



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

**COMMITTEES ON FINANCE
AND YOUTH SERVICES**

FISCAL 2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

BILL CHONG

COMMISSIONER

MAY 20, 2020

Good afternoon Chairs Dromm and Rose and members of the Committees on Finance and Youth Services. I am Bill Chong, Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. I am joined remotely by Jagdeen Phanor, DYCD's Chief Financial Officer; Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services; Darryl Rattray Associate Commissioner for Youth Services and Strategic Partnerships and Daphne Montanez, Assistant Commissioner for Youth Workforce Development. While we may not be physically together, we are grateful to have this opportunity to testify on DYCD's Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget. Like so many New Yorkers, I too am recovering from COVID-19 and know firsthand just how hard this has been for individuals, families and communities who have been directly impacted by this disease.

I am incredibly proud of DYCD staff, our providers, young people, and families during these challenging times.

Since the PAUSE order was enacted in March, DYCD staff quickly adapted to this new normal—from supporting, reimbursing, and communicating with funded programs so they can best serve their communities.

This was possible because the IT staff has developed systems and reports to help with the COVID-19 response and kept systems up and running to allow Finance and contracting staff to support nonprofits during the crisis. Administrative Services remains at the office to ensure that critical mail is distributed and has been carrying out some very important work to protect our front-line providers.

Our fiscal team created a new approach to streamlining paperwork to help providers, and spare our Procurement, Program and Legal staff from having to do multiple contract actions.

Our community-based organizations have gone above and beyond in helping the City meet one of its top priorities during the COVID-19 emergency: keeping New Yorkers safe. For example, Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Services programs continue to offer vital support. To help providers keep youth safe during the pandemic, DYCD issued an emergency procurement to offer services for homeless youth with COVID-like illness (CLI) within hotel rooms, for youth who do not otherwise have a safe place to isolate. Although the numbers of symptomatic youth have declined within RHY programs, we will be prepared if that should change in the near future. Drop-in Centers continue to make essential referrals to housing and health care while they expand on-line supports, including counseling on how to cope during the pandemic, clinical support for anxiety or depression, and recreational activities to maintain social connections during this time.

To address growing food insecurity among New Yorkers, many Cornerstone and COMPASS sites are handing out meals directly or are referring people to sites where they can be picked up. These efforts are complemented by food pantries funded through the City Council or with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

DYCD-funded after school programs, COMPASS, Beacon and Cornerstone programs shifted to remote services to maintain connection and engagement with youth and families. Like

the shift made by schools, after school programs created online and virtual activities to meet recreational, academic, and social-emotional needs. For example,

- **Global Kids** hosted a virtual talent show, and Center for Family Life COMPASS Explore celebrated Earth Day with an online fashion show of clothing made from recycled materials.
- **United Activities Unlimited (UAU):** Elementary and SONYC participants are using a mix of pre-recorded activities and live Google meets, including events for superheroes week, a “world food tour” and fitness challenges.
- **Child Center of New York:** Worked with the principal and parent coordinator at P.S. 273 in Queens to align planning for remote learning, virtually completed their Shark Tank challenges, and showcased techniques in dance on YouTube.

The City has had to make some tough choices about whether programs should remain open or closed or be modified to ensure the safety and health of all New Yorkers. Out of an abundance of caution for our young people, providers and worksites, the very difficult decision was made to not operate SYEP and summer camps.

SYEP has been a New York City institution since 1963 so you know we did not arrive at this decision easily. Unfortunately, the uncertainty these next few months over how social distancing guidelines, worksite availability, and provider and site staffing would continue to be affected by COVID-19 made it difficult to ensure that these programs could operate safely and efficiently. Similarly, following the guidance of health and education officials, there was no safe way to operate summer camps. The well-being of our young people is always a top priority of the City. We welcome conversations with the Council on how we can serve young people and families this year.

These actions have resulted in a savings of \$15.3 million in Fiscal 2020 and \$182.3 million in Fiscal 2021. This savings comes at a time when the city is facing an unprecedented decrease of \$7.4 billion in tax revenues, huge costs associated with the COVID-19 response, a loss of state aid and a Federal government refusing to assist the epicenter of this pandemic.

The Executive Budget includes nearly \$600 million in funding, of which \$371.7 million is city tax levy, \$65.1 million is federal, \$5.3 million is state and \$152.3 million is intracity. While we await further budget actions in Albany and Washington, this funding is critical in restarting services when conditions allow. We are carefully monitoring the situation, particularly considering the emerging trend of children being stricken with pediatric multi-system inflammatory syndrome. To emphasize once again, health and safety is our first and utmost priority as we make careful considerations about DYCD programming in the weeks and months ahead.

While all our staff and non-profit providers are doing extraordinary work helping young people and families get through this pandemic, I wanted to share some great examples:

DYCD staff teamed up to supply RHY providers with much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and to connect cases of diapers, baby formula and baby wipes to children staying at facilities run by Diaspora, SCO, Children's Village, and Covenant House. PPE supplies have been limited, but thankfully the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, secured more than 9,000 face masks through NYC Emergency Management. They were distributed to front line staff at Ali Forney Center, Cardinal McCloskey, Project Hospitality, Safe Horizon, Sheltering Arms, SCO of Family Services, The Door, Diaspora, GEMS, Rachel's Place, CORE Services, Covenant House, Children's Village, Good Shepherd and Rising Ground.

We are also discovering other creative ways to serve New Yorkers in the face of a pandemic.

- **#DYCDatHome:** DYCD is hosting [virtual events](#) to help young people stay connected, including puppetry, open mics, contemporary jazz, the DYCD Heroes Project, Recipe Rescue, Step it Up, Asian traditional dance, hip hop fusion, and visual arts.
- **Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) and Denim Day:** DYCD hosted an online conversation with A CALL TO MEN's Ted Bunch, who facilitated a dialogue about healthy masculinity.
- **Community Moms:** DYCD used social media to solicit nominations for our annual recognition of mothers and other caretakers who provide inspiration and support. Congratulations to Chair Rose as one of 30 NYC moms chosen for this recognition.
- **Future Now:** The Adult Literacy program housed at Bronx Community College [is raising \\$1,000](#) to provide emergency cash, food and cleaning/hygiene supplies to students who have lost loved ones to COVID-19.
- **Club A-Elita:** The Discretionary provider is sending its musicians to serenade seniors at nursing homes.
- **Lemontree Foods:** The nonprofit continues to send volunteers to help distribute food at Cornerstones and City Council-funded food pantries.
- **NDA Opportunity Youth:** Fourteen providers are working with [NYC Census](#) to connect young people with paid remote Census outreach work experiences. This includes calling and texting New Yorkers to remind them to complete the Census.
- And **The JCC of Staten Island** launched the Carter Center's first virtual Saturday Session, *Our Black Is Beautiful*. Special guests included DJ Drewski from Hot 97 - and Staten Island's very own Skai Jackson from the Disney Channel who gave youth some inspirational words of encouragement.

These are just a few of many wonderful examples of the work that DYCD and our providers are doing to support New York City youth and families during this pandemic. We will get through this together and we look forward to working with the Council as we continue our efforts to create opportunities to improve the lives of New Yorkers.

Thank you again for the chance to testify today. We are happy to answer any questions.