



NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

FISCAL 2022 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

BILL CHONG

COMMISSIONER

MARCH 11, 2021

Good morning Chair Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services. I'm Bill Chong, Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. I'm joined by Jagdeen Phanor, DYCD's Chief Financial Officer; Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner for Youth Services, Darryl Rattray, Associate Commissioner for Youth Services and Strategic Partnerships, Daphne Montanez, Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Development, Dana Cantelmi, ACCO, and Rong Zhang, Assistant Commissioner for Literacy and Immigrant Services. We are grateful to have this opportunity to testify on DYCD's Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget.

I am incredibly proud of DYCD staff, our providers, young people and families during the past challenging year. With COVID-19 and the City's worst economic crisis in 45 years, this was a year unlike any other. Going on PAUSE due to the pandemic meant meeting our core responsibilities while teleworking. DYCD's IT team quickly had the agency up and running remotely, and our staff didn't miss a beat. Services continued to be delivered in new ways: virtual opportunities like DYCD at Home; making sure that providers had contracts and were paid; and fresh approaches to internal and external communications in terms of content, frequency and delivery.

Our outstanding network of community-based organizations answered the call by quickly reinventing themselves to administer remote programming and adapt to new initiatives such as Learning Bridges so that New Yorkers have a safe place to learn and receive services. DYCD was able to serve 339,963 New Yorkers in Fiscal Year 2020, an increase over the previous year. We continued to address the needs of vulnerable and homeless youth primarily through in-person programming and more available beds. Our COMPASS afterschool programs served 122,575 young people, and Beacon and Cornerstone Community Centers became lifelines by providing everything from remote activities to food and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs). Tens of thousands of New Yorkers received support through literacy, immigrant services and anti-poverty programs. With your partnership, and in close coordination with our providers, we developed SYEP Summer Bridge, an engaging virtual program that offered young people opportunities to learn new skills, explore potential careers and earn money.

Online applications for most programs are now available at [discoverDYCD](#), and DYCD Connect has been greatly enhanced to help organizations communicate and coordinate with the communities they serve. These accomplishments are due in no small part to investments in streamlining and modernizing our systems.

Last week, as part of the City's ongoing efforts to address the digital divide in underserved communities, Mayor de Blasio announced a new initiative to provide free high-speed connectivity in public housing. DYCD and DOE working with the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC), The Rockefeller Foundation, Zoom, Cielo Scholarship Foundation, and EducationSuperHighway will deliver Wi-Fi and broadband upgrades at DYCD-funded Cornerstone Community Centers. More than 12,000 young people and adults will benefit from the enhancements during active programming at the centers, in addition to thousands of community members who can access the free Wi-Fi hotspots provided by ITDRC as a result of this partnership. We thank our partners for their support.

The Preliminary Budget places DYCD in a strong position to continue this progress and to prepare the city for a strong recovery. Despite the City's fiscal challenges, the Preliminary Budget preserves most baseline funding and programming, a true testament of the de Blasio Administration's commitment to the City's young people and families. It stands at \$745.4 million. \$533 million, or 71.5% is city tax levy, 9% is federal and 1% is state.

We are pleased that the Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget includes funding to support 70,000 slots for SYEP. Working with our providers and health experts, our program will provide services in-person, remotely or in a hybrid environment. This model will balance the needs of young people and their families and meet the needs of worksites as we move towards reopening our city. We anticipate applications to open mid-March. We thank the Council for your strong support and advocacy for SYEP.

Our other program areas are also receiving baseline funding. Fiscal 2022 funding levels currently stand at \$337 million for COMPASS programs, \$59.5 million for Beacon programs, and \$53.4 million for Cornerstone programs. The \$44.5 million to Runaway and Homeless Youth services will support 813 beds, eight drop-in centers and street outreach services. These and our other programs are essential in fostering "a recovery for all of us."

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



New York
Public
Library



QUEENS
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
FISCAL YEAR 2022 PRELIMINARY BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING
YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE
March 11, 2021**

Greetings: My name is Eva Shapiro, Manager of Early Childhood Education for the New York Public Library. I am pleased to represent the three public library systems of New York City as partners in the City Council's initiative for early literacy, City's First Readers. On behalf of the three systems, I would like to thank Speaker Corey Johnson, Committee Chair Deborah Rose, and the members of the committee for their support of youth services in our city during this most challenging time, and for the opportunity to testify today on the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Preliminary Budget.

We are truly grateful for the Council's generous support of City's First Readers. Each year, Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library offer neighborhood early literacy programs with an annual attendance exceeding 600,000 people. Over the course of the last year, the three library systems have worked to expand remote offerings to ensure we can support our youngest patrons and their caregivers. Funding from the City's First Readers initiative has been critical in helping libraries pivot to virtual offerings and continue to prioritize early literacy across the five boroughs.

As part of City's First Readers, each library system is developing and expanding its own early literacy services. Here are some highlights:

- **Brooklyn Public Library (BPL)** offered storytimes in 10 languages as well as training to child care providers in English, Spanish, and Chinese in early literacy and talking about race and racism through literature. We distributed books and other literacy materials to families in health care settings, child care, and family shelters. We also developed a workshop for parents on balancing screen time and literacy at home. We are making Grab and Go activity kits available to families with hands-on supplies to promote play and learning at home. Our signature school-readiness program, *Ready, Set, Kindergarten*, is offered in Spanish and English and we were able to print a program booklet to encourage families to read, talk, play, write, and sing in their communities. This spring, we will offer professional development on strength-based family engagement for our staff, to better build relationships and cultural competency with the families we serve.
- **New York Public Library (NYPL)** offered robust virtual early literacy programs including bilingual storytime in nine languages, STEAM storytime with hands-on activity guides and caregiver conversation groups that focused on a variety of high interest topics. The library also produced and distributed bilingual English/Spanish early literacy activity booklets for families to engage in developmentally appropriate literacy building activities at home with easily accessible materials. We provided 10 sessions of antiracist professional development to NYPL children's staff that

included topics such as race in storytime, Black Lives Matter in early education and combating the racist origins of nursery rhymes that has influenced all our early literacy programming.

- **Queens Public Library (QPL)** was able to take our school readiness program and convert it to a blended learning model. Home materials were mailed out to families and our course curriculum was offered virtually. We invested in a deep community reach through our Black Health and Healing Summit, offering our families both information on raising healthy literate children while approaching family health and needs as a whole. We continued to reach across the digital divide by offering take-home learning kits that promote higher order thinking in our youngest learners. We created a fully virtual version of our new mothers group called “Mothers on the Move” – this group focuses on educating new mothers about their young child's literacy needs while also addressing postpartum health, infant health, and general parenting issues. This group has a particular antiracist focus in its delivery.

The City's First Readers initiative has also allowed the three library systems to collaborate with program partners in unique ways:

- **Literacy Inc.** has worked with the libraries to provide programs to families citywide. Literacy Inc. staff offered virtual storytimes regularly in East New York (BPL); throughout Manhattan, Bronx, and Staten Island (NYPL); and weekly in the South Jamaica community (QPL).
- In collaboration with NYC Health + Hospitals, Reach Out and Read, and other City's First Readers partners, libraries are sending much-needed early literacy materials to quarantining families, including books and literacy kits, through Test & Trace initiatives.

We are proud of all we have accomplished in this difficult year and are optimistic about the future. Libraries, like our City's First Readers partners, have stepped up to pivot to remote programming throughout the pandemic. We are deeply appreciative of the Council's and Mayor's support, but know there will be a great deal of work to do to address learning loss and inequity that the pandemic has amplified across our city.

If the City Council authorizes funding for Fiscal Year 2022 for the City's First Readers Initiative, this vitally important work will only grow in NYC's libraries, as we look towards a future where we can once again provide our services in-person – at library branches, and in classrooms and child care settings. We could expand specialized family learning opportunities, grow school-readiness activities, and provide more training, which is necessary for our staff, on working with families with very young children, both virtually and at our libraries when it is safe to do so.

Our Libraries are the first social and educational experience many of our young families have, and we want it to be the most enriching experience it can be. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Audwin Greene <audwin.greenesw@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 11, 2021 at 9:48
AM

To: David Calvert <dcalvert@youthactionyouthbuild.org>

Good Morning,

My name is Audwin Greene. I am the Youth Counselor at ADC Dreams Youthbuild & Adult Training Program, located in Crown Heights community of Brooklyn, NY. I am also an Alumni of ADC Dreams Youthbuild & Young Adult Training Program, Class of 2009. My story has in some sorts come full circle.

As a youth, as many across New York state are, I was raised in a household facing financial adversity. It affected my schooling and ultimately led me to make the decision, though difficult, to forgo my education and join the work force. As things progressed, I was prepared to return to school but found myself in the increasing large population of Overaged and Under credited students across New York City. This led me to ADC Dreams Youth & Young Adult Training Program. And the second chance I desperately needed.

I say my story has come full circle due to my role now as a Youth Counselor. The methodology of training for the High School Equivalency (TASC) certification, vocational training, leadership development, etc coupled with the wrap around services and job readiness, as well as employment assistance, all while working directly in the communities that we are from to provide or repair low income housing feels phenomenal and is empowering. I speak for the countless Youthbuild Alumni, globally, who come back to their respective programs and give back what we received. We do not simply build communities, we build community leaders.

Youthbuild as a whole is way more than an organization. Youthbuild is a family, each program a smaller, but at times larger, family and support system for not only the students but the community. Due to Covid, we have managed to successfully transition our program virtually. Offering the same services, sense of family, and support we all need during these unexpected times. Now more than ever Youthbuild programs will be needed to help build, rebuild, and service our communities across not only New York State, But Globally.

Thank you.

Audwin Greene



167 W 89th St, New York, NY
10024, United States
+1 212-362-6710
ballethispanico.org

Ballet Hispanico
Providing Arts Education to New York City Youth for 50 Years

New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
March 11, 2021

“The Latinx world speaks, breathes and communicates through dance. We communicate with gestural movement that connects our diverse Latinidad. Our folk and social dances connect us to tradition and family; and guide us through life’s major events, from birth to death. Music and dance are the cultural godparents of all Latinx communities.”

Eduardo Vilaro, Artistic Director & CEO

I want to thank you and Councilman Gjonaj for once again providing such an incredibly rich opportunity for our children to learn about their own, or perhaps a new, culture through dance! The children thoroughly enjoy it, but the parents’ smiles throughout the performances are a true testament to the success of this program.”

Carol Ann Gilligan, Principal, PS/MS 498

Simply put, the arts are essential to the proper functioning of our society. The arts continue to demonstrate their ability to provide categorical evidence of their impact on social issues that concern virtually every facet of American society. The arts are especially important for our children. Students with an arts rich education:

- Have better grade point averages
- Score better on standardized tests in reading and math
- Have lower dropout rates

Americans for the Arts Action Fund

I would like to thank Chairman Rose and members of the committee for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I am David Chase, Associate Director of Institutional Relations at Ballet Hispanico. The quotes above speak volumes about the essential role and impact of the arts for children in New York City. Continuing support for the arts and arts organizations is more important than ever. We are grateful for the City Council’s support for culture and the arts in New York City throughout the years that yields a monumental return on investment for all New Yorkers.

I appreciate this opportunity to advocate for funding in the FY22 budget, and it is my pleasure to provide the information below about Ballet Hispanico and some of the exciting work we engage in each year with some 12,000 of the city’s youth.



Ballet Hispanico is the nation's renowned Latino dance organization and one of America's Cultural Treasures. Ballet Hispanico brings communities together to celebrate and explore Latino cultures through innovative dance performances, transformative dance training, and enduring community engagement experiences.

Founded in 1970 by National Medal of Arts recipient, Tina Ramírez, the organization emerged during the post-civil rights movement on New York's Upper West Side, **providing a safe haven for primarily Black and Brown Latinx youth seeking artistic sanctuary during New York City's plight in the 1970s.**

With its strong emphasis on dance, achievement, and public presence, the organization has flourished in its three main programs: its Company, School of Dance, and Community Arts Partnerships. The organization serves as a platform for historically omitted and overlooked artists providing them with increased capacity, voice, and affirmation.

During a typical year, Ballet Hispanico reaches over 20,000 New Yorkers through its three main programs:

Ballet Hispanico Company

Performances by the 14-member **Ballet Hispanico Company** include annual New York Seasons at the Apollo and Joyce theaters as well as special appearances at events such as the Hudson River Dance Festival in Hudson River Park, the annual Fall for Dance season at City Center, and our annual *A Calle* Block Party on West 89th Street in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

School of Dance

The Ballet Hispanico **School of Dance is the direct link to the organization's values of access, opportunity, and pride for all students interested in dance and Latinx culture.** The School is a nationally accredited training center that leads with a holistic curriculum for today's young dancer. The School offers 135 classes each week for 35 weeks per year as well as summer programs. Throughout its 50 years, the School has held has offered classes for every age and ability level each year to for its diverse student population, providing an inclusive and nurturing environment to over 1,000 students of all ages.

Community Arts Partnerships

Since our founding, the pillars of education and community engagement have been at the core of Ballet Hispanico and to this day serve as the backbone of the organization and its mission. **Community Arts Partnerships (CAP) arts education programs** engage and enrich communities by providing exploratory learning experiences of Latino cultures from around the world. BH teaching artists collaborate with schools and community members to tailor each program to align with the needs and interests of the participants. Activities include **multi-week dance residencies in schools, interactive performances, and classroom workshops and master classes.** For many students, it is inspiring and motivating to engage with Ballet Hispanico teachers and performers who reflect their own cultural heritage.



Response to COVID-19

On March 23, 2020, BH launched *BUnidos* a comprehensive social media program that included content created by the artistic and administrative staff in all of our program areas. Content included streaming of recorded Company performances followed by live Q&A sessions with AD/CEO Eduardo Vilaro and the choreographer, **dance classes for students and enthusiasts of all ages, health and wellness classes, inspirational messages**, and more. All of this was made available through daily video postings on Instagram and Facebook with new content created on an ongoing basis. *BUnidos* programs continue to provide continuity for our community and makes it possible for us to connect on a social and emotional level during this period of social distancing—a virtual connection that is likely to continue after the current crisis passes.

The Future

The digital expertise the Ballet Hispanico staff has acquired in the past year is making it possible for the organization to provide high-quality online programs during FY21 and beyond. And the exciting first steps toward reopening and resuming in-person programs is underway. Activities include the following:

Virtual CASA FY21

Ballet Hispanico is currently reaching students in 12 public schools in New York City through this invaluable after-school program. Our teaching artists conduct live, multi-week online dance classes where students are learning Latino folk dances and also participating in complementary activities (reading, writing) to learn more about Latino music and culture. A pre-recorded, interactive “Performance for Young People” includes excerpts from the repertory performed by the Ballet Hispanico Company followed by a live dance lesson. In FY22 when we expect in-person programs will have resumed, each CASA program will include a culminating performance where students perform the dances they learned during a school assembly. Students are fully costumed by Ballet Hispanico and parents, guardians, students, and Council Members are invited to attend.

School of Dance Classes

Beginning March 15, 2021, Ballet Hispanico is reopening the School of Dance to a limited number of pre-professionals students for in-person instruction for the first time in a year. The reopening process will continue gradually throughout the remainder of the year as pandemic restrictions are lifted and the safety of the students is assured. We anticipate returning to full enrollment in FY22 and will provide classes to over 1,000 students age 4 through adult.

Arts Enrichment Program

An important element in our commitment to developing emerging artists is **providing opportunities for students to see the best the art form has to offer**. Enrichment activities include master classes, mentoring opportunities with the professional BH Company and artistic leadership, field trips to world-class performances, and professional development workshops. This deepens each student’s knowledge in the forms studied at the school as well as exposes them to new career possibilities.



Performance and Additional Dance Opportunities

In addition to their annual Winter Showcase recitals in a black box space onsite, and year-end productions in a theater space, a very strong effort is made to **provide additional performance opportunities for students to hone their performing arts skills**. Examples include participation in Performances for Young People (one-hour narrated performances of excerpts from BH repertory) alongside the professional BH Company and BHdos at the Apollo Theater, and citywide events that are donor-sponsored and/or community based.

Scholarships

Each year, Ballet Hispánico provides approximately **\$300,000 in scholarship support** to about 20% its students including both needs- and merit-based awards. This support has never been more crucial and necessary since the pandemic has had such a devastating impact on the incomes of so many families.

The Scholars Program

Eduardo Vilaro, Artistic Director & CEO of Ballet Hispánico, envisions a new, comprehensive **dance scholarship program that would transform the lives of young Latino/a children from low-income families in New York City**. “The Scholars Program” will provide students with incomparable dance training and holistic support that will insure academic and personal success.

Scholarships will include full dance training awards covering Ballet Hispánico tuition and all related expenses including shoes, dance specific clothing, and supplies. The program will also provide wraparound services for the students and their families including travel expenses to and from the dance school, guidance counseling, student tutoring, and nutritional support. **Auditions will be held at NYC Housing Authority locations** and additional sites. **Full scholarships and program support will be provided to ten students annually throughout the students’ K-12 education**. The cost of planning and implementation for the three-year pilot is \$885,000.

Ballet Hispánico is committed to identifying at-risk young people and providing them with the opportunities that can ensure a more certain future and change the trajectory of their lives. The Scholars Program is a catalyst for change that will transform the lives of Latino/a children.

The program was put on hold last year and we now anticipate launching the pilot in late 2021 with the date subject to change based on the status of COVID-19.



Performances

The Ballet Hispánico Company is returning to the rehearsal studio in April for the first time in over a year. The Company will be rehearsing works that will be presented during our virtual 50th Anniversary Celebration on May 27. **Students from the School of Dance will also host and be featured performers in the program.**

The Company has also been invited to participate in NYC outdoor performances during the summer. We anticipate that those opportunities will grow as the season approaches.

FY22 Support for Arts Organizations

It has been both heartbreaking and inspiring to see students in our Zoom classes dancing in their living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. A recent letter from the mother of one of our students simply and eloquently sums up the impact of the pandemic, the impact of Ballet Hispánico, and the need for the arts:

“Just wanted to say thank you for all you are doing. I don't see Gannon smiling as much these days, and to see the huge genuine grin on his face while dancing in your class warms my heart.”

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**Testimony of Kaveri Sengupta, Education Policy Coordinator
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)**

**Committee on Youth Services Remote Hearing
March 11, 2021 at 9:00AM**

Good afternoon. My name is Kaveri Sengupta, and I am the Education Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF). Thank you, Chair Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services for giving us this opportunity to testify.

Founded in 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization and leads the fight for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services to support those in need. The Asian Pacific American (APA) population comprises over 15% of New York City, over 1.3 million people. Many in our diverse communities face high levels of poverty, overcrowding, uninsurance, and linguistic isolation. Yet, the needs of the APA community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood, and uncounted. We are constantly fighting the harmful impacts of the model minority myth, which prevents our needs from being recognized and understood. Our communities, as well as the organizations that serve the community, too often lack the resources to provide critical services to the most marginalized APAs. Working with over 70 member and partner organizations across the City to identify and speak out on the many common challenges our community faces, CACF is building a community too powerful to ignore.

CACF also leads the 15% and Growing Campaign, a group of over 45 Asian led and serving organizations that work together to fight for a fair, inclusive, and equitable New York City budget that protects the most vulnerable Asian Pacific American New Yorkers. Two of our campaign members include the Chinese American Planning Council and Immigrant Social Services, who are testifying today. Currently, the APA community is by percentage the fastest growing group in New York City, nearly doubling every decade since 1970 and making up 15% of the population. Unfortunately, current levels of public funding for the Asian Pacific American community remain disproportionate to our community's needs. However, in FY 2021, Asian-led and serving organizations received only 4.65% of City Council discretionary dollars and less than 1.5% of social service contract dollars.

15% and Growing campaign members employ thousands of New Yorkers and serve hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Many provide essential youth services around college and career readiness, mental health, social emotional learning, and other areas to the 27.9% of all APAs in New York City who are under the age of 18. They need fair and equitable funding to continue to provide language-accessible and culturally responsive services for our youth. While APAs have a high school graduation rate at 80%, the percentage of college and career-ready students is significantly lower at over 50%. Other important statistics to note, particularly as part of DYCD's



mission is to alleviate the effects of poverty: nearly a quarter of APAs in NYC live in poverty - the highest poverty rate across all racial/ethnic groups. APAs in NYC have the highest poverty gap or intensity of poverty.

Our organizations and young people need investment in culturally responsive and language accessible youth services, without which many immigrant young people in particular can find themselves isolated and marginalized, facing continued barriers to navigating systems and accessing critical services that would put them on the path to becoming competent and responsible adults.. These needs have only intensified as a result of the pandemic, which has further isolated so many of our APA young people, who have contended with an enormous disruption to their education, heightened mental health challenges, and ongoing fears regarding racism. They deserve a budget that prioritizes them. This means investing in them, by funding programs we know provide them with comprehensive supports and opportunities.

Our priorities include baselines to SONYC and SYEP and restorations and baseline to Work, Learn, Grow, and are happy to see funding allocated for many of these necessary programs. However, as discussed, it is incredibly worrying to see that by providing zero slots for SONYC summer funding, including cuts to 9,500 slots supported by over 140 programs that have been funded for decades, the Mayor's budget, a moral document, has deemed that SONYC programming is unnecessary during a pandemic that has done so much harm to our young people. We commend the Council for securing funding for this program and SYEP in FY21, and ask that this continue for FY22. These initiatives are critical to the well-being of APA young people, to provide them with safe and supportive environments to explore their interests and passions, and to ensure that their families are able to reenter the workforce. This is especially important for Asian Americans, who, during the height of the pandemic, have experienced the largest increase in joblessness of all major racial groups in NYC, with an unemployment rate of 25.6% as of May 2020.

15% and Growing Citywide Initiatives - Priorities:

The City needs to invest in programs and supports that serve our most vulnerable APA community members who have been severely impacted by the pandemic. Adequate funding is essential for our CBOs' ability to continue to provide language-accessible and culturally responsive services. **NYC Council must expand funding for the following Citywide Initiatives to ensure that more APA-led and serving groups are adequately funded to support those with the highest need:**

- **College and Career Readiness**
- **Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative**



Other Priorities Relating to Youth Services:

Note: For the initiatives listed below that do allocate dollars directly to CBOs, zero APA-led organizations and only two APA-serving organizations were funded. Our CBOs - and particularly our smaller CBOs, are trusted by our community members and uniquely able to provide language-accessible and culturally responsive services. It is therefore imperative that they be funded adequately to allow them to continue providing the community with essential services.

Enhance the Discretionary Child Care to \$5.405 Million which supports child care programs that do not have an EarlyLearn contract, and add additional child care slots to certain programs.

Baseline \$20.35 million in funding for SONYC to add seats for 34,000 middle school students.

Restore Autism Awareness Initiative to \$3,246,846.00 to support services to children living with Autism and their families during non-school hours.

Enhance Children Under 5 Mental Health Initiative (CU5) to \$1.002 million to support services to children who have experienced trauma at a young age.

Baseline \$20 million in the Summer Youth Employment Program to support the minimum wage increase.

Restore and baseline \$19.7 million in funding for Work, Learn & Grow to make it a truly year-round work experience for youth in high school.

Restore \$1.7 million in funding for the Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Efforts (ICARE).

As we continue to live in a COVID world, in which existing disparities continue to grow, we must be sure to center all of our decisions on our most marginalized students and avoid neglecting those who may have previously been ignored. Our communities are consistently overlooked in the distribution of resources, which is harmful to us as well as other communities of color who are denied the same resources due to the perceived "success" of APAs. This pandemic has highlighted a myriad of holes in our City's safety net systems, and the City's response must address root problems in addition to immediate needs. Our community will continue to suffer every day we allow these flaws in the system to exist. As always, CACF will continue to be available as a resource and partner to address these concerns and look forward to working with you to better address our communities' needs.

Testimonial and Endorsement
City Council Support of the YouthBuild Program

March 11, 2021

Our South Bronx YouthBuild participants are delighted to receive continued support from their public officials who have championed their cause and make funding available to change the trajectory of their lives. Many of our opportunity youth thought attaining their High School Equivalency was far-fetched, now they have come to realize it's achievable with hard work and dedication.

This past year, SoBro's South Bronx YouthBuild program had over 17 students enroll for college; many are first generation college students.

We have had successful YouthBuild graduates attain management positions in banking, nursing, education, retail, and construction. For example, Trevor Fobbs, a SoBro YouthBuild graduate is the Managing Director at Santander Bank located in the Bronx, Monica Rene became a Program Manager for the SoBro YouthBuild, and Chance Ess a recent graduate has majored in social work and is serving the Community of South Bronx.

Through the YouthBuild relationship, SoBro leads a strong vocational program developing and honing students' skill set in construction, customer service and sales, and security guard training. Jeremy Henriquez and Gary White continue to blaze the trail in the area of construction. Our students continue to improve their job readiness skills which shows up in the employment rate of our enrolled students. We could not have achieved these milestones without the Council's support during the past several years.

We strongly urge the Council to fully fund the Citywide Initiative for YouthBuild for FY2022 @ \$3.2 million.

Carla Wilson-Redden

YouthBuild Program Director, SoBro, Bronx, NY



Citizens' Committee for Children of NEW YORK

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

Presented to the New York City Council
Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2022

Committee on Youth Services

March 11, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Daryl Hornick-Becker and I am a Policy and Advocacy Associate at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. CCC is a 76-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for New York City's children.

I would like to thank Chair Rose and all the members of the Youth Services committee for holding today's hearing on the city Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget.

In the past year, youth serving community-based organizations across the city have stepped up to bridge the digital divide, help working families, address children's emotional trauma and behavioral health needs, and significantly help to address social isolation and disruption in education during an extremely difficult time. In addition to supporting our youth, summer camps, SYEP, afterschool programs and the Learning Bridges sites have played a significant role in keeping our schools, communities and economy running during the pandemic, and they will be vital to an equitable and lasting recovery.

However, the youth services sector has long experienced inadequate and inconsistent funding, and despite their vital role during the pandemic, youth programs are once again one of the first areas to be cut in the most recent budget proposal. CCC urges the council and administration to not only restore cuts to summer programs and baseline funding, but to make the necessary reforms and investments that will stabilize, support, and expand access to youth programs that serve children and youth throughout the city.

Make no mistake, in light of what New York City's children and youth have experienced this year and the disruptions in their lives that may continue, the City administration and City Council are faced with an incredible opportunity to make robust investments in the youth services continuum – to offer year-round supports commencing this summer, that promote not only good physical health, but importantly supports social emotional health and wellbeing, in addition to addressing profound learning loss. This is an opportunity the City can ill afford to miss, what we do for our children and youth now will inform their immediate and long-term needs for months and years to come. The Executive Budget must make robust investments in year-round youth services, with an emphasis on expanding summer supports, as a core priority.

Restore Summer SONYC funding for 9,500 slots for middle school students, and add and baseline funding for an additional 34,000 slots.

Last year during the height of the pandemic, the administration proposed the total elimination of all summer programs for youth, including SYEP, summer COMPASS and SONYC camps, and summer programs at Beacons and Cornerstones. While CCC was pleased to see partial restorations in the adopted budget - as a result of the hard-fought advocacy of both the Campaign for Children and our champions in the City Council - it is vital that at the very least the city returns to pre-pandemic funding levels for summer programs and build on them to serve more children and youth.

Instead, the FY 2022 Preliminary Budget includes a reduction in summer SONYC programs for middle school students, a \$5.73 million cut that amounts to approximately 9,500 slots, on top of the exclusion of one-time funding of \$20.35 million for 34,000 slots. This means as it currently stands, the budget includes no funding or programming for summer SONYC for middle-schoolers.

Up until late February middle-school students in NYC were attending school entirely remotely, and even as middle-schools open up the vast majority will likely remain learning partially or fully remotely. These students will require the academic engagement and learning loss prevention that summer programs offer. To eliminate them entirely is antithetical to the administration's stated goal of helping students cope and recover from this school year.

Additionally, summer programs help working families by providing child care over the summer, they benefit students physical and social-emotional health, and they will help students safely re-engage after an isolating and difficult school year. Lastly, eliminating summer programming handicaps CBOs who need to hire staff and develop plans to provide afterschool programs for the next school year, and this elimination comes after years of only last-minute and partial restorations for summer programs for middle school students.

It is imperative that the administration not only restores the \$5.73 million in summer SONYC funds well before the adopted budget, but also adds back and baselines funds for an additional 34,000 SONYC spots – for a total restoration of \$25.7 million to fund 43,500 summer SONYC slots. Additionally, the Department of Youth and Community Development should not be caught flat-footed and should issue guidance on how summer programs can be enrolled and operated safely, even before restorations are in the budget.

Families are already asking providers if their children will have the opportunity to attend summer camp this year. It is past time the City removes children and families from the annual budget dance and prioritizes the youth-serving summer programs that have always been vital to children's behavioral health, but this year will also be integral to a recovery.

Invest in the Summer Youth Employment Program to build towards universal access, and enact reforms that expand access and participation.

The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) had reached a peak participation rate in the summer of 2019, with over 74,000 youth employed.¹ However funding was entirely eliminated in the FY 2021 Executive Budget and only partially restored in the Adopted Budget, resulting in just over 35,000 youth served in the summer of 2020.² Although CCC was pleased to see the funding return to pre-pandemic levels for SYEP in the FY 2022 Preliminary Budget, it is important to note that in summer 2019 over 150,000 youth applied to SYEP, and less than half received placement. To truly invest in employment opportunities and career training for young people, the administration and council should not be content with just pre-pandemic funding, but should begin to significantly invest and add spots to SYEP following this summer, with the goal of universal access next summer.

Additionally, the nature of working in the pandemic and the last-minute restorations of SYEP last summer showcased SYEP providers' best practices in terms of flexibility, enrollment, placement, and serving community needs. Since last summer providers have gathered to issue recommendations for programs reforms that would streamline processes and expand access and participation. These recommendations include but are not limited to the following:

- Set aside slots for youth in areas most impacted by COVID-19.
- Maximize time allowed for youth in community-based programs to access and select opportunities by ensuring the application goes live by the agreed-upon date of March 15th.
- Launch a campaign to publicize this year's initiatives and promote outreach within and across agencies (DOE, DOP, DOHS, ACS, NYCHA, etc.) to stimulate application flow and to help build connections across the agencies and providers;
- Allow providers maximum flexibility to enroll young people and leverage available slots to best serve youth;
- Provide flexibility on participant document requirements similar to 2020, and;
- Quickly approve provider program plans for Summer 2021 so they can begin the work of staffing up and finalizing curricula etc.

Furthermore, Teens Take Charge has developed a proposal for *SYEP Unbound*, which would provide self-guided courses and learning opportunities to young people who are not accepted through the lottery process, and we urge the City Council to fund this initiative.

For this summer's program and to ensure equity and access as more SYEP spots are added, the administration and City Council should ensure DYCD pursues these reforms and listens to the providers who run the programs and the youth they serve.

Continue to support Learning Bridges as long as they are needed, and better collaborate across agencies to expedite background clearances for youth program staff.

¹ NYC Dept. of Youth and Community Development. "SYEP 2019 Annual Survey," Retrieved from https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dycd/downloads/pdf/2019_NYC_SYEP_Annual_Summary.pdf.

² NYC Mayor's Office "Preliminary Mayor's Management Report Fiscal Year 2021: Dept. Of Youth and Community Development," Retrieved from <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2021/dycd.pdf>.

CCC was pleased to see an investment of \$57 million in the current fiscal year for Learning Bridges programs in the FY 2022 Preliminary Budget. We understand these funds and the program itself is set to run through the school year and end at the conclusion of the Fiscal Year on June 30th. However, in addition to funding there are a multitude of ways the administration and DYCD can continue to support CBOs who are running Learning Bridges and afterschool programs, as well as the children and families they serve.

Expanding access to the sites beyond just select feeder schools has worked to increase enrollment, but students who attend charter schools should also be able to access the sites. Additionally, if Learning Bridges will be operational either during the summer for summer school students, or next fall, the earlier these plans can be announced and funds made available, the better equipped providers can be to serve children and youth.

Lastly, even prior the pandemic it was a long and arduous process to have new staff cleared to begin working in afterschool or summer programs, putting providers at a disability in their ability to scale up and serve families. Unfortunately, this has remained true throughout the pandemic, even as CBOs were tasked with operating Regional Enrichment Centers last year and Learning Bridges sites this year. The administration, DYCD, and DOHMH must collaborate better on the clearance process and allow providers to onboard new staff in a timely manner.

Conclusion

As vaccinations efforts ramp up the city can and should craft a bold and comprehensive approach to year-round services for children and youth that begins with a robust approach to summer programming. Children and youth have but one childhood, and the year they have experienced will inform their growth and development, social-emotional health, and their academic achievement for months and years to come. The City administration and City Council have an opportunity to invest in children and youth today – the Executive Budget must prioritize the health, wellbeing and recovery of New York’s children and youth. To do anything less, would be an abdication of responsibility.



520 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10018

p. 646 386 3100

f. 212 397 0985

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Courtney Bryan. Director

**Center for Court Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 11, 2021**

Good morning Chair Rose and esteemed Councilmembers. My name is Awinna Martinez, and I am the Project Director of the Staten Island Justice Center (SIJC), a program of the Center for Court Innovation. Since its inception, the Center for Court Innovation has supported a vision of responding to the needs of vulnerable New Yorkers, reducing unnecessary and harmful involvement in the justice system wherever possible, and to building public safety through sustainable solutions.

Our firsthand experience uniquely positions us to serve as a model that Council can look to as it considers the development and support of initiatives that respond to the needs of New Yorkers of all ages. It is our responsibility to meet youth where they are and provide the necessary supports to reduce their contact with the justice system. In each instance, our aim is to provide a meaningful and proportionate response, to treat all young people under our care with dignity and respect, to prioritize public safety, and to produce much-needed cost savings for the City. And, as an anti-racist organization, to ensure the needs of marginalized New Yorkers are addressed. With the populations we serve facing ongoing police violence and a public health crisis that disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities, realizing this vision is now more important than ever.

Staten Island Justice Center

Every year, SIJC works with those touched by the justice system. We offer alternatives to incarceration, a pretrial supervised release program, and access to social services aimed at reducing the consequences that come with involvement in the justice system. SIJC also provides a diverse array of youth programming, from voluntary preventative work with at-risk youth to diversion initiatives with already justice-involved youth.

Compared to the rest of the city, Staten Island has limited options for mental health services for youth involved in the justice system. In 2020, with support from City Council, the Justice Center began providing more robust mental health services to youth participants who are justice-involved or at-risk of justice involvement through the Youth Wellness Initiative. These services have included comprehensive mental health assessments and access to a menu of services such as individual short-term counseling, peer mentorship, restorative justice circles, and civic engagement opportunities. With Council's support through renewal funding, in 2021

the Justice Center will expand the Youth Wellness Initiative programming to include a workshop series designed to address trauma and promote healing.

Youth will participate in a 10-week long workshop series focused on addressing the impacts of trauma and promoting healing facilitated by a mental health professional. In addition to group sessions, youth will be offered a menu of services such as individual short-term counseling, peer mentorship, restorative justice circles, and/or civic engagement opportunities as determined clinically appropriate to address underlying needs that spurred justice system involvement. Additionally, this workshop series will be geared towards providing support to the families by supporting the parents and caretakers of youth enrolled in the initiative.

It is important to recognize that the familial structure is often strained when there is a member of the family touched by the justice system. While there are services in our community that offer familial therapy, it is a great challenge to get youth and their families to commit to this intervention when there is an unwillingness, mistrust, or there is a familial crisis that has been exasperated by past and current trauma. Many times, by the time a young person reaches our higher end court involved programming, there has already been years of system involvement. To that end, wraparound services for court involved youth that include family support as an alternative to traditional services are imperative and effective. With Council support, SIJC continues to provide these services, which promote the idea of meeting families where they are and prioritizes developing interventions and supports tailored to meet families in a crisis state.

Shrinking the Footprint of Police: Innovative Criminal Justice Programs

Spurred by ongoing police violence, there is public support to reallocate certain responses from police into community-based approaches. As municipalities work to submit police reform plans by the April 1st deadline set by the State government, the Center's expertise through sustainable community-driven solutions that enhance public safety can serve as a path forward. Based on lessons learned, we believe that this is not the work of a moment, but rather a long-term shift that will require engaging with previously policed communities in new ways. The Center's blueprint for transformational change requires funding for community-based programs: from restorative justice approaches to addressing harm by focusing on healing relationships across families, communities, and neighborhoods; to mentoring and supporting young people at risk of system involvement through credible messenger models that prioritize the lived experiences of youth; to supporting families through trauma and systemic-racism informed programming that creates security in the home.¹

The Center's core Council-funded innovative criminal justice programs are built upon community partnerships and serve thousands of youth and adults across the City. Renewed funding by the Council provides flexibility in the Center's approach to this work, allowing the continuation of the Center's alternative-to-incarceration, youth-diversion, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs. Specifically, Council's support provides mental health services, family development, youth empowerment, workforce development, housing, legal, immigration, and employment resource services. The Center's funding under this initiative was cut in FY21, while we continued to ensure our services were accessible to New Yorkers during

the pandemic. We ask the Council to return the Center's funding to its pre-pandemic level so that it can provide programming to vulnerable New Yorkers.

Through these programs, the Center is making a deep investment in engaging youth as far upstream as possible, to limit, and ideally prevent justice system involvement. Young people need positive programming to help them build skills and develop their leadership ability. This programming is particularly important in the summer months when young people have unstructured time. Such programs rely on people from the community—including artists, computer programmers, and business owners. These mentors teach concrete skills, from photography to entrepreneurship to youth organizing, and offer young people, particularly people of color, an opportunity to realize their full potential. Credible messenger models, staffed by people from the community who reflect the demographic of the community and the lived experiences of residents, can be especially effective with youth. These programs bring services and positive role models where youth are, instead of expecting vulnerable youth to show up at programs operating out of fixed locations.¹

The Center thanks Council for its continued partnership and looks forwards to continuing to develop youth programming that can serve as a blueprint for transformational change. We will be available to answer any questions you may have.

Notes

¹Center for Court Innovation. (2020). Shrinking the Footprint of Police: Six Ideas for Enhancing Safety. New York, NY. Available at: <https://www.courtinnovation.org/publications/alternatives-to-police>.



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p. 646 386 3100

f. 212 397 0985

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Courtney Bryan, Director

March 5, 2021

Dear Esteemed Councilmembers,

From a global pandemic to the continued violence against Black and Brown people, 2020 was a hard year for many. And, as the City still grapples with COVID, this time continues to be one of unthinkable loss and uncertainty. Despite these challenges, the Center continues to serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers in all five boroughs, providing critical programs and services to those most in need. Much of this work has been and continues to be funded by Council. To that end, I want to take this moment to thank Council for its steadfast support of our work, and request renewed support as we look ahead to FY22.

With Council's support through the innovative criminal justice programs initiative, the Center for Court Innovation has continued to operate community-based programs to serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers, while also reducing reliance on police. The vast majority of those served are youth, immigrants, low-income, LGBTQ, and people of color. Last year, funding through this initiative was reduced. We hope Council will restore this core funding to its pre-pandemic level. By doing so, we can make a greater impact in meeting the many needs your constituents.

Through Council-funded programs like the Brooklyn Felony Alternatives to Incarceration Court, Driver Accountability Program, and Bronx Project Reset, we continue to keep hundreds of people out of jail and provide them with off-ramps through meaningful supports and services. We also ask that Council renews funding for these programs in FY22 so that this important work continues unabated.

I cannot close without thanking you again for Council's enduring partnership. We have done an enormous amount with you over the years, including creating a credible plan for closing Rikers Island, implementing the Cure Violence model in multiple neighborhoods, and creating new mechanisms to divert low-level cases out of the criminal justice system. In this time of great uncertainty, renewing funding for our programs will ensure our efforts to make New York City stronger, fairer, and safer for all, are realized.

If you have questions, you can reach me at 718.496.9363 or bryanc@courtinnovation.org. I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Courtney Bryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Courtney Bryan
Executive Director



New York City Council Committee on Youth Services

Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearing

Thursday, March 11th, 2021

Testimony submitted by: The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF)

Thank you to Chair Rose as well as to members of the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Shamar Watson and I am the Director of Youth Services for the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families, better known by its acronym, CHCF. CHCF is a non-profit organization with a 39-year history of combining education, capacity-building, and advocacy to strengthen the support system and continuum of learning for children and youth from birth through school-age.

At the onset of the pandemic and the state shut-down, community-based organizations like CHCF rapidly adjusted their services to ensure continuity in the delivery of the essential support that we offer to our students, families and communities. CHCF has always centered equity and cultural and linguistic responsiveness in the educational youth services that we deliver. Even before the pandemic, the students and families in our communities often faced barriers in access to responsive supports and opportunities. CHCF's programming in school-based settings focuses on expanding access to opportunities for students to thrive in their education, explore their interests, and access additional opportunities in the community to better prepare them for success in their education, career, and life. Additionally, the rapport our bilingual staff are able to build with the students and families creates a responsive and safe space for them to share intersectional life issues and concerns, and to be connected to high quality resources and supports within and outside of CHCF. As we know, the pandemic has exacerbated the inequities and traumas faced in our communities, and CBOs have been key in ensuring families and students remain connected to the necessary resources.

During a typical school year, our school-based programs are funded through both state and city dollars to reach nearly 800 students and their families in the Bronx: 250 elementary students at PS 59 (48% of the school population); 140 elementary students and 100 middle school students at PS/MS 279 (24% of the school population); and the 300 students enrolled in the Bronx High School of Business (BHSB) Community School. Our Community Empowerment Department expands our general reach of supports in those communities through additional workshops that are open to all, beyond those enrolled in our school-based programs, on a number of issues reflective of the shifting needs (i.e. housing, immigration, food access, etc.). With the pandemic, our school-based program staff have worked closely with our school leaders to meet the needs of students and families even beyond those we are funded for, offering language access and support, support in navigating DOE device requests and technical assistance, and offering the opportunity to join virtual activities to combat the effects of quarantine on physical and mental health (i.e. yoga, dance classes, cooking classes, etc.). This has been a moment for all community partners and stakeholders to show up in collective support of families as they navigate these





difficult times, and CHCF—like many citywide CBOs— has continued to step up for our communities during this crisis.

Community Based Organizations, however, have been facing challenges from their city and state partners that have exacerbated the effects of long-standing underfunding for their high-quality services. There were significant delays in much needed guidance for how to effectively transition our programs to continue delivering the necessary services to our students and families within the remote/hybrid reality without jeopardizing full reimbursement for the costs expended. The work and the need for our services never slowed and required us to adjust quickly to the new reality in the best interest of the families and students we serve. Ambiguity about what would qualify for reimbursement created vulnerabilities for many nonprofits who contract with the city while typically be underfunded by about 20% of the true cost in non-pandemic times. Hearing that thousands of nonprofits were poised to close by the end of 2020 was devastating, because we know what that means for the communities that they serve, as they often serve as the cultural and linguistically responsive bridge in access to city initiatives and services.

An additional city program that CHCF has continued to proudly participate in, while adjusting to the realities of the pandemic, is City's First Readers. City's First Readers (CFR) is a collaboration of nonprofit organizations fostering the literacy development of NYC children, ages 0-5. The initiative provides research-driven programming to more than 1 million children, parents/caregivers, early childcare providers, and educators annually to ensure children enter school ready to read and achieve educational success.

Decade after decade, research demonstrates that children living in poverty do not experience the important pre-reading activities of talk, sing, read, write, and play as often as their more affluent peers. Consequently, they often arrive at school less prepared to learn. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these inequities, with rises in unemployment, food and housing insecurity, isolation and mental health crisis, and the lack of access to basic necessities. Even more, for families with young children - those supported by CFR - these stresses are compounded by child care needs, crowded and noisy living spaces, increased responsibilities for children's learning including for older siblings, and a lack of culturally and linguistically responsive educational resources and supports in their homes to continue learning.

Families living in poverty have been devastated by Covid-19, ensuring that even more low-income children will find it difficult to reach proficiency by third grade. The need for City's First Readers programming has never been greater. Children and families have been isolated for more than one year with limited access to the pre-literacy support. While CHCF continues to focus on the learning loss for school aged children and teens, we know that our youngest learners from birth-five have also been deprived of the rich and necessary experiences that are foundational to their future success in school and beyond. Only City's First Readers has the capacity to engage these





families to reverse this deprivation and prevent the long-term consequences from hobbling a generation of learners.

We join our CFR partners in calling on the City Council to acknowledge the severity of this crisis and their commitment to addressing it by supporting City's First Readers and investing \$4.6 million to:

- Extended outreach efforts to engage the hardest to reach families and increase the numbers of constituents who benefit from early literacy programs;
- Expand comprehensive early literacy programming and the ability to continue to adapt and pivot programming based on the changing external environment;
- Increase public education messaging through an "always on" Read the City public education campaign that uses best practices in digital outreach and that positions CFR as a landing space that directs families to partner resources; and
- Implement a strong evaluation and impact assessments to inform programming and coordination across all partner organizations.

We call on this Committee to continue supporting and growing the programs that we know work. With the anticipated long-term effects of the pandemic on social-emotional well-being and educational growth for our most vulnerable young children and school-aged learners, it is essential that programs like City's First Readers and extended learning time programming—and the culturally and linguistically responsive CBOs who deliver them—are funded to thrive and grow in reach.

It is community and education-centered programs, like those that CHCF delivers, that are the stopgap for students and families who face tremendous and long-standing barriers in access to education supports and social services, and the city must act to ensure that these programs can continue, without delay or disruption. While the city and state have been facing significant budget crisis, we cannot balance the budget on the backs of low-income communities and families and the community-based organizations that support them; or at the expense of academic success and social-emotional well-being for low-income students and students of color. With the forthcoming federal relief dollars for New York State and New York City, we must intentionally allocate funds to build back a stronger system of supports, and grow those critical and effective programs to expand reach and access for the millions of New Yorkers who have been physically, mentally, and financially destabilized by the pandemic and will be feeling the effects of this moment for time to come.

For any questions about our testimony, please contact Danielle Demeuse, Policy Analyst for CHCF, at ddemeuse@chcfinc.org or 212-206-1090 ext. 359.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY 22 budget.





Testimony of Lena Bilik, Policy Analyst, Children's Aid
Submitted Testimony on the FY22 Preliminary Budget
Committee on Youth Services
March 11, 2021

My name is Lena Bilik, Policy Analyst at Children's Aid. I would like to thank Chair Debi Rose and the members of the Youth Services Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact of the FY22 preliminary budget on youth services citywide. Given the current public health and economic crisis, it is clearer than ever children, youth and families citywide are being supported by essential social services, and that these services must be sustained and adequately funded.

For 168 years, Children's Aid has been committed to ensuring there are no boundaries to the aspirations of young people, and no limits to their potential. We are leading a comprehensive counterattack on the obstacles that threaten kids' achievements in school and in life. We have constructed a continuum of services, positioned every step of the way throughout childhood, which builds well-being and prepares young people to succeed at every level of education and every milestone of life. Today our over 2,000 full and part-time staff members empower nearly 50,000 children, youth and their families through our network of 40 locations, including early childhood education centers, public schools, community centers, and community health clinics in four New York City neighborhoods – Harlem, Washington Heights, the South Bronx, and the north shore of Staten Island.

Children's Aid is a member of the Campaign for Children, the New York State Network for Youth Success, the New York State Community Schools Network, and the New York City Coalition for Community School Excellence, and as a member of these networks and alliances we are in support of their policy agendas. Together, we are on a mission to connect children with what they need to learn, grow, and lead successful, independent lives.

During this crisis, Children's Aid has continued our work, and has filled in many of the gaps in services that are causing real challenges for NYC students and families. When everything was remote, staff conducted 1:1 calls, emails, and zooms to check in with families on how remote learning/access were going, whether food was available, and general inquiry about needs and/or provision of community resources. Our centers also pivoted and collaborated with our Go Healthy program and other support services to provide grab and go meals, food boxes and bags, coloring books, crayons, and face masks to families. Because of the connection we have as a Founding Member of the Boys and Girls Club of America, we have been able to leverage additional food to serve thousands of meals as well as PPE for staff, youth, and families. In addition to food, we have tried to pick up the slack to support the DOE and gave out tablets and laptops to children who had no devices to work during this hybrid model. Our staff has also been providing mental health, counseling, and social emotional support sessions for both students and parents. Our mental health support has been crucial; many of our students and families are facing real loss, fear, anxiety about the future, and depression. We continue to provide afterschool programming during the COVID-19 crisis, with a range of topics for engagement, including a Dreamers club; a photography club; various tutoring, mentoring, and social support groups; and other activities to keep youth engaged and supported after the virtual or hybrid school day ends. Our staff have reported high levels of engagement and attendance for this programming. We also stepped in to provide emergency child care and learning support at 7 Learning Labs.



Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the economic devastation it has wrought, New York's children and families deserve a budget that puts their needs first in order to begin the long road towards recovery. We are cautiously optimistic about aspects of youth services in the Mayor's preliminary budget for FY22, with the full restoration to the Summer Youth Employment program and the prospect that the expansion of 3K For All will continue. We hope that once the City receives the announced FEMA funding the FY2022 Executive Budget will accurately reflect these commitments. However, we do have the following budget asks and recommendations:

1. Restore \$25.7 million in the FY22 Executive Budget to support Summer SONYC programming for 43,500 middle school students.

Children and youth who are struggling with the massive disruption to education due to the pandemic need more, not less. Instead of investing in summer programming, which has been shown to combat learning loss, promote healthy social-emotional development, and bridge achievement gaps that our youth are facing, the Mayor has proposed the total elimination of SONYC summer programming for middle school students, by cutting what was baselined in the budget and failing to fund seats lost in last year's budget. It is deeply concerning to see supports for middle schoolers eliminated when there are broad concerns about keeping this age group engaged and not left behind. Additionally, summer programs are critical services that support parent participation and reentry in the work force at a time when this support is extremely needed.

NYC summer camps through the DYCD-run COMPASS & SONYC programs served approximately 70,000 children and youth each summer before COVID hit. SONYC serves approximately 24,000 students, but could always serve more if it wasn't for the last-minute nature of the spots. SONYC and COMPASS initiatives have been a model of what an afterschool system can and should look like to serve children, youth and families with high-quality programs. The programs' shared emphasis on academic skills enhancement, social-emotional learning, cultural enrichment, sports, recreation, community engagement, and leadership development offer children and adolescents the best of both the youth development and education worlds. Children's Aid part-time afterschool and summer employees are youth workers who are often local college or high school students. We also provide education coordinators who are certified teachers who serve as liaisons to align the school day learning with afterschool enrichment, provide tutoring, and support the planning of the youth workers, and community educators from other local community-based organizations that specialize in leadership development, sports, the arts, etc. They are all essential to our program quality and design. Many of these employees are from the community or have graduated from the very program in which they're working.

We are calling on the city council and the Mayor to restore the misguided cuts to summer SONYC; this is not a time to cut summer supports for young people. During the start of the pandemic last year, Children's Aid as a part of Campaign for Children advocated and ended up achieving partial and last-minute restorations for all summer camps – about 30,000 spots total worth \$45M. We reiterate what we advocated for last year: summers are a crucial time to stay in contact with youth to ensure they are supported, cared for, and have their academic and social-emotional needs met. Even before the pandemic, numerous studies already showed the disruptive effects that just two months off from school in the summer typically has for many students, particularly low-income students – a phenomenon known as “summer learning loss” or “summer slide.” National research indicates that the average student loses a month of academic calendar learning each summer, and the effects are more



pronounced for low-income students. We see summer as a crucial bridge where we have a chance to address immediate academic and social-emotional needs of young people and ensure students are prepared to transition to the 2021-2022 school year. Families that rely on summer programming for childcare will need even more access to these services as vaccine rollouts make it safe for more people to return in person to work. The educational benefits of summer programming are more important than ever after months of learning loss due to trauma and mental health challenges as well as academic disruptions from remote/hybrid school and overall disruptions in learning. We also urge the immediate release of summer and after school guidance. As we saw last summer and in the fall, the delay of rollout and inconsistent guidance frustrated the hiring process, preparation of health safety protocols, and preparation of curriculum.

There is also the issue of space. We want to and are prepared to serve all children and families that need us this summer, but a big question is what DOE is doing with their buildings this summer. In other words, if providers are asked to do in-person or hybrid programming, will we have the space to do so? At this point, this issue is still unclear, and providers will need to plan -- this must be worked out in a timely manner between DYCD and DOE.

2. Restore funding for the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative in FY21 and beyond.

The nonprofit network of nonprofit providers who run youth programs have played a vital role for children and their families during COVID-19 and will be an essential part of the City's recovery efforts over the summer and into the fall. Indirect funding is the backbone of a nonprofit human services organization, covering critical overhead costs that help organizations serve their communities most effectively. Indirect helps to support functions that are crucial to running a program, like facilities cleaning, payroll, and technology. Indirect expenses are often the things that we do not see when we walk through the front door of an organization to go to a program or receive a service, but help to keep that front door open. The City retroactively cut Indirect Rates for non-profit human services providers in the FY20 budget, and there is currently no guidance from the City on what indirect funding providers should expect for FY21 and beyond. We urge the Mayor and City Council to honor their commitment to the human services sector and fully fund indirect rates in FY21 and beyond.

The youth services sector is an essential partner to the city, and a crucial key to getting families back to work. If the city does not prioritize it, the youth development sector will become destabilized, creating unnecessary setbacks to our work of critical youth development and child care support that could last years, if not decades, affecting the ability of the City to fully recover from this pandemic. The youth services sector has the expertise, experience, cultural competency, and community trust to be an invaluable piece during this time.

3. Work to clear the backlog of comprehensive background checks.

Since September 25th, 2019, New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has required NYC DOHMH to perform new extensive background checks for staff and volunteers in after-school and early childhood education. Providers and advocates strongly support rigorous background checks for all staff and volunteers, and we rely on our partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so that programs can operate. DOHMH has not been able to complete the background checks in a timely manner and many prospective staff members in after-school and early childhood education programs are unable to work due to pending clearances. In February, the backlog led New York State Office of Children and Family Services to provide some relief through a temporary rule



change that allows staff members to work provisionally if they have been cleared through the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) and if they are supervised for 100% of the time that they are in contact with children by a staff member who has been cleared. However, this is not a permanent solution, and DOHMH must be given the resources they need to clear staff quickly and efficiently.

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

Please feel free to contact me at lbilik@childrensaidnyc.org with any questions regarding this testimony.

Hi. My name is Chisom Nnam. I am a junior at Excelsior Preparatory High School in Queens, and I applied to the Summer Youth Employment Program my freshmen year and again last summer. On the first day of school, my freshmen year, I went straight to the guidance counselor to learn how to apply for my working papers. From the start, I was eager to work. Not only would it financially stabilize my family, but it would have made me independent. On top of that, it would have provided me with some experience, some insight into the real world, which I was not getting from regular education. I didn't know anything about workplace etiquette, writing a resume, or what different careers entailed. So I applied, hoping for some help and I didn't get any. After constantly checking my status, months after many of my friends said they got in, months after DYCD said I would know, and weeks before the program was supposed to begin, I received no answer. When I finally did, it was to tell me I didn't get picked. I was pretty upset, to say the least. I was counting on it. I thought it would have my back. I thought I was deserving of this kind of opportunity. I, like many other kids, are struggling to get by. It was as if I now had to do the job the city promised me. I had to learn on my own. Face the music and find a way to keep going. So I did. I applied to numerous programs geared towards career & college readiness, and I got lucky. Lucky enough to have found one that is sustainably helping me with my future. And when I applied in the summer of 2020 and didn't get in, well, I was prepared thankfully. No, I didn't have a job---no one was offering any for my age--- but I had people backing me up, ready to help me when I asked. I had my programs and people in that program who really, really cared about my success. In the end, I realized that I could count on these programs, specifically SEO Scholars, to help me "figure it all out", but I couldn't count on the city or the education provided to me. And you could say it was my job to find out---to develop these real-world skills, but it was the city's job to help me and it didn't. Now, I'm calling on you to help other kids. I just got lucky. Not every kid is. Make SYEP universal! We have the power within ourselves, enough youth to pitch in if adults are tried. We can do this! Let's do it for our youth!



City Council Youth Services Committee Hearing – 11 March 2021

Testimony by Mam Fatou, a youth organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

My name is Mam Fatou Dukuray and I am a youth organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol.

It is upsetting that we still have to attend hearings to demand police-free schools and fully funded schools only to see that our city budget continues to fund the criminalization of NYC students. We who care about the wellness of marginalized students in NYC do not believe in this superficial transfer of School Safety Agents from the NYPD to the DOE and we do not believe that the city budget should continue to underfund our schools and communities.

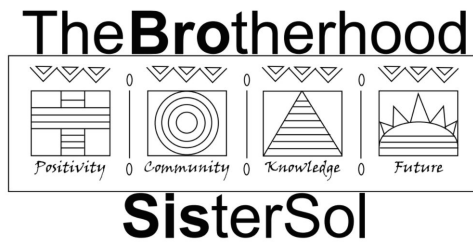
To address issues worsened by COVID-19, we have to find money to create meaningful shifts in our education system and, instead, create pathways to student success. This will require police-free schools. Failure to divest from school police and invest in student success will mean that our city continues to fail us youth. Our city does not do enough to ensure that our schools are fully funded and fully resourced so as to meet the needs of all students. We need to remove all police presence – whether under the DOE or NYPD – and shift those funds to actually offer mental health support and overall supports for all young people.

None of the schools I have attended have had the resources for mental health support. In my current school, every teacher has the role of advisor but we have no guidance counselors or therapists and I have not had any support to prepare for college either. In school, not only do I feel like I'm being spied on but I feel criminalized as if the SSAs are just waiting for me to make one mistake to get us in big trouble. Additionally, a lot of my peers and I have had other negative interactions with SSAs.

The presence of police in our schools comes at the cost of having actual student support staff. This, paired with the disproportionate and negative impact policing has on students who are low-income, Black, and Latinx, means that we are more likely to be the subject of exclusionary discipline and police response at school than their white peers. Continuing to fund policing and policing culture in schools will make it clear that this is an issue of lack of political will. We, young people, are closest to the problem and therefore you need to hear us when we offer a solution.

You all have the power to meaningfully shift funds from the police and reinvest in our communities but this requires radical action beginning with this budget. To meet the demands of the people who took to the streets *and* the organizers now in this room, you have to end the criminalization of youth and students of color while deconstructing the school-to-prison pipeline and you must do this now. Join us or be a part of the problem.

For more information regarding our campaign, please contact Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles (mjc@brotherhood-sistersol.org, 212.283.7044).



City Council Youth Services Committee Hearing – 11 March 2021

Testimony by Abraham Velazquez an educator of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

My name is Abraham Velazquez and I am an educator and organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol. For more than 25 years, The Brotherhood/Sister Sol (BroSis) has been at the forefront of social justice, educating, organizing, and training to challenge inequity and create opportunity for all. With a focus on Black and Latinx youth, Bro/Sis is where young people claim the power of their history, identity, and community to build the future they want to see.

BroSis youth have a vision for education in New York City that includes safe, restorative, healing environments where all students have the opportunity to learn and grow. To meet this goal, the city council must pursue legislation that values and respects the dignity of students, caregivers, and their communities. This requires providing schools equitable resources, adopting a culturally responsive curriculum, preventing trauma, repairing harm, and promoting restorative practices. The budget passed this year has to reflect this vision.

Today, New York City is far from where it need be to ensure student success as our schools face troubling realities:

- School segregation leads to chronic underfunding of schools in New York state which has negative and disparate impacts for Black, Latinx and low-income students given subsequent resource disparity.^[iii]
- Only 77.3% of the 1.1 million children in the DOE system will graduate on time and only 55% of NYC high school graduates will graduate college-ready.^{[iii] [iv]}

- 1 in ten NYC public school students is houseless.^[v]

Additionally, in a nation in which 14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker^[vi], New York City has more school safety agents (SSAs) than any other school district in the U.S. The presence of police in our schools has disproportionately impacted students who are low-income, Black, and Latinx, who are more likely to be the subject of exclusionary discipline and police response at school than their white peers.

Everyone in the City Council, however, has the power to shift this – beginning with meaningfully shifting funds from the police, reforming their responsibilities, and reinvesting in our communities.

We must deconstruct the school-to-prison pipeline; end Broken Windows policing; and truly decriminalize low-level offenses that lead to our youth having negative contact with the state and carceral systems. And, we must do this now.

Please see the attached policy paper for more information re: other ideas for continued progress towards the aforementioned vision.

For more information regarding our campaign, please contact Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles (mjc@brotherhood-sistersol.org, 212.283.7044).

[i] New York City Council, School Diversity in NYC. 2019, <https://council.nyc.gov/data/school-diversity-in-nyc/#:~:text=However%2C%20New%20York%20Cit y%20public,more%20than%2050%25%20white%20students.>

[ii] Alliance for Quality Education, Chronic Underfunding. 2018, <https://www.aqeny.org/2018/09/11/report-new-yorks-chronic-underfunding-of-schools-the-disparate-impact-on-black-latino-students/>

[iii] NYC's 2019 Graduation Rate Inches Up to 77% . January 16, 2020, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/1/16/21121757/nyc-s-2019-graduation-rate-inches-up-to-77>

[iv] More NYC High School Students are College-Bound – and ‘College Ready’. November 21, 2019, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2019/11/21/21121750/more-nyc-high-school-graduates-are-college-bound-and-college-ready>

iv] The Children in the Shadows: New York City’s Homeless Students. September 9, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/09/magazine/homeless-students.html>

[vi] ACLU, Counselors and No Cops: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students. 2019, <https://www.aclu.org/report/cops-and-no-counselors>



New York University (NYU Grossman School of Medicine)
City's First Readers: Video Interaction Project

Testimony Submitted to the
NYC City Council **Committee on Youth Services** Hearing

March 11, 2021

March 11, 2021

I, Alan Mendelsohn, MD, am writing on behalf of New York University and City's First Readers to provide testimony as to why it is absolutely critical to continue to support the **City's First Readers** Initiative during the terrible period fostered upon us by the COVID pandemic. I make this request not only as a pediatrician, professor, and scientist at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health+Hospitals / Bellevue, but also as a parent of two grown children and resident of New York City.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catastrophe for families with very young children, and continuing to provide programming through City's First Readers is **essential** for their wellbeing. Parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers have been required to shelter in place at home; preschools, childcare centers, playgrounds, and in-person support groups have been closed or limited; and many other vital services have been cut or inaccessible. Parents are under incredibly high levels of stress due to loss of employment and income, lack of access to food, worry about protecting their children, and grieving over deceased or ill family members. All families are suffering greatly, but low-income families are being hit the hardest by this crisis and will struggle the most to recover both financially and emotionally. A report published by the United Hospital Fund illustrates some of the devastating ways that children in New York have been and will continue to be deeply affected by this crisis: <https://uhfnyc.org/publications/publication/covid-19-ripple-effectimpact-covid-19-children-new-york-state/>

The programming offered through City's First Readers, such as my program (the Video Interaction Project - VIP), can help families cope with stressors of parenting, reduce maternal depressive symptoms, reduce early harsh discipline that can lead to child maltreatment, and prevent child behavior problems that interfere with learning. My research, funded in part by the National Institutes of Health, has shown this scientifically. **By helping parents cope with the stressors of this crisis and even maintain some possibility of normalcy in their relationships and activities with their children, City's First Readers has the potential to protect children against long-term impacts on mental health and school achievement, and even reduce large costs that the city will otherwise face to address this calamity.**

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, all of the City's First Readers partners have quickly adapted our services in order to best meet the needs of incredibly vulnerable families during this time. My program, Video Interaction Project, is being delivered remotely by internet or phone to families across New York City at NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue, Woodhull, Gouverneur, Queens, and Elmhurst and at the NYU Langone Brooklyn Family Health Center in Sunset Park, and at Children's Aid locations in the Bronx and in Harlem, reaching over 1,700 high-risk families in NYC in 2020. This is happening directly as a result of New York City Council support and **is helping support families during the COVID pandemic.**

It is critical that we are able to continue to provide City's First Readers' services for parents and young children in Fiscal Year 2021, when we anticipate that the need for both in person and remote parent support will be even higher as the implications of this crisis become fully known.

There are going to be so many incredibly difficult decisions on everyone's plate regarding the upcoming

year, but my plea to you is to **maintain funding** for these incredibly important services from parents, infants, and toddlers. The economic and educational impacts of such a decision will be felt by children for their entire lives.

Please find attached some additional information on my program, the Video Interaction Project, and some of our accomplishments over the past few years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "A. Mendelsohn".

Alan L. Mendelsohn, MD
Professor of Pediatrics and Population Health
Director of Clinical Research, Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics
Director, Video Interaction Project
NYU Grossman School of Medicine and NYC Health+Hospitals/Bellevue
alan.mendelsohn@nyulangone.org



HASSENFELD
CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL
AT NYU LANGONE



2 in 5

Number of children living
in poverty in the U.S.

50%

Number of children living
in poverty who lack skills
needed for learning at
school entry

25

Minutes required for
each VIP session

22

Number of age-specific
VIP sessions available
between birth and age 5

\$200

Approximate cost of
VIP per child, per year

11

Number of locations
delivering VIP in 2020

Video Interaction Project (VIP)

VIP is a **unique, impactful, low-cost** program that uses pediatric healthcare to prevent achievement gaps before they occur. The program has grown to 11 sites in 3 states and is ready for **large-scale expansion**.

Poverty And The Achievement Gap

Decades of research all point to the same conclusion: Poverty causes significant barriers to a child's scholastic success and reduces opportunities for early learning and educational achievement. These poverty-related gaps in achievement originate in infancy, continue into early childhood, and grow wider over time in the absence of intervention. **Although the causes of disparities in school achievement among children are complex, we know that children from poor and low-income households often face two common challenges:**

1. Lack of readiness to learn (e.g. inability to pay attention or control behavior)
2. Lack of attainment of early reading and math skills

Parents Hold The Key

Approximately *50 percent* of disparities in school achievement in children of low-income families can be traced to fewer opportunities for early learning activities with parents, including talking, teaching, playing, and reading.

The VIP Solution

VIP reduces educational achievement gaps before children reach the classroom by **utilizing pediatric primary care** to:

1. Help parents understand their critical role in their child's development; and
2. Arm parents with the skills and confidence to engage in activities that will stimulate brain development and foster the behavioral skills needed to learn effectively

How VIP Works

VIP is an **individualized program** delivered at the time of **every pediatric well visit** from birth to five years.



At each session:

1. A VIP coach leads a 5-10 minute discussion of child development, including suggested activities & goal-setting with the parent
2. Families receive a developmentally appropriate toy or book to take home
3. A short video is made of the parent(s) interacting with their child during reading or play
4. The coach watches the video with the parent, reinforcing strengths and identifying opportunities for further interaction

Research Findings

VIP has a **strong body of evidence** showing large benefits for parents and children, including:

1. Increased Reading Aloud, Play, & Talking
2. Enhanced Parent-Child Relationships
3. Improved Child Development

VIP is especially helpful for preventing child behavior problems that interfere with learning. For example, the percentage of families with significant child hyperactivity at school entry was reduced from 9.1% to 2.8% overall and from 15.8% to 0% for those at the highest risk category—a reduction of between 70 and 100%, respectively.

Mendelsohn et al., Pediatrics, 2018; Weisleder et al., Pediatrics, 2016; Cates et al., J of Child and Fam Studies, 2016; Canfield et al., J of Dev Beh Peds, 2015; Burkule et al., Clinical Pediatrics, 2014.

For a list of publications: www.videointeractionproject.org/publications.html



City's First Readers
An Initiative of the New York City Council

Why is VIP Unique?

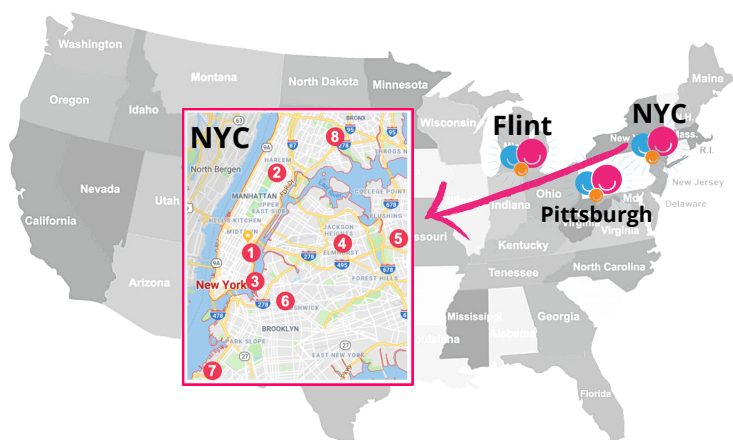
Although a host of programs exist to support early learning through enhanced parenting, *few of them have VIP's level of evidence*, and the cost of those programs can be a barrier for widespread dissemination.

1. VIP is designed to take place in **pediatric primary care**, and can seamlessly be integrated into existing clinical services and flow
2. VIP is a **primary prevention program**, which means that it prevents problems in the parent-child relationship and in child development before they occur
3. VIP is **evidence-based**, and has already been shown to have impacts in randomized controlled trials
4. VIP **costs less** than 1/10 of many home visiting programs at approximately \$200 per child per year

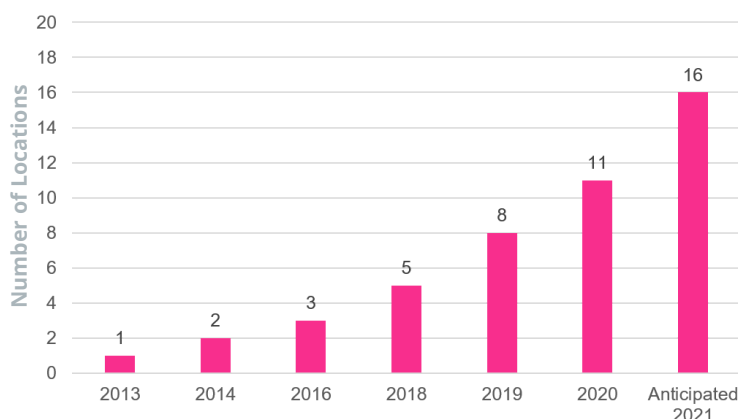


VIP is at an inflection point for growth with plans for widespread expansion, led by the VIP Center of Excellence.

Current VIP Locations in 2020



VIP Anticipated Growth



VIP Center of Excellence

The VIP Center of Excellence (COE) launched in 2016 at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, guided by a business plan for initial expansion that was developed in coordination the Community Resource Exchange. The VIP COE provides centralized support for all locations, including program implementation, training, supervision, and maintenance of fidelity. In addition, the VIP COE works centrally to continuously study and optimize VIP, and adapt to the needs of new sites and populations. The VIP COE has developed a comprehensive implementation package so that VIP can be delivered anywhere with quality and fidelity, and VIP has been implemented at 11 locations nationally as of 2020.

Funding

VIP in NYC is supported by: NIH / Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Children of Bellevue, Inc.; Marks Family Foundation; Tiger Foundation; Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, Inc.; Rhodebeck Charitable Trust; KiDS of NYU; NYU Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI); Academic Pediatric Association; NYU Langone Community Service Plan; New York Community Trust, New York City Council Early Literacy Initiative (City's First Readers); New York City Councilmembers Stephen Levin, Antonio Reynoso, and Keith Powers; NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

videointeractionproject.org

  @playreadvip

Alan Mendelsohn, MD

Alan.Mendelsohn@nyulangone.org

Anne Seery, PhD

Anne.Seery@nyulangone.org

NYU Langone Health, Department of Pediatrics
Divisions of General and Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics



Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
Preliminary Budget Hearing March 11, 2021

My name is Jayne Bigelsen, and I am the Vice President of Advocacy at Covenant House New York (CHNY), where we serve runaway and homeless youth (RHY) ages 16 to 24. I would like to thank the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify today.

CHNY is the nation's largest, non-profit adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway and trafficked youth. During this past year, CHNY served over 1,600 young people in our residential programs, as well as through our drop-in center and outreach efforts. On a nightly basis, we provide shelter to approximately 300 young people, including, LGBTQ youth and pregnant women and mothers with their children as well as survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. Our youth are primarily people of color and over a third of our youth have spent time in the foster care system. Many of our youth have experienced abuse or neglect at the hands of parents or other caregivers, and a disproportionately high percentage of our youth struggle with the pervasive impacts of trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse. We provide young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care, mental health and substance abuse services, legal services, high school equivalency classes and other educational and job-training programs, as well as a safe house and specialized services for survivors of human trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation. All of these services help young people overcome the trauma of abuse, homelessness and exploitation and move toward stability.

We are keenly aware that our city, state, nation and world are in the midst of a global economic recession due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and that difficult spending decisions need to be made. However, we by now all know that minority groups have been especially hard-hit by this pandemic and have faced a larger death toll respective to their representation in the greater population. Global and national



crises have shone a spotlight on the inequalities that exist in our society with the most vulnerable among us often faring the worst. At CHNY, the most vulnerable among us are exactly who we serve: young people without homes, financial support, adequate vocational or educational skills and little-to-no safety net before they reach our doors. Additionally, rather than closing our doors, youth homeless shelters must welcome and shelter even more at-risk young people during a pandemic. Our direct service staff cannot work from the safety of their home, and instead are essential workers who must directly care for our young people at our 41st St. and Bronx based shelters and transitional housing. We therefore implore you not to forget our youth and staff in the New York City budget process.

Right-size Runaway and Homeless Youth Provider Contracts

First and foremost, we are asking that our essential workers/direct care staff, who have risked their lives every day of this pandemic caring for our young people experiencing homelessness, be paid a living wage. Unfortunately, cost of living allowances (COLA) for RHY staff under NYC contracts have been few and far between, leaving some full-time RHY employees struggling to meet basic costs of life in our city. It is simply unacceptable for essential workers with full-time jobs, who are jeopardizing their own health to serve others in this pandemic, to be living in poverty or needing multiple jobs to survive. Additionally, low and stagnant wages due to insufficient state and city funding can cause staff turnover rates which are detrimental to the young people we serve. Our youth develop rapport with the adult staff who act as mentors and guides as they rise out of poverty to lead self-sufficient lives. Frequent staff changes can disrupt that rapport and make it more difficult for youth experiencing homelessness to leave poverty behind. We are therefore asking for a 3% increase on contracts and rates for the next five years and an additional 7% general contract increase for all current DYCD funded RHY contracts.

Mental Health Funding

Living through a global pandemic can exacerbate mental health symptoms in all of us. However, individuals who were previously struggling with mental health concerns and the neediest among us are the most susceptible to declines in mental health. The experience of being without a home or family support is in and of itself traumatic, and for this reason, even prior to Covid-19, a majority of the young people we serve required mental health services. Now, in the midst of the pandemic, the CHNY mental health team is reporting significant increases in a wide range of mental health issues among our young people, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.

We are continuing to train our mental health workers in several evidence-based mental health models designed specifically for young people or those who have experienced trauma, including Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) and Motivational Interviewing (MI) as we work to address our young people's ever-growing mental health needs. However, as our young people's mental health needs grow, so do our costs in providing the appropriate level of 24/7 care. To continue to safely meet our young people's mental health needs throughout this pandemic we needed to offer youth greater availability to mental health services, obtain the appropriate PPE for our staff, reconfigure spacing, buy individual supplies for our art and group therapy work and ensure that we have the appropriate technology.

CHNY is doing everything in our power to meet this increased need for mental health services for our young people, including asking more of our private and foundation donors, at a time where people have less to give. However, we simply cannot do it alone and need the City's support to help us fund our mental health department, which includes a part-time psychiatrist and a team of social workers. We currently do



not get any City Council mental health care discretionary funding, and we are asking for \$100,000 to help fund a portion of the salary for two social workers on our dedicated mental health team.

Workforce Development Funding

Young people who are experiencing homelessness often rely on jobs in the services/restaurant industry as they simultaneously continue their education or vocational training with the goal of lifting themselves out of poverty. It is the job of the workforce development team at CHNY to help them reach that overall goal in whatever career path the young person chooses. Covid-19 has undoubtedly made this work more challenging. A large number of our young people have lost their jobs in restaurants, movie theatres and retail stores. Many of the educational and vocational training programs that our young people participated in have either shut down entirely or gone online, thereby creating a strain on our limited space and technology resources. Our incredible workforce development team have gone above and beyond in shifting focus and resources and making new connections with employers that can provide our young people with safe and stable employment despite the pandemic. During the last economic downturn in 2008, young people were the ones left farthest behind, with many unable to even find entry level employment. CHNY is doing everything that we can to make sure that this does not happen again. However, these efforts come at an increased cost, and we are asking the City Council for \$50,000 to defray some of the increased technology and personnel costs.

Continue to fund CHNY's anti-human trafficking program

Unfortunately, traffickers like to make homeless youth a primary target. Recent research has demonstrated that approximately one in five of the young people we serve have had experiences that fit the federal definition of 'severe forms of human trafficking' or felt so desperate that they believed they had no



choice but to trade sex for basic life necessities, such as food or shelter¹. Many of our survivors have told us that they are finding this period of social isolation especially difficult because it reminds them of being isolated with their trafficker and in some cases makes it harder to access their support systems in person. Unfortunately, many survivors of trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 which increases their chances of relapsing back into the life of prostitution if they cannot find employment. Additionally, we are in the process of moving our current safe house for survivors to a new location in the Bronx. We are extremely excited about the move as it will allow us to serve more survivors in a beautiful home closer to our main 41st St. hub. However, this relocation will be costly, with an increase in both rent and staffing costs. We are asking for continued funding of \$50,000 from the NYC Council which will help defray some of those costs which is crucial for our continued operation.

We again thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We understand that the City has difficult spending decisions to make in this unprecedented time. However, we also know that young people experiencing homelessness in NYC were already marginalized and that the current economic realities will make it even harder for them to break free from poverty. Additionally, many of our frontline staff are barely making a living wage yet continue to heroically risk their health to care for our young people. We believe that the above recommendations are essential steps to ensuring that the people who serve homeless youth are compensated fairly and that young people experiencing homelessness in NYC have an opportunity to thrive instead of falling further behind.

Jayne Bigelsen
VP of Advocacy
Covenant House New York
(917)842-6911

¹ 3Greeson JKP, Treglia D, Wolfe DS, Wasch S, Gelles RJ. Child welfare characteristics in a sample of youth involved in commercial sex: an exploratory study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 2019;94(1):1-11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104038>



jbigelsen@covenanthouse.org

550 Tenth Avenue, New York, NY 10018 ♦ 212-613-0300



**Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Testimony at the New York City Council
Youths Services Committee Hearing on the oversight of the preliminary budget
for Fiscal Year 2022.
Honorable Deborah Rose Chair
March 11th, 2021**

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Rose and the Members of the City Council, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Shuk King Cheng, and I oversee one of the many afterschool Programs Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC), provides across the city.

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

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

CPC's Youth Services comprised of afterschool programs for youths ages 9 to 19 and internship opportunities for youths ages 14 to 21.

Beacon at IS 220, COMPASS/ NDA/ Extended School Day for High Schoolers at the H.S. for Dual Language and Asian Studies, New Utrecht High School, Queens High School for Language Studies, **Learn & Earn Afterschool Programs** at both Manhattan and Queens Community Centers.

Work Learn and Grow (WLG) at the Flushing's International High School and the Brooklyn International High school

Summer Alternative Program (SAP) when SYEP was canceled. CPC launched a successful CPC Summer Alternative Program (SAP), a virtual career readiness initiative for New

York City high school and college participants, that operated in July and August. The program was particularly impactful during the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly reduced the number of summer youth employment opportunities for NYC residents. We invited 155 high school and college-aged students, including many low-income, immigrant, and first-in-family youth, to participate in SAP.

Pre-pandemic, afterschool programs are essential especially for low-income, and immigrant families due to the limited availability and resources parents can provide for their children. At CPC our afterschool programs provide workshops schools do not offer; DIY arts and crafts, various life skills including but not limited to financial literacy, cooking, mental health and welling, college and work readiness, professional etiquettes, and mentorship opportunities. These services are also youth focus, with social and emotional learning incorporated to close the socioeconomic gap.

With schools closed, our colleagues and front staff are scrambling to help youths coping with xenophobia, zoom burnouts, one on one guidance and counseling **due to an increasing mental health issues; anxiety, depression, and loss of motivation among Asian American Students.**

Covid-19 exacerbated the hardship minority, low-income, and immigrant communities face every day partially with essential services like employment, food, housing, and medical. Within my program for High school Juniors and Seniors, we not only provide laptop rentals, internet troubleshoot, but also the constant reminding to our youths of their basic needs to drink water, eat, and sleep. Additionally, we also assisted their families with unemployment benefits, rent relief applications, scheduling vaccination appointments, and translation services. **There are just more loss, more death, fewer vaccines among the hardest-hit communities.**

Who does our community member have to turn to, when the adults in their lives, are unable to navigate the system? They do not speak English and have no idea where to begin. That unemployment application was over 10 pages long with limited time allotted to each page, how could a high schooler understand those terminologies, when they have a difficult time completing their very own FAFSA forms for college.

Post pandemic, mental health will preside long after Covid subside and it will have an even longer and adverse affect on our youth than the disparity in education and learning loss may have. With Anti-Asian hate crimes increased 150% in 2020 mostly in New York and Los Angeles, more than ever our Asian American youths will need Mental health services, social workers, reliable adults, or mentors as a healing process.

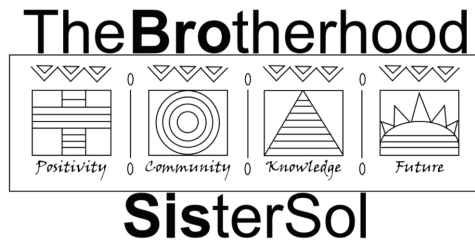


It is not surprising, according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, emergency room visits relating to mental health increased 31% in children ages 12 to 17. Mental Health is treatable and suicide is a preventable public health crisis. More than ever educators across the country are needed to detect and refer the help our youths need.

The time is now to address these presistent issues by investing in our youth and invest in community organizations like CPC who has were there since the beginning of the battle. **We demand the government to not only investments in youth services but specifically targeting the most vulnerable population and those who have been impacted disaproportionatly due to the pandemic.**

CPC appreciates the opportunity to testify on these issues that so greatly impact the communities we serve, and look forward to working with you on them.

If you have any questions, please contact Shuk Cheng at scheng@cpc-nyc.org



City Council Youth Services Committee Hearing – 11 March 2021

Testimony by Mam Fatou, a youth organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

My name is Mam Fatou Dukuray and I am a youth organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol.

It is upsetting that we still have to attend hearings to demand police-free schools and fully funded schools only to see that our city budget continues to fund the criminalization of NYC students. We who care about the wellness of marginalized students in NYC do not believe in this superficial transfer of School Safety Agents from the NYPD to the DOE and we do not believe that the city budget should continue to underfund our schools and communities.

To address issues worsened by COVID-19, we have to find money to create meaningful shifts in our education system and, instead, create pathways to student success. This will require police-free schools. Failure to divest from school police and invest in student success will mean that our city continues to fail us youth. Our city does not do enough to ensure that our schools are fully funded and fully resourced so as to meet the needs of all students. We need to remove all police presence – whether under the DOE or NYPD – and shift those funds to actually offer mental health support and overall supports for all young people.

None of the schools I have attended have had the resources for mental health support. In my current school, every teacher has the role of advisor but we have no guidance counselors or therapists and I have not had any support to prepare for college either. In school, not only do I feel like I'm being spied on but I feel criminalized as if the SSAs are just waiting for me to make one mistake to get us in big trouble. Additionally, a lot of my peers and I have had other negative interactions with SSAs.

The presence of police in our schools comes at the cost of having actual student support staff. This, paired with the disproportionate and negative impact policing has on students who are low-income, Black, and Latinx, means that we are more likely to be the subject of exclusionary discipline and police response at school than their white peers. Continuing to fund policing and policing culture in schools will make it clear that this is an issue of lack of political will. We, young people, are closest to the problem and therefore you need to hear us when we offer a solution.

You all have the power to meaningfully shift funds from the police and reinvest in our communities but this requires radical action beginning with this budget. To meet the demands of the people who took to the streets *and* the organizers now in this room, you have to end the criminalization of youth and students of color while deconstructing the school-to-prison pipeline and you must do this now. Join us or be a part of the problem.

For more information regarding our campaign, please contact Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles (mjc@brotherhood-sistersol.org, 212.283.7044).



ExpandED Schools' Testimony to the City Council Budget & Oversight Hearing on Youth Services

INSERT DATE HERE

Nearly one year ago, students were uprooted from their classrooms as they did, and continue to do, their part in slowing the spread of COVID-19. Now, continuing their studies on an online platform, students face many challenges as they adjust to remote learning. While those from high-income backgrounds were able to transition somewhat smoothly into this new way of learning, low-income students have not been so fortunate. Various inequities have become apparent in our schools as low-income students are not adequately provided with the tools they need to succeed in the online classroom. Lack of access to WIFI, safe home environments, and computers in general all act as considerable barriers to academic prowess. In response to these needs, the youth development sector has stepped up to provide resources, support, and virtual enrichment for students.

While one may believe that such problems surrounding inequality and inequity in education will magically disappear with the gradual decline of the pandemic, that prospect is far from the truth. Today's traditional school day continues to not provide enough time or resources to cater to the needs of our city's most vulnerable youth, within or outside of a global health crisis. With this in mind, it becomes apparent that Out of School Time (OST) and Expanded Learning Time (ELT) programs are an essential supplement to any child's successful education. Expanded learning and after school programs have long provided enrichment opportunities in areas such as literacy, STEM, civics, the arts, physical education, entrepreneurship and career exploration. In addition to learning and skills-building supplements, these programs also provide a space of social emotional wellness for the trying times our youth are navigating.

ExpandED Schools is setting forth testimony regarding our After-Three Initiative which serves 56 after-school programs in 36 Council Districts in all five Boroughs. Within this program, children are able to participate in high-quality expanded learning and afterschool programs which include tutoring, music, cultural dance, sports, science/technology, literacy, and bilingual education. It is through meeting students where their interests are that we are able to bridge in the academic support and youth development that provide the holistic education that our city's youth deserve. Furthermore, each of these enrichments are aligned with school academic goals, as the Community School Director works closely with the school leadership team and the Parent Teacher Association. After Three ultimately provides children with a safe, community-centered learning environment in which they are given the tools to better themselves while parents receive safe, supervised, supportive childcare as they work or pursue employment.

These programs also employ community members in various roles such as site coordinators, group leaders, activity specialists, social workers, and administrative staff. Community educators are frequently brought on board in order to facilitate diverse programs, strengthen the sense of community, and promote social-emotional wellness as a foundation for development. Provided with competitive wages, flexible schedules, and professional development, employees of the After-Three Initiative graduate from entry-level skills to more advanced skill sets thus preparing them for careers in education, social service, and beyond.



(formerly TASC)

ExpandED Schools

Close the learning gap. Open the world.

The Council's investment in After-Three for the past 20 years has enabled ExpandedED Schools to serve over 10,000 students and their families. We urge the Council to continue to prioritize children and families by allocating \$6 million to ExpandedED Schools for the After Three Initiative in the FY 2022 city budget. Whether in-person or online, afterschool programs such as this one continue to be invaluable resources to our youth as they support families, strengthen communities, and enhance learning. Funds for these programs are more critical than ever as a key tool to COVID-19 recovery and ultimately contribute to our state's future.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to New York's youth. Please reach out to our Policy Director, Naa-Shorme Aidoo, at 646-943-8847 or naidoo@expandedschools.org, with any questions or for further information.

FY22

Preliminary Budget
Hearing – Youth
Services Committee

Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE)**. I am here today to ask that you continue that support by advocating for and prioritizing our FY 22 citywide funding request of \$1,000,000 under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative.

Twenty-nine years ago, New York Edge (then called the Sports & Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc. /SASF) was created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

From these beginnings, we have grown into the largest provider of after-school and summer programming in New York City, traditionally serving over 40,000 students a year at 134 locations throughout the five boroughs. Core components of our programming include visual and performing arts, STEAM education, social and emotional learning and leadership, sports, health and wellness and academics and college readiness.

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. It is the belief of our Board and Staff that **EVERY** child is gifted and talented if only given the necessary tools, resources and supports. And as our name implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the **EDGE** that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life. **Eighty percent (80%) of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their schools and eighty-six percent (86%) of parents believe that our programs are helping their children succeed in school.**

Since its creation, New York Edge programming has consistently, and proactively, evolved in order to meet the needs of New York City's children and families, the most recent example being our response to COVID-19. With the onset of the pandemic and the closing of the public school system last March, we:

- *Moved our entire workforce to remote work through the end of the school year;*
- *Worked with our school partners to make sure students had the needed technology, by donating over 600 laptops and devices to students in need , to stay engaged and participate in remote learning AND to ensure that students and their families has ACCESS to healthy food;*
- *Created a trauma informed approach to our programming to help young people deal with the stresses and anxiety that the pandemic has unleashed on families across the city;*
- *Successfully rolled out 101 online programs in the spring - with focus on social emotional learning - open to youth in all of our traditional school site locations, providing academic; arts enrichment; health and wellness and college readiness;*
- *Developed, in consultation with the CDC and NYS Department of Health, stringent health and safety protocols for socially distant in-person programming for our summer and our 2020-2021 school year programs to best protect the health and safety of our students and staff;*
- *Created a COVID-19 Information and resource page for parents on our website which is updated regularly and provides links to various city and state agencies.*

With your support we received \$850,000 in the FY 21 Budget. **This funding allowed us to provide 3000 youth from across the city with a mix of virtual and in-person summer camp activities last summer.** Activities ranged from virtual concerts and career carnivals, to Knicks and Rangers –themed arts classes with Knicks alum John Starks and Ranger alum Adam Graves to financial literacy classes and MUCH, MUCH MORE. Due to the pandemic, our campers’ experiences were a little bit different than in past years but they were just as fun and enriching.

Our FY 21 Council citywide funding is also supporting our current after-school programming, virtual and socially distant, safe in-person depending on the school, throughout the five boroughs including seven Learning Labs. **Currently, we are running 107 programs throughout the five boroughs.** And as the public school system resumes in-person instruction, more and more of our staff will return to the classroom.

This past year has been extremely challenging for us all but through adversity comes strength, resiliency and, often, new opportunities. **This year has brought us new collaborators and partners including Teach Rock, founded by legendary guitarist Steven Van Zandt, Mets on the Move, the US Olympic Handball Team, the NY Knicks and actor and author Taye Diggs.** I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality.

For 29 years, New York Edge has been able to substantially impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of New York’s most vulnerable youth by leveraging City Council funding not only to run our flagship New York City Council Summer Camps but to bring our school year leagues, special events, weekend programs, and holiday break programming to youth across the five boroughs.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the support of the New York City Council these past 29 years. We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 22 citywide funding request of \$1,000,000 which will bring us back to our FY 20 level of funding. ***These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!***

Thank you.



Lazar Treschan
Vice President, Policy and Impact
HERE to HERE

Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
March 11, 2021

Oversight Topic: *The fiscal 2022 preliminary budget*

Recommendation: *Find a way to support every youth who applies for SYEP as we work toward a universal summer jobs program in Summer 2022*

I want to thank the New York City Council, and the Council Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify in support of the New York City Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). I will speak today about the critical importance of SYEP and paid, engaging summer experiences for you, more broadly, as a tool for the city's economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am grateful for the opportunity, and this testimony will focus on the need to create a way to serve and support all the young people that will apply for SYEP this year. The Mayor's preliminary budget includes full funding at baseline levels, which would allow for approximately 70,000 youth to be served in SYEP this year. It is good news that we will not have to fight another reduction, much less a summary cancellation, which took place last year, without any consultation with youth or youth-serving organizations. Thanks to the leadership of young people and many members of the City Council, we were able to restore 35,000 SYEP slots last year--an effort that we documented [here](#). And even better, we have an opportunity to use this summer as an intentional, proactive way to re-engage so many young people after a terribly difficult year and build toward a universal program.

You may be hearing from providers and DYCD about the capacity challenges in expanding SYEP this year. The city has not created flexibility in the program that would allow them to expand the group of providers if program slots are increased. Nor have they given providers the support that would be necessary to scale up easily. As a result, providers, many of whom had to let staff go last year when the program was cut, are wary about being able to serve more than the baseline numbers. This situation serves the city's interests of keeping costs down and not having to add providers to the current procurement. It also meets providers' needs not to stretch their capacity. ***The only people whose needs are not being met are youth, who are ostensibly the point of all of this work.***

Even if we serve 70,000 youth this year, tens of thousands more will apply to SYEP and be turned away. Many of these youth have faced intense struggles and disengagement this year.

We urge the Council to work with the administration to find a way to support these young people, whether or not we call that SYEP. Whether it's offering funding to high schools to design paid projects to keep students engaged; working with CUNY's Office of Career Success Initiatives to support their students through summer activities; and/or opening up to new summer program providers, we should consider going beyond SYEP this year. If we create a separate funding stream connected but outside the program, we will also not need to use the burdensome income verification paperwork requirements that the small amount of state funds for SYEP require (and which to make things easier for themselves, the city admin just makes into a requirement for all participants and providers).

SYEP is the largest workforce development program in the country, and the first job for many New Yorkers. In recent years, the program has reformed and improved, from a program to get young people off the streets at its inception, to a strong summer jobs program, to more recently a program that connects to youth's year-round interests through new service models within the program, most notably the school-based version of SYEP. My organization, HERE to HERE, believes that school-based SYEP is the most important entry point to the reshaping of public education to where it better prepares young people for 21st century careers, and creates the conditions for a truly inclusive New York City economy. If we cannot expand SYEP this year, let's use this summer as an opportunity to create a new initiative for those who do not get awarded slots, to ensure they get the same chance to stay engaged and connected. And the best way to do this is by connecting their summer experience to the interests, skills, and curiosity that they demonstrate

Connecting learning to work creates more [positive outcomes for students, as well as employers and the economy](#). Making work-based learning available to all [students](#), beginning at least as early as high school, is a win-win-win that benefits students, employers, and the entire community. When we braid school learning and workplace learning together, students are well-positioned to secure rewarding careers, employers are offered a qualified, diverse talent pipeline, and the community is better equipped to respond to today's rapidly changing labor market. Moreover, work-based learning prepares young people with the work skills they need to secure employment during times of economic strain.

Programs like the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) are often the only opportunity for low-income youth in New York to gain paid work experience and build their professional skills and a [key vehicle to mitigate the effects of segregated schools](#). COVID-19 has caused destructive economic impacts, which are disproportionately being borne by those with the fewest resources. **HERE to HERE urges New York City to expand the Summer Youth Employment Program during our ongoing crisis and recovery.** If providers tell us that this is not possible, then we should create an alternative program to support youth who cannot get into SYEP. Again, the best way to do this is directly offering fundsin to high schools and CUNY to engage their students over the summer in paid experiences that are not just sitting in classrooms doing traditional academic work, which is sure to

disengage them further. Regardless, we need to support every young person seeking to reconnect and contribute this summer.

SYEP and other similar paid summer experiences keep young people meaningfully engaged during otherwise unoccupied summer months, which will be crucial whether or not we need to maintain social distancing. Many young people are already becoming disconnected from our civic infrastructure as a result of not attending school in person, and SYEP, whether it is able to operate in-person or remotely, will be a key way to keep tens of thousands of young adults connected to positive, constructive activity, in what will be a crucial summer for our city. We all hope high schools return to in-person learning in the Fall, and we should view SYEP this year as the key way to begin that reconnection. With time to plan, we can create an SYEP and additional programming for 2021 that high schools and CUNY can use, in partnerships with the CBOs that administer the program from DYCD, that helps reconnect teenagers across the city through engaging them in paid in-person or virtual internships, and which will excite them to get back on track this Fall.

SYEP has shown clear educational and other benefits to participants, which we should not sacrifice, particularly following remote learning in schools. Research has found that the program increases school attendance and test scores following program participation, in addition to non-academic, statistically significant benefits including decreased mortality and incarceration. A virtual SYEP may even be able to offer young people a professional technological skill set they will need in the years to come. As so many adults have begun to use the term “learning loss” for their own purposes

Above all, we all understand that these are tight times for the city budget, but they are far more difficult times for the young people and families that rely on SYEP not only for income, but for that first job experience that teaches them about the world, themselves, expands their network, and helps them begin to figure out what type of career might be for them. We must not balance the budget on the backs of our most vulnerable youth. Along with ensuring the program’s funding stream, the Council should work to give providers and young people as much time to plan as possible--approving the budget for SYEP at or near the June 30 deadline for the city budget makes the program extremely complicated to administer. We urge you to work with administration to solidify funding by the start of Spring, so we can create the best program possible this year.

I again want to thank the Council for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the tens of thousands of young New Yorkers who stand to benefit greatly from the Summer Youth Employment Program and any alternative programming we can offer this summer to the tens of thousands of youth who will not be accepted into the program.



**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Meeting on March 11, 2021
Testimony By: Juan Carlos Salinas**

Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Juan Carlos Salinas, and I am the Director of Education at Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL).

JCAL was founded in 1972 as part of a large effort to revitalize Downtown Jamaica. Since then, JCAL has become the cultural destination for local residents and a magnet for local economic growth.

As a CIG and the one and only multi-disciplinary arts center in Southeast Queens, JCAL serves as an arts oasis in a neighborhood of New York City where cultural opportunities are limited for one of its largest communities of color. Even during the current pandemic, JCAL continues to provide high quality arts education at no cost for any student in need, with a focus on our Southeast, Queens community.

There are many education programs out there, but JCAL is unique. Our students grow with us. Elementary, Middle, High School, college, and adults, our education programs cover the depth and breadth of a lifetime education in the arts.

It is often said that the arts have the power to change lives. I'm sure the arts have impacted many of you in different ways. Though for many of us, the arts were the turning point in our lives. And many times that turning point begins in the after school programs such as CASA, College Access, and our School Assembly/ Family Matinee series especially, for children's from Southeast Queens. Now more than ever, our community needs us.

As the director of the education programs, I see every day how the arts transform into opportunity and possibility, while restoring the creativity that is so often stifled in our students in New York City.

Our programs service over 1000 students directly and over 2000 students indirectly in the South East, Queens community, often listed as a "arts poor district". Over 98% of our participants are students of color, and for most of our students, we are the only arts education they receive.

As Ms. Christine Guzman parent coordinator at PS 160 Q says, "I don't know what we would do without JCAL. When our federal funding for the arts was cut, JCAL was there to fill the void. Whether it was dance, drama or visual arts, our students were able to explore their artistic talents under the tutelage of dynamic teaching artists.

JCAL, along with other CIG's, will be crucial in the revitalization of New York City. The arts alone may not build a neighborhood, but they can help shape the culture of a community to help celebrate the triumph of the human spirit. We ask that the cultural budget be held harmless and maintained at FY'21 levels as we await further information on federal COVID relief that may be made available to the City and State. Thank you for your time.



www.jcal.org
The *Art & Soul* of the Community

161-04 Jamaica Avenue
Jamaica, New York 11432
Tel. 718-658-7400
Fax. 718-658-7922



New York City Council Committee on Youth Services

Meeting on March 11, 2021

Testimony By: Kayla Scott McDowell

College Access

I would like to thank JCAL College Access for helping me in the college process. From a young age, I dreamt about going to college and that dream came true because of this program. I did not know much about applying to college. With the one on one sessions and open discussions the program has given me, this program has helped me get feedback on my application to college and informed me what I had to do to get into college. As a first generation student, I am forever grateful for the help this program has given me. Now I can live that dream of going to college!

Again, JCAL I would like to thank you for helping me get into college!

–Kayla Scott McDowell, Bard Early College High School,
Mount Holyoke Admit



**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Meeting on March 11, 2021
Testimony By: Rofeeah Ayeni**

College Access

Thank you for creating this wonderful class that kids like me can look to for help. As a first-generation immigrant student, I don't know how I would have done any of it on my own. Thank you for preparing me for the application process and reviewing my essays to make sure that I'm presenting the best possible version of myself. Above all, thank you for believing in me and encouraging me to dream big.

Best,
Rofeeah Ayeni , Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical High School,
Tufts University Admit



New York City Council Committee on Youth Services

Meeting on March 11, 2021

Testimony By: Daryl Richardson

School Assembly/ Family Matinee series

My name is Daryl Richardson, and I am the Director/CEO and Founder of The Me Nobody Knows in Southeast Queens. I am submitting this letter to inform you that my organization would not be able to do what we do without the continual support of the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning. They have funded my organization to have afterschool programs, and hire teaching artists in dance, drama, and music. We are currently working on a documentary with students expressing their experience during this devastating time.

The Me Nobody Knows is a community-based organization that uses social-emotional learning and mentoring through the Performing Arts to tap into the talent, gifts, and abilities that are innate in every child. The arts play an important role in the overall development of a child, and our purpose is to create a safe environment and support for children to express themselves freely. This builds self-esteem, confidence, respect for self and others, and the outcome is that well-balanced human beings emerge.

Although we have been quarantined, that has not stopped The Me Nobody Knows from continuing our mission. We are creating virtual presentations where the students are still engaged. Any support given for the Jamaica Center for Arts and learning will be a catalyst for students in Southeast Queens to be impacted positively. Typically when Arts programs and budgets are removed the children suffer.

Thank you for allowing me to express my appreciation for the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning.

Sincerely,

Daryl Richardson

New York City Council Chair Rose and Committee on Youth Services
March 11, 2020

Thank you for Chair Rose and committee on Youth Services for giving us a chance to testify today. My name is Judy Ling and I am a Certified School Counselor currently working at Immigrant Social Services, Inc. (ISS).

Since 1972, ISS is dedicated to improving the conditions and promoting the welfare of our community in the Chinatown and Lower East Side Area of New York City. ISS has worked extensively with immigrant children and their families, many of whom are from low-income households with limited English proficient. We partner with schools to provide enrichment, academic support and prevention through OASAS but it has been extremely difficult especially during the pandemic because there is just so much we can do without adequate support from the city.

Nearly 50% of our Pan Asian population in NYC lives in the hardest hit areas during the pandemic but for fiscal year 2021, Asian led and serving organizations only received 4.65% of City Council's discretionary funding, when we make up 15% of the population in NYC. The purpose of this 15% and growing campaign is so we can receive 15% of the discretionary dollars, which correlates to the population size.

The 1st citywide initiative the city should expand on is Mental Health Services for our young people. To do that, the DOE needs to lift the current hiring freezes. Schools were already understaffed, especially when it comes to pupil personnel services. COVID-19 is a traumatic experience, so now more than ever, students and families need social emotion support. I chose to be a School Counselor so I can give back to my community, but was appalled that I wasn't even given a chance to a job interview not because I didn't have the skill set, but because I was born too late to be in the field. Just simply applying SEL in schools is not enough, you need PPS to help address crises. Teachers are not trained like we are and they are already burnout and overworked. Also, adequate language access needs to be in place to provide mental health resources related to covid-19 since a lot of our APA population have limited English proficiency. Covid-19 is a traumatic experience and it is crucial our young people can have support to process it and work through it. Adults have some skill sets to cope with the pandemic, but still struggle so imagine how much worse it is for our youth who speaks English and the ones who don't. Mental Health resources are great for our youth, but doesn't mean anything if it is not linguistically or culturally appropriate. It also doesn't help that there are anti Asian crimes in the midst of the pandemic. Youth need us to support them, but we cannot support them without adequate funding. ISS is at limited capacity, scrambling to help and going above and beyond but there is so much we can do with all these budget cuts.

The second citywide initiative the city should expand on is Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative. Its been a year since the lockdown and many families still don't have ipads or stable affordable internet connection. The inadequate support that resulted in lack of funding to APA communities should not be the reason why 6-year-old Amanda has to squint her eyes while

trying to see the worksheet her teacher is sharing on her mom's cracked iPhone 7 screen because she did not receive an iPad from her school and she does not have a printer at home to print the workbook. Children like Amanda are struggling academically not because of their lack of effort, but because of the lack of resources provided by the city. We are asking that the city expand the Digital Inclusion and Literacy Initiative. Expansion is needed to ensure that more APA-led and serving organizations are adequately funded to support those with the highest need. 63% of residents in our district are either living in overcrowded housing or do not have decent internet at home. In this age of remote learning, the digital inclusion and literacy initiative should really be the minimum for every child and the financial burden should not fall under the families or CBO's.

Covid-19 is affecting everyone in some way. As for the APA community at ISS, education is extremely important and the quality of a child's education should not be deficient because their families became unemployed, live in homeless shelters or public housing or simply don't have the technology. A fair share of public and private resources can really help APA organizations like ISS go a long way. We are the only organization funded by NYS OASAS serving the APA population, but lost a significant amount of funding because of the pandemic. OASAS allowed us to have a prevention program that offered counseling services to students, educate them and their families to decrease risk factors for substance abuse, addiction, problem gambling, violence and much more. We cannot teach students the curriculum if they can't show up to zoom because of technological related struggles. And that's why we need your help. So we can continue to advocate for our community. Thank you for your time.



Dear City Council Members,

Jumpstart's vision is that every child in America enters kindergarten prepared to succeed. To accomplish our goal, Jumpstart recruits and trains college students and community volunteers to provide language, literacy, and social-emotional programming to preschool children in low-income communities. In the past year, Jumpstart recruited and trained 417 Corps Members to deliver programming to 917 preschool children in underserved communities across New York City. Jumpstart engaged an additional 572 children through community events in South Jamaica and East New York.

Jumpstart partners with stakeholders in the early childhood education field to broaden our reach in our communities, including through City's First Readers (CFR). CFR is a collaboration of 12 nonprofit organizations focused on supporting the literacy development of NYC children from ages 0-5. By delivering research-driven programming to over 1 million children, parents, caregivers, early child care providers, and educators, this initiative works to ensure that children enter school ready to read and achieve educational success.

Early literacy is critical to building an equitable society, and children ages 0-5 must not be forgotten as the city responds to pandemic-related learning loss. Of the 442,837 New York City children living in poverty, 30.6% (135,780) are under the age of five. We know that a substantial percentage of these children in poverty represent communities of color. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, families living in poverty are not only living in fear of the virus, they are also experiencing greater loss, horrific rates of food insecurity, unemployment, and are lacking many necessities—including the tools to support early learning.

The need for City's First Readers programming has never been greater. Children and families have been isolated for more than one year with limited access to the pre-literacy support. Many advocates and educators are understandably focused on the learning loss for school aged children and teens. Yet, we know that our youngest learners from 0-5 have been deprived of the rich and necessary experiences that are foundational to their future success in school and beyond.

Jumpstart, alongside each CFR partner, is uniquely positioned to fight against learning loss and its long-term consequences among our youngest New Yorkers. In response to COVID-19, Jumpstart made an immediate pivot to providing services digitally to the children and families we serve. In addition to the resources provided on our website, we also delivered tips, weekly storybook readings, and activities in English and Spanish to support at-home learning to over 9,000 Jumpstart families and caregivers through our partnership with Ready4K—an evidence-based family engagement texting platform developed by educational researchers.

This year, we support CFR in requesting \$4.6 million. This funding will allow: extended outreach efforts to engage the hardest to reach families and increase the numbers of constituents who benefit from early literacy programs; comprehensive early literacy programming and the ability to adapt and pivot programming based on the changing external environment; increased public education messaging through an "always on" Read the City public education campaign; and strong evaluation and impact assessments to inform programming and coordination across all partner organizations.



Children first.®

Jumpstart urges the City Council to prioritize early learners by continuing to support City's First Readers. In doing so, the City Council will contribute towards increasing equity and creating opportunities for NYC's young children to build strong foundations for a lifetime of learning.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naila Bolus".

Naila Bolus
President and CEO

From: Lazar Treschan <ltreschan@heretohere.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 10, 2021 2:21 PM
Subject: Re: Teens testifying at hearing tomorrow

Hi, I also wanted to reach out--thanks so much for the invitation to testify. Due to a conflict, I will have to submit my testimony and won't be able to testify live.

I am grateful for the opportunity, and the testimony that I submit will focus on the need to create a way to serve and support all the young people that will apply for SYEP this year. I'm sharing a summary of that testimony here, in case it is helpful.

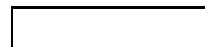
You may hear from providers and DYCD about the capacity challenges in expanding SYEP this year. The city has not created flexibility in the program that would allow them to expand the group of providers if program slots are increased. Nor have they given providers the support that would be necessary to scale up easily. As a result, providers, many of whom had to let staff go last year when the program was cut, are wary about being able to serve more than the baseline numbers. This situation serves the city's interests of keeping costs down and not having to add providers to the current procurement. It also meets providers' needs not to stretch their capacity. The only people whose needs are not being met are YOUTH, who are ostensibly the point of all of this work.

Even if we serve 70k youth this year, tens of thousands more will apply to SYEP and be turned away. Many of these youth have faced intense struggles and disengagement this year. We urge the Council to work with the administration to find a way to support these young people, whether or not we call that SYEP. Whether it's offering funding to high schools to design paid projects to keep students engaged; working with CUNY's Office of Career Success Initiatives to support their students through summer activities; and/or opening up to new summer program providers, we should consider going beyond SYEP this year. If we create a separate funding stream connected but outside the program, we will also not need to use the burdensome income verification paperwork requirements that the small amount of state funds for SYEP require (and which to make things easier for themselves, the city admin just makes into a requirement for all participants and providers).

The testimony that I will submit will focus on these concerns, and we urge you to be creative to find a way, this year of all years, to support every young person seeking to re-engage this summer. HERE to HERE and our allies are ready to support you in this work.

Thanks,
Lazar

Lazar Treschan
Vice President, Policy & Impact
He/him/él



www.heretohere.org



City's First Readers

An initiative of the New York City Council

Committee on Youth Services and Community Development Preliminary Budget Hearing Submitted by Literacy Inc. - March 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Emily Gertz and I am the Director of Strategic Initiatives at Literacy Inc. We are a program partner and the managing organization for the **New York City Council's Early Literacy initiative, City's First Readers.*** City's First Readers includes 15 active partners that work in all 51 council districts to create equity of opportunity for children under five who are affected by systemic poverty. Annually, as a coalition, we support one million families by providing them with the critical early learning programming to ensure *all* New York City children have a solid foundation to start school successfully, thrive academically and succeed beyond their school years.

Equity Results from Early Literacy Access and Opportunity

An amazing 90% of brain development occurs by age five. Unfortunately, during this critical period, children living in poverty – who are disproportionately children of color – experience the important foundational literacy activities of talking, singing, drawing, playing and reading together at rates far below their wealthier peers. Without strong pre-literacy engagement, children arrive at school less prepared to learn. As a result, they quickly fall behind academic standards. An achievement gap forms that is nearly impossible to close.

Experts and advocates for education justice know that the academic achievement gap is actually an opportunity gap. City's First Readers provides this opportunity through coordinated and complementary early literacy engagement such as distributing 270,000 books to build home libraries, training almost 1000 staff to deliver effective programs and implementing more than 355,000 remote learning opportunities in FY20 alone.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Early Literacy

City's First Readers independent evaluator documented the impact of COVID-19 on families served by our programs.ⁱ Not surprisingly, the report illustrated that families with young children are experiencing horrific rates of stress from unemployment and food insecurity. They are also burdened with increased needs for childcare support and the challenge of managing multiple child rearing responsibilities. Many families lack the tools to support early learning at home and do not have access to any or enough technology to engage effectively in remote programming. Often, the needs of school aged children are prioritized. This does not mean that families are not concerned about the impact of COVID on their youngest. In fact, as many as **68% of parents in New York with infants and toddlers are worried that their child's social, emotional and cognitive development will suffer as a result of the coronavirus crisis.**ⁱⁱ

"CFR programs offered connection and continuity, providing structure and stability during a time of crisis. [CFR Programs] validated activities that may have seemed, to someone unfamiliar with the critical importance of play for young children, comparatively frivolous."

—CFR Partner

Early Literacy is Socially and Economically Beneficial

Early literacy programming safeguards the future and well-being of children. It is a preventative measure that yields tremendous results with multiplying effects. **Literacy levels are strong predictors of improved health outcomes, civic engagement, and economic self-sufficiency - positive behaviors that help our society overall.**

The appetite for early literacy support was actually greater [during the COVID crisis] because all of these parents have been home with their kids.

-CFR Partner

Early literacy is also fiscally responsible - every dollar spent on quality programs for children from birth- age 5 delivers a 13% annual return on investment.ⁱⁱⁱ

The New York City Council took decisive action in 2014 to address the literacy crisis facing New York City children by initiating City's First Readers. **Today we respectfully request a budget of \$4.6 Million to continue fighting for education justice in our communities.**

City's First Readers did not pause during the COVID-19 pandemic and we have no intention of slowing down as the city begins to emerge from the crisis. With \$4.6 Million in funding for FY22, City's First Readers will continue and expand its powerful work with children and families including:

- Extended outreach to engage the hardest to reach families
- Effective programmatic adaptations that respond to the external environment
- Increased public education through a family-focused website and year-round digital engagement
- Strong evaluation and impact assessments that strengthen coordination across all partner organizations.

For far too long investments have been made in communities when problems are too large and impacting change feels impossible to achieve. The New York City Council can enable this change from the start by investing in the city's youngest learners through continued support for City's First Readers.

*FY21 City's First Readers active partners include: Brooklyn Public Library, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Hunts Point Alliance for Children, JCCA, Jumpstart, Literacy Inc, New Alternatives for Children, New York Public Library, ParentChild+ (delivered locally by SCO Family of Services, Child Center of New York and Sunset Park Health Coalition), Reach Out and Read of Greater New York, Queens Public Library, and Video Interaction Project. Broadway Housing Communities also receives funding from City's First Readers.

ⁱ *Continuity During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Evaluation Inquiry.* Apter & O'Connor Associates, Inc. January 2021.

ⁱⁱ <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2020/04/Coronavirus-Poll-Memo.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://heckmanquintion.org>



**Testimony of Good Shepherd Services Before the New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

Submitted by Luis Fuentes, Senior Program Director, Monterey Cornerstone Community

March 11, 2021

My name is Luis Fuentes and I am the Senior Program Director at Monterey Cornerstone Community Center in the Bronx. I have worked for Good Shepherd Services for 13 years and during that time, I have been a group leader, teen services coordinator and now a director. Thank you Chair Rose and the members of the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify on afterschool during today's preliminary budget hearing.

Today, we operate 20 afterschool programs, 7 Community Schools, 10 Young Adult Borough Centers (YABCs) and 4 Partnerships Schools, with our 14 YABCs and Partnership Schools supported through the Learning to Work (LTW) Program. Currently, we also operate 5 Learning Labs (LLs), 2 at our Cornerstone Community Centers located in NYC Housing Authority Community Centers; 1 at our Prince Joshua Avitto Community Center and; 1 in partnership with a DOE Public School. Annually, our educational programs serve over 10,000 students.

Last year when the pandemic hit, I went from Director to first responder. We supported the City in opening the Regional Enrichment Centers, the Grab and Go Meal Centers, the Learning Labs, provided social and emotional supports to children and families and supported educators and students with remote learning. And all the while, kept ourselves, children and community members safe.

This was also happening as Good Shepherd Services had to lay off over 300 individuals as a result of the cuts that youth services experienced last year when the Mayor eliminated all youth services programs. Those of us that remained had the impossible job of continuing to support families in the midst of a pandemic while mourning the loss of our colleagues and navigating the precautions of social distancing and wearing masks to keep both ourselves and the children and families we interacted with daily safe. I too feared contracting the virus and keeping children and families safe.

Last year, I participated in 16 #FundYouthNYC rallies to fight back the cuts and just yesterday, I cohosted the first round of #FundYouthNYC rallies to denounce the Mayor's proposal to cut SONYC slots this summer in his preliminary budget. I am here today to ask the Council to negotiate a budget that includes SONYC slots for the over 45,000 children who depend on supports and engagement now more than ever.

Because there is still uncertainty, we are planning for both remote and in person. We are considering new ways to have youth connect with each other. Last year, summer program included a community engagement and salsa congress. During the school year, we had over 100 children grades 8th through 12th grade participate in a Step Up initiative where kids gave back to the community. We provided virtual activities that helped kids work on leadership skills, exposed them to what civic engagement looks like in their communities and created social and emotional connections among participants. The

youth also learned about how to make their communities better during COVID. These experiences, these meaningful interactions is what is at stake if the Mayor is allowed to eliminate SONYC.

I ask the Council to help us restore these slots so we can plan accordingly. We need to stop the budget dance and the last minute negotiations that yield slots which providers have to scramble to fill. Our parents deserve better. Our communities deserve the respect to plan ahead and not last minute. They too have to schedule work and life and this budget dance makes it very difficult for them. We need a decision to be made NOW and by the Executive Budget, next month so we can plan and not do the budget dance until June 30th.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

About Good Shepherd

Guided by social and racial justice, Good Shepherd Services partners and grows with communities so that all NYC children, youth, and families succeed and thrive. We provide quality, effective services that deepen connections between family members, within schools, and among neighbors. We work closely with community leaders to advocate, both locally and nationally, on behalf of our participants to make New York City a better place to live and work.

Hello, my name is Nargis Asghar. I am a student at the DREAMS Youthbuild program. I am glad that I have this opportunity with you all to share my experience with the Youthbuild program.

The reason I joined the Youthbuild program was because I hadn't finished high school so I had no diploma. It was very hard for me to find somewhere to help me, to give me a second chance to start over and succeed this time. The program gave me a second chance to prepare me for taking the TASC exam and getting my High School Equivalency Diploma. The staff members, the teachers, the director...they were beyond helpful. They helped me to start on a path of great success and a good future.

Because of this program, I got my HSE. Because of my HSE, I got into college. I get to start college this month at BMCC. The Youthbuild program not only prepared me for getting my HSE, they helped me to improve my future, set my goals and start on the path of achieving my dreams, on a path of making a difference. I am grateful for the contribution of the program towards not only the students' education, but towards the student's well-being, success and goals.

I believe the City Council should continue to fund the Youthbuild program because the program is a person's second chance. How many times we have wished to have had a second chance in life? The program was my second chance, it was what I needed to look forward to a bright and successful future. I want others, just like me, to know there is people out there that will welcome them with open arms, and give them a second chance. Thank you.



**Testimony for the New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
Oversight: Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget
March 11, 2021**

Thank you to Chair Rose and members and staff of the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify. My name is Nicole Hamilton, I am currently the Director of Community Partnerships at Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) and previously served as the Director of Urban Leaders Academy, GGE's social justice school-based after-school program for almost 10 years. I am testifying today in strong support of returning full funding to the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and to speak specifically to concerning trends of outsourcing youth work to the NYPD.

Introduction

Almost exactly one year ago today, GGE convened a Zoom call of over 100 youth service providers, educators, city agency employees, mental health professionals, social workers, and others out of necessity in rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the upheaval it has caused. Recognizing that there is strength in numbers, we decided to continue to meet regularly in an effort to organize a critical mass around some of the issues and challenges we were facing as Youth Service Providers. The most emergent issues identified by the group include but are not limited to: educational access and equity, mental health and social service supports, restorative practices in the digital space, support for youth workers and afterschool providers, policing and surveillance, funding, and the City budget. Here we are, almost a year later, still holding space to support this dynamic group of people who love, serve and support young people day in and day out.

Last September, the Youth Service Providers Network published a letter which we titled 'A Call to Action - Maximize Resources and Restore Healing'. The letter stated four demands, one being for the city to 'resource the work' by reducing the NYPD's expense budget and re-allocating funds back into schools and youth-serving organizations. We all know that young people are in desperate need of safe and supportive spaces to process some of the trauma they have experienced due to COVID-19 and witnessing the murders, assaults, and dehumanizing disregard of Black people at the hands of the police. Young people also need spaces to heal and reconnect with joy, play, and community.

The Mayor's Preliminary Budget Proposal

DYCD is facing continued and disproportional divestment. We thank the Council for your leadership in preserving SYEP in some form after the Mayor proposed its cancellation in FY21, and we thank the Council for the stated commitment to returning SYEP slots for the summer of 2021. However, we are concerned that the funding for SYEP falls short of sustaining SYEP in its entirety – as funding in FY22 is just 75% of what it was in FY20. Further, funding for DYCD in FY22 is \$200 million less than what it was in FY20.

Many of the young people you find at City Council, or in these zoom hearings will not forget the times when they shared their stories, raised their voices, and demanded that you do better by them, only to have their

programs cut and defunded, taking away valuable life experiences and often, as in the case with SYEP, financial resources needed to help support their families in hard times such as these. They will not forget.

Young people are severely impacted by these cuts because they take away vital resources that they need while continuing to siphon these funds into the budget of NYPD. Young people are watching and listening and they will not forget that their cries for the City to stop criminalizing, dehumanizing, and traumatizing them day in and day out by the ever-looming presence of police have been consistently ignored. They will not forget that the City sends officers who wield the power to enact deadly force into their schools and onto their playgrounds and in their train stations, at their bodegas, their youth programs, and in the very buildings where they live.

Despite their outrage and pleas, the City doubles down and finds even more ways to give the NYPD access and portals into the lives of young people. We know that quality programs are a protective factor in the lives of many young people, yet it seems that the City is willing to forfeit their protection in order to bolster the budget of the NYPD, who are ironically called to serve and protect and often do the opposite.

Fund Positive Youth Development

We call on the Council to invest in programs that build skills, cultivate communities, heal past hurt and harms, spark inquisitiveness, value individuals for what they bring, validate, affirm, connect, uplift and support. This is your chance to prove that you have not only been listening but that you have heard and will honor the experiences of young people in our city in a way that is undeniable: by putting forth a budget that reflects that they are a priority and not an afterthought and that their well being is paramount.

By fortifying the communities of care that are already in place to serve young people with funding, staff, resources, space, equipment, we create environments that can sustain safety and positive culture, free of police. Instead of outsourcing youth worker positions like camp counselor, after-school provider, or coach, to the police, invest that money back into building up the people who have been undervalued and underpaid, yet still doing the real work all along. When we call for police-free schools we are calling for new pathways to school-based employment focused on restorative practice, care work, and resisting criminalization. We cannot continue to place such political emphasis on displacing school police if we do not equally consider how pushing the NYPD into youth-serving jobs indirectly displaces thousands of youth workers who are dedicated, equipped, and ready to give young people the specific, age and developmentally appropriate care and attention they want, need and deserve.

Defund Youth Policing

In addition, the public needs full transparency about all current relationships, with their budgetary impact, between DYCD and the NYPD. We heard this morning that DYCD collaborated with the NYPD at the Police Academy to start up the new Youth Coordination Officer program, endorsing the use of police as a DYCD outreach strategy. This is outrageous! Young people must be able to be outside, play, and have joyful everyday youthful experiences without police intervention! The Mayor's March 5th "Police Reform and Reinvention" proposal expands on what we've seen in our communities – the tangling together of youth programming and policing. With SYEP, for example, we understand the NYPD is one of the larger SYEP worksites where youth are placed at local precincts, 1 Police Plaza, and other NYPD units/commands.

The City has created devious and secretive partnerships between the NYPD and DYCD, forcing young people to interact with police at Beacon and Cornerstone Centers, and DYCD-contracted youth-serving organizations. We see this in schools where the City makes plans to train NYPD in restorative practices so that they can sit in circle and be privy to intimate details of young people's lives. Again we see it when school police are deployed to meal distribution sites and given thermometers to take temperatures when young people enter school buildings.

What's worse, the Patrol Guide is continuously and outrageously adapted so that police are instructed to perform a myriad of tasks with the intent of insidiously infiltrating youth spaces, just so that they can stay in close proximity to young people, even when young people themselves have stated that they are not welcome. And let's face it, those jobs rightfully belong to other people: people without the legal authority to use physical and deadly force or carry with them the threat of imminent criminalization. Those jobs belong to food services workers, restorative justice practitioners, counselors, school nurses, parent coordinators, and a long list of other positions that are severely understaffed and also require specific skill sets and levels of expertise and experience in youth development. The NYPD's intelligence-driven policing model, its information-sharing practices across City agencies, its omnipresence and surveillance infrastructure, makes it clear, apparent, and imperative that DYCD must be free from the NYPD.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.



New York Road Runners
156 West 56th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10019

Tel (646) 758-9732
Web www.nyrr.org

**TESTIMONY BEFORE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES
FISCAL YEAR 2022 PRELIMINARY BUDGET
THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2021**

**PREPARED BY: CHRISSY ODALEN, SENIOR DIRECTOR, YOUTH PROGRAMS
REPRESENTING: NEW YORK ROAD RUNNERS**

Good morning Chair Rose. My name is Chrissy Odalen and I serve as Senior Director of Youth Programs at New York Road Runners (NYRR). Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Committee on Youth Services on the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget.

INTRODUCTION

New York Road Runners' (NYRR) mission is to help and inspire people through running. We achieve our mission by creating running and fitness opportunities and programming for people of all ages and abilities.

NYRR demonstrates its commitment to keeping New York City's five boroughs healthy through races, community events, senior walking programs, youth initiatives and school programs, and training resources that encourage over 600,000 people each year to run, move, walk, and build physical and mental strength. NYRR's premier event, the TCS New York City Marathon (the largest marathon in the world), is not only a celebration of New York City but is a powerful contributor to its betterment: each year, 10,000 charity runners raise \$40 million on behalf of hundreds of nonprofit organizations in New York City and across the nation. The Marathon generates \$415 million each year for New York City, significantly boosting tourism, tax revenues, and the economy.

While NYRR is best known for producing the TCS New York City Marathon, our organization is one of the **largest nonprofit providers of free youth fitness programs in New York City.**

Rising New York Road Runners (RNYRR) is the flagship youth program of NYRR, and helps kids develop the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life. The program takes a developmental approach to physical education through students' ages, needs, and abilities, blending running and social emotional learning (SEL) with a mix of fitness activities and games.

Offered for free to New York City schools, afterschool programs, community centers, and running clubs, NYRR trains PE teachers, classroom teachers, counselors, and coaches to implement the RNYRR program, as well as provides resources for virtual and blending teaching and rewards for kids to keep them moving and improving.

BUDGET REQUESTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020

NYRR is asking the New York City Council to once again generously fund our critical services for youth under its **Physical Fitness and Education Initiative. In FY20 and 21, NYRR was allocated \$250,000 under this initiative; it is our hope the Council will increase its support to \$500,000,** which will greatly help offset the expenses necessary in bringing the RNYRR youth program, at no cost, to roughly **800 New York City educators and 100,000 students, in every single City Council District annually.**

NEW YORK CITY NEEDS FREE, YOUTH PHYSICAL FITNESS AND ACTIVITY PROGRAMMING

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, New York City youth need, more than ever, an active lifestyle and resources that promote social emotional learning. Low levels of time spent being active cause a wide range of negative physical, social, and emotional health effects among youth, some of the most dangerous being weight problems; cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness; risk of depression; and cognitive function. A lack of access to equipment, facilities, and spaces (unfortunately compounded by the COVID-19 crisis), and lack of support from peers and parents further compounds these issues.

To address the unique needs in the 2020-21 school year, NYRR has enhanced our youth program's offerings to provide activities that fit a range of settings—whether students are learning in-person, remotely, or a mix of both—and guide the inclusion of physical activity into students' days. The program also includes no-barrier instructional videos, including Spanish language videos, that can be followed independently at home. As of fall 2020, NYRR also began offering virtual office hours with our on-staff youth program coordinators, so educators have even more access to support and training to best implement the program into their instruction.

RNYRR Content Packs:

- Rising in Class: For schools/sites introducing PE into the classroom environment. Provides guidance on how PE or classroom teachers can optimize with limited space and equipment while safely providing the crucial benefits of physical activity during the school day.
- Rising with Space: For schools/sites able to use their indoor/outdoor recreational spaces, including gyms, cafeterias, and athletic fields and tracks. Provides activities safe to practice as a group while following social distancing guidelines.
- Rising at Home: For schools/sites seeking to include physical activity during the day for their students or provide instructions for parents who are serving as the at-home facilitator.

HELPING YOUTH AND THEIR LEADERS SUCCEED

In addition to unlimited access to hundreds of SHAPE America standards-based PE curriculum resources, schools and afterschool programs enrolled in RNYRR receive:

- Personalized training and ongoing support from an NYRR Program Coordinator
- Great rewards for students, schools, and program staff, as movement milestones are met
- Instructional start-up kit with gear to get programs up and running
- Virtual events, challenges, races and runs to motivate youth, build school community, and strengthen peer relationships

As a testament to our youth program's importance among NYC educators, in 2021, NYRR was chosen as one of four providers to help NYC schools offer high-quality physical activities that focus on fun, movement, socially distant games, running, and sports conditioning through the CHAMPS program. We are also constantly working in partnership with the DOE and the Office of School Wellness Programs to adjust our curriculum to accommodate at-home learning and support educators transitioning to new teaching styles.

NYRR is dedicated to continuing this integral partnership with the NYC DOE, which spans over two decades, so together we can find solutions and create physical activity opportunities for the 1M+ students who call New York City home.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 crisis has made NYRR's work to support New York City schools, educators, parents, and kids, more important than ever. By creating a plethora of new digital and virtual resources, NYRR is ready to serve every member of our New York City community, regardless of the unique impacts COVID has had on our lives. PE has never been more important, and NYRR is here to help provide great PE instruction throughout the current school year and beyond.

We hope that renewed and increased funding from the New York City Council will continue to enable NYRR to provide our youth program for youth across the five boroughs free of cost. We further hope, because of the ongoing pandemic, that funding will remain flexible in FY22 as it has in FY21. It is essential for NYRR to be able to use this critical initiative funding to relieve the program's budget as the fiscal year (and school year) takes shape, i.e., if New York City is able to return to an increasingly in-person instructional model and outdoor activities rebound this spring and summer. As we gain more certainty with the pandemic, and pending city and state guidelines, we hope funding will also be able to support our in-person youth fitness events (with COVID safety measures in place) once again.

I respectfully ask the City Council to reinforce the importance of keeping kids active by renewing and increasing funding under its Physical Education and Fitness Initiative, so that NYRR may continue, at no cost, to help youth across the five boroughs stay healthy.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the work of New York Road Runners, and I urge you to prioritize the funding of physical education and fitness programs for all New York City students.

Please review our resources at <https://www.nyrr.org/Youth> and/or contact us with any questions: risingnyrr@nyrr.org or codalen@nyrr.org.



**RISING
NEW YORK
ROAD RUNNERS**

FREE RESOURCES FOR TEACHING PE DURING COVID-19

**INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS
NATIONWIDE, GRADES PRE-K - 12**

rising.nyrr.org



RESOURCES OFFERED

- Standards-based physical activity ideas, lesson plans, and units of instruction with social distancing
- Activities without equipment, or safe to use with minimal equipment
- Instructional videos featuring Olympic and Paralympic athletes
- Resources for in-person, virtual, and blended teaching
- Opportunities for social emotional learning
- Support for educators in any school setting and for students and families at home

YOUR STUDENTS NEED YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER

PE classes and physical activity improve student's physical and mental health and build resiliency to face the COVID-19 crisis. To help you best serve your students, regardless of the teaching model, we've adapted **Rising New York Road Runners** for this unprecedented school year.

Rising New York Road Runners is a 100% free and fun physical activity program used by 1,300 schools and 250,000 students nationwide. Grounded in physical literacy and youth physical development science, our program's activities help students develop lifelong physical, social, and emotional skills. The mix of fitness and running activities builds student's competence, confidence, and enjoyment of movement.

Rising New York Road Runners serves students of all ages and abilities and is easily personalized for class size, space, and skill focus.

Recommendations for using the physical activities include:

- PE class and/or recess
- PE class "pushed into" classroom
- Classroom brain breaks
- Remote, at home instruction



IT'S EASY TO TRY

The heart of the program is **PLAYBuilder**, a database with 800+ fun, research-based activities. Use PLAYBuilder to help students develop the fundamental movement skills essential for participating in sports and daily life. PLAYBuilder's customizable activities, games, lesson plans and units are an excellent curriculum resource, especially this Fall. **Click here to check out some fun sample activities, specifically designed for safe and easy implementation this school year!**

Want more? Enroll in Rising New York Road Runners.
It's free and easy—and you get all the program's resources!

CLICK HERE TO GET STARTED

HELPING YOU HELP YOUR STUDENTS

In addition to unlimited access to hundreds of SHAPE America standards-based PE curriculum resources, schools in Rising New York Road Runners receive:

- Personalized training and ongoing support from a Rising New York Road Runners Program Coordinator
- Great rewards for your students, your school, and program staff as you log your students' physical activity and reach movement milestones
- Instructional start-up kit with gear to get your program up and running
- Virtual events, challenges, races and runs to motivate your students, build your school community and strengthen peer relationships

PE has never been more important, and we're here to help you provide great PE instruction throughout this school year. Please review our resources and contact us with any questions: email risingnyrr@nyrr.org.



EARN COOL GEAR

Reward for kids are built into the program to keep them moving, whether they participate in their school's Rising New York Road Runners sessions, virtually or in-person. Here are the incentives kids can earn this school year:

GRADES PRE-K TO 5 EARNING LEVELS

5 Sessions

35 Sessions

26.2 Miles

100 Miles

GRADES 6-12 EARNING LEVELS

5 Sessions

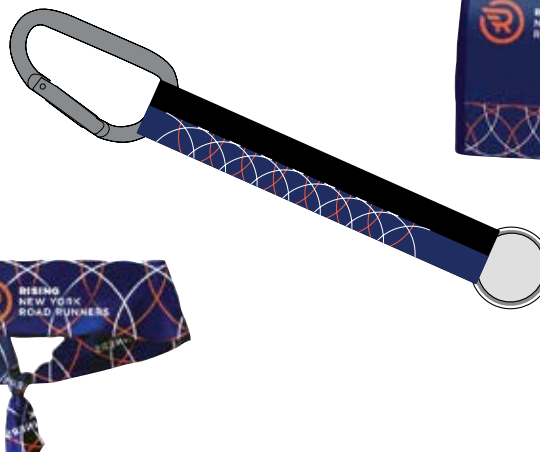
35 Sessions

26.2 Miles

Time Trial Patches



ENROLL NOW



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**RISING
NEW YORK
ROAD RUNNERS**

New York Road Runners, whose mission is to help and inspire people through running, serves 670,000 runners of ages and abilities annually through races, community runs, walks, training, virtual products, and other running-related programming. Our free youth programs and events serve 125,000 kids in New York City's five boroughs and 250,000 kids nationally.



**ParentChild+ Program Testimony
Committees on Youth Services and Community Development**

**Submitted by ParentChild+
in Partnership with the City's First Readers Initiative**

March 11th, 2021

Good afternoon: My name is Andre Eaton, and I am the New York State Director for ParentChild+, formerly The Parent-Child Home Program.

ParentChild+'s unique focus is on providing parents with the skills, knowledge, and materials they need to support school readiness in the home and build home learning environments that support children's language, literacy, numeracy, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. In doing this work, we are also helping parents learn what to look for in a child care setting, how to identify and access their children's next educational steps, and how to support their children's continued academic progress. Our partners in this work in New York City and elsewhere in the state include school districts, public libraries, social service agencies, literacy programs, community health centers, and community-based organizations. Focusing on school readiness and early literacy supports for families in communities challenged by poverty, isolation, limited education, and language and literacy barriers, ParentChild+ provided over 46,000 home visits and distributed over 23,000 books & educational toys in New York City last year with support from the NYC City Council.

Before children enter pre-k or kindergarten, many of the children living in communities furthest from opportunity and children from immigrant families and families with home languages other than English are cared for by family members or in informal settings. These are the families least likely to have access to the information, materials, and activities that will enable them to build their children's school readiness skills and ensure that they have the skills they need to enter a classroom ready to be successful students. The funding provided by the City's First Readers Initiative is critical to providing the support families need to prepare their children to enter a classroom prepared to be successful in school.

ParentChild+ provides critical learning tools, books and other educational, interaction-stimulating materials, to families with two- and three-year-olds. ParentChild+ helps families build literacy, language, and interaction-rich environment in their homes. They participate in two visits a week (typically in person visits, and during COVID all virtual) with an early learning specialist, or home visitor, who introduces the materials to the family, and models for parents how to read, talk, and play with their children to build language, social-emotional, and early literacy skills. ParentChild+ staff also connect families to other social service supports when necessary and assist parents in

planning for their children's next educational step and with registering their children for a pre-k or Head Start program.

ParentChild+ staff also provide similar supports to family child care providers caring for children in low-income communities. Family child care is the most common form of child care for 0 – 3-year-olds in historically marginalized communities – it is accessible, available with caregivers who speak the families' home language, and available at that the hours that parents need to work. Through twice weekly visits with providers during the day while children are in care, ParentChild+ early learning specialists support providers in building learning and interaction-rich care environments and support their group management skills and age-differentiated activities. They work with the providers on family engagement and support both the care and home environments by providing high quality books that both stay with the provider and go home with the children, tips for both providers and parents, and other learning materials. The ripple effect is powerful as each of the providers will go on to bring these school readiness skills to other children in their care over the coming years.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to expand our reach, adding our work with family child care providers in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, and South Jamaica and Astoria in Queens, supporting them in building school readiness-rich care environments for the children they care for during the day. This work is enabling us to reach families who are not able to be a part of our one-on-one home visiting model, because they work long and often irregular hours.

The pandemic forced us all to change the way we interact with each other socially and forced ParentChild+ to adjust the way we provide services, especially to our most vulnerable populations. We pivoted from in-home visits to remote/virtual visits using tablets, phones and devices with the children and families that we serve, making that change immediately as the virus began to spread rapidly in across the city. In addition, our families and our work are located in the midst of the ongoing fight and struggle against racism and social injustice in our cities, the nation, and the world. The COVID pandemic has further highlighted the educational, social, and economic disparities experienced particularly by black and brown in this country. As these dual pandemics highlighted the size of the disparities and depth of their impact on children and families, ParentChild+ elevated and recommitted to its stance against racism and injustice, taking a much deeper look into the entire organization in every area to provide the best services to the children, families, and staff whom we work with nationally and internationally.

We have implemented our four-pillar approach across our work as we partner with our City's First Readers' partners. Our framework of four key pillars to help bring equity is an organizational commitment to:

- 1) Strengthen the families and parents of ParentChild+ children by providing services where they live to support and embed in their communities.**

- 2) **Build their trust and respect by providing them and their children the best tools and educational resources to prepare their children for educational success and a better future.**
- 3) **Facilitate deep community connections with all our public and nonprofit partners so that families' needs are always upfront and met.**
- 4) **Continuing to prioritize caregiver-child interaction as critical to all children's health development.**

ParentChild+ is so honored to be part of the City's First Readers Initiative. Working with our partners in this initiative, we were able this year to provide intensive school readiness supports to 100 additional families challenged by poverty, isolation, and language and literacy barriers in communities across the city, 4,600 additional home visits, 2,300 additional books and educational materials in homes that would not have been possible without this support. We were able to connect ParentChild+ families with a continuum of other school readiness services and activities in their communities, provide all the program materials through drop-offs and all the visits virtually. Throughout the pandemic we have also been able to support family's immediate needs for food, clothing, PPE, technology access, and rent assistance.

Our work with families significantly increases children's school readiness, decreases their need for special education services as they move through school, and improves their school performance. Our work with FCC providers improves the quality of the interaction in the care environment, increases reading with parents at home, and decreases home screen time.

With support from the City's First Readers Initiative, ParentChild+ has been able to expand to seven communities, reaching families in both South Jamaica and Astoria, Queens, Sunset Park, East New York, Brooklyn, and most recently Far Rockaway who would otherwise not have access to these supports. Many of these communities have historically had limited early childhood school readiness services available. With additional funding, ParentChild+ could reach more deeply into these communities and expand into additional communities. ParentChild+ could easily reach an additional 150 families across the city in the coming year. We hope to expand to Hunts Point in the Bronx with our current CFR partner the Hunts Point Alliance for Children with additional funding.

We look forward to working with the City Council to expand this critical continuum of services for young children and their families. Thank you so much for allowing me this time to present ParentChild+'s critical school readiness and family support work as part of the City's First Readers Initiative.

**FY2022 Expense Request Testimony
NYC Council Committee on Youth Services Preliminary Budget Hearing**

March 11th, 2021

Good afternoon. My name is Maryam Mohammed-Miller and I am the Manager of Government Relations at Planned Parenthood of Greater New York. Thank you to Youth Services Committee Chair Debbi Rose for convening this hearing, Speaker Corey Johnson, and to the entire City Council for your continued support and the opportunity to testify about our FY22 expense budget requests.

PPGNY has proudly provided the full range of sexual and reproductive health care services and quality education programs to all New Yorkers for over 100 years. Last year, despite the pandemic, our New York City health centers conducted over 70,000 patient visits and enrolled 5,600 people in health insurance programs, providing care to all regardless of immigration status, identity or ability to pay for services. Our education programs also engaged over 6,500 people in 2020 -- including 118 young people. Project Street Beat (PSB), through their offices and mobile health center, conducted over 1,300 additional encounters.

The COVID-19 pandemic we are living through has had a devastating impact on all of New York, especially on the marginalized communities PPGNY serves. We saw that many of the patients and communities we serve, many of whom are people of color, were hardest hit by the COVID-19 virus and the ripple effects it had on the city's economy and social service system. Communities that were already marginalized have proven to be disproportionately impacted by this disease. To help combat the impacts of COVID-19 on our communities, we transformed our care delivery model at our health centers and PSB to help ensure individuals could safely access our services while adhering to government guidelines to decrease the spread of the virus. Also, we continued to provide critical education programming virtually and conduct community outreach to ensure communities obtained the sexual and reproductive health information they need. As an organization, PPGNY also faced several challenges that presented financial hardship due to decreased revenue from service fees, and a 15% cut in council discretionary funding in the FY21 budget.

Planned Parenthood continued to face attacks from the federal government and conservative state governments that used the pandemic as a tool to restrict sexual and reproductive health care access around the country. Also, the changing landscape of the Supreme Court presents a real threat to *Roe v. Wade* and reproductive freedom throughout the country. We are also still dealing with the devastating impact of the domestic gag rule on Title X recipients, forcing Planned Parenthood to withdraw from that program.

Despite these attacks, we remain committed to providing quality health care services and educational programs to our communities, no matter what. Our outreach programs are crucial in ensuring that patients have access to health care services and information whenever, wherever, and however they are needed. Today, we again turn to the generosity of the City Council to help us to continue to provide affordable health care for all New Yorkers.

Supporting Young People and Protecting Access to Healthcare

PPGNY recognizes the challenges the pandemic has presented to all New Yorkers, but especially young people. They have been forced to quickly adapt to changes in the educational system almost daily, have

not been able to engage with their peers regularly, and are restricted from accessing vital services and programming that support them academically, socially, and personally. PPGNY has been committed to supporting young people during this difficult time and we've continued to provide healthcare services and educational programs to young people that ensure they can still safely access sexual and reproductive health care.

We respectfully request an enhanced funding amount of **\$750,000 from the Reproductive and Sexual Health Initiative**. This funding supports the clinical healthcare services offered at our five New York City health centers and our Youth Health Promoters program. We offer care to our most vulnerable patients who qualify for low or no cost services because they are uninsured, low income, have an undocumented immigration status or are otherwise unable to use their insurance due to confidentiality or safety concerns. Enhanced funding will also support our clinical staff with Electronic Medical Records (EMR) telehealth care training that will allow our patients to continue to receive quality healthcare during the pandemic and beyond, given the consistent demand for care through the telehealth modality.

This funding also supports our Youth Health Promoters (YHP) program. The YHPs are highly trained peer educators who engage other young people and conduct interactive workshops to educate youth about teens' rights and access to sexual and reproductive health care to overcome barriers and stigma that teens may experience in accessing care. The YHPs also engaged with their peers through a series of virtual events and robust social media engagement that promoted healthcare access in fun and interactive ways. In 2020, the Youth Health Promoters reached 118 youth in "Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights & Access" workshops.

PPGNY also requests enhanced funding from \$225,000 to \$500,000 from the Dedicated Contraceptive Fund Initiative to provide long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) devices free of charge to patients who choose LARC and are uninsured, ineligible for public insurance coverage, facing financial hardship, or unable to use their health insurance due to confidentiality concerns.

We provide no-cost LARC insertions and removal at our health centers as well as on our Project Street Beat (PSB) mobile health center whose client base is individuals who use drugs, work on the street or are unstably housed. The PSB mobile health center addresses these risk factors by bringing free reproductive health care--including LARC devices, navigation and referral services-- to hard-to-reach communities.

PPGNY has extensive experience providing comprehensive contraception options counseling and administration, which includes LARCs, thanks to support from public and private sources. However, we recently faced a \$500,000 decrease in private contributions for New York City LARC services, which will impact our ability to sustain our volume of patients on a sliding scale.

We also request funding from the Trans Equity Programs Initiative in the amount of \$250,000 to help empower the trans and gender non-conforming populations to lead healthy lives by expanding access to sexual and reproductive health services and gender affirming care at our health centers. We offer trans/nonbinary care in all five of our New York City health centers. In 2020, we provided care for over 500 individuals. Additionally, we recruited two Ambassadors from the transgender and gender non-conforming community who are working to build relationships with partner organizations, raise awareness of our culturally competent care, and link individuals to expert services at PPGNY.

The cost of medications associated with this care can also be burdensome, even for those who are insured. We will use these funds to expand the sliding scale funding that helps offset the costs of gender hormone medications at all of our New York City facilities, and expand access into our mobile health centers.

Ensuring Access to Vital Sexual and Reproductive Health Education

Intimate partner violence is an issue plaguing too many young people in our city and we must ensure that they have information and resources to help make health decisions about their bodies and their relationships. To support our work in combating domestic violence, **PPGNY requests \$75,000 from the Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DOVE) Initiative** in order to increase our work with survivors of domestic violence to connect them to the sexual and reproductive health care and services. PPGNY does this work in collaboration with community organizations serving these individuals. Funding will allow us to further train staff and build additional partnerships with domestic violence agencies through the presentation of workshops and other channels of engagement best suited to reaching the communities they serve. Further developing our long-standing clinical and education work with survivors of intimate partner violence and our internal competencies will enable us to amplify our role as part of a comprehensive coordinated community response to violence and reduce the risk of poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes.

Conclusion

Young people are facing unprecedented challenges during this pandemic and we must and ensure they have access to healthcare and educational resources to empower them during this time. As New York City begins to move past the pandemic, we ask that the council stand up and support organizations doing work in the communities most impacted. We look forward to continuing to work with the council to ensure all New Yorkers are empowered to make healthy decisions for themselves and have access to the care they need.

Thank you.

March 11, 2021

Testimony to the New York Council

Dear Committee of Youth Services,

My name is Polina Ostrenkova and I'm a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation and a client of Covenant House New York (CHNY). As a part of the *Aspire Program*, which is a CHNY safe house program, I continue to receive services that help me to stay on track with my life goals without thinking that I need to become involved in illicit schemes. I'd like to tell you my story to show you the importance of the programs at CHNY for young people in extreme predicaments. I'm grateful for the opportunity to testify to the Committee on Youth Services as a voice of trafficked youth.

I left my home and family due to extreme tension about the differences my family and I believed were the best ways for me to achieve my goals. I couldn't accept what my family insisted I should do with my life. I ran away from home because I wanted freedom, but I was still living under the strain of what punishments I would receive for making such decisions. The events that followed left a scar on my life and traumatized me.

In the summer of 2019, I was arrested and faced several criminal charges. I believed my life was ruined. A couple of days later I was re-arrested when I tried to flee the country. People who I had been staying with provided me with a ticket home and assured me that nothing bad would happen. Why did I believe them? Because I was a naïve and desperate girl who couldn't make any decision for my own benefit. I didn't have anyone to support me in the situation. My knowledge about life was so limited, so I had no choice but to listen to my "boyfriend" (someone I had met in the U.S.) while he was thinking how I could avoid accountability for what I had done. I felt desperate, miserable, ashamed and abandoned, but I never asked for pity. I blamed myself.

My outlook on the situation changed when I looked at it from a different side. Three lawyers and a social worker from the Legal-Aid Society were defending me while my case was open. Meanwhile I started to get a sense of my case, but I still couldn't believe that I was the one who had been taken an advantage of. I had never seen myself be in a such predicament. Eventually, I was released from jail, but I lost everything and had no idea whether I would be able to live a normal life. My first connection became Restore NYC, which specializes in immediate help for victims of human trafficking. Restore later referred me to the CHNY. I stayed at the crisis center for 2 months and was assigned to the *Aspire Program* that CHNY oversees. It's a safe house program where trafficked female identified young women are able to get comfortable living accommodations while recovering from a recent trauma. The young women are also educated about creating an independent and sustainable life. The program provides material support to the young women by supplying them with everyday needs that are considered necessary. Victims of human trafficking may feel anxious, unsafe, ashamed and desperate because of possible issues with the law, their immigration status and the lack of necessary documents which can jeopardize them. That's why CHNY works hard to get young adults' needs met and help them to thrive.

CHNY helps youth to set goals and to achieve them. CHNY is focused on helping young adults reach self-sufficiency. However, since the pandemic hit our country it became harder to assist youth with their needs due to a crisis of resources and economic issues. Supporting the programs that CHNY provides creates measures of success. Clients, who are 16 to 24 years old come from different places

with a variety of issues that they are not able to solve on their own. All major issues start from a lack of love and support. Youths become homeless, trafficked and rejected by families; they find themselves at Covenant House's door after breaking down. Knowing that homelessness is a big issue in the U.S., Covenant House makes sure that people won't stay abandoned and famished at their young age. The variety of services that CHNY provides help youth to get on their feet. Every staff member in the CHNY circuit plays a very important role with helping young adults overcome difficulties and learn how to gain success in order to create a sustainable life.

Workforce Development

I think that the continued existence and increased funding of workforce development programs is very important because they tackle different areas of assistance that youth may have troubles connecting with. As a client of CHNY, I think, that it's very important to maintain all the services currently sponsored and operating. Youth face diverse problems going through the justice system and are not able to help themselves. The services that CHNY provides enable us to have a roof over our heads, to have good nourishing food and to be clean and safe. We get to learn more and apply for schools and colleges, fulfil our educational needs and prepare for careers. Being aware that the range of knowledge may completely differ among youth, CHNY offers programs that will help every young person gain general knowledge and prepare them for schools and jobs. Workforce development helps young people earn a GED/TASC if they don't have one and move towards their career goals by connecting them with programs that match their goals.

Physical and Mental Health Services

The young people who come to CHNY are coming from different cultures with different experiences that may have caused physical and mental health issues. People with mental health disorders and difficult conditions must be provided with immediate help. CHNY is dedicated to helping youth with any issues that need to be solved, and there are staff members who specialize in specific mental health fields, who are having hard time, due to a lack of sufficient funding, meeting all the young people's needs. A lack of mental health services providers will result in less than satisfactory outcomes. The issue of having mental health disorders or trauma bonds won't be solved as soon as possible if there aren't enough staff members provided who specialize in particular fields (counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists). Delayed assistance may cause depression, anxiety, outbursts, etc.

Legal assistance

Free legal assistance plays a huge role among youth due to diverse history of arrests and immigration issues. Currently CHNY has a very small legal staff (only one attorney) and the addition of more paraprofessionals and attorneys would be beneficial.

Anti- trafficking programs

Trafficking is a hard thing to stop. Exploiters have brilliant skills of manipulation and that's where vulnerable people are caught. People from marginalized communities and LGBTQ+ youth are at the highest risk from traffickers. The year of the pandemic made the situation even worse due to the reduction of jobs, which brought an inability to sustain basic life needs. People will seek money, and assuming that consequences won't be that great, they will choose to accept the deal a trafficker or other exploiter offers. Victims of human trafficking may require all services listed above because of the

traumatic experiences they have endured. They require mental and physical health treatment because of possible trauma bonds and health conditions. People who have been abused and targeted might not know how to operate in life because of a lack of knowledge, language skills or disabilities. Their choices are limited, mostly, because of the money issues. They also face problems with the law and require legal-aid services.

When it comes to male trafficking victims, the gender of the professionals offering physical and mental services comes into question. Advocates say that the male identified survivors should be provided with services given by male psychologists and medical doctors. This approach seems to be more efficient because these victims might feel more comfortable speaking with person of the same gender.

CHNY has been fighting trafficking for decades. The importance of supportive services is crucial to making people's lives better. Speaking about my own experience, I'm grateful for the *Aspire Program*, because for the past year I haven't had to worry about a place to stay, food, transportation and toiletries. I also have been getting a weekly incentive to cover my own needs and learn how to budget money. When I got an immigration status, I was offered a paid internship to work with the staff of CHNY as a survivor of human trafficking. I started in October and have been in this position until today. This internship is a great opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking, educate people and gain a lot of knowledge and experience within policy/advocacy work. My supervisor Jayne Bigelsen is an expert in advocacy work. She helps me to overcome my barriers and motivates me to work for justice and equality. Since English might have become a barrier for me, Jayne suggested tutoring sessions which have helped me to perfect my English. This program helped me to grow from a shy and vulnerable girl into a strong, resilient and fearless woman. I admire the work that CHNY does. As long as Covenant Houses exists, youth will have resources about education, careers and how to establish a stable life. Covenant House takes care of runaways, homeless, exploited and LGBTQ+ youth and cares about their lives. America is an advanced country and must show the progress of fighting injustice and inequality. The programs that were made to simplify and improve people's lives must continue to operate. CHNY and other programs like them make the lives of abandoned and desperate youth better. The only thing that is out of its control is the variety of conditions that result in people becoming homeless and abandoned in the first place.

Polina Ostrenkova

Youth intern/client of Covenant House New York

REACH OUT AND READ OF GREATER NEW YORK

Testimony before the Committee on Youth Services and Community Development (DYCD)

This testimony is on behalf of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York (RORGNY) in support of City's First Readers, the early literacy initiative. We want to take this opportunity to thank the Speaker and City Council Members for their ongoing commitment to ensuring that New York City children who participate in our program will begin school with the literacy skills that will enable them to succeed.

More than ½ of New York City public school 3rd graders read below grade level. The problem is even bigger in communities of concentrated poverty, where one age-appropriate book exists for every 300 children. Third grade literacy levels are strong social determinants of health, civic engagement, and economic self-sufficiency. Low levels of literacy are also correlated with incarceration and both juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. Prevention beats intervention. The Return on Investment for high quality early childhood programs is cited as 13%.

For 20 years, [Reach Out and Read of Greater New York](#) has partnered with health care providers to put books and literacy resources in the hands of children and their caregivers. During regular pediatric checkups, pediatricians, family physicians, and nurse practitioners give new, developmentally appropriate books to children from birth through 5 years old and advise parents and caregivers about the importance of reading aloud. Many of the resources we provide families at these visits are connections with our City's First Readers partner organizations, who we know will continue to further the early childhood education support we give at the pediatric checkups. We partner with 170 of these hospitals, clinics, and pediatric care sites in New York City. In 2020, we served over 255,000 children.

With schools and libraries closed during much of 2020, the best way to reach the most vulnerable New Yorkers was through the hospital and clinics. In the majority of our clinics, Reach Out and Read programming never stopped.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us a unique partnership opportunity with [NYC Health + Hospital's Test and Trace Corps](#). We partnered with 17 of their rapid test sites, providing books to be handed out to families who come in for COVID tests, and to train the NYC Health + Hospital's Resource Navigators to advise parents on building early literacy skills with their young children. At the five quarantine hotels set up around New York City, RORGNY provided books to support the children and families staying there. Our partners at City's First Readers (CFR) came together to provide books, crayons, art supplies, and activity sheets for 5,000 Take Care Kits – collections of resources that go out to families required to quarantine.

We feel honored to be a founding member of CFR whose goal is to build links between literacy resources for low-income families in a variety of contexts across New York. As a consortium of

organizations, CFR aims to reinforce messaging across platforms and provide cross-referrals of services, with the ultimate goal of increased saturation of literacy resources for parents, teachers, and other childcare providers to promote school readiness in children ages 0–5. To date, CFR has expanded services, provided additional opportunities for parent engagement and provision of books.

If the City Council authorizes funding for Fiscal Year 2021 for the CFR Initiative, this vitally important work will have an even greater effect on NYC children and families. RORGNY will be able to expand on meeting book need at the sites we work with, increase the number of health care workers trained in the program, and revamp our book recommendations to assure families are receiving quality books.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything it is how crucial health care workers and health care systems are in supporting New Yorkers. Providing early literacy resources through this system has carried through the pandemic and is thriving through the challenges. We continue to need financial support to allow the RORGNY program to reach maximum impact, serving more families in NYC.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.



Dear Council Members,

On behalf of Row New York, I would like to thank you for your support of the Sports Training and Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS). With funding from the New York City Council, the ten STARS partner organizations have continued working to develop the life and leadership skills of NYC girls through athletic, academic, and arts programming despite the impact of COVID-19.

As a STARS partner, we at Row New York are doing everything we can to support the girls we serve. COVID-19 has dramatically disrupted our students' lives, and we have responded by providing a consistent, structured academic and athletic program that students can rely on, while also offering readily accessible counseling services to make sure our participants are safe, supported, and on track to meet their goals. We are currently providing a hybrid virtual and in-person program for high school students that includes remote programming in addition to a socially distanced rowing program using single boats.

Our program staff are providing individualized case management services to assist students and their families that have been affected by the pandemic. Staff are contacting students individually on a weekly basis to assess how they are responding to virtual learning, discuss progress towards rowing and academic goals, and determine if further support is needed to help with challenges related to the pandemic. If students are experiencing issues like food or housing insecurity or anxiety from the pandemic, staff work to identify and connect them with resources and agencies that can provide further assistance. By helping in this way, Row New York is working to ensure that all participants are prepared to graduate from high school on time, gain admission to college, and have the skills and opportunities to seek meaningful employment in adulthood despite COVID-19.

Though COVID-19 has temporarily changed the way sports programming is delivered, support from STARS and the participating partner organizations have made sure that the girls in our communities have still been given access to novel programming that keeps them healthy and engaged. Recently STARS partnered with Nike to create a video series featuring the initiatives participants focused on selfcare. The initiative, appropriately titled SelfCare Saturday, has provided opportunities for each STARS partner organization to work with their participants and create videos that show the importance of taking care of your mind and body.

We are so grateful for the City Council's leadership and their support of STARS. We thank you on behalf of the girls of this city that have received invaluable support throughout this pandemic, and urge you to continue your support in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rachel Cytron".

Rachel Cytron, Executive Director of Row New York

2 Lafayette Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10007
T 212.577.7700 F 212.385.0331 www.safehorizon.org



Testimony of
Joe Westmacott, Assistant Director
Safe Horizon Streetwork Project

On the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget

Committee on Youth Services
Hon. Deb Rose, Chair

New York City Council

3.11.2021

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the youth services portion of the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget. My name is Joe Westmacott, and I am the Assistant Director of Housing and Benefits Resources at Safe Horizon Streetwork Project. Safe Horizon is the nation's largest non-profit victims services organization, offering a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. And we are increasingly using an antiracist lens to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the public positions we hold.

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are pleased to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We look forward to helping you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping young people access desperately-needed shelter, support services, legal assistance, and counseling.

My testimony today will provide an update to the Youth Services Committee on one key Initiative that is funded by the City Council and contracted through the Department of Youth and Community Development. This Initiative, the Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade, provides critical funding to Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project.

Streetwork provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 13 to 25. We work with homeless and street-involved young people to help them find safety and stability. Many homeless young people face a day-to-day struggle to survive, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. Homeless youth may have experienced family abuse, violence, rejection, and instability that led to their homelessness. We welcome these young people, help them navigate complex systems, and provide essential resources at our Drop-In Centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams. This work can be incredibly challenging but also rewarding. Our work at Streetwork did not pause during this pandemic. Rather, our dedicated team continued to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter, services, and understanding. Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project has been doing this community-based work since 1984, and we will continue to do so for as long as our services are needed.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2020, the City Council designated \$456,697 through the Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative to bolster Streetwork's ability to provide services and access to housing to young people engaged in the sex trade. With this funding, we have been able to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the Drop-In Center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade and to connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare. Safe Horizon is seeking a full restoration of \$456,697 to continue to bolster our response and offer

critical services to this vulnerable population navigating a pandemic, homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Testimony Submitted by Student Leadership Network
March 11, 2021**

Good morning. My name is Yahaira Gil Maestro, and I am the Director of The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS) at Student Leadership Network, formerly known as Young Women's Leadership Network, where I lead programming that impacts more than 2,500 students across TYWLS. With close to 20 years' experience serving underrepresented communities in NYC, my passion is connecting families and children to resources that serve as a bridge for their next step. My work in single gender, all girls' education over the past 13 years has focused on creating access opportunities to engage students and volunteers across industries. On behalf of Student Leadership Network and The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), thank you to Chair Deborah Rose and all of the members of the Youth Services Committee for this opportunity to testify about youth services in New York City.

Student Leadership Network operates two programs in New York City that support a diverse pipeline of young people from underserved communities to gain access to educational opportunities that help prepare them to lead successful lives: The Young Women's Leadership Schools (TYWLS), a high-performing network of single gender traditional district public schools, and CollegeBound Initiative (CBI), a comprehensive college access, persistence, and success program for young people of any gender.

In 1996, Ann and Andrew Tisch partnered with the Center for Educational Innovation and the New York City Department of Education to launch The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) of East Harlem, the first public all-girls school to open in the United States in 30 years. Their vision was to provide girls growing up in underserved communities with a high-quality college preparatory education modeled after the finest private schools. Today, Student Leadership Network impacts more than 2,500 students through our five single gender public schools in New York City, located in East Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens (Astoria and Jamaica).

TYWLS are open to girls and gender expansive youth of all academic abilities who aspire to postsecondary education. The TYWLS "whole girl pedagogy" is based upon girls' education research and is guided by the overarching goal of elevating young women's voices, confidence, and expanding their resources to thrive in college and beyond. As such, our programs are designed to support skill building in four core areas: 1) College and Career Awareness; 2) Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM); 3) Leadership Development; and 4) Health & Wellness. Through the "whole girl pedagogy" comprising these core areas, students have access to dozens of in -and -out of school enrichment opportunities that deepen their learning, broaden their exposure, and strengthen their self-regard. The four core areas permeate nearly every facet of TYWLS through our approach to service delivery called the three "Ps" for its emphasis on programs, partnerships, and professional development. As a result, TYWLS boast a 98% high school graduation rate, a near 100% college acceptance rate for graduating seniors, and an average financial aid package of \$20,000 per student annually, excluding loans. We hope that this testimony is a starting point to continue this conversation about ways that we can collaborate to deepen our support of young women and gender expansive youth in New York City.

The on-going pandemic has disrupted students' lives and learning on a monumental scale and has also had a disproportionate effect on many of our TYWLS school communities due to deeply entrenched systemic racism and chronic underresourcing of communities of color in New York City. To provide opportunities for student engagement during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 crisis, SL Network offered our student support programming virtually for thousands of students at home. We are continuing to offer a number of mental health supports to students who are experiencing

extended isolation and trauma in addition to continuing to provide critical services through virtual counseling sessions. Our team at Student Leadership Network also recently developed a suite of free [virtual college and financial aid application resources](#) that could greatly benefit students and their families navigating this process virtually during this most challenging year.

TYWLS continues to be a location for safety and healing, and we are implementing new virtual events and programs designed to give students a sense of comfort, peace, and control through opportunities to express their voices and connect with their peers. Events such as “Wellness Wednesdays” provide a safe space for students to talk through what they are experiencing during this time and find comfort in their peers’ shared experiences. Other wellness events have included virtual Zumba and yoga classes that support students work through stress, and sessions led by Dr. Maysa Akbar in which students discussed Urban Trauma, how systemic oppression impacts communities of color, and how health is impacted by racism.

SL Network has facilitated virtual professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders, including a webinar for educators nationwide titled “Elevating Virtual Voices: How to Empower Girls to Speak Up During Remote Learning.” During this training, TYWLS students presented their own projects including Femstrate, a social movement for period equality and RPRSNTD., a digital platform connecting high school book clubs across the U.S. that center underrepresented voices. Most recently, SL Network hosted a virtual professional development day for TYWLS teachers and school leaders. Sessions included:

- Managing Time and All The Things Through COVID-19 and Beyond
- Educator Burnout: Understanding Compassion Fatigue, Practicing Self-Compassion
- *Microaggressions: The Biggest Small Thing You’ll Ever Do*
- Gender, Identity, Sexuality, Expression: Enhancing Your (and Your Students’) Emotional Health (Virtually)
- Teaching, Loving and Believing Black Girls Workshop
- Restorative Decision Making

At TYWLS, school is viewed as an extension of one’s family. Our students see that their teachers care about them and their futures, and creating safe spaces and elevating their voices are paramount. The inequities exacerbated by COVID-19 in conjunction with the deeply ingrained and institutionalized racism in this country highlights the continual need to shift schools away from control to and towards greater freedom. Through a social justice lens, the “whole girl pedagogy” used at TYWLS promotes education as a tool for liberation, prioritizing restorative practices and student-led construction of knowledge and understanding.

SL Network is deeply grateful for the Council’s support of youth services in New York City. Specifically, the programming detailed in this testimony is made possible partly through funding received through the Young Women’s Leadership Development Initiative. Continued funding from the New York City Council will support leadership development, college and career readiness, and health and wellness programming, partnerships, and professional development at our five TYWLS schools. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.





**Testimony of Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center
Damion Samuels, Senior Director of Youth Services and Community Engagement
FY'22 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 11, 2021**

I'd like to thank Chair Deborah Rose for her leadership and the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm Gregory J. Morris, President and Executive Director of the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, a multi-service non-profit organization embedded within four public housing developments in Upper East Side Manhattan and East Harlem. I hope to share with you the challenges the communities we serve have experienced during the pandemic, our response to those challenges and some suggestions for how we move forward in a way that includes our most vulnerable and marginalized citizens.

The Isaacs Center is a multi-service organization providing services to all ages for nearly 60 years. Our programs are located at the Isaacs Houses and Holmes Towers public housing developments on the Upper East Side, and the Taft Houses Senior Center in East Harlem. A substantial portion of our service portfolio is our commitment to Workforce Development for youth and young adults. Our workforce development portfolio is focused on three employment sectors: Community Healthcare, Human Services, Food and Hospitality. Each of these employment sectors has been severely impacted by stay-at-home orders and other mitigation efforts that are essential to reduce the spread of COVID 19.

The economic effects of the Pandemic have disproportionately affected People of Color, young people and those lacking a High School Degree, three constituencies that make up the bulk of young people enrolled in Isaacs Center Education and Workforce Development Programs. The Study "*The New Strain of Inequality: The Economic Impact of COVID-19 in New York City*" clearly describes how already marginalized groups have withstood the worst effects of the Pandemic. According to the study, 68% of those who have experienced job loss are persons of color and one-third of young adults ages 18-24 have lost jobs during the Covid-19 crisis. More than half of all dislocated young adults worked in restaurants and hotels and non-essential retail trade.

In response to increased food insecurity and hunger in our community as a result of the pandemic, and with the support of private philanthropy, Isaacs Center expanded our kitchen operations to support the community, doubling the number of meals prepared each day from 800 to 1,600. The expansion provided an opportunity for dual-purpose programming, engaging young adult interns enrolled in the Center's Culinary Arts Training Program. From April to September of 2020, our community kitchen operated with two shifts of cooking teams made up of displaced chefs and kitchen aids, and young adults who received training in food service and culinary arts at the Isaacs Center. Isaacs Center also redeployed staff displaced from education, workforce development, and afterschool programs, quickly training them to fill in on meal delivery routes and other older adult services to ensure continuity when other staff had to self-quarantine or became sick. ***As a result of these efforts the Isaacs Center has produced and distributed over 18,000 meals over that time period.***



In response to the public health emergency, Isaacs Center partnered with New York Presbyterian Hospital to launch an innovative internship program. 100 young people were trained on community healthcare and wellness, with the goal of creating a workforce more equipped to find employment success in the healthcare sector in a COVID-19 landscape. Young people worked in a range of essential roles from staffing a food pantry, facilitating community health outreach campaigns, delivering PPE to home bound older adults, supporting mental health first aid efforts, and preparing and distributing healthy meals.

As a result of the pivot in sector strategy and a more focused engagement on strategic partnerships the Isaacs Center was able to achieve extraordinary results despite the challenging economic landscape. We have doubled our employer engagement efforts resulting in over 75 new contacts within the health and hospitality industries. **Since July 2020 we have placed 102 young people into employment (yearly goal is 125). 92% of young people have completed training programs (goal is 85%) We have served 157 young people this year (yearly goal is 225).**

Based on our learning and experience and that of community-based organization throughout the City focused on workforce development opportunities for young adults we believe

- Any and all support that can be given to support the food and hospitality industry. We are committed to the long-term health of this industry and in this moment of extreme crisis, it is incumbent on all of us to prop up an industry that is so central to the financial and cultural health of New York City. We believe that aligning the restaurant industry with the need to combat food insecurity is a critical step that can address multiple community and industry needs. *Much of the dramatic expansion of our community kitchen was driven by one-time emergency grants from philanthropic partners given at the height of the pandemic. To continue the critical work of feeding food insecure New Yorkers while providing pathways to meaningful employment we need our government partners to lean in with financial supports to continue this important work.*
- Better coordination among the multiple agencies driving workforce development is essential. We need a Unified strategy to connect young people to jobs that are developing in this emerging economy. Currently workforce Development is administered through HRA, SBS, DYCD, DHS, ACS et al. A common strategy is needed to uncover and promote all meaningful employment opportunities.
- Workforce 1 centers should operate more in concert with community boards so they can leverage that power to extract specific concessions around local hiring and training from businesses opening in the community.
- Although there has long been interest in the development of a workforce system in NYC where CBOs, educational institutions, and employers are working in collaboration to assist New Yorkers with job training, employment, and credit and credential attainment, investments at a neighborhood level are critical to assisting New Yorkers now, and to rebuild local economies that can sustain the communities we serve. In alignment with this vision, we have begun discussions with several providers and partners (including Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, Henry Street Settlement, and JobsFirstNYC) to **launch a workforce referral network in Northern Manhattan**, modeled on the Lower Eastside Employment Network Employment (LESEN) to serve as a centralized point of



intersection, or hub, for current and future employers seeking to hire trained, prepared candidates.

The challenges we face as we grow older are vast. I appreciate the time today and the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

March 14, 2021

TO: Council Member Debbie Rose
FR: Debra Sue Lorenzen, St. Nicks Alliance
RE: Youth Services Budget Hearing

Good afternoon. My name is Debra Sue Lorenzen, Director of Youth and Education at St. Nicks Alliance. We serve more than 6,000 youth and 3,000 familial adults through comprehensive services for ages 2-24 years old.

I want to begin my testimony by thanking City Council for its extraordinary support of the Youth Services field last year, when funding from youth services was drastically cut. Our successful restoration of summer camp and Summer Youth Employment Program depended on your fight alongside us on behalf of children, youth and families. Chair Rose, you have been an extraordinary leader. Thank you.

Today, I am grateful for your continued fight with us for the critical Youth Services needed to help our children, teens and families recover from this awful year. As you know, New York City's recovery will not happen without community-based organizations and our provision of comprehensive Youth Services. We are critical to helping turn around children's learning loss, providing the childcare that allows parents, especially single mothers, back to work, and addressing socio-emotional needs of kids.

For our youngest children, we need the Birth to Five contracts to be made whole with the full scope of services requested and determined by community-based organizations. St. Nicks Alliance did not receive a single extended day/extended year slot for our income eligible families, which leaves low-income families with three and four year olds to fend for themselves. We need our DOE contracts to cover the real costs of providing early childhood education, estimated at some \$24,000 per child, and remove the 25% cap for fringe benefits, which will not cover 11% union pension.

For our elementary school children, we need universal in-person afterschool and summer camp that allows for every child to have the academic enrichment, socio-emotional supports, arts learning, sports, mental health counseling and wellness activities essential to getting back on track in school.

For our middle school children, we need SONYC summer camp restored. Developmentally, early adolescence is arguably the worst time to leave children for an entire summer without healthy peer interactions, positive adult guidance and productive use of time. The annual fight for SONYC camp needs to end this year.

Summer camp can not happen without the DOE opening its buildings this summer. Last summer, not a single school was open in District 14 for summer camp. In order to plan effectively and meet the needs of families, we need to know where summer camp will occur.

For teens and young adults, we need the 25% cut to Learning to Work restored and universal youth employment programs enacted, even if gradually. Our LTW students are the most vulnerable, yet demonstrate great tenacity to overcome tremendous obstacles to graduation. We cannot abandon them, and leave them to join the ranks of 1 in 5 NYC students who drop out each year.

The team at DYCD is working hard to make SYEP successful and responsive this year. As one of the largest SYEP providers in NYC, St. Nicks Alliance is very grateful for Daphne Montanez' leadership and partnership as we reach 70,000 youth this year. But the demand for SYEP is much, much greater and we need changes to the scope of and processes behind SYEP. We need more slots. We need 12-month contracts, because the 3 month, 9 month contract model is absurdly burdensome and inefficient for the providers and DYCD. And, we need a sufficient staffing model at DYCD to allow for the implementation of program.

I thank you for your kind attention.



Written Testimony of Teresa Baik
Director of Education at Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS)
Before the
New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
Preliminary Budget Hearings – Youth Services
March 11th, 2021

Good morning Chair Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services. My name is Teresa Baik and I am the Director of Education for Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc. (KCS). I am grateful that you have given me the opportunity in order to testify in front of all of you on the importance of youth services.

Founded in 1973, KCS is a non-profit organization that provides culturally appropriate social services to the Korean American and other immigrant communities in Queens around the areas of Aging, Education, Immigration, Mental Health, Workforce Development and Public Health. We are a "one-stop" shop where clients - regardless of their immigration status or income - can access the resources they need to overcome socioeconomic and cultural barriers and become thriving members of American society.

Since 2001, KCS has been offering young adult summer programming for high school and college students. By being a part of YASP (Young Adult Service Program), students are able to not only serve their local community but also learn the importance of service. Last year, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when all summer programming were shut down as a result of the Mayor's decision, we were one of the few remaining summer internship programs that were able to operate on a remote basis thanks to the small pot of funding that we had received from the City Council. This provided a huge relief to the numerous high school and college students that were scrambling to fill in their summer plans. As one of our former interns so aptly stated in her reflection paper, "At the beginning of the summer, I was devastated to discover that my planned volunteering at a local library was cancelled. I looked forward to it but now my summer was empty because of the pandemic. I searched for other opportunities and found YASP as one of them." Last year, we received a record number of fifty applicants, and had approximately thirty high school and college interns for our 2020 YASP cohort. At the end of the YASP internship, many of our interns thanked us and left with smiling faces as we closed out their internship with a virtual graduation.

Youth programming is vital to the growth of the economy and the revitalization of the City. After a year of adjusting to the pandemic, we must continuously reimagine summer internships and provide opportunities for our young adults to thrive and learn. The two months when the students are off from school is a chance for them to discover not only about their passions and interests but also learn more about themselves in the process. As one of our former interns so aptly stated in his reflection paper, "My experience at YASP made me realize a lot about myself which I had not known previously. It is intriguing to reflect upon myself as I look back on the many times I've worked through obstacles, tasks, and pressure." Since the youth are our next leaders, we need to show that we are committed to their growth and well-being.

KCS Main Office
Adult Daycare |
Immigration | ESOL

203-05 32nd Avenue
Bayside, NY 11361

**Corona Senior
Center**

37-06 111th Street
Corona, NY 11368
Tel: (718) 651-9220

**Flushing Senior
Center**

42-15 166th Street
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 886-8203

**Public Health and
Research Center |
Workforce Development**

325 W 38th Street, Ste. 1210
New York, NY 10018

Brooklyn Project

8710 5th Ave. 1FL
Bay Ridge, NY 11209
Tel: (718) 630-0001
Fax: (718) 630-0002

Mental Health Clinic

42-16 162nd Street, 2FL
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 366-9540
Fax: (718) 534-4149



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Since 1973

We at KCS are grateful that the City Council has supported our youth services for all these years and during this crucial moment in history, we are once again asking the Council to not only continue our funding but to also increase it as well so that we are able to serve more youths across the City.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

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Bayside, NY 11361

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42-16 162nd Street, 2FL
Flushing, NY 11358
Tel: (718) 366-9540
Fax: (718) 534-4149



**New York City Council Committee on Youth Services
March 11th at 9:00 am**

Testimony of Caroline Iosso, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Communication
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)

Good morning. My name is Caroline Iosso and I am the Director of Advocacy and Strategic Communication at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT). Thank you to the members of the Council for the opportunity to speak today. I am here to discuss the importance of centering young adults in the City's recovery efforts and for DYCD's budget to remain intact to facilitate this recovery.

Founded in 1983, OBT is one of New York City's largest providers of workforce development and education services for opportunity youth, ages 17-24, and adults who are disconnected from education and/or employment. OBT serves over 4,000 youth and adults annually across sites in Brooklyn and Queens. We exist to break the cycle of poverty and inequity through education, job training, and employment. OBT's programs serve as a bridge to economic opportunity for youth, individuals, and families in underserved communities. With programming that ranges from high school equivalency to ESOL courses to industry-certified training programs for high school graduates, we focus on meeting individuals "where they are" and work with them to meet their goals. Our programs have an 87% completion rate. 72% of participants earn employer-recognized credentials during their time with us and 70% are placed in jobs after graduating from our programs.

Supporting Young Adults Must Be a Priority

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on New York City's economy. From high unemployment to shuttering businesses, economic recovery will need to address the myriad ways this crisis has manifested over the past year. One critically important toll that COVID has taken is on New York City's young adults. The pandemic has had a disproportionately negative impact on this population and we must prioritize their needs and challenges in the months to come, and in the City's FY22 budget.

According to a February 2021 report from the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, **young adults were 34% more likely to have lost work** and **workers with a high school education or less were 16% more likely** to have lost their jobs in New York City. Their vulnerability in part stems from the fact that many young adults traditionally find their first formal work experience in service industries - sectors that were particularly devastated by the

pandemic's restrictions. Before the pandemic, workers under 25 made up 10% of the City's total workforce, but held 15% of the jobs in industries like restaurants, retail, and entertainment. Another staggering statistic - in October 2019, 80,000 workers under 25 filed for unemployment benefits in New York. In October 2020, over one million did, not including those who filed for pandemic assistance. According to recent research from Jobs First, approximately **30% of New York City's young adults are now disconnected from employment and education, totalling around 291,500.**

In addition to bearing the brunt of the economic downturn, young adults also face an especially steep climb back to financial stability. This is due to (1) increased competition for jobs, (2) a need for enhanced skills, and (3) the continued challenges and inevitable permanent changes faced by service sectors.

With so many New Yorkers out of work, the job market is extremely tight. Young adults with less experience and often less education are having the hardest time securing full-time employment. We're also seeing that the jobs available, especially those that pay a living wage, require not just a High School Diploma, but other technical skills. Many young adults have yet to build these skills that would make them more marketable to jobs that pay well, come with benefits, and act as stepping stones to a long-term career. Finally, we must also mention that many of the jobs that young adults have always relied on to earn money and build experience are never coming back. The economy has fundamentally shifted and we cannot expect that once social distancing restrictions are lifted, those same opportunities will reemerge. CUNY's February report asserts the following, "Thousands of jobs will return in 2021 after vaccinations are widespread and social distancing restrictions ease, but businesses that have failed will not re-open and they will not be bringing their workers back. Together with the fact that recovery in restaurants, tourism, and the arts will be very drawn out, New York City will still be short 350,000-400,000 payroll and independent contractor jobs a year from now, and it likely will take at least until late 2023 or 2024 for the city to return to the pre-pandemic employment level." With what we know about who has fared the worst in the pandemic economy (young adults and those with a high school diplomas or less), it is safe to predict that young adults will continue to bear the brunt of these job losses.

How We Can Promote Living Wage Work for Young New Yorkers

DYCD's programs must continue to be able to address this crisis and support young people in accessing living wage work. We advocate that their budget stays whole so that young adults of all ages can access enrichment, and personal and professional growth throughout the year. After a stressful and difficult year for the City's young people, we must support them in building skills, connections, and community. It would be cruel to cut funding to programs that engage one of the city's most vulnerable - and most valuable - populations.

OBT is a trusted institution in communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. We have built young adults' skills, connected them with employment, and helped them earn their high school equivalency diplomas for decades. Supporting organizations like OBT, who focus on creating economic mobility for disconnected young adults by designing trainings and building partnerships with hiring sectors and businesses, is critical to ensuring that young New Yorkers can get back on their feet.

In particular, we advocate for initiatives like the following, all of which are laser-focused on moving young people into living wage opportunities:

1. **Strengthening Career Pathways Through Expanding Industry-Certified Training Programs:** For high school graduates or graduates of OBT's High School Equivalency programs, we offer advanced trainings in healthcare, construction, and technology. All three of these sectors have seen job growth in New York City, despite the pandemic. OBT's programs offer technical skill-building, industry-recognized credentials, on-the-job experience through paid internships, networking opportunities, and job placement assistance. Critical to our success at connecting vulnerable young adults with employment is our commitment to case management and emotional support. Especially through the trials of the pandemic, where loss of work is often not the only nor the most painful loss, our support of our students allows them to complete their programs and achieve success. We are hoping to expand our Cloud Support Engineering Program and Medical Administrative Assistant Program so that more New Yorkers can access them.
2. **Supporting Those Seeking Their High School Equivalency Diplomas with Increased Digital Education:** A high school diploma is still the gatekeeper for living wage employment. Those without a diploma are relegated to lower-paid and more vulnerable positions that lack opportunities for growth. Furthermore, we know that digital literacy and basic technological skills are essential for all workers - the pandemic has only exacerbated this truth. OBT is seeking support to enhance the integration of digital literacy into our High School Equivalency programs to ensure that young adults have all the skills and fluency they need to compete in the job market.

NYC's Economy Cannot Recover Without Targeted Support for Young Adults

Many New Yorkers have been living in crisis long before this pandemic; COVID has served to magnify the disparities, and now our communities need us more than ever. For young people in low wage work, the need for training and education to help them develop a career trajectory has always been present. What is new is the urgency for increased capacity for these services - and the reality that to not build skills is to stagnate in unemployment. As we determine the best paths forward, it would be devastating to leave young people - the next generation of doers, thinkers, and builders - behind. The programs we are proud to provide are lifelines to young adults as they work to survive in the economic landscape that we're facing.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. With any questions, I can be reached at ciosso@obtjobs.org.

TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

New York City Council

Youth Services Committee, Preliminary Budget Hearing FY 2022
Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair

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

March 11th, 2021

Thank you Chairperson Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Faith Behum and I am an Advocacy and Policy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA is one of the nation's largest local philanthropies. UJA's mission is to fight poverty, connect people to their communities and respond to crises both locally and around the world. UJA supports nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are the most vulnerable and in need of programs and services.

UJA's network of nonprofit partners oversee a number of Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) funded programs, including but not exclusive to Summer Youth Employment Programs, COMPASS and SONYC afterschool and summer programs and Learning Labs. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UJA's network of nonprofits have worked closely with the communities they serve, connecting children, youth and their families with the supports and services they needed to live through an incredibly difficult time. While the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted those living in poverty and highlighted already present systemic inequalities, it also made clear the invaluable resource UJA's network of nonprofits provide to their communities. UJA's network of nonprofit partners will be instrumental in helping New York City recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. UJA urges the City Council and Administration to make the following investments in the FY22 budget in order to support the work of youth services providers and further strengthen recovery efforts in New York City.

Restore Funding for SONYC Summer Programs

Unfortunately, the FY22 Preliminary budget included no funding for Summer SONYC programs. Both the \$5.7 million that is usually baselined for SONYC summer programs as well as any funding that is in the adopted budget for additional SONYC summer slots were both not included in the Preliminary budget.

Middle school students and their families have endured a challenging year, being forced to navigate remote learning for the majority of the school year while parents or guardians continued to juggle work responsibilities either in or outside their homes. Many youth struggled to benefit from remote learning and often relied on their parents or guardians to provide them additional academic support. Those who were enrolled in SONYC

afterschool programs received support from staff to help them with homework and school assignments. These programs allowed youth to remain engaged in their school work. Summer SONYC programs will provide additional educational opportunities that will help youth build on what they have learned throughout the year. SONYC afterschool and summer programs combined combat any potential learning loss youth may be susceptible to. Without SONYC summer programs, many youth will not have the opportunity to engage in academic enrichment programs putting them at a disadvantage when they start school in the fall of 2021.

Summer SONYC programs also provide relief for parents and guardians who want to ensure their children are safe and engaged in positive activities while they are out of school. The families that UJA's network of nonprofits serve will most likely not be able to afford other childcare options making summer SONYC programs a necessity for many to work outside their homes.

Summer SONYC program providers must know as soon as possible if they will be funded to oversee programs this summer. Families also require adequate notice so they can know what childcare options are available to them this summer and plan accordingly. Funding must be restored in the Executive Budget, allowing providers months to plan for the summer. Operating these programs during a pandemic is extremely challenging and providers need sufficient time to hire and train staff as well as develop COVID safe protocols and activities. DYCD must also release summer programming guidance. This guidance must include information on how programs can oversee remote and in-person options for participants, taking into consideration some participants may still feel more comfortable attending only virtual programming. Without sufficient guidance from the agency that is funding their program, it is difficult for providers to develop curriculum and hire staff. During a pandemic, it is essential for providers to receive directions on how to safely oversee programs and what will be funded as they deliver these programs. Because of this and the positive impact summer SONYC programs have on youth, **UJA is urging the restoration of \$25.7 million in the FY22 Executive Budget for summer SONYC programming for 43,500 middle school students.**

Comprehensive Background Checks

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

The delays in completing background checks are unacceptable at a time when parents and guardians' ability to return to work hinges on the availability of reliable childcare options. Providers will also be unable to staff summer programs like the SYEP and COMPASS and SONYC summer programs if the background check process remains in its current state. **UJA urges DYCD to assist DOHMH in expediting the comprehensive background check process, ultimately making DOHMH commit to a two-week maximum timeframe to complete checks.** Providers support rigorous background checks for all staff and need their partners in government to process background checks quickly and efficiently so providers can operate programs in this constantly changing environment.

Summer Youth Employment Program

The cancellation of the SYEP last April and then the small restoration of the program in the FY 21 adopted budget, devastated many SYEP providers as well as the thousands of youth who applied to participate in the program. Many providers laid off staff in April when DYCD announced the SYEP would not be funded during the summer of 2020 causing them to scramble to develop programming and attempt to rehire staff when they were notified the SYEP was going to be partially restored. Meanwhile, over 100,000 youth applied for 35,000 SYEP slots, leaving many without work options or compensation during a financially difficult year for them and their families.

UJA is grateful the FY 22 Preliminary budget included \$132 million for 70,000 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) slots. UJA recognizes that more than 70,000 youth will be applying for the SYEP and the need to expand the program to allow every youth who is interested in participating in the SYEP the opportunity to do so. While the City may not be able to financially support an expansion to universal SYEP this year, in the next few years UJA urges DYCD to work with providers and youth to design a plan that will create a universal SYEP.

In order for SYEP to be successful in summer 2021, UJA recommends:

- DYCD to determine areas of the City most impacted by COVID-19 and to prioritize SYEP slots for youth who reside in those areas;
- A coordinated inter-agency effort (including the following City agencies but not exclusive to the New York City Housing Authority, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services, Department of Education and Administration for Children's Services) led by DYCD, to ensure that providers have the supports and partnerships they need to rebuild capacity after last year;
- Flexibility for providers to develop programming (including remote and in-person options) that is safe, high quality, and responsive to the unique needs of young people in their communities;
- Continued partnership with advocates, providers, and youth to determine a safe, effective process for document collection and audits that meets legal requirements while accommodating the unique circumstances faced by young people and providers in 2021; and
- Providers to have access to PPE for staff and youth as well as cleaning supplies at no additional costs to their programs. DYCD should also help SYEPs get access to COVID testing and the COVID vaccine for all employees who work in their programs.

Learning Bridges/Labs

The Preliminary budget included \$57 million for Learning Bridges/Labs funding the program for the remainder of FY 21. Ten of UJA's nonprofit partners oversee Learning Bridges/Labs, providing services and supports to children and youth in all five New York City boroughs. UJA nonprofit partners have experienced a multitude of issues overseeing the Learning Bridges/Labs including gaining access to reliable, fresh kosher food through the DOE Grab & Go program and making the program accessible to students with disabilities. Most recently, providers have received unclear guidance and inconsistent communication from the Department of Education's (DOE) COVID Response Situation Room which has impacted Learning Bridges/Labs ability to offer quality instruction and childcare.

Learning Bridges/Labs providers are experiencing major lapses in communication from the Situation Room. These gaps in communication are mostly related to Learning Bridges/Labs programs being notified late of positive COVID cases in DOE schools, placing children, youth and staff at increased risk of contracting COVID. Learning Bridges/Labs providers have reported being told to shut down operations at their programs up to ten days after the last time a child or youth who tested positive with COVID attended their programs. Regardless of the extended Situation Room hours that began February 22nd (Monday through Friday from 7:00AM through 6:30 PM and Sunday from 11:00AM to 5:30PM), Learning Bridges/Labs report continued frustrations with the hours of the Situation Room, stressing that they often need feedback on specific cases when the Situation Room is closed. Providers also report reiterating the same details multiple times resulting in

them spending excessive amounts of time interacting with the Situation Room staffers who are disconnected from one another.

Despite Learning Bridges/Labs programs in the UJA network often having separate entrances and are largely isolated from other programs in their multi-service community centers, the DOE recommends entire building closures when positive cases have been found only in DOE funded programs. Lastly, the Situation Room closes Learning Bridges/Labs when two unrelated positive COVID cases are verified in participants or staff under the assumption that one or two of the cases was contracted from someone else in the program's building and not from elsewhere in the community. This assumption places Learning Bridges/Labs programs located in multi-service community centers at increased risk for having their programs closed.

Learning Bridges/Labs providers have been dealing with contradictory instructions from different Situation Room staff, building shutdowns based on unrelated cases, and inconsistent wording and reasoning. It is important to note that providers also receive delayed communications from schools when a child or youth who attends their Learning Lab is in quarantine or has tested positive for COVID. These issues often lead providers to extended 24-hour investigations and not receiving information about COVID cases in a timely manner – an issue which threatens the health and safety of all children, youth and staff involved.

In order to eliminate these harmful gaps in communication and ensure that the children and youth served by Learning Bridges/Labs receive quality care, UJA urges the DOE, DYCD, DOHMH and the Test and Trace Corps when appropriate to take the following immediate steps:

- 1.** The principles that guide the DOE, DOHMH, DYCD, and the Test & Trace Corps decisions regarding school building and program closures must be publicly accessible for all relevant City agencies, Learning Bridges/Labs program managers, and parents/guardians. All Situation Room employees should be rigorously briefed on these guidelines.
- 2.** The Situation Room must clearly state in writing when Learning Bridges/Labs must close, for how long and the reasons why the programs must close. This communication must be sent to the manager of the impacted program and the Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer of the nonprofit hosting the program.
- 3.** The Situation Room must have extended hours and/or have staff who are on-call to receive inquiries from providers about potential COVID cases in their programs. From start to finish investigations should take a maximum of 24 hours to perform. After 24 hours, it should be determined if a program should remain open or be shut down.
- 4.** The Situation Room must implement more cohesive and reliable documentation which would ultimately expedite the investigation process and lessen the likelihood that providers would have to repeat details. Every investigation should be overseen by one person in the Situation Room who will be the point of contact with whom providers interact.
- 5.** Learning Lab providers should be notified directly and simultaneously with DOE school personnel by the testing company when children or youth are found to be positive after undergoing random COVID testing.
- 6.** Learning Lab providers should not be required to serve enrollees from public schools closed due to COVID investigations while the investigation is active. Children and youth from these schools should be allowed to attend Learning Labs once it is determined the child had not tested positive or that they were not required to quarantine due to COVID exposure.

UJA and its nonprofit partners recognize the important role the DOE Situation Room plays in keeping children, youth and providers healthy and safe and look forward to working with the City Council, DOE, DOHMH, DYCD and the Test and Trace Corps to address the above issues, action items and improve its operations.

Restoring and Baselineing the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR)

In FY20, the Administration and Council made a commitment to increase funding for indirect costs (overhead and administrative costs) associated with providing contracted human services programs through the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative. As part of the Nonprofit Resiliency Committee, critical human services providers in New York City, met regularly with the Mayor's Office to establish a new "[City of New York Health and Human Services Cost Policies and Procedures Manual](#)" to guide the ICR Initiative, which launched in November 2019. The City's commitment and investment was a step in the right direction that would have greatly assisted UJA's provider network.

Human services providers were given a series of options to adjust their organization's ICRs. The majority of UJA's network decided to work with a CPA to apply the principals of the "Cost Policies and Procedures Manual" across each human service contract held by the agency. This process by which nonprofits determined new ICRs was costly (as much as \$5,000-\$25,000), time consuming, and had to be completed by June 30, 2020. Organizations that endured this process starting in November 2019 were promised retroactive contract enhancements for FY20 and an approved (and fully funded) new ICR applicable for the next three fiscal years.

Throughout the first half of 2020, as the City's finances were beginning to be impacted by COVID-19, providers continued the ICR exercise with no word from the Mayor's Office or City Council that cuts to the ICR were imminent.

During the last days of FY21 budget negotiations, the Mayor's Office indicated that there might be "adjustments" to the ICR. Then weeks after the FY21 budget closed, the Mayor's Office retroactively rolled back its commitment to the FY20 ICR by 40% at the start of FY21. Providers, who had gone through the time and expense of determining their new Indirect Cost Rates across their organization's human services contracts now find themselves with a significant cut for services already rendered and costs that were assumed to be covered by the City. **Across the UJA provider network alone, there is a combined FY20 loss of \$2.3 million for the ICR.** This number does not account for additional funds lost due to changes in the definition of "indirect costs". Due to the ICR Initiative and Cost Manual guidance, some expenses that were previously covered as direct costs shifted to indirect. When the City cut the ICR, these expenses that had been previously paid for were no longer funded, leaving providers at a larger retroactive deficit.

The ICR funds important aspects of human services provision, which are needed now more than ever to help New York City respond and recover from COVID-19. **It is imperative that New York City support its human services network at this time of great need and not create further obstacles to critical response efforts for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. The City must restore the FY20 ICR cuts, fully fund FY21 rates and baseline the full cost of ICR funds for FY22 and the outyears.**

Conclusion

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital programs that assist New York City's most vulnerable and neediest youth and the organizations that serve them. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions please contact me at behumf@ujafedny.org or 212-836-1338.



45 Broadway, 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10006
212-967-0322 | www.unhny.org

**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses
Before the New York City Council Committees on Youth Services
Council Member Deborah Rose, Chair**

Oversight – The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, The Preliminary Capital Commitment Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025 and The Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report

**Submitted by Nora Moran, Director of Policy & Advocacy
March 11, 2021**

Thank you Chair Rose and members of the New York City Council for the opportunity to testify. My name is Nora Moran, and I am the Director of Policy and Advocacy at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is a policy and social change organization representing 44 neighborhood settlement houses, 40 in New York City, that reach 765,000 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged New York City’s economy and safety net and has underscored the significant racial and economic disparities that have impacted New York City’s neighborhoods for decades. Just as they did through other crises our City has faced, settlement houses have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 emergency response by continuing to deliver essential services to New Yorkers, providing emergency food, counseling, shelter, youth and family supports, and more. Though the City is facing financial challenges, this is not the time to divest from the safety net programs that support neighborhoods, nor is it time to cut funds that will lead to layoffs in the human services sector.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have been uniquely impacted. Sudden school closures and reopenings, massive changes—and cuts—to the community based programs on which they rely, and the loss of parents, guardians, and community members have all weighed on them during key periods of development. The mental health toll of this pandemic will be with this generation for years to come, and the disparate impacts on young people of color and low-income young people threaten to widen already existing racial and economic gaps.

Mayor de Blasio's FY22 Preliminary Budget does not repeat the disastrous budget cuts from Summer 2020, with one glaring exception. The Preliminary Budget once again fully eliminates funding for Summer SONYC programming for middle school students, leaving 43,500 middle school students with no options for summer activities.

In order to provide young people with safe and supportive activities this summer and to ensure the stability of the youth services field, UNH recommends that the City do the following:

- Restore \$25.7 million in the FY22 Executive Budget to support Summer SONYC programming for 43,500 middle school students;
- Work to clear the backlog of comprehensive background checks;
- Ensure that SYEP is a safe and robust program for summer 2021;
- Restore and baseline \$12 million for adult literacy services; and
- Restore funding for the Indirect Cost Rate Initiative in FY21 and beyond.

This testimony highlights the current state of youth services programming in NYC, as well as several key budget recommendations.

Current State of Youth Services Programming in NYC

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

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

- Remote Programming: In March, early childhood education, youth employment and after-school programs rapidly transitioned to virtual programming which kept children connected to their peers and to adults focused on their support and educational enrichment.
- Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs): CBOs operated early childhood Regional Enrichment Centers, providing in-person child care and education to young children of essential workers. CBO staff also played key roles in operating the school-age RECs that were located in public school buildings. CBO staff brought their expertise in Youth Development to design socially distant activities that were engaging and supportive for participants.
- Learning Bridges/Labs: CBOs started to provide Learning Bridges programs for children enrolled in hybrid learning at 3-K, Pre-K and elementary and middle schools in September so that these students would have five days per week of care.

CBO staff have gone to significant lengths to provide essential services during this time of significant stress and upheaval for the City's children and youth. However, the City has not adequately supported CBOs, making it difficult for them to carry out programming and focus on working with children and youth. CBO programs depend on successful high-level collaboration

between City agencies. Unfortunately, this has often been lacking throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and CBOs have been left to make sense of missing or conflicting guidance from Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

This led to issues such as:

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

Overall, youth services providers have remained focused on providing children, youth, and their families with the highest quality support they can in uncertain times. In the following sections, we make recommendations that will help to bolster those efforts in service of New York City's young people. With the recent passage of the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, we have an opportunity to address the primary challenges weighing on the youth services field for summer 2021. Funding from the ARP, such as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), can and should be leveraged to restore Summer SONYC programming and generally support summer and after-school programming run by human service organizations.

Restore \$25.7 million for Summer SONYC Programming for 43,500 Middle School Students

It is essential that New York City have program options in place this summer for youth to ensure that they have constructive activities that support their well-being and recovery after a difficult year. Similarly, their parents, including many parents who are essential workers, need the security of knowing that there are safe and available child care arrangements. Summer camp programming is more important than ever given the extreme challenges youth and their families faced this past year due to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, the FY22 Preliminary Budget includes no funding for Summer SONYC programming for middle school students. New this year, Mayor de Blasio cut \$5.7 million in baselined funding for Summer SONYC programs, which typically supported approximately 9,500 students. Additionally, the Preliminary Budget does not include expansion funding for Summer SONYC slots, which have included in the Adopted Budget as one time funds from FY16-20. At its peak, this one-time funding was allocated at \$20 million for 34,000 Summer SONYC slots.

This cut comes after middle schools have been closed for months and parents have few options for affordable child care this summer. It is essential that New York City have program options in place this summer for youth to ensure that they have constructive activities that support their well-being and recovery after a difficult year. Similarly, their parents, including many parents who are essential workers, need the security of knowing that there are safe and available child care arrangements. Summer camp programming is more important than ever given the extreme challenges youth and their families faced this past year due to COVID-19.

Given the immense need for social and emotional supports in 2021, we are urging the City to invest \$25.7 million to support 43,500 middle school students with Summer SONYC programming this summer.

With stimulus funding on the way from the federal government, we have an opportunity to quickly address this challenge and restore these funds to the budget. Critically, this restoration must happen soon. The Mayor and City Council must work together to restore Summer SONYC funding immediately, as providers need time to plan and prepare for programs, especially due to the increased health and safety restrictions. Families also need to know that summer programs will be available to them. This funding must be restored by the Executive Budget, otherwise we run the risk of providers not being able to use these funds because they arrive too late.

DYCD must also immediately release summer programming guidance. As we saw last summer and in the fall, delayed roll out of funding and inconsistent guidance frustrated the hiring process, preparation of health safety protocols, and preparation of curriculum. Clear, consistent, and early communication can help prevent some of these challenges.

Clear the Comprehensive Background Checks Backlog

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

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

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

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

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

DOHMH has not been able to complete the background checks in a timely manner and many prospective staff members in after-school and early childhood education programs are unable to work due to pending clearances. In February, the backlog led New York State Office of Children and Family Services to provide some relief through a temporary rule change that allows staff members to work provisionally if they have been cleared through the State Central Register of

Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) and if they are supervised for 100% of the time that they are in contact with children by a staff member who has been cleared.

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

Summer Youth Employment Program

In summer of 2019, 75,000 young people ages 14-24 participated in SYEP. Participants in SYEP are primarily low-income students from communities of color that have faced economic disparities. Despite this, in Spring 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic wrought devastation across the City—with particular damage to low-income communities of color—Mayor de Blasio announced plans to suspend SYEP for Summer 2020, pointing to health and safety concerns regarding in-person programming.

The full elimination of SYEP in summer 2020 would have had disastrous consequences for the City's young people. Many families rely on SYEP income during strong economic times and eliminating SYEP in 2020 would have had a disproportionate economic impact on those communities already suffering the most profound consequences from the pandemic. SYEP providers often hear from participants that they use their wages to buy food while out of school for the summer, pay for school supplies for themselves and their siblings in the fall, and generally help out with household expenses. Eliminating this essential economic support in the face of a recession would have compounded the inequitable impact the pandemic had on low-income communities of color. Furthermore, the impact on the mental health of young people—who were already carrying so much—would have been incalculable. Many young people were struggling with mental health issues and providers feared that the loss of SYEP would contribute to the larger sense of loss and hopelessness young people were experiencing due to COVID-19.

Thanks to the work of advocates, providers, young people, and our allies on City Council, funds were ultimately restored in the adopted budget to cover 35,000 Summer Bridge slots. Still, the impact of the Mayor's initial decision to eliminate SYEP and the significant cut the program's funding took in 2020 will be felt this year as providers attempt to ramp services back up. Layoffs, furloughs, and staff fatigue have led to a loss of infrastructure through attrition. Furthermore, SYEP is a program that depends on deep, meaningful partnerships with local employers, so losing a year of contact with them will have significant ripple effects.

For 2021, the Mayor has included sufficient funds in his preliminary budget to cover 70,000 SYEP slots. Given the consequences of last years' tumultuous rollout, the provider community believes this is a realistic and achievable number of slots for summer 2021. However, out of a recognition of the importance of this program, we have also been meeting with advocates, providers, and youth leaders as well as DYCD to discuss changes that could be made to the program such that we could, in the next few years, reach universal access. While expansion beyond 70,000 slots would be challenging this year given the unique set of circumstances, we

believe that the City has a moral responsibility to provide access to this critical program to every young person who applies.

While the Mayor's preliminary budget includes sufficient funding to cover 70,000 slots with wages paid to older youth, there are some additional potential expenses that providers will incur while providing remote internships and/or credentialing for some older youth. Given all this, we recommend City Council work with DYCD to ensure that sufficient funding is in the budget to cover additional expenses for technology for young people and access to credentialing/courses as well as additional staffing to support credentialing/courses at community organizations.

Furthermore, Teens Take Charge has developed a proposal for *SYEP Unbound*, which would provide self-guided courses and learning opportunities to young people who are not accepted through the lottery process, and we urge the City Council to fund this initiative.

In addition, UNH recommends the following for SYEP in summer 2021:

- Set aside slots for youth in areas most impacted by COVID-19 as was done in the wake of Superstorm Sandy;
- A coordinated inter-agency effort, led by DYCD, to ensure that providers have the supports and partnerships they need to rebuild capacity after last year;
- Ultimate flexibility to providers to develop programming that is safe, high quality, and responsive to the unique needs of young people in their communities; and
- Continued partnership with advocates, providers, and youth to determine a safe, effective process for document collection and audits that meets legal requirements while accommodating the unique circumstances faced by young people and providers in 2021.

Once summer 2021 programming is complete, we will look to begin work in earnest in the fall to pass Council Member Kallos' Intro 1474, which would make access to SYEP universal for all eligible young people.

Adult Literacy

Immigrant & low-income New Yorkers are serving on the front lines of the city's response to COVID-19, and have experienced some of the harshest outcomes with higher rates of COVID-19 infections and higher rates of unemployment. Adult literacy programs are one of the few services available in New York City to support their educational and economic growth.

In the absence of economic relief from the federal administration, which has excluded immigrants from any COVID-19 federal stimulus package, the City must keep these programs whole by doing the following:

- Restore and baseline the \$12 million in annual funds that the Council secured in the budget every year from FY17 to FY20, and which were reduced to \$9.8 million in FY21;
- Ensure that every adult literacy student who needs it is provided with the necessary hardware and with free internet to be able to access and engage in online education platforms;
- Invest \$10.5 million in the adult literacy pilot project that NYCCAL had proposed prior to the pandemic; and

- Work to increase the cumulative funding for adult literacy education in New York City by sixfold over the next five years (from \$85M in city and state funding to \$500M).

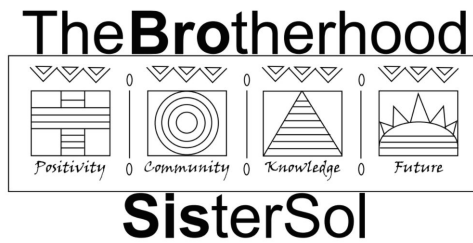
Restore Funding for Indirect Rates

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

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

UNH urges the Mayor and City Council to honor their commitment to the human services sector and fully fund indirect rates for youth service contracts and all other human service contracts in FY21 and beyond.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today. For more information, or to answer any additional questions, you can reach me at nmoran@unhny.org.



City Council Youth Services Committee Hearing – 11 March 2021

Testimony by Abraham Velazquez an educator of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

My name is Abraham Velazquez and I am an educator and organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol. For more than 25 years, The Brotherhood/Sister Sol (BroSis) has been at the forefront of social justice, educating, organizing, and training to challenge inequity and create opportunity for all. With a focus on Black and Latinx youth, Bro/Sis is where young people claim the power of their history, identity, and community to build the future they want to see.

BroSis youth have a vision for education in New York City that includes safe, restorative, healing environments where all students have the opportunity to learn and grow. To meet this goal, the city council must pursue legislation that values and respects the dignity of students, caregivers, and their communities. This requires providing schools equitable resources, adopting a culturally responsive curriculum, preventing trauma, repairing harm, and promoting restorative practices. The budget passed this year has to reflect this vision.

Today, New York City is far from where it need be to ensure student success as our schools face troubling realities:

- School segregation leads to chronic underfunding of schools in New York state which has negative and disparate impacts for Black, Latinx and low-income students given subsequent resource disparity.^[iii]
- Only 77.3% of the 1.1 million children in the DOE system will graduate on time and only 55% of NYC high school graduates will graduate college-ready.^{[iii] [iv]}

- 1 in ten NYC public school students is houseless.^[v]

Additionally, in a nation in which 14 million students are in schools with police but no counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker^[vi], New York City has more school safety agents (SSAs) than any other school district in the U.S. The presence of police in our schools has disproportionately impacted students who are low-income, Black, and Latinx, who are more likely to be the subject of exclusionary discipline and police response at school than their white peers.

Everyone in the City Council, however, has the power to shift this – beginning with meaningfully shifting funds from the police, reforming their responsibilities, and reinvesting in our communities.

We must deconstruct the school-to-prison pipeline; end Broken Windows policing; and truly decriminalize low-level offenses that lead to our youth having negative contact with the state and carceral systems. And, we must do this now.

Please see the attached policy paper for more information re: other ideas for continued progress towards the aforementioned vision.

For more information regarding our campaign, please contact Dr. Marsha Jean-Charles (mjc@brotherhood-sistersol.org, 212.283.7044).

[i] New York City Council, School Diversity in NYC. 2019, <https://council.nyc.gov/data/school-diversity-in-nyc/#:~:text=However%2C%20New%20York%20Cit%20public,more%20than%2050%25%20white%20students.>

[ii] Alliance for Quality Education, Chronic Underfunding. 2018, <https://www.aqeny.org/2018/09/11/report-new-yorks-chronic-underfunding-of-schools-the-disparate-impact-on-black-latino-students/>

[iii] NYC's 2019 Graduation Rate Inches Up to 77% . January 16, 2020, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/1/16/21121757/nyc-s-2019-graduation-rate-inches-up-to-77>

[iv] More NYC High School Students are College-Bound – and ‘College Ready’. November 21, 2019, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2019/11/21/21121750/more-nyc-high-school-graduates-are-college-bound-and-college-ready>

iv] The Children in the Shadows: New York City’s Homeless Students. September 9, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/09/magazine/homeless-students.html>

[vi] ACLU, Counselors and No Cops: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students. 2019, <https://www.aclu.org/report/cops-and-no-counselors>



Testimony for the Committee on Youth Services
March 11, 2021

Women for Afghan Women (WAW) has been **providing comprehensive and culturally specific services** to Afghan, South Asian, and Muslim women, children, men, and families in New York City since 2003 through its New York Community Center (NYCC).

Women for Afghan Women's approach is to address every need in the community including but not limited to: social and legal services including domestic violence case management, youth and adult education programs, seniors support program, monthly women's circle support group, civic engagement initiatives, know your rights workshops, and much more.

Last year, WAW supported the highest number of New Yorkers to date, taking on over **4,100 client intakes** and transitioning our **15 programs virtually**.

85-90% of women that come to WAW for services are **survivors of domestic violence and often illiterate in any language**. Years of conflict and displacement made it nearly impossible for most to access formal education.

The **lack of education among Afghan adults** has a significant impact on their children who often struggle in school because English is not their first language and because their parents cannot provide them with academic support. Women for Afghan Women finds this to be especially true for newly arrived immigrant families. These **challenges have been further exacerbated** during this pandemic due to the lockdown and remote learning for students.

In addition, Women for Afghan Women also learned that immigrant youth living in NY were enduring similar cultural constraints and abuses as those in their countries of origin. They struggled (and continue to struggle) with **domestic violence, poverty, isolation, and forced or underage marriage with limited access to opportunities** to lift themselves out of these situations. Boys are exposed to domestic violence at a young age and are taught to follow harmful and rigid cultural norms that make them at-risk of perpetuating violence.

And because their parents are unfamiliar with the school system in the U.S., many of these children and young adults—a majority of whom are U.S. citizens and have been raised in the country since they were young children—look to Women for Afghan Women for **guidance in applying for colleges, academic support, and career development**.



Women for Afghan Women started its first youth program in 2005 and currently has **four (4) youth programs for young women and men aged 10-20** who are from low-income and immigrant or refugee families.

Our New York Community Center, or NYCC, is based in Queens, where 90% of the NY Afghan population resides; however, WAW extends its NYCC services to, and receives clients from all five boroughs of NYC. The **NYCC is within walking distance to most clients, most of whom cannot afford or do not know how to use public transportation.** This is especially important for our youth programs because parents are confident in their children's safety once we resume in person programming.

Given this current crisis, our team has worked **extra hard to serve as a pillar and support system during this time.** Our youth participants are facing high levels of stress because of the transition to online classes and staying home full time. They live in cramped apartments with multigenerational family members, and their parents have lost their sources of income due to this pandemic.

Throughout this crisis, Women for Afghan Women has provided **emotional support through regular check in calls and practical guidance during our weekly program sessions.** We also assisted youth in obtaining financial assistance, sent them care packages, distributed PPE, and made sure they had access to food and other basic needs. For our youth who graduated high school, we held a drive-by graduation to celebrate their achievements despite the immense challenges they experienced last year. Most of them will be the first in their families to attend college because of their hard work.

During our youth programs, our team sought to equip youth with **coping strategies and skills** through discussions on how to manage time and stress, reflections on the crises around us, and most of all we **built a sense of community to break isolation and feelings of despair** many youth were experiencing. One student shared during a session that she was unable to fall asleep due to worries and stress, and our youth leader shared **techniques to overcome these challenges and provided her with mental health resources.**

In addition, all of our programs build a foundation for discussing and educating young women and men about **gender-based violence through a culturally sensitive and comprehensive approach.**

We focus on **building communication skills and confidence** among our programs for younger boys and girls, while also giving them an opportunity to explore topics and ideas they may not learn at home or in school.



For older youth, we work on **academic and career development** such as workshops on writing personal statements and essays, resume building, interview etiquette, public speaking, creating LinkedIn profiles, and administering surveys.

Our programs also create a space to **discuss social issues** ranging from anti-racism and the Black Lives Matter movement, to mental health stigma, healthy relationships, and gender norms. One student shared that through these discussions, **she now feels comfortable speaking with her peers and family about topics such as racism and civic engagement.**

Through these gains, WAW expects the entire community to benefit through improved interpersonal skills among youth, better communications within families and the community, and overall increased awareness of community issues, youth needs, and institutions/resources.

To date, the NYCC has provided youth programming to over **800 youth from the Afghan, South Asian, and Muslim communities in NYC. 99% of youth program graduates go on to pursue higher education.** Among girls and young women, **none were forced to marry though they were all at-risk** and all have successfully advocated for themselves to finish their education and pursue their chosen careers.

One program participant shared how, **“My favorite thing about the program is the sense of community. I think we are a very supportive group that shares a journey to achieving self-love and achieving our career and life goals.”**

During this pandemic, our youth have been especially impacted. WAW is grateful to be able to continue supporting youth and their families through all means possible from financial assistance, distribution of care packages and PPE, counseling, mentorship, and job placement.

2021 will be an integral year for all New Yorkers. Women for Afghan Women will do everything we can to provide and stand with our community **to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic.**

Your support will be imperative in supporting underserved immigrant youth in New York City, as we navigate recovering from this crisis together. Women for Afghan Women hopes to be a partner in the City's recovery efforts.

Thank you for your partnership and for your time and consideration today.

Thank you Chair Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify about SONYC summer Programs. My name is Yasmin Schwartz and I am the assistant division director of youth and family services at Cypress Hills LDC. The sites I supervise are our middle school serving programs.

Local residents and merchants founded Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) in 1983. Over the decades, our organization has gone from a one-program organization with an annual budget of \$35,000 to one with six program divisions serving 11,000 people a year. Our services and programming are available to all community residents, and strengthen the neighborhood through empowering its residents to act as leaders and determine the future of their community. These services include career and education, college access programs, community development, and housing counseling. One of the biggest services we provide is youth and family programs, which is what I am here today to speak with you about.

Our organization currently offers services to over 2,000 youth, 500 of which are middle school aged, in the neighborhood. We run after school, summer, and community programs for families members of all ages. Our young people participate in activities that support their social emotional development, leadership growth, and academic engagement. We are calling on the council to restore funding for SONYC summer programs as soon as possible, to allow us to continue to serve our young people this summer.

As an adult who has worked with and for adolescents for over 10 years, I want to remind you that this group has needs that are not being met. We have stayed connected to our youth, listened to their struggles, and continue to support their development. We have learned that our young people have had to step up in their families to support the child care of their younger siblings, are often translating for parents, and are navigating technical issues that affect their schooling. They have not had the consistency and space required to support their learning and growth at a time where this is critical for pre-pubescent youth. Last summer this city left our middle school youth behind, and I cannot allow that to happen again. We as an organization are prepared to do whatever it takes to support this age group this summer.

The Mayor's Preliminary Budget does not include funding for Summer SONYC Programming for 43,500 middle school youth. \$20 Million in funding for 34,000 that parents and providers have fought for for the last several years and a new cut to baseline funding for 9,500 youth in the amount of \$5.7 million more. This cut comes after middle schools have been closed for months and parents have few options for affordable child care this summer. It is essential that New York City have program options in place this summer for youth to ensure that they have constructive activities that support their well-being and recovery after a difficult year. Similarly, their parents, including many parents who are essential workers, need the security of knowing that there are safe and available child care arrangements. Summer camp programming is more important than ever given the extreme challenges youth and their families faced this past year due to COVID-19.

We recommend the following along with other organizations in our youth serving community:

- The Mayor and City Council must work together to restore Summer SONYC funding immediately, as providers need time to plan and prepare for programs, especially due to the increased health and safety restrictions. Families also need to know that summer programs will be available to them.
- This funding **must be restored by the Executive Budget**, otherwise we run the risk of providers not being able to use these funds because they arrive too late.
- DYCD must also immediately release summer programming guidance. As we saw last summer and in the fall, delayed roll out of funding and inconsistent guidance frustrated the hiring process, preparation of health safety protocols, and preparation of curriculum. Clear, consistent, and early communication can help prevent some of these challenges

In summary, we are ready, our parents are ready, and most of all, our young people are ready. Let us send a message to our young people and their families that we care about them, by funding them.

Youth Development Institute at Ramapo for Children
City Council Youth Services Committee Testimony
March 11, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is Adam Jacobs and I am representing the Youth Development Institute at Ramapo for Children. I am here to share testimony from youth on the importance of Youth Leadership Councils. These testimonies are from participants in YDI at Ramapo's two councils, one which has already been mentioned today--My Brother and Sister's Keeper Youth Council that we facilitate with DYCD--and the other from the Youth Council of the DOE Office of Community Schools. We think it is essential to have youth voices represent the needs of young people, but the council participants are not able to attend this hearing because they have obligations for school and work. In the future, we ask that this committee consider moving this hearing to afternoon hours to enable more young people to testify without missing school.

We also believe in compensating youth leaders for their contributions. For this reason, The Youth Development Institute at Ramapo submitted discretionary requests to the City Council to support our Peer Leader Internship Program, which would allow us to compensate youth leadership council alumni for their continued engagement after they have completed the one year Council program. The Councils explore important topics in New York City, such as policing, health care, equity in education, and more, and then make policy recommendations. As DYCD Commissioner Chong mentioned earlier, the My Brother and Sister's Keeper Youth Council is lifting up youth voices through town halls and was just tasked with becoming peer hosts of Circles for young people to discuss some of the stigmas associated with mental health challenges. The Office of Community Schools young people are looking at the implications of student attendance and students living in temporary housing.

Their testimonies are as follows:

One youth leader says, "Youth councils are important in any community containing young people. It gives youth an environment to feel important and grow the mindset that they can effect change in their community. Youth councils foster collaborations, and young people work with individuals around the same age groups to make themselves better."

Adhana, 16, from Brooklyn says: "I believe that being on a Youth Council is important. I'm the source that can be used to promote change, especially on the issues that directly affect me."

Monica, 15, Queens: "I'm passionate about my voice, and this Council gives me an opportunity to speak freely and confidently about the things that matter most to me."

Chloe, 16, Brooklyn: "I'm an advocate for change and inclusion. I want to address the issues in my school and community that others just walk by."

Rayan, 16 Staten Island: "In my opinion, youth councils bring our youth community together, teach valuable life lessons, and encourage the youth community to get along while voicing their opinion."

Kervens, 21 Brooklyn: "The importance of having a youth council is that it gives young people the power to invest in themselves and improve their peers, it helps young people develop their leadership skills and also take on new skills along the way, it helps forge better adults for tomorrow because they already are in a line where they know how to be responsible and act according to a certain situation. Also, it brings awareness on how to improve life for other young people when they're in power because they are on the ground with a theme. A youth council is critical because it helps create better leaders for tomorrow and better youth-adult partnerships."

Chelsea, 14, Bronx: "Youth Councils are important because we make the people we know and our community heard. What others may not have the time to do, we as teens do for the most part. We also push our families and neighbors to advocate for themselves to hear and understand they have rights they should be using."

Eva, 17, The Bronx: "This Council makes me feel heard in a way that no other place does."

Thank you on behalf of these youth leaders and everyone at The Youth Development Institute at Ramapo for Children. We look forward to working with you to continue lifting up the voices of young people in New York City through renewed funding for Youth Leadership Councils.

Thank you.



YouthBuild NYC Collaborative 206 East 118 Street, New York, NY 10035

March 9, 2021

++ The Hon. Deborah L. Rose, Youth Services Chair, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007
++ The Hon. Margaret S. Chin, Youth Services, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007
++ The Hon. Mathieu Eugene, Youth Services, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007
++ The Hon. Farah N. Louis, Youth Services, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007
++ The Hon. Bill Perkins, Youth Services, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007
++ The Hon. Kevin C. Riley, Youth Services, NY City Council, City Hall, NY 10007

RE: YouthBuild in NYC – Discretionary Citywide Speaker Initiative for YouthBuild -- request for \$3.2 million for FY2022

Dear Chairwoman Rose, and Members of the Youth Services Committee:

I am David Calvert, speaking for the YouthBuild NYC Collaborative, on behalf of eight YouthBuild programs located in all five boroughs and operated by some of the finest community service institutions in the city: Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, New Settlement, SOBRO, Antioch Community Services, Youth Action YouthBuild, Central Family Life Center, The Hope Program, and Queens Community House. Each of these institutions has taken up the awesome challenge of turning around the lives of young people that really need that second chance, through a methodology that includes training, education, counseling, community service, follow-up services, respect, inclusion, and yes, love.

These YouthBuild programs are offered for youth 16-24 who are out of work and out of school, and desperate to get it right. Our City government first partnered with local community organizations and willing youth to provide this transformative path in 1979, when the first ever YouthBuild program was launched in East Harlem. As you may know, it spread fast, so that 20 YouthBuild programs now operate in NY State, 230 more across the US, and now 81 more in 23 other countries. This year worldwide, about 20,000 of "Opportunity Youth" will participate in YouthBuild programs replicating (and continually enhancing) the original NYC model. But today we are focused on eight YouthBuild sites in New York City.

YouthBuild provides the classroom training required to obtain the High School Equivalency (TASC) certification, as well as vocational certifications, job readiness training, and leadership development, college readiness, and professional internships. Just like anyone else, YouthBuild students want to succeed and are willing to work hard to get there.

The YouthBuild secret to success is already pretty well known. YouthBuild students are warmly invited in, respected, included in the program governance and decision-making, and they give back to the community even as they secure their own high school equivalency degrees and rebuild their own lives. Community asset building is central to the program. For example, YouthBuild students provide more than 30,000 hours of community service each year here in NYC alone. Nationally, YouthBuild students have built or preserved better than 40,000 units of low-income housing. YouthBuild students still do construction, but most of our sites have added on training in other trades as well, e.g., building maintenance, culinary arts, information technology, cosmetology, entrepreneurial, customer service, etc.

When we created YouthBuild 40 years ago, it was in response to emergency conditions in our communities: so many disengaged youth, thousands of vacant city-owned buildings without solutions, and an emerging homeless housing crisis. We acted, and made a real difference. During the past 12 months we faced down a new, additional emergency, the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted all our lives. I am proud to report that every YouthBuild site in the city successfully transformed its operations from on-site classrooms and trainings to functional remote formats, and kept their students on-track and thriving. Our staff and students marched and debated and wrote poetry for Black Lives Matter and as part of the national/international movement for racial justice; we are proud of this engagement. But we never lost sight of the longstanding truth of YouthBuild, that education, training, and working together for the community remain key to survival and success.

In preparation for the challenges of the coming year YouthBuild staff are already planning and training for the new programmatic environment as the pandemic continues, but ebbs. We hope to be able to transition back this fall to a hybrid model that relies on mostly onsite work, but still makes good use of the technology that has carried us through the current year.

We want to thank Speaker Corey Johnson, the Youth Services Committee, and the entire NY City Council, and Commissioner Bill Chong and DYCD, for supporting YouthBuild in NYC. We are grateful for your active support for young people's lives. We know that it requires funds and concerned government officials to make this movement work well, year after year. We also know that today's investments in our youth pay off in future savings; a recent study showed that \$1 invested in YouthBuild saves \$10 of future public

sector costs. We stand ready to expand to meet the real needs of you who find themselves needing education, employment, direction and renewal.

YouthBuild functions as a partnership of the public sector, private sector, civil sector, and thousands of young people needing a second chance. Central to the vital mix that keeps YouthBuild funded and operating in all five boroughs is a combination of federal Dept of Labor/YouthBuild grants and the support of the NY City Council. Since 2014, the Council has stepped in to fill the funding gap by allocating \$2.1 million of Discretionary funds through a Citywide Speaker Initiative, to ensure that no YouthBuild opportunities be lost for lack of funds. A return to continuity funding would be \$2.1 million citywide, but to ensure excellent YouthBuild services for a minimum of 530 Opportunity Youth in all five boroughs in FY2022, we respectfully request \$3.2 million in the citywide Speaker's Citywide Initiative for YouthBuild.

We accept the new challenges ahead; we are on it! We need the Council to accept the challenge too, to hold steady and expand youth services as we emerge from the pandemic and enter a critical new year; to provide young people a decent second chance; to lead our city forward instead of retreat and retrench; and to help ensure full productivity and pride for otherwise disconnected youth. Let's do this together!

All YouthBuild sites deliver quarterly reports to the Finance Committee of the Council. We will continue to work closely with the Council and DYCD, updating all activity as we go.

Thank you for your attention and support,

David Calvert, Citywide Coordinator, YouthBuild NYC Collaborative ~~ Email: dcalvert@yayb.org Cell: 646-351-2433

Attachments:

1. YouthBuild locations in NYC
2. YouthBuild's Impact

+++++=

1. YouthBuild NYC Collaborative membership:

Title	Borough	Address	Contact	Contact info
New Settlement Apartments – “YouthBuild NSA”	Bronx (South Bronx - Mt. Eden)	1512 Townsend Avenue Bronx, NY 10452	Roman Woodson, YB Director	(718) 716-8000, Ext. 419 r.woodson@newsettleme nt.org
South Bronx Overall Economic Development Organization, Inc. or SoBRO – “YouthBuild SoBRO”	Bronx (South Bronx - The Hub)	“YouthBuild SoBRO” – 555 Bergen Avenue Bronx, NY 10455	Carla Wilson-Redden, YB Director	Tel: 917-530-9578 credden@sobro.org
Antioch Community Development Corp – “Dreams YouthBuild”	Brooklyn	1615 St. John’s Place Brooklyn, NY 11233	Ditashiah Kohn, Peter Rodriguez	(718) 455-4308 ditashiahkohn@gmail.com peterjrod@gmail.com
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation – “YouthBuild NMIC”	Manhattan (Washington Heights)	45 Wadsworth Avenue New York, NY 10033	Sasha Linney, YB Director	(212) 453-5369 sashalinney@nmic.org
Youth Action Programs & Homes, Inc. – “Youth Action YouthBuild”	Manhattan (East Harlem)	206 East 118 Street New York, NY 10035	Amanda Guzman, YB Director	(212) 860-8170, Ext. 33 aguzman@yayb.org
Central Family Life Center – “YouthBuild IMPACT”	Staten Island	117 Wright Street Staten Island, NY 10304	Liz Morgan, YB Director	(646) 573-3707 – cell (w) emorgan@centralfamilylifecenter.org
Queens Community House – “YouthBuild Queens”	Queens	67-09 Kissena Blvd Flushing, NY 11367	Dennis Acevedo, YB Director	201-546-0137 - cell dacevedo@qchnyc.org
The Hope Program – “YouthBuild Hope”	Bronx (Hunts Point)	1360 Garrison Bronx, NY 10474	Tiara Williams, Bronx Program Director	475-207-3893 twilliams@thehopeprogram.org
United Way of Greater NY – “YouthBuild Long Island”	Hempstead and Deer Park, Long Island	819 Grand Boulevard Deer Park, NY 11729	Jenette Adams, YB Program Director	631-355-3666 – cell jadams@unitedwayLL.org
YouthBuild NYC Collaborative	Citywide	206 W 118 Street New York, NY 10035	David Calvert, Coordinator	646-351-2433 – cell dcalvert@yayb.org

2. YOUTHBUILD'S IMPACT

Compared to a motivated control group receiving other case services, YouthBuild results:

EDUCATION:

- ++ 24% increase in **college enrollment**
- ++ 52% increase in **vocational school enrollment**
- ++ 47% Increase in **GED attainment**
- ++ 56% increase in **volunteerism**

EMPLOYMENT:

- ++ 50% of all enrollees were **placed in either employment** or postsecondary education immediately following the program
- ++ 73% of those placed **retained their placements** for at least six months
- ++ 19% increase in **weekly earnings**.

RECIDIVISM:

YouthBuild's recidivism rate is only **9%** within one year of enrollment

RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

- ++ One year of federal YouthBuild funding at \$89.5 million (current level) results in an estimated **\$1.3 billion in lifetime savings** from taxes, crime, health, and welfare.
- ++ Every dollar spent on YouthBuild results in an estimated fiscal **return on investment of over \$10**.

Sources: Bridgeland, John: A Bridge to Reconnection: A Plan for Reconnecting One Million Opportunity Youth Each Year Through Federal Funding Streams." Civic Enterprises. 2016. Miller, Cummings, Millensky, Schwartz, Wiegand and Long. Laying a foundation: Four-Year Results from the National YouthBuild Evaluation New York: MDRC 2018.

Statement of Tené Howard - Executive Director of Sadie Nash Leadership Project

Hello Chairman Dromm and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Tené Howard and I am the Executive Director of the Sadie Nash Leadership Project. I am here to speak in support of Sports Training And Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI). Members of our initiative are here to ask for your continued support in **ensuring STARS CGI funding is restored in the Council's FY22 budget**—particularly during this unprecedented time. I started as the ED on March 16th 2020 right as the COVID-19 crisis was ramping up-- and this coalition has been critically important to me and Sadie Nash Leadership Project during this unprecedented crisis and has enabled us to provide collective support for our Sadie Nash students, who represent young people from 44 districts across NYC. **Our organizations are a LIFELINE for our young people--** it is through our orgs that young people are gaining opportunities to sustain and be resilient in this unprecedented time.

At Sadie Nash Leadership Project -- the support from STARS has enabled us to show up for our Nashers and families during the COVID-19 crisis. In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we have had to develop creative and adaptive responses that center the voices and experiences of Nashers. We are proud of the work we have done to bring SNLP programming onto virtual platforms, **create new opportunities for healing and self-care**, and develop spaces in which to bring our community together for collective support and action. **Our Nashers are members of the communities of color that are feeling the impact of the pandemic acutely. We have been able to provide direct cash and food assistance to families** who have lost jobs and have been impacted by sickness. We know how important it is for us to deliver on our promise of supporting their ability to grow as leaders who can work now and in the future to create communities committed to collective care and justice for all.

Our young women and gender expansive youth are the NOW and the future of our city. Do not divest in them -- an investment in them is an investment in our collective future. We need you to fight to ensure our programs remain available by reinstating our *City Council funding of \$1,450,000* in FY22.

--



Tené Adero Howard
Executive Director

Pronouns: she, her, hers

Sadie Nash Leadership Project

[4 West 43rd Street, Suite 502](#)

[New York, New York 10036](#)

[212-391-8664](#)

Connect with us! [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

FY22

Preliminary Budget
Hearing – Youth
Services Committee

Honorable Deborah Rose, Chair

Submitted by Rachael Gazdick, CEO

Thank you Madame Chair and Members of the Committee for the Council's long standing support of **New York Edge (NYE)**. I am here today to ask that you continue that support by advocating for and prioritizing our FY 22 citywide funding request of \$1,000,000 under the Council's After-School Enrichment Initiative.

Twenty-nine years ago, New York Edge (then called the Sports & Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc. /SASF) was created at the suggestion of the New York City Council to provide free wrap-around summer camps for youngsters attending summer school. At that time such camps, which provided sports and arts activities as well as academic help, did not exist. With the Council as its partner, New York Edge was at the forefront of the movement to provide free summer camp programming to our city's youth.

From these beginnings, we have grown into the largest provider of after-school and summer programming in New York City, traditionally serving over 40,000 students a year at 134 locations throughout the five boroughs. Core components of our programming include visual and performing arts, STEAM education, social and emotional learning and leadership, sports, health and wellness and academics and college readiness.

Our mission is to help bridge the opportunity gap among students in underinvested communities by providing programs designed to improve academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. It is the belief of our Board and Staff that **EVERY** child is gifted and talented if only given the necessary tools, resources and supports. And as our name implies, we strive to provide every student in our programs with the **EDGE** that they need to succeed in the classroom and in life. **Eighty percent (80%) of Principals attest to the power of New York Edge in supporting academic improvement in their schools and eighty-six percent (86%) of parents believe that our programs are helping their children succeed in school.**

Since its creation, New York Edge programming has consistently, and proactively, evolved in order to meet the needs of New York City's children and families, the most recent example being our response to COVID-19. With the onset of the pandemic and the closing of the public school system last March, we:

- *Moved our entire workforce to remote work through the end of the school year;*
- *Worked with our school partners to make sure students had the needed technology, by donating over 600 laptops and devices to students in need , to stay engaged and participate in remote learning AND to ensure that students and their families has ACCESS to healthy food;*
- *Created a trauma informed approach to our programming to help young people deal with the stresses and anxiety that the pandemic has unleashed on families across the city;*
- *Successfully rolled out 101 online programs in the spring - with focus on social emotional learning - open to youth in all of our traditional school site locations, providing academic; arts enrichment; health and wellness and college readiness;*
- *Developed, in consultation with the CDC and NYS Department of Health, stringent health and safety protocols for socially distant in-person programming for our summer and our 2020-2021 school year programs to best protect the health and safety of our students and staff;*
- *Created a COVID-19 Information and resource page for parents on our website which is updated regularly and provides links to various city and state agencies.*

With your support we received \$850,000 in the FY 21 Budget. **This funding allowed us to provide 3000 youth from across the city with a mix of virtual and in-person summer camp activities last summer.** Activities ranged from virtual concerts and career carnivals, to Knicks and Rangers –themed arts classes with Knicks alum John Starks and Ranger alum Adam Graves to financial literacy classes and MUCH, MUCH MORE. Due to the pandemic, our campers’ experiences were a little bit different than in past years but they were just as fun and enriching.

Our FY 21 Council citywide funding is also supporting our current after-school programming, virtual and socially distant, safe in-person depending on the school, throughout the five boroughs including seven Learning Labs. **Currently, we are running 107 programs throughout the five boroughs.** And as the public school system resumes in-person instruction, more and more of our staff will return to the classroom.

This past year has been extremely challenging for us all but through adversity comes strength, resiliency and, often, new opportunities. **This year has brought us new collaborators and partners including Teach Rock, founded by legendary guitarist Steven Van Zandt, Mets on the Move, the US Olympic Handball Team, the NY Knicks and actor and author Taye Diggs.** I am so proud of my team for their dedication, tenacity and inventiveness in adapting our programs to the new COVID-19 reality.

For 29 years, New York Edge has been able to substantially impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of New York’s most vulnerable youth by leveraging City Council funding not only to run our flagship New York City Council Summer Camps but to bring our school year leagues, special events, weekend programs, and holiday break programming to youth across the five boroughs.

New York Edge, its students, and families are extraordinarily grateful for the support of the New York City Council these past 29 years. We are now looking to you to meet the needs of the next generation of young people by supporting our FY 22 citywide funding request of \$1,000,000 which will bring us back to our FY 20 level of funding. ***These funds will enable us to keep providing youth throughout the city with the edge they need to succeed!***

Thank you.



Children and Family Services

Embracing Hope and Building Futures for Generations

**Testimony delivered by
Amy Wilkerson, Vice President for Afterschool and Youth Services
Prepared for the New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services
FY22 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 11, 2021**

Good afternoon. My name is Amy Wilkerson and I'm the Vice President for Afterschool and Youth Services at Sheltering Arms Children and Family Services. Thank you, Chair Rose and members of the Committee on Youth Services, for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Sheltering Arms is one of the City's largest providers of education, youth development, and community and family well-being programs for the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. We serve nearly 15,000 children, youth, and families each year, and employ more than 1,100 staff from across New York City. We are one of the few providers citywide that provides a full continuum of care for youth experiencing homelessness, and serve more than 3,000 homeless and at-risk youth each year through two Drop-In Centers, one Crisis Shelter, two Transitional Independent Living residences, and a HUD-funded Rapid Re-Housing program. We have provided services for youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness for more than 20 years. We also serve more than 2,500 students each year through our 10 afterschool programs (4 COMPASS, 5 SONYC, and 1 Bronx Hope) throughout the city.

Restoration of the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Initiative

First, New York City's FY22 budget must honor the City's commitment to cover providers' true indirect costs by including \$171 million in ICR funding. Disinvestment in the ICR Initiative is the primary risk to organizations like Sheltering Arms. It is unconscionable that NYC would commit to this initiative, require providers to go through a lengthy process to demonstrate actual costs, and then refuse to pay providers the full rate approved by the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS). Full funding for the ICR initiative is critical to our ability to continue providing high quality services to children, youth, and families across NYC.

Restoration of Summer SONYC

We thank the Council for its long-standing support of summer programs for students, and are grateful that the Council has consistently restored funding that has been cut in the Executive Budget. After the stress that families and providers were put through last summer we were hopeful that summer funding for youth would be prioritized, especially as the City continues to move towards recovery and opening schools.

However, here we are again with zero funding for SONYC middle school programs. We know this is a tough budget year, but the Council and the Mayor know these programs are vital for the well-being and development of our students, and the recovery of our communities. Providers like Sheltering Arms are

ready and able to provide these programs safely in-person. We have done so from more than 120 students across five elementary schools this semester.

The Council must ensure that full funding is restored for summer SONYC for middle schoolers.

Hold Harmless and Right-Size Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Contracts

Throughout the pandemic, Sheltering Arms has worked closely with DYCD to manage our programs safely, including reducing the number of youth in our Crisis Shelter to allow for social distancing and isolation, when necessary; and closing our daytime youth drop-in center in Far Rockaway during the initial months of the crisis in order to avoid in-person activities. These actions, which were necessary to ensure the safety of our clients and staff members, resulted in lower utilization in both of these programs.

DYCD is currently penalizing RHY providers for this type of under-utilization, marking us as “Far Below Standard” on our Annual Performance Evaluation. They have assured us that a note will be added to this evaluation in PASSPort, but this does not reassure us that future decisions based on provider performance will not be impacted. **Just as DOE is holding schools harmless for attendance this year, DYCD must hold RHY providers harmless for under-utilization of in-person services throughout the pandemic.**

Additionally, while we are grateful that the City has largely kept RHY programs whole in the FY22 budget, there are key areas in the RHY system that require investment in order to ensure the City can meet the needs of RHY:

- **Fully fund the cost of services provided** (\$3.01M) – in addition to the need for fully funding the ICR initiative, funding for RHY contracts has consistently fallen short of covering the true cost of running programs.
- **40 additional beds for 21- to 24-year-olds** (\$2.02M) – throughout the pandemic, our 24hr drop-in center in Jamaica, Queens is full every night because youth don’t want to enter the adult homeless system. Youth who are between the ages of 21-24 have often aged out of every other support system, and with only 60 beds citywide, many are still being left to fend for themselves.
- **Fund targeted mental health support or specialized TIL pilots** (\$2.6M) – youth with severe mental health needs are being done a disservice; providers need resources to provide on-site clinical services and intensive case management
- **Create a Peer Navigator program** (\$200K) – private funding has allowed Sheltering Arms to provide a peer navigator program for youth in our continuum for the past year. These peer navigators provide critical support to youth learning many life skills for the first time – peer navigators accompany youth to get their State ID, access resources, and navigate a path to permanent housing.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Amy Wilkerson
Vice President for Afterschool and Youth Services
awilkerson@shelteringarmsny.org

Youth Development Institute at Ramapo for Children
City Council Youth Services Committee Testimony
March 11, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is Adam Jacobs and I am representing the Youth Development Institute at Ramapo for Children. I am here to share testimony from youth on the importance of Youth Leadership Councils. These testimonies are from participants in YDI at Ramapo's two councils, one which has already been mentioned today--My Brother and Sister's Keeper Youth Council that we facilitate with DYCD--and the other from the Youth Council of the DOE Office of Community Schools. We think it is essential to have youth voices represent the needs of young people, but the council participants are not able to attend this hearing because they have obligations for school and work. In the future, we ask that this committee consider moving this hearing to afternoon hours to enable more young people to testify without missing school.

We also believe in compensating youth leaders for their contributions. For this reason, The Youth Development Institute at Ramapo submitted discretionary requests to the City Council to support our Peer Leader Internship Program, which would allow us to compensate youth leadership council alumni for their continued engagement after they have completed the one year Council program. The Councils explore important topics in New York City, such as policing, health care, equity in education, and more, and then make policy recommendations. As DYCD Commissioner Chong mentioned earlier, the My Brother and Sister's Keeper Youth Council is lifting up youth voices through town halls and was just tasked with becoming peer hosts of Circles for young people to discuss some of the stigmas associated with mental health challenges. The Office of Community Schools young people are looking at the implications of student attendance and students living in temporary housing.

Their testimonies are as follows:

One youth leader says, "Youth councils are important in any community containing young people. It gives youth an environment to feel important and grow the mindset that they can effect change in their community. Youth councils foster collaborations, and young people work with individuals around the same age groups to make themselves better."

Adhana, 16, from Brooklyn says: "I believe that being on a Youth Council is important. I'm the source that can be used to promote change, especially on the issues that directly affect me."

Monica, 15, Queens: "I'm passionate about my voice, and this Council gives me an opportunity to speak freely and confidently about the things that matter most to me."

Chloe, 16, Brooklyn: "I'm an advocate for change and inclusion. I want to address the issues in my school and community that others just walk by."

Rayan, 16 Staten Island: "In my opinion, youth councils bring our youth community together, teach valuable life lessons, and encourage the youth community to get along while voicing their opinion."

Kervens, 21 Brooklyn: "The importance of having a youth council is that it gives young people the power to invest in themselves and improve their peers, it helps young people develop their leadership skills and also take on new skills along the way, it helps forge better adults for tomorrow because they already are in a line where they know how to be responsible and act according to a certain situation. Also, it brings awareness on how to improve life for other young people when they're in power because they are on the ground with a theme. A youth council is critical because it helps create better leaders for tomorrow and better youth-adult partnerships."

Chelsea, 14, Bronx: "Youth Councils are important because we make the people we know and our community heard. What others may not have the time to do, we as teens do for the most part. We also push our families and neighbors to advocate for themselves to hear and understand they have rights they should be using."

Eva, 17, The Bronx: "This Council makes me feel heard in a way that no other place does."

Thank you on behalf of these youth leaders and everyone at The Youth Development Institute at Ramapo for Children. We look forward to working with you to continue lifting up the voices of young people in New York City through renewed funding for Youth Leadership Councils.

Thank you.

New York City Council
FY 2022 Preliminary Budget Hearing
Youth Services Committee
Thursday, March 11th, 2021

Submitted on behalf of:
New York Junior Tennis & Learning (NYJTL)
36-36 33rd Street, Suite 504
Long Island City, NY 11106

George Guimaraes
President and CEO

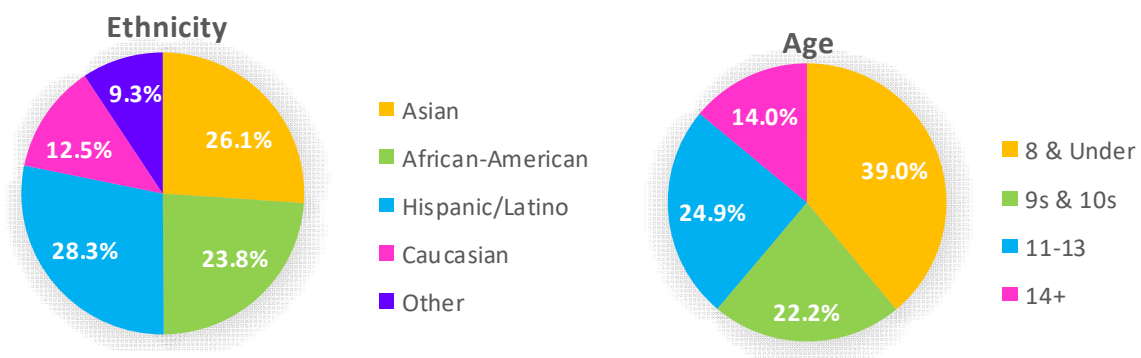
Presented by
Scott Daly
Senior Director of Community Tennis

Thank you for the New York City Council's longstanding support of ***New York Junior Tennis & Learning*** (NYJTL), legally incorporated and funded as the **New York Junior Tennis League, Inc.** We are the largest and most successful scholastic tennis program in the country, serving as a model for other states. For nearly 50 years, NYJTL has been a driving force for New York City's youth and tennis communities, traditionally reaching over **85,000** youngsters throughout the five boroughs on an annual basis.

With the NYC Council as our partner, NYJTL is offering the youth of our city much more than the chance just to learn tennis. The overwhelming majority of the young people we serve are Black, Latino, Asian, and new immigrant populations. **Nearly two-thirds of our participants are 10 and under AND virtually all come from low-income families and neighborhoods, where young people lack access to the opportunities typically available only to youth in affluent neighborhoods, suburbs and private schools.**

When COVID started, NYJTL had to suspend our Winter season and cancel our Spring season. In Summer 2020, when NYC Parks allowed for group instruction on the tennis courts, NYJTL was out there the next day. **All NYJTL locations were made aware of NYC Parks COVID rules and protocols were also created by NYJTL to ensure safety of all kids and staff.**

CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS¹



CTP CITYWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS continued¹

Ethnicity	%	Age	%	Gender	%	N/R	%
Asian	26.1%	8 & Under	39.0%	Male	55.4%	New	55.2%
African-American	23.8%	9s & 10s	22.2%	Female	44.6%	Returning	44.8%
Hispanic/Latino	28.3%	11-13	24.9%				
Caucasian	12.5%	14 +	14.0%				
Other	9.3%						

¹- Graph & Pie Charts represents CTP demographics, not the traditional 85,000 youth reached by NYJTL annually

NYJTL addresses issues of economic and educational inequities by giving **ALL children**, including children with special needs, the opportunity to learn the sport of tennis—and just as importantly - the opportunity to become physically fit; the opportunity to reach new educational heights; and the opportunity to expand their horizons beyond their immediate world. NYJTL helps young people build self-esteem and learn the affirmative values of perseverance, cooperation, fairness and respect.

NYJTL brings tennis to thousands of children of all economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. **Funded under the Council's *Physical Education and Fitness Initiative*, NYJTL provides quality tennis, educational programming, and character development in EVERY borough throughout the city:**

- **Community Tennis Programs (CTP)** – CTP reaches children throughout the five boroughs by supplying trained coaches, tennis instruction, match play, educational services, and special events to youth ages 5-18 during Spring, Summer and Fall. In our educational component, we provide a Reading Club, USTA ACEs curriculum for our 4th and 5th graders, and free SAT Prep classes for our 11th graders. CTP holds over 15 tennis tournaments for all ages throughout the year. We provide trips to Arthur Ashe Kids Day, US Open Qualifiers, multiple Mets/Yankees games and various pro tennis tournaments in the vicinity of NYC (New Haven to Long Island). **In addition, last year alone, CTP provided tennis to over 1,000 Special Population/ District 75 children.** Finally, CTP develops not only tennis skills but also the character of youth through positive life experiences. *Due to COVID-19, all tournaments and special events have been suspended.*

- **Winter Weekend Indoor Program** – This program enables players to continue their progress during the 20-week indoor season and includes NYJTL sponsored events: Hartman Cup Championships, Holiday Tournament, and Presidents' Week Tournament. This program runs from mid-November to early April. *Due to COVID-19, all tournaments and special events have been suspended.*
- **School-Time Tennis Program (STP)** – STP supplies free tennis equipment, teacher training, and ongoing support to approximately **250** schools annually throughout the city to include tennis as a regular part of their physical educational curriculum. **NYJTL is a NYSED Approved Provider of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) credit.** Any participant that attends one of NYJTL's STP trainings will receive 6.5 CTLE credit hours. *Due to COVID-19, STP is currently suspended.*
- **Intensive Training Program (ITP)** – ITP provides tennis training for high-performing/high-potential players who currently participate in NYJTL's Community Tennis Program. With smaller coach-to-student ratios and increased access to tennis, ITP bridges the gap between recreational community-based programs and elite training. ITP is **FREE** to the under resourced population that NYJTL's Community Tennis Program serves.

Council funding also enables us to employ many of our NYJTL alumni, high school seniors and college students, as coaches and assistant coaches at various time throughout the four seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter). In effect, we run our own Student Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

NYJTL is seeking 1.2 million in FY 22. Funding at this level will enable us to:

- Keep up with rising costs, including the new minimum wage of \$15 per hour, and costs associated with implementing COVID -19 protocols –
 - Additional Equipment – no sharing of any items between participants and staff;
 - Equipment to assist in social distancing (lines, cones, spots);

- PPE Supplies – cleaning products, point and shoot thermometers, masks and hand sanitizers (for players and staff);
- Enables us to continue serving youth in **EVERY** borough;
- Allows us to bring **additional hours** of free tennis instruction throughout the city;
- Increase staffing at each site to ensure safety as per newly implemented protocols
- Increase enrollment throughout the city as a result of additional program hours.

Continued funding of NYJTL in the FY 22 budget is crucial to our vision and that of NYJTL's founder, Arthur Ashe who believed tennis could transform the lives of poor children of color just as it had his own life. With your support, we can continue to change the lives of thousands of New York City youth and their families.

We could not do what we do without the strong funding support of the New York City Council. On behalf of the youngsters and parents annually served by NYJTL, I thank you for the New York City Council's commitment to the youth of our city and for your sustained support of NYJTL.

2 Lafayette Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10007
T 212.577.7700 F 212.385.0331 www.safehorizon.org



Testimony of
Joe Westmacott, Assistant Director
Safe Horizon Streetwork Project

On the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget

Committee on Youth Services
Hon. Debi Rose, Chair

New York City Council

3.11.2021

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the youth services portion of the Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget. My name is Joe Westmacott, and I am the Assistant Director of Housing and Benefits Resources at Safe Horizon Streetwork Project. Safe Horizon is the nation's largest non-profit victims services organization, offering a client-centered, trauma-informed response to 250,000 New Yorkers each year who have experienced violence or abuse. And we are increasingly using an antiracist lens to guide our work with clients, with each other, and in developing the public positions we hold.

Whether we are called on to provide expert testimony at an oversight hearing or to assist a constituent in crisis and in need of emergency services, we are pleased to partner with the City Council in a collective effort to make our city safer for all. We look forward to helping you and your staff learn how best to support survivors and connect them to the resources available in your borough and community.

Over many years, the City Council has been a key supporter of our programs helping adult, adolescent, and child victims of violence and abuse. City Council funding fills in gaps where no other financial support exists and allows us to draw down critical dollars from other sources. Moreover, this funding demonstrates the value that you and your colleagues place in helping young people access desperately-needed shelter, support services, legal assistance, and counseling.

My testimony today will provide an update to the Youth Services Committee on one key Initiative that is funded by the City Council and contracted through the Department of Youth and Community Development. This Initiative, the Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade, provides critical funding to Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project.

Streetwork provides shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 13 to 25. We work with homeless and street-involved young people to help them find safety and stability. Many homeless young people face a day-to-day struggle to survive, which can lead to physical and emotional harm. Homeless youth may have experienced family abuse, violence, rejection, and instability that led to their homelessness. We welcome these young people, help them navigate complex systems, and provide essential resources at our Drop-In Centers, at our overnight shelter, and through our street outreach teams. This work can be incredibly challenging but also rewarding. Our work at Streetwork did not pause during this pandemic. Rather, our dedicated team continued to respond to homeless and at-risk young people in need of shelter, services, and understanding. Safe Horizon's Streetwork Project has been doing this community-based work since 1984, and we will continue to do so for as long as our services are needed.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2020, the City Council designated \$456,697 through the Support for Persons Involved in the Sex Trade Initiative to bolster Streetwork's ability to provide services and access to housing to young people engaged in the sex trade. With this funding, we have been able to increase our engagement and response to the number of young people both in the Drop-In Center and on the streets who are in crisis and involved in the sex trade and to connect them to supportive counseling, access to benefits and housing, and primary and mental healthcare. Safe Horizon is seeking a full restoration of \$456,697 to continue to bolster our response and offer

critical services to this vulnerable population navigating a pandemic, homelessness, violence, racism, and so many other traumas.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.