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COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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January 13, 2021  
Start: 10:11 a.m.  
Recess: 1:11 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 1)

B E F O R E: Deborah Rose,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Margaret S. Chin
- Mathieu Eugene
- Farah N. Louis
- Bill Perkins
- Kevin C. Riley

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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A P P E A R A N C E S

1  
2  
3 Daphne Montanez  
4 DYCD Assistant Commissioner for Workforce  
5 Development

6  
7 Julia Breitman  
8 Senior Director for Youth Workforce Development

9  
10 Jorge Morales  
11 Junior at the University of Rochester and Member  
12 of Teens Take Charge

13  
14 Carmen Lopez Villamil  
15 Senior at Beacon and Member of Teens Take Charge

16  
17 Muhammad Deen  
18 Junior at Hunter College

19  
20 Kai-Lin Kwek-Rupp  
21 Junior at Bard Manhattan as well as a Member of  
22 Teens Take Charge

23  
24 La'Toya Beecham  
25 Junior in the South Bronx

26  
27 Adam Philogene  
28 Junior at the High School for Youth and Community  
29 Development and a Member of Teens Take Charge

30  
31 Sierra Fraser  
32 Freshman at Smith College and a Member of  
33 Teens Take Charge Member

34  
35 Maryam Choudhury  
36 Sophomore at the Young Women's Leadership School  
37 of the Bronx Teens Take Charge Organizer

38  
39 Carolyn Blair  
40 Fair Futures Co-Supervisor at Good Shepherd  
41 Services

42  
43 Jordan Hall  
44 Senior Youth Advocate on the BDS's Adolescent  
45 Representation Team at Brooklyn Defender Service

46  
47 Angel Sacarello  
48 University Settlement Society of New York

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Makeda Murray  
Sheltering Arms

Simon Weng  
SYEP Program Director at the Chinese American  
Planning Council

Eryn Hatzithomas  
Coordinator of Volunteers at Queens Botanical  
Garden

James Lee  
Wildlife Conservation Society

J.T. Falcone  
United Neighborhood Houses

Danielle Fuller  
Forestdale Inc.

Lazar Treschan  
HERE to HERE

Christine James-McKenzie  
Associate of Communications Learning and Policy  
at Jobs First NYC

Tatiana Arguello  
Director of Workforce Development here at UAU

Cashay Haffoney  
Coach Supervisor at Catholic Guardian Services

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SERGEANT SADOWSKY: PC recording all set.

SERGEANT POLITE: Recording to the Clouds all set.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Backup recording is on.

SERGEANT DAUTAJ: Perfect, okay Dane, with the opening. Thank you.

SERGEANT HOPE: Thank you. Once again, good morning and welcome to the Committee on Youth Services. At this time, would all panelists please turn on your videos. I repeat, at this time, would all panelists please turn on your videos. Thank you.

To minimize disruption, please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). I repeat, [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

Chair Rose, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you Sergeant at Arms. [GAVEL]. I want to thank you all for joining our virtual hearing today on this very important issue, SYEP. I am going to read my opening statement before I introduce the Council Members that have joined us.

Good morning, my name is Debbie Rose and I am the Chair of the New York City Council's Committee on

1 Youth Services. Today, the Committee on Youth  
2 Services is conducting an oversight hearing on the  
3 New York City Department of Youth and Community  
4 Development Summer Youth Employment Program. The  
5 Committee will also hear Resolution Number 1388-2020  
6 sponsored by Council Member Barron. Which is calling  
7 on Congress to pass and the President to sign the All  
8 Dependent Children Count Act H.R. 6420 and the All  
9 Dependents Count Act S. 3652. These bills would  
10 extend the 2020 Recovery Rebates of the Coronavirus  
11 Aid Relief and Economic Security Act to qualifying  
12 children over the age of 16.

14 I would like to now recognize the Council Members  
15 that have joined us for this hearing this morning.  
16 We are joined by Council Member Louis, Council Member  
17 Chin and Council Member Riley. Thank you colleagues  
18 for joining us.

19 At today's hearing, the Committee on Youth  
20 Services will examine how the adapted Summer Youth  
21 Employment Program or the Summer Bridge 2020 program  
22 performed. As well as solicit provided feedback  
23 about the challenges of instituting remote and in-  
24 person services during the COVID-19 outbreak. The  
25 hearing will also seek to understand how services can

1  
2 be improved in the event the COVID-19 pandemic  
3 persists into the next program year and to hear from  
4 our participants about their experiences.

5 Even before the COVID outbreak, the Summer Youth  
6 Employment Program has been an important connection  
7 for thousands of young New Yorkers to providing  
8 valuable internships, employment and educational  
9 opportunities. Thereby promoting individual  
10 development and socioeconomic upward mobility and  
11 serving as a way to address racial and economic  
12 disparities by bolstering life changes and chances  
13 and opportunities for disadvantaged youth.

14 Crucially, this program has also been a source of  
15 much needed income for youth and their families.  
16 Easing the economic burden and in parting a sense of  
17 self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy for  
18 participating youth. These benefits are even more  
19 important to thousands of disconnected youth in New  
20 York City for whom the Summer Youth Employment  
21 Program represents a critical link to education, work  
22 and civic engagement. A way to productively occupy  
23 their time and to channel their energies into healthy  
24 growth promoting pursuits.

1  
2       The COVID-19 outbreak and the pivot to remote  
3 activities in so many areas of their life which  
4 amplified the value of and the need for a Summer  
5 Youth Employment Programs. As evidence, by the  
6 volume of applications for the remote version of this  
7 program, Summer Bridge 2020, the number of  
8 applications for this program far outpace the number  
9 of available slots.

10       Now more than ever, the Summer Youth Employment  
11 Program is needed as a structured organized influence  
12 for young New Yorkers whose lives have been thrown  
13 into disarray by the pandemic. It is needed to give  
14 youth a much needed sense of predictability, some  
15 degree of control, purpose and direction. Especially  
16 in the case of out of work, out of school New York  
17 City youth.

18       SYEP also serves to reduce social isolation,  
19 address learning loss and to support healthy  
20 development and growth as productive individuals and  
21 engage members of their communities. SYEP is  
22 absolutely a necessary source of income for youth and  
23 their families during these most trying times. For  
24 example, 91 percent of the Summer Bridge 2020 program  
25 participants were from communities hardest hit by the

1  
2 COVID-19 outbreak. Their income would not only help  
3 the youth and their families but would also promote  
4 local and national economic recovery in the form of  
5 consumer spending.

6 The Summer Youth Employment Program is also so  
7 valuable and so important to so many New Yorkers that  
8 the goal should be not only full restoration of the  
9 program to its pre-COVID size but the expansion of  
10 the program. The need is that great. Given that the  
11 pivot to remote version of Summer Youth Employment  
12 Program, Summer Bridge 2020, was developed in record  
13 time and during a national crisis. This was a  
14 monumental task and as anticipated, there were issues  
15 and challenges surrounding the program.

16 We are hear today to examine the rollout of the  
17 Summer Bridge 2020 program. The problems that arose,  
18 the responses to them and the encouraging successes.  
19 We are here today to hear the concerns of youth,  
20 parents, providers, advocates and community members  
21 as well as to hear from the Administration.

22 We are here today to work cooperatively to ensure  
23 that our youths educational and socioemotional needs  
24 are met and our communities are assisted in  
25



1  
2 weathering this collective crisis and recovering from  
3 it.

4 I would really like to acknowledge the hard work,  
5 the advocacy and the collaboration that went into  
6 preserving albeit in a drastically scaled down form  
7 the Summer Youth Employment Program and launching its  
8 remote version this summer. I have to thank our  
9 providers, our advocates and our young people for  
10 being able to adapt to these changes so swiftly. I  
11 want to thank all of the staff who are working behind  
12 the scenes to make this hearing run smoothly despite  
13 the Chair's technological disparities.

14 I would like to thank the Youth Committee staff  
15 for their work on this issue Committee Policy Analyst  
16 Anastassia Zimina, Financial Analyst Michele Peregrin  
17 and Elizabeth Artz who is our Speaker Representative.  
18 I want to give a big thank you to my staff as well.  
19 Chief of Staff Christine Johnson, my Legislative  
20 Director Isa Cortez and my Policy and Budget Aid  
21 Vinuri Ranaweera.

22 And with that, I would like to give Council  
23 Member Barron, if she has arrived, a moment for her  
24 remarks about Resolution 1388. Is Council Member  
25 Barron here? Yes, good morning Council Member.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Good morning and thank  
3 you so much. I just want to thank the Chair for  
4 giving me these few minutes to just talk about what  
5 the Resolution is aimed to do. This is a very  
6 important hearing, we are talking about, this  
7 Committee is very important. We are talking about  
8 youth, we're talking about youth services and making  
9 sure that we do our part to support them and advocate  
10 for them and make sure that the resources that they  
11 need are in fact entered into that budget, so I  
12 support the Chair and as all of the Council Members  
13 have fought in the past to make sure that the  
14 restorations are there. We are going to have to  
15 fight even harder to make sure that we recognize that  
16 we are in the midst of a pandemic and we have got to  
17 work even harder to make sure that we can help  
18 restore students and programs that are beneficial in  
19 these very present economic times.

20 I just want to thank the Chair for allowing me to  
21 talk. The Resolution is called the All Dependent  
22 Children Count Act and its support of HR 6420 and  
23 what it will do is expand the 2020 recovery rebates.  
24 As you know, rebates were issued but there was a cap

1  
2 and it was capped at children who were age 16 and  
3 under.

4       So, what we want to do is to extend that so that  
5 qualified children over the age of 16 will be able to  
6 have these benefits given to their families as well.  
7 And it will include children younger than 19 and we  
8 understand that 19 is just a very arbitrary number  
9 but particularly as students engage in education that  
10 students who are 24 and younger, they would also be  
11 granted the benefits of the coronavirus aid relief  
12 and Economic Security Act, which we call the Cares  
13 Act.

14       I won't take much more time than that but I do  
15 want to acknowledge and thank several people, first  
16 of course the Chair Debbie Rose for this Committee  
17 hearing and for allowing me to speak to our Speaker  
18 Johnson to the Deputy Director of Legislative  
19 Division and HR Andrea Vasquez, the Assistant Deputy  
20 Director Smith Adesma[SP?] and Zemanual Halu[S?].  
21 The assistance, no the Legal Policy Analyst  
22 Anastassia Zimina and my Chief of Staff Joy Simmons  
23 as well as my Legislative Director M.Indigo  
24 Washington.

1  
2 And with that, thank you very much Madam Chair  
3 and look forward to the remarks that the panel is  
4 going to bring forward. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you so much Council  
6 Member Barron. I really appreciate you pushing this  
7 very important legislation. I will now turn this  
8 over to my Committee Policy Analyst who will review  
9 some procedural items relating to today's hearing.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Rose. I am  
11 Anastassia Zimina, Legislative Policy Analyst for the  
12 Committee on Youth Services of New York City Council.  
13 I will be moderating today's hearing and coordinating  
14 panelists to testify.

15 Before we begin I would like to remind everyone  
16 that you will be on mute until I call on you to  
17 testify. After you are called, you will be unmuted  
18 by the host. Please listen for your name. I will  
19 periodically announce who the next panelist will be.  
20 Council Members questions will be limited to five  
21 minutes and Council Members, please note that this  
22 includes both the questions and the witnesses  
23 response.

24

25

1  
2 Please also note that we will allow a second  
3 round of questions at today's hearing. This will be  
4 limited to two minutes, again including both your  
5 questions and the witnesses answer.

6 For public testimony, I will call up individuals  
7 in panels. Council Members who have questions for a  
8 particular panelist may use the raise hand function  
9 on Zoom. You will be called on after everyone on  
10 that panel has completed their testimony. For public  
11 panelists, once I call your name, a member of our  
12 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will  
13 give you the go ahead to begin after setting the  
14 timer.

15 All public testimony will be limited to three  
16 minutes. After I call your name, please wait a brief  
17 moment for the Sergeant at Arms to announce that you  
18 may begin before starting your testimony. I will now  
19 call on the following members of the Administration  
20 to testify. Daphne Montanez DYCD Assistant  
21 Commissioner for Workforce Development and Julia  
22 Breitman Senior Director for Youth Workforce  
23 Development. I will deliver the oath to both of you  
24 and after reading the oath, I will call up on each of  
25

1  
2 you individually by name to respond to the oath one  
3 at a time. Please raise your right hand. Do you  
4 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing  
5 but the truth before this Committee and to respond  
6 honestly to Council Members questions? Assistant  
7 Commissioner Daphne Montanez?

8 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Senior Director  
10 of Youth Workforce Development Julia Breitman?

11 JULIA BREITMAN: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Assistant  
13 Commissioner Montanez, you may begin your testimony  
14 when you are ready.

15 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Good morning Chair Rose and  
16 members of the Youth Services Committee. I am Daphne  
17 Montanez, Assistant Commissioner for Workforce  
18 Development at the Department of Youth and Community  
19 Development. I am joined today by Julia Breitman,  
20 Senior Director for Youth Workforce Development.

21 On behalf of Commissioner Chong, thank you for  
22 the opportunity to appear today to discuss Summer  
23 Bridge, DYCD's flagship youth workforce development  
24 program in 2020. Last spring, along with our  
25 nonprofit partners, we were deeply involved with the

1  
2 preparation for the Summer Youth Employment Program  
3 when the coronavirus pandemic interrupted. It soon  
4 became clear that health and safety considerations  
5 would not allow for the traditional SYEP program in  
6 which youth were placed in worksites throughout the  
7 City. With your partnership and in close  
8 coordination with our providers, we developed SYEP  
9 Summer Bridge, an engaging virtual program that  
10 offered young people opportunities to learn new  
11 skills, explore potential careers and earn money.

12 All program activities, including enrollment,  
13 document verification, orientation and work-themed  
14 learning experiences took place safely and remotely,  
15 while still allowing for personal and group  
16 connections. The Summer Bridge program included  
17 35,198 participants and 57 nonprofit provider  
18 organizations. In accordance with the equity  
19 principles of this Administration, we prioritized  
20 enrollment for youth from communities most in need.  
21 91 percent of participants lived in areas identified  
22 by the Racial Inclusion and Equity Taskforce as  
23 priority neighborhoods based on health, social and  
24 economic indicators, including the locations hardest  
25 hit by the COVID pandemic.

1           The program was funded at \$51 million. The  
2 Summer Bridge program offered specialized options  
3 that mirrored the traditional SYEP program:  
4 community-based slots that were offered by lottery,  
5 the Career Ready program in partnership with select  
6 public schools and SYEP Special Initiatives that  
7 serve vulnerable youth and residents of NYCHA  
8 developments. SYEP Summer Bridge gave youth a unique  
9 opportunity to explore their interests and discover  
10 new ones. Career exploration allowed them to flex  
11 their research skills and discover new career  
12 possibilities, skill-building activities offered help  
13 with resumes, cover letters and interview skills, and  
14 connections to professionals offered youth the  
15 opportunity to build their networks through  
16 mentoring, career panels, social media workshops and  
17 more.

19           Youth aged 14 and 15 received a stipend of \$700  
20 for 60 hours of participation and those aged 16  
21 through 24 received \$1,000 for 90 hours. The SYEP  
22 Summer Bridge experience included three major  
23 components: the Hats & Ladders online program,  
24 Project-Based Learning and the Workplace Challenge  
25 learning opportunity for youth ages 16 and up.



1 Hats & Ladders delivers career exploration and  
2 education through an engaging digital platform that  
3 allowed youth to complete a remote work readiness  
4 experience. The Hats & Ladders app is accessible via  
5 any internet connected mobile device or the web.  
6 Participants completed up to 30 hours of work  
7 readiness and educational activities. The course  
8 consisted of a Participant Self-Assessment and 4 to 8  
9 topics or instructional sequences on topics such as  
10 resume writing, financial literacy and civic  
11 engagement. Summer Bridge offered virtual Project  
12 Based Learning experiences to both younger youth and  
13 older youth participants.

14 In partnership with the Youth Development  
15 Institute, DYCD developed a digital learning  
16 portfolio centered on building civic engagement and  
17 career ready resources. The project-based activities  
18 helped cultivate an ethic of service and reinforce  
19 core competencies such as interpersonal,  
20 communication and decision-making skills. Popular PBL  
21 themes included: COVID-19, where youth developed an  
22 informational video on the disproportional effects on  
23 communities of color. Organizing for Change;  
24 Participants learned how organizing is used as a tool  
25

1  
2 for local civic and democratic change. Environmental  
3 Justice: Youth explored their own personal impact on  
4 the environment and how to live sustainably and  
5 cyberbullying. Participants in Staten Island who  
6 were part of the United Activities Unlimited program  
7 produced a podcast on cyberbullying and interviewed a  
8 psychiatrist about the long-term effects on children.

9 In developing Summer Bridge, DYCD worked with the  
10 workforce development organization Grant Associates  
11 to create the Workplace Challenge learning 3  
12 opportunity, which allowed for New York City youth to  
13 gain exposure to industries and careers while  
14 simultaneously building workplace skills in a virtual  
15 environment.

16 A Workplace Challenge is a career preparation  
17 activity in which small groups of young people are  
18 engaged in solving a real-world problem or a  
19 challenge issued by an industry partner. We  
20 partnered with more than 1,000 organizations  
21 including prominent corporations such as Deutsche  
22 Bank, Goldman Sachs, Google, Morgan Stanley,  
23 SoundCloud, Vox Media and Warby Parker for the  
24 workplace challenge.

1  
2 The SYEP Summer Bridge model included specialized  
3 options in addition to the community slots. In 2020,  
4 the Career Ready program served 3,981 participants  
5 through 60 school partnerships. The Career Ready  
6 SYEP program was created to provide enhanced  
7 opportunities for youth attending select public high  
8 schools to explore career options and develop work  
9 readiness skills. Though this model features some  
10 universal elements, it is uniquely shaped and  
11 customized by each school and SYEP provider  
12 partnership. The MAP to \$success option for NYCHA  
13 residents served 2,003 participants.

14 In July 2014, the de Blasio Administration  
15 launched the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood  
16 Safety or MAP to reduce violence and make  
17 neighborhoods safer in and around 15 New York City  
18 Housing Authority developments that have some of the  
19 highest crime rates in NYC. Providers work  
20 collaboratively with the NYCHA developments, the  
21 Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and MAP partner  
22 agencies to recruit and enroll program participants.

23 Career First NYCHA was designed to expand access  
24 to career readiness as well as summer youth  
25 employment opportunities for youth residing in

1 additional NYCHA public housing complexes. In 2020,  
2 it served 865 youth in 9 developments. Providers  
3 work collaboratively with NYCHA developments and  
4 community-based partners to recruit and enroll  
5 program participants.  
6

7 Finally, the Emerging Leaders option was designed  
8 to provide SYEP opportunities to vulnerable youth who  
9 meet at least one of the following barriers: homeless  
10 or runaway youth, justice-involved youth, youth in or  
11 aging out of foster care and youth in families who  
12 are receiving preventive services through New York  
13 City's Administration for Children's Services. This  
14 option served 1,919 youth in 2020, with priority  
15 given to the highest-needs youth. At the end of the  
16 program, we asked our participants about their  
17 experience. We were pleased that 92 percent agreed  
18 the program provided them an opportunity to learn a  
19 new skill and it opened up new career options for  
20 them.

21 We would like to share an example of the feedback  
22 we received from participants. Wynter shared a  
23 testimonial about her experience. She told us, "This  
24 year is definitely a year like no other. I have been  
25 faced with one of the most difficult times in my

1  
2 entire life. My family was sick with COVID-19. The  
3 most difficult task was having to take care of an  
4 entire household. I was left in devastation by the  
5 loss of two loved ones. I needed an outlet and a  
6 break. I was notified that I was able to be a part  
7 of SYEP Summer Bridge. Although it was challenging  
8 because I had to discipline myself to do the work  
9 virtually, I am so grateful I did it. This Summer  
10 Bridge experience has given me knowledge and the  
11 skills necessary to be successful as I prepare for  
12 college and beyond.”

13 This past year has been challenging but our  
14 commitment to offering positive experiences to young  
15 people remains strong. We are especially grateful to  
16 the City Council for your advocacy and support of  
17 SYEP and youth workforce development programs. I am  
18 now happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Thank you so much  
20 for your testimony. We have been joined by Council  
21 Members Perkins and Council Member Eugene and again,  
22 I would like to thank the Administration for your  
23 testimony.

24 Last year, as we all know, after the Mayor  
25 announced plans to totally eliminate SYEP, did you

1  
2 continue the contingency plan given that you know,  
3 advocacy was very vocal and that we were with the  
4 hope that the decision was going to be reversed and  
5 if you did, how at all did you include the provider  
6 or if at all, did you include the provider community  
7 in those conversations and as you prepare for summer  
8 2021, how have you or how are you planning to engage  
9 the providers in those planning conversations?

10 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, right after the  
11 announcement was made, once it was clear that from a  
12 health and safety perspective, that the traditional  
13 SYEP could not be operated safely for our  
14 participants. We began starting to plan around an  
15 alternate program that would be virtual and in all of  
16 our planning, we started to include leaders in the  
17 field and reaching out to our provider partners to  
18 gain their input as well as we develop the plan.

19 And we developed technical assistance to help  
20 assist providers because we knew both the short  
21 period of time to get a new program up and running  
22 would be a challenge and also, operating a program  
23 and connecting with young people in a virtual manner  
24 would be new for all of us and our providers would  
25 need that level of support. So, as with all of our

1  
2 programs, whether in-person or with this past summer,  
3 we do engage very closely with our providers in  
4 gaining their input and looking forward to this  
5 coming summer, we are currently planning for the SYEP  
6 2021 program. Those plans are underway. We will be  
7 working closely with our providers as we build out  
8 those plans but it must be said also that there are a  
9 great deal of uncertainties that lay ahead of us at  
10 this stage, both in terms of health and safety  
11 conditions on the ground and availability of work  
12 sites and placements for young people.

13       So, we will be working very closely with our  
14 providers in terms of their own capacity, what their  
15 thoughts are on what a program would look like. As  
16 we head into this summer and we have more clarity  
17 around what the conditions will look like going  
18 forward.

19       CHAIRPERSON ROSE: So, are you planning to  
20 continue - is your plan to continue to deliver  
21 services remotely and if so, are you talking to the  
22 providers now about capacity and giving them some  
23 realistic direction and guidance and realistic  
24 numbers maybe so that they can talk about the  
25 capacity that you are looking to have them achieve?

1  
2           DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yeah, so what we are going to  
3 be doing is planning for every potential possibility  
4 that could present itself. We will be prepared to  
5 run a program similar to the program in 2019 should  
6 conditions allow and work site availability be  
7 possible to be done in person. However, as of today,  
8 as we know where we are with the corona pandemic,  
9 that is quite uncertain. I don't think anyone knows  
10 exactly what conditions will look like on the ground.  
11 What worksites will be open and able to take on large  
12 numbers of youth.

13           And so, I think our experience from this past  
14 summer with Summer Bridge, we have learned quite a  
15 great deal about running a remote program. There are  
16 some elements and best practices that we can  
17 leverage. We could incorporate – that we hope to  
18 incorporate into the program allowing for even a  
19 hybrid program where there would be some in person  
20 elements as well as some remote elements and our  
21 planning will definitely involve our provider  
22 partners in having those discussions. Many of the  
23 great ideas around some of the project based learning  
24 themes and how to engage in people really came from  
25 our providers and so we really will rely on them and



1  
2 work very closely with them as we start planning for  
3 this coming summer.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: What is your timeline in terms  
5 of involving them in the discussions for the  
6 planning?

7 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, we typically begin our  
8 planning and have a large provider meeting in  
9 January. So, forthcoming we will be holding a larger  
10 meeting to begin discussions and then we will be  
11 holding individual conversations with our providers  
12 shortly thereafter.

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, I just want to stress  
14 how important communication is and you know, that  
15 everyone is getting the same information in real  
16 time, so that we can achieve you know, our goals to  
17 get to where we need to be. And given the late  
18 timing of the fiscal 2021 adopted budget, on June 30,  
19 2020 when did this SYEP Bridge program begin and when  
20 did the program conclude?

21 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, once the budget was  
22 adopted, on July 1<sup>st</sup> we notified all of our SYEP  
23 providers, sent out surveys to confirm their  
24 participation in the program, confirm their capacity  
25 for the summer. We held our first provider kick off

1 meeting on July 6<sup>th</sup> and the launch of the application  
2 took place on July 9<sup>th</sup> and was open until July 15<sup>th</sup>.  
3 And the lottery and enrollment process began on the  
4 16<sup>th</sup> and ran for two weeks. The shortest and most  
5 compressed time to get things up and running for the  
6 first day of the program on July 27<sup>th</sup> and the last day  
7 of the program as on August 28<sup>th</sup>.

9 JULIA BREITMAN: I just want to add that this  
10 program would not have been possible if we had not  
11 been in constant communication with our provider  
12 community. As Daphne mentioned, you know the moment  
13 that the traditional program, realized the  
14 traditional program would not be able to take place  
15 over the summer, we started a feedback loop with our  
16 providers, constantly soliciting their feedback,  
17 trying to understand what's going on on the ground in  
18 their communities, the needs of their young people,  
19 their partners, their work side partners, what's  
20 available, what's possible and that's what allowed us  
21 to truly launch the program in this tiny time span  
22 that we were allowed.

23 As Daphne mentioned, this was the most compressed  
24 timeline. Truly as soon as the budget passed, that  
25 very same morning, our providers received an email

1  
2 requesting their allocation but they knew that email  
3 was coming because we were in constant communication,  
4 letting them know that as soon as the budget passes  
5 this is the model that we are going forward with and  
6 the model truly was the result of provider feedback.  
7 And that is why they were able to launch so quickly  
8 because this is what they knew. Their organizations  
9 wanted to put together for their young people; this  
10 is what their young people requested and I think it  
11 speaks to the level of engagement that we had from  
12 our young people, that this model truly spoke to  
13 their needs this summer.

14 On July 1<sup>st</sup>, we sent out that email asking our  
15 providers to return their slot allocation, their  
16 capacity surveys and we had them the following day  
17 and that's truly when the program launched.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, thank you. SYEP annual  
19 report summary said that 2,008 devices were  
20 distributed to participants. Could you tell me who  
21 provided these devices? What kind of devices were  
22 distributed? What was your total budget spent on  
23 these devices and were more devices needed than were  
24 provided?

25

1  
2           DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, I will begin and I will  
3 have Julia give a little more detail but one of the  
4 most important considerations is we were putting the  
5 program together and developing a model was ensuring  
6 that all of our participants would have access and  
7 could participate fully in the Summer Bridge program.  
8 We worked very closely with our DOE partners to  
9 ensure that every young person who is a DOE student  
10 would be able to continue using their DOE issued  
11 device throughout the summer. And that also included  
12 graduating seniors allowing them the opportunity to  
13 continue using it for the purposes of Summer Bridge.  
14 And then additionally, we know that there are a  
15 number of young people who were not connected to the  
16 Department of Education and would possibly need  
17 devices and in order to ensure that we covered every  
18 single participant, we purchased over 2,000 devices  
19 that we distributed to the providers who then  
20 distributed it to their young people.

21           And in particular, we were very intentional about  
22 ensuring that those most in need to really and the  
23 NYCHA options, had access to obtaining a device. And  
24 Julia, do you want to add anything to that?

1  
2 JULIA BREITMAN: Sure. Our original conversation  
3 started with our NYCHA partners when members of that  
4 Administration expressed to us that they felt that  
5 about 50 percent of their households are either not  
6 connected to the internet, do not have a device or a  
7 Wi-Fi signal and that's when we realized that in  
8 order to make this program feasible for the young  
9 people we are trying to reach, we needed technology,  
10 it had to be part of the equation.

11 So, we secured funding from our partners at YMI  
12 as well as private funding that came through the  
13 Mayor's fund to purchase over 2,000 devices. We had  
14 over 800 iPads and Samsung internet ready tablets and  
15 those were distributed first to organizations who  
16 were operating programs for our most in need youth,  
17 such as emerging leaders and young people residing in  
18 NYCHA households. And we distributed to all of our  
19 providers who felt that their communities would  
20 require technology and we had a reserve at DYCD, so  
21 that anytime anybody felt they needed an additional  
22 device, they could always come in and pick up a  
23 device and these devices were internet connected for  
24 the next 12 months.

1  
2       So, organizations were able to continue to use  
3 those devices with their young people in programs.  
4 To the best of our knowledge, there was not a single  
5 young person in the program that was not able to  
6 participate because of technology. In fact, our  
7 providers were able to redistribute some devices that  
8 were not used for Summer Bridge to RHY Homeless  
9 Shelters.

10       CHAIRPERSON ROSE: That's commendable that you  
11 were able to provide devices for all of the  
12 participants.

13       Maybe you could have worked with DOE so that they  
14 could have been able to help meet that goal as we  
15 still have young people that don't have devices.  
16 That's a very critical part of their educational -  
17 their learning. Could you - were the young people  
18 able to keep these devices after the program ended or  
19 did you -

20       JULIA BREITMAN: If they continue to participate  
21 in a program with their provider, we really left it  
22 to the providers discretion, so if a young person  
23 needed them for another program that they continued  
24 into the fall, then we left it to the providers to  
25 allow them to hold on to that device.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: How much did that cost?

3 JULIA BREITMAN: We spent, it was nearly \$800,000  
4 and as I mentioned, a lot of it came from private  
5 funding and from the Young Men's Initiative.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And so, because SYEP is a  
7 lottery, there is a chance that we will get  
8 youngsters that didn't participate last summer. Will  
9 we be able to provide them with devices?

10 JULIA BREITMAN: That would be the plan going  
11 forward. As I mentioned, a lot of our provides still  
12 have a number of devices that were either returned or  
13 they ended up not needing to distribute, so we  
14 already have some in stock but absolutely, if we are  
15 once again unfortunately in one of these strange  
16 socially distanced summers, then the plan would be  
17 once again to replenish that technology supply.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Did private and public  
19 companies both engage in the planning and if so, how?  
20 And uhm, did they also uhm, how many private  
21 organizations and public organizations participated  
22 in the programming?

23 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, yes, we were pleased that  
24 so many from — so many companies and organizations  
25 from the private sector really stepped up to assist

1 us and really knew the importance of ensuring that  
2 Summer Bridge program was supported and they did this  
3 in a variety of ways. We received through the  
4 Mayor's fund and their fund raising over \$6.6 million  
5 in donations towards the program and additionally,  
6 probably one of the most exciting aspects of this  
7 summer's program was something, I new element called  
8 the Workplace Challenge and it was an opportunity for  
9 young people, although we could not offer an in-  
10 person work experience. It was an opportunity for  
11 them to work closely with industry partners in small  
12 groups working on a challenge or a business problem  
13 presented by a volunteer from participating  
14 organizations and we got wonderful feedback both from  
15 the participants and from the organizations that  
16 participated.

18 We had a wonderful partnership with Tech NYC  
19 where over 300 companies primarily in the technology  
20 space which traditionally has not been an SYEP corp.  
21 industry group. They signed up to [LOST AUDIO 40:51-  
22 40:55] provide [LOST AUDIO 40:58-41:05] and these  
23 workplace challenges. And so, we hope to continue  
24 the workplace challenge as we think about our plans  
25 for 2020 is certainly a best practice and we hope to



1  
2 continue our partnerships both at Tech NYC and the  
3 other for profit companies and private sector  
4 industries that participated this summer.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Can you tell me how many of  
6 the private sector for profit organizations  
7 businesses that you engaged this past summer were  
8 minority owned Black and Brown businesses? Can you  
9 give us a number?

10 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, so uhm, actually we [LOST  
11 AUDIO 41:59-42:05] are a current program. And as far  
12 - in terms of our internship development for work,  
13 learn and grow, we have partnered with SBS and the  
14 Mayor's Office on MWBE's and they have 58 of these  
15 MWBE's have provided over 200 internship  
16 opportunities to our young people. This is probably  
17 one of the most exciting elements in terms of our  
18 employer engagement for our workforce development  
19 programs for work, learn and grow.

20 Many of these internships are being offered  
21 remotely which is a new way of delivering internships  
22 and also [LOST AUDIO 42:49-42:56] being responsive.  
23 You have such a strong start to the MWBE partnership  
24 and it is our hope to continue that partnership and  
25 expand it into the summer.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Did you utilize any of them  
3 for the Summer Bridges program?

4 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: We can verify through - we  
5 would have to get back to you on a particular MWBE  
6 partnerships but for the most part, the real [LOST  
7 AUDIO 43:22-43:26] intentional campaign this fall  
8 with the Work, Learn and Grow program.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Uhm, could you tell me what  
10 the per participant price was for the Summer Bridge  
11 program?

12 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: I am sorry, I did not hear that  
13 question, sorry.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: What is the per participant  
15 price that was paid for the participant this summer.  
16 What was the per participant price.

17 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Excuse me, yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: For Summer Bridge program.

19 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: I am sorry, my internet, uhm  
20 \$600 per participant.

21 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Okay and you had a budget of  
22 \$51 million. How much was spent on total stipends  
23 that were paid out and how much of that went to  
24 younger youth for stipends and to older youth for  
25 stipends?

1  
2 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, between \$140 and for older  
3 youth \$19,547,322.50 and for younger youth,  
4 \$5,088,817.50 cents was paid out.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: And for the older youth it was  
6 19 what?

7 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: \$19,547,322.50.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, how long did – on an  
9 average, how long did it take before the participants  
10 received their stipends?

11 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, stipends were paid on a  
12 weekly basis to young people and uhm, give me one  
13 second, I believe the very first payable for  
14 participants was on August the 1<sup>st</sup>. Julia can  
15 correct me if I am wrong but August.

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: August 1<sup>st</sup> and they started  
17 July 15<sup>th</sup> you said?

18 JULIA BREITMAN: July 28<sup>th</sup>, yes, and the first  
19 pay date was August 7<sup>th</sup>, excuse me.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, alright. I am going to  
21 yield my time and com back for a second round but I  
22 would like to give my colleagues the opportunity to  
23 ask questions.

24 Uh, Anastassia, do we have any questions.  
25

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, thank you Chair. I will  
3 now call on Council Members in the order in which  
4 they have used the Zoom raised hand function.  
5 Council Members, please keep your questions to five  
6 minutes which includes time for the witnesses  
7 response. The Sergeant at Arms will keep a timer and  
8 let you know when your time is up. We will now hear  
9 questions from Council Member Barron followed by  
10 Council Member Chin, followed by Council Member  
11 Riley.

12 Council Member Barron, please, you may begin.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank you  
14 Madam Chair. I am particularly interested in getting  
15 the information as to how the money actually was  
16 distributed and how it was used. But before I get to  
17 that, what is the total – when did the application  
18 period begin for students who wanted, for children  
19 who wanted to be a part of the Summer Youth program,  
20 Summer Bridges? What was the start date?

21 JULIA BREITMAN: The application was launched on  
22 July 9<sup>th</sup> and it was open until July 15<sup>th</sup>.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: The 9<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>,  
24 okay. How many applications did you receive?  
25

1  
2 JULIA BREITMAN: We received 137,000  
3 applications.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And how many spots were  
5 finally awarded?

6 JULIA BREITMAN: 35,198.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What percentage is that?  
8 I don't have my calculator in front of me. It's got  
9 to be like 1-

10 JULIA BREITMAN: Let me do some quick math.  
11 About 25 percent.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That's what I thought  
13 about 25 percent. Uhm, and I heard you say that the  
14 providers, your partners did in fact distribute  
15 devices so that children would be able to fulfill  
16 their responsibilities and get the full objective of  
17 learning how to be in the workplace. I content that  
18 there were many, many more than 137,000 children who  
19 would have applied but did not in fact, between that  
20 period of July 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> have a device. They  
21 weren't able to go to the library or to other  
22 locations to use a device and I would submit that  
23 that number of 137,000 is not a true reflection of  
24 the number of children who would have liked to have  
25 gotten consideration to work in the summer. We know

1  
2 that particularly children living in economically  
3 oppressed communities have very low opportunity to  
4 have a bandwidth that would allow them to participate  
5 you know the NYCHA developments have very poor  
6 reception. So, the first thing I want to make, first  
7 point is that I would contend that there are many,  
8 many more than 137,000 children who would have  
9 applied.

10 We are glad to know that the providers did get  
11 the devices to them. What would happen, who had the  
12 responsibility of addressing concerns of  
13 malfunctioning devices?

14 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, sorry, I will start and  
15 Julia, you can jump in.

16 JULIA BREITMAN: Absolutely.

17 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Uhm, throughout the process,  
18 not only before the start of Summer Bridge but  
19 throughout the summer, we were in very close contact  
20 with our providers and made it known that should any  
21 of the participants have any issues with their  
22 devices, either the devices that we have distributed  
23 or those through the DOE that we would work with our  
24 DOE partners and our own internal information  
25

1  
2 technology unit to help support and troubleshoot any  
3 issues.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, I am glad to hear  
5 that. I hope that the students, the children who are  
6 participants, I hope that their testimony embraces  
7 that and supports that as well and if it doesn't, I  
8 would think that there have been some gaps someplace,  
9 some cracks that we need to address that. And just  
10 finally, what were the zip codes from which the  
11 participants came. I heard you say you focused on  
12 those communities that were most devastated by the  
13 coronavirus and what zip codes was that?

14 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, we can provide you with  
15 that detail. I would be happy to follow up with that  
16 level of detail but as mentioned in the testimony, we  
17 really wanted to focus on those areas that are  
18 highlighted by the racial inequity task force and  
19 included those areas that were most hit hardest by  
20 the COVID pandemic this spring.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And you will find that  
22 they very closely parallel. Those two categories are  
23 very closely parallel.

24 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, absolutely.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So I would love for the  
3 Chair to be able to receive that information and not  
4 just the zip codes but the number of participants  
5 from each of the zip codes. I am particularly  
6 interested in my zip codes which are 11207-11208,  
7 11212, 11239 also because particularly 11239 had the  
8 highest mortality rate in the city.

9 So, I want to make sure that there is a  
10 representation of that and I would also like to have  
11 that information as to the applicants zip codes. I  
12 would like to see how those zip codes matched up with  
13 students who actually were selected.

14 Thank you Madam Chair. Thank you to the panel.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you Council Member  
16 Barron. Who is next.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. We will now  
18 hear from Council Member Chin followed by Council  
19 Member Riley. Council Member Chin, please proceed.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Okay, thank you Chair Rose  
22 for holding this important hearing and you know, the  
23 whole issue with fighting for the Summer Youth  
24 program is dear to all of our hearts and we are very  
25 glad that we were able to have you know, some kind of



1  
2 a program that started this summer and I am looking  
3 at the number, we were only able to provide 25  
4 percent of the slots from all the kids that applied.

5 So, I wanted to hear from you Assistant  
6 Commissioner. Do you have any idea from provider now  
7 what their capacity could be? Could they do more  
8 than just 25 percent? Because I think every year  
9 uhm, the number of applicants has been around you  
10 know, over 100,000. So, I think the first thing is  
11 that uhm, do we know if providers you know, can  
12 increase the number and how you are going to sort of  
13 help with that. And the other thing is that we will  
14 be fighting for more funding because 35,000 is not  
15 enough.

16 I mean, I think in 2019, maybe you can tell us  
17 how many summer youth jobs were provided compared to  
18 2020? And so that we can see you know, what the  
19 difference was.

20 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Absolutely, well firstly I have  
21 to thank the Council for their continued and ongoing  
22 support of SYEP and for your advocacy. It is greatly  
23 appreciated and it is always our goal to serve as  
24 many young people as possible. Looking forward to  
25 this coming summer, as I mentioned earlier, we are in

1 the beginning stages of planning for this coming  
2 summer and part of that planning process will include  
3 conversations with our providers, not only with  
4 regards to their capacity but also in terms of the  
5 program model and what it could look like given the  
6 uncertainty that we are heading into for this spring.  
7 From the health and safety perspective as well as  
8 work site availability. We know that there is a lot  
9 of uncertainty, we are not clear on if it will be  
10 safe for in person internships. If we will have to  
11 provide a bit of a hybrid, a remote and in-person  
12 internships as well.

14 So, more to come and you know, we want to ensure  
15 that we are planning for every possibility and be as  
16 flexible as we can to allow the providers to serve as  
17 many young people as effectively as possible. I  
18 believe you also asked a question regarding our  
19 service levels for 2019. Last year, we enrolled  
20 74,453 participants in the SYEP.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, we are only to pretty  
22 much half this past summer. So, I think that we, you  
23 know, we have been planning for universal SYEP. That  
24 every youth who apply should be able to participate.  
25 So, we are going to continue to fight for more

1  
2 funding and I think it is really important for you to  
3 work with the providers and really target you know,  
4 the increased number. Because you know, a lot of  
5 kids you know, right now are doing virtual learning.

6 So, equipment's are available and hopefully they  
7 will have a wonderful experience during summer and  
8 that's what we wanted to push for. And in this  
9 budget process, I am sure Chair Rose, myself and  
10 other Council Members are not going to just stop at  
11 not fighting for more funding. I mean last year, we  
12 had to fight hard to put it back but \$51 million is  
13 not, definitely not enough and we wanted to at least  
14 get back to the level 2019, if not you know, continue  
15 to add more because so many kids can benefit from  
16 this program.

17 And my last question is that do you know how many  
18 kids who are in the homeless shelter were able to  
19 participate in the summer youth program? Were they  
20 one of the target population?

21 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes and before I give you that  
22 number, I just also want to add that there are no  
23 reductions taken from the preliminary FY22 budget for  
24 SYEP. So, we do remain stable currently at the full  
25 \$132 million budget, so.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

DAPHNE MONTANEZ: I just wanted to clarify that.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, wait, wait, wait. I want to hear -

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Yeah, say that again.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, say that again. In the preliminary budget, there's already \$132 million allocated.

DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, for the FY22 program for SYEP.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: SYEP program?

DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, now the final budget will depend obviously on a number of factors including what the program model will look like. Provider capacity, so more work to be done there but we are looking at the \$132 million stable level for funding for FY22 in the preliminary plan.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: But we have to make sure it didn't get eliminated like last year. This budget where we had to like start from zero and we finally were able to get at least 51 restored but it's good to hear, good. See Chair Rose, you know, you can thank the Mayor on Thursday.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Well, thank you. I am glad to  
3 hear that but uhm, is that inclusive of just SYEP or  
4 is that including summer camps and Work, Learn and  
5 Grow? What is that inclusive of?

6 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: That is the SYEP budget.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: That is the SYEP budget. Oh,  
8 okay, alright well, we are going to fight for that  
9 believe me and uhm and maybe even more. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: The summer, and the other  
11 summer program, yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Oh, yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh yeah, do you have the  
14 statistic in terms of the homeless children in  
15 homeless shelter? Were they able to participate?

16 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, we had 1,843 homeless  
17 youth that applied and 873 were enrolled in the  
18 program.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, okay. Thank you.

20 JULIA BREITMAN: And I just wanted to add Council  
21 Member Barron raised this question about how we went  
22 about recruiting young people that didn't have access  
23 to technology. And I just wanted to reiterate that  
24 we ensure that young people that didn't have access  
25 to technology from before they could apply had access

1  
2 to the application. And so, our providers that  
3 typically work with vulnerable groups such as young  
4 people who are in homeless shelters and young people  
5 in NYCHA developments who don't have access to that  
6 technology, they recruited the way they would have  
7 recruited in a regular year following social  
8 distancing guidelines. But they did have paper  
9 applications and paper recruitment materials and once  
10 they were able to collect applications and documents  
11 from those young people, they were then given the  
12 technology to be able to participate in the program.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Great, thank you. Thank  
14 you Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I just want to sort of circle  
16 back on Council Member Barron's point about you know,  
17 that 91 percent of the participants were from  
18 communities that were impacted mostly by COVID-19 and  
19 uhm, and we wanted to know which neighborhoods they  
20 were specifically. So, we will be looking forward to  
21 getting that information in terms of the zip codes  
22 and the numbers that participated in the program.  
23 And I really would like to see also if in fact they  
24 were also offered programming in the Ladders to  
25 Leaders program, which is you know a cohort of SYEP

1  
2 that is a nationally recognized program that offers  
3 1,100 slots to the top tier high school students.

4 So, I just wanted to have included in that  
5 information, that data, if any of the 1,100 students  
6 were from zip codes of the highest level having been  
7 impacted by the highest level of COVID-19.

8 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: We actually didn't have a  
9 separate Ladders for Leaders program last summer.  
10 Our providers who typically who would have run a  
11 Ladders to Leaders program had the option of  
12 operating a standard summer bridge model, which they  
13 did. There was not a separate internship program.

14 And in terms of the 91 percent, we will  
15 definitely get you that information but I just wanted  
16 to say that the reason that it is so high for those  
17 high needs zip codes is that was intentional. We  
18 allocated our spots to those zip codes to ensure that  
19 the young people in those communities receive the  
20 services they need most.

21 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, okay, thank you. I  
22 think the next speaker -

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If I may just take a moment  
24 to remind Council Members that if they would like to  
25 pose a question to use the raise hand Zoom function

1  
2 in Zoom and also, after I call your name, please wait  
3 a moment for the Sergeant at Arms to announce that  
4 you may begin your testimony.

5 We will hear next from Council Member Riley  
6 followed by Council Member Menchaca. Council Member  
7 Riley.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair Rose for  
10 hosting this hearing. This is a very near and dear  
11 Committee to me. This is my first hearing with you  
12 all today. Youth Services is something that is very  
13 imperative especially to Summer Youth Employment  
14 Program and like stated earlier today and during the  
15 rally like Chair and myself, we came in through this  
16 program. This is like our first opportunity to work,  
17 so this is a very imperative program.

18 With that being said, my question is I know there  
19 were a lot of virtual programming implemented and I  
20 just want to know what was the impact or the input of  
21 youth in the program that they wanted to view or  
22 utilize during the summer. I know that the youth had  
23 been – you know its been very challenging being that  
24 they have been doing remote learning, so I just want  
25 to know how much input did the youth have in the



1  
2 program and that they wanted to utilize during this  
3 SYEP Summer Bridge Program.

4 JULIA BREITMAN: I notice that my colleague  
5 Daphne is muted, so I will go ahead and start. I  
6 just want to say that every step of the program truly  
7 encompass youth voice and youth choice and we knew  
8 that in the summer when young people felt like so  
9 much was taken out of their control and so many  
10 decisions are being made for them by factors outside  
11 of everybody's control, that this program really did  
12 speak to their interests and to their needs.

13 And so, from the very beginning young people  
14 would start on the digital platform Hats and Ladders  
15 that began with an assessment and that was a very  
16 personal assessment where young people put in their  
17 career choices and their interests and based on that  
18 assessment, they would receive an individualized core  
19 study on that platform.

20 So, no two young peoples experience in Hats and  
21 Ladders Platform look the same. From that point on,  
22 they went onto project based learning, where again  
23 providers worked with their young people to design  
24 what their project based learning experience would  
25 look like.

1  
2 We had a digital library, a project that young  
3 people and providers could chose from. Where they  
4 could design their own and we could see that and our  
5 providers in the feedback we received that some  
6 groups really wanted to work on COVID recovery, while  
7 others groups said they never want to hear the word  
8 COVID again.

9 And we, young people participated in civic  
10 engagement and came up with their own projects for  
11 how to revitalize their communities and drive up  
12 voter registration and census response.

13 Workplace challenge, the young people had a  
14 choice of which companies to work with and again, how  
15 to design that challenge. How to respond to the  
16 challenges close to them. So, truly this was an  
17 experience that young people designed for themselves  
18 and we saw that in their feedback.

19 You know, 90 percent of the young people  
20 responded that they loved the experience. That they  
21 thought it prepared them for returning to school or  
22 to work and they felt more comfortable using these  
23 Zoom and virtual technologies and felt much more  
24 empowered after the experience.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you and my next  
3 question is kind of to piggyback on my colleague  
4 Council Member Barron's question. I know it was  
5 about seven days that families had the opportunity to  
6 apply for the program but during those seven days, I  
7 also used to work for a foster agency and it is very  
8 challenging to get the paperwork together, especially  
9 if you don't have remote access.

10 Is it possible to extend that time period to at  
11 least ten days for families that I guess, would run  
12 into that issue and also, is there going to be a more  
13 transparent layout for our immigrant population of  
14 families who had issues the first time this program  
15 was rolled out and they weren't able to access the  
16 application or apply for the application?

17 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, so as part of the  
18 enrollment process this year, we recognize that we  
19 had to make some adjustments and allow for  
20 flexibility in terms of documentation given that we  
21 were in the middle of a pause. Many government  
22 agencies were not open and so, we worked very closely  
23 with our providers to allow for some flexibility and  
24 allow for participants to follow up with some of the  
25 necessary documents. We wanted to ensure that we did

1  
2 not put up too many barriers to actually accessing  
3 Summer Bridge.

4 And so, that is something that we will continue  
5 to look at as we further develop the model for this  
6 coming summer but certainly where we found ourselves  
7 this summer with only two weeks to enroll young  
8 people in the time period where we found ourselves in  
9 pause -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: We had to make those  
12 adjustments and if we do continue to see that there  
13 are continued barriers to obtaining enrollment  
14 materials, we will certainly continue those flexible  
15 arrangements with providers and participants.

16 JULIA BREITMAN: And just to add for our  
17 vulnerable population such as young people in foster  
18 care, that deadline that the seven day open  
19 application period, that was only for the online  
20 application period for the lottery.

21 So, young people in specialized options have  
22 longer time to be recruited and submit their  
23 documentation.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. I will yield  
25 my time. Thank you very much.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. So, I would like  
3 to remind Council Members that if they would like to  
4 ask a second round of questions, then please keep  
5 your questions to two minutes, which includes both  
6 your question and the response. Please use the raise  
7 hand function in Zoom.

8 Okay, there seems to be no questions for the  
9 second round. So, I will turn to Chair Rose for any  
10 closing remarks. Oh, my apologies, my apologies, I  
11 am seeing uhm, my apologies, Council Member Menchaca  
12 would like to pose a question. Council Member  
13 Menchaca.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I am sorry, before - I am  
16 sorry, please hold Council Members time. I just  
17 wanted to acknowledge that we have been joined by  
18 Majority Leader Cumbo. I am sorry colleague. Start  
19 the clock again for him. Thank you.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you Chair for  
22 your work and looking forward to fighting with you  
23 and all the Council. I have a question for the  
24 Administration. You know, we learned so much from  
25 our battle last year and I just want to acknowledge

1  
2 that I think that even you were all taken by surprise  
3 at DYCD about what happened and the kind of slash and  
4 burn that we all felt that caused incredible movement  
5 to rise. But let's learn from that and do something  
6 different. What would be a pos - how can uhm - I am  
7 trying to ask this question without throwing so much  
8 shade but I guess what I want to say is the work that  
9 we are trying to do here is to set this up for  
10 success. And what we failed to do, even in our  
11 budget process was give the organizations the  
12 opportunity to plan for the most - some of our most  
13 vulnerable community members like our youth and give  
14 them the time to plan so that they can have a  
15 successful summer. We give the money so last minute  
16 at the end of June, that they couldn't even get  
17 themselves going.

18 And then they failed and that was on us. So,  
19 what value can we do in seeing - the Mayor's is going  
20 to release his Preliminary Budget tomorrow. What  
21 value can we see from your perspective in saying yes  
22 to SYEP now, so they can prepare for the summer? Do  
23 you see value in that?

24 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Absolutely and this past spring  
25 and summer we really only had two months to create

1  
2 and launch Summer Bridge with provider input. Even  
3 though there is still a great deal of uncertainty in  
4 terms of what the summer program will look like, the  
5 model will look like, we now can begin and we have  
6 begun our planning process. And part of that  
7 planning process will include engaging providers  
8 later this month to start asking them about their  
9 thoughts on the program model, both from planning for  
10 health and safety concerns for our young people.  
11 Since there is still an open question as to where the  
12 city will be as we head into spring and summer, as  
13 well as worksite availability as well.

14 We know that many of the industries that have  
15 typically provided placements in years past have  
16 certainly been under tremendous stress and strain and  
17 we are not sure how many of those industries will be  
18 back and in what format they would be able to provide  
19 placements.

20 So, we have the benefit of actually beginning in  
21 January versus a two month span of time and as with  
22 all of our programming, particularly when we are  
23 working in a challenging environment and  
24 understanding what the needs on the ground will be,  
25

1  
2 we will go to our provider partners to help us  
3 develop the plan.

4 So, the model will definitely be informed by the  
5 providers. We will have a better understanding of  
6 their capacity and so, we know that in order to  
7 ensure successful programs, that our partnership with  
8 our provider partners is crucial.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, so I heard that  
10 you see the problem that working in advance is going  
11 to be helpful. Will we see SYEP in this Preliminary  
12 Budget fully funded at the levels that we need to  
13 engage the youth that have been impacted, that are  
14 incredibly impacted not just by mental health but  
15 just by education in general.

16 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: So, there are no reductions  
17 currently in the FY22 SYEP budget and the budget  
18 currently stands at \$132 million. In terms of the  
19 final budget, that will all depend on a number of  
20 factors including what the final program model will  
21 look like.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Okay, I am almost out  
23 of time but I think this is going to be – what we are  
24 talking about now is probably some of the most  
25 critical components of ensuring the success of this



1  
2 program. The universal program that we are going to  
3 be fighting for and we really want to work with you  
4 and your agency to engage in a way that sets us up  
5 for success.

6 I think that we did a disservice to even the  
7 failed attempt to inject money. I know the Chair and  
8 I were having conversations after the budget about  
9 how many problems we saw and that was just, that is  
10 beyond heartbreaking. This was set up to fail and  
11 that cannot happen again.

12 And so, I am hoping that your intentions and the  
13 work that you are describing now really manifest into  
14 something but -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: That's the work that we  
17 have to do. So, thank you so much Chair for this  
18 time.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: You are welcome.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: At this time, we have  
21 concluded this round of questions. So, I will now  
22 turn to Chair Rose for any closing remarks before  
23 Administration will be excused.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Chair Rose has some questions.  
25 So, we are not closing yet but I want to echo how

1  
2 important Council Member Menchaca's remarks are about  
3 the planning. I was really glad to hear that you are  
4 going to begin the planning next month with the  
5 providers so that - like there is no surprises that  
6 everybody knows what's happening, what you know, what  
7 to anticipate. We just won't know what the numbers  
8 are.

9 So, if the plan is to stay remote again, will any  
10 of the features be changed for added and if so, will  
11 additional cohorts be included like the Ladders for  
12 Leaders program? Will that be something that will be  
13 considered for this round?

14 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, so beginning with your  
15 Ladders for Leaders question, we will be resuming  
16 Ladders for Leaders for this coming summer. The  
17 application will actually be launched in a couple of  
18 weeks. We typically start recruitment for Ladders  
19 for Leaders earlier in the year to allow for enough  
20 time for the more enhanced work readiness training  
21 and as well as for early placement for some of our  
22 for-profit companies.

23 In terms of lessons learned, we learned a great  
24 deal from this past summer through Summer Bridge.  
25 The elements that were most helpful to young people

1  
2 in terms of their growth, from a work readiness  
3 skills perspective, in terms of their ability to  
4 explore various careers.

5 Using the Hats and Ladders online platform  
6 allowed for a uniform way of delivering work  
7 readiness training and orientation and I think we  
8 want to continue to use that. However, we also  
9 received a lot of feedback about additional topics  
10 that we could include, so we will be working with  
11 Hats and Ladders on making those adjustments.

12 Project based learning, definitely including youth  
13 voice and having the connections to the providers was  
14 definitely seen as very vital to encouraging  
15 engagement.

16 And then, the workplace challenge; brand new to  
17 us but was really I think a stand out in terms of the  
18 model this year as a way of ensuring that we continue  
19 connections between employers and industry and our  
20 young people and having the ability for them to work  
21 together as peers on projects. And in a fun way,  
22 developing their work readiness skills. Their  
23 decision making skills, time management, presentation  
24 skills.

1  
2       So, we see a lot of value in that and regardless  
3 of what the model will look like, we certainly want  
4 to incorporate these elements in the 2021 program.  
5 We always send out participant surveys and employer  
6 surveys. We have that feedback. We are also  
7 conducting an evaluation on Summer Bridge as well.  
8 So, all of the learnings that we gather from there  
9 will help inform the best way forward for the new  
10 model.

11       CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I am glad to hear that Ladders  
12 for Leaders is going to be you know utilized this  
13 session, this budget cycle. And again, I want to  
14 implore you that we look at and we take young people  
15 from those communities that were disparately impacted  
16 by COVID-19. You know, there is these glaring  
17 inequities and I really would like to see that  
18 happen. I know Ladders for Leaders is for top tier  
19 high school students and actually, it has been my  
20 experience, I haven't seen a lot of diversity, as  
21 much diversity as I think could be. So, I really  
22 would like to see that special consideration is given  
23 to those communities that were – those zip codes that  
24 were hardest hit with COVID-19. And with that, you  
25 know, given the challenges facing local small

1  
2 businesses and many placement sites for SYEP, we have  
3 heard from the providers that DYCD's assistance  
4 making connections with potential employer partners  
5 for the workplace challenge element of the Summer  
6 Bridge program that DYCD have been active in  
7 recruiting employers to participate for the summer.

8       So, will you – can you give them that type of  
9 assistance and can providers expect an increased  
10 level of assistance in that area, especially since  
11 our small businesses have been you know, so greatly  
12 impacted?

13       DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yeah, so our Employment  
14 Engagement team has been hard at work at developing  
15 these opportunities and connections to the private  
16 sector. They were very instrumental in getting a lot  
17 of the industry partners as part of the workplace  
18 challenge for Summer Bridge. Are working now closely  
19 with the Office of MWBE's and so, that work will  
20 continue and we will continue to provide support to  
21 our providers and we certainly encourage as many of  
22 our for-profit companies here in New York City to  
23 sign up and take part in youth workforce development  
24 programs.

1  
2 JULIA BREITMAN: We also are – our Employer  
3 Engagement team worked with grant associates to  
4 develop a remote internship guide and provided  
5 trainings to our providers on how to develop those  
6 remote internship opportunities and how to convert.  
7 How to work with businesses to convert what was  
8 previously an in-person opportunity to a remote  
9 opportunity. We realize that that may be the way a  
10 lot of internship opportunities, a lot of summer  
11 opportunities will be available in the summer in a  
12 remote format. And our providers never had  
13 previously had the opportunity or the kind of the  
14 know how of how to develop those jobs and so, that's  
15 something we are working with them very, very closely  
16 to develop their capacity for the future.

17 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you and some of our not-  
18 for-profits were granted new school based SYEP  
19 contracts immediately before the pandemic. Then  
20 those contracts were cut out of that opportunity.

21 When the program numbers were halved, when they  
22 cut the program numbers in half, will they be brought  
23 back into for consideration of this go around and  
24 like, for example, H2H's Laboratory school for  
25

1  
2 finance and tech, Brooklyn Academy of Letters? Will  
3 they have the opportunity to be brought back into –

4 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, they will be eligible to  
5 participate this summer and yes, we had 33 new  
6 schools will be added to the career ready portfolio.  
7 24 providers were awarded the new contracts. 10 of  
8 these providers are new to SYEP and/or the career  
9 ready model and we will be working very closely with  
10 our new providers to give them all the technical  
11 assistance and capacity building to ensure a  
12 successful summer.

13 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Will they be included in the  
14 planning sessions?

15 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, of course.

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay. Was the City or DYCD  
17 reimbursed the \$22 million for the TANF grant for the  
18 Summer 2020 Bridge program and we heard that since  
19 the program was remote, the state ultimately decided  
20 the funds did not fall under the criteria as usual,  
21 you know for usual SYEP programming.

22 So, is there a plan and what is it to make up for  
23 the shortfall in funding?

24 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, so shortly after the  
25 suspension and work started to begin on the

1  
2 alternative program, we shared a request initially  
3 with OTDA requesting some high level waivers because  
4 we knew that at a minimum, the model that we would be  
5 able to roll out would be remote. And that we would  
6 pay stipends for the program model.

7 Obviously the restrictive measures that TANF  
8 generally has, includes only in-person placements.  
9 We explained to them where we were as a city in terms  
10 of the pause and that it just would not be possible  
11 given then timeframe for us to allow or even provide  
12 in-person work experiences. We had some several  
13 exchanges with our colleagues at OTDA and our last  
14 correspondence with them was just prior to the start  
15 of Summer Bridge. Again reiterating the program  
16 model, the need for, the change in model and  
17 requesting the funding but we are still in talks with  
18 the state and we are still working to in the hopes  
19 that they will change the funding criteria and that  
20 we will receive payment for the services rendered  
21 this past summer.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Is there some type of advocacy  
23 or something that we could do on the City Council's  
24 level to sort of help move them to grant the waiver  
25 and to consider the change in model?



1  
2 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: We would welcome all of your  
3 assistance and your advocacy, I am sure would be very  
4 valuable to us in pleading our case, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, thank you. And how did  
6 DYCD go about collecting the data and information,  
7 like timesheets this year and in the past? Because  
8 in the past, there was reference to DYCD being in the  
9 process of overhauling and standardizing data  
10 collection systems, specifically for SYEP. So, what  
11 is the status of this process? In addition, you  
12 know, has this streamlined things as well as the  
13 economic impact on our new system?

14 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yeah, so out of necessity this  
15 past summer, we did have to switch to not only online  
16 enrollment but also capturing time and payroll  
17 information electronically as well. And certainly,  
18 this is something that I think helped to ensure  
19 everyone's health and safety for one but helped to  
20 smooth the process. It is something that we are  
21 looking to continue into this coming summer and we  
22 are working closely with our software vendor who  
23 manages our SYEP programming and ensuring that we are  
24 able to do this successfully at a larger scale for  
25 this coming summer.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Yeah, I highly recommend that  
3 that happen. I know that the providers were you  
4 know, very happy to see that system put in place.

5 So, thank you for doing that and that's I think  
6 one of the best practices that we need to maintain  
7 and improve upon. So, thank you for that. And then,  
8 just give us an update on the operation of Work,  
9 Learn and Grow program since it resumed in November.

10 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes, so, program operations to  
11 begin on November 9<sup>th</sup> and the Work, Learn and Grow  
12 model this year really represents a true year round  
13 experience for the participants.

14 Young people who are a part of our career ready  
15 school portfolio and took part in Summer Bridge, had  
16 the opportunity to take part in WLG this year. They  
17 had the opportunity to take part in one of three CUNY  
18 college courses. Two of which, have the ability to  
19 gain an academic credit and should they successfully  
20 pass, they also worked with our providers on a career  
21 and exploration activities.

22 We, the week of December 21<sup>st</sup>, started our  
23 internship days and this is where our young people  
24 are currently at work in a variety of different  
25

1 modalities. Remote, in-person or a hybrid and Julia  
2 had mentioned earlier that we worked with grant  
3 associates, a technical assistance provider to  
4 develop a remote internship guide to help our  
5 providers in cultivating remote internships, as well  
6 as helping employers understand how to convert an in-  
7 person opportunity into a remote experience and  
8 ensuring that our young people are supported  
9 throughout the process.  
10

11 So, we are several weeks into the internships and  
12 our providers are monitoring those internships  
13 closely. Where there are in-person internships, we  
14 also have contingency plans given the fact that we  
15 are in such an uncertain environment with the  
16 pandemic and if participants need to be moved into a  
17 remote opportunity that those opportunities are  
18 available to them.

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you and I have a  
20 lightening round question for you. Yes or no, would  
21 the agency rate the remote model of SYEP Bridge  
22 Program a success?

23 DAPHNE MONTANEZ: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, thank you. I want to  
25 thank you very much Deputy Commissioner and all of

1  
2 the DYCD staff for being here. Please make sure that  
3 the information that Council Member Barron asked be  
4 submitted to the Chair. And I want to say that we  
5 are being preemptive. We were taken by surprise last  
6 year that we were totally x'd out. This year, we are  
7 starting early. I am glad to hear that we are  
8 starting from you know, a full restoration point of  
9 view and we are going to continue to work to make  
10 sure that that's a reality.

11 So, I want to thank you and I also want to ask  
12 you to stay to hear what our young people have to  
13 say. We are doing all of this programming for them  
14 and I think it is very important that you hear their  
15 voices. That you hear what their experiences were  
16 last year and their hopes are for this year.

17 So, I am asking you to stay because somehow I got  
18 overruled. I had asked that the young people testify  
19 first because often times the Administration gives us  
20 information that we really need to hear but they  
21 don't get to hear what the actual experiences are of  
22 the people who are providing the services or who are  
23 the consumer of the services. And so, I don't know  
24 how it happened. I am saying this publicly that I  
25

1  
2 had come into this hearing with the knowledge that my  
3 young people were going to be able to speak first.

4 Since that did not happen, I really, I need you  
5 to stay behind to hear what they have to say and I  
6 thank you for cooperating with us on that. And I  
7 want to say a big welcome to my new colleague Council  
8 Member Riley. You are a welcome addition to this  
9 Committee. I know you have a lot to give us and we  
10 have a lot to learn from you, so I wanted to welcome  
11 you.

12 And with that, I am not going to see on my  
13 script, I am now going to turn it over to my  
14 Committee Policy Analyst to call on the members from  
15 my youth panel to come to testify. And thank you  
16 again members of the Administration for staying.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. I will now  
18 call on the following students to testify: Jorge  
19 Morales; Carmen Lopez Villamil; Muhammad Deen; Kai-  
20 Lin Kwek-Rupp; La'Toya Beecham.

21 Jorge Morales, please wait until the Sergeant at  
22 Arms announces that you may begin your testimony.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Jorge Morales?  
25

1  
2 JORGE MORALES: Yeah, I was unable to get off  
3 mute. Now I am. Thank you so much. Good morning to  
4 the Council Youth Service Committee and to all of  
5 those watching this hearing. My name is Jorge  
6 Morales, I am Junior at the University of Rochester  
7 and I am also a Teens Take Charge Alum, a mentor and  
8 was one of the leaders of Teens Take Charge Save SYEP  
9 Campaign last year.

10 Today, I am once again here to testify about  
11 Summer Youth Employment Program. I don't want to  
12 make it a habit to come to all of these testimonies  
13 to be completely frank with all of you. The COVID-19  
14 pandemic has served as an accelerator in many ways as  
15 it has magnified what was wrong even before the  
16 pandemic.

17 We are currently living in a pivotal time period  
18 which will shape the recovery of our city and its  
19 future. And it is at the toughest that we must  
20 strive to do much better than we have done in the  
21 past and this is why Teens Take Charge is here, to  
22 fight for the future of our city and to fight for the  
23 future of your youth. The youth went out of their  
24 way this past summer to plead for these opportunities  
25 and they were served with 35,000 slots. I think

1  
2 that's something that is completely unfair and  
3 honestly just really disheartening.

4       This past summer, we were able to see what the  
5 lack of inadequate amount of communication did with  
6 regards to the rollout for Summer Bridge. Throughout  
7 Teens Take Charge Campaign and even after we heard  
8 multiple stories from providers and the youth about  
9 the great amount of uncertainty that they experience.  
10 Over 130,000 youth applied for Summer Bridge in less  
11 than two weeks, maybe a weeks' notice. This has  
12 proved that there is a tremendous demand from the  
13 youth. That these are opportunities that the youth  
14 need but not just the youth, that the city needs in  
15 order to benefit from them now and in the future.

16       I think that this time around we should make  
17 things more certain. We should not leave place for  
18 uncertainty. We must ensure that SYEP is secure and  
19 that the youth are part of its development process.  
20 I think that's a very important component. That a  
21 time we miss, as at the end of the day, the youth are  
22 the ones that are going to take part in these  
23 opportunities and if they are not designed to some  
24 extent with a perspective from the youth, we are  
25

1  
2 going to be failing the youth like we did this past  
3 year.

4 So, I just really urge you all to include the  
5 youth in this process some way or another. I know  
6 DYCD officials have said that they will but we would  
7 really like to see how that would work and we would  
8 like to see that implemented rapidly. As time moves  
9 on really quick and from now on, we have to make sure  
10 that this occurs. We need to make sure that those  
11 communities that were most effected by COVID-19 are  
12 served and are given what they deserve.

13 That is all that I have to say. Thank you so  
14 much for allowing me some time to speak. I am going  
15 to pass it over to whoever goes next.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Jorge Morales. We  
17 will now hear from Carmen Lopez Villamil followed by  
18 Muhammad Deen. Ms. Villamil.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 CARMEN LOPEZ VILLAMIL: Good morning everyone. I  
21 am Carmen Lopez Villamil. I am Senior at Beacon and  
22 a member of Teens Take Charge. I worked on the SYEP  
23 Campaign last year and last summer, 137,087 young New  
24 Yorkers, that's over 137,000 of your constituents,  
25 applied for SYEP Summer Bridge and over 35,198 got a



1 spot. So, that leave over 100,000 of your  
2 constituents without jobs and without support last  
3 summer. This year, we will not settle for anything  
4 less than guaranteed placement. Every young person  
5 who applies, must get a job.  
6

7 More broadly, last summer was a mess and a  
8 largely avoidable one. In early August, we were  
9 still receiving desperate emails from our peers,  
10 wondering whether SYEP was happening, what had happened  
11 to their application, why their provider wasn't  
12 emailing them back and we, a group of 16 and 17 year  
13 old's were frantically trying to make SYEP work for  
14 our peers. With shockingly little information or  
15 support from DYCD.

16 If that had been our only problem last year, I  
17 wouldn't be that mad. But weeks before that, we had  
18 to scramble to broadcast that SYEP was back. We  
19 waited through clunky applications that wouldn't go  
20 through, uncertain deadlines and widespread  
21 confusion. You guys left 137,000 of your  
22 constituents to find and apply for this program on  
23 their own. 102,000 never even got an email back.  
24 You passed a budget that left 102,000 youth behind.  
25

1  
2 In the months before that, we were organizing  
3 rally's, meetings and actions in response to the whim  
4 of the City Council and DYCD that love to cite our  
5 work publicly but scarcely took the time to talk to  
6 us.

7 No offense to you all but similarly to Jorge, I  
8 really don't want to have to keep testifying about  
9 SYEP. Or I would like to come back with a happy  
10 report. I would like to tell you that every  
11 applicant got a spot. That the process was clear and  
12 equitable and that we all had fun doing it but that  
13 has to start with you guys. It has to start with  
14 young people planning this process and that has to  
15 start now. If SYEP is going to happen, we have to be  
16 included now and it also means that we need a budget  
17 that ensures that every young person who applies for  
18 SYEP will get a job.

19 If you need any help with any of that, our emails  
20 are always open. Feel free to email us, we have  
21 time, we have young people and we really do want to  
22 talk. We want to be a part of this process. We just  
23 need the resources and the opportunities to do that.  
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
3 from Muhammad Deen followed by Kai-Lin Kwek-Rupp.  
4 Mr. Muhammad Deen.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 MUHAMMAD DEEN: Hello, my name is Muhammad Deen,  
7 I am Junior at Hunter College and I just want to say  
8 that during coronavirus, there is a tale that you  
9 know, New York City is a tale where the rich get  
10 richer and the poorer get poorer and corona really  
11 exposed that. Many students who came from privileged  
12 backgrounds, they were able to move out of the city  
13 during the pandemic or they had basements, they had  
14 their own rooms to themselves that allowed them to  
15 succeed in school.

16 Many students focused on online learning  
17 completely and they didn't have to worry about having  
18 a job, having to look for an internship and having to  
19 do these other things because they are privileged.  
20 For thousands of New York City students, SYEP is that  
21 program that guarantees money and that money isn't  
22 just any money, for them, it's food on the table.  
23 For them, it's how they are going to pay their  
24 mothers bills because their mom doesn't have

1 insurance. For them, it's how they are going to help  
2 their disabled father at home. For them, it's how  
3 they are going to bring something home for their  
4 little brother or sister.

5  
6 So, when SYEP got taken away, some of these other  
7 kids like with online learning school is so easy for  
8 them. They are doing internships, they are doing all  
9 of these things and now, 2020 and 2021 is just going  
10 to be a year where like transcripts and everything  
11 just went up and for some of these other students, it  
12 was a year where they were scrambling. They couldn't  
13 find jobs. They were going through all of these  
14 things and you see these divides just get stronger.

15 So, I really urge that I know you can't give us a  
16 house. You know, I know you can't give us a  
17 basement. I know you can't talk to our teachers and  
18 tell them to give us A's but the least you can do is  
19 really make sure that in the greatest and biggest  
20 city in the world, we can give opportunities to  
21 students who want them. There is no reason why – and  
22 especially with everything that's happened, I really  
23 think that look, we know what happened in the  
24 capital. We are not even asking for that. We are  
25 just asking for a huge fight for our budget because

1  
2 there is no reason that a lottery system should  
3 dictate who is going to get opportunities, who is  
4 going to bring home food on the table. Whose family  
5 is going to starve and whose family isn't. So, I  
6 know that you know, a lot of adults, there is all  
7 this talk about you know, this isn't in the budget,  
8 this isn't in the budget but it always seems like  
9 when it comes to education, when it comes to anything  
10 related to youth, we always get sidelined. I mean,  
11 we are not even in the table. We have three minutes  
12 to speak but does our vote count when you vote on the  
13 budget? Like, is there any youth in City Council  
14 that you are listening to? Who is a stakeholder in  
15 any of these decisions?

16 Like they said, you know, I appreciate the  
17 opportunity for this but we need more than just three  
18 minutes. We need youth to be stakeholders and with  
19 everything that's happened with coronavirus, we  
20 cannot afford to just have certain kids get the  
21 opportunities and certain students not.

22 So, I am calling on all of you guys - sorry, all  
23 of you all, if New York City is the greatest city in  
24 the world and if we are going to beat corona, let's

1  
2 do it by giving every single kid that wants a spot in  
3 SYEP this summer a chance. Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Deen. We will  
6 now hear from Kai-Lin Kwek-Rupp followed by La'Toya  
7 Beecham. Ms. Kwek-Rupp.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 KAI-LIN KWEK-RUPP: Good morning. My name is  
10 Kai-Lin Kwek-Rupp and I am a Junior at Bard Manhattan  
11 as well as a Member of Teens Take Charge.

12 I am also in a panel right now and so I would  
13 like to thank Council Member Rose for her remarks on  
14 making sure that youth voice gets prioritized. In  
15 the future, I would love it if you had a little bit  
16 more heads up about when they are going to speak, so  
17 they can plan.

18 Last spring, the Summer Youth Employment Program  
19 was eliminated completely despite the city's youth  
20 struggling with loss of friends and family from  
21 COVID. The economic strain as jobs were lost and  
22 businesses closed and the mental and emotional pain  
23 of isolation at home and online learning.

24

25

1  
2 This resulted in an overall insecurity about the  
3 future. To take back control, my peers and I worked  
4 tirelessly over the course of four months to save  
5 SYEP. We launched a full scale campaign using any  
6 available hours to draft [INAUDIBLE 1:45:42] promote  
7 our own petition with over 40,000 signatures,  
8 organized protests online and in person, develop our  
9 own plan for an equitable, socially distant SYEP and  
10 finally, come up with a report detailing all of that  
11 which will be coming out in the coming weeks.

12 As a result of our efforts, opportunities for  
13 35,000 young people were restored. However, despite  
14 them, the efforts of high schoolers, 40,000 SYEP  
15 slots were eliminated. Taking away opportunities  
16 from youth who were desperate to provide assistance  
17 to their families during the pandemic. Over 102,000  
18 applicants who sought summer employment and a chance  
19 to develop professional and working skills were  
20 refused.

21 It is easy to be desensitized by numbers, so  
22 let's visualize how many people our city failed.  
23 102,000 of our city's ambitious, dedicated and  
24 hardworking youth were rejected from SYEP. With  
25 102,000 youth denied access to SYEP, you could fill

1  
2 city's field – you know, the big place in Queens  
3 where the Mets play, two and a half times. Give  
4 yourself a moment to sit with magnitude of just how  
5 many New Yorkers by budget that failed to prioritize  
6 them. What is clear from this – what has been clear  
7 from the start is that SYEP is cornerstone of  
8 investing in youth by providing paid jobs and  
9 opportunities. These opportunities help bridge gaps  
10 in work base learning, financial and future  
11 employment that's gaping by current inequalities of  
12 our city's social and educational systems.

13 Youth jobs create stability. Youth jobs inspire  
14 passion. Youth jobs foster learning. Youth jobs  
15 build the future. The future that is out there once  
16 the COVID-19 pandemic receives and the youth of our  
17 city have become the city's adults.

18 So, in the coming budget negotiations, I urge you  
19 to find funding's so every New Yorker can build a  
20 future they deserve. Because at this point, that  
21 really shouldn't be a debate. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Kwek-Rupp. We  
23 will now hear from La'Toya Beecham. Ms. Beecham.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.  
25



1  
2 LA'TOYA BEECHAM: Hello, my name is La'Toya  
3 Beecham and I am a Junior at [INAUDIBLE 1:47:54] High  
4 School in the South Bronx. I am also a Leader at  
5 Teens Take Charge and HERE to HERE's Youth Policy  
6 Advisor.

7 I would like to say thank you to the New York  
8 City Council and Council Committee on Youth Services  
9 for the opportunity to testify in support of New York  
10 City Summer Youth Employment Program, SYEP. I wrote  
11 a whole testimony but that might be a little bit too  
12 long to read in three minutes and I want to get to  
13 the main point.

14 So instead, I will give you three details or  
15 defects that I want to resonate with you. Number one  
16 is that SYEP is the largest youth employment program  
17 in the country and as often, the first opportunity  
18 you get to have access to gain skills and experience  
19 based on whatever field or role you want to pursue in  
20 the near future. SYEP often serves as a foundation  
21 to building upon your knowledge and understanding  
22 when it comes to learning how the real world works.

23 From W-9 forms to time sheets. Things that you  
24 wouldn't learn in class, especially when it comes to  
25

1  
2 budgeting. Whew, sorry. Especially when it comes to  
3 budgeting.

4 Another fact that I would like you to know is  
5 that SYEP was completely canceled. Cut, finished and  
6 done for this year and as NYC Youth, we didn't take  
7 no for an answer. We noticed that this was unfair  
8 and we spoke out about it. From morning Zoom calls  
9 to mass emails to petitions and even nights where we  
10 stayed up to perfect our graft. It was not easy and  
11 we did it alone. And it was one of those things that  
12 didn't go unnoticed. This should show how near and  
13 dear SYEP is for youth but we kept going and we  
14 stayed motivated and we are still pushing regardless  
15 of the answer that we get.

16 And my third and final thing today is that to  
17 center youth voice. We need youth voice and just  
18 overall youth in the room where it happens and  
19 decisions that are being made because countless times  
20 we don't have a say and we are expected to deal with  
21 the repercussions, negative or positive. And SYEP  
22 was one of the double negative and if we didn't fight  
23 back, we know we would have went a year without  
24 learning - well, I would have went a year without  
25

1  
2 learning what I should have and that would have left  
3 me with the job of filling the gap myself.

4       And often, that is the case. You wouldn't have  
5 someone who wants to be a doctor but is stuck working  
6 at McDonalds but is unsure where to get the  
7 experience or exposure to have access to these  
8 opportunities which proves the importance of SYEP and  
9 the importance of connecting jobs to education.  
10 Because not only are you learning for your future but  
11 you are able to apply what you are learning in  
12 schools while gaining experience.

13       So, I say to invest more in youth advancement.  
14 Invest more in youth voice, invest more into these  
15 voices that are often silenced and don't have a say  
16 in what goes on because it is unfair. And we deserve  
17 more especially because of — when I first came here  
18 from Jamaica, they say that America is land of  
19 opportunities and this is a great opportunity to  
20 speak up about what's happening but the fact that I  
21 have to speak up and that it's happening —

22       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23       LA'TOYA BEECHAM: Thank you.

24       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will  
25 now turn to questions from Chair Rose.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you so much. I want to  
3 thank all of you Jorge, Carmen, Muhammad, Kai and  
4 La'Toya for standing up, for saying straight out, not  
5 without any trepidation about the realities of what  
6 young people in New York City are experiencing. The  
7 lack of services, resources that you have had to  
8 endure. I want to thank you for your strong  
9 advocacy. Teens Take Charge have been very vocal and  
10 very active and played an important role in getting  
11 even a portion of the youth's funding restored. We  
12 went from zero to 35 million but I wanted to ask you  
13 had any of you participated in the planning in the  
14 past and have any of you been invited to participate  
15 in the planning for SYEP going forward this year?

16 I take it that's a no. No, oh you are muted.

17 JORGE MORALES: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Oh, okay. Can you unmute,  
19 okay, thank you. Sorry Jorge.

20 JORGE MORALES: The host needs to unmute us in  
21 order for us to speak. I just wanted to quickly note  
22 before we got into questions that there is a couple  
23 other youth voices that were unable to get listed in  
24 that list and I think it would be amazing to hear  
25 from them. Some of them are Sierra, Mariam also and

1  
2 Adam. They had prepared testimonies for today's  
3 hearing as well. I just wanted to quickly note that.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Why were they not included on  
5 the list?

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, they are included in  
7 other public testimony panel, all of them, yes. We  
8 will hear from them later on.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, alright. We will make  
10 sure that their voices are heard. Thank you Jorge.  
11 So, we heard from the Administration that they are  
12 planning to have conversations with the providers and  
13 the advocates going forward next month. I just  
14 wanted to know if you had, any of you, had been  
15 invited to participate? If Teens Take Charge was one  
16 of the groups that were invited to be a part of that  
17 and if not, then the Deputy Commissioner is still on  
18 this Zoom. I am asking that the Youth groups and  
19 youth advocates be included in the planning.

20 And I guess, they can't respond. I want you to  
21 know that the Council is fighting for universal SYEP  
22 and that's, you know, that's been our goal and you  
23 know, going forward that's where we are trying to get  
24 to. So, I want you to know we heard you and that we  
25 are going to move forward in that direction.

1  
2 Okay, are there any questions from any of the  
3 Council Members? Council Members, do you have any  
4 questions.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Chin has a  
6 question. Council Member Chin, please proceed.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Yeah, thank you  
9 Chair. I just wanted to really thank this panel of  
10 our you know, young leaders. And I just want to  
11 reassure you that Chair Rose and I, from the  
12 beginning, I think this is our 12<sup>th</sup> year on the  
13 Council.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And this will be our last  
16 budget. From the beginning, under the Bloomberg  
17 Administration, we fought very hard to save Summer  
18 Youth Program and other youth after school programs  
19 and universal has always been the goal. And working  
20 together with other Council Members and now our  
21 Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, universal SYEP was  
22 always the goal. And I think the year before when we  
23 finally got to over 70,000, it was a milestone and we  
24 thought it would be a great you know, step forward  
25 for us to continue and then the pandemic hit.

1  
2 But I am really glad to hear from the  
3 Administration DYCD, that at least in the preliminary  
4 budget, they have the money in there. So, at least  
5 we are in a good starting point but we have to  
6 continue to fight. And I wanted to really thank you  
7 know, Teens Take Charge and our youth leaders. Your  
8 advocacy is really tremendous and also, all the youth  
9 organization and nonprofit providers, we have been  
10 doing this for so many years. To continue to fight  
11 for our young people and we got to continue to do  
12 that because I, myself, benefitted from an SYEP when  
13 I was in high school.

14 And it really made a difference in my life in  
15 terms of you know, the income but the work  
16 experience. Like, I have never even shopped in lower  
17 Manhattan because I grew up in China Town but because  
18 my job was on John Street in Lower Manhattan for the  
19 New York telephone company, I was able to you know,  
20 gain work experience and really build confidence and  
21 I think that is so important to our young people.

22 And I think you have our commitment from the  
23 Council. We will fight very hard to make sure that  
24 we get the funding for SYEP and we are still pushing  
25 for that goal and you got to work on our Mayor and

1  
2 the Administration but also the state and federal  
3 government. Because they have to also put in the  
4 funding and we know how great the program is and I  
5 really you know, urge all the young people to get  
6 involved, talk to your Council Member, talk to your  
7 state elected and really, let's all work together  
8 towards this goal of universal Summer Youth Program.

9 So, thank you again for coming to testify and  
10 thank you to Chair Rose for your leadership.

11 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you Council Member Chin.  
12 You know, with you behind us, you know, we can't  
13 fail. Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, we have a question  
15 from Council Member Louis. Council Member Louis,  
16 please proceed.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Good afternoon everyone.  
19 Thank you so much Chair Rose for hosting this  
20 conversation today. I took some time to listen to  
21 the Administration and their feedback. Some of it  
22 was good, some of it was lackluster but I look  
23 forward to further conversations.

24

25



1  
2 I just wanted to share with the youth. I have a  
3 question for them but I also wanted to tell them  
4 thank you so much for your testimony this afternoon.  
5 For having this conversation, for participating. I  
6 want to let you all know that Chair Rose, Council  
7 Member Chin, Council Member Barron, Public Advocate  
8 Williams have fought really hard for universal SYEP.

9 I participated in SYEP when I was young and I  
10 worked for a Council Member, former Council Member  
11 Jumaane Williams who fought hard for universal SYEP  
12 with Council Member Chin and Chair Rose and so many  
13 others. We need you to support us. So, listening to  
14 your testimony and saying that you want to be a part  
15 of the conversation. You want to be a part of the  
16 decision making, I am going to ask one of you because  
17 I don't know how much time we have. What does that  
18 look like? So, that Chair Rose has something to take  
19 back to the rest of the Administration.

20 And also want to piggyback off of what Council  
21 Member Chin said, the decision is not just on the  
22 Council Members, it's really also on the Mayor and  
23 those in the state. So, we want to partner with you.  
24 Chair Rose wants to partner with you. She wants to  
25 work with you and we are going to support her and

1  
2 undergird her, so that she can give you what you need  
3 but we need to know what that looks like. We need to  
4 know that the framework is.

5 So, if you could share with us. A few of you  
6 mentioned you wanted to be a part of decision making  
7 process. Give us some idea of what that looks like.  
8 Thank you Chair Rose.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

10 JORGE MORALES: I can quickly go since I am  
11 unmuted but I think that basically starts with  
12 meeting with us. It starts with accepting to meet  
13 with us. We reached out to multiple of your offices  
14 and many of them didn't - we didn't get to schedule a  
15 meeting. So, that's a huge barrier. If you all  
16 can't listen to us, you know, sometimes when we talk  
17 to your reps, that's amazing as well. But the  
18 message gets swirled around. It's not directly as we  
19 were speaking with you right. The youth has to know  
20 that you are prioritizing their voices, so you have  
21 to meet with them. That's for starters.

22 We can meet and discuss further how that looks in  
23 practice and I mean, we would love to, we can follow  
24 up with that.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I would like to  
3 take a moment to remind Council Member that if they  
4 would like to pose a question to use the raise hand  
5 function in Zoom.

6 There are no questions from Council Members.  
7 Chair Rose.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay, again, I want to thank  
9 this very articulate panel. We heard you. We are  
10 behind you. We are willing to lead the way so that  
11 we can get the ear of the Administration and achieve  
12 our goal. Our goals are the same, so with that, I am  
13 sure this will be a strong partnership that will  
14 prevail.

15 So, I want to thank you again for your time and  
16 we will speak off line in terms of what this  
17 framework or what the paradigm should look like.  
18 Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. At this  
20 moment, I would like to remind that for public  
21 testimony, I will call up individuals from panels.  
22 Council Members who have questions for a particular  
23 panelist should use the raise hand function in Zoom.  
24 You will be called after everyone on that panel has  
25

1  
2 completed their testimony. For public panelists,  
3 once I call your name, a member of our staff will  
4 unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will give you the  
5 go ahead to begin speaking after setting the timer.

6 All public testimony will be limited to three  
7 minutes. After I call your name, please wait a brief  
8 moment for the Sergeant at Arms to announce that you  
9 may begin before you start your testimony. The next  
10 panelist will be in the following order. Adam  
11 Philogene, Sierra Fraser and Maryam Choudhury. Adam  
12 Philogene please.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 ADAM PHILOGENE: Good morning. I am Adam  
15 Philogene, I am a 16-year-old Junior at the High  
16 School for Youth and Community Development residing  
17 in Queens New York. I am also a member of Teens Take  
18 Charge.

19 This pandemic has flipping changed lives in ways  
20 like no other. The trauma that comes with these  
21 deaths from the virus are agonizing. Young people  
22 are struggling with traumatic stress in the many  
23 different forms that come due to the virus. As a  
24 city, we must strive to get to a comfortable state  
25

1  
2 where everyone feels safe in their own environments,  
3 stable socially as well as financially.

4 With our youth, SYEP is the first step. The  
5 Summer Youth Employment Program has provided for the  
6 youth in the most suitable ways. However, when this  
7 pandemic hit and everything shifted to online  
8 services, that changed. With limited seats and  
9 limited funding towards this program, it doesn't  
10 allow for the youth to garner working experience and  
11 accountability as well as financial stability.  
12 Especially when the virus still going around despite  
13 the upcoming vaccine, the funds received from working  
14 SYEP could be used to greatly benefit and stabilize  
15 households.

16 Beforehand, working in internships haven't  
17 necessarily been appealing to me until just recently  
18 when my mother brought it to attention. Now that I  
19 have gained significant interest, I am more than  
20 passionate about the topic as other children and  
21 peers younger or older or even the same age as me can  
22 significantly benefit from this opportunity.

23 This experience serves as a better source of  
24 income rather than turning to other things such as  
25 legal activity or selling items that won't generate

1  
2 much profit as a result of school being out over the  
3 summer and people having nothing to do with their  
4 lives.

5       There is no alternative to SYEP. SYEP serves a  
6 major purpose and as a stepping stone to all that  
7 apply for it and all of the appliers should be  
8 granted this opportunity regardless of their  
9 situation. With that being said, the program as a  
10 whole should be and needs to be expanded to at least  
11 150,000 members of the youth. As New York City  
12 youth, I ask you to profoundly expand and improve  
13 SYEP. Thank you.

14       COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much. We will  
15 next hear from Sierra Fraser. Ms. Fraser.

16       SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17       SIERRA FRASER: Thank you. My name is Sierra  
18 Fraser, I am 18-years-old and I am also a Teens Take  
19 Charge Member. I am Freshman at Smith College and I  
20 wrote this testimony May 2020, so a lot of things  
21 apply to then but I still think it is a really  
22 relevant conversation to have.

23       A mothers biggest fear is not being able to put  
24 food on her table. Her greatest wish is that she  
25 will never have to ask her children to contribute

1  
2 financially. Her favorite words are it's okay, you  
3 can wait until you are older to provide for the  
4 family. Right now, just focus on school baby. But  
5 this is where we bump heads because I want to provide  
6 now mom. I have officially lost track of the amount  
7 of times that I have applied for Summer Youth. Not  
8 the amount of times I participated in it but the  
9 amount of times I have been rejected.

10 I haven't been called back for jobs elsewhere and  
11 Summer Youth won't take me. So, what age will I  
12 finally get my first work experience? My fingers  
13 were crossed that this summer would be the first time  
14 I had my own money. For once, not the birthday  
15 money, not the Christmas money, not the lunch money  
16 but my money. Except now, I will be a freshman in  
17 college who has never worked. I want to surprise my  
18 hard working mom with a gift or two sometimes. My  
19 mom shouldn't have to do all of the surprising.

20 I want to buy groceries and necessities for the  
21 house when they run out, my mom shouldn't have to do  
22 all of the buying. I am a freshman in college with a  
23 mom that will be paying room and board and I never  
24 wanted my first job to be the one that I work on

1  
2 campus. Although I wasn't chosen last summer or the  
3 summer before or the summer before that, I had hope  
4 in the program. At this year, the year of COVID and  
5 many losses, the year that I would graduate on a  
6 prerecorded ceremony. The year 2020, would be my  
7 lucky year. Not only did it provide for over 75,000  
8 but it rejected a quantity that we will never know.  
9 Some service options have additional legibility  
10 requirements. Clearly requirements I never had. I  
11 live within the five boroughs and I am legally  
12 allowed to work, that's what the website said I  
13 needed. So, what am I missing now? Sorry, excuse  
14 me.

15       The programs binoculars don't see everyone and  
16 there are portion of teenagers that want the  
17 opportunity so bad but can't get it. Officials say  
18 the absence of summer youth will push families to  
19 change their summer plans. But you can't just tell a  
20 low income family struggling to keep meals on their  
21 table to change the plans they were relying on to  
22 keep their household economically stable.

23       A paycheck for a 16-year-old is a paycheck for a  
24 mother. For a sibling for school supplies and for  
25 clothing. One check is split several ways put to



1  
2 more than one thing to ensure that the whole family  
3 can take care of itself. Giving up on this program  
4 will completely deplete the probability of some teens  
5 ever getting a job.

6 For me and thousands of youth in New York City, I  
7 am asking you to expand and improve SYEP. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will next hear  
10 from Maryam Choudhury also of the Teens Take Charge.  
11 Ms. Choudhury.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 MARYAM CHOUDHURY: Good afternoon. I am Maryam  
14 Choudhury. I am a sophomore at the Young Women's  
15 Leadership School of the Bronx and the Teens Take  
16 Charge Organizer. I am also a mentee at Mind's  
17 Matter, a participate at Corneil big data for a big  
18 policy program an inter AG Guggenheim Museum and path  
19 finders. My experience with COVID has been very  
20 stressful. Seeing the deaths of so many people in  
21 the world and in my family has played a very negative  
22 role on me. Mentally and emotionally it's like  
23 losing a part of me. This pandemic is very hard for  
24 us. We aren't getting enough socialization time,  
25

1 usually we can play with our friends at school or the  
2 park but for me, that is not an option.

3  
4 Employment programs like internships and SYEP can  
5 give me the environment to socialize and work on  
6 other necessary skills. I have been turned down for  
7 jobs because I lacked experience and SYEP could have  
8 helped me with that. SYEP could have helped me  
9 because it would have given me a chance to see and  
10 feel how it is to be employed. The pros and cons of  
11 working. The application for SYEP last year was very  
12 hectic. An application 12 pages long just to not be  
13 accepted. SYEP is employment based off of lottery  
14 which I believe is unfair. Everyone deserves a spot.

15 Students take the time out of their day to do a  
16 12 page long application just for the page to crash,  
17 the application not going through and not being  
18 accepted. SYEP must be expanded because every  
19 student who wants to gain experience from SYEP should  
20 be provided that opportunity.

21 SYEP would be so significant during this pandemic  
22 because there are so many families struggling as we  
23 speak and students can help their family out with the  
24 employment they are provided through SYEP. There are  
25 businesses in my community that will benefit from

1  
2 SYEP workers. For example, small businesses like  
3 family owned pharmacy and district office or  
4 community centers. Most of the time, my summer  
5 consists of staying at home bored since we are in a  
6 pandemic and have limited opportunities.

7 The summer should be a time where I can put my  
8 time to good use but without the resources, how can I  
9 do so? I hope everyone gains a better understanding  
10 of SYEP and why employment matters to me. It is  
11 important for you to listen to us because we are the  
12 future of New York City. We are fighting to make the  
13 city better for everyone and expanding SYEP is a  
14 start. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now turn  
17 to Chair Rose for questions for this panel.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Again, I think it's sad that  
19 your comments were meant for 2020 and that they are  
20 still very relevant today Sierra. You know, I had  
21 hoped that we would not have had to face that. Last  
22 year, uhm, you know, we were on a roll. We were  
23 incrementally increasing the number of young people  
24 that we were able to accommodate in SYEP. Still  
25

1  
2 moving and pushing toward universal SYEP and then to  
3 have the rug pulled completely out from under us, was  
4 really devastating.

5 And so, we are having this hearing to find out –  
6 to get on the record you know, the outcomes of the  
7 you know, of all that happened with SYEP last year  
8 and to be preemptive, so that this year we won't face  
9 those same hurdles and stumbling blocks. With the  
10 exception of the budget.

11 And so, we are trying to get ahead of it. I was  
12 glad to hear the Administration say that we were  
13 starting from the previous level, not 2020 level and  
14 we are going to continue to fight. And I agree with  
15 you, uhm, it's really difficult. I think all of us  
16 can know the experience of being in a lottery and not  
17 winning. I think it was \$780 million last night that  
18 was up and none of us to say that we were winners and  
19 I know we were not pleased with that.

20 So, I just, it's a good place to start. That we  
21 look at the lottery system but we would have to then  
22 – if we had universal SYEP, then there would be no  
23 need for a lottery and so, that's why that's our  
24 goal.

1  
2           So, I thank you. I don't have any questions. Do  
3 any of my colleagues have any questions for these  
4 wonderfully articulate young people?

5           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, I would like to remind  
6 Council Members, if you would like to pose a  
7 question, please use the raise hand function in Zoom.

8           There seems to be no questions, so I would like  
9 to announce the next panel. The next panel will be  
10 Carolyn Blair of Good Shepherd Services, Jordan Hall  
11 of Brooklyn Defender Services and Angel Sacarello of  
12 University Settlement Society of New York. Ms.  
13 Blair.

14           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15           CAROLYN BLAIR: Thank you Chair Rose and the  
16 Council Members of the Committee on Youth Services  
17 for the opportunity to submit testimony on the  
18 oversight hearing on the Summer Youth Employment  
19 Program. My name is Carolyn Blair and I am the Fair  
20 Futures Co-Supervisor at Good Shepherd Services where  
21 I supervise four coaches with a caseload of 15 youth  
22 each who support youth in foster care between the ages  
23 of 11 and 21.

24

25

1  
2 I have been employed with Good Shepherd Services  
3 for the past seven years, all in family foster care.  
4 Before this role, I served two years as a Case  
5 Planner, two and a half years as an Education  
6 Specialist for Youth from birth to fifth grade.

7 Today, my testimony will emphasize on the role  
8 cultures and career specialists play in supporting  
9 over 35 youth who participated in SYEP last year and  
10 worked remotely at the sites Common Point Queens,  
11 Children's Aim and the CUNY Research Foundation. The  
12 supports I will speak of are offered to youth in care  
13 year around by coaches who are trained in trauma  
14 informed and strength base approaches and build a  
15 trusting relationship with the young person.

16 Cultures also provide ongoing social, emotional  
17 support and work one on one with youth to develop  
18 goals based on their interests.

19 Cultures are always looking for opportunities and  
20 experiences that help youth become self-sufficient.  
21 Coaches provide essential support to youth during  
22 their SYEP placement. Coaches connected youth to  
23 members of the community and the career specialist  
24 partnered with the SYEP placement team to ensure  
25 youth have the needed supports to be successful.

1  
2 Coaches help youth to navigate and sustain their  
3 participation in SYEP placement. Career Specialists  
4 also schedule weekly calls with SYEP placement  
5 supervisors to ensure both the supervisor and the  
6 youth's needs were being met. Coaches scheduled  
7 frequent check ins with youth to support them  
8 throughout the placement to discuss connectively  
9 issues, also discuss effective communication  
10 strategies and to monitor progress.

11 Coaches help prepare youth for potential  
12 challenges by hosting monthly workshops for youth  
13 around the topics of navigating the remote workplace,  
14 video fatigue and professionalism. Coaches and  
15 career specialists also support youth in obtaining,  
16 collecting and submitting vital documentation online  
17 for SYEP.

18 Some of the key take a ways youth gain from SYEP  
19 program include effects of communication skills,  
20 career advancement and navigating relationships  
21 between youth and their supervisors. Additionally,  
22 youth were connected to the Hats and Ladders Career  
23 Building Network. These opportunities provided youth  
24 vital support in real life experiences and developed  
25

1  
2 their careers. Despite the immense difficulties  
3 presented by the ongoing COVID crisis -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 CAROLYN BLAIR: Thank you for the opportunity to  
6 submit this testimony.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. We will  
8 next hear from Mr. Jordan Hall followed by Angel  
9 Sacarello. Mr. Hall.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 JORDAN HALL: Good morning. My name is Jordan  
12 Hall, I am a Senior Youth Advocate on the BDS's  
13 Adolescent Representation Team at Brooklyn Defender  
14 Service. I want to thank Chair Rose and the  
15 Committee on Youth Services for holding this hearing  
16 today. BDS's Adolescents Representation team  
17 provides a specialized legal services and social work  
18 support to young people who are a resident of  
19 Brooklyn. We represent about 2,000 adolescents 13-21  
20 each year. The majority of whom are Black or Latinx  
21 and live in low income communities. The Summer Youth  
22 Employment Program has been an asset for youth we  
23  
24 serve and for low income Black and Brown youth across  
25 the city. In 2019, 81 percent of SYEP participants



1  
2 were Black and Brown and 84 percent were enrolled in  
3 Brooklyn, Queens or the Bronx. Research on SYEP has  
4 indicated that participation increases likelihood of  
5 employment in the following year and reduces the  
6 likelihood of incarceration for them.

7 SYEP is a step towards career success. Youth who  
8 participate in the program receive on the job  
9 training. They gain necessary skills and they  
10 receive supportive mentoring from their supervisors.  
11 The program gives young people something to look  
12 forward to. It provides structure during the summer  
13 and it boosts confidence.

14 For youth involved with justice involvement,  
15 including youth at Crossroads and juvenile detention  
16 facilities SYEP may be one of the few job  
17 opportunities available. Participants, they aren't  
18 judged by the charges that they are facing but they  
19 are allowed to be young people and given the same  
20 opportunities to learn and grow as their peers.

21 We ask you to carefully consider what message it  
22 sends to our young people when we cut Summer Youth  
23 Employment Programs to afford to pay the officers who  
24 terrorize our communities or when teachers are  
25

1 shortchanged by the NYPD prizes annual overtime  
2 allotment by 100 million yet again.

3  
4 If the city wants to invest in young people, it  
5 must create opportunities for young people to feel  
6 safe to thrive and see viable successful future in  
7 themselves in their communities. The investment in  
8 SYEP is an indication to young New Yorkers that their  
9 lives and their time have value. Where society  
10 allocates its budget is a statement of its values.  
11 We encourage the City Council to consider those  
12 values when determining if SYEP will be funded in the  
13 next years budget. Thank you again for holding this  
14 important hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
17 from Mr. Angel Sacarello. Mr. Sacarello.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 ANGEL SACARELLO: Hello, my name is Angel  
20 Sacarello, I am the Program Director for University  
21 Settlement at Campos Plaza Community Center. I want  
22 to thank the Committee for allowing me to testify  
23 today. Our agency as a whole has been committed to  
24 development of youth and young adults in the  
25 community center for years.

1  
2 As a Center Director, we have a unique  
3 perspective. We offer programming for participants  
4 as young as kindergarten and all the way through  
5 adulthood. So, we are able to see our participants  
6 develop and grow. The SYEP program is such an  
7 essential part to that development, especially as  
8 these young people are transitioning into adulthood.

9 Without these programs available to our  
10 participants consistently, we have a lot of  
11 difficulty in terms of providing them with the  
12 resources that they need. Our programs try to  
13 emphasize continued support for young adults. These  
14 programs are also essential for the financial support  
15 that is needed, especially during our current  
16 situation in the pandemic.

17 On top of that when we are not able to offer  
18 consistency, especially in a time where everything  
19 seems to be uncertain, our participants tend to lose  
20 trust, not only in specific programs but also in the  
21 city as a whole. When these young people feel that  
22 they have been left out, when they feel that they are  
23 operating solely on their own and they have no other  
24 options, that's when poor decisions are made. That's  
25 when alternatives that we want – we don't want them

1  
2 to go down, we don't want them to participate and  
3 start to happen. So, it is essential that these  
4 programs are not only maintained but also expanded  
5 because in my experience, the need has not shrunk.  
6 The need is growing and it's very - in the ten years  
7 that our center has been a work side 4 SYEP, we have  
8 never been able to get all of the participants that  
9 need a spot, a spot in the program.

10 And so, a lot of our participants don't have that  
11 job readiness for future opportunities and especially  
12 in the current climate, they need that job readiness  
13 more than ever before. We are entering an era where  
14 tech and video and remote are now essential and they  
15 need to have opportunities to practice those skill  
16 sets before they are sent out there.

17 Also, we need to make sure that we are  
18 maintaining a role modeling in a safe space and  
19 having these SYEP is a powerful tool for participants  
20 in term of making sure that their needs are being  
21 met. That we are able to maintain those connections  
22 with them and with their families. So, I ask the  
23 Council to make sure that this program continues to  
24 be a priority. That we are reaching out and getting  
25 these services provided early because as a provider,

1  
2 the more time we have to actually implement this  
3 program, the more successful those programs are and  
4 we need to make sure that that is something that is  
5 high on –

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now turn  
8 to questions from Chair Rose for this panel.

9 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: No, I don't. Thank you. I  
10 just want to thank you for your hard work, your  
11 advocacy and for documenting the adverse impacts that  
12 the lack of having SYEP workforce development  
13 programs available to our young people have on you  
14 know, on our communities as a whole.

15 So, I want to thank you for giving us the  
16 statistics and the data but also for working to  
17 combat some of these problems that we are facing.  
18 So, I thank you for your work and advocacy.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I would like to remind again  
20 that if Council Members would like to pose a  
21 question, please use the raise hand function in Zoom.

22 There are no questions, so we will move on to our  
23 next panel, which will be Makeda Murray of Sheltering  
24 Arms, Simon Weng of the Chinese American Planning

1  
2 Council and Eryn Hatzithomas of Queens Botanical  
3 Garden. Ms. Murray.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MAKEDA MURRAY: Good afternoon. My name is  
6 Makeda Murray and I am the Creative Development  
7 Specialist on the foster care and adoption team at  
8 Sheltering Arms. Thank you Chair Rose and member of  
9 the Committee for the opportunity to testify before  
10 you today.

11 Sheltering Arms is one of the city's largest  
12 providers of education and youth development and  
13 community and family wellbeing programs for the  
14 Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens. We serve  
15 nearly 15,000 children, youth and families each year  
16 and employ more than 12,000 staff from across New  
17 York City. We join UNH in urging the city to commit  
18 to serving 75,000 students at SYEP this summer to  
19 2021. And calling on DYCD to include providers in  
20 the planning of SYEP for this summer.

21  
22 Prior to the pandemic, the application process  
23 for SYEP was easy and all youth needed was to  
24 complete an application and ensure that they have the  
25 proper identification.

1  
2 The summer of 2020 was totally different, from  
3 the application to the placement. After the city  
4 reversed its decision and restored SYEP, I had only  
5 seven days to submit the applications for all of our  
6 youth. This required me to work overtime for a week  
7 straight just to ensure everything was submitted on  
8 time. For the youth who did get placed, many  
9 placements consisted of workshops and answering  
10 emails. Younger youth in these placements found it  
11 similar to their pre-COVID placements and felt that  
12 they were actually working and not just lounging  
13 around. However the older youth who are more used to  
14 the physical aspect of work felt as if their  
15 placement wasn't challenging enough for them.

16 These youth were able to complete their tasks  
17 ahead of time and found themselves bored. Added to  
18 this, several youth didn't get paid until several  
19 weeks into their placement and one youth specifically  
20 who did not receive his last payment.

21 This was a huge impact on the youth because they  
22 felt like they were being taken advantage of. SYEP  
23 has been an important resource for youth because it  
24 is one time of the year when they are able to earn  
25 their own money without going without or waiting.

1  
2 Many of these youth come from low income  
3 families, are in foster care, or they are reliant on  
4 others to care for them. SYEP gives them the chance  
5 to be independent and reap the benefits of their hard  
6 work. SYEP has had a huge impact on the youth  
7 already fragile mental health and without it, I worry  
8 that their mental health will be impacted more.

9 After all of the challenges that have transpired  
10 and the unknowns in the upcoming year, many of our  
11 youth are really looking forward to SYEP 2021. I  
12 currently have youth calling and telling me to let  
13 them know when they can apply for SYEP. I do hope  
14 that we are awarded funds for SYEP this year and that  
15 we are given ample time to fix the kinks of what last  
16 year created.

17 The city must commit now to serving the 75,000  
18 youth in SYEP this summer and DYCD must engage  
19 providers in planning the process. Thank you for  
20 this opportunity to testify and for your commitment  
21 to our youth. I am happy to answer any questions you  
22 may have.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.  
24  
25



1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
3 from Simon Weng followed by Eryn Hatzithomas. Mr.  
4 Weng.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 SIMON WENG: Whew, glad to be here. Good  
7 afternoon Chair Rose and members of the New York City  
8 Council Committee on Youth Services. It gives me  
9 great pleasure to be here and testify.

10 My name is Simon Weng and I am an SYEP Program  
11 Director at the Chinese American Planning Council,  
12 where we are the trusted partner to more than 60,000  
13 individuals and families each year.

14 As one of city's largest youth employment  
15 providers, CPC greatly appreciates Chair Rose, the  
16 Youth Service Committee and the Council Members who  
17 fought for the restoration of SYEP last summer. CPC  
18 has been providing SYEP in our communities for years.  
19 We have seen the impact of providing meaningful  
20 summer experience it has on our youth and  
21 communities.

22 Last summer, SYEP was needed more than ever as  
23 families struggle to make ends meet and local  
24 businesses struggle to stay afloat. While we  
25 appreciate the city's decision to partially restore

1 SYEP last year, we found that the effort was simply  
2 not enough. Too many young people in Bronx sites  
3 were regrettably left out of a program that would  
4 have benefitted them greatly.

5  
6 In New York City SYEP is as much a part of the  
7 teenage experience as prom and graduation. I am  
8 pretty sure they didn't get any of that last year.  
9 Although we are still in the midst of a pandemic  
10 wreaking havoc on our economy, it is a shame that  
11 SYEP is continually used as a budget negotiation item  
12 and consequently that so many young people lose out  
13 on the monumental experiences provided by the  
14 program.

15 If the goal of SYEP is to provide financial  
16 literacy and work readiness skills, we award  
17 experience and come to you while simultaneously  
18 supporting worksite partners, there is no greater  
19 opportunity to fully fund one of the city's most  
20 successful youth initiatives and safety net program.

21 As adults, we tend to overlook the skills and  
22 knowledge that young [INAUDIBLE 2:29:23-2:29:25] in  
23 times thinking that we have everything to offer them.  
24 The pandemic is a prime example of how our SYEP  
25 worksites could have benefited from the value and

1  
2 move New York workers through a fully funded program.  
3 As many companies were moving online and leveraging  
4 various social media platforms, local mom and pop  
5 shops did not have the skills or knowledge to make  
6 that adjustment.

7 SYEP participants should have been at the  
8 forefront of supporting with this transition. I  
9 strongly implore you to continue fighting for our  
10 communities. This is a commitment to funding 75,000  
11 slots for SYEP this summer. Providers need to be  
12 assured and can have the ability to plan educational  
13 work opportunities for our youth without the threat  
14 of another SYEP contract this budget. We need to  
15 continue supporting the city [LOST AUDIO 2:30:07]  
16 through SYEP this summer but with the flexibility in  
17 doing so in-person and remotely.

18 We already know the positive impacts that SYEP  
19 has. The city must continue investing in our younger  
20 generation, so we may have a brighter and more  
21 skilled community. As for off script, I am 26-years-  
22 old. I think I applied as early as like possible at  
23 like 14 for SYEP. So, I have only been picked once  
24 but the funny thing about being picked once was that  
25 it had a huge impact on my life. Because I think I

1  
2 got picked when I was in my 20. I actually started  
3 working -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 SIMON WENG: Oh, damn, okay, thank you, thank  
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Just finish your sentence.

8 SIMON WENG: Oh, okay, okay. Uhm, so, that one  
9 summer I worked at SYEP, it really helped a lot  
10 because I used that money to pay for my college  
11 classed because I wanted to take a summer class to  
12 graduate earlier and then, behold, I graduated during  
13 that summer and eventually I started working at CPC,  
14 right where I worked as - because they are my  
15 provider and here I am. You know, I am a Program  
16 Director you know, I'm feeling good right, I look  
17 pretty good now. I just really appreciate it.

18 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

19 SIMON WENG: To have this opportunity.

20 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you. Thank you so much.  
21 We are proud of you.

22 SIMON WENG: I'm trying to. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
25 from Eryn Hatzithomas. Mr. Hatzithomas.

1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

2 ERYN HATZITHOMAS: Thank you so much. My name is  
3 Eryn Hatzithomas. I am the Coordinator of Volunteers  
4 at Queens Botanical Garden. Thank you Committee  
5 members for providing this opportunity for me to  
6 testify today. So, Queens Botanical Garden is  
7 located on 39 acres of city owned land in Flushing  
8 Queens. We are the place where people, plants and  
9 cultures meet.  
10

11 Public gardens and parks are even more important  
12 now than ever and we offer a safe, beautiful and  
13 interesting place nature heals. Even in this  
14 pandemic year we had 165 people come to the garden.  
15 The garden was able to host socially distanced  
16 weddings and birthday parties and public programs.  
17 People who came to the garden love that it made them  
18 feel like life was almost normal again.

19 This would not be possible without the hard work  
20 of our entire garden staff. Prior to COVID, we  
21 welcomed 2,000 community volunteers and young interns  
22 annually to help keep the gardens green and growing.  
23 This includes the significant contributions of our  
24 SYEP interns. QBG was proud to host up to 40  
25 participants each summer and over the six week

1  
2 program, we strived to provide meaningful job skills  
3 and experience and have positioned the youth for  
4 success in their future careers.

5       The participants come from diverse economic  
6 backgrounds and we focus to make sure they learn  
7 important job skills when they are with us. Their  
8 work reaches all corners in departments of the  
9 garden. To make this happen, we partner with local  
10 community organizations in diversity programs such as  
11 Chinese Planning Council, Korean Community Services,  
12 Common Point Queens, Frank Sinatra 993 School,  
13 Lexington School for the deaf along with many, many  
14 others.

15       And this year, through the pandemic's many  
16 impacts, the Garden continued to serve as a steadfast  
17 internship resource for our communities youth. Last  
18 summer QBG hosted 35 interns, 7 onsite and 28 virtual  
19 interns. The drop in onsite support was strongly  
20 felt by our team this year. Queens Botanical staff  
21 never stopped bringing people, plants and cultures  
22 together. The contribution of our volunteers and  
23 interns help us to remain an urban oasis for  
24 visitors. They find peace, relaxation and  
25 inspiration among the wonders of nature.

1  
2           The SYEP programs endurance will be an important  
3 component of the ability of the garden and our  
4 community to thrive. Thank you.

5           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now turn  
6 to Chair Rose for questions for this panel.

7           CHAIRPERSON ROSE: I have none, just gratitude.

8           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, I would like to remind  
9 Council Members to use the raise hand function in  
10 Zoom to ask questions.

11           There are no questions, so we are moving to the  
12 next panel which will consist of James Lee of the  
13 Wildlife Conservation Society, J.T. Falcone of the  
14 United Neighborhood Houses, Danielle Fuller of  
15 Forestdale Inc. and Lazar Treschan of HERE to HERE.  
16 James Lee please.

17           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18           JAMES LEE: Hi, I want to thank Chairwoman Rose  
19 and the Committee on Youth Services for the  
20 opportunity to testify today for the Summer Youth  
21 Employment Program. My name is James Lee, I am a  
22 Freshman at the Macaulay Honors College at Hunter  
23 College and I am also a Youth Employee at the  
24 Wildlife Conservation's Bronx Zoo.

1  
2 Like many of our cultural institutions group, a  
3 colleagues WCS relies on SYEP youth to contribute to  
4 the engaging experience for our visitors at all five  
5 parks. As one of its largest providers, we  
6 definitely felt the loss of the program last year.  
7 Not only in the loss of support and talent but in  
8 wage replacement and a diverse talent pipeline. Of  
9 the 250 SYEP students who were with our organization  
10 in 2019, many were hired by WCS in part-time capacity  
11 even after the end of SYEP.

12 We all understand that these are tight times for  
13 the city budget but they are far more difficult times  
14 for people like me and the families that rely on  
15 SYEP, not only for income but for that first job  
16 experience that teaches us about the world, ourselves  
17 and real world careers.

18 It is important that the city's budget is not  
19 balanced on the backs of our most vulnerable youth.  
20 My first work experience and placement in SYEP was  
21 working at a barber shop in Jamaica Queens during the  
22 summer of 2017. It as in that role that I really  
23 learned work etiquette and responsibility and after  
24 that, I participated in the Bronx Zoo's Discovery  
25



1  
2 Guide Volunteer program in 2018. And I was looking  
3 for a way to continue doing what I loved at the Bronx  
4 Zoo while also earning an hourly wage. So, I was  
5 fortunate enough to get a placement in SYEP at the  
6 Bronx Zoo during the summer of 2019, facilitating  
7 hands on educational activities for zoo visitors.

8 Largely due to my experience through SYEP and the  
9 leadership experience it provided me, in 2020 I was  
10 hired as a seasonal employee at the Bronx Zoo again.  
11 In this role, I helped to create an educational, safe  
12 and welcoming experience for all our visitors and I  
13 felt extremely fortunate to have had a meaningful job  
14 during these challenging times. Especially after  
15 being rejected by Summer Bridge 2020. If it were not  
16 my experience in SYEP, I am not sure these doors  
17 would have been open to me.

18 Programs like SYEP are often the only opportunity  
19 for low income youth to gain paid work experience and  
20 build their professional skills. COVID-19 has caused  
21 disproportionately destructive economic impacts in  
22 some of our most vulnerable communities. It is a  
23 vital resource to low income communities and any cuts  
24 to the program will have massive negative  
25 consequences on those who need help the most.

1  
2 Again, I want to thank the Council for the  
3 opportunity to testify on behalf of the tens of  
4 thousands of young New Yorkers who stand to benefit  
5 greatly from SYEP.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
7 from J.T. Falcone followed by Danielle Fuller.  
8 Falcone please.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 J.T. FALCONE: Hey there, I am J.T. Falcone I am  
11 a Policy Analyst with United Neighborhood Houses. I  
12 work on SYEP as well as other programs that serve  
13 youth with workforce services. For over 20 years,  
14 United Neighborhood Houses has led the campaign for  
15 summer jobs, which was created in response to federal  
16 funding cuts that threaten summer jobs for youth. We  
17 worked at the city, state level to increase funding  
18 for this vital program and over the years have  
19 watched it grow to the 75,000 young people that were  
20 served in 2019.

21 I know that I am preaching to the choir here, so  
22 I am not going to go too deep into all of the reasons  
23 why SYEP is great. I really appreciate the Chair and  
24 the Council Members who have committed to fighting  
25 for a full restoration of 75,000 slots. I also think

1  
2 that hearing this rhetorical shift that folks are  
3 excited to think about expansion this year and that  
4 we acknowledge that 75,000 isn't enough. That  
5 ultimately we need to get to a place where every  
6 young person who applies for an opportunity should be  
7 granted one is really exciting. Because of UNH's  
8 role where we convene and work very closely with the  
9 providers who were allowed this program, uhm, we have  
10 lots of thoughts and opinions about ways that the  
11 system will need to be tweaked in order to allow for  
12 that capacity, right.

13       It's not just a situation where in order to  
14 double the estimates for universality are about  
15 150,000 slots would be reaching universal. Based on  
16 applications and folks eligibility in the past.

17       It is not a situation where you can just double  
18 the budget and achieve that. It is going to take  
19 creativity. It is going to take intersectoral  
20 partnerships and it is going to take a lot of  
21 innovation particularly on the part of New York's  
22 provider community. But it is also the right thing  
23 to do.

24

25

1  
2 We just have heard time and again from young  
3 people and thank you to all of the young people who  
4 have come out today. I really appreciate you taking  
5 your personal time to show up on this line to talk  
6 about the importance of this program. We will need  
7 you this year unfortunately. I know that we have  
8 heard that that looks like the program is in the  
9 budget right now. When we see the Preliminary  
10 Budget, we will understand what the modified thinking  
11 is and where the Administration is at. But we will  
12 be here, we will be fighting alongside our advocates  
13 in Council, advocacy organizations, provider  
14 community and young people once again to say 75,000  
15 is the very bare minimum that we will accept for this  
16 year. We need to get back to where we were and  
17 really excited just hear all the folks thinking today  
18 and using that word universe.

19 So, I think it really is promising for the  
20 future. SO, thank you very much for your time.  
21 Thank you for hosting this hearing and thank you for  
22 joining Chair Rose, the rally beforehand.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 J.T. FALCONE: My email and phone number is in  
25 here if you have any questions. Thanks.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
3 from Danielle Fuller followed by Lazar Treschan. Ms.  
4 Fuller.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 DANIELLE FULLER: Good afternoon esteemed members  
7 of the City Council and staff. My name is Danielle  
8 Brown Fuller, I am the Director of Strong Futures at  
9 Forestdale. Forestdale helps children and families  
10 navigate their paths from trauma and crisis to  
11 stability and growth. We support them in their work  
12 to heal from abuse or neglect. Forestdale is pleased  
13 that young people in our foster care and other youth  
14 programs have benefitted from SYEP for many years.  
15 We know that they need the structure, the income and  
16 self-confidence they obtain from SYEP.

17 Today, I am here to add my voice, urging you to  
18 support baseline funding for SYEP. Youth aging out  
19 of foster care consistently face unbelievably grim  
20 odds. 20 percent will enter into homeless shelters  
21 within three years. Only 22 percent will earn a high  
22 school degree or equivalency. Only 12 percent will  
23 enroll in college or vocational programming.

24 We understand that internships and other work  
25 opportunities allow our young people to beat these

1 odds. That is why we became a founding member of the  
2 Fair Futures coalition in 2018. Fair Futures has  
3 brought full-service supports to young people, ages  
4 11-21, who have been in foster care. Forestdale  
5 helps these youth chart a successful life course with  
6 life coaching, intensive educational supports, career  
7 training and more.  
8

9 When faced with the loss of SYEP, we designed an  
10 ad hoc, project-based, paid summer internship program  
11 called STAR Summer Training Activist Program. Where  
12 we put 33 young people in project based learning  
13 where they learned skills like business planning,  
14 critical thinking, reasoning, creativity, cross-  
15 cultural understanding, etc. The program as 100  
16 percent remote.

17 Although STAR was great, it is not sustainable.  
18 SYEP must be baselined. Let me tell you about one  
19 young person that was in our program. He entered the  
20 program when he was 12, he is now 17. He came  
21 through because his parents inflicted physical harm  
22 to him and he is gang involved. He is not a talker.  
23 Therapy didn't work but through Fair Futures, through  
24 his coaching that he received from us, he was able to  
25 learn how to use his words and not his fists as he

1 tells us. He now sees a future for himself. He is  
2 now more engaged. We are looking to reengage him  
3 into school and he is currently part of our mentored  
4 internship program.  
5

6 Forestdale remains committed to providing  
7 material assistance and programmatic support so young  
8 people can envision hope in a future. We trust that  
9 City Council feels the same way and provide baseline  
10 funding for SYEP to support young people and their  
11 dreams because we can not let them down. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
13 from Mr. Lazar Treschan. Mr. Treschan.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 LAZAR TRESCHAN: Hi everyone. Thanks for the  
16 opportunity to testify and thanks to Chair Rose in  
17 particular for her leadership on this issue. I am  
18 going to take the lead of my intern La'Toya Beecham  
19 who spoke earlier and not read my testimony. I think  
20 as with the case of a lot of interns, you know, the  
21 adults who work with them, learn as much from them as  
22 they do from us and you know, that's another thing we  
23 haven't really talked about the way that young people  
24 through SYEP and through other programs, getting out  
25

1  
2 into the workplace can really have an effect on the  
3 rest of us and I think you are seeing that here  
4 today. The powerful voice of young people and I want  
5 to circle back, just to the comment that Chair Rose  
6 made. You know, all of this is a microcosm, we  
7 should have young people testifying before the city  
8 at every Youth Services hearing, at every education  
9 hearing. The fact that SYEP can be canceled without  
10 consulting with young people, that is part of the  
11 problem and that is a reflection of the problem and  
12 hearing you say that today and putting young people  
13 forward and encouraging them to have a seat at the  
14 table is really encouraging to me.

15 When — you know I grew up in the city. When I  
16 moved back to the city, it was to replan SYEP about  
17 20 years ago. Then it was a program to get young  
18 people off the streets, right. Now, we have turned  
19 it into a program to really give them skills in a job  
20 and I think we need to take right now as an  
21 opportunity to go much bigger. The call for  
22 universal, the best way for us to do that, you know,  
23 85 percent of SYEP students are high school students.  
24 We know that high schools aren't teaching young  
25 people a lot of the skills they need, not just to



1  
2 succeed in work but to succeed in college, to  
3 navigate the paperwork. To speak with adults that  
4 aren't your parents or your teacher. To handle  
5 problems that come with budgeting, financial aid and  
6 like La'Toya said, you learn all those skills in a  
7 job. We really need to use this as an opportunity to  
8 step back, make SYEP universal, bring the power of  
9 the incredible community based organizations that we  
10 have heard from today and connect them into our  
11 schools through SYEP to really build those linkages  
12 that will benefit young people and schools.

13 We from HERE to HERE and my former job at  
14 Community Services Society have put a couple reports  
15 about what could universal SYEP look like if it was  
16 full connected. Really building what young people do  
17 ten months of the year and really turn into something  
18 that can supercharge in the New York City economy.  
19 This year more ever, we need SYEP. We need the  
20 income to the families, young people. To the Chair's  
21 point earlier, have been so disconnected. Let's use  
22 this summer as a way to reengage them, connect them  
23 back to their schools through a school based SYEP  
24 model. Now, that is a service option within SYEP,

25

1  
2 really should expand that. Every young person should  
3 be given a paid internship as part of their high  
4 school experience and let's really use this as an  
5 opportunity to step back and make the program really  
6 what it can be for every young person in the city.

7 Really appreciate everyone's commitment to get to  
8 universal, to go past you know, fighting for slots.  
9 We can't have SYEP be subject to the budget dance  
10 every year and making it universal is the only way to  
11 do that. Thank you very much.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now turn  
13 to questions from Chair Rose for this panel.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Uhm, I have none but again I  
15 just want to thank the providers for you know,  
16 harnessing the energy and channeling the young  
17 people's creativity so that they are in the right  
18 place and they are in the right place to make change  
19 and part of that is due to the direction and support  
20 that your agencies have given them and that goes for  
21 all of the providers. So, thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Members, just a  
23 reminder, please use the raise hand function in Zoom  
24 if you would like to pose a question.

1  
2           There seems to be no questions, so moving onto  
3 the next panel, which will consist of Christine  
4 James-McKenzie of the Jobs First NYC, Tatiana  
5 Arguello, Cashay Haffoney and Michael –

6           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7           CHRISTINE JAMES-MCKENZIE: Good morning to the  
8 distinguished members of the Committee on Youth  
9 Services. My name is Christine James-McKenzie and I  
10 am the Associate of Communications Learning and  
11 Policy at Jobs First NYC. It's a nonprofit  
12 intermediary that creates in advance a solution and  
13 separate barriers and transform the system.  
14 Supporting young adults and their communities in the  
15 pursuit of economic opportunities.

16           I would also just take a quick moment to  
17 acknowledge the young people who have taken the time  
18 to come and testify. Your testimony was wonderful to  
19 hear.

20           Now, Jobs First NYC is currently in the process  
21 of developing a youth adult workforce agenda that  
22 examines policy, practice and systems change  
23 recommendations that will improve educational and  
24 economic outcomes for young adults across the city.  
25 For this process, we have facilitated discussions

1  
2 with practitioners across the five boroughs, many of  
3 whom are SYEP programming.

4       While the SYEP remains an important program for  
5 workplace learning and early career development,  
6 there are several ways it could be administered  
7 differently to better support these organizations and  
8 the young adults they serve. To this end, I would  
9 like to share the following recommendations. First,  
10 that we map in demand skills and partner with  
11 employers, data linking new jobs to current  
12 educational offering provisions should be a priority  
13 with a constantly evolving economy, short to be  
14 further impacted by the success and failures of the  
15 vaccine rollout. It is imperative that programs have  
16 access to real time labor market information to help  
17 them better match young adults to jobs that are  
18 available in summer 2021.

19       The labor market information should include data  
20 gathered through employer partnerships and should  
21 actively tie to economic development that the city is  
22 doing to support a collective economic recovery. Now  
23 is not the time for silo's, intentionally tying SYEP  
24 to economic recovery efforts. We believe that you  
25

1 know, that should be something addressed separately.  
2 We also believe in order to help market the SYEP to  
3 employers, the city should not just be intentional  
4 about the potential employer benefits of summer youth  
5 employment. It should be intentional about how these  
6 benefits are marketed to employers.  
7

8 We also believe that we need to remain flexible  
9 about remote SYEP placements. While there have been  
10 many public health gains since last summer, most  
11 notably the different COVID-19 vaccines, the future  
12 of the economy and the timing of any meaningful  
13 recovery is still uncertain. Many SYEP young adults  
14 may need to be placed remotely. The city should  
15 remain flexible about these placements and work  
16 closely to support programs as they navigate in  
17 uncertain economic climate.

18 We also recommend that we ensure that young  
19 adults are on the ramp to their next opportunity at  
20 the end of SYEP. 18-24-year-old SYEP participants  
21 were out of school and out of work, should be offered  
22 resources and activity on ramp to -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 CHRISTINE JAMES-MCKENZIE: Thank you for the  
25 opportunity to testify.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
3 from Tatiana Arguello followed by Cashay Haffoney.  
4 Ms. Arguello please.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 TATIANA ARGUELLO: Good afternoon Chair, Council  
7 Member Rose and members of the Youth Service  
8 Committee. I just want to first thank you to the  
9 City Council at large for championing and restoring  
10 SYEP last year.

11 My name is Tatiana Arguello and I am the Director  
12 of Workforce Development here at UAU. We are the  
13 largest SYEP provider in New York City traditionally  
14 serving over 5,000 young people through SYEP every  
15 year. Last year, we were only able to serve 2,200  
16 due to the late decision. And it just feels like  
17 yesterday that we were fighting to restore SYEP  
18 funding. This program along with a slew of other  
19 programming was abruptly cut due to the city's  
20 financial deficit. And instead of accepting defeat,  
21 we quickly formed a coalition to push back against  
22 these cuts. We took a stand and said firmly, we will  
23 not balance the books of our city on the backs of our  
24 young people.

1  
2 This coalition included partners like UNH, YES,  
3 HERE to HERE, Expanded AG, Teens Take Charge, CBO's  
4 across the city, our community leaders, partners, our  
5 young people and our elected officials. A special  
6 shout out to our very own Councilwoman Debbie Rose  
7 for her advocacy.

8 As a result, SYEP and other critical youth  
9 service programs like Cornerstones, Beacon, COMPASS,  
10 SONYC, were all saved and envisioned alongside DYCD.  
11 For months, although we were uncertain about funding,  
12 we centered our campaign about hearing about what the  
13 cuts would be to our young people in our community.  
14 Focus groups were formed in commission to think  
15 through what programming will look like to address  
16 the need and safety of our participants.

17 We presented our ideas in countless forms and  
18 fought back. We won because we understood that this  
19 is not the time to cut programming. We were not  
20 afraid to roll up our sleeves and face all of the  
21 challenges that were thrown our way. We have brought  
22 programming into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by building young  
23 people's work history, skills and professional  
24 networks in which help to secure jobs in meaningful  
25 ways.

1  
2 We interacted with new partners that we have  
3 never met. Zoom, the Google Platform, VEMO and other  
4 platforms allowed us to connect with high profile  
5 companies who traditionally would not make their way  
6 to Staten Island or the Bronx. The lessons we  
7 learned are now interweaved into all of our year  
8 around program we offer.

9 While though we have seen pain, we have also seen  
10 resilience. We have seen adaptability, we see  
11 growth, we see connectedness in new ways. Throughout  
12 this year we have seen our young people empowered and  
13 advocating for themselves in the world that they want  
14 to live in in so many ways. Our youth and our  
15 workforce teams were helping to solve real world  
16 issues alongside business owners, distribute PPE,  
17 become contract tracers, getting people signed up to  
18 vote and to help with the Census, helping with food  
19 distribution, creating education advocacy campaigns  
20 and even help in alongside their family affairs.

21 This serves as a critical reminder that we can  
22 and should demand critical –

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 TATIANA ARGUELLO: And ongoing support for our  
25 young people. We need to continue to expand and



1  
2 envision our services. I will add the rest of my  
3 testimony that I wasn't able to share to the City  
4 Council.

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now hear  
7 from Cashay Haffoney. Ms. Haffoney.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 CASHAY HAFFONEY: Hello and good afternoon  
10 everyone. First, I would like say Chair Rose, thank  
11 you so much. I am honored for this opportunity to  
12 speak to you and our colleagues about the importance  
13 of the Summer Youth Employment Program.

14 My name is Cashay Haffoney and I am the Coach  
15 Supervisor at Catholic Guardian Services. We are a  
16 foster care agency here in New York City and I cannot  
17 tell you how vital the Summer Youth Employment  
18 Program is to the success of our young adults who are  
19 transitioning into adulthood. You know, in addition  
20 to getting Fair Futures on in 2020, we all worked  
21 together. Our career development specialist, our  
22 workforce development team, to really, really, really  
23 be assertive with getting our youth engaged as rapid  
24 as possible for the Summer Youth Employment Program.

1  
2 And in that, we did develop new virtual platforms  
3 and curriculums to help them be better engaged and be  
4 successful but in order for us to all ensure that  
5 young adults in New York City are successful when  
6 they transition into adulthood and thrive, not just  
7 survive, we need to ensure that Summer Youth  
8 Employment Program is not just remains, but it  
9 expands.

10 All young adults need to be afforded this  
11 opportunity to work and gain those entry level  
12 skillsets to be successful in the workforce. Not  
13 just in school but in the workforce as well. Many of  
14 our young adults are young parents and they run their  
15 own households. So, these opportunities, these  
16 inaugural opportunities that SYEP affords our young  
17 adults, it is vital to the success not just of the  
18 young adults and their family but to our communities  
19 who they pour back into and who we work together to  
20 service.

21 So, yeah, it's an all hands on deck situation as  
22 far as I am concerned when it comes to SYEP. So,  
23 Chair Rose, uhm, Council Members, if there is  
24 anything that I can do to help push this initiative  
25 and make sure that SYEP stays a part of the New York

1  
2 City young adult experience, I am more than happy to  
3 commit my time and energy. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Alright, well I hope you – you  
5 have to maintain that energy. You have to give me  
6 some of it, so that you know, we will be undefeatable  
7 with the energy and the commitment that you know, I  
8 am hearing from all of you. I am sure that despite  
9 the fact that it might be a battle, that you know, we  
10 will be able to be victorious and shout out to  
11 Tatiana from UAU you know, as always, everyone is  
12 doing a good job. So, thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. Council  
14 Members, as a reminder, if you would like to pose a  
15 question, please use the raise hand function in Zoom.

16 There are no questions. At this point, we have  
17 concluded public testimony. However, if we have  
18 inadvertently missed anyone who would like to  
19 testify, please use the raise hand function in Zoom.

20 Okay, so Chair Rose, we have concluded public  
21 testimony for this hearing and I am turning to you.

22 CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Okay. Well, again, I want to  
23 thank you all for participating. I want to thank you  
24 for your commitment to our young people and we know

1  
2 that difficult budget decisions will have to be made  
3 this spring. But let me be very clear, we will not  
4 balance a budget on the backs of vulnerable youth.

5 Let me say it again. We will not balance this budget  
6 on the backs of our vulnerable youth.

7 We are being preemptive and we will not allow  
8 conversation to start off with youth losing any  
9 services. During this crisis that has magnified  
10 glaring disparities in our city, it is imperative  
11 that we provide a safety net for those young people  
12 before they fall even further behind.

13 So, we will be fighting every day, just as we  
14 fought to save and expand summer programs in the  
15 years past. And so, again, I thank you. I look  
16 forward to working with you and uhm, everyone be  
17 safe. Wear your masks, get your vaccinations because  
18 we need you. Thank you.

19 And with that, this hearing is concluded.  
20 [GAVEL] at 1:11 p.m. Thank you. Thank you all for  
21 being here.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: And we have ended the live.  
23 We are all wrapped up now. Thank you so much and  
24 everybody else that worked on this.

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COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

CHAIRPERSON ROSE: Thank you so much. Good job,  
you guys always do a great job, so thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you.

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 12, 2021