universal 3-K in New
22 York. You are destroying this program by taking half
23 a billion dollars of funding away and claiming that
24 it's just avoiding a few thousand seat addition.

1
2 DAN WEISBERG: So if I could respond Council
3 Member.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Please.

5 DAN WEISBERG: And good to see you as well.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Always, you know I love
7 my constituents.

8 DAN WEISBERG: What's that?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I love my constituents.

10 DAN WEISBERG: Appreciate that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I would have been a lot
12 more mean if you weren't one. Sorry Dr. Ahmed.

13 KARA AHMED: No offense taken.

14 DAN WEISBERG: Maybe one day Dr. Ahmed will be -

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah, you could move
16 into the 33rd, it's a beautiful district. I don't
17 know where you live so, I'm sure it's a beautiful
18 district.

19 DAN WEISBERG: Our numbers Council Member just to
20 level set and we'll go back and check. I understand
21 the math you're doing and let us go back and clarify
22 what it is we're saying about per seat. The 6,000
23 number I'm not familiar with, but I'm not doubting
24 you're getting that from our documents. Our numbers
25

1
2 we have right now are about 55,000 3-K seats and that
3 includes family child care.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Understood but 65,000
5 seats, not 55,000 kids enrolled. And so, there was
6 supposed to be a 6,000 seat increase next year. I
7 don't even mind if you all were to say that increase
8 is not needed based on the demand you're seeing. We
9 think there's 65,000 three-year-olds in New York
10 City. 55,000 seats is actually adequate but that's
11 not what you're doing. You're saying you're not
12 adding 6,000 seats and you're cutting half billion
13 dollars, which amounts to nearly \$100,000 a seat.
14 That's more than horse man costs. That's more than
15 the fanciest private school in New York City and it
16 just doesn't make sense for 3-K. It's two years of
17 college right? I mean, it doesn't add up and so,
18 what you're actually doing is destroying this program
19 and cutting it down to the bone. Go ahead, sorry.

20 DAN WEISBERG: Just to be clear. We're not
21 destroying the program. We're spending as much money
22 and providing at least as many seats, maybe more
23 seats than we're providing this year.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: It is thee benign to
25 neglect. In the de Blasio Administration when there

1
2 were 40 staff during early childhood education
3 outreach, \$4 million outreach budget, there was a
4 significant campaign to engage families, meet them
5 where they are. Use dynamic data sets of the most
6 current data to reach three-year-old's, reach
7 families in multiple languages, hard to reach
8 families. That's not happening.

9 DAN WEISBERG: And there were tens of thousands
10 empty seats with all of that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What I can say is that
12 we're not seeing any effort on outreach right now.

13 DAN WEISBERG: Then why do we have 20 percent
14 higher applications?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, I hope that you're
16 going to have the seats for these kids, if we can
17 actually make it happen, because if you're cutting
18 half a billion from this program, it doesn't add up.
19 The math doesn't work.

20 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, so again, I'm not saying we
21 can't do better on outreach but I want to be clear,
22 during the time of launch when there were signs on
23 bus stops and T-shirts, as Council Member Brewer was
24 talking about. There were tens of thousands of empty
25 seats with that.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Every year the de Blasio
3 Administration would move seats around, modify where
4 they needed to push and pull to meet the needs of the
5 UPK program and expanded it to 3-K. I appreciate
6 that there has been uneven enrollments across the
7 city. There's also uneven seats across the city and
8 that needs to shift year over year and you need to
9 look at where there's growth and that's a reasonable
10 thing. What I can say is, is to Deputy Chancellor
11 Ahmed's point earlier, when you have widespread
12 vacancies at extended day, extended year seats. It
13 is a tremendous indictment on the lack of outreach
14 that you all are doing. Because every family in New
15 York City is dying for an extended day, extended year
16 seat. We are losing families, immigrating out of New
17 York City in droves who cannot find affordable child
18 care. Who cannot access early childhood education
19 and if there was outreach happening, then those seats
20 would be filled, because everybody needs the ten hour
21 a day, year around coverage that those seats provide.

22 So, to me, there's no explanation other than the
23 fact that no outreach is - that very limited outreach
24 is occurring and that we're not making the efforts to
25 reach families where they are to engage them in this

1
2 vital program. Just like outreach is required to
3 engage people in any governmental program and
4 service. Go ahead.

5 DAN WEISBERG: We are doing, first of all again,
6 not saying that we can't do better and we want to do
7 more. We want every family to have the information
8 about whether and yes, I get it. I'm a parent. Yes,
9 of course you want it, it's true for K-12 by the way.
10 You'd like to have quality child care up to five
11 o'clock or six o'clock, so we get it. We want to
12 make sure that information is in the hands of every
13 parent but we are doing extensive outreach, extensive
14 outreach already and the proof is in the pudding.
15 Applications are up. Now, maybe they could be up
16 more. It's not - outreach is not going to fill the
17 gap that we have.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Outreach can make an
19 enormous difference and I can say that I'm eager to
20 partner with you. I think every member of the City
21 Council is eager to partner with you and every member
22 - and with Chair Joseph's leadership, with Speaker
23 Adams leadership, we want to fight to see more
24 funding invested in early childhood education. That
25 what is being proposed in next year's budget would

1
2 truly destroy this program and we have to get back on
3 a path to universal 3-K as quickly as possible and
4 we're going to do everything in our power to make
5 that happen. Thank you for answering the questions.

6 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you Council Member.

7 KARA AHMED: Chair Joseph, can I just make one
8 comment. I just want to make sure that we're all
9 clear that you know just this year alone, we added an
10 additional 8,000 3-K seats, and I would actually say
11 that it's not about cutting back on 3-K seats but as
12 we've shared I think multiple times now through this
13 hearing, that seats are being converted. There have
14 been a number of unused Pre-K seats.

15 So, to Council Members point about constantly
16 looking at those changes, that is the work that we're
17 doing and we're looking to see where we can convert
18 those seats to make sure that they are meeting the
19 exact need that we're seeing in communities. Whether
20 that be Pre-K to 3-K, 3-K to Pre-K, filling the gap
21 where there's missing, there's infant toddler seats
22 and then there were Pre-K seats and there were no 3-K
23 seats in between to ensure continuity for families.

24 And so, it won't be a matter of taking back or
25 reducing 3-K seats, it will be a matter of making

1
2 sure that we are putting the seats exactly where they
3 are needed and the age type that's needed for that
4 community.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. We had a
6 question. I have a – so on February 10th, just to
7 piggyback, the Administration announced the creation
8 of the first ever Mayor's Office of Child Care and
9 Early Childhood Education, which will streamline the
10 child care process, remove red tape and provide
11 support to the entire sector. How long has that plan
12 – how long has the plan to open a new early childhood
13 office has been in works?

14 KARA AHMED: Yeah, actually it's been in the
15 Mayor's blueprint, and so that is something that the
16 Mayor had announced going back to last spring if I'm
17 not mistaken.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you know how many people
19 will staffed in that office?

20 KARA AHMED: Sorry, that I don't know.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, uhm, so you don't know
22 how many staff. You don't know what the description
23 of the roles, the responsibilities of those that will
24 employed in that office?

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2 KARA AHMED: What we certainly understand and
3 just in our you know close partnership with the First
4 Deputy Mayor and with her team is that this
5 absolutely an opportunity to support with
6 coordination among city agencies that are supporting
7 child care in the city and so, to the Council Members
8 earlier points around DOH and DOE and the different
9 pieces that providers need to contend with to support
10 their own work and their own programming, that this
11 office will absolutely support to create seamless
12 structures to support the child care community. So,
13 we're looking forward to continuing our partnership
14 and work with this office.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, why, why not perfect the
16 office you have before you create a new office?

17 KARA AHMED: So, I won't be able to speak to
18 anything outside of what I understand is the vision
19 and mission of this office, which we are in support
20 of, to obviously work in close partnership, not just
21 with the office itself but the multiple city agencies
22 that are touch points with this office. And so,
23 that's the work that's going to continue and that's
24 the work that's ahead.

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, how is the office, your
3 office and this office will coordinate and deliver
4 service for New York City children?

5 KARA AHMED: Our understanding is that we will
6 continue to work in close coordination with this
7 office, along with the other city agencies because
8 there is a touchpoint across. It's a system that
9 doesn't just you know, child care is not limited to
10 just DOE right? There are non-DOE contracted
11 programs that you know exist across the city. And
12 so, that this office will be able to support all of
13 the work that's happening across New York City.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Will it also address the
15 backlog in reimbursements to early childhood and will
16 it also address future reimbursements?

17 KARA AHMED: That is our work. You know and so,
18 that's the work that I think we've been talking about
19 here. That's the work that we will continue to
20 stress and to emphasize and to prioritize. To
21 support the submission of any back invoices, improve
22 upon systems and support our providers.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, so, the vacancies in
24 your office and how do they plan on staffing, getting
25

1
2 - I mean, supporting your office while working with
3 this office?

4 KARA AHMED: Again, I can't speak to specifics of
5 what this office will do in terms of supporting
6 various city agencies. We feel we are sufficiently
7 staffed for the work that's ahead of us. We will
8 continue to look at what work we need to prioritize.
9 We will continue to ensure that we've got the right
10 people in the right places to support that work and
11 to actualize our vision.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Earlier, the panel talked
13 about pay parities for CBO's. How do we plan on
14 addressing that? That's one way to retain. We saw
15 we have to do 4410 in order to have students with
16 special need preschool teachers. How do we plan on
17 doing that? What's the requirement and also, they
18 talked about teacher longevity, just equal pay to DOE
19 educators. Can you address that and tell me what the
20 plan is?

21 KARA AHMED: Absolutely, that is a huge priority
22 for this administration, as you said Chair Joseph,
23 that was a commitment that our Chancellor had made to
24 ensure that our providers, our 4410 providers, that
25 they and their staff actually have an increase in

1 salaries that became equal to that of CBO contracted
2 early childhood programs were long overdue.

3
4 And so, we were very proud to be able to deliver
5 on that and to continue to deliver on that, and to
6 support our 4410 providers. The work that we're
7 doing and I know that this is a priority for the
8 Administration as a whole in terms of ensuring that
9 there's compensation equity. And to do that, we want
10 to make sure that we have a workforce among our
11 contracted providers that is also credentials and
12 certified just like our DOE peers and so, we are
13 putting those supports in place.

14 And so, my office, our team at the DOE, we are
15 absolutely doing the work that we need to, to support
16 the workforce. In the CBO sector, our family
17 childcare providers, to earn degrees. To earn the
18 credits needed to earn a degree to earn credentials.
19 Identifying where they are in a study plan and really
20 empowering our providers and their staff to continue
21 on with their own professional studies and become
22 certified, so that when we are at that place of
23 compensation equity becoming actualized in this city,
24 we have a workforce that's ready to receive those
25 funds as well.

1
2 And that, that again, thinking about our
3 workforce in general and our CBO's, women, women of
4 color. This is going to foster economic mobility for
5 generations to come. So, huge and significant work.
6 We're proud to be involved in it within our own lead
7 childhood office and making great strides and really
8 partnering with universities across the city to make
9 that happen. And partnering with our City Hall
10 partners to ensure that compensation equity becomes a
11 real thing.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the current salary
13 for a CBO, a current, early childhood CBO educator?

14 KARA AHMED: So, again, it varies based on
15 credentials.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Pay parities for CBO
17 directors as well and support staff?

18 KARA AHMED: Yeah, that's certainly my goal.
19 Uhm, you know I think that if we're doing the work,
20 we should absolutely be fairly compensated for it.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSPEH: Absolutely. Uhm, I'm going
22 to pass it on to my colleague Shekar and then I'll
23 come back.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chair
25 Joseph for today's hearing. Thank you all for your

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2 testimony. I just have a few short questions but you
3 know just to reiterate, I mean you've heard it all so
4 far as Council Member Brewer said too. A couple
5 things, one is, I think we all can agree on how
6 essential early education is and 3-K is. As I've
7 said before at prior hearings too, foundation for
8 children. I have young children, one who just went
9 to 3-K last year. We all know how beneficial it is,
10 number one.

11 Number two, I think we can all agree at least
12 from Council Member Brewer's question, that DOE must
13 do a much, much better job. It's not doing a
14 satisfactory job of reaching out to communities now
15 to fill those seats. And so, you know I just want to
16 again you know state for the record to, that my
17 serious concern is and as many others have said to
18 that, knowing how fundamental this program is,
19 knowing DOE's failure to do adequate outreach to fill
20 those seats. The fact that DOE's choice is to first
21 reduce the seats, claim they're not going to be
22 filled, rather than spend more resources, more
23 attention, more energy to aggressively recruit.
24 Because it just doesn't logically make sense that
25 with the number of families in New York City, the

1
2 number of parents who depend on child care that we
3 can't fill the overwhelming majority if at all those
4 seats.

5 So, you know I do have very serious concerns
6 about the approach here. I think it's a policy
7 matter. The focus should really be on you know what
8 the latter is as I just said, instead of actually
9 cutting back on those vacancies.

10 DAN WEISBERG: Can I just in if that's okay
11 Council Member?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Sure.

13 DAN WEISBERG: Good to see you as always.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: You to.

15 DAN WEISBERG: Just to clarify and I understand
16 your point but I just want to clarify that we have no
17 plan to reduce the number of seats. We are concerned
18 certainly in 3-K that we have about 16,000 empty
19 seats as Dr. Ahmed has talked about. We think we can
20 alleviate that in a few different ways. One is
21 reconfiguring. We don't have a plan to reduce the
22 number. We have a plan to make sure we are meeting
23 the actual community demand. That may mean more
24 seats. As Dr. Ahmed said, we've actually added seats

1
2 just in the past year and also to do outreach,
3 absolutely to do outreach. That is part of it.

4 So, I just wanted to clarify. I understand your
5 point but our plan is, we don't have a plan in place
6 next year to reduce the number. What we have a plan
7 to do is test what the demand is in particular
8 neighborhoods, birth through five. Not just for 3-K
9 but birth through five and try to match up as much as
10 we can, which might end up increasing the number of
11 3-K seats. We certainly don't have a plan to cut
12 those. I just wanted to reassure you of that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And I appreciate the
14 clarification, although it does feel that way given
15 also the federal money that's you know being taken
16 out as well, which is a huge part of sustaining this
17 program. So, you know, I do appreciate that this is
18 looking at the need, but the reason that we don't see
19 it that way is because of the funding that supports
20 it that sustains that program.

21 So, I have a few questions in particular that I
22 want to get to. One, and I apologize if this was
23 already asked, I had to step out for a bit to. But
24 you know focusing now on the providers that are you
25 know way behind in reimbursement and that is also a

1 whole separate issue but a massive concern is that,
2 you know and I think you mentioned before to Mr.
3 Weisberg as a nonprofit leader before, myself as
4 well, knowing full well what that means. And I know
5 personally, you know having to scramble to make
6 payroll. What the city contracting process is
7 obscenely delayed in payments and what that means
8 from payroll to payroll.
9

10 Given how big of an issue this has been, why
11 hasn't there been an examination by the DOE of
12 increasing the advance? The providers are as I
13 testified before, seeking a 75 percent advance in the
14 contract. I know any organization could really
15 benefit from that. Approaching on 75 percent of the
16 year, coming to an end you know relatively soon. So,
17 that could really over night alleviate this immense
18 pressure that providers are feeling.

19 DAN WEISBERG: You know again, we hear you and
20 want to do everything we can to stabilize the sector.
21 I just want to say, I think the solution is more in
22 the nature of providing that back office support.
23 So, as again, as a former nonprofit head, if I could
24 have invoiced every month and gotten paid every
25 month. I can deal with that no problem. We have a

1
2 lot of providers that get the advance, which is
3 great. We're happy to provide it and don't invoice
4 for a while and that leads to needing to catch up.
5 So, just to say there's some issues there. You know,
6 we get our revenue, as you all know, from the federal
7 government, from the state government based on the
8 number of students we serve. I mean, that's true
9 everywhere. That's not a New York City thing, so you
10 know with knowing that particular provider is going
11 to see variation in their enrollment, very difficult
12 for us to front all the money before we see what the
13 enrollment is.

14 The thing we really, really want to avoid, which
15 does have to happen even with a 35 percent advance,
16 it has to happen in some cases, is to have to recoup
17 money because that's even more difficult for our
18 providers. And that's an obligation, like we're not
19 legally permitted to just say well, you know, just
20 keep the money. It doesn't matter what the contract
21 performance is.

22 So, just to say, we're willing to look at
23 anything to try to stabilize this sector. We think
24 we do actually give a pretty healthy advance at this
25 point. We just need to figure out how to make sure

1
2 that all of our small providers get the support they
3 need, so they're getting paid every month like
4 clockwork. That's where we really want to get to.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And I appreciate that.
6 I understand the reasoning, I would just urge you all
7 to really reconsider that and look at that because
8 one, 35 percent and I know it to from my legal
9 services days to, you know that's really one quarter
10 right? And so, it's a little bit more in this
11 instance but effectively we're talking about one
12 quarter, which gets you through you know three months
13 of the year. And that's, you know the end of it but
14 obviously we're much further along at this point.

15 The other issue is the providers then are
16 squeezed on both ends. They get a very small
17 advance. It doesn't cover them, you know nearly as
18 much as they need to be and on top of that as I
19 understand it, you can't seek to recoup on your
20 invoices until the prior one is paid. Which you
21 know, in this situation, given all the backlog,
22 really at the end of the day, the bottom line is no
23 matter of the reality of the situation is that these
24 providers just need money to pay to stay afloat.

1
2 And so, that's why I think given the exigencies
3 here right now, revisiting the advance is a way that
4 could overnight change this situation. Because right
5 now, we're not facing the theoretical concerns that
6 you're raising, we're facing the opposite problem,
7 which is they've run out of cash.

8 DAN WEISBERG: Yeah, understood, understood.
9 Just another clarification. I think somebody
10 mentioned this. One of the fixes that's you know it
11 doesn't sound very exciting but it was very helpful
12 the providers were able to do in the sprint for FY22, is
13 to allow multiple invoices to be submitted. And
14 that's something that we're allowing once again this
15 month for FY23. So, that should be a help to the
16 providers that have gotten a bit behind in the
17 invoicing but we understand your point on larger
18 advances and that's something we'll take back and
19 consider, absolutely.

20 KARA AHMED: I just wanted to say one thing and I
21 do appreciate your thoughts on this and I'd love to
22 continue talking and thinking some more together. I
23 just want to also just really emphasize the point
24 that, the conversations we're having today really go
25 hand and hand right? And so, I want to really just

1
2 put an emphasis on the remarks that the First Deputy
3 Chancellor made around not reducing seats but getting
4 shifting seats to where they're needed but also in
5 supporting our providers in particular who have been
6 unfortunately the most impacted by the unhealthy
7 competition of seats and over saturation of seats, of
8 getting them the right seats that they need to serve
9 their community. Because that enrollment goes hand
10 and hand then with invoicing.

11 And so, the two really can't be separated and so,
12 that's why this work becomes very critical and again,
13 looking forward to our partnership to make that
14 happen.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: And I look forward and
16 I appreciate that. I look forward to hearing more to
17 about you know what you all can do when you revisit
18 the advance issue. I think it's a critical one.

19 Uhm, and on that note, you know there's a
20 provider in both my district and actually also in
21 Council Member Won's district to that - with Mark
22 Treyger to, former Council Member Mark Treyger that
23 I've been reaching out to and working with whose been
24 really helpful in working on this issue. But the
25 fact of the matter is, there still very far behind.

1
2 I just want to read to you as of now, Little Friends
3 is behind \$264,000 on payments owed. Woodside
4 Friends is behind \$70,000 and Woodside Friends Christ
5 Lutheran Church is behind \$320,000 give or take.
6 Those are really sizable amounts and I think those
7 are invoices that are owed from I want to say
8 November till January and I'd love to know if you all
9 have an update on where they stand in terms of
10 getting the reimbursement as soon as possible?

11 KARA AHMED: A member from your team actually
12 reached out I think to Mark and from Council Member
13 Won's District and we've been in active contact with
14 this provider. If we're talking about the same one,
15 which I think we are.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Yup.

17 KARA AHMED: And her invoices are completely up
18 to date and have been paid, so those records
19 certainly - our records certainly sound very
20 different than what you've stated. Happy to talk to
21 you more about it. Happy to chime in the provider as
22 well. We were in contact with her as recently as
23 yesterday again when there was another inquiry. She
24 is saying that she is fully paid, so I'm not sure if
25 this was a previous inquiry. I couldn't speak to

1
2 those details but more than happy to continue the
3 follow-up.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Okay, I urge you all to
5 follow-up yeah and I appreciate the work that you've
6 been doing. You know we spoke with the provider
7 today before this hearing and heard this information
8 to, so let's figure out what's going on. I want to
9 make sure it's a top priority of mine that they get
10 reimbursed as soon as possible. So, I appreciate you
11 all looking into it.

12 And the last question I had if the Chair will
13 permit me one more question, is just uh, you know on
14 another note, you know I've been following the
15 positions that I've raised before to as has Chair
16 Joseph, the early education positions that were first
17 you know slated for transfer or to removal and are
18 now back in. There's one in particular I wanted to
19 ask about which were the policy specialists in the
20 early education. Dr. you may know more about this.
21 What's the status of their positions in particular?

22 KARA AHMED: The DOH specialist?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Yeah, I think the
24 policy specialist. I can get you the exact name
25 afterwards to but you know I assumed it was you know

1
2 that was the name of the position but policy
3 specialists.

4 KARA AHMED: Oh, the policy specialist okay,
5 because there's a DOH specialist that's assigned and
6 I'm actually probably using the wrong terminology for
7 DOH but there's a DOH person that's assigned to each
8 program, a licensed program who comes out to conduct
9 inspections. They have a full-on inspection list.
10 There was a program policy support specialist I think
11 who you might be referring to, that was actually set
12 up to do the same exact role in supporting programs
13 and they had a lot of value in the support but
14 certainly duplicative of the DOH role.

15 And so, there are still policy support
16 specialists within the early childhood office that
17 have taken on a variety of different functions based
18 on their own interest of what teams they'd like to be
19 part of, workstreams that they'd like to be a part of
20 and certainly helping to still support providers.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: So, that's the policy
22 support specialist, that's the question. Some of
23 them have reached out to us to and have raised my
24 concern as well, so I do hope that these are
25 positions that are being kept and they're being

1 supported because we were hearing a lot of concerns
2 from policy support specialists.

3
4 KARA AHMED: They are still with our early
5 childhood, they're an invaluable piece of our early
6 childhood team.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. Those were
8 my questions, thanks a lot.

9 KARA AHMED: Thank you.

10 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member Avilès, thank
12 you for waiting.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Good afternoon. Thank
14 you so much Chair Joseph and uhm, good to see you
15 both. Dr. Ahmed and Deputy Chancellor Weisberg. I'd
16 like to talk a little bit about special education,
17 one of my favorite topics. In particular preschool
18 special education since in general we know; we have
19 had a very hard time in our city addressing the full
20 and complete needs of children with special needs.
21 So, I'd like to know in terms of in December the
22 Mayor and the Chancellor announced that they would
23 open 400 preschool special K seats in January and
24 another 400 in spring to address the significant
25 shortage.

1
2 I'd actually like to know on the record what the
3 full scope of the shortage is and then would like to
4 know for those seats that are opening in spring, do
5 we have, what is the status? Do we have the CBO's
6 and school lined up for those classes and how many
7 seats and CBO's do you have lined up to open? I'm
8 sorry if I conflated those two questions.

9 KARA AHMED: No, that was actually, that's
10 perfect, thank you Council Member. So, yes, so we
11 are proud to say and again we thank Chair Joseph for
12 her support with this work, that we did fulfill the
13 Chancellor's commitment of ensuring that there are
14 400 seats by January. There are approximately 400
15 seats right now across - 400 newly created seats
16 across our 4410 providers and I do want to just
17 emphasize 6,000 seats were stabilized through this
18 contract enhancement. And that's often misunderstood
19 and not taken as seriously as one should probably
20 understand it because what it does is it helped to
21 retain seats for our children with disabilities.

22 So, this contract enhancement allowed for those
23 seats to remain intact because it helped to retain
24 teachers by increasing salary. It helped to ensure
25 that there was a longer day as we talk about the

1
2 length of day for our children to support even
3 working families, right?

4 And so, that is a huge accomplishment. We're
5 extremely proud of it and still recognize that there
6 is work to be done. So, we are working with our 4410
7 providers. Those who have already gone to the
8 contract enhancement process, those that are going to
9 becoming online to open up an additional 400 seats in
10 the immediate. That is what our goal in our work and
11 what we're aiming towards but we're also working very
12 closely with our special education colleagues in the
13 Department of Education to really understand best
14 what the needs are of the students that they're
15 seeing in terms of referrals, so that we get them in
16 the right C-type. You know it goes to this larger
17 conversation of making sure that we're aligning seats
18 to the needs of children.

19 So, yes to your question of that work continuing
20 with our 4410 providers in particular to support
21 them. They are experts in this work. And so they
22 are working through, many of them are ready to open
23 up some new classes as they come online. They are
24 working through as we've heard from other providers,
25 they're working through their own recruitment of

1
2 staff as they receive funding through the contract
3 enhancement, it makes that kind of recruitment that
4 much easier. And so again, big benefit of that
5 process.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: So, always happy to hear
7 of progress. I guess in particular of the 400 coming
8 online, how many do you have set ready to go and how
9 many do you still have in process?

10 KARA AHMED: So, just in last check, we've got
11 about 250 that are happening across 4410 providers,
12 that we've been informed by those 4410 providers that
13 they have either already opened up or soon will be
14 opening up. It was just based on staffing at their
15 sites. That would be with another 100 plus to serve
16 children. We also want to make sure though that we
17 are doing that in coordination with our special ed
18 colleagues, so that we are understanding what the
19 referral rate is, which we know is going to be
20 evolving. This is not going to be a one and done
21 process. We want this to be an ongoing constant
22 assessment, a constant review of what is the need.
23 We want to serve children in their least restrictive
24 environment at all times but based on their IEP.

1
2 So, depending upon what that is, whether that is
3 an inclusion class, whether that's a skits class,
4 whether that is a special class for six and eight's
5 or twelve's. And so, that's the work that continues
6 to be ahead of us.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: So, in terms of the
8 first, I'm happy to hear about the stabilization of
9 the 6,000 teachers that were noted.

10 So, that means we have 150 outstanding in some
11 form of process and a very fast approaching deadline.
12 Can you report to the Council more specifically,
13 that's a kind of very wide open possibility right?
14 Where those 150 are in terms of realistically being
15 able to open those services and get them online by
16 spring.

17 KARA AHMED: Sure Council Member and so, that's
18 6,000 seats, I just want to clarify.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: That's right.

20 KARA AHMED: Yes, which is really important
21 because that adds to this conversation. If we don't
22 stabilize those seats, the deficit will be that much
23 greater.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: That's right.
25

1
2 KARA AHMED: And so, yes, so right now, we're
3 looking at a little over 200 of children that are
4 part of a placement or waiting to be placed I should
5 say through the special ed office. But not all
6 waiting because of seat deficit and so, we want to
7 take that very seriously because we don't want to end
8 up where we are with too many seats and not the right
9 match to what the needs are of children.

10 And so, when we even talk about this 100 plus, we
11 are going to be looking very closely at what the
12 referrals are, where those seats are needed the most,
13 what type of seats is actually needed based on the
14 IEP of those children, based on what the
15 recommendation is, so that we can make the right and
16 the best decisions. We're working closely with our
17 advocates that are really in full support of getting
18 this work done right after years of it not being done
19 right. And working very closely with our state
20 partners too, so.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Yeah, that's great to
22 hear. I mean I would love to see the similar
23 breakdown for the children with IEP's including a
24 clear articulation of how many children are waiting
25 for legally mandated seats, the distribution of those

1
2 seats, both not only by type, certainly by district
3 and obviously a clear metric of where the gaps
4 continue to be in service. I'd also like to know
5 very quickly about what steps the DOE is taking to
6 ensure that young children, the 3-K children with
7 developmental delays or disabilities are receiving
8 for their mandated services at 3-K programs.

9 KARA AHMED: Yeah, so the related services that
10 children are entitled to by their IEP's is the work
11 of our special ed colleagues and they are working
12 incredibly hard at ensuring that the needs are
13 identified and the related services are matched up to
14 our 3-K children. Irrespective of the setting of in
15 which they are in.

16 And so, if there any specific questions around
17 the related service provider piece, I'm certainly
18 happy to take those back to our special ed colleagues
19 and we can certainly get back to you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: It's across the board
21 right? I mean the backlog is serious across the
22 city, so I think part of this question is also how
23 the agency is going to be prioritizing this issue in
24 the budget. In the budget negotiations this year to
25 make sure that we have the resources to provide these

1
2 services and obviously, I know there are many
3 elements to this but I'd like to hear a little bit
4 more from your perspective. How are you going to
5 prioritize these children and ensuring that we meet
6 the backlog and make sure we have appropriate
7 services.

8 DAN WEISBERG: And one of the things and
9 appreciate your focus Council Member very much on
10 this population, which has not been served well
11 traditionally, so we really appreciate it. Ahead of
12 you know the finalization of the budget, we are
13 expanding the team of itinerant physical therapists,
14 occupational therapists, speech therapists who do
15 serve the Pre-K, 3-K population. So, we are
16 expanding that pool to make sure that students are
17 getting their related services in a timely fashion
18 but you know, it is a very chronic shortage, so.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: And what does that mean
20 specifically expanding the team?

21 DAN WEISBERG: That means we're hiring an
22 additional several dozen of these related service
23 providers.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: How many do you currently
25 have?

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2 DAN WEISBERG: That I'll have to, I'll have to
3 get the current number and we'll get you the number
4 that we are adding to that team as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Great and Chair if you
6 may? Just in terms of some of the earlier
7 conversation around reduction, cost, shifting, all
8 these incredible words, you noted that there was an
9 additional 6,000 seats. Did you mean in the context
10 of 16,000 vacancies? That 6,000 seats were filled
11 from the current enrollment?

12 DAN WEISBERG: I think Council Member, that
13 number came from Council Member Restler talking about
14 the reduction in stimulus money for 3-K?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: No, no, you just
16 mentioned in your testimony that you added, that the
17 agency added 6,000 seats. So, I'm asking, we noted
18 there are 50 some odd thousand, 16,000 are vacant.

19 DAN WEISBERG: I'm sorry.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: We're using adding and
21 I'm asking are you really saying that you just filled
22 6,000 seats more this year than last year? You're
23 not adding new?

24 DAN WEISBERG: No, I understood. I was thinking
25 of something different.

1
2 KARA AHMED: So, thank you. We can certainly
3 clarify. So, going into this school year and this
4 September, 8,000 additional 3-K seats were added to
5 areas where there was unmet need across a variety of
6 districts. So, that wasn't just adding children to
7 unfilled seats but it was adding seats to where they
8 were actually needed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Okay, so it doesn't add
10 the top number. It's still shifting, right? You are
11 suggesting that they are being shifted to the need -

12 KARA AHMED: Actually it increased our overall 3-
13 K capacity. I did. So, it actually added an
14 additional; there were already existing seats that
15 were unfilled and not being used but there were 8,000
16 seats that were coming in as part of an old RFP,
17 previous RFP I should say that we're going to meet
18 unmet need across New York City. And so, we were
19 able to bring those online so that we can serve
20 communities in the immediate.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Okay, you understand the
22 disconnect with adding and subtracting and adding and
23 subtracting and yet, yeah, it's still utterly
24 confusing. In terms of similarly, actually, you know
25 what? I'll just leave it there because I think

1
2 there's definitely a semantic disconnect around what
3 is being filled and currently, what is being shifted
4 and what is being cut. And yet, we still, I would
5 just say you know, representing a district in South
6 Brooklyn, the need is significant and to hear 16,000
7 vacancies just makes my hair fall out given that we
8 have residents every single day. We see the struggle
9 particularly with undocumented children and we are
10 absolutely happy that the program was set up, the
11 promise program. We will demand and advocate that
12 that be baselined. Our families cannot be left
13 behind. That they are important parts of our
14 community so for the record.

15 And lastly, I would encourage you all also to
16 consider the partner with our office. I think you
17 know we are often; we are meeting residents in the
18 community. It would be amazing to have actually some
19 faced folks come to our district offices and provide
20 those services closer to where people are as opposed
21 to always having them go outside. We have language
22 accessibility. We are in the community and
23 unfortunately city agencies seem not to, we spend
24 half of our budgets calling city agencies to do the
25 work they're supposed to be doing anyway.

1
2 So, I would encourage greater in district
3 participation with your staff in our offices.

4 DAN WEISBERG: We would love to do that. We can
5 Council Member have family welcome center staff come
6 to you to help enroll you know families or just
7 provide information to families. And just on the
8 understanding how are you adding seats when you have
9 empty seats? You know as I think you know because
10 this exists in your district in Brooklyn, we have
11 some neighborhoods where there's lots of empty seats
12 and struggling providers and then we have other
13 neighbors with waitlists. And we have neighborhoods
14 where there's empty Pre-K seats and a big need for
15 infant toddler seats.

16 And so, you know the seats that we're adding,
17 we're obviously trying to target them into areas
18 where we have waitlists where we know there's a need.
19 So, that's the disconnect. Certainly, we don't want
20 to add gasoline on the fire and create just
21 additional empty seats and we're not seeing
22 additional empty seats, we're seeing that number come
23 down somewhat but adding the seats where there's
24 waitlists doesn't alleviate the problem in places
25 where there's too many.

1
2 KARA AHMED: And Council Member, if I could just
3 if you have any family inquiries of undocumented
4 families in particular, looking for early childhood,
5 between both our Head Start programs and any of our
6 school day, school year programs, I want to make sure
7 that we're supporting and getting them the
8 information and access that they need. So, please
9 let us know. So, we will continue to partner and to
10 the First Deputy Chancellors point, Face time is
11 incredibly important, so we would be happy to join
12 any of those events.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Yeah, we'll say we have
14 incredible local providers who need all the tools
15 because they are doing the face to face, not the you
16 know bus ads. They are actually in community,
17 grinding every single day.

18 KARA AHMED: That's what matters.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: So, thank you for that.

20 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you. Thank you Council
21 Member.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Just a couple of
23 follow-up questions. In the 8,000 seats that you
24 added, where are they? How many of them are filled?

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2 KARA AHMED: They are across a variety of
3 districts. We can get the actual enrollment number
4 on those and get back to you in the current state,
5 exactly where we are right now, but yes, they are in
6 places where there was need to the First Deputy
7 Chancellor's point.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Local Law 20,
9 the DOE is required to post annual data on preschool
10 special education by November 1st. We noticed that
11 it has not been posted. On the record, can you tell
12 for the record, when are you expecting to post that
13 data?

14 DAN WEISBERG: We'll check on that. I wasn't
15 aware Chair but we will absolutely meet our
16 obligations.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I gotcha. You know I'm
18 always watching.

19 DAN WEISBERG: Yup, thankfully, thankfully Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right, always watching, I
21 got my eyes on you.

22 DAN WEISBERG: We will come back with a specific
23 date for you, absolutely.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Uhm, to
25 piggyback off of uhm, Council Member Avilès about the

1
2 undocumented students, it expires this June. Is that
3 a priority in this year's budget? I know for me it
4 is because we fought to get that on and it was - no
5 child should be without. And I think Mark would say
6 that because I always say that to him. It wouldn't
7 be universal if every child does not have a seat and
8 that includes our special need, our ENL students and
9 of course our new New Yorkers and our undocumented
10 students of this city.

11 KARA AHMED: Are you talking about Promise NYC?

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes ma'am.

13 KARA AHMED: So, that is actually an incredibly
14 wonderful initiative and so, thank you for all of
15 your support. I think it's a game changer for the
16 city.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That incredible work is
18 actually being led by ACS and so, we are you know
19 working in close partnership with ACS to gather any
20 information that we can to see how we can make sure
21 we are supporting our children and our families
22 directly.

23 So, I'm sure there's more to come around what
24 that will look like. What it will feel like in terms

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1
2 of timeframe or extension and can certainly continue
3 to have that conversation.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Definitely, thank you.
5 Earlier, we talked about payment. We wanted to know
6 why can't the DOE increase the advance upfront to
7 increase access? And also to allow cash flow to the
8 providers and reduce paperwork.

9 KARA AHMED: So, again, I think these are great
10 questions. You know we've heard some other Council
11 Members ask the same and I think we've leaned into
12 that you know previously the standard around the city
13 has been and you know we've been in contact with a
14 number of city agencies on this, is about 25 percent
15 for an advance. Uhm, and we actually are doing 35
16 percent. We've eliminated burdensome requirements
17 which is a number of paperwork requirements and
18 documentation requirements.

19 And so, these are the systems changes that we're
20 putting into place and we're happy to keep exploring
21 what else can be done, whether that be a greater
22 advance, whether that be a different system, whether
23 that be both, right?

24 DAN WEISBERG: So, yes, we will absolutely
25 consider that again. You know this is the backbone

1
2 of our whole program. These providers are the
3 backbone of our whole program. They're wonderful
4 people doing incredible work, so if it's a larger
5 advance, we're going to look at that even though it's
6 a pretty healthy advance right now if it is changing
7 the way we do invoicing, absolutely. There is no law
8 that I'm aware of, that says it has to be done
9 monthly for example.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

11 DAN WEISBERG: We've already reduced the
12 paperwork. There were literally, Kara talks about
13 sending us photocopies of receipts. They don't have
14 to do that anymore, thank goodness but I'm sure
15 there's more we can do. So, we will continue to and
16 we will continue to explore how they can get day to
17 day at elbow back-office support, so they don't even
18 have to run these things down themselves.

19 KARA AHMED: Which we'll support with managing
20 cashflow, which we'll support with proper budgeting,
21 which we'll support with a lot of things, so that
22 providers can do the work that they want to do, which
23 is to serve children and their families.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That would be music to their
25 ears. In our special, I was happy to hear that

1 you're hiring related services for our preschoolers.

2 Because we know during the pandemic, a lot of our

3 students did not receive their early intervention

4 services during the pandemic. So, we know that

5 they're coming to you with a lot more challenges.

6 So, to have the related services in place will be a

7 game changer for parents and students to support the

8 students with special need.

9
10 Now, we're going to talk about a special

11 population near and dear to my heart, you know that.

12 Students living in alternative housing and foster

13 care always miss out on early childhood education

14 programs. How are you reaching out and working with

15 foster care agencies to meet the need of these

16 children?

17 KARA AHMED: Yeah, that's a great question, so

18 thank you Chair Joseph. I think we actually have

19 some information here that we can share because

20 there's been a lot of work being done with our city

21 partners in particular and this has been a huge

22 initiative I know for our City Hall partners. You

23 know just some numbers I think that might be

24 important that we've been gathering is just — and you

25 know it could be heartbreaking in so many cases

1
2 right? When you think about the fact that there's
3 you know over 2,000 young children in shelter that
4 are three and four, right?

5 As a former principal and working with so many
6 young parents and their children and when they
7 themselves, who I would consider children at 16 and
8 17, and then with their child being in shelter, we
9 know that that is a incredibly difficult circumstance
10 that nobody should have to go through at any age but
11 particularly at a young age. And we know that about
12 50 percent of those children around four years old
13 are those that we've matched up to learn in our
14 programs, in our Pre-K programs, about 30 percent are
15 in our 3-K programs. And so, there's been a lot of
16 work under the Mayor's blueprint to really have a
17 strategy focused on increased outreach and enrollment
18 for families in temporary housing. And really to
19 increase that and to build that across the city. And
20 so, we know that there's an incredible amount of time
21 and energy being put into that work and we are here
22 to support it and to lean into it as much as
23 possible.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How about our students in
25 foster care?

1
2 KARA AHMED: In the same. Absolutely the same
3 and working closely with our ACS partners you know in
4 that work.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: In the 12 districts, in the
6 3-K universal, what is the percentage of the students
7 that are living in DHS shelters? Do you have a
8 percentage? Do you have a number?

9 KARA AHMED: For 3-K?

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, 3-K.

11 KARA AHMED: Roughly 30 percent from what we
12 know. There are many more that are not necessarily
13 in a 3-K program. And so, what we need to do is to
14 really think about and along with our city partners,
15 what are the strategies that we can employ to make
16 sure that we're connecting families to resources,
17 especially at a criminal time when they're in
18 temporary housing.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, you know that's
20 important to me. Yes, I'd like to recognize Council
21 Member Gutiérrez. Thank you for being here.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Earlier, we talked about
24 batch processing of invoices. Has that been helpful
25 for our providers in resolving payment backlogs for

1
2 FY22? And will you extend that to providers ability
3 to provide and submit multiple months of invoice for
4 FY23 and future years.

5 KARA AHMED: That is something that providers had
6 talked about when we first identified there was an
7 issue with back invoices that needed to be submitted
8 from the previous fiscal year.

9 And so, we worked hard at making sure that that
10 was an enhancement made to the invoicing system to
11 happen to support the rapid response teams work of
12 getting in submissions for FY22 and so, we saw an
13 incredible increase to support that work.

14 And not all providers took advantage of that
15 right? And so, they have two options. They can
16 batch invoices at one time and they don't have to and
17 we saw that as well. And so, we are going to be
18 opening that up again for FY23. We have shared that
19 with providers widely and that is really to support
20 any of the back invoices that are happening right now
21 for FY23 as well. We want to make sure that we can
22 provide all the supports possible for providers and
23 to support their operations for the remainder of the
24 fiscal year.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Earlier we talked about pay
3 parities for our directors, support staff and
4 educators. What is the cost? What's the fiscal
5 commitment?

6 KARA AHMED: We don't have that; I don't have
7 that number. I know that there are some studies that
8 are going to be conducted I think more in a citywide
9 level to really understand what the gap is in
10 salaries and to understand best because again, it
11 does range. It ranges across our settings. It
12 ranges across our providers and it ranges based on
13 credentials.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you'll be providing
15 support and outreach to make sure that was supporting
16 -

17 KARA AHMED: 100 percent. We have to support our
18 workforce that's serving our young children. Some
19 who have been doing this their entire career and they
20 are some of our most beloved teachers among our
21 center-based programs, our family child care
22 providers. And so, we want to do all that we can to
23 support them in furthering their own degrees and
24 credentials.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council Member
3 Gutièrrez.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÈRREZ: Thank you Chair and I
5 apologize for being here. It's just next door, no,
6 no, no. I just want to uplift Chair Joseph. She's
7 been a tremendous, tremendous voice, leader and
8 champion for our day care centers and 3-K and it's a
9 difficult committee to Chair. So, I just want to
10 acknowledge you because you've been sitting here for
11 hours as well and I also just want to extend my
12 gratitude to you Deputy Chancellor. I know, I missed
13 the whole hearing. I will be touching base, because
14 I know we're not where we need to be as far as paying
15 these providers and we're not where we need to be on
16 pay parity but I just want to acknowledge that you've
17 been incredibly responsive in my district and I hope
18 that you know the next time you're here we're talking
19 about, applauding about how well and how much more
20 streamlined and how much further we are to getting
21 where we need to be to uplift our community.

22 So, that was - my question was really saluting
23 our Chair Joseph and thank you Deputy Chancellor.

24 KARA AHMED: Thank you Council Member Gutièrrez.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Council Member.

2 This is the work I do in partnership with my 20
3 colleagues. Thank you so much for your support.

4 Thank you. I think that's all my questions. Thank
5 you both.

6 KARA AHMED: Thank you Chair Joseph.

7 DAN WEISBERG: Thank you so much Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I told you; we don't want to
9 be here in three months again having this same
10 conversation with my providers. We want to make sure
11 we resolve this as my colleague has mentioned and we
12 work in partnership.

13 KARA AHMED: Thank you. We thank you for your
14 partnership and support.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to DOE and
17 thank you Chair. We will now turn back to public
18 testimony. We will be limiting testimony today to
19 three minutes each. For in-person panelists, please
20 come up to the table once your name has been called.
21 For virtual panelists, once your name is called, a
22 member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant
23 at Arms will set the timer and give you the go ahead
24 to begin.

1
2 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you
3 may begin before delivering your testimony. So, our
4 first in-person panelist Sarita Subramanian,
5 Rosemarie Sinclair, Mary Cheng, Patricia Lett.

6 Please make your way to the table in the front.

7 Sarita Subramanian, you may begin your testimony.

8 SARITA SUBRAMANIAN: Thank you. Good afternoon
9 Chair Joseph and my name is Sarita Subramanian, I'm
10 Assistant Director for Education at the New York City
11 Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify at this oversight hearing. My
13 testimony includes a lot of detail in the budget that
14 I'm going to largely skip over. I'll touch upon a
15 few points but I'm going to focus on the payments to
16 3-K and UPK providers, as of the Mayor's Preliminary
17 Budget release last month. We looked into the city's
18 financial management system in our report on the
19 following amounts. The budget for this fiscal year,
20 the commitment reflecting contracts that are
21 registered, invoices that are submitted and approved
22 for payment or invoices already paid and expenditures
23 reflecting payments made.

24 Expenditures are a component of commitments,
25 therefore a large difference between these two

1
2 numbers suggest a potential delay in payments after
3 DOE has agreed to make payments. I will compare
4 these amounts to those from the preliminary budget
5 last year to see if a larger share of payments has
6 been made so far this year.

7 Finally, IBO supports the passage of Intro. 843
8 as it would bring increased financial transparency to
9 payments to early childhood providers. As the city
10 expanded 3-K, it has relied increasingly on
11 participating New York City Early Education Centers
12 or NYCEEC's. Last school year, 74 percent of 3-K
13 students attended these centers. In contrast, only
14 51 percent of Pre-K students attended these centers.

15 In addition, the city's expansion of 3-K relies
16 on federal COVID aid that will expire by the 2024-
17 2025 school year and that will need a gap of \$92
18 million in additional funds to maintain the program
19 at the current levels.

20 In addition, the Adams Administration in the
21 preliminary budget last month included \$70 million in
22 a fund managed by the City's Economic Development
23 Corporation as part of an effort to expedite payments
24 to the city's contracted providers that were not paid
25 for at least 75 percent of their annual contract last

1 school year. Another \$1 million is being dedicated
2 to a child care marketing campaign which may also
3 include 3-K. These funds were included in the
4 corporations fiscal 2023 budget, that's outside of
5 the Department of Education budget.
6

7 Tracking payments to providers, we analyzed how
8 payments to providers for 3-K and Pre-K students
9 compared this year versus last year when many
10 providers began reporting payment delays. The
11 payment process is divided into four steps. First,
12 the DOE must register contracts with the city's
13 Comptroller's Office.

14 Second, providers must submit invoices based on
15 actual enrollment. Third, the DOE must approve
16 invoices. And finally, the DOE makes payments to
17 providers. Delays in payments last year were due to
18 issues with providers submitting invoices and issues
19 with DOE processing payments. Lower than expected
20 enrollment in 3-K has resulted not only in a
21 reduction in the budget by the Adams Administration,
22 but also affected invoice submission by providers who
23 were unable to meet enrollment targets.

24 Based on our analysis, it appears that fewer
25 delays in registering contracts and receiving and

1
2 processing invoices from providers reflected in a
3 greater level of commitments, have led to an increase
4 in overall expenditures this year compared with last
5 year. As of the release of the Preliminary Budget,
6 79 percent of budgeted funds to 3-K and Pre-K
7 providers had been committed. Meaning, the city had
8 agreed to make payments to providers.

9 As of the preliminary budget last year, which
10 actually was released about a month later than this
11 year, only 61 percent of funds had been committed.
12 In terms of actual expenditures, a larger share of
13 this years budget has been extended compared with a
14 similar time last year. This year, 60 percent of
15 budgeted funds have been spent, \$500 million as of
16 the release of the preliminary budget compared with
17 44 percent of last year's budgeted funds as of last
18 years preliminary budget.

19 When we looked at expenditures as a share of
20 commitments, however, we find a similar share this
21 year compared with last year indicating that once the
22 DOE agrees to make payments there does not appear to
23 be much difference in the timing of payments compared
24 with last year. As of the release of the preliminary
25

1
2 budget this year, \$152 million had been committed but
3 not yet expended.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm
5 happy to answer any questions.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
7 testimony. Rosemarie Sinclair.

8 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Good afternoon Chair Joseph.
9 My name is Rosemarie Sinclair and I am the Executive
10 Vice President of CSA, the Council of School
11 Supervisors and Administrators. We represent
12 thousands of professionals who provide leadership in
13 our public schools, central offices and in our city
14 funded early childhood centers. Thank you for the
15 opportunity to speak on behalf of our early childhood
16 directors and assistant directors and I'm sitting
17 next to one.

18 In October, I testified concerning early
19 childhood programs dealing with delayed invoiced
20 payment which led to unmet payrolls and prevent CBO
21 centers from getting necessary resources to support
22 their daily operations. CSA is absolutely grateful
23 that the Committee has pushed to help expedite the
24 budgetary and invoicing approval process for centers
25 and is following up on this.

1
2 Now, I just want you to know that we are pleased
3 to share that we have been meeting with the DOE.
4 We've been asking for various documents and we've
5 been sending back and forth and then send it to our
6 providers to say, wait a minute, did you really get
7 this and so forth.

8 There are some improvements, which I'm very
9 grateful for. There are some improvement and we will
10 continue to work collaboratively with DOE to ensure
11 all, and I underscore, all centers are getting
12 invoice payment in a timely manner. In addition, the
13 story must be told that leaders of these centers
14 still earn far less than DOE counterparts. Even
15 though virtually all of them have the same and you
16 heard this word, credentials and administrative
17 duties. The historic pay inequity is especially
18 troubling because they, meaning our directors, have
19 been a lifetime; and you know this, a lifeline rather
20 for our city's families. They lay the foundation for
21 children entire education as well as their eventual
22 careers. They continue to serve children, often way
23 beyond their work day and without a contract since
24 September 2020. 92 percent of our directors and
25 assistant directors are women of color. We continue

1
2 to say thank you to the City Council for all the hard
3 work and I know it's hard work, that has been done to
4 ensure there is pay parity in the workforce. There
5 is power in the Council's posture. CSA also wants
6 the leaders of these centers to know that their
7 condition now will not be their conclusion. We want
8 the frequency to change for them where pay parity
9 swallows up pay disparity.

10 We ask that the City Council help ensure that the
11 city budget includes funding for the equitable
12 salaries they deserve and have earned. Thank you
13 very much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
15 testimony. Mary Cheng.

16 MARY CHENG: Hi, good afternoon Chair Joseph and
17 members of the Committee. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify today. My name is Mary Cheng,
19 I am the Director of Childhood Development Services
20 at Chinese American Planning Council. CPC's FCC,
21 Early Childhood and School Age Centers are critical
22 safety nets for thousands of working-class, AAPI, and
23 immigrant families throughout New York City.

24 In addition to providing childcare for low-income
25 families, CPC's Childhood Development Services staff

1
2 are instrumental in supporting the growth of children
3 of color and with disabilities. As we enter another
4 year of contracting with the DOE we continue to be
5 frustrated by the Vendor Portal system, which is a
6 system created by DOE in hopes of unifying,
7 enrollment, attendance, budget and invoicing. But
8 the system is plagued with issues. For example, in
9 FY22, we were severely delayed in payments, to date
10 we are still awaiting five months of outstanding
11 invoices for our service between centers.

12 The DOE only changed their system for FY22 to
13 allow multiple invoicing to try to rectify the severe
14 delay of FY22. But instead of learning from last
15 year's inadequacy, for FY23 they went back to month-
16 to-month invoicing, which resulted in severe delays
17 in payment for FY23. To date for FY23 we have only
18 received two of our invoices for July of 2022 out of
19 two budgets that were awarded. Only last week did we
20 get all of our budgets awarded to us and approved to
21 us. I understand a notice came out this week to
22 allow for multiple invoicing starting at the end of
23 February, but this just shows you how inadequate the
24 system really is.

25

1
2 Also, we are facing multiple issues with
3 certifying attendance which is linked directly to our
4 invoicing. The issue that we are plagued with
5 enrollment and attendance system that isn't accurate,
6 and unfortunately we also have no way to rectify the
7 discrepancies on our own, we have to diligently await
8 for the Occupational Analyst to correct the issues we
9 find. This is taking upwards to four to eight weeks
10 to correct. This delay in rectifying the issue,
11 leads to delay in invoicing for the work we are
12 doing. Not to mention that we receive multiple
13 notifications to state that "we must certify our
14 attendance by the 5th of the month after, but
15 providers who fail to meet the requirements may be
16 subject to the following: I'm not going to list it
17 all. I will send you the mail. It is the tone in
18 which this is written that is very penalizing on the
19 part of the provider. However the issues lay within
20 DOE, providing the CBO's with not only accurate
21 attendance lists, but also timely ones as well.

22 So, we analyze our enrollment and attendance
23 lists so closely because we know that is directly
24 linked to percentage of reimbursement that we are
25 going to receive back from the DOE. So, we must do

1
2 our due diligence as directors. However, it is very
3 frustrating when we can't hold them accountable or
4 penalize them for creating this systemic issue. We
5 call for DOE to decouple the attendance from the
6 invoicing, as we are still required to anticipate for
7 service for the amount of children we are contracted
8 for, and a reevaluation of the vendor portal system.
9 And unfortunately with the centralized enrollment
10 system, we have no control over who DOE awards the
11 seats to and every year we have seen a fluctuation in
12 the number of awarded children to our centers that
13 does not meet the capacity amount we requested.

14 Families usually enroll in an online system
15 without truly understanding the discrepancy and
16 details of each seat. This confusion isn't just for
17 immigrant families. Even within educated English
18 speaking families as well, navigating a public system
19 should not be this hard for families. We want
20 families to walk in and make their choices based on
21 the full knowledge about programs. Not from behind a
22 screen. This way we can really support the process
23 and they truly feel supported in what they are
24 applying for. Our families feel unsupported and
25 confused by the system. They blame the CBO's for not

1
2 being transparent and it leads to jumping between
3 schools but at the end of the day, CBO's are left
4 holding the rest of the bills because DOE didn't
5 provide enough children to begin with.

6 All these issues lead directors really standing
7 behind a computer screen instead of focusing on the
8 children. There is a growth and balance between the
9 business aspect of education and the quality care of
10 education. We understand the need for both as a
11 provider but in DOE's current state, it is severely
12 straining our programs quality and practice and
13 putting it at risk.

14 This is why we are demanding that the City
15 Council and the Mayor correct the gross inadequacy of
16 DOE invoicing and enrollment system to fully invest
17 in our workforce and ensure that children receive the
18 quality education they deserve. Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Patricia
20 Lett.

21 PATRICIA LETT: Okay, I'm still technology
22 challenged. Alright, thank you. Usually your mom
23 raise you correctly. Thank you. I believe protocol
24 has already been established but I too bring
25 greetings from the Brooklyn Sunday School Union of

1
2 which I am the President. I'm here to speak on - I
3 need this candy, it's my allergies. I'm here to
4 speak on Anniversary Day and uhm, I must say that I
5 served 31 years and four months for the Department of
6 Education. I retired in 2019. I hold a master's in
7 history and for me, Anniversary Day is our history.
8 Anniversary Day was established in 1829.

9 Our organization was organized in 1816, primarily
10 for the purpose of economic building up here in
11 Brooklyn. There were people who said they would live
12 in Brooklyn for free rent. The children were out of
13 control. The infrastructure was bad. There was a
14 high rate of illiteracy. So, we began with that or
15 the organization began with that but then, they
16 wanted to do something for our children. They needed
17 to be educated. Hence comes about Sunday School,
18 because you couldn't get them through the week
19 because they had to work and you could only get them
20 on Sunday's in the afternoon.

21 And this was done after a model that they had
22 viewed in England. I come at this time to state
23 that I am in full support of Diwali becoming a
24 public-school holiday. I believe that everyone has
25 the right to celebrate their history. It says who we

1
2 are. We need to know where we come from and I talk
3 sometimes a little bit too much but I got to tell
4 this little story.

5 I remember teaching and a fight broke out in the
6 back of the room and I said, "what happened?" And
7 one of my students said, "he called me such and such,
8 so I hit him." But my reply to him, "it's not what
9 people call you, it's what you answer to." When you
10 know your history and who you are, no one can take
11 you out of that method.

12 I'm also reminded of a quote. It says, "people
13 without knowledge of their past history, origin and
14 culture is like a tree without roots." You're
15 unstable. You have nothing to stand up with. New
16 York City is a place of diversity and inclusion. We
17 welcome everyone. We used to refer to New York City
18 as a melting pot. Some people do but we can see
19 what's going on with the people that are here. We
20 embrace, we welcome everyone. We are a very diverse
21 city.

22 Again, as I said, I'm asking that Anniversary Day
23 remain on the calendar. I don't see why our day that
24 was given to us in 1905 by the New York State
25 Legislature alright, for just Brooklyn only and in

1
2 1959 under a consolidated law, Article 52, Number
3 2586 and I'm going to bring it in. 2586 and it was
4 signed by Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller. We've been
5 around a long time. This day has been around a long
6 time and I just again, I'm just going to reiterate
7 that I ask that and I'm impressed of what I saw here
8 today. You guys are on the money. You know your
9 stuff. You represent your constituents well. I
10 don't give praise out easily because I'm a tough task
11 master and I'm particular proud of you as women.
12 Holding it down. You show that you're not just
13 beautiful, you got a brain.

14 And uhm, as I said, I see too much talent in this
15 room for you not to be able to work this out. And
16 for everyone gets to keep their history. As I said,
17 I worked and I know it's of 180 days you got to
18 maintain in order to get from it but we're going to
19 do it, we're going to work it out. And I have to
20 acknowledge some of my sponsors for this day, the
21 AACO which is the African American Clergy and Elected
22 Officials, Chair Dr. Waterman, the Assembly Woman
23 from the 55th District Latrice Walker as First Vice
24 President and the Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, our new
25 speaker is second Vice President. Alright, we also

1
2 endorse by Bridge Street Development, Footsteps to
3 Follow which is a group, because I target my young
4 people. We do workshops on goal setting, financial
5 literacy. I have to acknowledge to the Department of
6 Aging because I love my seniors because we stand on
7 their shoulders. They paid the way for what we do.

8 And let me see, as I said, oh yeah and I have to
9 acknowledge on the state level, Assembly woman
10 Stefanie Zinerman and again Latrice Walker who is
11 always there for us and they participate in
12 everything we do. I thank you for your time. I'm
13 sorry if I stay too long and I have books that I've
14 written. I compiled a history. I'm so glad your
15 doing the van, I got four books. So, if you ladies
16 want to read up on Anniversary Day and the Brooklyn
17 Sunday School Union, you're more than welcome and if
18 some of them need the book, we're on Amazon okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much. Could
20 you state your name for the record?

21 PATRICIA LETT: Sure, Patricia L-e-t-t.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

23 PATRICIA LETT: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for being here and
25 thank you for the history lesson, I appreciate that.

1

PATRICIA LETT: I'm a teacher.

2

3

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I know, I'm a forever educator too. I just left a classroom last year to come do this job.

4

5

6

PATRICIA LETT: And you're doing it well.

7

8

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I have a question for Sarita. How can we make this better? On time payments, providers, seats being in the right place?

9

10

11

SARITA SUBRAMANIAN: That's a tough question.

12

13

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21

You know to be honest with you, I need to understand a little bit more about the processing. And so, I actually in preparation for this did start making some calls to really try to understand you know the steps from the contract, registering the contract to the invoice and you know what exactly makes a commitment. And so, you know that is work that we're trying to do to understand exactly how the process works before we can really speak to what can be improved in that process.

22

23

24

25

One thing that did peak my interest was Deputy Chancellor Weisberg talked about the breakdown between like slots or capacity. Our data just focuses on an actual enrollment, so I don't have that

1 data on capacity. So, I'd be very interested in
2 learning more about that. There was also a
3 discussion about the application process and that's
4 also some data that I'm planning to request. We do
5 get data on the kindergarten choice, middle school,
6 high school, choice application processes but I do
7 want to take a deeper dive into the 3-K and 4-K
8 application processes and that would allow us to
9 enter some of these questions about when students do
10 apply to programs and don't the seat offer. Where is
11 that happening? To try to better under understand
12 where there is a mismatch between seats and you know
13 actual enrollment.

14
15 In terms of the process, I'm again, I'm not quite
16 sure. I need to have some more conversations maybe
17 with the DOE also to understand the different
18 systems. I'm not so familiar with Passport for
19 example and I wasn't aware that they were trying to
20 consolidate both the - I know that they've been
21 working on trying to get better enrollment data
22 because that's something that our registered files
23 have been delayed for the past several years because
24 of the Pre-K enrollment have part of that. So, I
25 know that they are trying to you know get that system

1
2 uhm, more accurate I think from the providers. So,
3 yeah, I want to try to get more information on these
4 different processes before I can really speak to what
5 we can do to improve the payment process.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, what recommendations
7 we can also make, so we're not back here having this
8 same conversation. Obviously, in October, you're
9 back again having the same conversation. CSA, how
10 much it going to cost us?

11 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: I like the fact that the
12 City Council mentioned before, gave a recommendation
13 of \$46 million.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, \$46 million. Let me
15 write that down. In order to get pay parity for our
16 educators.

17 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Yeah, and you know we were
18 saying that even if we have a path to pay parity,
19 that you know that that would be great. I mean, we
20 discuss with different one's and then the statement
21 was about credential of course, which we already told
22 them that our members do have credentials but also
23 the fact that the same centers you have a path for
24 teachers. We started a path but who's leading the
25 centers.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it, got it and
3 longevity? You also talked about longevity.

4 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Yes, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, wonderful. Thank you
6 so much.

7 ROSEMARIE SINCLAIR: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Ms. Patricia,
9 thank you.

10 PATRICIA LETT: No, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Continue teaching and
12 spreading your knowledge.

13 PATRICIA LETT: We're still teaching.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I know. We are forever
15 educators.

16 PATRICIA LETT: I have emails from DOE asking -

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah, they sent me an email
18 last week too.

19 PATRICIA LETT: [INAUDIBLE 3:53:22].

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

21 PATRICIA LETT: [INAUDIBLE 3:53:28].

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sure, thank you.

23 PATRICIA LETT: [INAUDIBLE 3:53:36].
24
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, I know you will. I know
3 you will email me. Thank you so much. Thank you so
4 much panel for your testimony.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to all of
6 our panelists, if there's anybody else in person who
7 wishes to testify, please see the Sergeant at Arms in
8 the front of the room. We will now move on to our
9 virtual panelists. Again, please wait for the
10 Sergeant to announce that you may begin before
11 delivering your testimony. Our first virtual panel
12 will be Betty Baez Melo, Lupe Hernandez, Jeremy
13 Caplan, Chris Banks and Dana Abrassart. Betty Baez
14 Melo, you may begin your testimony.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 BETTY BAEZ MELO: Thank you. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to discuss early childhood education in
18 New York City. My name is Betty Baez Melo, and I am
19 an attorney and Director of the Early Childhood
20 Education Project at Advocates for Children of New
21 York. Over the past ten years, the city has greatly
22 expanded access to early childhood education programs
23 by launching Pre-K and 3-K for All and, more
24 recently, by implementing Promise NYC to increase
25 access to programs for children who are undocumented.

1
2 However, making 3-K truly universal is not only a
3 matter of adding seats, but of ensuring access to
4 preschoolers with disabilities and other historically
5 marginalized groups of children. At AFC, we have
6 heard from numerous families who needed a preschool
7 special education classroom placement for their child
8 but were told that there was no seat available. At
9 the end of last June, 800 preschoolers with
10 significant disabilities were waiting for seats in
11 their legally mandated preschool special education
12 classes. Many of these children are diagnosed with
13 autism, are non-verbal, or have delays in multiple
14 areas of development. These are children that stand
15 to benefit significantly from early childhood
16 programs, and the city cannot leave these children
17 behind.

18 We have also heard from families whose children
19 with disabilities are in 3-K and pre-K general
20 education classes but are not receiving their legally
21 mandated special education services, such as a part-
22 time special education teacher, speech therapy, or
23 counseling. According to DOE data, one in four
24 children with IEPs in 3-K and Pre-K for All programs
25 did not receive their full mandated services by the

1
2 end of the 2020-2021 school year, in violation of
3 their legal rights.

4 While there is more work to do, with the
5 Council's support, the city has taken some important
6 steps to help address these systemic legal
7 violations, including opening hundreds of new
8 preschool special class seats, committing to
9 addressing the shortage of seats by the end of the
10 spring, opening integrated classes, and hiring dozens
11 of related service providers and staff to help
12 address delays with preschoolers with IEPs. However,
13 the city is relying on \$88 million in federal COVID-
14 19 stimulus funding this year to fund these
15 initiatives, funding that will be expiring in the
16 fall of 2024. So, as you consider next steps on
17 sustaining and expanding 3-K, it is critical to also
18 work to sustain and expand these initiatives so that
19 preschoolers – to sustain these initiatives as
20 serving preschoolers with disabilities is not
21 optional.

22 Similarly, while some seats remain empty, the
23 city's 3-K and Pre-K programs are under serving
24 children in temporary housing, who could greatly
25 benefit from having a safe, consistent, high-quality

1
2 preschool program, and children from immigrant
3 families who have historically been excluded from
4 certain programs because of their immigration status.
5 Plans to assess need and determine the location of
6 classrooms need to include increased access and
7 outreach to families of children who are
8 disproportionately left out of these programs. To
9 sustain recent progress, we urge you to ensure the
10 city extends funding for Promise NYC, so that
11 children can access all 3-K and Pre-K for All
12 programs regardless of their immigration status.
13 Funding for this program, which just launched in
14 January, -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 BETTY BAEZ MELO: Will expire in June. Thank you
17 for the opportunity to speak to you today. I'm happy
18 to answer any questions.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
20 testimony. Our next panelist Lupe Hernandez.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Thank you very much. Good
23 evening. My name is Lupe Hernandez and I thank you
24 for this opportunity to speak with you today. I will
25 be speaking to you as in my own capacity as a New

1
2 York City parent that has recently gone through the
3 process of applying for the early learn child care
4 program.

5 My son actually just finally got into this
6 program. It was his first day this week. We have
7 actually qualified for this program for the past
8 three years. However, I had no idea and he didn't
9 just now get a seat because there were not enough,
10 he's actually only the third student in this class.
11 There were only two other students in this early
12 learn class. It's actually because it took over a
13 year for me to figure out how to apply. For those
14 that don't know me, I've testified many times
15 regarding education in this space.

16 I'm a member of the Community Education Council
17 for my district. I live in the education space and
18 still, I could not get access to be able to get
19 information to even figure out if I was eligible.
20 Once I did get the information and I got this just
21 about three weeks ago, only because I finally got a
22 response. They thought I was emailing regarding the
23 3-K applications that just went live in January. And
24 I had to; I had sent emails about eight times this
25 year asking, how do I find out if I qualify and what

1
2 is the eligibility requirements and where do I apply?
3 I find that Dr. Kara Ahmed spoke about these programs
4 having to enroll from the program itself. It would
5 have been nice to have known that. This information
6 could have been easily accessible on the New York
7 City public schools website.

8 At the time and for the past year, there was no
9 way to see for yourself if you qualified for this
10 infant toddler child care program, such as Early
11 Learn and 3-K, extended day and year programs for the
12 low income families. There was no where published
13 the income eligibility thresholds for family
14 households. I had to once I got the reply from the
15 enrollment office, thinking I was asking about 3-K
16 and I reiterated no. My email clearly asked about
17 the early learn application. And they told me to now
18 look on the my schools application directory to find
19 the site that offered the program and then call the
20 site directly to find out if they had a seat. If
21 that site has a seat, -

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 LUPE HERNANDEZ: That site will then enroll you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Continue.
25

1
2 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Thank you. The website only
3 gave you an email to find out if you were eligible or
4 how to apply. It just seems more simple that they
5 would give this information well over a year ago. I
6 am well resourced. I would have reached out to
7 whomever I needed to and did the leg work. They do
8 put the burden on the families, I want to point that
9 out, but they should just at least give this
10 information.

11 They recently changed the website. I looked
12 today after hearing her testimony and they now
13 include some of this information but I have
14 screenshots and I will send to you the many emails
15 that I sent that were never replied to because this
16 program was through ACS and when it got changed over
17 to the DOE, DOE did not do anything to inform
18 families how to properly apply. And I think there
19 are thousands of families that are eligible for these
20 seats and these seats would be filled if families
21 actually knew one, if they were eligible and two, how
22 to apply and access them.

23 Again, I live in this space and it took over a
24 year for me to get a space and I will say this.
25 They're right, he got that seat in two weeks. But

1
2 just imagine if I would have had this information a
3 year ago when I – I actually emailed them November of
4 2021 and I emailed them several times after that.
5 Not a single reply, not a single reply and I think
6 the outreach is beyond blacking. They need to have
7 when it comes to our students in temporary housing,
8 everyone of our shelters should have somebody
9 enrolling our under five into whatever program that
10 we know that they qualify for. I think the 16,000
11 seats would get filled pretty quickly if we actually
12 put in the work. And I will submit the rest of my
13 written. Thank you very much for this opportunity
14 but I want really stress that even a parent like
15 myself that lives in this space, could not get my son
16 into a seat until a year after. That's prolonging
17 any services he may need because he could have been
18 identified over a year ago and now we're just now
19 getting into this program. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your
21 testimony Lupe. Jeremy Caplan.

22 JEREMY CAPLAN: Yes, hi, this is Jeremy. I'm
23 here from Sunset Park. I have a son right now in 4-K
24 and I really want to thank Rita Joseph and also my
25 Council Member Alexa Avilès for the work that they've

1 done on this. I was at the hearing uhm, in October.
2 It's incredibly frustrating to feel like there's a
3 lot of the same issues going on and I've been hearing
4 from some friends in Flatbush about daycare center,
5 new daycare centers that are closing and it's
6 incredibly distressing. It's such a lifeline. I
7 know so many parents who New York City would not be
8 affordable unless, especially with child care unless
9 with this program.
10

11 There's no way that we should be readjusting
12 seats or any euphemism that we're talking about.
13 When I hear them say that you know there's these
14 unused seats, I think that's purely a failure of
15 outreach to you know local organizations, to Council
16 Members to get those seats and especially when I'm
17 hearing that a lot of those seats are in the Bronx
18 too. I think that's primarily just a terrible lack
19 of outreach to immigrant communities, to reach people
20 in their languages. I know I Sunset Park here, I
21 dealt with this myself. My son was going to 3-K and
22 the program itself actually dropped us three days
23 before because they had too many people enrolled for
24 3-K and thought they could take more seats on. Not
25 realizing that they had a limited amount of 3-K seats

1
2 and they had extra 4-K seats and they thought they
3 were all the same.

4 So, three days before basically, starting 3-K, we
5 got transferred to another you know 3-K which was
6 fine, I'm glad that luckily we were on a waitlist for
7 that but I think that in general, it just
8 demonstrated that providers here and this was a
9 provider in Sunset Park, was still not clear about
10 the rules and regulations and that shows you know
11 some big issues on communication with providers. And
12 then I also think in general, we need to really look
13 at this program not as, once we built the capacity,
14 we need to see how we bring in these community
15 nonprofit providers under DOE umbrella and to give
16 that standards. My son currently goes to a school.
17 Little Brooklyn Pre-K that is DOE and the standards
18 are great. The teachers are fantastic. It really is
19 education and you know wonderful teachers and I know
20 a lot of -

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

22 JEREMY CAPLAN: Nonprofit providers have that too
23 but I think the importance is, we're seeing the lack
24 of just hodgepodge of throwing providers together was
25 mainly because you know, we didn't have the seats. I

1 think we need to think about how we really integrate
2 this, so we don't have these problems and then fully
3 bringing a lot of these programs into the public
4 school system, so that we're not dealing with a lack
5 or you know lack of payments but then also, various
6 standards and different qualities and stuff. I've
7 definitely seen that in Sunset Park, the differences
8 between some DOE schools and from some at home
9 schools and just what the teachers are, the quality
10 of education curriculum, the offerings, all of that.
11 I think this really needs to be a public school
12 solution and to rid of all the sort of bureaucracy
13 because we're seeing so much of it. It seems to be
14 hampering you know providers and for filling seats
15 and for students and parents to have this wonderful
16 opportunity. So, thank you so much for testifying,
17 for giving me the time to testify. Thanks.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Jeremy.
19 Moving on to our next panelist, Chris Banks.

20 CHRIS BANKS: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we can hear you.

22 CHRIS BANKS: Okay, thank you, My name is Chris
23 Banks, and let me just first of all start by saying
24 to the Chair Joseph and to all the Council Members
25

1
2 that are there, thank you for the opportunity to be
3 able to testify before the Committee. I am the Chair
4 of Board of Directors of the Boulevard Nursery Day
5 Care, located at Brooklyn, East New York. And we
6 have been in existence for a quite a couple years in
7 the community, we're a staple in the East New York
8 community and located right on 2150 Lindon Boulevard,
9 here in East New York.

10 We provide daily educational programming to about
11 70 children per day, Monday through Friday, between
12 the hours of 8am to 6pm. Most recently and I just
13 want to get to the point. Most recently we've been
14 dealing with issues of possibly closing due to no
15 fault of ours. And solely on delays in payment by
16 the city. And this has threatened the schools
17 ability to make payroll on several occasions since
18 October of 2022. And you know, the staff you know
19 we're not wealthy people but they come in every day
20 to work and to make a difference. And these are
21 members of the community that are dedicated to
22 providing the best possible outcomes for youth who
23 are often forgotten and casted aside and leading to
24 poor outcomes as they get older.

1
2 We cannot and must not allow the Administrative
3 bureaucracy to threaten programs like the Boulevard
4 Nursery School. As it is, the State Board of
5 Community and has helped so many families in our
6 community. As the consequences will be felt solely
7 by the staff and the parents and most importantly the
8 children of our community.

9 I am asking and begging the Committee to continue
10 to provide the oversight and I know there is a bill
11 to help with this issue but to continue to look into
12 the causes of these payment delays that they have
13 threatened the existence of the quality of our
14 program and others like this across the city. The
15 early education safety net must be protected or we
16 will pay a much greater price in the future.

17 I thank you for the opportunity to testify before
18 you today and look forward to answering any questions
19 you may have.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chris.
21 Next panelist, Dana Abrassart.

22 DANA ABRASSART: Hi.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: We can hear you.

24 DANA ABRASSART: Okay, so, hi, my name is Dana
25 Abrassart and I just want to thank you for the

1
2 opportunity to testify today and thank you to all the
3 care providers who have testified and more
4 importantly thank you so much for the work that you
5 do.

6 Also, I'd like to thank Chair Joseph whose my
7 Councilperson for being such an advocate of the
8 universal early childhood education. So, I am a
9 parent and I am writing as a constituent of District
10 40,. I know that this district is also plagued by
11 lack of payments from DOE to several 3-K providers
12 for many months now and I know that a lot of them are
13 struggling to keep their doors open. I also have
14 recently entered what I consider to be a Disney World
15 of navigating New York's education and care system.
16 I can attest to many of the challenges parents face,
17 which is high cost of care, provider shortages and
18 months and months of waitlists of which I am still on
19 several waitlists.

20 At a time when life is already very hectic as a
21 working parent finding reliable care only adds to the
22 challenges. So, I learned of the 3-K program from
23 family members in the neighborhood and I was really
24 ecstatic to learn about it but as I've been you know
25 trying to find care providers, I'm getting a very

1
2 different sort of narrative from the actual staff
3 then I have heard today from the DOE. I know there's
4 lots of care centers and when I ask if they have
5 universal 3-K, they have said that they have applied
6 and the DOE has refused their requests. I don't know
7 for whatever reason but there's a very specific
8 number of places within my neighborhood that offers
9 this program.

10 So, and they also kind of – the providers also
11 give me the kind of look and sort of a speech about
12 how they're very uncertain about the future of the
13 program. So, I feel like I'm hearing quite the
14 opposite about how DOE seems very optimistic and
15 moving this program forward but given the budget cuts
16 and the lack of payments as well as providers trying
17 to provide care, using the universal 3-K system, it
18 feels very different as a parent trying to find a
19 spot for your child.

20 Uhm, it's also – there's not a lot of talk about
21 changing places that are being unused in certain
22 districts and I know that the landscape is constantly
23 changing because about three to four years ago, it
24 was much easier to find care for especially infants
25 and toddlers in this neighborhood in care centers

1
2 that also provide 3-K, which is kind of the ideal
3 situation where you can send your child as an infant
4 toddler -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

6 DANA ABRASSART: 3-K but I know now we are really
7 facing a shortage in this neighborhood. So, thank
8 you so much for the time and uhm, I look forward to
9 seeing the results of this.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your
12 testimony. Uhm, I will call Dana offline tomorrow,
13 so we can talk and find care for your child. This is
14 something I'm very passionate about. So, I'm sorry
15 you're going through that Dana but we will try to
16 make sure your child gets care.

17 DANA ABRASSART: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Lupe, I know that you
19 mentioned there was several, the website had a lot of
20 issues, lack of information especially around
21 enrollment. Are there any recommendations for the
22 New York City public school system on how to fix it?
23 How to make it easier for parents to navigate?
24 Especially those; there are parents that are not tech
25 savvy, they just need the basic.

1
2 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Thank you Chair Joseph for
3 giving me the opportunity. I do. The way I found
4 out that I was eligible uhm, a provider that I called
5 regarding the program asked if they had seats, gave
6 me this two sheeter that was from the DOE and I just
7 thought to myself, why wouldn't this be on the
8 website under this programming? Why wouldn't - you
9 know they give the information for Head Start on the
10 website. There was even a link to get the
11 eligibility threshold for Head Start, which is much
12 lower. And like I said, as of today, all of this
13 information is there but I have been complaining
14 about it for the past two weeks. When immediately
15 when I got the information, I said to them, why isn't
16 this - if I would have known that it was on me, the
17 parent, to start to look at the program and the sites
18 and I have to be the one to reach out them and they
19 would take care of this application process, I would
20 have did it a long time ago, but I had no idea.

21 So, I think that information needs to be not just
22 sitting on a website but through many multi-languages
23 that are used here in New York City. The same way
24 I'm getting robocalls about the CEC election, I want
25 to hear robocalls about how to enroll into all of

1
2 these programs. We need people out on the streets
3 tabling by subways, Union Square, you know go to
4 communities that we know need these seats. If
5 families knew and I'm also really curious of what the
6 income threshold will be after we adjust what the
7 state and Governor Hochul had I think she was
8 expanding that to expand the income. That needs to
9 be known immediately.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you and if you heard
11 previous testimonies and my colleagues and I, we
12 stressed that there was no outreach. The lack of
13 outreach that was invested in prior year when the
14 program first rolled out, we don't see those visible
15 outreach anymore in shelters, in churches, in
16 community street fares. They tabled at every single
17 event they were there. We don't see them anymore, so
18 we're calling on them to make sure they step up their
19 game and continue to do the same type of leveling of
20 marketing and outreach to community organizations and
21 meeting communities where they are. So, thank you so
22 much for that.

23 LUPE HERNANDEZ: Thank you. They should be
24 knocking on doors. They were knocking on doors when
25 it launched and they need to do that again.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, they were. They were
3 doing grassroots level. They were knocking on doors
4 as if they were campaigning to enroll children into
5 these programs. So, I think the same level of
6 aggressiveness should be turned to these programs.
7 Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to everyone
9 on that panel. Our next panel is for those who are
10 registered and are not logged on Zoom. If you are on
11 the Zoom and would like to testify, please use the
12 raise hand feature, Annie Minguez Garcia, Mohammed
13 Usman, Gloria Alston, Adrianna Alicia, Celeste Brad-
14 Sherlane, Shakoya Jones and Elton Dodson. I am not
15 seeing any raised hands, so that concludes our public
16 testimony for - sorry, Celeste.

17 CELESTE BRAD-SHERLANE: I did raise my hand.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Apologies.

19 CELESTE BRAD-SHERLANE: That's okay. I'm trying
20 to work this technology, it's hard. My phone's not
21 working, so I had to go to my iPad. What I want to
22 basically say since we're talking about technology.
23 My center since I started working there which was in
24 2014, always had the parents come in and the parents
25 didn't know how to use the technology. So, they were

1
2 registered definitely at the center in order for
3 their child to participate in the program.

4 This is something that is needed because parents
5 don't always have the technology or they don't know
6 how to use it. Because I know myself, it's difficult
7 especially if you have a disability.

8 The other thing I would like to say is that I am
9 a teacher for over 40 years. My previous day care
10 center closed, which was in the Bronx, West Chester
11 Tremont Day Care Center and all of this, COVID and
12 everything and the non-funding, it had to close. I
13 have also other staff members that I know of that had
14 to leave the job because they were not getting paid
15 on time in order to survive. Others have left
16 because the amount of money being paid was not
17 enough. I started as an assistant teacher and worked
18 my way up to a group teacher but I am still going to
19 school, which means it is a hardship for me when I'm
20 not getting paid properly by the day care center,
21 which is not being paid properly by DOE.

22 Also, when the Health Department comes in, there
23 are things that happen. We were closed for three
24 months from November to January and thank God we were
25 paid according to our Board of Directors because DOE

1
2 said, don't pay us. This is at my new center that
3 I'm working at. There's a lot of things that need to
4 be worked out between DOE and the Health Department.
5 Personally, I love my job. I have parents that love
6 us also that stuck with us that came back to us but
7 not all of them. We had a full center with lots of
8 children, which we housed like 90. There was a point
9 where we only had 30 children in the daycare center
10 when we reopened. Right now, we still are looking at
11 54 less children in our center, which we need to
12 bring in more, which we can't bring in more because I
13 heard someone testify that the teachers are not
14 there, they are leaving.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time has expired.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Celeste for
17 your testimony. Jeremy Caplan, we're seeing you have
18 a raised hand. Jeremy.

19 JEREMY CAPLAN: Yeah, is it actually possible to
20 ask a question for Chair Joseph? I'm curious to hear
21 about uhm, you know we're not going to reach the end
22 of the COVID federal funds for another two years. Do
23 you have a reason or do you feel like there's a
24 reason why the Adams Administration is already saying
25 that there won't be funding for it in two years? And

1
2 considering we also have a budget surplus of several
3 billion dollars, it feels like the money that is that
4 gap from the federal COVID funds seems minimal. I
5 mean it's what, \$70 million compared to a \$5 billion
6 surplus that we have currently or maybe even more on
7 a city level. And then the state level, we also have
8 a several billion-dollar surplus. Why do you get the
9 sense that there's a push for austerity now when
10 we're actually not seeing that austerity? You know
11 we have the money, why is the Adams Administration or
12 other people acting like there's no money already and
13 that this is a crisis?

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I will forward that question
15 to the New York City, to the DOE.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to all of
17 our panelists and that concludes our virtual
18 testimony for today.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And this concludes our
20 hearing. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 28, 2023