



## **Testimony of the NYC Department of Education on the Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in New York City**

Before the NYC Council Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Education

December 16, 2020

Good morning Chair Rosenthal and Chair Treyger and all the members of the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Education here today. I am Josh Wallack, Deputy Chancellor of the Division of Early Childhood Education and Student Enrollment at the New York City Department of Education (DOE). Thank you for inviting us to testify today on the provision of child care in New York City during the pandemic, and for your ongoing support for early care and education.

Mayor de Blasio has made access to free, full-day, high quality 3-K and Pre-K for All a top priority of this Administration. In partnership with teachers and leaders across the city, we have expanded access to these programs to tens of thousands of children, helping our youngest learners get a strong start in school and life, and providing an essential support for working families. Just as your two committees indicate, access to early childhood programs is vital for both the educational success of children and the ability of mothers and all caregivers to participate in the workforce, continue their education, and support themselves and their families. We also recognize that when we continue to make investments in our early childhood workforce, we are investing in women and their families, as the majority of early childhood program leaders, teachers, and staff are women, including many women of color.

Following the expansion of Pre-K for All in 2014 and 3-K for All in 2017, we reached another milestone in 2019 with the transition of the EarlyLearn system of contracted early care and education from the Administration for Children's Services to the Department of Education. The DOE now supports an early childhood system that can serve nearly 100,000 children from birth to five, in settings that span district schools, DOE Pre-K Centers, community-based organizations, and family child care programs. There is universal access for all four-year-olds in New York City, and three-year-olds in nearly half of our school districts. Across the city, we provide Head Start and other extended day and year programs for families who are eligible based on their income and needs, and work closely with family child care providers particularly to meet the needs of infants and toddlers, as well as three-year-olds. We know how important a longer day and year of care are for many families of young children, and while our State and federal resources for these programs are limited, especially in this current fiscal climate, we hope to expand these opportunities in the future.

Since the onset of this pandemic, the City has made it our priority to ensure that families—including our healthcare professionals and other essential workers—could access safe, reliable care and education for their children. Toward this end, the efforts of teachers, leaders, and staff at our early childhood programs to support children and families during this time have been nothing short of extraordinary. As you know, the DOE's Regional Enrichment Centers, or RECs, were a critical support for the City's first responders and essential workers beginning in March when schools closed for in-person learning. As part of this



effort, many of our community-based organizations and family child care programs also kept their doors open to provide emergency child care for children under five. Teachers, leaders, and staff in these programs volunteered to take on this heroic task at the height of fear and uncertainty in the City. They not only ensured the health and safety of children and staff but also created nurturing, welcoming environments for children and families when they needed it most. Simultaneously, the rest of our early childhood system shifted to remote instruction in the spring, helping children learn from home in the most creative ways—hosting virtual lessons, sharing recorded messages from teachers, making regular phone calls to check in with caregivers and offer tips for play-based learning, and much more. We know this has been an incredibly challenging time for families, and acknowledge all the ways families have been adapting to this new environment and creating as much normalcy for their children as possible.

I believe I speak for everyone when I express my deep gratitude to early childhood programs for their leadership and service to New York City’s communities through one of our most difficult moments. I also want to recognize the tireless work of my colleagues at the Division of Early Childhood Education. From social workers offering trauma-informed support, to instructional staff who eased the transition to remote learning, to policy support staff who developed and trained programs on new health and safety guidance, to the those who stepped up to take on reassignments at our district schools, to so many more—this dedicated team has been incredibly invested in the well-being, safety, and success of these programs and the children and families they serve, and I thank them for this ongoing service to our City.

A critical support we have provided for our contracted early childhood programs throughout the pandemic is continuing to honor our contracts as programs shifted to offering remote instruction. We also worked with the Child Care Resource and Referral consortium to ensure providers had access to CARES Act funding opportunities. And we have maintained the Administration’s commitment to salary parity for teachers in community-based organizations following a significant new agreement with our partners in labor, DC37, as well as the Head Start Sponsoring Board, and the Day Care Council; we are currently in the second year of a three-year phase-in of these salary increases and remain on track to fulfill this commitment. We are continuing to work with our partners in State and federal government to maximize the resources available to our programs.

As we approached the fall, we knew how crucial it was for our students, especially our youngest and most vulnerable students, to be able to attend their schools and early childhood programs in person. For many families, the school or program community is one of the steadiest, most reliable aspects of their lives, with people and resources they can count on. So many aspects of reopening schools and early childhood programs have been unprecedented, but the reality has remained the same: our children need to learn in person with a caring teacher as often as possible.

So this fall, we built on the valuable experience of emergency child care and family child care providers to inform our broader reopening efforts and the strong support systems we put in place for the school year. Health and safety has been our top priority from the outset, and we’ve worked hand in hand with programs to keep staff, children, and families safe as we resumed in-person services that we know are such a vital support to families and communities. We’ve been encouraged by the very low positivity rate at schools and programs, and appreciate every effort programs have made to maintain the highest standard



of safety while providing a caring learning environment for children. We have issued and provided training for programs on comprehensive health and safety guidance, in partnership with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and we directly ship 30-day supplies of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies to all programs. We continue to support programs through our Situation Room, through which we work with DOHMH and the NYC Test & Trace Corps to confirm any positive cases and coordinate next steps. We are following the same protocols for close contact quarantine and site closure as in our public schools. We're also pleased to offer nursing support to our contracted programs; nurses are available through our telehealth hotline and visit programs to help guide their health and safety practices. And staff and children at all DOE early childhood programs and affiliated family child care programs have priority access for COVID-19 testing at City testing locations.

As we keep health and safety at the forefront of everything we do, we are also working with programs to ensure that children have an enriching educational experience that we know is key to their development. Our instructional experts have helped guide programs on supporting children's learning in remote and blended learning environments, including on the use of technology for early learning, classroom design that maintains social distancing, and sharing resources for families to use at home. We have also distributed devices to thousands of early childhood families, and launched new family resources like Ready4K, which empowers families by texting them simple ways to incorporate learning into their day, in multiple languages. All our guidance for programs has been delivered through frequent, comprehensive communication that is a cornerstone of our partnership with program leaders. We share updates, resources, and other important information with programs at least weekly through our Early Childhood Bulletin and through webinars, office hours, and virtual meetings.

Throughout the school reopening process, our youngest learners and their families have been top of mind for in-person learning. During the recent temporary school closure, our community-based early childhood programs and family child care programs again continued to offer essential in-person services for children and families, and we continued to support them in maintaining safe, healthy environments for children and staff. Many of our contracted early childhood programs also act as partners in the City's Learning Bridges initiative, a collaboration between DOE and the Department of Youth and Community Development that provides free child care opportunities for children in 3-K through 8th grade on days when they're scheduled to be remote. There are currently 450 Learning Bridges programs operating for children from 3-K through eighth grade, with the capacity to serve nearly 44,000 students. That number continues to increase as we expand seats across all five boroughs. As we open new programs, we reach out to any family that has applied and is still looking for a seat in that community, and partner with school and program leaders in our community outreach efforts to encourage more families to apply. While we work to expand the program, priority placement has been given to children of essential workers or families previously enrolled in a REC, families in temporary housing, children of teachers and school staff, children in foster care, and students with disabilities. Learning Bridges programs remained open to serve children and families during the temporary school closure, providing crucial child care for working families. In order to respond to feedback from families, we have also now added early drop-off hours at approximately 70 of our Learning Bridges and Learning Labs programs. And, nearly 130 Learning Bridges sites are co-located with an after-school program that operates from 3pm to 6pm. DYCD funds nearly 1,100 after school programs across the City.



We are proud to partner with the early childhood programs that have been such resilient sources of support for their community throughout this public health crisis. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our efforts to strengthen the city’s early care and education sector for years to come. This summer, we significantly increased the City’s investment in family child care through our new Family Child Care Network contracts—which include higher rates for providers, greater support for professional learning and family engagement, and the opportunity to offer 3-K in family child care for the first time. Next summer, we will reach another important milestone in our effort to create a stronger, more unified early care and education system when new center-based contracts begin. These contracts will contain pay parity for teachers, an enhanced funding model that accounts for more of programs’ fixed costs, and greater opportunities for socioeconomic and racial integration in classrooms. We continue to center the voices of providers and the families they serve in all aspects of our work, and recently began piloting a citywide council of community-based program leaders, starting with the communities most impacted by COVID-19.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and we look forward to your questions.



Testimony

of

**Jacqueline M. Ebanks**  
**Executive Director, Commission on Gender Equity**

before the

**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Women and Gender Equity and Committee on Education**

on

**Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care in NYC**

December 16, 2020  
Virtually  
New York, NY

## **Introduction**

Good Morning Chairs Rosenthal and Treyger, and members of the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Education. I am Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director (ED) of New York City's Commission on Gender Equity (CGE). I am joined today by my colleagues Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education and Student Enrollment at the Department of Education, Josh Wallack, and Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services at the Department of Youth and Community Development, Susan Haskell.

In my role as ED of CGE, I also serve as an advisor to the Mayor and First Lady on policies and issues affecting gender equity in New York City for all girls, women, transgender, and gender non-binary New Yorkers regardless of their ability, age, ethnicity/race, faith, gender expression, immigrant status, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Throughout its tenure, the de Blasio Administration has been steadfast in its commitment to promote equity, excellence, and fairness for all New Yorkers. From providing free, full-day Pre-Kindergarten to all four-year-olds and expanding this program to three-year-olds, to enshrining rights for pregnant and parenting New Yorkers, among other important efforts, the Administration strives to ensure that regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or background, all New Yorkers have opportunities to thrive.

It is within this context that CGE works, across city agencies, to create deep and lasting institutional commitment to tearing down equity barriers within our City. CGE operates within three focus areas of Economic Mobility and Opportunity, Health and Reproductive Justice, and Safety; a human rights framework, and uses an intersectional gender lens.

During my testimony I will discuss the intersection of gender equity and child care provision, and highlight the work the de Blasio Administration is doing to advance child care access in New York City, particularly during these unprecedented times as the city, nation, and globe wrestle with the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Women and the COVID-19 pandemic**

The pandemic reminds us, yet again, that economic inequities have disastrous effects on our health, safety, and overall well-being. This is clearly visible when we examine the unique challenges women have faced over the past eight plus months, both at home and at work because of the pandemic.

As is now common knowledge, the industries most likely to employ women have been the ones most impacted by the pandemic. For example, the retail and hospitality industries, which employ a high percentage of women, have seen a significant numbers of temporary and permanent business closures. Additionally, women who already did most of the work at home are now working from home, taking care of children, overseeing remote learning, and continue to carry the majority share of household chores. Simultaneously, the businesses, which form the core of "essential employers" and have remained opened during the pandemic, employ a high percentage of women, particularly the medical field and our supermarkets.

Taken together, these conditions are unsustainable for women and families across our city, have caused women to leave the workforce entirely if they are able, and has resulted in what experts are calling a "she-cession."

## **Administration's Efforts to Advance the Provision of Quality Child Care Prior to the Pandemic**

Prior to the pandemic, as part of its commitment to putting an “end to economic and social inequities,” the de Blasio Administration consistently focused on developing high quality and affordable child care for all New Yorkers, regardless of their background or family income.<sup>1</sup> As a result, in 2014, in the Administration launched the nation’s most expansive increase of Pre-K enrollment – *Pre-K for All*, which in its first year doubled the number of children previously enrolled. Building upon this success, in 2017 the Administration launched its *3-K for All* program.

These new and expanded child-care programs complemented the City’s existing Early Learn Child Care program, Head Start programs, Child Care voucher programs, and CUNY Child Care Centers. Together, these programs provide childcare and education services to eligible children from ages six weeks to five years old in a variety of settings—be they home-based, center-based, or public schools.

Finally, since 2014, the Administration has advanced a number of policies and legislation that promote New York City parents’ ability to adequately care for their child, in spite of life circumstances that may arise:

- Paid Sick Leave (2014) – expanding previous legislation to add grandparents, grandchildren and siblings to the definition of family members which workers can legally care for using paid sick time.<sup>2</sup>
- Paid Parental Leave (2016) – providing six weeks at 100 percent salary for maternity, paternity, adoption, or foster care leave – and up to 12 weeks fully paid when combined with existing leave,<sup>3</sup> with an expansion in 2018 to include public school teachers.<sup>4</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Increasing the availability of high quality childcare for all New York children and their families falls within CGE’s economic mobility and opportunity focus area, through which CGE seeks to ensure all New Yorkers live economically secure lives and have access to opportunities to thrive. This work is now more important than ever.

CGE will continue to collaborate with our colleagues at DOE and DYCD to ensure that we meet the childcare needs of women and families during these unprecedented times.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. I look forward to continued conversations on this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Mayor Bill de Blasio Presents 2018 State of the City, (February 14, 2018) <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/095-18/official-transcript-mayor-de-blasio-presents-2018-state-the-city>. 2019 State of the City, (January 10, 2019)

<https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/022-19/transcript-mayor-de-blasio-presents-2019-state-the-city>

<sup>2</sup> Local Law 6, To amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the provision of sick time earned by employees. Link Available at: <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=1531333&GUID=764858D6-E574-475D-BF29-DEDAC7CC20AB&Options=ID|Text|Search=sick>

<sup>3</sup> Mayor de Blasio Signs Paid Parental Leave Personnel Order for NYC Workers (January 7, 2016) <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/025-16/mayor-de-blasio-signs-paid-parental-leave-personnel-order-nyc-workers#/0>

<sup>4</sup> Mayor de Blasio, United Federation of Teachers Announce Contract Agreement to Provide Paid Parental Leave for All New York City Public School Teachers (June 20, 2018), <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/306-18/mayor-de-blasio-united-federation-teachers-contract-agreement-provide-paid-parental#/0>



TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
BY TAMMIE MILLER  
CHAIR OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS CHAPTER

BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY AND  
THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

REGARDING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILD CARE IN NYC

DECEMBER 16, 2020

My name is Tammie Miller and I serve as the Chair of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Family Child Care Providers Chapter. On behalf of the more than 10,000 UFT family child care providers, I would like to thank Chairpersons Helen Rosenthal and Mark Treyger and all the members of the New York City Council's Committee on Women and Gender Equity and the Committee on Education for holding this important hearing on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on child care in New York City.

I would like to share with you the challenges our families and providers face. First is the frustration families experience due to delays in the certification and recertification processes they use to access subsidized child care. Second is the increased cost that burdens providers due to an overall drop in child enrollment rates. I will conclude by sharing with you the many difficulties we at the UFT have experienced as a new provider network under contract with the Department of Education to support our group of providers.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on Children, Parents, and Families**

Parents in need of child care are experiencing anxiety as they weigh whether to take their children to day care and thereby risk exposing their children and themselves to COVID-19 from other children and/or day care staff. Some have expressed interest in virtual opportunities while others prefer a hybrid learning model that includes remote learning. However, many of those interested in either hybrid or fully remote opportunities do not have electronic devices for their preschool children who are not yet enrolled in the public school system.

Parents who are willing to accept the risk and participate in traditional in-person child care are experiencing profound challenges with the certification and recertification processes they use to receive access to subsidized child care. Applications have been delayed for months. And recently, there were issues throughout the city when letters of denial were sent to the wrong families and to provider networks that were not matched with those families, sometimes networks in entirely different boroughs. These difficulties frustrate families and cause them to look for alternative child care options or to give up entirely.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on Providers**

Due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the child care system as a whole is at risk of collapsing. With record high unemployment, a substantial group of families are either no longer able to afford child care or no longer require child care as one or both parents are at home for the foreseeable future. Still other families have one or both parents working from home (or older children learning remotely), further depressing the demand for day care providers.

At the same time, the stress and cost of operating as a child care provider has exploded in the era of COVID-19. Essential supplies, including personal protective equipment, or PPE, have been both scarce and costly. Additionally, enrollment has decreased as providers have had to adjust

for mandated social distancing requirements while child care rates have not increased, leaving providers without adequate funding for operating costs and staff salaries.

Unfortunately, providers cannot afford to provide stable, consistent employment at wages that would enable them to retain experienced workers. Even minimum wage is difficult for them, never mind living or competitive wages. They are also having trouble paying workers compensation and liability insurance, as well as meeting other daily expenses. In fact, according to a July survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 86% of child care providers are serving fewer children now than they were before the pandemic, while 70% are incurring “substantial” new operating costs.

Meanwhile, interventions that were expected to come to the rescue have fallen woefully short. First, many providers applied for federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act grants and to date have not received the funding to enable them to remain open.

Systemically, there are issues with the way the New York City Department of Education (DOE) oversees its child care provider networks. These provider networks were established as a way to support individual providers. The UFT now serves as a new provider network with a five-year contract with the DOE. But unfortunately, our experience as a new network has been hamstrung by poor decisions and ineffective and impractical regulations. We’ve experienced too many issues as a new provider network to function to the full benefit of our group of providers.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Networks that Support Providers**

At a time when the pandemic has had such an impact on providers, networks need to support providers more than ever. However, networks are not able to operate optimally as a result of a combination of bureaucratic failures by the DOE and a flawed funding and reimbursement model.

*Bureaucratic Failures:*

1. Despite the DOE contract for network providers starting on July 1, 2020, access to the Web Enrollment System (WES) was not granted until late November 2020, nearly five months after the start of the program. As a result of this delay, children who were preliminarily enrolled were not able to complete their enrollment and were lost to other programs, or their frustrated families gave up on the system entirely. While this lack of access affected all 50 provider networks, it had a disproportionately negative impact on the 13 new networks that were starting from zero enrollment. Even with workarounds that were provided recently, the child enrollment process was substantially hampered. Unfortunately, the lack of access was only the first of a series of ongoing issues with WES. Full turnover of provider and family information in the system continues to slow the enrollment process, and also slows the process of notifying families about upcoming recertifications. Additionally, the data in WES is frequently inaccurate; for example, it often does not correctly reflect the true number of children in our programs, and students are miscategorized by age bracket. We recommend the DOE immediately resolve all technical issues and prioritize family outreach and enrollment.
2. New provider networks were not granted access to admissions and enrollment information for 3K School Day/School Year until late October 2020. Due to this lack of access, we lost children who wished to enroll with our providers because we were unable to get into the system and move them from the waiting list into a placement with one of our providers. The failure to provide access to this system also disproportionately affected new networks as the existing or renewed networks actually had access to this system not only during the admission cycle that closed in October 2020, but also during the cycle that closed in April 2020. New networks were unable to access the system due to a five-month delay in awarding the new contracts in response

to the Request for Proposal (RFP) put out by the DOE. Contracts were announced in late February 2020 instead of September/October 2019 as originally planned.

3. Applications submitted to the EarlyLearn email address for the Extended Day/Extended Year program that we were directed to use receive no response. In the absence of enrollment status and updates, parents grow frustrated and find other options for child care – including giving up on the system as a whole. When bringing this issue to the attention of our Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) liaisons at the DOE, we were told that the responsible parties were understaffed and overwhelmed and we were advised that “all we can do is wait.” In addition, recertification applications submitted by families from August through October still have not been reviewed or approved. It should be noted that this is the same agency that mailed letters of denial to the wrong families and networks.
4. The provider enrollment process has slowed to a crawl. After a provider completes the online survey, it can take weeks for that provider to appear in the online spreadsheet that guides the affiliation process. Moving to each successive step can also take multiple weeks. As a result, a process that should take one to two weeks is taking one to two months. This is depressing our current enrollment numbers, creating frustration with providers and families, and potentially causing us to lose children to other providers and networks or because families give up on the system.

#### *Flawed Funding and Reimbursement Model*

Despite having carefully negotiated a detailed budget with each network for Network Administration Costs, the DOE employs a dynamic reimbursement structure in which it only reimburses for actual expenses and at the percentage of complete child enrollment each network has in any given month. For example, if a network shows it is at 72% child enrollment in December but, in January, due to a major COVID-19 outbreak, for example, enrollment drops

to 63%, then the network can only submit for reimbursement of actual expenses up to 72% for December and 63% for January. This model is deeply flawed for both programmatic and fiscal reasons, and the flaws are all the more evident during this pandemic.

The first issue is that this model is almost never seen anywhere else in the real world. It takes two distinctly different approaches to awarding contracts or grants and it combines the consequences of both while omitting the incentives of either.

In a “fee for services” style contract, a dynamic, enrollment-based reimbursement would be appropriate but not the limitation on actual expenses. In this approach, the service provider provides the quality of service desired by the contractor for a price that the contractor considers fair and the contractor does not look over the shoulder of the grantee to see how they are spending the money or how much they are spending. They receive the full amount to which they are entitled regardless of whether they spent more or less than that amount to provide the service.

The other approach does involve the contractor only reimbursing for actual expenses but without adjusting the maximum based on a performance indicator, such as enrollment. That is the trade-off. Our current model, however, combines the performance-based requirements of one model with the restrictive reimbursements of the other. It should be noted that in the prior RFP for networks, there was no dynamic, performance-based reimbursement structure for administrative costs. This “innovation” was added only with the current round of RFPs and has been a cause of consternation to many networks from the beginning.

This reimbursement model entirely fails to take into consideration the reality of fixed costs. If, for example, based on a five-year contract a new network signs with the DOE, the network signs a five-year (or even a one-year) lease, the rent costs do not fluctuate based on child enrollment changes. The same is true for the salaries of the mandatory “core” staff positions, such as Network Director and Education Director. These positions must exist according to prescribed

ratios based on the number of providers the network supports, not the number of children the individual providers enroll. So, if a network is required to employ four Education Specialists to attend to 60 providers to adhere to the required ratio for this position, then the network must still pay those individuals at 100% of their salary and benefits as long as the network retains the same number of providers, regardless of what happens to their enrollments. It is nearly impossible to operate a program of this sort in a fiscally responsive manner given the failure to consider this reality.

More important is where the fiscal considerations cross over into the programmatic: A pay-for-enrollment model disincentivizes allocating adequate resources to operate the program successfully. When reimbursement of actual costs is tied to enrollment and enrollment is significantly hindered by external factors such as COVID-19, prudent stewardship of funding will call for less allocation of resources. This is an instance where the tail is wagging the dog. Lack of consistent and reliable funding makes it impossible to provide the high-quality support and services needed to properly run the program, especially given the importance of the population we're serving and the severity of this moment.

To give you a sense of the fiscal and programmatic impact of this model, unless there are substantial changes in the on-the-ground reality in the coming weeks, we as a provider network will be reimbursed only 60% of our network administrative costs, at best. We have incurred expenses from July through November of approximately \$750,000, and we will be reimbursed \$450,000 at best, which is a loss of at least \$300,000. Annualizing these costs and enrollment numbers would yield a loss of just more than \$700,000.

We recommend that the networks' hiring budgets be fully funded to ensure continuity of employment, salary stability and to avoid compromising quality for quantity.

In addition to the problematic reimbursement model, we would also like to point out that the DOE is using an incorrect calculation for funding indirect costs. According to the *City of New York Health and Human Services Cost Policies and Procedures Manual*, which resembles the

federal uniform guidance on this matter (2 CFR § 200.68 - Modified Total Direct Cost), the first \$25,000 of any subcontracted amount should be counted toward the Direct Cost Base against which the Indirect Cost is calculated. Unfortunately, despite bringing this to the DOE's attention on several occasions, the DOE calculated the rate without the inclusion of the subcontracted funds.

Based on this calculation error, we alone have been deprived of up to approximately \$317,000 on an annual basis that could otherwise support and sustain our vital operations in these trying times. The same is true for the 49 other networks whose programs would no doubt benefit from these additional funds as much as our program would.

We would also like to point out that despite having a five-year contract, the contract makes no allowances for cost-of-living adjustments, causing veteran staff to experience a decrease in their true compensation year-over-year. Finally, we would like to note that the daily reimbursement rate for providers per child enrolled in "3K School Day/School Year" is identical to that for children enrolled in "3K Extended Day/Extended Year" despite the "day" for the latter group being several hours longer than for the first group.

## **Conclusion**

I know these are extraordinary times. And in such times, it's important to be flexible and remain patient. Unfortunately, thus far, we at the UFT child care provider network believe the DOE has not extended the appropriate forbearance. Instead, the DOE has exacerbated an already delicate situation dictated by enrollment numbers that are out of our control. Despite all of our recommendations, we find it alarming that the DOE is unable to adapt and modify its operations to account for the unprecedented times we are facing. We hope the City Council can assist us in advocating for the DOE to make child care just a little bit easier for children, families, providers and networks.



capital for healthy  
families & communities

**New York City, City Council Hearing 12/16/2020**  
**Committee on Women & Gender Equity jointly with Committee on Education**  
**Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care**

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**To: New York City City Council Members on the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and the Committee on Education**

My name is Amy Chea and I am a Program Officer at the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF) heading up the Early Care and Education work in New York City. LIIF is a community development financial institution that believes everyone in the United States should benefit from living in a community of opportunity, equity and well-being. LIIF has emphasized the field of Early Care and Education (ECE) in its strategic plan, and has mobilized capital and partners to achieve this vision. LIIF has invested in ECE facilities and ECE providers through capital grants, technical assistance and training, emergency/disaster recovery, and policy advocacy and research. ECE is a public good, and should be regarded and financed as such.

How New York City responds to the needs of the child care sector during the COVID-19 crisis affects our city's economy, working families' livelihoods and our children's future wellbeing. Without adequate support for ECE providers, we risk the permanent loss of roughly half the city's child care slots, the majority of which are owned and operated by women and people of color. Because of pressure for space, most child care in our city occurs in licensed family child care homes (FCCs), and providers take on the dual roles of small business owners and educators. LIIF believes that supporting these small business owners is critical for our city's economic recovery, and funding this sector advances racial and gender equity overall.

The ECE landscape has been shaped by centuries of racial and gender discrimination via policy, programs and cultural norms. Caring for and teaching babies, toddlers and preschoolers is work whose legacy is rooted in the labor of enslaved people and domestic servants and has long been relegated as "women's work," which is rarely seen as "real work," therefore, ECE workers are perpetually undervalued. More than 1 in 6 women working in the ECE field live below the poverty line, and these rates are higher for women of color and mothers. I invite Members of the Committees to read LIIF's blog post about these historical connections. ([Link here](#))

Prior to the pandemic, the ECE sector faced many challenges and equity issues, such as significant undersupply, under-funded operations, unaffordability for the average family, and an undervalued and disrespected workforce. These issues are exacerbated due to COVID-19 and our city's FCC providers experienced immense difficulty in accessing relief funds. (Nationally, child care businesses received less than 5% of the total \$521.4 billion in lending through the Paycheck Protection Program.) LIIF responded with a strategic intervention and launched a major fundraising effort to provide emergency relief.

Together with regional funders and local partners, LIIF is working to get resources into the hands of these small businesses that provide this critical service.

LIIF's New York City Child Care Emergency Grant Program provided emergency relief grants to licensed FCCs who are experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. Many FCCs in the city – already operating on shoestring budgets – lost nearly 70% of their incoming revenue during the first week of sheltering-in-place. **LIIF recognized that these providers were not just at risk of losing their businesses, but since they were operating out of their residences, they were also at risk of losing their homes.** Through this effort, LIIF provided critically needed grants to these primarily women- and minority-owned businesses to support the business owners and their employees.

Through the generous support of private funders, 182 eligible programs received \$1.2 MM in funds to cover operating expenses to retain their staff, pay their rent or mortgage, and pay taxes, insurance, utilities and other expenses related to typical operations for their program. LIIF worked closely with five community partners to identify the applicant pool. Through a rigorous selection process, which prioritized lower income zip codes hardest hit by the pandemic, LIIF identified 182 FCC programs to award grants ranging from \$3000 to \$10,000. These grant funds helped ECE providers keep their doors open so that they could continue to serve their communities safely. These providers serve the families of essential workers and remain a critical part of the city's economic recovery and pandemic response. LIIF will continue to provide technical assistance and business supports to the grantees through the next year, but more funding and support is necessary.

I'd like to take this time to highlight our grantees and the populations they serve. A total of 375 FCC providers (out of 6,000+ licensed FCC programs in NYC) applied for this grant opportunity, with requests ranging from \$800 to \$11,000. The majority of applicants live in the Bronx, but we covered programs in all five boroughs.

In the group of 182 FCC programs LIIF awarded:

- 99% of the FCC providers identify as Female
- 98% of the FCC providers identify as a Person of Color, particularly Hispanic/Latino and Black and African-American
- 96% of the FCC programs serve infants and toddlers
- 52% of the FCC programs serve children with developmental delays and special needs
- 63% of the FCC programs serve dual language learners
- 42% of the FCC programs serve children who are experiencing homelessness, living in transitional housing, or in the foster system

In terms of how their businesses are faring:

- 95% of grantees are currently open
- 67% of grantees had to temporarily close their programs, for a range of 3 weeks to 8 months
- 88% of grantees currently have enrollment at or less than half of their licensed capacity

The last statistic regarding decreasing enrollment numbers highlights the importance of why FCC providers need more funding. Their income is based on their program's enrollment numbers and how many children come through their doors, and right now, they are suffering with low enrollment more than ever before. Families are out of work, and can no longer afford care, or they are afraid to send their children to school.

LIIF is honored to continue its support of these 182 FCC programs, but there are over 6,400 registered/licensed FCCs here in the city, and they deserve your support. Many of them are independent from the DOE and rely on private pay families. They are essential workers caring for the children of essential workers – our city's economic recovery rests on their backs, as it has for centuries. What we need from you, is your ear, your heart, and above all, financial relief. We're at risk of losing these child care businesses forever. And providers are at risk of losing their homes and livelihoods.

In a recent survey, 40% of the FCC providers who participated said they will close within 3 months if enrollment stays where it is and they don't receive additional public support. They need grants.

Now that the emergency funds have been disbursed, LIIF has funding to work with our partners to continue to support these family child care providers with technical assistance, workshops and trainings, and small business support through the end of the fiscal year. FCC providers have historically been overlooked, underfunded, underappreciated, and overworked. We need to change this. Although LIIF is extremely happy with the successes of the NYC Child Care Emergency Grant Program, there are thousands more FCC programs across the city (approximately 6,400 total) that are at risk of closing without similar, and more, financial support and technical assistance. FCC providers need additional support.

**LIIF makes the following recommendations:**

1. Meet with FCC providers and local advocate groups to learn more about the needs of the sector.
  - a. Devise an outreach strategy to reach all FCC providers, DOE-contracted **and** independent of a network, when new initiatives are being drafted.
    - i. Polls, public forums, city-wide meetings, listening sessions, questionnaires, or anything democratic would be a good method.
  - b. ECE On The Move is a grassroots movement of Early Care Educators founded right here in NYC. They have a network of 600+ providers and are growing in number. LIIF recommends that you consult with this group to learn more about their needs, legislative asks, and advocacy work. (Reach out to Gladys Jones, Doris Irizarry, and/or Shanita Bowen.)
2. Design small business grants specifically targeting FCC providers that are:
  - a. Linguistically accessible
  - b. Reflect the dynamics of home-based businesses and sole proprietorship

- c. Direct grants, not based on reimbursement
  - d. Flexible in use of funds
  - e. Open to network-affiliated and non-affiliated FCC providers
3. Offer a grant program that allows child care facilities to modify their program to accommodate heightened health and safety requirements. Examples are:
  - a. Cleaning supplies
  - b. Program materials to promote social distancing
  - c. Facility modifications like air purifiers and
  - d. Technology to accommodate distance/remote learning
4. Offer hazard pay for those Providers whose doors remained open throughout the pandemic and are still risking the health of themselves and their families.
5. Advocate for “pay by enrollment” permanently going forward for all Family Child Care Providers as opposed to “pay by attendance.”
6. Offer guidance and technical assistance on accessing financial and small business relief.
7. Offer guidance and technical assistance on compliance with Department of Labor requirements/other relevant small business compliance components to avoid crippling fines.
8. Help make the connection between the Department of Education and Providers who do not wish to affiliate with a Network, yet can use available resources to serve all families.
9. Amend or support a policy that will freeze families’ child care subsidies from expiring, causing hardships on the family and Child Care Providers.
10. Collaborate with external partners and community organizations to advocate for supportive policies to support family child care and to treat ECE as a public good.

### **Examples of What’s Working in Other Cities**

LIIF operates a repair and renovation program in San Francisco using city funds, and many providers have found this program to be very helpful in keeping their program open and safe for children and adults. This facility grant program could be modified for New York to support providers as they navigate the pandemic.

Additionally, the City of Los Angeles just dedicated \$11MM to emergency relief funding for child care programs and LIIF is proudly administering this grant money for over 700 programs, both centers and homes. New York City needs to similarly invest boldly in the small business owners and workers who are supporting our city through some of the worst times our residents have ever endured. LIIF is prepared to support these family child care providers, and hopes to collaborate with organizations and institutions

who are willing to help these small business owners out of the pandemic to not just recover, but to be sustainable in the years to come.

## Conclusion

As you can see, the child care sector in New York City, particularly the home-based programs, are in dire need for your help. They need you to see them, to hear them, to fight for them, but most importantly, to value them. These family child care providers are providing essential services to our essential workers and our economic recovery rests on their backs. They are the workforce behind our workforce. I invite you to read some stories from our grantees, so you can see how impactful these small grants were. We have thousands upon thousands of family child care providers in New York City who still have not received any financial relief, and even with \$1.2MM in initial funding, we need millions more.

Much of our nation's inequities in achievement, health and wealth building are borne of the opportunities granted in infancy and early childhood. Investment in early care and education is foundational to reclaiming this sector to build wealth for entrepreneurs of color and advancing racial and gender equity. I invite you to join me in this investment.

If I could quote a family child care provider, Alisalda Coronado, who testified during the verbal testimonies during the Committee on Small Business on Wednesday, December 9th, and who also happens to be one of our grantees, "Please don't turn your backs on Community, Essential Workers, Parents and Guardians, Early Childhood Educators, Caregivers, Infants, Toddlers, Children, Hard Workers, Providers, Remote Learning, and the Workforce."

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please reach out to me at [achea@liifund.org](mailto:achea@liifund.org) if you have any questions or would like a follow-up meeting. LIIF has been doing work in the Early Care and Education sector for 20+ years and are always looking for collaborative partnerships to improve and expand the work. I would be happy to share in your passion to support our child care providers and the children and families of our great city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,  
Amy Chea  
Program Officer & Small Business Advisor  
Early Care and Education Programs, NYC  
Low Income Investment Fund

## Appendix A: LIIF Grantee Stories

THANK YOU to our funders and our partners! With their help, 182 Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color-owned and women-owned businesses received critically needed funds to sustain their program, keep their homes and pay their bills. It is crucial to highlight the real life impact these funds have on these small businesses. Below are some stories LIIF has compiled:

“It gave me hope, and it helped me stay afloat. A life line.” – *Gladys from Staten Island*

“The funding I received was a true blessing. It essentially was a month’s buffer. I have been able to maintain staffing with ~50-60% capacity. I have carefully budget and stocked up on PPE in case we have a harsh winter. I was able to purchase materials for remote learning. I am so grateful to LIIF as a small minority female business owner. It is a blessing to still be open and serving my community when so many around me are closed.” – *Nickashia from Brooklyn*

“We were also taking stock of the many blessings we have enjoyed in 2020, in spite of the pandemic! We both agreed that right up there on our list of blessings was YOU! Your unwavering support and consistent flow of information resulted in the \$3,000 grant! Wow! It really helped reduce our child care associated debt! We will be forever grateful to you!” – *Miguel and Addys from the Bronx*

“The LIIF Grant allowed me to restore my program during the pandemic. This grant also helped me prepare me and my employees with the proper PPE when working with the kids. I was able to pay my house and light bills, where I have my business. Even during the pandemic, I was able to pay my employees. Thankfully, with this grant, I was able to succeed without all of my children. Without this grant, my program would not be standing and I am extremely grateful for the grant that was given to me.” – *Mary from the Bronx*

“The funding I received helped me to reemploy my staff who I had to lay off because of the COVID-19 epidemic. It also helped to pay my monthly operating expenses required to keep my business alive. Without the funding from LIIF I would not have been able to reopen my business as soon as I did. Thank you for your help.” – *Heather from the Bronx*

“Because of the funding, I was able to remain open for the children in my community, many of whom are children of essential workers. Thank you!” – *Glennys from Queens*

“I cannot thank you enough for the grant I have received. Ninety percent of the children come from low income homes. Due to COVID-19, the enrollment at [my program] has decreased to less than 50 percent. This grant helps us give the children quality service by paying the salaries of my assistants.” – *Deborah from the Bronx*

“It helped me pay my mortgage, my utilities, insurance, and helped me so much. It kept me going. My income took a dive with the COVID-19 epidemic. I’m so grateful to LIIF for their help. I

was able to open my door for the parents that needed to bring their children.” – *Doris from the Bronx*

“LIIF funds helped [my program] a lot, since our program has suffered a large deficit of children due to the pandemic. With this grant, we were able to pay part of the business expenses and we can continue to keep my staff working with us. We were able to buy emergency supplies for COVID-19. We are very grateful that the program was selected for this great grant opportunity. Thank you once again for helping small businesses like us. We are a very important pillar for our children and especially our community.” – *Miguelina from the Bronx*

“It helped us survive when we thought we would have to close our doors due to lack of enrollment. It allowed us to serve our community and essential workers when everyone else was closed.” – *Tiffany from the Bronx*

“We are completely broke due to this pandemic. Prior to the pandemic we had over 70% capacity but as soon as it hit we went down to having nobody. After 4 months only two kids have come down from the twelve we had. We are literally open thanks to this funding, otherwise we would've been out of business.” – *Georgina from the Bronx*

“The LIIF grant brought great relief to the debt the program had accrued during the shutdown period of the pandemic. It allowed us to take care of the bills and keep afloat.” – *Enma from the Bronx*

## Appendix B: LIIF NYC Child Care Emergency Grant Program Applicant Data

As of May 2020, there are **6,429** registered/licenses family child care programs in New York City. The \$1.2MM in pass-through grants was able to serve 182 FCC providers. The city has a long way to go if they want to save child care and get our folks back to work safely.

### Applicants by Borough

Borough	% of Applicants
Bronx	66% (248)
Brooklyn	12% (45)
Manhattan	13% (47)
Queens	7% (27)
Staten Island	2% (8)

### Applicants by Community Partner Organizations

Organization	% of Applicants
All Our Kin	16% (62)
Cypress Hills Child Care Corp	5% (20)
Lutheran Social Services of NY	16% (60)
ParentChild+	3% (10)
WHEDco	22% (82)
<i>Unaffiliated</i>	<i>38% (141)</i>

## Appendix C: Survey Data from Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes

The National Association for the Education of Young Children released the results of a nationwide provider survey today, which you can find here:

[https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc\\_policy\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_december\\_survey\\_data.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf)

### Results for NY are as follows:

233 responses; 56% from child care centers and 44% from family child care homes.

- 62% of respondents from child care center and family child care homes said they are currently losing money by remaining open, even as they are desperately trying to stay open for the children and families they serve.
- 60% of respondents reported putting supplies or other items on their personal credit card or dipping into their personal savings accounts, including 82% of family child care homes.
- 92% of respondents are paying additional costs for cleaning supplies; 80% are paying additional costs for PPE, and 64% are paying additional costs for staff/personnel, including 74% of child care centers.
- 41% are confronting so much uncertainty that they are unable to say how much longer they will be able to stay open.
- Of those who do know, 29% say they will have to close within three months, including 40% of family child care homes, if enrollment stays where it is and they don't receive additional public support.
- 53% of respondents said they know of multiple child care centers and/or family child care



**Testimony of Lena Bilik, Policy Analyst, Children's Aid**

**Submitted Testimony – Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Education Hearing 12/16/20**

**Oversight: The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC**

My name is Lena Bilik, Policy Analyst at Children's Aid. I would like to thank Chairs Mark Treyger and Helen Rosenthal and the members of the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Education for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on childcare in New York City.

For nearly 167 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people, and no limits to their potential. We are leading a comprehensive counterattack on the obstacles that threaten kids' achievements in school and in life. We have also constructed a continuum of services, positioned every step of the way throughout childhood that builds well-being and prepares young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life. Today over 2,000 full and part time staff members empower nearly 50,000 children, youth and their families through our network of 40 locations including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island. Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we are in support of their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

Children's Aid provides early childhood education programs for 850 infants, toddlers and preschoolers across a total of 10 sites. Currently 83% of those children live in poverty. Four of our sites are co-located in NYCDOE public schools, one is co-located in our Charter school and the remaining five sites are in community centers, three of which are New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) facilities. While we do have some direct-federal contracts, 70 percent of our programming is city-funded. Our services are delivered by a team of almost 300 professionals who respond to and support the various needs of children and their families both onsite and in the home. Our programs support parents even before birth to ensure that children receive the services they need to start life on the right track. Our early childhood programs enhance cognitive and reasoning ability, foster literacy skills, build self-esteem, and facilitate healthy social maturation. We offer Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-School programming.

All Children's Aid early childhood sites were closed from March until August. During this period, we continued to work with families remotely. Using an app called ClassDojo, teachers provided more than 800 children with educational activities that they could complete with their parents at home. These activities were aligned with the research-based curricula we use year-round, keeping children on the path to meeting key developmental milestones. In addition to this, teachers provided live instruction through Zoom. As of August 10, an average of 92% of families across all sites were satisfied or very satisfied with the instruction their children were receiving via ClassDojo. Despite the hurdles of



technological capability during the lockdown, we have also ensured that 92% of our learners were meeting or exceeding their School Readiness Goals. We reopened two of our sites in August, and our remaining eight sites in September, while also continuing to offer remote learning for those families who prefer it.

Family Advocates from each site made bi-weekly phone calls to all families to assess their needs around COVID-19-related challenges families have been experiencing, including job loss, food insecurity, and health. Food insecurity has arisen as one of the most prominent challenges for our Early Childhood families, with 60% of our families requesting urgent help in accessing food. To address this need, Children's Aid quickly developed a variety of food distribution channels. Based on site and neighborhood, we created "grab and go" options where families pick up high-quality, nutritious meals made from scratch by our Food and Nutrition team. We also started distributing Food Boxes of organic produce each week and utilized partnerships with neighborhood food banks to distribute additional supplies of shelf-stable food. When we learned through our check-in calls that some of our families were too afraid of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to venture outside of their apartments to pick up our food offerings, we repurposed our camp van and implemented a weekly delivery service of food, diapers, and other items. With fundraising efforts and community partner donations, we were also able to provide over 35 boxes of diapers a week to our families. This support helped families handle other financial demands like rent, utilities and medicine.

The story of Gabriella\*, a child enrolled in our Early Head Start program at P.S. 152 in Washington Heights, and her mother Elena\* exemplifies the coordinated, holistic approach Children's Aid has taken throughout this emergency. Following the temporary closure of our early childhood sites in late-March, Gabriella was connected to remote learning activities she could participate in from home through the ClassDojo app. A Family Advocate began making calls to Gabriella's family to assess their pandemic-related needs and address any ongoing concerns. Soon after site closures took effect, Elena revealed to staff that her husband had been drinking excessively and behaving abusively toward her. She was quickly connected to the Early Childhood Psychologist, who helped her process her feelings and take steps to keep herself and her children safe. Soon after meeting with the psychologist, Elena separated herself and her children from her husband, who has moved out of their home. She has continued to receive weekly tele-counseling sessions from the psychologist, which have provided critical emotional support as she has worked to separate herself and her children from her husband in the midst of the pandemic. Children's Aid has also helped Elena and her family maintain stability by delivering weekly care packages of groceries, diapers, and other essential supplies and connecting them to additional food resources provided by the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. With all of these supports, all from being connected with Children's Aid through Early Head Start, Elena has been able to maintain a safe, nurturing home environment in which Gabriella can participate in remote learning activities and progress toward achieving developmental milestones. *\*Clients' names have been changed to protect their anonymity.*

### **The Importance of Early Care and Education in Recovery from COVID-19**

We know firsthand that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges disproportionately experienced by children and families in NYC communities of color and majority-immigrant communities. As the City plans recovery efforts, access to quality early care and education (ECE) will serve a vital role helping parents and caregivers return to work, promoting healthy child development, and mitigating the



impact of trauma on children. The pandemic has laid bare what all working families with children - and their employers - have long known: a sound, accessible quality childcare system is critical to the health and economic stability of working families and the economy. Families with low pre-pandemic incomes – especially those led by women of color – have been disproportionately impacted as both providers and consumers of childcare. High-quality, safe, affordable childcare and afterschool care are more important than ever.

Prioritizing early care and education in recovery efforts will require a multi-pronged approach to invest in community-based program infrastructure, to bring to scale best practices and support the workforce to meet new needs brought on by this unprecedented crisis, and to protect and expand the system capacity to address the unmet need for care. In order to do this, the city must:

- Build ECE workforce capacity to meet social-emotional needs of children
- Meet developmental needs of young children with integration of early intervention and preschool special education in ECE settings
- Integrate behavioral health supports in ECE settings
- Invest in system capacity
- Protect extended-day learning for working parents and caregivers
- Protect and expand infant and toddler care capacity
  - Before this crisis, the city had a scarcity of publicly supported option for infants and toddlers. As of 2018, the estimated number of infants and toddlers in the city was approximately 330,000, and 147,059 of these children live in households earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. Despite this high number of young children who are subsidy eligible, only 23,104 infants and toddlers were enrolled in publicly funded care in 2018. With parents returning to work, ensuring, supporting, and expanding infant toddler care is vital to recovery.
- Continue to prioritize and protect early care services for essential workers in NYC – including childcare workers themselves
- Protect Universal Pre-K and 3K capacity
- Honor the city's commitment to salary parity and provide pandemic safety parity with DOE employees and CBO childcare providers who are working through the pandemic.

### **Department of Education Birth to Five Contracts**

There are major concerns about the recent Birth to Five/Early Head Start RFP results in Manhattan. With this announced round of funding set to begin July 1, 2021, Manhattan will lose 511 slots overall – a 44% decrease. Manhattan will lose 783 extended day slots – a 72% decrease.

Children's Aid is one of the providers who received fewer Birth to Five contracts from DOE than in past years, some of these losses in sites we have had a presence in for 60 years. In some sites where we applied for two toddler rooms, one 3-year-old room, and one 4-year-old room, we did not receive any toddler rooms. We know, from years of experience of building a pipeline of care and sustainable enrollment, a program needs to provide for all of these age groups. Additionally, as previously explained, there is already a scarcity of toddler slots in the city. This disrupts the work of creating a continuum of care for children aged 0-5, and will likely cause job losses, and the loss of trusted,



successful programs that serve neighborhood needs and provide crucial services to children and families.

Hundreds of childcare slots in Manhattan were cut because the city is redirecting funding to other neighborhoods deemed to have higher need. But the families we serve in these neighborhoods are mostly families living in NYCHA housing, who also happen to be living in rapidly gentrifying areas. These families rely on the childcare and services Children's Aid and other providers offer. The decrease in slots will mean families in Birth to Five and Early Head Start programs in these neighborhoods may have to suddenly pay for childcare they can't afford. As the city begins our recovery process from this pandemic, every childcare slot is needed to help parents go back to work.

### **Learning Labs/Bridges**

Children's Aid, like many of our CBO partners, is now offering Learning Labs in addition to our other supports and programs, where children can receive in-person childcare during the days when they are participating in remote learning. These programs are run by CBOs and were launched in a matter of weeks. Children's Aid is operating 4 learning labs at Goodhue, Frederick Douglass, and Dunlevy Milbank Centers and PS 72.

We are honored to help serve as a critical part of the continuum supporting the city's children and families during these difficult times. These programs so far have brought both positive developments and challenges to our staff. One issue has been that CBOs have received conflicting guidance between city and state agencies and the Mayor's mandates, and the guidance received lacks standardization, which makes implementation, staffing, and budgeting very challenging. Some of the guidance makes all the more evident that the Administration repeatedly fails to include CBOs in the planning process – to ensure support for students and families continues as schools reopen and close, and as families juggle with ever-changing schedules and remote and in-person instructional needs. These providers serve many of the same communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic, and their programs have always been vital to the academic, social-emotional, and physical well-being of youth. Service providers must be intimately involved in planning, development and delivery of services like Learning Labs during this school year, to ensure the entire educational system and its wraparound programs are safe, effective, and supportive. In order to continue providing in-person, blended, and full remote services, the City and State must work together and commit to agile funding models to support nonprofit providers, who are and who have been the City's safety net throughout the pandemic.

Now, the Learning Labs are shifting to serve as the emergency childcare for the city with schools partially closed (except for younger and high needs learners). Now it will be even more critical that nonprofit providers are involved in the planning and processes. To do so without us will only cause challenges to getting these programs up and running to effectively serve the city.

Recommendations for Learning Labs/Bridges as emergency childcare:

- Provide CBOs with contract flexibility, including around scheduling (“afterschool” services can happen at all hours); dosage (manage expectations around required number of hours for participants to attend activities); and attendance.
- Allow Learning Labs to provide afterschool to all participants at the site rather than have students go home at 3pm to log on to remote afterschool. Requiring students to leave at 3pm



to go home for remote programming will not help working parents' childcare needs, when ostensibly these programs will be aiming to do just that.

- Allow providers to enroll outside of their feeder sites; there is a great need for the families that we have always served as well as in our feeder sites, which will likely only grow in the event of school closure.
- Provide additional resources needed to bring on more staff in Learning Labs that will be able to expand the number of students per day. It is important to note that Learning Labs were originally awarded a number of slots that were to be filled on a hybrid model. For instance, if you received 40 slots you would have 20 students on day A, and 20 students on day B. Now that schools are mostly closed, resources must be increased to serve students under any new needs or guidelines (i.e. ratio of students to staff allowed in a pod).
- Restore the flexibility provided during the spring around background clearances to ensure that we will be able to staff up fast enough to provide emergency childcare for all who need it.
- Provide a timeline for the school closure duration for Learning Labs providers, even if it is in stages or estimates. This has implications for our plans and staffing, and it will be invaluable to be kept in the loop.

We will continue to support children, youth, and families through this difficult time, and we stand ready to serve as emergency childcare in the event of schools closing. Because of our organizations' uniquely trusted role and longstanding presence in our communities, we must be at the table for these kinds of initiatives. This is why we are joining our partners in calling on the city to prioritize youth, their families, and the workforce that provides vital youth and social services in the recovery process. CBOs have played an invaluable role supporting childcare needs of the city during this pandemic, from RECs to Learning Bridges/Labs, to our usual center-based and school-based childcare. Our staff has gone into work to support working families and children when DOE school buildings were closed, without hazard pay. The CBO sector is essential partner to the city, and a crucial key to getting families back to work. If the city does not prioritize it, the sector will become destabilized, creating unnecessary setbacks to our work of critical youth development and childcare support that could last years, if not decades, affecting the ability of the City to fully recover from this pandemic.

As an agency committed to eradicating poverty in the neighborhoods that we serve, we will do all that we can to advocate, protect, and increase funding for the most under-resourced students and families in NYC. We understand the challenges the City faces to meet the needs of the city's young people, especially given the immense challenges that have been exacerbated through this crisis. Children's Aid sincerely thanks the New York City Council for their vigorous support of children, youth, families, and communities in New York City, and we emphasize that we can be your partners to address the immediate needs of students and their families as we look to the months ahead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this very important issue. Please feel free to contact me at [lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.



**NYC Council Committees on Education and on Women and Gender Equity**  
Joint Oversight Hearing – The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC

Testimony Submitted by the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)  
December 16, 2020

Good Afternoon: Thank you to Chair Treyger and Chair Rosenthal, as well as to members on the Committees on Education and Women and Gender Equity for holding this hearing on such a crucial topic, and for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Leah Van Halsema and I am the Director for the Early Care and Education Institute for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 38-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

As a member of the New York City Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Consortium, we are contracted by the state to support high quality, culturally responsive early care and education services in home and center based early education programs, both private and subsidized, throughout New York City. CHCF has a particular focus on supporting home-based family child care programs, independent programs as well as those that contract with the DOE directly or through Networks. The majority of the providers we serve are women who speak Spanish as their primary language. As a CCR&R, we additionally support families in accessing high quality and affordable care across the city. Our Early Care & Education Institute and Community Engagement teams continue to assist families in navigating subsidy and voucher eligibility processes, as well as the more recent CARES essential worker childcare scholarship program during the pandemic. Furthermore, as of July 2020, we also hold a DOE FCC Network contract, supporting Bronx providers within our network in offering infant and toddler extended day and year care, as well as DOE 3K programming.

It is worth stating up front that childcare is a multi-faceted impact issue, existing simultaneously as an equity issue under the domain of small business, labor and workforce development, as well as general welfare, immigration and health; and as this hearing clearly recognizes, this is an educational equity issue as well as a women and gender equity issue. The reality is that Family Child Care (FCC) programs are small businesses, owned and operated overwhelmingly by women of color, many of whom speak a primary language other than English. This sector has always been essential to the overall financial stability of working families, the larger business community, and the city and state economy; as well as an essential foundation in children's healthy cognitive, social and emotional development, having demonstrable impacts a children's successful transition into and growth within school-based learning.

At a time when the city ordered center-based programs closed, the smaller group-size FCC programs overwhelmingly continued to serve essential workers and other working families throughout the pandemic, often placing their own staff and families at higher health risk, in the same low-income communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, while essential worker parents had to make difficult decisions to risk their health and that of their household





members to maintain family financial stability, these care providers continuously offered safe, healthy, high-quality care and early education spaces for families to leave their children. Even while enrollment has dropped and providers are not making enough to survive as a small business, so many are hanging on by a thread because they know that they are fundamental in keeping the families they serve active in the workforce— the essential workers, as well as the larger workforce that is trying to return to work, with the now added difficulty of school buildings not being fully available for their school-aged children.

Yet, these overwhelmingly women-owned small businesses have consistently been marginalized in child care spaces, education spaces, and in business spaces, leading to consistent disparities in access to funding and supports even before the pandemic. The adverse impact of these existing disparities on providers has been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic, leaving this crucial small business sector, which uplifts the stability of all other sectors, on the verge of collapse.<sup>1</sup> The collapse of the home-based child care sector will undoubtedly lead to devastating long-term effects on working families and their ability to fully return to the workforce, overwhelmingly in low-income communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color.

### **Systemic concerns pre-pandemic**

The challenges that Family Child Care providers are facing were already well entrenched prior to the pandemic. The state and city systems perpetuated inequities time and time again, even as recently as the DOE's FCC Network design, RFP and contracting processes. While many FCC experts and providers in the field, including CHCF, offered their free counsel during every stage of development, recognizing and openly naming the inherent flaws in the system design that would have unintended negative consequences on the stability of the FCC sector and the working families who choose and rely upon these licensed, high-quality, culturally responsive care and education programs, the DOE's Network structures do not honor that expertise. The DOE moved forward with soliciting network proposals based on the needs of families and communities, only to turn around and offer contracts that blatantly disregarded the community needs assessments and legwork required of applicants in the proposals. Further, the DOE maintained provider rates that barely met the state-set market rates, which are intended to "reflect" the cost of base health and safety requirements and are also insufficient in meeting the true cost of care; they offered 5-year contracts with no cost of living adjustments; and they did not guarantee a percentage payout of contract to truly sustain the cost of running programs and of running a network (in line with what center partners were offered).

These choices would have had long-term negative impacts on the FCC providers and network organizations who took on these contracts, even if there hadn't been a pandemic. While there was no way to predict a pandemic outbreak, the infrastructural flaws established by the DOE for the current

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<sup>1</sup> See CHCF Public Testimony on December 9, 2020 Joint Oversight Hearing on Workforce Development and Combating Unemployment.





networks, as well as the existing infrastructural flaws of the state system that oversees all providers, including independent (non-DOE) providers, left these essential programs exceptionally vulnerable to the financial and physical devastation of this pandemic. Additional breakdowns of flawed city systems related to the broad childcare sector in New York City beyond the DOE, including within DOHMH, ACS and HRA have only further fueled more rapid permanent program closures due to financial instability and an enormous sense of abandonment among providers. These permanent program closures not only put dedicated child care providers and staff out of work, but also stagnate working parents' ability to return to the workforce and the ability of the city economy to quickly recover from this pandemic.

### **Pandemic impact on the sector and inequitable access to support**

As the pandemic has blazed forward this public health crisis has magnified the inequalities facing vulnerable communities and families. The FCC sector in NYC has faced particularly challenging barriers to survival throughout 2020. For providers in FCC Networks, they have had to adjust to elevated DOE contract requirements (compared to ACS network requirements) with funding rates that do not reflect the true cost of providing that level of care, let alone with a contract and rates that were established before the pandemic that do not reflect the added costs of restructuring programs, PPE and cleaning supplies responsive to the realities of the pandemic. While the DOE has distributed limited PPE, cleaning supplies and guidance, these supports are primarily meant for and reach providers in their networks, leaving independent providers across the city overwhelmingly on their own. Further, the limited supplies and guidance for network providers has not been enough to offset the added costs that have fallen to them due to the pandemic. Affiliation with a FCC Network is meant to offer protection, support, and resources to home-based child care programs in recognition of their crucial importance to the city's workforce and wellbeing; the DOE's lack of support infrastructure and pandemic response for its Networks highlights the gap between stated intention and real impact for these small business owners.

Enrollment and attendance have always been tied to provider payments, with the burden of advertising and attracting families overwhelmingly placed on the network and providers, even while actual enrollment in network programs is controlled by the DOE. With the pandemic came a natural and temporary drop in demand as families moved to work-from-home or were losing work all together during state and city business closures, threatening the financial stability of networks and provider programs who rely on enrollment to sustain the cost of business. For DOE programs, given the low rates that they are paid for service, insufficient supplies and supports in response to the pandemic, lacking guidance on allowable program adjustments to reflect the current reality, and underenrollment, which reduces how much the DOE pays them regardless of the base operational costs of keeping their programs open, providers and organizations tied to the DOE Network system are simply not receiving the necessary, secured funds to operate and financially survive this.

Even as the City DOE has rolled out systems of care for essential workers during school closure through the RECs, they did not equitably engage FCC programs, especially ideal for care during the pandemic





based on their small group sizes, cutting them off from potential funded care that could keep their businesses afloat while joining collective efforts to support the essential workforce and their children. This lack of inclusion has continued into the more recent Learning Lab/Learning Bridges programs.

Further, as the workforce is slowly building back up, a standstill in ACS and HRA processing of subsidy and voucher applications for income eligible working families for the past several months<sup>2</sup>, as well as a DOE freeze on enrollment, have stopped the flow of families and funds into these programs. As one of NYC's 4 CCR&R agencies, we continue to receive hundreds of 311 calls monthly from families searching for answers regarding their subsidy applications and have no way to support them. These illogical freezes intentionally hold providers in this financially vulnerable position and threaten their ability to survive as a small business, while at the same time stagnating parents' ability to return to the workforce to financially sustain their families and weakening provider and family trust in existing systems. We have yet to get a sufficient answer from either agency as to why this standstill is occurring and how to get applications moving at a pace reflective of the crisis and need.

With the city systems that control program payment for subsidized care and universal 3K services leaving programs in limbo, Family Child Care providers have been desperately looking elsewhere for financial relief. While the CARES SBA PPP loans were open to child care provider businesses, they were exceptionally difficult for these unique small businesses to access. Many providers were turned away from larger lending institutions who prioritized their larger clientele in accessing the loans. Providers were often left on their own in trying to navigate the complexities of the eligibility and application processes, with additional barriers faced for providers who speak a language other than English. As a result, very few providers were successfully able to access the SBA loans. This experience of little-to-no technical support was reflected in similar small business relief opportunities at the state and city level.

The CARES Act also allocated \$164 million in Child Care Development Block Grant funding to New York State, intended specifically for child care providers and child care for essential workers. While nowhere near the level of relief needed for a child care sector that is on the verge of collapse, with looming catastrophic effects on the larger workforce returning to work as we move through and out of the pandemic, advocates and providers were hopeful for some small reprieve. Unfortunately, the state-set requirements for provider grants created many undue barriers, resulting in very few grant payments actually having been received by providers to date. That said, in a city disproportionately ravaged by COVID19, there is no excuse for essential child care workers needing to resort to full reliance on federal CARES Act Funds to sustain their businesses. We speak daily with the small business owners throughout this sector, many of them who have gone into debt or exceeded their credit lines for months to continue caring for our smallest New Yorkers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NYC Children Flash Monthly Indicator Report, October 2020. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2020/10.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Am I Next? Sacrificing to Stay Open, Child Care Providers Face a Bleak Future Without Relief (December 2020) National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc\\_policy\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_december\\_survey\\_data.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf)





In light of the significant inconsistencies in enrollment and attendance, limited connection to city efforts to connect working families to care during school closures, delays in ACS and HRA enrolling and renewing working family subsidies, and significant barriers in accessing small business or child care sector relief to sustain their programs, many providers have closed their doors permanently throughout the pandemic. Not only do they lay off their support staff and lose their own source of income, but this also further grows child care deserts which will pose greater barriers for working families to fully return to the workforce as it slowly opens back up. We have to collectively recognize that it is not in anyone's best interest that these programs be left to collapse, as we know that child care will continue to be an essential need for working families and the health of our economy.

The city must rapidly, intentionally and meaningfully act to sustain and safeguard family child care programs from permanent closure. As New York City moves through and out of this pandemic, it is crucial that this sector remains on the other side so that our working families and their children can thrive. We, as a city and as a state, have neglected child care as a whole and family child care in particular for far too long, leaving these predominantly women-operated businesses unduly vulnerable to the impacts of this pandemic. We call on the city to act now, to:

1. Immediately address freezes in access to ACS and HRA subsidies and vouchers for income eligible working families, and enrollment in DOE programs, so that working families can rapidly re-enroll their children and funds can flow to their child care programs of choice.
2. Support advocacy at the federal level to secure at least \$50 billion in dedicated funding for the child care sector. Advocates will continue to work with the state around uses and rapid distribution of any federal child care relief.
3. Ensure that with any local relief funding, the city will allocate hazard pay enhanced rates to providers who serve income eligible families and have remained open since the onset of the pandemic, even if they have had to temporarily or intermittently close due to COVID. This would include both independent providers who serve families with vouchers as well as DOE network affiliated providers who serve families with subsidies or provide universal 3K services. The added costs of keeping programs open, adjusting spaces and services to meet the new "reality," and the particular risk that providers and their staff have placed themselves in by continuing as the backbone of care, not only for infants, toddlers and 3K, but now for school aged students who are not back in school buildings full time, requires that they are receiving enhanced rates that reflect the value and risk associated with their services during this time. Hazard pay enhancements could go a long way towards keeping their businesses alive through and beyond this critical moment.
4. Fund linguistically accessible technical assistance to support city providers in navigating grants and other forms of relief, including for small businesses, to ensure timely payment and minimal risk of recoupment.

For any questions about our testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse at [ddemeuse@chcfinc.org](mailto:ddemeuse@chcfinc.org) or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you.



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# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

## Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on Women and Gender Equity

### Re: The Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care in NYC

December 16, 2020

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Matthew Lenaghan

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the impact of COVID-19 on child care. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For nearly 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We speak out for students whose needs are often overlooked, such as students with disabilities, students from immigrant families, students who are homeless, students in foster care, students with mental health needs, and court-involved youth.

We appreciate this Administration's commitment to early childhood education, as well as the work done by the City to launch Learning Bridges programs during the pandemic. We join with our colleagues in expressing concern about the impact of the pandemic on the City's child care programs. With added expenses and reduced enrollment, many child care programs are struggling to continue operating and need assistance. We want to use our limited time today to discuss two related issues based on what we are hearing on the ground from families of students with disabilities.

First, we are hearing from families whose preschoolers with disabilities do not have the preschool special education programs they need and have a legal right to receive. While many young children with disabilities participate in child care programs, others require preschool special education classes with smaller child-to-teacher ratios and specialized support. By early March 2020, hundreds of young children were already sitting at home – not because of the pandemic but because the DOE did not have enough seats in preschool special education classes. The DOE's own projections showed a shortfall of more than 1,000 preschool special education class seats for the spring of 2020, despite the City's efforts to open more classes over the previous two years. Contributing to this shortage is the fact that a number of community-based organizations (CBOs)—which run the majority of the City's preschool special classes—have closed their preschool special education programs due to insufficient



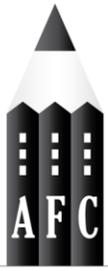
funding. The pandemic has exacerbated these financial challenges, leaving programs with increased costs that make it even harder to continue operating. Although there has been a decrease in special education referrals during the pandemic, we have already heard from families this year whose children do not have seats in the preschool special education classes required by their IEPs, and we worry that the problem will grow in the spring. ***The City must meet its legal obligation to provide a preschool special education class seat to every child whose IEP requires one—either by opening more DOE-run classes or by ensuring CBOs do so.***

In order to ensure that CBOs can recruit and retain the teachers needed to continue running preschool special education classes, the City must also extend salary parity to teachers of preschool special education classes at CBOs—teachers who are serving some of the City’s highest-need children but were left out of the City’s early childhood salary parity agreement last year. Particularly given the impact of the pandemic, the City ***must extend salary parity to teachers of CBO preschool special education classes so they may continue to support preschoolers with disabilities.***

Second, we are hearing from families whose children have been turned away illegally from Learning Bridges programs due to their disabilities. Although the City is giving priority status to students with disabilities in selecting students for the program, the program has no resources or process for providing accommodations and supports to students who need more support than the staffing ratio currently funded by the City. While families and programs have asked the City for assistance, the City has not provided solutions. We are asking the City to provide resources for supports and accommodations for students with disabilities who need more support than what the typical Learning Bridges program provides pursuant to its City contract; to fund and launch Learning Bridges classes that have smaller group sizes and have staff equipped to provide the support needed for students with disabilities; and to develop a process for parents and programs to request – and the City to approve – accommodations and supports for students with disabilities that is posted online and sent to parents when they are offered a seat.

Remote learning has been extremely challenging for students with significant disabilities and their families. The Mayor promoted Learning Bridges as a way to help students and families when students cannot be in school. To live up to its promise and to comply with the law, the City must provide the support needed to include students with disabilities in Learning Bridges programs.

We appreciate the ongoing work the Council has done to draw attention to these issues and look forward to continuing to partner with you.



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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
Honorable Mark Treyger, Chair  
And Committee on Women and Gender Equity  
Honorable Helen Rosenthal, Chair  
On the Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care in New York City**

Presented by Gregory Brender, Director of Children & Youth Services

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Thank you Chair Treyger and the members of the Committee on Education and Chair Rosenthal and the members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity for the opportunity to testify. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is a policy and social change organization representing 44 neighborhood settlement houses that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

A progressive leader for more than 100 years, UNH is stewarding a new era for New York's settlement house movement. We mobilize our members and their communities to advocate for good public policies and promote strong organizations and practices that keep neighborhoods resilient and thriving for all New Yorkers. UNH leads advocacy and partners with our members on a range of issues including civic and community engagement, neighborhood affordability, healthy aging, early childhood education, adult literacy, and youth development. We also provide professional development and peer learning to build the skills and leadership capabilities of settlement house staff at all levels.

**Increased Role of CBOs in the Response to COVID-19**

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are an indispensable part of the City's child care and education system. For parents who need full day of a care for infants, toddlers or Pre-School Aged children or who need after-school services for school-age children, community-based organizations have traditionally been the only affordable option.

With COVID-19, community-based early childhood education and youth services programs dramatically increased their services to meet the new child care needs of families including New York City's essential workers. Community based organizations acted swiftly and innovatively, often without receiving complete guidance from government to launch services including:

- **Remote Programming:** In March, early childhood education, youth employment and after-school programs rapidly transitioned to virtual programming which kept children connected to their peers and to adults focused on their support and educational enrichment.
- **Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs):** CBOs operated early childhood Regional Enrichment Centers, providing in-person child care and education to young children of essential workers. CBO staff also played key roles in operating the school-age RECs that were located in public school buildings. CBO staff brought their expertise in Youth Development to design socially distant activities that were engaging and supportive for participants.
- **Five Day Per Week Early Childhood Programs:** With the public school's initial use of a hybrid model, CBOs were the only places that offer free or low-cost early childhood education five days per week at the same location with the same staff and teachers. During the most recent system-wide school closure, public school 3-K and Pre-K programs closed, yet CBO-based 3-K and Pre-K programs were expected to continue operations.
- **Learning Bridges:** CBOs started to provide Learning Bridges programs for children enrolled in hybrid learning at 3-K, Pre-K and elementary and middle schools in September so that these students would have five days per week of care.

CBO staff have gone to significant lengths to provide essential services during this time of significant stress and upheaval for the City's children and youth. However, the City has not adequately supported CBOs, making it difficult for them to carry out programming and focus on working with children and youth. CBO programs depend on successful high-level collaboration between City agencies. Unfortunately, this has often been lacking throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and CBOs have been left to make sense of missing or conflicting guidance from Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

This led to issues such as:

- After-school programs not having clarity as to what space they are able to use in school buildings, or receiving exorbitant permit fees;
- Lack of communication to CBOs operating in schools about school health issues and decisions from the situation room;
- Reduced capacity for summer programs which the City Council fought to restore due to late notice insufficient guidance; and
- Learning Bridges programs facing the expectation of ramping up in a matter of weeks with many unanswered questions.

### **Recommendations**

In order to ensure the stability of early childhood education and after-school services for New York City's children, UNH makes the following recommendations.

## Pay Full Contract Value Regardless of Enrollment Throughout the COVID-19 Crisis

UNH and our members appreciated the actions taken by both Department of Education for early childhood education and Department of Youth and Community Development for after-school programs in March to ensure that programs maintained their budgets including:

- Continuing to ensure that contracts were funded to pay for all staff during the mandated closures of center-based programs as well as closures of home-based programs;
- Maintaining contract costs for rent, utilities and other expenses; and
- Providing guidance on remote programming alternatives.

These actions helped to stabilize the early childhood and after-school systems, allowing programs to maintain their infrastructure and their staff in order to prepare for reopening. Having staff already working at the time of reopening moved the process along more efficiently than other services where providers need to rehire and clear staff for reopening.

However, we are concerned that with potential shifts towards payment based on enrollment will destabilize these systems and prevent further progress on reopening more capacity when New York City emerges from this crisis.

Many early childhood education and after-school programs are currently under-enrolled and operating at lower capacity due to temporary conditions. These conditions include:

- **Decreased participation due to COVID-19.** With many businesses still closed and many parents still working from home, the level of participation in early childhood education and after-school programs does not reflect need. However, when restrictions on more types of in-person work are lifted we expect that families will need to rapidly secure child care in order to transition back to in-person work.
- **Enrollment delays for child care subsidies.** Providers are reported lengthy delays in the processing of child care subsidies, with families waiting months to be approved. Providers continue to work with families to enroll children through centralized enrollment but families are still experiencing delays. Providers should not be penalized for vacant slots when families are waiting for approval.
- **Family Child Care Network transition.** Family Child Care Network contracts transitioned to new contractors during the pandemic. As such, some new networks did not have their full roster of providers and many are struggling with the same enrollment challenges that center-based programs face.

Maintaining a stable system and workforce for early childhood programs is crucial to the city's recovery from COVID-19. Therefore, UNH urges Department of Education to extend full contract payments for early childhood education programs through this crisis and Department of Youth and Community Development to extend full contract payments for after-school programs throughout this crisis.

## **Offer Incentive Pay for CBO Staff Risking their Own Health to Provide Child Care**

Governor Cuomo declared child care an essential service in March. While center based early childhood education programs and after-school programs were closed by order of NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, staff in community-based organizations and providers affiliated with CBO Family Child Care Networks continued to provide essential child care at every point in this crisis.

Family child care providers who offer care to small groups of children in the providers' home were allowed to stay open and many continued to provide services to essential worker families. Early childhood educators and youth services workers in community-based organizations were deployed to Regional Enrichment Centers to provide essential child care at the height of the pandemic. During the most recent school shutdown, community-based early childhood programs remained open as school buildings closed.

Despite the recent moves towards salary parity for community-based early childhood educators, both early childhood educators and youth services workers remain underpaid in comparison to their colleagues working in similar positions in public schools. At the same time, they are expected to risk their own health to continue serving young people and their families. These inequities are unjust and run counter to promoting the economic equity that will facilitate New York's recovery from this crisis.

UNH urges the City to fund community-based organizations to offer incentive pay for staff who continue to work in-person when schools close.

## **Clear the Comprehensive Background Checks Backlog**

Since September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019, New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has required NYC DOHMH to perform new extensive background checks for staff and volunteers in after-school and early childhood education that are listed below:

- A NYS criminal history record check with the Division of Criminal Justice Services; (*new*)
- A national criminal record check with the Federal Bureau of Investigation; (*new*)
- A search of the NYS sex offender registry; (*new*)
- A database check of the NYS Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) in accordance with 424-1 of the Social Services Law;
- A search of the national sex offender registry using the National Crime and Information Center \*\*\*Required at a later time (*new*)

If the individual being cleared has lived outside of New York State in the last five years, they will also have to undergo background checks in every other State where they have lived. This includes:

- Each state(s) criminal history repository; (*new*)
- Each state's sex offender registry or repository; (*new*)
- Each state's child abuse or neglect registry. (*new*)

Providers and advocates strongly support rigorous background checks for all staff and volunteers, and we rely on our partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so that programs can operate.

DOHMH has not been able to complete the background checks in a timely manner and many prospective staff members in after-school and early childhood education programs are unable to work due to pending clearances.

In February, the backlog led New York State Office of Children and Family Services to provide some relief through a temporary rule change that allows staff members to work provisionally if they have been cleared through the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) and if they are supervised for 100% of the time that they are in contact with children by a staff member who has been cleared.

While this measure has helped tremendously it is not adequate to address the new needs that have resulted from the COVID-19 crisis. The Learning Bridges Programs must have pre-cleared staff who can provide the supervision and have struggled to clear staff quickly. The City must clear the backlog of staff awaiting clearances and develop processes to quickly clear prospective staff members.

### **Restore Funding for Indirect Rates**

Indirect funding is the backbone of a nonprofit human services organization, covering critical overhead costs that help organizations serve their communities most effectively. Indirect helps to support functions that are crucial to running a program, like facilities cleaning, payroll, and technology. Indirect expenses are often the things that we do not see when we walk through the front door of an organization to go to a program or receive a service, but help to keep that front door open.

The City retroactively cut Indirect Rates for non-profit human services providers in the FY 20 budget. Indirect Rates are necessary for programs to have the flexibility to develop new programs such as Learning Bridges and to change programs to meet new health and safety requirements.

UNH urges the Mayor and City Council to honor their commitment to the human services sector and fully fund indirect rates in FY21 and beyond.

### **Ensure that High-Quality Programs are Not Forced to Close as a Result of Reprocurements**

The Department of Education's Birth-To-Five and Head Start/Early Head Start RFPs are the first comprehensive reprocurements of contracted early childhood programs in New York City since 2012. It is significantly shaped by years of advocacy by United Neighborhood Houses and the Campaign for Children for salary parity for community-based early childhood educators and reimbursement levels that reflect the true cost of high-quality early childhood education.

On August 12, 2020, DOE released Provisional Awards for the Birth-To-Five and Head Start/Early Head Start RFPs. While little public information is available about the full scope of the provisional awards, providers have raised significant concerns about several aspects including:

- The dearth of infant/toddler slots in center-based settings. Only 2,300 slots were awarded Citywide, nowhere near the need for child care for the city's youngest children and subverting DOE's stated goal of a unified system which supported children consistently from birth-through kindergarten;
- A significant loss of early childhood capacity in public housing developments, most acutely in public housing developments that serve low-income residents in mixed-income neighborhoods; and
- Individual centers losing significant capacity. While DOE reports that over 90% of current providers have received a provisional award, many longstanding providers have received awards that significantly reduce capacity, making the proposed centers fiscally unsustainable.

It is crucial that the DOE make available information on provisional awards, including where programs are funded and what slots were awarded at these locations. Providers and parents need to know that their communities have sufficient services moving forward.

We recognize that areas of New York City have been child care deserts for far too long, and that all families deserve access to high-quality early childhood education. The City must preserve the infrastructure that currently provides child care in many high-need neighborhoods and expand capacity to ensure that all communities have access to high-quality programs.

This procurement highlights the need for New York City to invest further in expanding the capacity of community-based organizations to meet the needs of New York's families. New York's recovery from COVID-19 hinges on essential workers and other New York parents being able to access child care.

We are particularly concerned about the loss of child care for families living in public housing. New York City's public housing is spread out over 300 developments in almost every part of the City. Unlike other cities which have segregated public housing to one section of the City, NYC has public housing near some of its wealthiest neighborhoods. A 2019 report from the NYU Furman Center found that Public Housing is disproportionately located in gentrifying neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup>

However, the city's procurement process for programs that address poverty has often failed to take this reality into account. In 2012, United Neighborhood Houses researched the use of zip code targeting in two requests for proposals: EarlyLearn for contracted early childhood education programs and Out-of-School Time for after-school programs. Both RFPs used a variety of factors to determine relative neighborhood need and deemed several neighborhoods "non-targeted" because of relatively higher incomes. However, no distinction was made for communities in public housing leaving these and other pockets of poverty with

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<sup>1</sup> [https://furmancenter.org/files/NYCHA\\_Diversity\\_Brief\\_Final-04-30-2019.pdf](https://furmancenter.org/files/NYCHA_Diversity_Brief_Final-04-30-2019.pdf)

less access to these core services because of averages compared to wealthier neighborhoods. UNH found that 77,000 New Yorkers were living in public housing in the neighborhoods that were deemed “non-targeted”.<sup>2</sup>

Similar to the 2012 RFP’s, DOE’s Birth-to-Five and Head Start/ Early Head Start RFPs used neighborhood poverty levels to determine awards. Many of the same public housing communities that were deemed non-targeted in the 2012 EarlyLearn RFP appear to have lost significant numbers of child care slots in this most recent set of awards:

- Two public housing communities on the Lower East Side, Gompers and Baruch, with a combined population of more than 6,200 residents, stand to lose child care for 70 children;
- Alfred E Smith Houses, a public housing community on the Lower East Side with more than 5,700 residents, stands to lose child care for 30 children;
- Fulton, Elliott and Chelsea Houses, three closely connected public housing communities with nearly 4,000 residents, are losing their entire full day child care programs; and
- The Upper West Side, which is home to many public housing developments including Wise Towers, West Side Urban Renewal Area, Amsterdam Houses and Harbor View Houses and where 8.6% of rental units are in public housing<sup>3</sup>, stands to lose child care for 140 children.

An initial calculation of the loss conducted by several settlement houses in Manhattan and Brooklyn has identified a loss of at least \$17 million. It is crucial that the City invest additional funding in the child care system to stem these slot losses and ensure access to more families across the city.

Thank you for convening this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions. For follow up, I can be reached at [gbrender@unhny.org](mailto:gbrender@unhny.org).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.campaignforchildreennyc.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Off-Target-How-Cuts-to-Child-Care-and-After-School-Leave-Out-Public-Housing-Communities.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://furmancenter.org/neighborhoods/view/upper-west-side>

**Testimony of Henry Street Settlement  
Before the New York City Council  
Committee on Education  
Honorable Mark Treyger, Chair  
And Committee on Women and Gender Equity  
Honorable Helen Rosenthal, Chair  
On the Impact of COVID-19 on Child Care in New York City**

Presented by David Garza, President & CEO  
Henry Street Settlement  
265 Henry Street  
New York, NY 10002

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Thank you Chair Treyger and the members of the Committee on Education and Chair Rosenthal and the members of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity for the opportunity to testify. Henry Street Settlement is one of New York City's oldest, most established, and most embedded poverty fighting organizations. Today, we provide services across 18 sites on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, with half of our program sites located directly in NYCHA public housing developments.

Founded in 1893 by nurse and progressive leader Lillian Wald, Henry Street Settlement's mission is to open doors of opportunity to enrich lives and enhance human progress for Lower East Side residents and other New Yorkers through social services, arts, and health care programs. Serving 50,000 New Yorkers each year through our comprehensive range of human services, Henry Street has remained a leader in high-quality education and youth development programming for decades. Our spectrum of youth services—which range from early childhood education and afterschool programs to college access and summer youth employment—reach thousands of low-income children and young people each year. Henry Street also has a 127-year legacy of responding with agility in the wake of major crises including 1918 flu pandemic, the Great Depression, 9/11, and Hurricane Sandy, as well as today's COVID-19 crisis. At the onset of the pandemic, Henry Street leapt into immediate action to protect our vulnerable clients and community through a range of emergency relief efforts, including cash assistance programs, a community-wide HELPLINE, and food pantry/delivery services. All of our core services, including those for children and youth, have continued throughout the pandemic, providing both essential on-site services and virtual programming.

Henry Street's programs reach underserved youth and families from across NYC's five boroughs, with a focus on Manhattan's Lower East Side as well as surrounding areas of Brooklyn, which is our second-largest area of impact due to its close proximity across the river. Across the agency, we serve some of NYC's most vulnerable low-income residents, including families experiencing homelessness, NYCHA residents, and recent immigrants. Participants in our youth programs—the vast majority of whom are young people of color—face numerous barriers to success, including but not limited to intergenerational poverty, rising income inequality, housing instability, limited educational opportunity, racial disparities, neighborhood violence, mental health challenges, and environmental stressors. All of these challenges have been deeply exacerbated by COVID-19. Citywide data continue to illustrate that low-income communities of color—such as those served by Henry Street—are at a severely disproportionate risk of being affected by the pandemic's public health, social, academic, and economic impacts.

Henry Street offers a comprehensive continuum of education and youth services to support young people of all ages in succeeding academically, achieving social-emotional growth, and preparing for future success. As described above, NYC's vulnerable youth are experiencing unprecedented challenges in today's COVID-19 era, which have compounded existing economic and racial disparities. As such, Henry Street's range of high-impact youth services are more vital now than ever in supporting the safety and wellbeing, academic progress, and stability of youth and their families.

### Childhood (age 0-4)

- We operate an **early childhood education** center that provides high-quality education for toddlers and preschool-age children, helping them transition successfully into kindergarten. The program fosters our youngest clients' healthy development in a welcoming, supportive environment for children as well as their families.
- For families living in our agency's three **family shelters**, including domestic violence survivors and single parents, we provide drop-in childcare services, family-friendly activities, and baby-care supplies.
- Henry Street's **Parent Center** provides a range of free classes/workshops for low-income new parents—including our 'Mothers with Babies' series, and 'Toddler Tuesdays' which offers structured play and enrichment.

At a time when NYC's vulnerable youth face unprecedented challenges on multiple levels as a result of the devastating COVID-19 crisis, we are grateful for representatives and leaders like you who share our commitment to protecting the safety, stability, and success of NYC's vulnerable children and youth.

Henry Street commends and appreciates the actions taken by both Department of Education for early childhood education and Department of Youth and Community Development for education and after-school programs in March and throughout the pandemic to ensure that programs maintained their budgets including:

- Continuing to ensure that contracts were funded to pay for all staff during the mandated closures of center-based programs as well as closures of home-based programs;
- Maintaining contract costs for rent, utilities and other expenses; and
- Providing guidance on remote programming alternatives.
- Providing flexibility and creativity in service delivery.

These actions helped to stabilize the early childhood and after-school systems, allowing programs to maintain their infrastructure and their staff in order to prepare for sustainability and service to families.

Henry Street shares the view that the well-being of low-income New Yorkers is jeopardized by many aspects of gentrification and that the development of low-income neighborhoods must occur with great care, thereby ensuring that low-income populations benefit, and are not alienated by, incoming resources.

The allocation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) slots by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) pursuant to the agency's recent Request for Proposal (RFP) results in the loss of hundreds of slots to low-income families residing in the highly income-stratified neighborhoods represented by the coalition of organizations testifying here today: the Lower East Side/Chinatown, Chelsea, the Upper West Side and Williamsburg. These slots are embedded in programs that have long been operated by our organizations and that have been highly valued by families.

We fully support the addition of slots to these other neighborhoods but we believe it is unjust and harmful for these slots to be stripped from neighborhoods in which poverty and the pressing need for early childhood education persists. Very notable, many of the families participating in ECE programs in the neighborhoods we represent reside in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) complexes, and a large number of them are immigrants, and the loss of ECE slots will add to the range of severe stressors they already face. The loss of the programs will also mean unemployment for many low- and moderate-wage staff employed by the programs, causing further instability and distress during a period of time when the effects of COVID-19 are already proving economically disruptive to low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.

With the disruption of public schools and many citywide youth programs, young people are at an even greater disadvantage during this time, as they face challenges such as social isolation, health/safety concerns, tense household dynamics, food insecurity, decreased household income, mental health

issues, and academic challenges (e.g. screen-fatigue)—all while navigating pivotal moments in their developmental growth. This spectrum of unprecedented new challenges has resulted in devastating outcomes for many of the children and youth we serve—ranging from interruptions in the formative social-emotional development of toddlers and school-age children, to deeply tragic events among children, teens, and young adults including violence and self-harm. For these reasons, the need for holistic child- and youth-focused services, including early childhood education, is greater now than ever.

For all these reasons, we implore the city to add funds to the ECE program to allow for full restoration of slots. It is important to note that every slot has a heartbeat, in fact multiple heartbeats. If children, families, and neighborhoods are to ever recover from this pandemic; they require and deserve stability, predictability, and certainty of opportunity with respect to education and employment.

Maintaining a stable system and workforce for early childhood programs is crucial to the city's recovery from COVID-19. Therefore, Henry Street joins **The Coalition in calling for NYC government to reinstate funding of at least \$17m for the full restoration of these 27 early childhood education programs in the 9 settlement houses** in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, Chelsea, the Upper West Side, Williamsburg and Bushwick.

Thank you.



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**BIRTH TO FIVE RFP RESULTS**  
*ANALYSIS OF NINE SETTLEMENT HOUSE PROVIDERS*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Results of NYC Birth To Five Provisional Awards For Nine Settlement House Providers*

The data analyzed from the coalition's 27 early childhood education (ECE) centers found:

- Losses across the board:
  - 500+ (-39%) slots lost overall
  - 888 (-72%) extended day slots (8am-6pm) lost which will impact working families
  - 82 infant/toddler and 315 3K slots lost
  - 125+ loss of jobs at centers for ECE workers who are predominantly women/people of color
- Areas of income stratification were overlooked including NYCHA, pockets of poverty, and immigrant neighborhoods
- Continuity of care was not prioritized which will impact the educational pathway for children ages 0-5
- Partial awards jeopardize high quality early child care education, family choice, and will not be sustainable for most organizations
- 40% of coalition ECE sites are at risk of closure under the current award structure

# MAP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SITES ANALYZED

## Organization Names

- Chinese-American Planning Council (6)
- Educational Alliance (1)
- Grand St. Settlement (4)
- Goddard Riverside (4)
- Hamilton Madison House (4)
- Henry Street Settlement (1)
- Hudson Guild (5)
- St. Nick's Alliance (1)
- University Settlement (1)

0 3 Miles



## OVERVIEW OF THE BIRTH TO FIVE RFP RESULTS

- We analyzed the results of the Birth to Five RFP for 27 early child care locations at nine Settlement Houses.
- Programs offered Early Learn, Universal Pre-K, 3K, or city-funded Head Start programs.
- Most offered extended day (8am-6pm) year-round programs for working families.

# STRATIFIED INCOME LEVELS OF NEIGHBORHOODS

- Most of the 27 early child care education centers are in neighborhoods with extreme wealth stratification or high median incomes that mask:
  - Neighborhood NYCHA developments,
  - Pockets of extreme poverty, and
  - High need immigrant hubs.

# COALITION EARLY CHILD CARE EDUCATION CENTERS SERVE NYCHA RESIDENTS

44% of coalition early child care centers are located within NYCHA

81% of coalition early child care centers are within 5 blocks of NYCHA



# SLOT LOSSES - COALITION CITYWIDE



831 slots were awarded from  
FY20's original 1,352 slots



39% of child care slots were lost  
across 27 coalition sites

## EXTENDED DAY TO HALF DAY CONVERSION

91% of FY20's 1,352 slots were year-round extended day slots from 8am-6pm

Only 41% of the 831 provisionally awarded slots are extended, full day slots

# SLOT LOSSES - EXTENDED DAY (FULL DAY)



344 extended day slots awarded from  
FY20's 1,232 extended day slots



888 extended day slots, or 72%, have  
been entirely lost

Extended Day Slots under Early Learn were 10 hours (i.e. 8 am to 6 pm).  
This model is critical for families to work and to ensure women can remain in the workforce.

Communities will lose **213,200 hours** of foundational education for **82** toddlers and at least **478,800 hours** for **315** three-year-olds.

These losses create a broken educational pathway for children ages 0-5 and their families and is especially detrimental to the development of children who are English language learners and for those who have special needs.

LOSSES FOR 1-, 2-, & 3-YEAR-OLDS

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# HEAD START ELIGIBILITY

- Head Start eligible slots benefit the lowest income families whose income is below the poverty level, e.g., a family of four's annual income can be no more than \$26,200.
- Many Settlement Houses serve families who are at a range of incomes who do not qualify for Head Start and who would not otherwise be able to afford unsubsidized care (e.g., a family of four's annual income could be up to \$57,948 gross in previous Early Learn programs).

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# JOB LOSSES FOR EARLY CHILD CARE WORKERS

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Early child care workers are primarily women/women of color whose annual average income is \$40,000.



**Coalition wide:  
125.5 jobs lost**

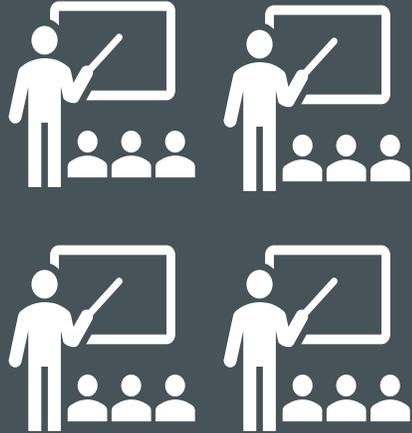
**LES/Chinatown:  
70+ jobs lost**

# WORKERS IMPACTED

- HEAD TEACHER
- ASSISTANT TEACHER
- TEACHER'S AIDE
- BOOKKEEPER
- MAINTENANCE WORKER
- HEAD COOK
- ASSISTANT COOK
- KITCHEN HELPER
- DIRECTOR
- ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



100% funded



**An ECE Center Pre-Birth to Five (FY20)**

*Was 4 classrooms of full day, year-round  
Early Learn for 2.9-5 years old.*

18%\* funded



**Same ECE Center Post-Birth to Five (TBD)**

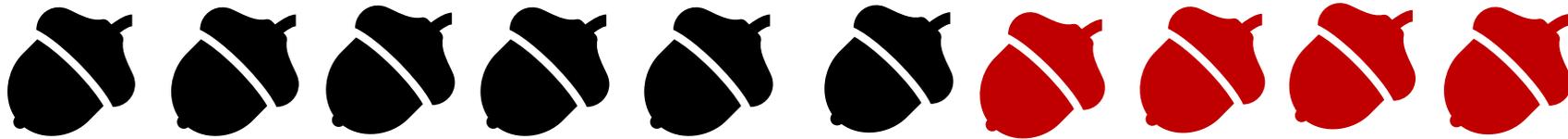
*Now only 1 classroom of half day, 180 days  
a year UPK for 4-year-olds*

*\*with estimated cost allocation*

## BIRTH TO FIVE – RESULTS OF PARTIAL AWARDS

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**40%**



**OF COALITION EARLY CHILD CARE SITES  
ARE AT RISK OF CLOSURE**

# BIRTH TO FIVE MODEL

## The Promise of the RFP

- Family choice
- Priority for high needs, low-income families
- Year-round extended day option for child care supportive of working families
- Continuity of care for all ages 0-5

## As Provisionally Awarded

- **Choice is more limited** for families, including NYCHA residents, who seek culturally and linguistically competent early child care community-based centers convenient to them
- UPK-only **half day slots favor higher income families** who can afford to pick up their child at 2:20 pm
- Loss of extended day slots means **families can't work, plus they will now have to pay** for after school or summertime hour care for their child(ren)
- Patchwork loss of slots for toddlers, 3- and 4-year-olds **loses existing continuity of educational and developmental pathway for ages 0-5**

**Council District 6 – Helen Rosenthal**

**144** slots overall lost & **204** extended day slots lost

**Council District 3 – Corey Johnson**

**25** slots overall lost & **93** extended day lost

**Council District 2 – Carlina Rivera**

**85** slots overall lost & **92** extended day lost

**Council District 1 – Margaret Chin**

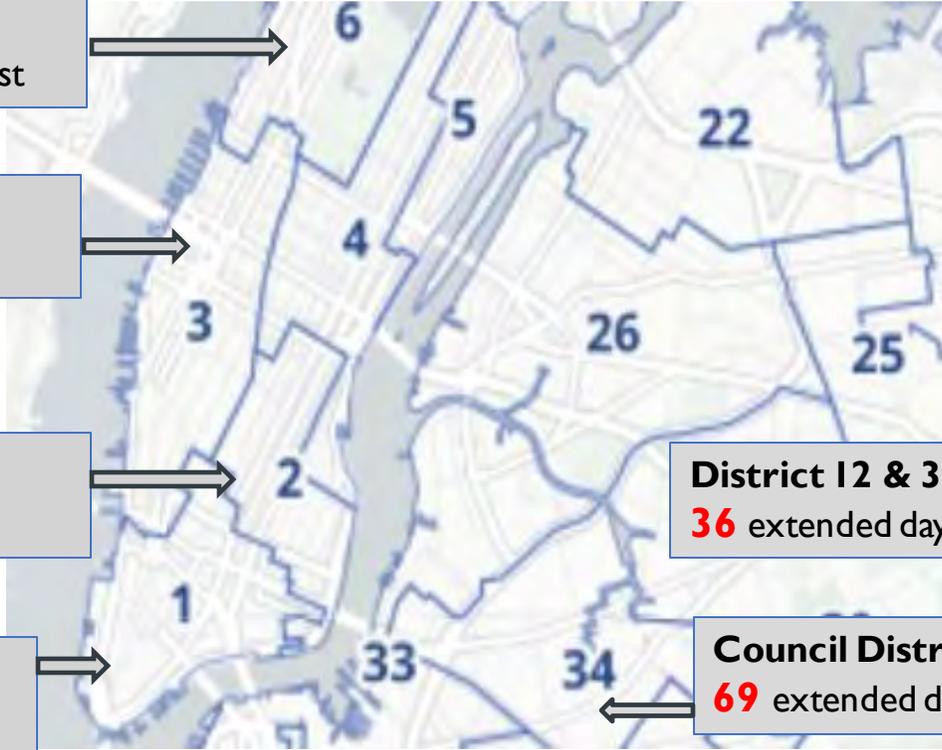
**289** slots overall lost & **402** extended day lost

**District 12 & 37 – Vacant** (not pictured)

**36** extended day slots lost & **4** slots lost overall

**Council District 34 – Antonio Reynoso**

**69** extended day slots lost & **6** slots lost overall

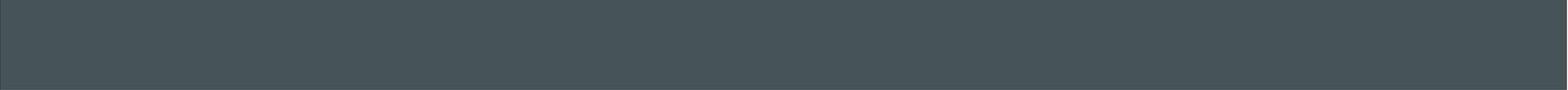


# COUNCIL DISTRICT IMPACT



# ADDITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

FOR NINE  
SETTLEMENT  
HOUSE'S EARLY  
CHILDCARE SITES



**BOROUGH  
RESULTS:  
MANHATTAN**

93% of coalition sites are in Manhattan

Of FY20's 1,161 slots, coalition sites were awarded 650 slots (511 slots lost, or -44%)

783 extended day slots for working families were lost (-72%)

NEIGHBORHOOD  
RESULTS:  
LOWER EAST SIDE/  
CHINATOWN

59% of coalition sites are in the  
LES/Chinatown area

Of original FY20's 864 slots, sites awarded  
500 slots (364 slots lost, or -42%)

486 extended day slots for working  
families were lost (-61%)

NEIGHBORHOOD  
RESULTS:  
UPPER WEST SIDE

15% of coalition sites are in the Upper West Side area

Sites awarded 60 slots from FY20's original 155 slots (95 slots lost, or -61%)

All 155 extended day slots for working families were lost (-100%)

NEIGHBORHOOD  
RESULTS:  
CHELSEA

19% of coalition sites are in the Chelsea area

Sites awarded 90 slots from FY20's original 142 slots (52 slots lost, or -37%)

All 142 extended day slots for working families were lost (-100%)

NEIGHBORHOOD  
RESULTS:  
BUSHWICK/  
WILLIAMSBURG

7% of coalition sites are in the  
Bushwick/Williamsburg area

Sites awarded 181 slots from FY20's original  
191 slots (-5%)

105 extended day slots for working families  
were lost out of original 143 (-73%)

**HAMILTON-MADISON HOUSE**

**TESTIMONY TO**  
**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING**

*December 16, 2020*

Good afternoon Councilmember Treyger and members of the Committee.

I am Karenne Berry, Assistant Executive Director for Early Childhood Education at Hamilton-Madison House (HMH), a community services organization that has been operating on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and in Chinatown and beyond for more than a century.

For decades, we have operated a very sizable early childhood education program designed to help young children from low-income families develop socially and emotionally while preparing for formal education while also extending a broad range of supports to parents. We are gratified that many thousands of parents have expressed appreciation for these programs, and that our performance has consistently been highly rated by NYC government.

As a result of the recent RFP process conducted by the NYC Department of Education, the center-based early childhood educational programming currently operated by HMH to more than 200 families will be dramatically reduced as of July 2021. I join with my colleagues on the panel today facing similar circumstances in:

- Expressing alarm about the situation
- Declaring that it is unfair for low-income families to lose services because higher-income people reside in their neighborhoods and DOE has decided to redirect resources to homogeneously low-income neighborhood (though we certainly support adding programs in those neighborhoods)
- Calling for a restoration of funds in the amount of \$xx m to maintain services in the neighborhoods represented by our coalition

Also very important, I must add that it is not only the programs funded by NYC DOE that will be lost if this error is not rectified. HMH is in the midst of adding a crucial layer to early childhood education programs in the form of a Two-Generation (2G) initiative.

Through this undertaking, which is part of a national movement, we go to lengths to engage parents in the education of their children and to support their own educational and professional development. The rationale behind the effort is that

better outcomes occur when children and parents are involved simultaneously and synergistically in efforts to designed to advance the goals of each family members, and the family collectively.

Our 2G offerings and planned efforts include English-as-a-Second Language instruction and support to graduate high school, access college, complete college, gain better access to healthcare and mental health services and improve family finances. Already, dozens and families have benefited from this initiative and hundreds more over the next years stand to do so. But without the infrastructure of the NYC DOE contracts to operate early childhood education programs, we will be unable to continue to advance this vital effort.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify about this critical matter and I join my colleagues in expressing a readiness to partner with City Council over the next months to ensure that children and families are not denied the services they sorely need and certainly deserve.



TESTIMONY BEFORE  
THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND  
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

December 16, 2020

Hudson Guild thanks the Committee on Education and the Committee on Women and Gender Equity for this opportunity to speak about the future of Early Childhood Education in New York City, which is both an anchor for the start of a child's academic life and a lifeline to employment for thousands of women raising children and working in human services.

I am LeeAnn Scaduto, and in my role as Deputy Executive Director at Hudson Guild I have the privilege of overseeing programming for nearly 300 two-, three- and four-year-old children who begin the learning process in our centers in Chelsea and along the west side of Manhattan. The children in our program are part of families living at the lowest household incomes in the city, and their caregivers - prominently women - require access to quality free or low-cost early education to ensure a strong start for their child and safe and productive care while the parents work, go to school or look for work.

As we have seen during COVID, access to child care is essential to both education growth and economic viability. That has always been true for the families who are part of Hudson Guild's programs.

For that reason, we are very concerned about the potential impact on children and families in our community that will result from the provisional awards announced in the New York City Department of Education's Birth-to-Five awards slated to take effect next July. Specifically, we are concerned about the unintended impacts on children from low-income households in gentrified neighborhoods.

- Over 90% of children in Hudson Guild's programs are NYCHA residents who have no access to the market rate amenities that exist in our community. For most of our families, loss of our services means loss of Early Childhood Education. Further, many of the kids in our program have other critical connections to the Guild, whether it be parents in mental health, a grandmother coming to us for meals or an older sibling in our after school program. Early Childhood is part of a network of programs serving the whole family.

- Head Start is an important part of our network of services. It is not, however, an equal substitute for DOE's Birth-to-Five programs. They serve different children from different families. The awards proposed by the DOE will eliminate options for families who are poor but just above the poverty level. It is one of the most vulnerable populations that needs subsidized childcare. This group of low-income families will have nowhere to obtain quality early childhood education in the community they know, and which supports them.

- For low-income working families we currently offer full-day and full-year Early Education for children who are two, three and four years old. It is essential programming that allows families to make progress on their goals. That will be almost entirely eliminated in our community under the provisional awards. Our families are losing hours and continuity of care. We provide 2,620 hours of education to every child on a yearly basis. Under the proposed awards, our families would only get 1,116 hours. Each child and family is losing 57% of their early childhood education. They are only getting 43% of the services they need and would have to pay for the remaining 57% of the services. Our families cannot afford this, and therefore will not be able to work.

It is our hope that the City Council will work with its partners in government to ensure that \$17m is restored for slots at our 9 settlement houses. A holistic, sufficient Early Child Education network which serves the needs of all children in the city must be funded and implemented. That will require an adequate number of funded seats, regardless of zip code, providing quality, comprehensive full-day, full-year education for children ages two, three and four.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. We are happy to answer questions or provide any additional information the Committees may want.



Testimony of Lara Kyriakou, Early Learning System Manager at South Bronx Rising Together, Children's Aid

Prepared for Joint Hearing on the Committee on Education and Committee on Women and Gender Equity- The impact on home-based FCC providers and families who use these programs

December 16, 2020

I would like to thank Chairs Mark Treyger and Helen Rosenthal and the members of the Committees on Education and Women and Gender Equity for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child care in New York City. South Bronx Rising Together (SBRT) is a collective impact initiative coordinated by Children's Aid and composed of more than 150 cross-sector partners committed to building pathways to success from cradle through college and career. SBRT employs data-driven decision making to align efforts, leverage resources, and streamline the continuum of care in Bronx Community District 3, our target geographic region. Bronx Community District 3 (CD3) is a diverse and vibrant community of families and residents, many of whom have been disproportionately affected by the health and economic crises of the COVID-pandemic.

Family Child Care (FCC), also known as home-based child care, is an especially vital pillar of support in under-resourced communities, such as CD3. More than 30% of CD3 residents are immigrants and rely on family child care as a trusted source for culturally-competent care of their young ones. Furthermore, home-based settings are the most common form of child care for young children in the Bronx, accounting for more than 80% of child care settings. By offering flexible and extended hours, FCCs provide crucial support to families—particularly working mothers, who are often the primary caregivers of young children. In addition to supporting working families, FCCs in the Bronx are most often owned by women of color, who invest hours of training and professional development into establishing and nurturing their small businesses. Family child care is a critical component of supporting women with young children in the workforce, as small business owners, employers, workers, and students. Given the disproportionately high rate of economic and educational disparities in CD3, SBRT is committed to supporting Family Child Care as a critical conduit to the success of educational and financial outcomes for children, parents, and community.

As we all continue to adapt to this new reality, FCC providers who had temporarily closed are facing several barriers that must be addressed if programs are to reopen.

1. **Loss of Income:** The loss of income over the past 10 months due to reduced enrollments through no fault of their own have left providers in a financially perilous situation from which many programs will not recover.<sup>1</sup> Current financial support, which is available on a reimbursement basis rather than through direct funding, poses a substantial burden to providers and excludes providers who need financial support the most. Additionally, the CARES funding is not applicable to many of the core costs of running a business, including rent/mortgage payments, utility bills, and other overhead costs that are essential to a home-based business.

1. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc\\_policy\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_december\\_survey\\_data.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf)

2. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2020/10.pdf>

3. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2020/09/03/489900/true-cost-providing-safe-child-care-coronavirus-pandemic/>

4. <https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>



**Recommendation:** Provide financial compensation to FCC providers for the months of lost income in order for these small businesses to survive the pandemic. Additionally, funding should be provided in the form of direct grants, not via reimbursements, and be applicable to cover rent/mortgage payments, utilities, and other overhead costs.

2. **Challenges to enrollment:** As parents seek to update their child care voucher cases due to the pandemic-related changes to employment and educational programs, a backlog of recertification applications has delayed processing for months. There has been a considerable drop in the number of families receiving vouchers in the past few months, even as parents are expressing a need for care as they continue or return to work, leaving both parents and providers who rely on voucher payments at a standstill until that paperwork is processed.<sup>2</sup>

**Recommendation:** The backlog and delay of parent certification and eligibility applications must be resolved so that funding can resume.

3. **Inadequate Payment:** Current NYS market pay rates do not reflect the actual cost of care, and the gap between rates and the true cost of care continues to grow.<sup>3</sup> Family child care providers were some of the few modes of child care that were able to remain open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. FCC providers have navigated the concerns and risks to their homes and families while caring for children of essential workers, yet, these early childhood educators have not received any hazard pay for the invaluable service they have provided essential workers and families during this unprecedented time of risk and uncertainty.

**Recommendation:** Increase payments to FCC providers that reflect the true cost of child care, incorporating hazard pay to FCC providers who have cared for children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

As NYC faces unparalleled challenges brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic, city agencies must streamline and coordinate as never before. FCC providers need guidance and clarity on licensing and operational adjustments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a defined protocol for complaints that is made available to all. Most FCCs are independent from a network, and so the field does not have equitable access to information, resources, and advocacy to support the ever-changing demands of providing care during the COVID-19 pandemic; ALL providers deserve the same access to clear, up-to-date regulatory information available in multiple languages.

Cooperation and coordination across all city agencies is crucial now more than ever, as pandemic-related needs are ever-evolving. As a collective impact initiative, SBRT is well-positioned to support the alignment and increased communication of these cross-sector agencies, and we continue to push, in partnership with our community stakeholders, for increased transparency and access to this critical information needed by all providers.

1. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc\\_policy\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_december\\_survey\\_data.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf)

2. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2020/10.pdf>

3. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2020/09/03/489900/true-cost-providing-safe-child-care-coronavirus-pandemic/>

4. <https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>



Family child care has long supported the backbone of many communities with minimal funding and supports, and such is the case in the South Bronx. During this time of dire economic need, family child care can no longer withstand the systemic and financial inequities of the current status quo. The research is clear on the long-term payouts of child care investments, with a return of \$7 on every dollar invested into child care.<sup>4</sup> Child care not only supports a child's potential to learn throughout their lifespan but also has direct effects on a family's earning potential and educational attainment. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the dire inequities in low-income communities and communities of color, supporting family child care providers is one of the most effective ways to invest in families, small businesses owned primarily by women of color, and communities; the benefits of which will be felt for generations to come.

I thank Chairs Treyger and Rosenthal and the members of the Education and Women and Gender Equity Committees for this opportunity to submit testimony on this very important issue. Please feel free to contact me at [lara@risingtogether.org](mailto:lara@risingtogether.org) with any questions regarding this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lara Kyriakou".

Lara Kyriakou, M.S.Ed., Early Learning System Manager  
South Bronx Rising Together

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christina N. Samuels".

Christina Samuels, Director  
South Bronx Rising Together

1. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc\\_policy\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_december\\_survey\\_data.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf)

2. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/pdf/data-analysis/flashReports/2020/10.pdf>

3. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2020/09/03/489900/true-cost-providing-safe-child-care-coronavirus-pandemic/>

4. <https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>

## Committee on Women and Gender Equity

Members: Rosenthal, Ayala, Kallos, Cumbo, Lander

## Jointly with the Committee on Education

Members: Treyger, Kallos, Levine, Rodriguez, Salamanca, Grodenchik, Dromm, Millwe, Ulrich, Levin, Cornegy, Lander, Ampry-Samuel, Barron, Brannan, Louis, Rose, Borelli

- Wednesday, December 16, 2020 - 10 AM
- Oversight - The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC

### NEW Testimony

Good morning. I am Amanda Kogut-Rosenau and I am the VP of Programs at of Nontraditional Employment for Women, or NEW, a nonprofit with a 42-year record of transforming the economic prospects for women through careers in the skilled trades.

Childcare continues to be a primary challenge for women entering the workforce and advance in their careers. NEW graduates are no exception. Despite the high wages a trades career offers, cost and access to childcare continue to pose a challenge. NEW's social services incorporates planning for current and future childcare throughout our programming. The Comptrollers 2019 report<sup>1</sup> showed that **combined** NYC center-based and home-based providers had the capacity to provide care for just 22% of the children between 0 and 2. The federal government recommends costs for childcare not exceed 8% of an individual's income and yet, New York City minimum wage workers can spend some 68% of their income on childcare. Our city's education system has thus become the de facto means of affordable care for school-aged children.

COVID-19 and the related shutdowns have transformed this existing challenge into a crippling barrier and demonstrated our inability to provide the basic services needed for children and families to thrive. Approximately 30% of NEW students are single parents with nowhere to turn for childcare support as center-based capacity has plummeted and schools vacillate unpredictably between in person and remote learning. Even those with a partner parent are often unable to pursue full-time work as they manage remote schooling and other household affairs. In the case that childcare is affordable and accessible, many NEW graduates are concerned that using a childcare service will not expose the child, themselves or their family members to COVID-19.

According to the Center for American Progress, in September alone, four times as many women exited the workforce compared to men, with women of color the most at risk for economic instability. NEW estimates that at least 35% of graduates have been unable to pursue a career-launching employment opportunity because they have been unable to find or afford care for their children. This is not unique to the NEW community, it a systemic barrier most evident in under-resourced communities, and has the potential to undo the hard-won progress toward gender equity in the workforce and US economy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nyc-under-three-a-plan-to-make-child-care-affordable-for-new-york-city-families/>

To create an equitable recovery, the city must take bold and permanent steps offer reasonably priced, safe childcare in vacant spaces around the city, and thereby address this dual barrier to New Yorkers seeking to earn a living and to providing the next generation of New Yorkers with the academic and socioemotional supports need to grow and thrive. Thank you for your time and attention to this issue that is harming both parents and children, particularly New York's most vulnerable.



**New York City Council Committee on Education & Committee on Women and Gender Equity  
Joint Oversight Hearing – Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC**

**Hearing Date: December 16, 2020**

**Date Submitted: December 16, 2020**

Dear Chair Treyger, Chair Rosenthal, and members of the Committee on Education and Committee on Women and Gender Equity:

My name is Diana Perez and I am the Vice President of Home-Based Childcare Services at the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco). WHEDco is a nonprofit organization that provides South Bronx residents with access to all the resources that create thriving neighborhoods. For 25 years we have served thousands of children, youth, seniors and families across the South Bronx and beyond.

The program I have overseen since WHEDco’s inception supports more than 10,000 family childcare (FCC) providers citywide, including a professional network of more than 300 licensed providers in the Bronx. Through professional development training, regulatory guidance, home visits and monitoring, technical support, and small business assistance, we help FCC providers grow successful businesses and create safe, engaging learning environments for young children. And, by providing access to affordable childcare, we enable parents to pursue employment and education.

The vast majority of the FCC providers we support are women of color, a group that has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. According to a study conducted by the New York City Comptroller’s Office in June, 85% of minority- and women-owned businesses believe they cannot survive for more than six months<sup>1</sup>—and we are certainly seeing these fears among FCC providers.

Because childcare is an essential service—and so many New Yorkers who rely on family childcare are essential workers themselves—FCC providers have kept their businesses open throughout the pandemic. At WHEDco, we have adapted our services to help them meet new challenges, from obtaining PPE and implementing daily health checks, to moving our trainings online and connecting families to mental health and nutritional resources.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/minority-and-women-owned-businesses-at-risk-impact-of-covid-19-on-new-york-city-firms/>

Still, there's only so much that nonprofits like WHEDco can do. FCC providers are barely scraping by—partly because of pre-existing, systemic vulnerabilities, and partly because they have not received government relief adequate to cover pandemic-related revenue losses and added costs.

It's important to realize that FCC programs are dependent on child enrollment and attendance for payment, and they are held to state-set rates that do not reflect the true cost of providing quality full-day, full-year care and early education. These conditions have left FCC providers exceptionally vulnerable to the pandemic's economic impact. Under-enrollment has been rampant as many parents have shifted to work from home or been laid off. As a result, providers' revenues have declined, making it difficult for them to fully staff programs, pay overhead costs and added health and safety costs, and keep their businesses open to provide care for working families who still need their services. Moreover, FCC networks do not have the same financial safety nets that are provided to daycare centers.

Suffice to say, the responsibilities they shoulder have increased substantially, but they have received little financial help. Due to language barriers, limited access to time and resources and myriad other reasons, many found Payroll Protection Program and similar funding at the city and state level extremely hard to access. Because FCC providers often lack capital, many banks will not issue them loans. Meanwhile, the state-set requirements to access Child Care Development Block Grant funding allocated to New York State in the CARES Act have created unnecessary barriers, resulting in very few grant payments to providers so far.

Nor has there been meaningful recognition of this sector as essential, with no prioritized access to hazard pay for staff, PPE, cleaning supplies, or supports to adjust program spaces.

A digital divide has further burdened FCC providers who were not prepared to support the influx of school-age children coming to their programs due to school closures. Their lack of access to technology, including devices and reliable internet service, has left them struggling to support remote learning.

This has all pushed many FCC providers to the brink or out of business altogether, which risks gutting the childcare system and expanding the childcare desert for working families at time when New York City is trying to rebuild its workforce and economy.

We urge the City to act quickly to help FCC providers access the funds and supports they need for their businesses—and the working families they serve—to survive this pandemic and thrive in the future. That must include hazard pay that reflects the value and risk associated with their services during the pandemic. We also encourage the City to create small business grants that are more accessible for vulnerable small businesses, such as family childcare. Providers need direct grants with flexibility, rather than reimbursement-based funding that requires them to pay upfront with money they do not have. And the grant application process must be easily navigable and linguistically accessible.

These steps are critical to keep thousands of providers' small businesses running; to ensure that young children from working families get quality care and early learning opportunities; and to enable parents in our communities to remain, enter or re-enter the workforce.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony. I welcome any questions or comments you may have.



## **Testimony of UJA-Federation of New York**

### **New York City Council Committees on Women and Gender Equity and Education Oversight Hearing-The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC**

**Submitted by:  
Faith Behum, UJA-Federation of New York**

**December 16, 2020**

Thank you to Chairpersons Rosenthal and Treyger for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact of COVID-19 on childcare in New York City. My name is Faith Behum and I am an advocacy and policy advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA's mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA connects people to their communities, responds to crises in New York, Israel and around the world, and supports nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

UJA's nonprofit partners oversee various forms of childcare for children and youth in all five New York City boroughs including but not exclusive to 3K, UPK, SONYC and COMPASS afterschool programs and Learning Bridges/Labs. Below are issues UJA's nonprofit partners have experienced overseeing childcare since the beginning of the pandemic as well as recommendations on how to improve childcare options.

#### **Comprehensive Background Checks**

Since September 2019, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has required new extensive background checks for staff and volunteers in youth and early childhood education programs. The background checks are required by rules in the Federal Childcare and Community Development Block Grant that was reauthorized and revised in 2014. As the local regulator, the background check process is managed in New York City by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). Throughout the pandemic, DOHMH has continued to struggle to complete the background checks in a timely manner causing delays in the hiring process for staff members in afterschool, early childhood education programs, and Learning Labs. When providers send inquiries about the status of pending background checks to the DOHMH mailbox designated for receiving completed background check paperwork they often receive delayed responses with little information. Programs have reported having to wait a minimum of *two months* to get completed background checks. OCFS allows prospective staff to work in programs if they are supervised by fully cleared staff. However, this only works when

there are enough cleared staff to oversee the prospective staff awaiting their clearances. When fully cleared staff test positive for COVID and need to quarantine, many programs are left scrambling to meet staffing quotas.

The delays in completing background checks are unacceptable at a time when parents and guardians' ability to return to work hinges on the availability of reliable childcare options. **UJA urges DYCD to assist DOHMH in expediting the comprehensive background check process, ultimately making DOHMH commit to a two-week maximum timeframe to complete checks. DYCD and DOE must hold providers harmless from any penalties for under-enrollment in programs until processes have been established to clear staff.** Providers support rigorous background checks for all staff and need their partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so providers can operate programs in this constantly changing environment.

### **UPK and 3K Specific Issues**

Overseeing UPK and 3K programs during the pandemic forced providers in Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to develop lesson plans for in-person and virtual instruction for children enrolled in their programs. Providers have faced many challenges implementing their in-person programs. Limiting the number of children in UPK classes to 15 children per two staff members has impacted providers greatly. Usually UPK providers have 18 children in each classroom. Limiting in-person attendance to 15 has required providers to locate more space in their buildings or hire additional staff to maintain ratios with no additional funding added to their contracts to do so. Providers also stressed how difficult it is to oversee in-person and virtual classes. Ideally, providers would like to have at least one staff member who is dedicated to monitoring only virtual learning. Unfortunately, it is not financially feasible for programs to pursue this based upon what they are currently reimbursed in their contracts.

While the number of children and staff have been limited in 3K and UPK classrooms, providers are still required to allow special education teachers into their classrooms to assist children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). UPK and 3K providers are committed to offering children with special needs all the supports they need to be successful students in their programs. But while the DOE has required 3K and UPK programs to let additional special education staff into their classrooms, they have provided no guidance to programs on how this can be done safely. For example, programs are unclear if and when they will be notified if a special education teacher who has worked with their students, tests positive for COVID. Programs have their own procedures on how to notify staff and families if someone tests positive, yet are unsure how quickly they will be notified if teachers not employed by them who work with children in their classrooms test positive.

While UPK and 3K programs are overseen by the DOE, providers also have to answer to the DOHMH regarding licensing and health and safety measures. Messaging from the DOE has been delayed and often non-existent from DOHMH. For example, providers were informed in early September by the DOE that children enrolled in full remote 3K or UPK programming had to receive the same vaccinations as children attending in-person classes. Families registered for full remote programming before this requirement was made public. This late communication on the part of the DOE caused providers to scramble to ensure their remote students were up to date on their vaccination requirements-days before remote learning was supposed to begin. DOHMH

has been unclear about a number of issues including how many square feet per child must be allowed in classrooms. While providers are maintaining two staff per 15 children, they are still unsure how much square footage is required by DOHMH to appropriately and safely run services. Providers encounter issues daily that require guidance. Whether it is guidance needed for special education teachers, vaccinations or space requirements **3K and UPK providers require and deserve timely answers to their questions from both the DOE and DOHMH.**

The Basic Educational Data System (BEDs) date was December 1<sup>st</sup>. The number of children enrolled in UPK programs on December 1<sup>st</sup> determines how much community based programs will be paid for the year. Due to the pandemic, many UPK programs have seen a drop in their enrollment numbers. On the BEDs date, one of UJA's nonprofit partners had 40 out of 54 slots enrolled in their UPK program. If reimbursement remains based on enrollment this program will lose over \$100,000-a deficit they will not be able to absorb. While enrollment may decrease, costs for running programs have remained the same or increased due to the need to maintain staff while implementing additional safety measures. **UJA urges the DOE to keep UPK contracts whole and to not use enrollment on the BEDs date to determine how much programs will be compensated.**

#### **Delayed Communication Regarding the Birth to Five RFP**

The Birth to Five Services Request for Proposals (RFP) was released by DOE in 2019 with proposals being accepted from prospective providers later that year. The RFP initiated the transition of all City contracted birth to five early care and education services (including Early Learn) from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to the DOE. Awarded contracts from this RFP are expected to begin in July 2021. Providers were contacted by the DOE at the end of July 2020 if they were being advanced to the next stage of award consideration. Since then, no additional information has been provided to programs. The lack of information on next steps regarding these awards has impacted providers' ability to plan for the City contracted services beginning in July 2021 as well as other services that are not funded through City contracts. UJA recognizes the additional stress COVID-19 has placed on city agencies like the DOE. **Regardless, UJA urges the DOE to communicate with providers being considered for the Birth to Five Services awards how to complete the next steps in the process in order to allow these programs enough time to plan for these services.**

#### **Barriers to Participating in Learning Labs for Children and Youth with Disabilities**

UJA's network of nonprofit partners oversees a variety of services (including afterschool and summer programs) for individuals with disabilities. Each nonprofit provides these services in an inclusive environment, providing the staff and additional supports that individuals with disabilities need to benefit from the programs. Many of the individuals have attended programming at UJA's community-based organizations for multiple years and have familiarized themselves with the staff and the environment the programs are delivered in. These individuals feel comfortable attending programs at UJA's agencies, viewing them largely as a home away from home.

UJA agencies saw the Learning Lab initiative as an opportunity to support children and youth (including those with disabilities) as they navigate remote learning and provide a safe place for

families to leave their children as they returned to work. When Learning Labs were first announced, students with disabilities were one of the groups indicated as being prioritized to benefit from the program. Unfortunately, Learning Labs are not given the additional financial assistance and information they need to provide the one on one supports many children and youth with disabilities require to be successful in the program.

To apply for the Learning Labs, parents or guardians must complete an application through the DOE. The DOE reviews the application, indicates if the applicant should be prioritized for a spot in a program and then uses their school's location to place the individual in a Learning Lab. Learning Lab providers can only accept the children or youth into their program who have been assigned to their program by the DOE.

Many individuals with disabilities were not matched with the Learning Labs at UJA nonprofits where they already attend programs. These individuals were placed in programs and with staff they are not familiar with-a huge oversight on the part of the DOE who match children with Learning Lab programs. It is incredibly challenging for individuals with disabilities to adapt to a new program and staff after largely being at home with their families for more than nine months. Parents or guardians have approached UJA's partners and requested their child be allowed to attend a Learning Lab program at their agencies. UJA's partners have stated they have space in their programs for these children but unfortunately cannot serve them due to the DOE and DYCD policy that providers can only offer services to the children who were assigned to their Learning Lab rosters. Some of these children are actually enrolled in a UJA agency afterschool program but were assigned to a Learning Lab outside the agency. These children could benefit from a full day program, but because their Learning Lab is located in a different location than their afterschool program, it is difficult for them to get to the afterschool program.

Many families are choosing not to send their children with disabilities to Learning Labs due to lack of familiarity with the provider. This results in children and youth with disabilities relying on their parents or guardians to support them on the days they are enrolled in remote learning, making it impossible for parents or guardians to go back to work.

Support on remote learning days outside the Learning Lab programs is lacking for children and youth with disabilities. Even those who are fortunate to receive community services, like respite through the Medicaid waiver program, cannot utilize these supports during school hours when they are being instructed either remotely or in-person. If a child or youth with disabilities cannot attend a Learning Lab program, there are limited support options available to them. UJA understands the need for Learning Lab assignments to be carefully monitored by the DOE in order to ensure children and youth are maintaining stagnant cohorts. Unfortunately, the process that DOE used to connect students to Learning Labs has proven faulty, resulting in children being placed with providers they are not familiar with. **UJA urges the DOE and DYCD to allow providers to host children and youth with disabilities who were not included in their initial roster in their Learning Lab programs in order for these individuals to have a better chance to benefit from this program.**

Programs that do have individuals with disabilities in their Learning Labs are finding it incredibly difficult to support these participants appropriately. Many of these individuals require one-on-one supports when they attend school and also require this when they are engaging in remote learning. Staff of Learning Labs often learn of a child needing additional support the first day they attend a program allowing for no time to develop a plan to serve the individual. Learning Lab contracts also offer no additional financial assistance for programs to provide these supports. **UJA urges DYCD to increase the per participant rate for Learning Lab providers who have students with disabilities enrolled in their program in order for these individuals to get the supports they need to engage in remote learning. We also urge the DOE to notify Learning Lab providers when a child on their roster has an IEP and detail additional supports the individual uses while engaging in in-person learning.**

### **Issues with Kosher Food in Learning Labs**

In order to meet the food requirement for the Learning Lab program, providers are required to pick up meals from DOE Grab&Go sites throughout the city. Because many of UJA's nonprofit partners require kosher meals, a staff member must travel to the closest kosher meal site, which is not always conveniently located to the Learning Lab program site. In many cases, providers must invest a significant amount of staff time – due to distance as well as traffic—to travel to pick up these meals. Furthermore, UJA agencies have reported experiencing issues with the Grab&Go program, including with the meal quality-many report a lack of variety and unappealing cold meals; meals arriving rotten from lack of proper refrigeration or completely frozen; food being inappropriate to meet the nutritional needs of the children and youth; and an insufficient number of meals available for participants in their programs. UJA agencies have reported having to throw out food received through this program due to spoilage, poor quality or dietary standards not being met resulting in a significant waste of food and city funding. On days when Learning Labs cannot serve the Grab&Go meals, they still provide food to the children and youth in their programs using their own financial resources to do so. **UJA urges the DOE to resolve these issues at the Grab&Go sites so that providers that require kosher food have easier access to nutritious, fresh food for their participants. Additionally, UJA urges DYCD to explore ways in which providers can use their own kosher caterers and be reimbursed for providing meals which would eliminate the travel requirement as well as ensure that the meals are of high quality and nutritionally adequate.**

### **Impact of Increased DOE Permit Fees on Afterschool Programs**

Some of UJA's nonprofit partners receive federal funding from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program that is administered through the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Using this funding, nonprofits use NYC public schools to provide free childcare to students in kindergarten through sixth grade offering tutoring and other academic enrichment activities while they are out of school.

In order to use NYC schools, nonprofits must pay the DOE a permit fee. Due to increased cleaning costs and additional labor fees associated with sanitizing school spaces, the permits costs for the 2020-2021 school year have increased tremendously. One of UJA's nonprofit partners usually pays a total of \$15,000 for the permits to use two NYC schools for their afterschool program. This year, this same provider is expected to pay over \$100,000 in DOE

permit fees to use the same two schools. This provider has been forced to oversee the program remotely because they do not have enough funding to cover the increased permit fees to use the school buildings.

Depending on COVID rates, providers would like to resume in-person programming providing parents and guardians the childcare they require to work outside the home. But they would only be able to do this if the DOE permit fees were reduced significantly. The Administration has prioritized in-person schooling to concentrate on closing the achievement gap. Afterschool programs have been found to reduce achievement gaps as well and providers of these services should be offered the financial support they need to continue to provide these services during the pandemic. **UJA recommends that all permit fees to use DOE buildings for afterschool programs be waived for the duration of the pandemic.** Without this, families will have access to less in-person childcare options.

### **Access to PPE and Cleaning Supplies, COVID Testing, and COVID Vaccinations**

The DOE has provided 3K and UPK CBO providers with multiple shipments of PPE and cleaning supplies at no additional cost to programs. In September, PPE was made available to all DYCD funded programs including Learning Labs. In order to receive the PPE, providers had to pick-up the supplies at one location in Manhattan. Since then, DYCD providers have struggled to obtain additional PPE and cleaning supplies. Providers' requests to DYCD are often met with multiple emails but no additional supplies. **Individuals who provide City contracted services to children and youth are essential workers and require access to PPE and cleaning supplies at no additional cost to their programs.** All essential workers in human service agencies (including employees in children and youth programs) also need access to COVID testing and should be prioritized to receive the COVID vaccine.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. UJA looks forward to working closely with the Council and the Administration in order to continue to provide the services and supports children and their families need in their communities during this unprecedented time. Please contact Faith Behum at [behumf@ujafedny.org](mailto:behumf@ujafedny.org) or 212-836-1338 with any questions.



WOMEN'S BUSINESS ENTERPRISE NATIONAL COUNCIL

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WOMAN OWNED SMALL BUSINESS (WOSB) CERTIFICATION TO
PROMOTING LOVE & WISDOM HOME CHILDCARE CENTER LLC DBA
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The identified small business is an eligible WOSB for the WOSB Program, as set forth in 13 C.F.R. part 127 and has been certified as such by an SBA approved Third Party Certifier pursuant to the Third Party Agreement, dated June 30, 2011, and available at www.sba.gov/wosb.

The WOSB Certification expires on the date herein unless there is a change in the SBA's regulation that makes the WOSB ineligible or there is a change in the WOSB that makes the WOSB ineligible. If either occurs, this WOSB Certification is immediately invalid. The WOSB must not misrepresent its certification status to any other party, including any local or State government or contracting official or the Federal government or any of its contracting officials.

Table with 3 rows: NAICS: 611710, UNSPSC: 86141500, 86141501; Certification Number: WOSB201813; Expiration Date: October 28, 2021



Sandra P. Eberhard (signature)

Sandra Eberhard, Women President's Educational Organization - DC Executive Director

Pamela Prince-Eason (signature)

Pamela Prince-Eason, WBENC President & CEO

Laura Taylor (signature)

Laura Taylor, WBENC Vice President



**Citizens' Committee  
for Children** of NEW YORK



Testimony of Daryl Hornick-Becker  
Policy & Advocacy Associate  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Presented to the New York City Council  
Oversight Hearing on The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC

**Committee on Education  
Jointly with the Committee on Women and Gender Equity**

December 16, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Daryl Hornick-Becker and I am a Policy and Advocacy Associate at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. CCC is a 75-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions.

I would like to thank Chair Rosenthal, Chair Treyger, and all the members of the Women and Gender Equity and Education committees for holding today's hearing on childcare.

New Yorkers are facing unprecedented challenges from COVID-19, with nearly every aspect of health, mental health, housing, child welfare, education, and economic security impacted. But amidst these unprecedented challenges it is imperative that the city continue to fund, support, and provide robust child care options throughout the pandemic and on through recovery.

More than ever, the health, educational, and social benefits of high-quality child care are needed for young children in our current moment. But in addition to the vital role it plays in child development, early care and education is also crucial right now to economic recovery and supporting working families. According to a U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, 1 in 5 NY adults aged 25 to 44 - including 1 in 4 women - report child care responsibilities as the primary reason for being out of work.<sup>1</sup> To keep caregivers in the workforce and help them return to the workforce, as well as to provide developmental support for children, we must focus on enduring that child care is and continues to be high-quality, accessible and affordable for New York's children and families. To achieve these ends, the city must make a series of commitments and investments to ensure the youngest children and their families have a chance to not only recover from our current crisis but to thrive.

**Child Care Providers Need Support to Remain Open and Safely Provide Care**

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<sup>1</sup> CCC analysis of US Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey data (April 23-July 21).

Early child educators have been and continue to be on the front lines of the pandemic. When schools and centers closed during the height of the pandemic in the Spring, many child care workers staffed the Regional Enrichment Centers, while many family child care operators stayed open to serve their communities and working parents. In the current school year, center and family-based child care programs remained open when schools partially or fully closed, and since September many providers have staffed and will continue to staff the city's Learning Bridges programs for young children enrolled in hybrid or remote schooling.

For all these reasons child care providers need and deserve every support New York City can offer to ensure their sustained ability to operate and safely provide critical services. This includes hazard and incentive pay, for those who previously put themselves at risk during the height of the pandemic and for the workers who continue to do so, which can be financed from federal funds or sourced from any future federal funds. Hazard pay should also be prioritized for those who worked continually since the pandemic first hit, many of whom were small home-based family care operators who are often the most cash-strapped and least-supported providers, but who stepped up to provide care to essential workers and working families.

Additionally, center and home-based settings for child care continue to need support to help pay for adequate personal protective equipment and deep cleaning costs; expenditures that are necessary to keeping staff and children safe, but that also have significant expenses and have strained providers' budgets. Early child educators outside schools also deserve a comprehensive testing strategy from the city, similar to their counterparts in schools including priority access to city testing and rapid testing sites, as well as efforts to test staff in child care settings.

In addition to health and safety protocols, there are essential administrative actions that could help providers serve their communities right now. These include expedited background clearances for staff, to ensure programs can onboard workers as enrollment grows or as they are called upon to staff Learning Bridges sites. Also, providers need better interagency coordination, between the DOE, DYCD and DOHMH, to ensure programs have the capacity, staff and support they need to adequately run either their child care programs or a Learning Bridges site.

### **Integrate Early Intervention and Meet Children's Social-Emotional Needs**

Considering trauma children may experience from COVID-19, it will be important to integrate behavioral health supports in early care settings, including through trauma-informed care, behavioral health, and Early Intervention services. The city should equip educators, administrators and other staff with support and effective tools to identify, assess and address children's trauma, and the state and Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene must work to ensure children receive appropriate screenings, referrals, and evaluations through Early Intervention services and to behavioral health care.

### **The City Must Honor its Commitments to Salary Parity and Preserve Child Care Funding**

Despite the difficult fiscal situation New York City is currently facing, city administration current budget year modifications and the Fiscal Year 2022 budget proposals must not contain

cuts to child care funding, or delays or reductions in the city’s commitment to salary parity for child care workers. The hard-fought parity agreement reached last year, to finally begin adequately compensating CBO early child educators on levels similar to their peers in schools, is essential to both the short-term and long-term stability of Universal pre-Kindergarten, and to the CBOs responsible for the majority of UPK sites and seats. The city must remain steadfast in its commitment to salary increases to these essential workers, to undergird the stability and continuity of programs and staff, and to support the wellbeing families and children they serve.

CCC was pleased to see child care remain largely whole in the adopted FY 2021 budget, aside from the delayed expansion of Pre-K for 3-year-olds to certain districts. Still, it is imperative that the sector is held harmless again from austerity measures, ensuring New York’s children and families do not bear a further burden of the economic, social, and educational devastation that COVID-19 has wrought.

### **New Child Care Contracts Cannot Result in a Loss of Seats or a Loss of Full-Day Services**

As the NYC Department of Education awards new center-based seats for its entire birth-to-five child care system, it must ensure that new awards and the redistribution of slots do not result in any net loss of capacity for the entire system. This means no fewer seats for children, but also no loss of current full-day offerings. For working families, child care that ends at 3 PM is simply not an option, and new awards must not replace what is currently a full-day seat with a school-day seat for child care. All full-day options must be preserved and, in the future, expanded, to build towards a universal, full-day, year-round system of childcare.

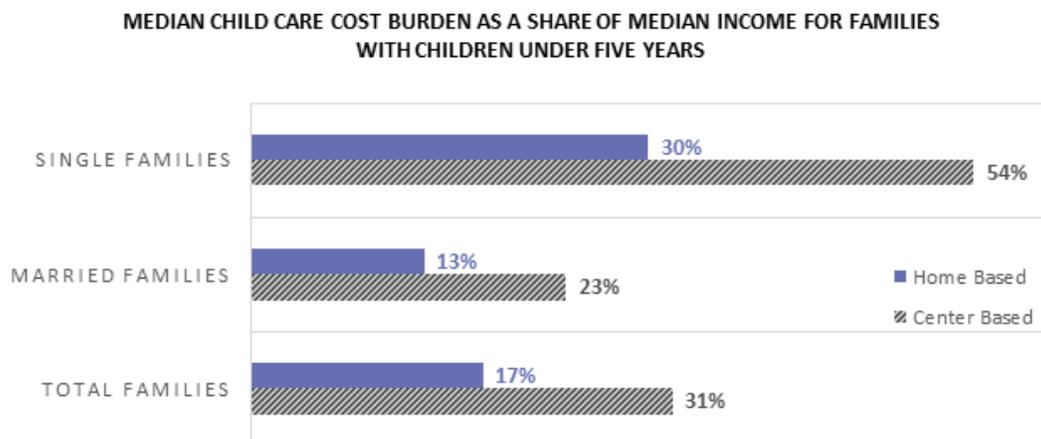
Additionally, we are concerned that new awards may well exacerbate issues around the dearth of affordable full-day care arrangements. Child care deserts certainly exist in the New York City, but as new contracts impact both the age cohort reached and capacity within community districts, there is real risk that in attempting to address the inadequacy of capacity in particular community districts, RFP awards could create child care deserts elsewhere. The procurement process may be administrative on its surface, but a provider losing a contract with the DOE or seeing a reduction in its contract capacity, means a real loss of services and opportunities for children and families.

### **The City Must Address its Infant and Toddler Care Affordability Crisis**

Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to high quality early care for infants and toddlers was unaffordable for most families in New York City. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has likely exacerbated this crisis.

CCC recently published a new report, *NYC’s Child Care Affordability Crisis: The Unaffordable Cost of Care Burdens Families and Impedes Pandemic Economic Recovery in New York City*. Our findings show that early care for the youngest children is prohibitively expensive to the vast majority of New York families. Citywide, the annual cost of center-based child care for infants and toddlers (\$18,746) consumes about 31% of median household income for all families with young children. In communities where median incomes are lower, this cost burden is higher and consumes as much as 65% of median income. The annual cost of home-based care is less expensive (\$10,296), yet still consumes 17% of median household income for all families with

young children. Again, in communities where median incomes are lower, the cost burden for home-based care is higher, and consumes as much as 36% of median income.



*Source: Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York’s NYC’s Child Care Affordability Crisis*

Families with young children headed by single parents have even lower median income compared to families headed by married couples. Therefore, child care cost burden is higher for single parents as care consumes 54% of median income for center-based care and 30% of median income for home-based care. Using a federally recommended affordability threshold of 7% of household income, center-based child care is unaffordable for 93% of families with young children, and home-based care is unaffordable for 80% of families with young children. Only 1% of single parent families citywide can afford center-based care, and only 5% can afford home-based care.<sup>2</sup>

To begin to finally address the crisis, the city must take action immediately as well as look ahead. As previously noted, New York City must do everything it can to protect current capacity for infant and toddler care against the dual threat of budget cuts and the shifting of system capacity away from infants and toddlers in newly awarded contracts. The city must ensure that the newly awarded contracts for home-based family child care and center-based care do not result in a net loss of seats for infants and toddlers and it must protect against budget cuts that fall hardest on working families already struggling to afford child care.

But moving forward, a new administration and new City Council, should pursue a robust agenda for early care and education. This should include universal approaches to full day, year-round care including Pre-K programs for 4-year-olds and 3-year-olds and the leveraging of federal,

<sup>2</sup> Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York, “NYC’s Child Care Affordability Crisis: The Unaffordable Cost of Care Burdens Families and Impedes Pandemic Economic Recovery in New York City.” December 2020. <https://www.cccnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NYCs-Child-Care-Affordability-Crisis.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=641a45ee-712b-415b-86e2-b808809ab11b>.

state, and city resources to dramatically expand access to affordable infant and toddler care, by increasing subsidies and expanding local child care tax credits.

## **Conclusion**

Early care and education have always been a vital part of children and families' social emotional, educational, and health well-being, in addition to a key part of the city's economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has only emphasized its importance and the role its essential workers serve. Our immediate ability as a city to survive the remainder of the pandemic, as well as our long-term recovery, requires real commitment and investments in the sector, its workforce, providers, and child and family programming and supports.

Elizabeth Olivo  
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Brishay Day Care

**Testimony from Elizabeth Olivo to New York City Council  
Committee on Women and Gender Equity / Committee on Education  
December 16, 2020**

Hello, Members of the NY City Council. My name is Elizabeth Olivo. I am the owner of Brishay Day Care, a Family Child Care program in the Bronx. I come to you today to voice my concerns about the impact COVID-19 is having on Family Child Care programs like mine.

First, I would like to specifically define the term Family Child Care. A Family Child Care program is a form of early childhood education in which a caregiver looks after children in their own home, often with the help of an assistant. A Family Child Care program is typically licensed for between 6 and 12 children. Family Child Care is a critical component of New York City's child care system as well as the national child care system. We are the backbone of our communities, and we are essential to the well-being, care, and education of young children. We work in our homes, we live in our homes, and we cultivate young minds from our homes. All of this is in jeopardy if our City officials don't act on behalf of this important part of the educational continuum.

At a time when demand for Family Child Care is higher than it's ever been, the pandemic has greatly exacerbated the challenges Family Child Care providers -- especially independent providers -- experience as educators who provide a vital service to our communities. We have long experienced inadequate:

- Professional development, including training, coaching and access to higher education and supports; and resources (e.g. mental health consultation, training, etc.)
- Inadequate compensation for our work as highly trained and experienced Family Child Care educators; and
- Inadequate communication with City regulatory and funding agencies.

These challenges have existed for many years and are responsible for a decline in the number of Family Child Care providers in New York City.

Since the pandemic began, our professional development needs have increased while opportunities to access the supports we need have decreased. Overnight we were expected to support school-age children in remote learning, with no communication from their teachers, no training in virtual learning or technical assistance. We were expected to care for children from infancy to school age whose routines were suddenly upended and are experiencing grief and loss, without professional development or supports like mental health consultation to help us address their needs.

Instead of being compensated like teachers with similar credentials and experience, Family Child Care educators typically operate with on razor thin margins. When the pandemic began, City officials assumed we would do the work public school teachers weren't willing to do, and we would continue to do it without fair compensation. They assumed that we, mostly women of color, would expose ourselves and our families to additional risk caring for children of essential workers without hazard pay.

When the pandemic began, poor communication from City agencies turned into no communication at all. Our telephone calls and emails with questions about new regulations went unanswered. Our requests for actionable health information and PPE fell on deaf ears. Independent Family Child Care providers make up 80% of the City's Family Child Care providers and have stepped up to provide a disproportionate amount of care during this pandemic. Yet we fall through the cracks in the City's bureaucracy. To this day we have not received health guidance for family child care. My colleagues and I have had to fend for ourselves, developing health practices and educational routines to keep children safe and ensure they continue to learn and grow during this challenging period.

Despite these challenges, those of us who can, continue to care for children. Some people ask us why. For most of us the answer is simple: our families and communities need us -- especially now. They need stable routines and relationships. When they can count on so little else, they need to know they can count on us. And they need to know we'll be here for them after the pandemic.

In New York City Family Child Care is the main form of child care and early learning. But we are at a turning point. Many of my colleagues lose money every day they stay open. Some have assumed debt that they'll never recover from. Some are tired of working under these conditions for so many years. To ensure that we're around after the pandemic, the City must start to invest in independent Family Child Care providers now. It should partner with us to develop:

- Training, coaching and professional development models that meet the needs of independent Family Child Care providers;
- Equitable compensation during the pandemic and beyond;
- Regulatory and funding agencies that work together to support us and the children we care for.

If our City has learned anything from this pandemic, it is that Family Child Care is essential! We need City Council to assist us in building this valuable community resource that will enable our economy and our children to emerge from this period stronger than before. Thank you.

December 14, 2020

TO: City Council Testimony, December 16, 2020  
Women and Gender in concert with NYC DOE

FR: Michael Rochford, Executive Director, St. Nicks Alliance Corporation  
RE: DOE Birth to Five Awards

On behalf of the children and families of Small World Early Childhood Center, St. Nicks Alliance is grateful to receive a Birth to Five award. St. Nicks Alliance is deeply committed to sustaining the generations-long impact of this center on our community's youngest children, helping them to develop the critical school readiness skills needed to thrive in Kindergarten and beyond.

I am writing today to notify City Council that the exclusion of two-year-olds, extended day services and year round services from the Birth to Five award undermine Cultural and Economic Diversity of Students Served; Financial Viability of Child Care Centers; and Continuity of Care.

### **Cultural and Economic Diversity of Students Served**

For more than 45 years, St. Nicks Alliance has helped transform the lives of low and moderate income families. We are known for our innovative programming, with an emphasis on socio-emotional and academic supports, intended to help low-income children succeed in school. St. Nicks Alliance's comprehensive early childhood, community school and afterschool services for 4,000 2-24 year olds are critical to this goal, as quality education from the earliest years can stop multi-generational poverty. At St. Nicks Alliance, Small World Day Care Center is their earliest gateway into these services for low-income families with children as young as two years old who benefit from the publicly funded, full-day services long-established at this center.

The elimination of extended day and 2-year-old services will reduce Small World's ability to provide low-income families with the same full-day services as wealthier families. SNA commissioned a 2018 community assessment data which identified a high number of children by income and poverty status who are eligible for early childhood services and a corresponding, significant shortage of quality seats to meet the need. More than 56% of residents are non-white, 42.2% live in poverty and families in 11211 receive public assistance at a much higher rate than families living in other part of our city. Our data clearly demonstrate that the need for quality childcare is especially prominent among the very young children living in public housing, children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care—all of whom Small world currently serves through its toddler, extended day and extended year programs. Our own extensive waiting list demonstrates the high demand for these services.

At the present time, Small World has developed a well-integrated school population which is equally split between low, moderate and middle income children who represent diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The lack of subsidized two year old, extended day and summer services in Small World's Birth to Five award will, instead, create an inequitable environment in which predominantly low-income African American and Latino families, who cannot pay for toddler care of extended day services, will not have access to Small World's full services to prepare their children for Kindergarten. Further, significant hardship will result for low and moderate income families who have no choice but to find resources for childcare now available at Small World with public resources on a sliding scale.

Nearly five decades ago, Small World's physical building was developed by the City of New York through a private owner, who received two 20-year leases. The private owner attempted to sell the property to force the closure of its occupying day care center and senior center. However, that would have been a blow to low and moderate families, and St. Nicks Alliance and the community fought back with critical City investments. First, we have successfully operated at this location over the last five years using emergency discretionary funds and UPK dollars to provide services, specifically to allow us to provide services to low and moderate income children. Second, the City of New York invested \$5M in assisting St. Nicks Alliance to acquire the property as part of an acquisition of \$10.5M. Our Birth-to-Five award conflicts with the purpose of saving and strategizing the building to serve low and moderate income families.

The deep commitment mentioned at the outset is reflected in St Nick's Alliance breakthrough efforts to achieve literacy outcomes through our *School Success* model in elementary school, the embedded day and after school initiative in nearby elementary schools. This past year we began to expand additional student support in Small World with the goal of providing consistent support from toddler years, then building a bridge for low income and struggling students from PreK to elementary schools.

### **Financial Viability**

In addition to undermining the financial health of low to moderate income families ,the Birth to Five Awards undermine the financial viability of the Early Childhood Centers, themselves. Based on the current DOE reimbursement rate of \$10,000 per UPK child, the Birth to Five Award will cover just 50% of the real costs of operating a child care center. These include fixed costs such as year round salaries, rent and building operations as well as program expenses. In short, this reality will force centers to close, thereby further reducing the accessibility of affordable child care to low and moderate income families.

### **Continuity of Care**

A central tenet of the Birth to Five RFP is Continuity of Care, which is key to enabling children to be Kindergarten ready. For three generations, Small World Early Childhood Center has recognized this mandate by providing full-day, year-round childcare and education services to children ages 2-5 years old. St. Nicks Alliance does not operate Family Day Care, and instead offers high-quality, center-based programming that allows children to learn the routines, academics and socio-emotional skills that set them up for success in three-year-old classrooms, PreK and ultimately, Kindergarten and beyond. These extended day services have been subsidized by public funding, critical resources that have enabled over 90 % of our PreK students to join Small World as toddlers in the two-year-old program. The elimination of this public funding will negatively impact continuity of care, and reduce essential educational services for low-income families who need these services the most.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to a fruitful ability to serve children and encourage their success in school.

# City Council Hearing December 16, 2020, 10am

## Committees on Education and Women and Gender Equity

### Written Testimony by ECE On The Move

#### I. ECE On The Move – Who We Are

ECE On The Move, founded by Gladys Jones and co-founder Doris Irizarry, is a NYC grassroots movement of Early Care Educators, also known as Family Child Care Providers. Our Network of Providers totals 600 and growing. Our mission is to advocate for ourselves in an unprecedented manner by being present in every action or conversation which affects our city's caregivers in residential settings. For too long, Family Child Care Providers have gone underrepresented (even with representation), underpaid and un-respected by the NYC agencies we engage with.

Throughout the history of family child care, our modality of care weighs in:

- Last for consideration for higher pay; Centers and center-based teachers historically first.
- Last to be invited (or not invited) to the roundtables or committees where important decisions concerning our future are decided upon.
- First to be considered as cheap labor to be utilized at all hours.
- First to be herded into a variety of initiatives without proper collaboration with our own sector or proper pay.
- Most likely to not receive deserved respect from city agencies despite the *"important work of family child care"*.

As stated at to the hearing on December 16<sup>th</sup> with the Committees on Education and Women and Gender Equity, this written testimony will detail our concerns as Early Care Educators and the DOE, how COVID-19 affected our workforce, why quality of pay and hazard pay is necessary and our recommendations for these issues.

#### II. The Department of Education and Family Child Care

Universal Pre-K for 3 & 4 year-olds have been the catalyst to Family Child Care Providers going out of business. Providers' businesses were affected when the 4 year-olds were called away to attend UPK. We took a loss of income and could only serve children whose families needed alternative hours or care.

When UPK for 3 year-olds began, Providers who were previously operating independently of Networks, were faced with having to joining an initiative which they had very little information about. Many took this as a sign to leave the profession or suffer only caring for infants and toddlers. Others were herded into a quick CDA education and then on to a work regimen which they were not prepared for. These are Providers who have always been considered the backbone of their communities, raising children into autonomous adults.

**We Ask** that the City of NY devise a strategy to reach all Family Child Care Providers when new initiatives are being drafted in consideration for those who will have to participate. We could have a poll, conduct a city-wide meeting, send out letters with questionnaires – anything democratic would work. It is no longer acceptable to talk solely to child care stakeholders. We want a stake in the design of OUR future as the

PRACTITIONERS. When the UPK for 3-year-olds unfolded, Providers did not expect it and we felt blind-sighted.

**We Ask** that the City Council take a look into the fine line of the definition of what is a business or business owner and what is being practiced under this initiative with the Department of Education. We have lost our individual identity as business owners.

We believe that rights may be violated for the following reasons:

- As a business owner, you may draft your own hours and pay rate and duties. None of this which is true as a Network affiliated Provider. Network Providers feel as though they are now employees with no room for any changes to their program to set individuality.
- There is no profit.
- These women of color and owners of small businesses are struggling to comply with business taxes, Workers Compensation fees, heavy payroll with a new \$15/hr minimum wage per employee.

These are the markings of an employee. If this is not the case, **We Ask** the City Council to advise us and to lead us toward the amendment or creation of state legislation that calls for the market rate to better represent the true cost of quality of care. We cannot continue to operate with these wages, under these conditions.

**III. The following questions were asked during testimony on December 16, 2020:**

- (DOE) Was the RFP for birth-5 withdrawn this year and will it be available in 2021? Withstanding your commitment to include FCC Providers in Network programming, again many Providers continue to choose to remain independent. They have plenty of space. Independent Providers continue to feel as if they do not have an equitable, or a fair chance at obtaining a contract. Is there a fair percentage of how many independent Providers are awarded contracts yearly or is this procurement solely for Center-based programs now as has mainly been in the past?
- (DYCD) An RFP- *the learning bridges* - was opened for Providers to apply to participate in caring for the city's school youth. This RFP was not clear that it was not open to all Family Child Care Providers. Independent Family Child Care Providers (who again are Providers not affiliated with networks) did not believe that they were not "lead CBO's". Many of these qualified, Independent Providers eagerly applied and were turned away. The result – Independent Family Child Care Providers with many open slots continue to wait to be called to work. There is no support for them on any website pairing them with families who need care. There should never be waiting lists in caring for children. What is missing is a partnership between any and all of the city's initiatives to whole-heartedly embrace the availability of all Family Child Care Providers, not just those who have joined the ranks of Networks but those who choose to continue to operate their businesses independently. Early education is not one-size fits all for Providers or Parents. There's a pride to the profession from independent providers. They want the same opportunities and resources that is contractually given to Networks and Network Providers.

#### IV. Era of COVID-19

At the onset of COVID-19, there was an agitation on whether the public schools would remain open. Schools were closed but Family Child Care programs remained open. The Department of Education continued to work the Network Providers hard during this time and the Independent Providers (Providers not affiliated within Networks) were left empty without children. These Providers put themselves on every list to provide care, to no avail. Many had to shut down to seek other employment for good. The children were going straight to the DOE centers and Network Providers for care. This was a monopoly on child care.

Providers who had an enrollment of children, pre-pandemic, were able to maintain a steady pay via waivers given by the state, even if the children were absent. But once parents' cases were dropped, the children dropped from the enrollment. This caused a ripple effect.

- Parents had poor or no contact with agency workers to assist them remotely to maintain their child care cases. When they were called back to work, child care subsidies were not reinstated and parents were left without options.
- The children who were dropped from Providers enrollment created a deficit in Providers pay. This makes the waivers which Providers relied upon, ineffective.

CARES funding should have been an opportunity for Providers to recover from the empty slots in their programs. This was not the case. CARES funding was limited to a simple few hundred caregivers across the state. Many could not apply. Most received nothing as of today. Small operating grants much like the LIIF grant was life saving for some. The model LIIF used was to ask Providers what their most important monthly expenses were. The Providers were awarded funds based on their most important needs. Providers are in need of additional similar awards to assist them through the pandemic.

With Network Providers receiving the bulk of the registrations for child care, the Department of Education has flooded them with PPE. Independent Providers who manage to care for a small number of children do NOT have access to these same resources whether it is health & safety related, PPE or educational resources. Shouldn't all families in all communities have access to the same resources regardless of their choice in caregiver?

**WE ASK** the City Council to make mandatory that the DOE is to avail and publish (website) the information of all licensed Family Child Care Provider Programs within a 1-mile radius of a family in need of child care. A disclaimer may be mentioned that these Providers are licensed but not affiliated with a Network. Parents need choice of care.

**WE ASK** for hazard pay for those Providers whose doors remained open throughout the pandemic and are still risking the health of themselves and their families.

**WE ASK** the City Council to work within the budget to find funds for small operating grants for the remaining Family Child Care Programs still struggling to stay open.

**WE ASK** the City Council to help make the connection between the Department of Education and Providers who do not wish to affiliate with a Network, yet can use available resources to serve all families.

**WE ASK** the City Council to amend or support a policy that will freeze families' child care subsidies from expiring, causing hardships on the family and Child Care Providers.

## V. Other Legislative Recommendations

**WE ASK** for pay by enrollment permanently going forward for all Family Child Care Providers as opposed to pay by attendance. We are the smallest modality in size, offering care for 1-16 children per program. When a family registers a child, we cannot share their space with other children. Each child is enrolled in one space. This space should be paid for in totality. (Example: if a family rents an apartment, do they not pay the total rent even if they decide to go away for a two week vacation? Rent is due in totality.)

**WE ASK** that the City Council be instrumental in gaining a livable wage for all Providers including the legally exempt Providers. These are Providers who do not have a license, but they are registered and cleared to care for 2 children maximum. These Providers earn \$13-\$15 per child daily for the same work as licensed Providers, same hours.

**WE ASK** that the City Council help to draft important legislation that would deem Child Care across all modalities to be considered a UTILITY or a child care system that resembles our social security and Medicare programs. Federal mandatory funding that takes away the partially discretionary block grant that has been around for three decades. To have a unitary federal funding that allows for continuum in the standards, not the divided patchwork to funding child care. Marginalized communities with publicly funded system support childcare through various modalities. A RIGHT for all families in need, for children aged 0-12 years old. There would be an automatic safety net for families to receive funds regardless of income. This would provide affordable and valuable care for families and keep Family Child Care Providers in business.

## VI. Conclusion

There are many issues to address in the Family Child Care workforce. This testimony should illustrate the difficult practices by which we must work through. We do not anticipate them being addressed immediately. We only ask that we can BEGIN the work that can change the lives of NYC Family Child Care Providers.

We ask the City Council to work with the Legislative Division, to craft any bills or amendments needed to effect change.

**Our final ASK** is for ECE On The Move to have an opportunity to follow-up with either CM Mark Treyger, CM Helen Rosenthal or both so that we may gain understanding of which issues may be addressed. These issues are important to the Provider community and we know that City Council is here to learn our circumstances and to be of assistance.

We are thankful for the passion exhibited by the Council Members regarding the history of child care and the work that needs to be done. We thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

ECE On The Move

Gladys Jones, Founder

Shanita Bowen, Communications Director

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**Testimony of Chinese-American Planning Council  
Before the New York City Council  
New York City Council Committee on Gender Equity  
Honorable Helen Rosenthal, Chair  
And the Committee on Education  
Honorable Mark Treyger, Chair**

**Oversight: The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC  
Presented by Mary Cheng, Director of Childhood Development Services**

December 16, 2020

Thank you, Chair Rosenthal, Chair Treyger, the Committee on Gender Equity, the Committee on Education, and the Members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today.

The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community based-organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 60,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as advocates and agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities. To that end, we are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council for their leadership on these issues.

Since the 1970s, CPC has offered year-round, full-day early childhood education programs to nearly 360 children and families each year. Services are provided by experienced multilingual certified teachers and other caring staff members at early childhood centers in the Lower East Side-Chinatown communities of Manhattan and in Flushing, Queens. Programs promote positive social, physical, intellectual, cultural, creative, and emotional developmental outcomes for children through high-quality learning experiences using research-supported curricula offered in safe, healthy environments. Program staff identify and respond to barriers to each child's progress using reliable assessments to promote socioeconomic diversity and inclusivity in the classroom and prepare children for the next stage in their education. As well,

CPC staff and teachers partner with families to provide them with the resources and supports they need to support their child's growth and, if they are new to the U.S., to acculturate.

**CPC's testimony addresses the following concerns: the impact of COVID-19 on child care in NYC, the danger of center closures and loss of slots for low-income and working families across NYC, and Family Child Care providers hard hit by the pandemic.**

### **Early Child Care Center cuts by DOE's Provisional Awards to the Birth to Five RFP**

Last year, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) went through a Request For Proposal (RFP) process for organizations operating early childhood education programs funded by NYC government to take effect July 1, 2021. The goal was to combine the many different funded program models into one holistic system, called **Birth to Five**, expand services to child care deserts, add family choice, and enhance continuity of care for young children.

Proposers were recently notified of the results -- and alarmingly, DOE elected to remove programming in sizable amounts from neighborhoods in which low-income families have participated in early childhood education programs for decades, and where the need for such programs remains urgent. If nothing changes, neighborhoods such as Chinatown and the Lower East Side will suffer from an especially severe reduction in programming.

While data from the DOE has not been made public, **it is clear that average household income of city zip codes influenced slot distribution.** We know many locations in NYC have had a recent influx of high-income residents in the same areas where entrenched lower-income and working families with young children continue to reside, such as in adjacent NYCHA public housing complexes. Families also may choose day care in areas most convenient to them, such as near their workplace or near other family members.

The Coalition is calling for NYC government to reinstate funding of at least **\$17m for the full restoration of these 27 early childhood education programs in the 9 settlement houses** in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, Chelsea, the Upper West Side, Williamsburg and Bushwick.

### **SUMMARY KEY DATA POINTS**

Our coalition of 9 settlement houses analyzed award results from 27 of our settlement house early childhood education (ECE) centers and found:

- Child care seats for young children were lost across the board:
  - **Overall 39% (500+ slots) are slated to lose their child care slots.** This includes a mix of UPK, 3K, city-funded Head Start and Extended day slots for 0-5 years.
  - **72% extended day slots (888 slots) serving families from 8am-6pm will be lost.** This hurt working families.
  - **82 infant/toddler and 315 3K slots will be lost** resulting in hundreds of thousands of foundational hours lost for young children's emotional, social, physical and mental development.

○ **125+ job will be lost** for ECE workers who are predominantly women/people of color.

- **NYCHA, pockets of poverty, and immigrant neighborhoods were overlooked in making awards.** Just because parts of a neighborhood are becoming gentrified, that does not positively impact the status of entrenched low-income communities.
- **Continuity of care was not prioritized** which will impact the future educational pathway for children ages 0-5. The closure of these programs will be especially devastating for English language learners and those who have special needs. ECE programs go beyond childcare, they also prepare these children for the next stage in their education.
- **Partial awards jeopardize high quality early child care** education, family choice, and will not be sustainable for most organizations.
- **40% of coalition ECE sites are at risk of closure under the current award structure.**

The loss of slots is not only a disservice to families, but the loss of so many extended day slots serving families while they are at work will gut the early childcare system in these neighborhoods. It will leave these family without options for their toddler or preschoolers' care. When families are being so hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the last thing they need now is to have their child care options taken away.

This will have especially dire consequences for women citywide, who bear the disproportionate burden of child care. Affordable day care options are critical to pursue their education or their career with equity. Young children without child care will be placed in unsuitable or potentially dangerous environments, leading many mothers to give up their career altogether to ensure their children get the care they need.

The DOE reported they awarded 91% of centers, however many of our CBOs only received partial awards: for example, our Chung Pak day care in the heart of Chinatown was awarded one class of half day UPK, though the center has served full day programming in the center's four classrooms for years. As any NYC tenant knows, you can't pay your landlord with 25% of your rent and still have a place to live. When nonprofit agencies are already facing cuts to youth programs due to the devastating financial cuts sweeping our city, **the partial awards by DOE will mean that 40% of our child care centers would be forced to close altogether.**

Job losses will result from these cuts. Early child care workers are primarily women /people of color whose annual average income is \$40,000. If these cuts go through, in the LES/Chinatown we anticipate losing over 76 jobs, many currently filled by local and low-income employees. CPC's teachers across our 6 early childhood education centers work incredibly hard to provide high quality, culturally competent, linguistically sensitive programming for the children they serve. In our Queens based Lois C. Lee Early Childhood Education Center, for example, we do dual language reading in 8 different languages. They are not just serving the children; these teachers help the parents with language access to critical information about how the school system works and how to best support their children.

### **Center-Based Early Childhood Coalition Message on Birth to Five Provisional Awards**

We applaud the city's vision in expanding early childcare such that low-income families in many neighborhoods throughout the City will, for the first time, have access to early childhood education

programs. However, it is unjust and damaging for new programs to be put in place at the expense of longtime, high quality programs that remain sorely needed for the families who rely on them. We call on the Mayoral Administration and the DOE to rapidly rectify this destructive policy and ask the council to help us with the restoration of funds of at least \$17m for the 9 settlement house provider centers should these awards continue unabated.

### **Family Child Care concerns during COVID-19**

**Family child care programs are small businesses, owned and operated overwhelmingly by women of color, many of whom speak a primary language other than English.** This sector has always been essential to the overall financial stability of working families, the larger business community, and the city and state economy; yet these overwhelmingly women-owned small businesses have consistently been marginalized in child care spaces, education spaces, and in business spaces, leading to disparities in access to funding and other supports.

**The Family Child Care providers never closed over the pandemic. They stood by our hospital and other essential workers to ensure this city could continue to operate. These workers deserve a living wage and we need DOE to increase rates for these programs.**

**We are asking for a raise in the Market Rate for Family Child Care providers for extended days of at least 30%.** The current rate structure is outdated and does not accurately cover the true cost of a childcare program, especially now that FCCN providers are being paid \$37 per day for regular 3K (6.2 hours) and the same \$37 rate for extended day (8-hour and 10-hour) programs. This structure discourages providers from serving working families, by not rewarding the long day with an equitable payment schedule. This will hurt working families who need the full day of care in order to go to work, and it is unfair to providers who are not being paid for their work.

Combining factors have caused low enrollment. The DOE itself has a four-month backlog of their system. As they no longer allow providers to enroll families as they used to under ACS, all families must enroll through a centralized system. However, DOE has not kept up.

CPC's Early Childhood Learning & Wellness Services' experiences over the last 10 months are that over 45% of the family child care programs have forced to close their child care programs during COVID-19 due to no or low enrollment and that 100% of the family child care programs that received services from ELCW in the past indicated that there experienced a significant reduction of enrollment (many have only one or two children in their program now versus seven or 10 before COVID-19). Additionally, only 55% of the 130 CPC Family Child Network-affiliated child care providers have children enrolled in their program with about an average of 40% enrollment capacity. In total, 450 (6 weeks-old to 3K) slots remain unfilled.

**Though this is in part due to DOE's own backlogged system of enrollment, they are currently penalizing providers with not providing full administrative rates in programs with low enrollment. This is unfair DOE's own backlog is to blame.**

### **AAPI families and AAPI neighborhoods are under stress**

COVID-19 hit the Chinatown neighborhood and community especially hard, as early as January 2020 because of the virus's association with China. In Spring 2020, businesses were shuttered and the unemployment rate among AAPIs in New York State rose 6,900%, higher than that of any other racial demographic. In recent feedback surveys, 70% of our families reported they had a change in their employment since the pandemic began, in line with NYC job losses for communities of color (Center for New York City Affairs).

Many AAPIs are also essential workers, yet they have been forced to take a financial hit, making childcare support a true necessity. Early Child care programs are a critical asset to help families get back to work and recover from the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the AAPI community. There is also the added costs of keeping programs open, adjusting spaces and services to meet the new "reality," and the particular risk that providers and their staff have placed themselves in by continuing as the backbone of care, not only for infants, toddlers and PreK.

We need understanding and support from providers like the DOE in meeting guidelines and system requirements, not penalties for things out of our control. We need fair award structures and continued services to AAPI neighborhoods including our child care centers, not more cuts due to arbitrary aspects like a zip code's median income. Last, we need equity in family child care rates, so that working families continue to have child care.

Good morning! My name is Danyela Souza Egorov and I want to thank the City Council Education Committee for holding this hearing on such an important topic. I work for the NY Charter Schools Association and am also the Board Chair of Brooklyn RISE Charter School in Sunset Park, an elementary school especially developed for multilingual learners. Most importantly, I am the mother of a 2nd grader at a DOE school.

I am very grateful that NYC has opened its schools this year when all other major districts in the country have not. I know this was a massive undertaking. But I also want to share how difficult it has been for families and for educators to deal with so many changes. **Schools are not light switches that you can turn on and off.** To properly reopen a school it takes time and planning. All children and families need routine and predictability, but this is specially important for our youngest students and students with special needs. This administration has postponed the reopening of schools multiple times, announcing it at the last minute. It was also announced on Sunday after Thanksgiving that elementary schools had to re-open full-time in one week. Educators and families need stability. Decisions as important as opening or closing schools should never be made based on politics. Good policy and the needs of families must come first. Before covid, NYC already had 47% of its students not being able to read at grade level. Educators expect these numbers to grow and the gap between high and low-income children to get even wider. Our Mayor celebrated that Janet Yellen is our first Secretary of the Treasury and can be a role model for other NYC students. I also celebrate Ms. Yellen's achievements, but to get there she had a PhD in Economics. How can NYC students follow her footsteps when, before covid, only 45% were able to do math at grade level?

NYC must develop a solid plan to ensure that when kids are back to school they are able to catch up on the learning that was lost this year. There will be pressure to abandon testing and not assess student learning, but if we don't know how big is the problem, how will we ever be able to address it? Just last week, the Mayor and the Chancellor shared stories of children who have suffered so much during this pandemic. I agree, our students have gone through a lot. But I know they would agree that it would be an additional injustice to now lower our expectations on what our children can achieve and have a different learning standard for this generation. I urge this Council to continue following this issue, demand clear data on the learning loss and a concrete plan to keep the learning standards for our NYC students.



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New York City Council  
Committee on Women and Gender Equity - Jointly with the Committee on Education  
"The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare in NYC"  
December 16, 2020

My name is Lisa Caswell and I am the Day Care Council of New York's Senior Policy Analyst. For more than 70 years, we have successfully served the needs of non-profit organizations sponsoring early childhood education programs across the five boroughs of New York City. Our 93 members currently operate more than 216 programs, most of which are under contract with the Department of Education.

In June of this year, the Day Care Council released a report entitled "Child Care in a Pandemic: What We Learned from Emergency Child Care Programs and How We Can Safely Reopen Our Early Education System." The following is the Executive Summary, Key Findings and Recommendations.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late March, soon after the COVID-19 pandemic shut down New York City's 1,800 schools, including the City's Pre-K for All programs, 93 regional enrichment centers (RECs) opened to serve the child care needs of first responders and essential workers. Soon after the city also opened emergency child care programs (ECCs) located in community-based organizations (CBOs) and family child care (FCC) provider programs, which include both nonprofit and for-profit private providers. These ECCs, which unlike the RECs, opened quietly and with almost no media attention, are dedicated to solely serving children under the age of 5, including infants and toddlers. Currently there are 46 ECCs located in CBOs and 72 FCC providers contracted by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to serve essential workers.

These community-based and home-based ECCs provide a unique window into what has worked and has not worked for child care programs operating during the pandemic. As the City looks towards reopening public schools and child care centers in September, it is critical to gather lessons learned and other information on how ECCs are able to operate in this pandemic in order to inform the conversation on how to reopen safely while still meeting the education needs of young children.

In June, the Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) examined a sample of 13 ECCs to determine how they are operating during this pandemic. DCCNY interviewed a total of nine center-based providers and four family child care providers to determine current and best health, safety, and instructional practices in an emergency setting and to develop a set of recommendations based on the findings of the interviews.

Interviews revealed that providers serving the children of frontline workers all felt a sense of pride and purpose in being able to serve essential workers during this time of crisis, but there was also considerable anxiety. The two primary concerns were seemingly conflicting: public health requirements and economic viability. Providers noted that taking the very measures needed to protect the health of their staff and families—for instance, reducing the number of children served—threatened their financial viability.

As the city prepares to reopen its early education system, efforts to ensure the health and safety of families and staff must come with financial assistance to providers, both center-based and home-based. If not, privately operated home-based and community-based programs may be forced to close, and New York City could lose significant child care capacity for its youngest children. This would have immediate and serious implications for parents' ability to stay employed, especially for working women and families who are unable to afford private care in their own homes.

#### SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

1. Deep cleanings and the sanitizing of the centers and FCC programs have become routine for providers and not a burden. Most providers did not complain about the CDC requirements on the increased frequency of cleanings. Instead these cleaning procedures are a part of the new normal of operating under pandemic conditions.
2. Providers are concerned about the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the long term.
3. FCC providers recommend that other programs that are considering reopening take a survey of their families to determine what policies would make the parents feel safe about returning to the program.
4. Nurses, provided to center-based ECCs by the Department of Education, are critical to the safe operation and morale of the staff.
5. Social distancing and mask wearing are difficult for young children. Many providers do not feel it is developmentally appropriate to force them to wear them.
6. Across 13 ECCs, including both center-based and home-based providers, no children or staff report having become sick with COVID-19.
7. Family child care providers are worried that complying with CDC guidelines regarding the limited number of children they can serve will result in them not being able to pay their own rent.
8. Centers serving primarily private pay families may be hardest hit financially as, unlike publicly-contracted centers, which are still receiving funding for enrolled children, most private pay centers are steadily losing tuition as families shelter-in-place.
9. There is widespread uncertainty about the summer and future. While there have been discussions among public policy experts about how public schools will reopen in September, it is still unclear to families and providers whether child care programs will reopen then. Providers say that many families did not even realize that family child care has been operating during the pandemic.
10. Centers and family child care providers will likely lose parents both in the short and long term due to families moving from New York City, families keeping children home because they are now unemployed, or because of health concerns.
11. Both center-based ECCs and FCCs are deeply concerned about the mental health and well-being of the young children in their care. Providers report that they are seeing clear signs of distress in their children, who have not been able to socialize and express affection in developmentally-appropriate ways.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Provide transparency over when child care centers can reopen so parents and providers can plan for reopening.
2. Ensure families know their options when determining whether they want a center or family child care provider. It is important to support the sustainability of home-based businesses as well as center-based child care providers. Both provide safe and educational spaces for children.
3. Provide all community-based organizations with the same access to nurses, weekly professional cleanings, and training around new cleaning and health protocols as public schools.
4. Do not adopt a blended model of half-days, where one cohort of children attends in the morning and a second cohort attends in the afternoon. Most of the ECC providers endorsed a model where different cohorts of children attend for a full day on alternating schedules, either every other day or every other week. Half-days mean more people move through the center or a home in one day, which would require more cleanings and a complex schedule of staggered arrival and pick-up times.
5. Family child care providers' financial concerns must be addressed to preserve child care for the very youngest and most vulnerable children, especially for infants and toddlers, as there is already a limited supply of slots for them.
6. Any subsidy provided to offset CDC recommendations for smaller classroom sizes must not be based on current attendance and/or enrollment. Instead implement a new system that provides a subsidy that covers a percentage of the number of children who are not able to attend in-person, or subsidize the fixed costs of running a center, such as the rent.
7. To sustain the city's child care capacity, it is critical to support even the private-pay tuition slots. If families do not return and CDC guidelines have to be implemented, these centers will be forced to close, which includes their Pre-K for All classrooms. This could threaten the Pre-K for All program, given that community child care centers provide almost half of the Pre-K for All slots.
8. Provide mental health consultants and trainings to both center-based and home-based providers so they can better support the mental health and well-being of the children they care for and the families they serve.

Of the eight recommendations, we acknowledge that the first has been done, but the other seven are either in various stages of implementation, or are facing funding limitations. For example, the third recommendation focuses on PPE supplies and the consistent presence of a nurse. The fourth recommendation has been implemented by the DOE, but is not in place system-wide. Since the time that we issued the report, DCCNY members have reported several immediate COVID-19 related needs:

- regular shipments of PPE
- increased funding for ongoing deep cleaning
- staff training on deep cleaning
- help with scheduling of mental health provider visits
- ongoing trauma support training for new staff

We are actively working with the DOE Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to address the above concerns, as well as the critical issues below:

Available center-based seats remain empty for as long as three/four months due to ongoing delays in the processing of child care applications. This is also true for family day care settings. While there are many factors involved, the first step in resolving this issue would be to fully staff the applications, requiring an exception to the City's current hiring freeze. This should not be a problem given child care's continuing status as an essential service.

Providers continue to face the same three/four month delay in the processing of background clearances for new staff. While new staff can be hired and cleared to work as long as they are supervised by qualified staff, our members are struggling to maintain the necessary supervision which is complicated by remote learning and the availability of qualified staff to do the supervision. While we have seen some recent improvement in waiting time, it is not consistent across the five boroughs.

Additionally, the recent DOE RFP awards are raising major concerns. A hallmark of our system has been its capacity to provide full day, full year service to children ages two through four from income eligible families. With this recent RFP, many of our members lost their two year old slots and were given 3K and Pre-K seats on a school day, school year schedule. We understand that the DOE had 300 fewer two year seats to award. We also understand that they are making good on their commitment to City-wide 3K, but we have a problem.

Providers in gentrifying neighborhoods are facing the possible closure of centers in NYCHA buildings. While we support the DOE's increased investment in family day care for infants and toddlers, we must make sure that the non-profit center based sector retains its long-standing capacity. Hopefully with a new federal administration we will see a significant increase in child care funding. If not, we may need to examine new sources of revenue.

Finally, if the school system is moving to mandatory staff testing for the COVID-19 virus, we are not clear why this is not being done in the early childhood education sector, particularly given our status as essential workers. Whether or not the testing of children remains optional, we would like to see testing done on-site, as is being planned for the DOE school system.

Thank you for your time. We greatly appreciate your long-standing support of the City's early childhood education system and welcome all opportunities for continuing collaboration.